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MTA Board Testimony – Fare Promotions and the Need for Freedom Ticket Now! **By Bradley Brashears, PCAC Planning Manager** **December 15, 2021**

Good morning, I'm Bradley Brashears Planning Manager at the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC). Before the Board today are fare discount options, which we largely support, including reductions of 20 percent off 20-trip peak commuter rail tickets and 10 percent off monthlies, fare capping, thanks to OMNY, and expanded CityTicket options. These are slated to go into effect in March and run for at least four months, maybe longer.

These options should help to get riders back on board, a key goal of these ticket type introductions. We are, however, disappointed that Freedom Ticket (a.k.a. Atlantic Ticket) options were not included: they offer more flexibility, including during peak times, and include transfers to subways and buses, while CityTicket does not. In addition, we're confused...will CityTicket current weekend fares remain \$4.50 or will it increase to the weekday off-peak option of \$5.00? It's essential that riders know what their options are and how they can get the least expensive ride, or this experiment is doomed to fail.

We assume that the Atlantic Ticket will remain in effect, but again ask for clarity. Its downside, same as CityTicket, is that it is only valid the day of travel. Atlantic Ticket is not available on eTix, but since alternate ticket types will be added to eTix, this is the perfect time – long past time, actually – to add it to eTix to open its use to more riders.

Atlantic Ticket has attracted riders and has produced revenue gains for the LIRR. Also, many systems, including our own, have restructured and reduced fares with free transfers between modes, gaining both ridership and increased revenues. We see the CityTicket expansion as a baby step in the direction of Freedom Ticket, and will continue to push, pull and call for its broader implementation. Thousands of SE Queens commuters have been able to reduce their once 2+ hour one-way commutes down to just 45 minutes or less in many instances. It's time for the rest of Queens and the Bronx to have the same access to lower and more flexible fares, that go beyond the options before you today.

The capacity exists – the time for Freedom Ticket is now! Pilot programs are designed to see what works and what does not work – adjustments can always be made.

Thank you.