**MTA Board Meeting Testimony**

**The Homeless Crisis: A Partnership Approach**

**By Bradley Brashears, PCAC Planning Manager**

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Good morning, I am Bradley Brashears, Planning Manager at the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC). We were heartbroken by Michelle Go’s tragic death last week – our hearts and prayers go out to her family and loved ones. Before this tragic news, Governor Hochul and NYC Mayor Eric Adams detailed their new Safe Options Support Teams (SOS) program. We’re encouraged that the state and city are addressing this problem together and that professionals are being deployed to help those in need.

But we would like to see the MTA, state, and city take it a step further and learn from peer systems around the country on related efforts. Years ago, I learned of “Hub of Hope,” a physical space within SEPTA operated as a 501 (c)(3) by Project Home in partnership with SEPTA, the City of Philadelphia, and others. It provides a safe place for those experiencing homelessness to be connected to the city and state services they need, as well as a space to do laundry, take a shower, get a hot cup of coffee, and be treated as humans. The city and state should learn from Hub of Hope and consider creating a similar program to help those living within our transit system. In addition to a physical location, mobile vans could be used to move services from station to station.

Our friends at TransitCenter released a great report called “Safety for All,” detailing the Hub and other best practices. Jose Martinez of The City also wrote about the program and others in a piece on Monday – both highly recommended reads.

New York needs a program like this where all partners come together to better address the homeless crisis. The MTA didn’t create this situation, and it cannot and should not solve it alone. With more targeted city and state funding for outreach and support programs, better housing, and an even greater partnership between all stakeholders, both public and private, our transit system can be a safe and welcoming environment for all. We hope that the Governor and Mayor’s SOS program can evolve into a comprehensive approach to help those in need, just as peer transit agencies are doing; please reach out to them.

Thank you!