**MTA Board Meeting Testimony**

**“A New Year: 2023 Off to a Great Start: Let’s Make It Even Better for Riders With**

**Operating Funding and Congestion Pricing**”

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

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

Happy New Year! 2023 is off to a good start: the opening of Grand Central Madison – a/k/a East Side Access; Metro-North turned 40 (happy birthday!); on subways, higher ridership and lower crime, despite some high-profile incidents that continue to distress; a real interest in finding funding from elected leaders to head off the fiscal cliff; and promise on the congestion pricing front. All this, and it’s only January!

If the rest of the year measures up to the excitement of the first rides into Grand Central on the LIRR, we’ll be in good shape. Everyone should check out Grand Central Madison. It’s truly a marvel. You may get all your steps in getting from one end to the other, but will hardly notice as you pass the art, features and placeholders for “things to come.” We’re glad to see that LIRR riders are already making use of their new home, and in a handful of years, Metro-North riders will be able to do the same as their trains roll into Penn Station. That’s why it’s so critical that Congestion Pricing makes it over the goal line in the coming months.

But right now, there is much work to do. We’ll be listening with great interest when Governor Hochul delivers her Executive Budget address to learn more about what riders can expect as the starting point in negotiations for funding for our transit system. It’s critical that this essential service is treated as such, with dedicated revenue sources that will stave off exorbitant fare hikes, ensures we see more – not less – service, and keeps valuable workers in place. We remain committed to working with you and our elected leaders to see that dedicated funding makes it through the budget process.

With all happy tidings come the sad, and we are truly sad to see you leave, Craig. Craig Cipriano, you’ve seen decades of change at the MTA, and help bring about countless improvements to the bus and transit network. Riders owe you a debt of gratitude. Your iconic PSA advising those of us who are NOT a bus to stay out of bus lanes will forever be a favorite. As will you. Thank you for everything!