**MTA Committee Meeting**

 **“A More Connected Region Starts with Transit”**

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

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

The opening of Grand Central Madison last week is an exciting symbol of a new, more unified future for the MTA. With the LIRR, Metro-North, and subways under one roof, taking transit around the region and between the MTA’s many modes is finally feasible. This is a game changer for people living in Westchester who need to reach JFK airport, commuters who live on Long Island and work on the East Side, Bronx residents who can now access more jobs in Queens and Long Island, and so many more people around the region. With ticket options like the Combo Ticket and City Ticket—soon to be 24/7—a more connected region is in sight, but better integration and coordination between the MTA’s operating agencies would benefit riders even more. Freedom Ticket, with weekly tickets and optional transfers to subways and buses would be even better!

For new users of Grand Central and Grand Central Madison, the long journey between transfers can be confusing. Continuing to add larger, clearer, and more colorful symbols and signs would help improve wayfinding.

Another step towards a more connected region is better first- and last- mile options to help riders get to transit. We were pleased to submit recommendations for improving bike and pedestrian access to MTA facilities last year, many of which were included in the MTA’s Strategic Action Plan released this month. The ongoing bus redesigns are also key to getting riders where they need to go, and we thank you for taking community input into account when the draft plans may not get everything right on the first shot.

But better and more connected transit will only be a distant hope if the MTA can’t avoid its looming fiscal cliff with dedicated operating revenue, and continuing to build and maintain the system won’t happen without getting congestion pricing over the finish line. We desperately need the Governor and legislature to do their part to invest in transit and its millions of riders this budget cycle, and hope that Mayor Adams will too, in addition to putting pressure on the state to keep the transit system that moves New Yorkers moving. Thank you.