**MTA Joint MNR/ LIRR Committee Meeting Testimony**

**“Improving Ridership and Service, 7 Days a Week”**

**By Kara Gurl, Research & Comm Associate**

**September 19, 2022**

Good morning! I’m Kara Gurl, Research and Communications Associate at the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, PCAC.

Ridership is bouncing back across the system, making it clear that New York is coming back. As we’ve seen over the last few months, weekends continue to be strongest compared to pre-pandemic levels on Metro-North and the LIRR.

We have some ideas to help ridership levels hit new and higher heights. Existing MTA Away deals that give riders discounts on group excursions to activities like tours of Long Island Wine Country and the Hudson Valley help encourage people to ride transit for leisure as well as for work. Having more package deals heading towards the city would be valuable, especially if advertised on the railroads. It’s clear that people want to take transit, as multiple days with ridership over 100% of pre-pandemic levels have proven. The future of work has changed, but our suburban neighbors still have plenty of reasons to ride into the city for leisure. The five boroughs have much to offer riders even if they no longer commute five days a week, and the MTA can help communicate this to them. Showing riders that transit is better, safer, and more enjoyable than they expected will help keep them coming back and riding other modes the MTA has to offer.

The new TrainTime app is great and represents a future of more collaboration between the two railroads. Having one central app for Metro-North and LIRR ticketing and schedules all in one place makes trip planning easier and more convenient for riders, which is key to giving them a pleasant transit experience. But TrainTime would be even better if riders could use it to purchase an Atlantic Ticket, currently the best deal for tens of thousands of riders in Queens and Brooklyn, who depend on it for lower peak and off-peak trips and the weekly option with transfers to subways and buses. We hope to see this improvement—as well as full Freedom Ticket implementation—not far behind, another way to encourage more frequent ridership.

Above all, we know that frequent, reliable, service is the best way to remind people around the region that transit is their best option. That includes on weekends, both heading into and out of the city. Thank you.