

**Testimony of the New York City Transit Riders Council to the
Board of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority
on Proposed Fare Increases and Service Reductions
Hilton NY, 1335 Avenue of the Americas, Manhattan
January 14, 2009**

My name is Trudy L. Mason, and I am a member of the New York City Transit Riders Council (NYCTRC). The Council was created in 1981 to represent the users of the New York City Transit system and consists of fifteen volunteer members appointed by the Governor upon the recommendation of the Mayor, the Public Advocate and the five Borough Presidents.

As representatives of transit riders in New York City we find the proposed fare increases and service cuts that are before you to be unacceptable. We also know that in the face of inadequate funding this Board has little choice but to propose substantial fare increases, but this reality does not make the fare increases any more acceptable. It is particularly offensive to hold paratransit customers, many of whom can scarcely afford their current cost of travel, hostage to a potential \$6.00 fare. We have called and will continue to call forcefully upon our elected representatives to support new funding sources for the MTA that will ensure that these unacceptable fare increases will no longer be necessary. We demand that each MTA Board member does the same.

The proposed fare increases that are before you are dire, but the proposed service cuts are even worse. Holding the line on fare increases isn't meaningful to the rider if a service he or she depends upon no longer exists, and this will be the situation for many transit users if these proposals are implemented. Transit in New York City is a system, and you cannot compromise major elements of the system without damaging the whole. New Yorkers depend on transit to get around the City twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. This level of service that is proposed is simply not adequate for a city that is open for business at all hours.

The severe service cuts proposed in off-peak hours are a serious threat to the safety and reliability of the system. Thirty minute subway headways in the overnight hours would make the system all but unusable. Would you choose to enter a lonely subway station in the early morning hours, knowing that your wait for the next train could be as long as half an hour? Combine these new schedules with the reductions or eliminations in off-peak bus service on many

routes, and you are making overnight transit service a frightening and dangerous experience for riders, many of whom have no other viable choices. The MTA has the franchise to serve the ENTIRE city, not just the profitable ones. Similarly, the closure of four stations in Lower Manhattan represents a setback at efforts to rebuild this important part of the City. In addition, the loss of 50% of the service on the R/W line by eliminating the W is unacceptable, as is the loss of the Z train, which will cause riders to divert to the already-packed E train if they begin their trips in Jamaica or Richmond Hill. Further packing people onto already packed trains by changing from 100% to 125% of seated load on B division trains will cause riders to seek other means of transportation. Is that what we want to do?

We are also greatly disturbed that our subway stations will become even more lonely and dirty under these proposals. Eliminating Station Customer Assistant and agent position may make sense on paper in cases where there is a staffed booth elsewhere in a station, but in reality the staffed booth may be far from much of the station and not accessible without returning to street level and locating the appropriate station entrance. Many stations in the subway system already suffer from a lack of human presence, and reducing staffing will only exacerbate this condition. In addition, we cannot believe that reduced station area track cleaning will not take its toll in terms of increased flooding and track fires. We must take the costs of delays from these causes into account before adding up the savings from these actions.

We are fully in favor of increasing efficiency in the system, but the service changes that have been proposed are largely a matter of cutting muscle and bone rather than fat. For example, the move to eliminate bus service parallel to subway lines ignores the fact that these two modes of travel often serve distinct groups of users. Many bus riders are unable to use the subway system due to mobility constraints, and the subway system is far from fully accessible. The sad fact is that even these ill considered cuts do not even make a large dent in the MTA's deficit, as in 2009 they close less than 5 percent of the \$1.2 billion hole in the Authority's finances.

The New York City Transit Riders Council calls upon this Board to consider the resources that are needed to provide an acceptable level of service and to take decisive action to pursue these resources. We reject a budget that raises fares dramatically only to keep the transit system on life support.