**MTA Committee Meeting Testimony-**

**Buses Are the Engine of Equity, Especially in Queens**

**By: Kara Gurl, Research and 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.

Queens is “The World’s Borough,” and it deserves a bus network that adequately serves its many diverse communities. The new draft Queens Bus Network Redesign plan will do just that, and Queens riders have much to be optimistic about.

Thank you for going back to the drawing board after taking into account the concerns and feedback of riders from the previous plan. The new plan will help make buses faster, more reliable, and more frequent with reduced headways. We were thrilled to hear that the new plan does not depend on being “revenue neutral,” which is a big win for Queens riders who will not have to sacrifice quality for cost. As DOT Commissioner Rodriguez said, buses are our opportunity to have an “above-ground train system.” And as Janno has said, buses are the engine of equity around the region. With this plan that revamps over 100 routes serving over 800,000 riders, we hope that this becomes a reality.

We’re also glad to hear that you will continue a robust public input process with 14 public workshops, and we encourage all Queens riders to make their voices heard. As public input is taken into consideration, we hope that connectivity to the subway, LIRR stations, and the future Interborough Express will be prioritized. A more connected and integrated transit system will be good for both riders and the MTA. We heard about first and last mile options to the commuter rails at Monday’s Joint Committee meeting, and hope that buses can fill some of those gaps to stations within the city.

Additionally, better bus connections to LaGuardia Airport should be prioritized regardless of the configuration of the Port Authority’s plans. We urge you to encourage your colleagues at the Port Authority to increase transit access to LaGuardia through an MTA-operated service, including rail options. This will help bring more riders onboard and keep their fares within the MTA system.

We appreciate the MTA’s commitment to prioritizing the needs of Queens riders who depend on the bus network every day and look forward to seeing the plan in action. We’re confident that a better and more equitable Queens bus network is well on its way.