

**Statement of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA  
Before the MTA Board – Special Meeting  
March 13, 2009**

I am William Henderson, Executive Director of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA. The PCAC is composed of the members of three riders' councils established by the State legislature in 1981 and addresses regional issues as well as coordinating the work of the councils.

We know that there are no easy choices today, and we will undoubtedly hear some difficult ones this morning. Put as simply as possible, from the riders' perspective this combination of service cuts, uncertainty about future capital funding, and fare increases is unacceptable. The time for posturing and slogans is past; the riders need our State legislators to complete a responsible funding package for the MTA and for the Governor to sign this package into law. We recognize that there is discomfort in Albany with some elements of the Ravitch Commission's proposals, but it is incumbent on those who reject these provisions to offer better alternatives. These better alternatives must provide for stable, reliable, and inflation sensitive funding for the MTA; they must not rely on one shot revenues or risky schemes to create something from nothing, if all goes well. Proposals meeting these criteria have been few and far between.

If there is no funding package approved, great damage will be done to the riders, but also to the MTA and its operating agencies and to the City, region, and State. Decades have been invested in bringing the MTA system back from the brink, and we cannot afford to throw this progress away because we refuse to face reality and do what needs to be done. Will this damage occur all at once? No, but the damage is real and the longer that we go without a solution the worse it will get.

Some State Senators have called for a comprehensive audit of the MTA. As in any large organization, we agree there are elements in the MTA and its agencies that can be improved, and we support increased openness with respect to MTA operations and finance. But we can't put the MTA's financial crisis on the back burner until an audit is completed. The riders need the services that they rely upon to operate every day at a reasonable fare. They can't afford to wait for the State to provide necessary funding to restore service. Our message to our elected representatives is straightforward: do the annual physical examination later; let's stop the bleeding now.