**MTA Board Meeting Testimony**

**“New Fare Discount Options are Good for Riders”**

**By Kara Gurl, Research & Comm 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.

There are many changes coming next month, many good and some bittersweet. First, we’re sad to say goodbye to LIRR President Phil Eng but thank him for his leadership.

We’re happy to welcome Cathy Rinaldi to her new role leading LIRR and Metro-North, and even happier that new fare options are beginning shortly. But of course, we would be happiest if our full Freedom Ticket proposal became reality, with discounted commuter rail tickets for peak and off-peak travel within the city plus free transfers to subways and buses. We will continue to advocate for its broader implementation.

We’re glad to see that Atlantic Ticket will continue. It’s helped thousands of Southeast Queens commuters cut their once 2+ hour one-way commutes to less than an hour. The expanded CityTicket will help bring more affordable commuter rail fares to riders around the city during off-peak travel, and we will continue to support it to ensure the program’s success. We’re also thrilled that our proposal for a 20-trip ticket at a 20% discount will become reality. Communicating that better fare options are coming is key to making sure as many riders know about them as possible, and it’s encouraging to see so many ads around the system highlighting the programs.

With seven more LIRR stations slated for ADA improvements, Atlantic Ticket will be an even better choice for many Southeast Queens and Brooklyn riders – and for CityTicket users too. As service plans are being developed for both East Side Access and Penn Station Access, permanent fare discounts must be incorporated, allowing even greater and more affordable and equitable access for both LIRR and MNR riders. We also encourage you to steadily increase service to keep pace with return to office, and as Platform F enters regular service, ask you to retain the one-seat ride to Atlantic Terminal during rush hours.

These new fare options and project completions will help bring more riders onboard. As they prove successful, we ask that you expand them to include peak travel and transfers to the subway and bus with Freedom Ticket – helping to bring even more riders back onboard, and hopefully getting drivers out of cars. Thank you.