



# PCAC

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## **PCAC Testimony to the MTA Bridges and Tunnels Committee Delivered by Kara Gurl, Research & Communications Associate, PCAC October 18, 2021**

Good morning! I'm Kara Gurl, Research and Communications Associate at the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, PCAC.

13 public meetings later, the message from the public is clear: we need congestion pricing, and we need it now. An overwhelming number of residents of the CBD, outer boroughs, and upper Manhattan were supportive of congestion pricing if it means a stronger transit system and city. Even our friends in Long Island, Westchester, New Jersey, and Connecticut largely understand that the benefits of increased funding for transit and rail infrastructure and a cleaner, healthier region far outweigh the costs of tolling.

We also have to make sure that congestion pricing actually brings in the funding we're depending on to make the capital program a reality. The \$1 billion annually bonded to \$15 billion brought in by congestion pricing will help us avoid a grim reality for the MTA's financial future. Federal emergency funding will dry up sooner than we are prepared for, and without a long-term strategy like congestion pricing, everyday subway, bus, and commuter rail riders will take the hit. Maximizing congestion pricing revenue is more than just crucial: it will be the lifeblood of the entire New York metropolitan area, the region's economic engine.

The only way to ensure that happens is by allowing few exemptions and equitable implementation of the toll. None of us are exempt from experiencing the pollution, traffic congestion, and other issues caused by too many cars in the CBD. We can't give in to all of the drivers who want exemptions; they must pay their fair share in tolls or make the switch to transit, LIRR, or Metro-North.

We did, however, agree with one complaint raised at most of the congestion pricing public meetings: that it has taken far too long. We can't afford to wait years for CBD tolling to start. The majority of New Yorkers know that reducing congestion, noise and air pollution, and increasing funding for transit and rail infrastructure is long overdue. The regional transit system our riders deserve is in sight: congestion pricing with few exemptions and faster implementation is the only way to turn that dream into reality.