



# PCAC

PERMANENT CITIZENS  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE MTA

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## **The Environmental Assessment Proves: Congestion Pricing Deserves a FONSI!** **Lisa Daglian** **August 31, 2022**

Greetings, I'm Lisa Daglian, Executive Director of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, PCAC. Created by the New York State Legislature, PCAC is housed within the MTA and is the official voice of riders of New York City subways, buses, the Staten Island Rail, Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North.

In that role, and on their behalf, I'm here to speak in strong support of Congestion Pricing — or more appropriately, “Decongestion” Pricing.

The Environmental Assessment shows that Congestion Pricing will reduce traffic, improve air quality and raise vital funds for critical transit projects. Therefore, Congestion Pricing meets the goals of the Environmental Assessment and should receive a Finding of No Significant Impact, or FONSI. That's what these hearings are supposed to be about. Yet, I have listened to the hundreds of people for countless hours, as have you, and heard so many ask to be exempt from the tolls, or have the lowest tolls possible. The irony is lost on them in that the more exemptions, the higher the tolls—and, the fact that Congestion Pricing has been law since 2019. I heard one speaker change his mind about supporting Congestion Pricing after listening to others' testimony. It's important to remember the millions of working-class transit riders who depend on Congestion Pricing happening swiftly, but who cannot afford to spend hours at these hearings, and that the loudest voices are often those resistant to positive change.

That's unfortunate because we should all support this program that will improve our quality of life, help protect us from the ravages of climate change, allow emergency vehicles to make better time — saving lives — speed up buses, and raise billions of dollars for transit infrastructure improvements like: accessibility projects — come on Mets-Willets Point!; new signals; station upgrades, including places like Valley Stream; new train cars and electric buses; and improving equity by bringing service to areas without it via new train lines, like the Interboro Express. These important projects will benefit of millions of riders and support our region's economy, including creating much-needed construction jobs, for decades to come.

More than 90% of people who travel to the Central Business District take transit, including people coming from New Jersey. You'd never know that to hear the testimony over the past few days. I lived for decades in Hells Kitchen and saw stand-still traffic tie ups every day and spent hours cleaning filthy soot from cars and trucks from my window sills. That went right into



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our lungs. Now I live above the Midtown Tunnel and watch a growing number of cars trying to cram into the tunnel at all hours of the day to get into Manhattan. I think to myself that there is no way they can all fit! And that's the truth — Manhattan from midtown to its southern tip is overburdened with cars and trucks spewing particulates, clogging streets and making passage dangerous for pedestrians. Congestion Pricing will help reduce the number of vehicles, improve air quality and bring in billions to make the improvements that transit riders need and deserve. With a resolute YES, the EA deserves a FONSI.