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MTA, city fear Paterson will cut budget

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Saturday, March 29th 2008, 4:00 AM

Gov. Paterson has proposed slashing \$60 million in transit funds that the MTA has been banking on as it confronts looming deficits, officials said Friday.

The cuts would widen a \$200 million budget deficit that the Metropolitan Transportation Authority is projecting for next year.

Paterson's proposal also raises concern that other money the MTA believed it would receive after hashing out its financial plans last year with former Gov. Eliot Spitzer could be in jeopardy.

"A fare increase next year is almost inevitable" if the Paterson proposal survives budget negotiations with the Senate and Assembly, according to Assemblyman Richard Brodsky (D-Westchester).

Noting Paterson's support for Mayor Bloomberg's congestion pricing plan in Manhattan, Brodsky fumed: "They are beating the hell out of the middle class."

A spokeswoman for Paterson declined comment Friday night.

The MTA's 2008 budget and four-year fiscal plan envision a \$338 million increase in revenues from the state's Metropolitan Mass Transportation Operating Assistance fund.

Authority officials had said they received assurances from the Spitzer administration that the funds would be provided because in the past the state had diverted mass transit money to other purposes.