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**Testimony to the MTA Board
The MTA is Counting on The Federal Government
By Lisa Daglian
Executive Director, PCAC
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Greetings, I'm Lisa Daglian, Executive Director of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, PCAC.

None of us are so naïve as to believe that the election of a bona fide transit user will result in instant salvation – although we can hope that our future is so bright, we'll have to wear aviators. But riders can't wait until Inauguration Day for relief. This month's meeting will include the release of the dreaded – and dreadful – Doomsday budget plan, with unfathomable service cuts, unaffordable fare hikes, and untenable layoffs, coupled with a devastating halt to many capital projects.

The next few months will be daunting and downright scary. We're staring into the abyss. It doesn't have to be like this. With the election over, Congress can take immediate action to pass a stimulus package that will stave off fiscal disaster for the MTA and support state and local governments. We also urge them to extend the MLF through 2022 to allow the MTA to borrow more slowly – with lower interest rates, longer terms and an increased borrowing cap.

Congestion pricing also must be a priority. Ideally, we'd like to see a January 2021 executive order for a categorical exclusion. This makes the most sense, given congestion pricing's ability to reduce traffic congestion and promote transit use while addressing the MTA's financial challenges and promoting economic activity. Calling for an environmental assessment also would pave the way for the next steps. The green light will mean billions and benefit riders with better service, increased accessibility and reduced delays, all while adding jobs.

Riders are benefiting from the MTA's ongoing innovative advances, and we thank you. Earlier this week, Metro-North introduced features to its Train Time app – like those on the LIRR – that allow riders to see how crowded trains are. Such ongoing and impressive updates provide commuters with the technology they need to improve their confidence in their trip and in the system. Bravo to the teams who continue to work to instill confidence in riders, getting them back on-board. We urge Washington to make the same commitment.

Thank you.