**MTA Board Meeting Testimony**

**Buses are the Engine of Equity**

**By Kara Gurl, PCAC Research & Communications Associate**

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

With Transit Equity Day coming up, we were pleased that Janno spoke this weekend about the MTA’s role in creating a more equitable region. There’s no doubt that public transit ­– especially buses – are the engine of equity and the backbone of New York City.

On Monday, Acting Bus President Frank Annicaro said that “2022 is going to be a defining year for buses.” We’re excited about the plan to work with DOT to bring riders five new busways, 20 miles of better bus lanes, expanded TSP and camera enforcement, and more accessible bus stops. And with Governor Hochul’s budget proposal including higher fines for drivers who block bus lanes, it’s clear that the tools to create a faster and more reliable bus network are right in front of us. We’re hopeful these improvements and enforcement will be enacted quickly so that more riders can depend on buses for a fast, reliable trip.

A better partnership with DOT will promote equity and sustainability by supporting the many essential workers who depend on buses, while giving more outer borough residents better transit access. The Interborough Express and Queens Bus Redesign will help, but it’s important to listen to riders whose lives will be most impacted. The redesign should include better bus access to LaGuardia from the Bronx and allow for connection to the Interborough, when built. We also hope you’ll push for the city to resume implementation of the Fifth Avenue busway, currently on hold but still key to building a city that prioritizes transit riders.

As much as transit access and reliability are important, so is affordability. This means better publicizing the Fair Fares program and raising the eligibility threshold to the city poverty level, bringing affordable transit to many more New Yorkers. It also means telling riders that more affordable commuter rail fares are coming soon with City Ticket and other fare discounts, including, hopefully, adding free transfers to the subway and bus with our full Freedom Ticket proposal.

Riders need a better bus network and more affordable transit as we continue to recover from the pandemic. The entire region, and the MTA, will benefit. Thank you.