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**Remarks of PCAC Executive Director William Henderson
On NYCT's Access-A-Ride Customer Bill of Rights
Before the MTA NYC Transit Committee
MTA Headquarters, 2 Broadway, New York, NY**

October 23, 2017

I'm Bill Henderson, Executive Director of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA. Over the years, it has been the policy and practice of the New York City Transit Riders Council (NYCTRC) to not become deeply involved in Access-A-Ride issues because paratransit was not included in our legislative mandate. However, as the riders' representatives, we are compelled to express our concern about the newly published Access-A-Ride Bill of Rights.

A customer Bill of Rights is an excellent idea and the fulfillment of a promise to Access-A-Ride users. This promise grew out of legitimate concerns of Access-A-Ride users, as expressed in MTA Board and City Council meetings and media coverage over the past several months. While we agree with the idea of a Bill of Rights, we have issues with its current execution. The document that has been developed is certainly not user friendly, and, as far as we are aware, was not created with substantial specific input from Access-A-Ride users. The result is, to use an analogy to our nation's Constitution, as if someone scattered chunks of the US Code into the first ten amendments to our Constitution. We think that the paratransit program administrators can do better.

One of our major concerns is that while a Bill of Rights generally denotes a general statement of principles that govern the relationship between an individual and an organization, the current Access-A-Ride Bill of Rights goes far beyond general principles and delves into issues that would better be contained in a policies and procedures manual, which should also be available to the public. The result is that any general principles governing relationships between Access-A-Ride and its users are lost in a sea of language addressing specific situations.

The wordiness of the current Bill of Rights makes it a difficult document to present effectively, and this is true in both the text version on the MTA website and in the formatted version that is online but will also be posted in Access-A-Ride vehicles.

Digesting the text version is a true test of patience, while the formatted version is practically unreadable even for those with good vision because its font size is far below the ADA standard of 16 point type and the contrast between colors used is ineffective. Given the difficulties in reading this version under the best of conditions, let alone in a

moving vehicle, it would help if the formatted version included a reference to the online location of the Bill of Rights; unfortunately, there is no such reference.

The Bill of Rights was presented to the NYC Transit Committee in the September Board cycle and subsequently posted on the MTA website without any formal announcement or press release. Perhaps this is for the best, as it provides paratransit officials an opportunity to rethink and rewrite the Bill of Rights with input from relevant stakeholders. We believe that with some additional work, this Bill of Rights can become a useful tool