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Testimony to the MTA Board Marking a Sad Anniversary and A Milestone in Recovery, and Calling for Restoring Committee Meetings and Overnight Service

**By Lisa Daglian
Executive Director, PCAC
March 17, 2021**

Greetings, I am Lisa Daglian, Executive Director of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, PCAC. I am giving my remarks on March 15th for the March 17th Board meeting. Apologies if I've missed breaking news in the intervening days – but I say this to reinforce the importance of allowing speakers on the day of the Board meeting. I'll also take this opportunity to urge you to reinstate Committee meetings where so much valuable information is shared. This would go far to shine light on the MTA – an announcement about their restoration at this Board meeting would be a perfect way to celebrate “Sunshine Week” – which you heard about from Reinvent Albany's Rachael Fauss.

Next week is a different anniversary, a tragically sad one as it marks the first deaths of MTA workers from COVID-19. We mourn the loss of too many of these front-line heroes and thank them for their continued service. We also stand with them in support of making spitting on transit workers a misdemeanor. Always disgusting, it's become more dangerous than ever.

Not only did subway, bus, Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North workers move our region during our darkest days, they continue to move us as we reopen. And we are re-opening: subway ridership hit a milestone peak last week and the ridership resurgence continues. The fact that we're seeing more and more people return to the system reinforces the need to provide enough service that people feel safe and comfortable getting back on board. Cutting service is not the answer, as we saw unfold in real time on the LIRR last week.

The additional funding from the federal government – which we are proud to have fought for and won with you and our elected leaders – should mean no service cuts. The state legislature's rejection of the \$145 million raid on MTA dedicated funds in the one-house bills, and hopeful restoration of the \$98 million from FY21 should mean no service cuts AND no fare hikes. It should also mean restoring 24/7 subway service so everyone can get to their vaccine appointment or work and back home – and to more fun activities in the future. Now's the time to encourage people to return to riding, not give them reasons to stay away. Thank you.