

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 Sheraton LaGuardia East Hotel November 15, 2012

Good Evening. My name is Michael Sinansky. I am the Vice-Chair of the New York City Transit Riders Council (NYCTRC) and Queens Borough President Helen Marshall's representative to the Transit Riders Council.

The NYCTRC opposes this level of increased fares as unfair to Transit riders who already pay the highest percentage of operating expenditures of any large transit system in the nation. Subway riders are already paying 72 percent of cost of their ride. In contrast, the average figure for large US transit systems is 38 percent. These proposals will result in an average fare increase in excess of 7.5 percent; for some riders these proposals will mean double digit percentage fare increases.

In 2009, an understanding was reached that riders, drivers, and the State would all contribute to resolve the funding shortfall caused by the fiscal crisis and to avoid crippling service cuts. The resolution that came out of this process, however, did not work. New funding sources enacted by the Legislature raised substantially less than projected revenues and were disavowed by many elected officials. The State added to the MTA's fiscal problems by taking \$243 million in existing funding from the MTA over two years, which resulted in the ill-advised service cuts of 2010. Only riders kept up their end of the bargain, paying fare increases far in excess of inflation.

Riders should share responsibility for funding increased operating costs, but they should pay only their fair share. Any new fare structure also must spread the burden of increased costs fairly among all NYC Transit riders. In recent years, the system's most frequent riders were called upon to pay a larger portion of increased operating costs. This time around, they must be protected from paying more than their fair share.

Two years ago, this Board placed the burden of fare increases on riders using 7 day and 30 day MetroCards and purchasers of bonus MetroCards, while holding the base fare constant. Fares were stable for tourists and occasional riders, but daily commuters faced double digit cost increases. The MetroCard bonus has eroded over the years, increasing the burden on

the regular riders who pay by the ride. If more is to be asked from riders, any fare increase must include a base fare adjustment that will more evenly spread the increase to all riders.

We also need to have an MTA fare structure that makes sense. In Queens, there are many places that are not convenient to subways, but do have access to Long Island Rail Road service. In fact, subway service in the Borough of Queens east of Jamaica and Flushing simply does not exist. In past years, the LIRR was an important transportation resource, but changes in fare structure have made it unaffordable for many riders, particularly when an additional NYC Transit fare is required to reach a final destination. Riders are forced to choose less direct and cumbersome routes that require only one Transit fare.

Our Council for several years has advocated a "Freedom Ticket" that would allow a rider to take any combination of bus, subway, and commuter rail routes to travel from point to point within the City at a reasonable cost. With expanding commuter rail options and new fare technology on their way, the time is right to plan for implementation of this fare at all times and on all days. We need a positive commitment from this Board that our buses, commuter railroads, and subways do constitute a single system that should be used to transport riders as efficiently as possible.

Thank you.