

Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA

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Statement of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA Before the MTA Board December 15, 2010

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.

As I'm sure that you may be, we are extremely wary about the 2011 budget that is proposed for adoption today. With about thirteen and one-half billion dollars in expenses, the proposed budget results in a closing cash budget of eight million dollars. Add to this that many difficult choices have already been made and the difficulty of implementing initiatives such as net zero labor cost increases, and there is not a high comfort level with this budget among the riders.

The budget makes it clear what we can and can't afford, but I will submit that one additional thing that we can't afford is more service cuts. We've already been down that road, and riders are still saddled with the effects of cuts earlier this year that generated less than one hundred million dollars in savings. We at the PCAC and the Councils are regularly reminded of the impact of these cuts when we work with riders who are crowded and inconvenienced as a result of the service that has been lost. Simply put, further reductions in service will significantly harm this region and the people in it.

We would like to be optimists; we want to believe that the budget will be workable. For this budget to work, however, it must be crystal clear to our State and local elected officials that they must keep the funding commitments that have been made to the MTA and its operating agencies. We'll be there to deliver this message, and we expect this Board and MTA management to forcefully make this point as well. There is no margin for error here; you know that and we know that. Let's make sure that our State and local officials recognize this as well.