**Congestion Pricing Will Help Transform Transit for Riders**

**Burt Strauss**

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Good morning, my name is Burt Strauss and I’m Vice Chair of the New York City Transit Riders Council and a member of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA. I’m also a regular subway and bus rider. I’m here today to speak in support of Congestion Pricing, which will vastly improve our transit, city, and region. As a representative for New York City Transit riders around the five boroughs, I know that Congestion Pricing will be transformative.

Long before the Environmental Assessment was released, we already knew that Congestion Pricing would drastically reduce traffic, improve air quality, and fund essential public transit upgrades. The document proves this point: with nearly 90% of people who enter the Central Business District getting there without driving, the benefits of Congestion Pricing far outweigh downsides for drivers. Low income and essential workers overwhelmingly ride public transit, and drivers are on average wealthier than transit riders. Those who still choose to drive will be thankful too, when their car trips speed up with fewer vehicles on the road.

All transit riders have experienced “delays due to signal malfunctions” and stations in need of repair, or inaccessible stations without elevators. It’s no secret that work must be done before we have the 21st century transit system New Yorkers deserve. The improvements riders desperately need are on the table in the current and future MTA Capital Plans, but they aren’t going to fund themselves. Congestion Pricing would bring in the money needed to build a more reliable, safe, and resilient transit system, something that our entire region and country will benefit from.

State of Good Repair projects like repairing century-old signals and fixing tracks; accessibility improvements that will bring elevators or escalators to almost all stations; and expansion projects like Phase 2 of the Second Avenue Subway and the Interborough Express are at risk of delay without Congestion Pricing funding. Our bus network—the slowest in the nation—will speed up when they no longer get stuck in traffic. These transit upgrades would help speed up the commutes of millions of riders around the region who make up the vast majority of people entering Manhattan.

The main purpose of these public hearings is to determine whether Congestion Pricing will meet its main goals: decreasing traffic congestion, improving air quality; and raising $1 billion annually for the MTA’s capital program. The Environmental Assessment proves that Congestion Pricing will do just that, while moving us towards a healthier, more pleasant, and all-around better city. As a longtime rider, I know that Congestion Pricing will vastly improve our transit system and help more people get back on trains and buses. Thank you.