



PCAC

PERMANENT CITIZENS
ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE MTA

2 Broadway, 16th Floor, New York, NY 10004
(212) 878-7087 mail@pcac.org

GERARD BRINGMANN CHAIR · MTA BOARD MEMBER · LIRRCC CHAIR
ANDREW ALBERT NYCTRC CHAIR · MTA BOARD MEMBER
RANDOLPH GLUCKSMAN MNRCC CHAIR · MTA BOARD MEMBER

LISA DAGLIAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
LIAM BLANK ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
KARA GURL RESEARCH & COMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATE
JESSICA SPEZIO ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Rider Reps Reiterate Call for MTA to Strongly Recommend Masks Onboard PCAC Statement January 9, 2023

Weeks after initially calling for the MTA to strongly recommend mask-wearing onboard trains, buses, and Access-A-Ride vehicles, the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC) is reiterating its call for the transit agency to change its communications to tell riders that “Masks are Strongly Recommended.” Their request comes as new COVID variants continue to emerge, including [the highly transmissible XBB.1.5 Omicron subvariant](#) quickly picking up steam in the Northeast— and on the heels of the CDC’s recent call encouraging people to wear masks to reduce the spread of COVID, the flu, and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). New York City has also strengthened its language, with the Health Department urging residents to use high quality masks when indoors and in crowded outdoor settings, [including on transit](#). With experts predicting another wave as this new variant continues to spread, PCAC stressed that it’s time for the MTA to proactively, and strongly, encourage riders to wear a mask while onboard.

PCAC, whose members represent riders on the Long Island Rail Road, Metro-North and subways, buses and Staten Island Rail, noted that the spread of airborne diseases is more prevalent in winter months, when more of us are indoors. While not recommending reinstatement of a mask mandate, PCAC noted that an increasing number of members of the public at both December 2022 MTA Committee and Board meetings spoke about the importance of masks in protecting against diseases, particularly for the immunocompromised. While the MTA responded that the agency turns to the New York State Department of Health for public health guidance, PCAC argues that the MTA can make the decision to ramp up its language to strongly recommend masks in its communications materials—and encourage its state partners to do the same—as a proactive step to protect riders.

“This winter, let’s spread joy – not germs,” said **PCAC Executive Director Lisa Daglian**. “While we’re seeing more and more riders voluntarily wearing masks, we’re asking the MTA to ramp up its messaging to strongly recommend even more masking onboard. Though there was no evidence that transit was a major driver of the spread of COVID, wearing masks onboard is a small but important step we can take to protect ourselves and our loved ones from the triple threat we’re facing this winter. We hope that mask mandates are a thing of the past, but recognize that there are many riders who are particularly susceptible to airborne illnesses like COVID, the flu, RSV, and the common cold. Masking up isn’t just a courtesy, it’s an everyday protection we can take for a healthier city, state, and region.”