

New York City Transit Riders Council

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Testimony of the New York City Transit Riders Council to the Board of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority on Proposed Fare Increases The Great Hall of the Cooper Union, 7 East 7th Street, Manhattan September 13, 2010

My name is Trudy L. Mason and I have been a member of the NYCTRC since 1998. The Council was created in 1981 by the legislature as part of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (along with the LIRRCC and MNRCC).

We represent the riders --known as "customers" to the MTA--of the New York City Transit System. The 15 unpaid members of the NYCTRC are appointed by the Governor upon the recommendations of the Mayor, Public Advocate and Borough Presidents. I was recommended by the Manhattan Borough President.

Over the years the NYCTRC has tried to take a balanced approach to fare increase proposals. While we have always realized that such increases are necessary at certain times, we have also held that they not be coupled with service reductions or any other measures that would cause the riders even more difficulty.

When the last fare increase was passed by the MTA Board, we made our position quite clear—we would reluctantly go along with it as long as the MTA would agree that there would be no service cuts and that they would work with other government entities to find new sources of desperately needed revenue. Of course, if the legislature had passed congestion pricing none of the above would have been necessary and we would not be in the situation we are in today.

In May of 2009, we were heartened when the State of New York and the MTA reached agreement that there would be increased financial assistance to the MTA from the State through new taxes and fees on motorists, taxis, and the private sector. This was prior to the implementation of the fare increase of July 2009. So we were also very pleased that this agreement included a program of regularly scheduled small fare increases every two years, which meant that transit riders would no longer have "surprise" increases and/or service cuts from the MTA as had been done in the past.

Therefore you can imagine our dismay when the State of New York took back \$143 million that had previously been appropriated to the MTA and the MTA chose to implement the most grievous service cuts in over 35 years rather than fighting for the riders.

How can the MTA possibly ask the riders to pay more again, when the State has not lived up to its part of the bargain? Nor has the MTA vigorously explored alternative funding sources—such as placing tolls on the East and Harlem River bridges, reviving congestion pricing, instituting a small gasoline tax or going to the Federal government to request that stimulus funds be used for operating assistance as has been done by transit systems in Washington DC, Chicago and other cities.

I am including with this testimony a resolution passed by all three Councils of the PCAC at our last meeting. This resolution explains in greater detail why the NYCTRC and the other riders councils believe that paying more for less service is a lose–lose situation for all of us.