

**Testimony of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee
to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority before the New York City Traffic
Congestion Mitigation Commission on Revised Proposals To Reduce
Traffic Congestion within the City of New York**

Wednesday January 16, 2008

Good Afternoon. My name is William Henderson. I am the Executive Director of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee (PCAC) to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). The PCAC is the coordinating body for the three legislatively mandated commuter councils: the Long Island Rail Road Commuter's Council, the Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council and the New York City Transit Riders Council. The volunteer members are appointed by the Governor upon the recommendation of local elected officials to represent the interests of the users of MTA services.

We appreciate the Commission hosting this series of hearings. As advocates for public transportation, the members of the PCAC enthusiastically support pricing as a means to improve transportation within the region so long as the funds raised are dedicated to public transportation. The pricing proposals that are before the Commission address two major impediments to public transportation achieving its potential: traffic congestion and lack of resources. Pricing is proving to be an effective tool in reducing congestion and generating revenue to improve transportation systems in cities throughout the world. It is now time to apply this tool in our city.

At the Commission's late October and November hearings, many individuals and groups brought forward constructive suggestions to strengthen the City's effort to reduce traffic congestion. We are pleased to see that many of those suggestions are mirrored in the Alternative Congestion Pricing Plan developed by the Commission. To reiterate our earlier testimony, we called for modifications to the Mayor's plan in terms of the boundaries of the charging zone, the means of collecting user fees, and the structure of charges as it relates to intrazonal travel and offsets to the congestion charge available for drivers using existing toll facilities.

The modifications incorporated in the Alternative plan are effective and reasonable responses to the concerns that we and others expressed in October and November. The moving of the zone's northern boundary establishes a closer correspondence between the zone and the area where congestion poses the greatest threat to mobility. The elimination of charges for intrazonal travel and exemptions for through trips in the zone make it possible to greatly simplify the task of assessing charges to individual

drivers. The taxi surcharge contained in the Alternative proposal seems to us a much more workable means of reducing congestion resulting from intrazonal travel.

In an ideal world, we would have preferred that tolls and congestion charges would be coordinated in order to establish variations in the total cost of entering the congestion zone within the day, thus providing additional price signals to influence driver behavior. As this proposal is for a pilot program, which provides opportunities for learning and changes based on evolving knowledge, we are comfortable with the less complex charging formula incorporated in the Alternative plan. It is vitally important to move forward now, at a time that is ripe for attracting more users to public transportation. To fully exploit this opportunity, we need both the resources and improved operating environment that congestion pricing will provide.

I thank you for the opportunity to comment on these revised proposals.