

Testimony To Metro-North Railroad and Long Island Rail Road Committee Meeting on New  
Performance Metrics  
April 15, 2019

Good morning, I am Lisa Daglian, Executive Director of PCAC, speaking today on behalf of the Metro-North and LIRR Commuter Councils. Welcome new Board members!

When the budget agreement was reached in Albany on March 31<sup>st</sup>, most of the transportation-related attention was focused on the historic approval of congestion pricing. We are proud to have been part of the effort to make it a reality, and to add our voices to ensuring that the Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North riders will also benefit from those critically needed funds.

As evidenced by some of the changes around this table, there were other important components of the agreement including restructuring and reorganizing the MTA, aligning Board members terms with those of the elected officials who appointed them, and new performance metrics that will go into effect no less than six months after they are signed into law.

One of those metrics is Terminal on-time performance. According to the legislation, a train will only be considered on time “if it arrives at its destination early, on time, or no more than two minutes late, and has not skipped any planned stops.” That’s a change from the current 5 minutes 59 second standard. In our 2011 report *Minutes Matter*, PCAC made a similar recommendation as it would better reflect the riders’ experience – however, we called for adding the metric, not changing it entirely.

As such, we have several concerns. First and foremost, it appears that the new metrics were taken – almost literally – from a page in London’s book, without significant discussion with the operating agencies or riders, especially with regard to making critical connections. Over the next few months, as Metro-North and the LIRR begin to integrate the changes into their scheduled and operating practices, we ask that rider representatives from each Commuter Council be at the table to provide input. There will likely be unintentional consequences of the new OTP requirements, and we urge inclusion of those that will be most affected – the riders.

Second, we are concerned about whether the new performance metrics will result in penalties or the extent to which funding is dependent on meeting certain standards, particularly when they appear to have been developed legislatively rather than operationally.

Third, the new OTP statistics will shred the railroads’ current on time trends, which are heading in the right direction – slowly but surely. That’s a sure way to lose some of the rider trust that is being won back little by little.

Riders want to get where they’re going reliably and safely – and on time. Striving to meet a two-minute threshold should be the goal of every rail system, and we are hopeful that one day we won’t even be having this conversation. Capturing the commuter experience through these new metrics will help restore faith in the system – but only if they are developed and implemented thoughtfully. Bring the voices of the agencies and the riders to the table as you work it out with the legislature. We all want to see service improve, but we also want to see that it’s done right.

Thank you.