

Hochul needs new plan to rebuild Penn Station: key state senator

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An influential state lawmaker said a new plan is needed to rebuild [Penn Station](#) now that the Hochul administration's existing proposal seems moribund.

"We can and must do better," said state Sen. Leroy Comrie, a Queens Democrat who chairs the Senate committee on corporations, authorities and commissions and sits on the Public Authorities Control Board, a powerful state oversight panel.

Comrie dismissed the state's proposal to rebuild the dismal transit hub as a "1970s plan" that fails to meet the region's transportation needs. He said a rebuilt station must accommodate commuters so they can travel into Manhattan and then onto other destinations in the boroughs or suburbs without changing trains. He spoke Wednesday as part of a sponsored forum on the future of Penn Station hosted by *Crain's Content Studio*.

"This is a real opportunity to do this right," said Comrie. "We need to lead the future of the country and not live in the past."

He didn't address how a properly rebuilt Penn Station should be paid for, which is one of the biggest questions about the project.

Gov. Kathy Hochul has proposed to help pay the estimated \$10 billion cost of rebuilding the station with tax revenue from redeveloping the surrounding neighborhood. But the state's development partner, Vornado Realty Trust, last month said it **isn't prepared to build towers anytime soon** because the office market is depressed.

The Hochul administration had no immediate comment on Comrie's remarks. At a speech today to the Association for a Better New York, the governor said she remains committed to rebuilding Penn Station.

"I am not taking my foot off the pedal on that one," she said. "That has to happen."

Panelists at the *Crain's* event, which included both sponsor-supported and invited speakers, agreed the need for a new station is urgent. Consensus was harder to come by when it came to who would pick up the tab or **whether Madison Square Garden should be relocated** so the hub that serves hundreds of thousands of travelers daily is no longer entombed.

Former lieutenant governor and Metropolitan Transportation Authority Chairman Richard Ravitch said the federal government should cover 80% of Penn Station's rebuilding cost. He said the feds have a responsibility to do so because they're **paying for new tunnels** intended to bring more traffic to the station. He urged Gov. Hochul and New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy to agree on ways to pay their states' shares without relying on private development "that isn't going to happen."

He urged the political leaders to move quickly, while the federal government is keen to invest in infrastructure and a longtime Amtrak passenger lives in the White House.

"Time is of the essence," Ravitch said.