**MTA Board Meeting Testimony**

**“MTA Board Taking Momentous Actions for A New Year”**

**By: Lisa Daglian, Executive Director, PCAC**

**December 21, 2022**

Good morning, I’m Lisa Daglian, Executive Director of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, PCAC.

Today is a big day, with important – even momentous – actions before you. It’s fitting you’re meeting on the first day of winter. Tomorrow, days begin to get longer and the darkness starts to abate. Of course, we still have to get through the coldest, harshest days of the season.

There are bright spots on the agenda. The $2.5 billion in projects include resiliency work, Park Avenue viaduct construction, and new elevator design-build-maintain contracts. Bundling these accessibility projects will help improve reliability so that all riders can get where they need to go. The number of projects and dollar figures are testament to the need for congestion pricing as a sustainable funding stream for the capital program.

You’ll also be voting on the Combo Ticket Pilot, which we support – hopefully it’s a precursor to full-fledged Freedom Ticket implementation, which would also include transfers to subways and buses. This pilot brings the start of LIRR service into Grand Central into view. What a great Christmas/Hannukah/Kwanzaa/Festivus gift for the region. We can’t wait!

Providing the service that riders need is the best way to get them back on board. That’s why we we’re very concerned to hear about “Service Adjustments.” Yes, increase weekend service, but don’t cut weekday service. We do notice tweaks to timetables that translate to more time on the platform.

Increasing service and frequency will cost money, clearly in short supply. How about $4 billion in 18-b back pay? The principal action you’ll take will be on the FY2023 budget. Deficits loom large. Paying down debt and finding efficiencies will help, but not enough. We’re at a transformative moment on how to fund the MTA. There is an urgent need for a new paradigm and new dedicated operating funding sources.  Our city, state and federal partners must provide direct, ongoing and sustainable financial support and increased subsidies. Looking at a new fiscal year could take some of the mystery out of future budgets and merits a closer look.

Transit is indispensable to life in metropolitan areas – to our city and region’s way of life and economy – and it must be funded like the essential service it is.