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PCAC Testimony to the MTA CPOC: Infrastructure Funding Kara Gurl, Research & Communications Associate, PCAC November 15, 2021

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

We're thrilled that the bipartisan infrastructure bill passed, and with it, \$10 billion for the MTA. Riders and the entire region will be the beneficiaries of this game-changing legislation.

The pandemic forced a Sophie's Choice with the capital program, and as a result, important signal, station, and resiliency improvements were put on the back burner. It's time to move them back onto the list – especially since we know that costs only rise with delay. We've already started to see that with key signal upgrades. Now that there is a strong pool of federal money for infrastructure, it's essential to look to the future and get creative with new projects that will help make a stronger, resilient, and more equitable regional transit system.

As a wise man – Janno Lieber – said last week, it's time for New York to have a 100 % accessible subway system, decades after the ADA was passed. This infrastructure funding can help make that a reality, starting with the stations already slated to get elevators, but eventually to every single station. We will continue to push for an accessible Mets-Willeys Point station regardless of the future of the LaGuardia AirTrain. The existing plans may need to be dusted off and updated, but the money is finally here and all you need to do now is make it happen.

We were happy to stand with Senator Schumer last week in Massapequa Park in support of LIRR projects that will benefit from the BIF. For riders, that translates to projects like more accessible stations, an improved Penn Station, completed Third Track, and fixing the "Jamaica Crawl," all of which will help make commutes faster and more reliable.

This funding will be a game-changer for subway, bus, Metro-North, and LIRR riders. And while we wait with our fingers crossed for even more funding from Build Back Better, let's get a head start and use the infrastructure bill to speed up the capital plan, or risk having costs go up even more. With this funding and smart, bold and focused implementation, we're optimistic that you will truly be able to Build Back Better.