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**Testimony of the New York City Transit Riders Council
to the Board of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority
on the Proposed Split of the M5 Bus Route and the Extension of the M1 Bus Route
Board Room, MTA Headquarters, 2 Broadway, New York, NY**

April 20, 2016

Good evening. I am William Henderson, the Executive Director of the PCAC speaking on behalf of the New York City Transit Riders Council (NYCTRC). I'm here this evening to comment on the proposal to split the M5 route and extend the M1 route. The NYCTRC is one of three New York State legislatively mandated councils that make up the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC). We believe that the division of the M5 route can serve a beneficial role in improving bus operations, but we do not believe that this proposal considered in this hearing is the best course of action.

The staff summary provided to the MTA Board when it took action to authorize this public hearing acknowledges that the proposed solution is less than ideal. The summary admits that a preferable solution would be to split the M5 bus line into two routes with a larger overlap, but laments that the number of buses in the present fleet is insufficient to meet the larger vehicle requirements that the overlap would create. The result would be that 14 percent of riders would have to transfer to complete trips, which is not a small proportion when we consider the number of M5 riders taking short trips that neither begin nor end near 37th Street.

The NYCTRC acknowledges that bus routes can be adjusted, and with enough vehicles in the fleet a better solution could be implemented at a later date while current problems and inefficiencies are addressed by the present proposal. We all know, however that, once established, bus routes tend to rival cockroaches and temporary tax increases in their persistence. If you need evidence of this tendency, we can discuss the number of bus routes that still follow former streetcar track beds. Once they're on the maps, bus routes tend to remain undisturbed until there's a compelling reason to adjust them.

Long routes are not good for riders and increasing reliability in this corridor may well require splitting the current M5 route. The split should include a reasonable distance where the north and south segments overlap, similar to the M10-M20 route pair. If it is infeasible for the overlap to be accomplished in the near term, we believe that the preferable option would be to split the route at a point further south, preferably near 23rd or 14th Street, which would preserve a one seat ride to destinations in the heart of Manhattan from the northerly part of the route. The extension of the M1 may have its own benefits, but does not mitigate this problem.

The NYCTRC strives not to let the perfect become the enemy of the good, but frankly we can do better here.