



PERMANENT CITIZENS
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**Testimony to the MTA Board
Table the Fare Increase, Consider Higher Tolls
By Lisa Daglian
Executive Director, PCAC
December 16, 2020**

Greetings, I'm Lisa Daglian, Executive Director of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, PCAC.

Today you'll be voting on the MTA's 2021 budget. We don't envy the difficult decisions you'll be making that are largely due to the stalemate in Washington. The impact of lawmakers' inability to come to agreement on a stimulus package that addresses the needs of transit agencies will be felt by riders – and economies – not just in New York, but across the United States. Hopefully, consensus on some relief will be reached in the coming days and we thank our elected leadership, including Senator Schumer, for their efforts to make it happen. We look forward to having a friend of transit in the White House and the new and improved dynamic that will bring.

Despite the gaping gap, we're dismayed that the budget you are voting on includes a four percent yield fare increase. We hope everyone's testimony will be considered – including those who will testify on December 21st – before any decisions are made. We understand that in typical times we'd be due for the biennial increase – but these are not typical times. It is unfair to make those of us who have never left or have come back to transit pay for the loss in revenue from those who have not.

We urge you to table the fare increase and instead look at other ways to fill the hole as we await help from Washington. Have you considered a higher increase for tolls while holding riders harmless?

Toll revenue is rising as more people turn to driving. Ridership is still low and expected to remain that way for years to come. Raising fares will only push more people into cars, especially with looming service cuts. We should be looking at ways to incentivize transit ridership while reducing congestion and pollution.

We understand that service cuts are not up for discussion at this meeting, but it is critical that any reductions in service, any right sizing – which is essentially a service cut – be accompanied by public hearings and that public input be a real consideration before any decisions are made. Transparency engenders trust. It's more important than ever that riders trust the MTA so they get back on board. Thank you.