



PCAC

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PCAC Testimony to MTA Joint Committee on New Fare Types and Technology Kara Gurl, PCAC Research and Communications Associate December 13, 2021

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

It's certainly been an interesting year, even as the who, where and when details of ridership and riding continue to evolve. Next year promises even more uncertainty as we wait to see whether businesses will require greater in-person participation, and what those schedules will be like. The railroads must be adaptive to changing ridership trends and needs – without a crystal ball, but with good predicative forecasting abilities and nimble practices and scheduling.

As we've consistently said, the best way to bring riders back on board is to incentivize them with travel options that meet their needs. It means luring people out of their cars by making trains more attractive than driving, increasing service during peak, off-peak and shoulder-of-peak times to meet demand, and adding train cars as needed to reduce crowding. It also means Freedom Ticket: discounted rail fares in the city with transfers to subways and buses, as has already proven successful with the Atlantic Ticket pilot program. For suburban riders, it means adding 20-trip tickets with 20% discounts, with a longer expiration period, to allow greater flexibility. We expect to hear more about pilot fare options today, but it's hard to predict what's on tap when Committee books aren't posted as of 6PM on the Friday before meetings.

Getting riders back on board is critical to the MTA's fiscal future. Ensuring the success of these pilot programs will contribute to that future. One way to ensure that riders buy into the pilot programs is to make sure everyone knows about them and can access them on the go. Shout from the rooftops: We have new, cheaper ways for you to travel faster! Or, a la ballpark franks, Get your cheaper rail tickets here! Put them on eTix and OMNY and have signs plastered around stations and on TVMs. Don't assume riders will know what they're entitled to – or hundreds of thousands will overpay. Making it easy for people to buy tickets will be the best way to measure the success of the programs. And if Freedom Ticket is not included, don't worry, we'll be back. It's an idea whose time has come, and riders and the MTA will benefit. Thank you.