



PCAC

PERMANENT CITIZENS
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Fare Vote Brings Balanced Budget, 24/7 CityTicket, but (Temporary?) Step Backward on Intra-City Fare Discounts and Transfers **July 19, 2023**

For the first time in perhaps forever, the MTA will have a balanced budget through 2027. Thanks to Governor Hochul and the state legislature recognizing transit for the essential service it is, the budget doesn't rely on service cuts, exorbitant fare hikes or layoffs – the triad of unbearable pain that we are too used to facing year after year. The state funded most of the yawning gap, and the MTA is on the hook for finding efficiencies, as it should be. Riders are also being asked to contribute to the well-being of the transit system, with the resumption of planned biennial four-percent fare increases to keep the lights on and the trains moving. Clearly, no one likes to pay more, but supporting the system with smaller planned increases is critical to keeping it sound financially – and running reliable service to show for it.

To lessen the pain, we'll see service *increases* on subway lines where there has been off peak growth. Service will also grow for Southeast Queens Stations LIRR stations. Safe, frequent, affordable and reliable service is important to attracting people to transit, critical to our ongoing recovery, especially in advance of congestion pricing. Improvements funded with that money will make for a smoother ride.

The advent of 24/7 discounted travel on commuter rail within the city is finally here, with CityTicket peak and off-peak tickets. Part of the evolution of Atlantic Ticket is folding it into CityTicket to help reduce confusion and rationalize ticket options, and we support that. Both were born from PCAC and we love them dearly. But instead of the demise of the Atlantic Ticket weekly, which offers convenient travel, helps unify the MTA system and improves equity, we have formally requested a feasibility study, including a field study in 2024, to see how a weekly CityTicket with transfers to subways and buses could work—especially as we seek to increase ridership in advance of congestion pricing. We appreciate Board members' words of support and while we understand they were unable to separate the Atlantic Ticket weekly from the rest of the fare package, we're very hopefully that their passionate words will move the MTA to reconsider and undertake our recommended study of how it could work within CityTicket going forward. The elimination of the weekly Atlantic Ticket is a step backward, but hopefully only a temporary one as longer-term solutions for fare integration are explored with full OMNY rollout.

The fare hikes will still cause pain for some riders. We remain disappointed that eligibility for Fair Fares wasn't raised to 200-percent of the federal poverty level, but the modest increase to 120-percent and additional funding will help more people than before. To help even more, Fair Fares should be expanded to the LIRR and Metro-North, using funding already allocated, and unfortunately too often underused, in the city budget.

We support changing the OMNY weekly fare capping to a rolling seven-day period, along with the introduction of monthly fare capping.

We also support capping the cost of monthly ticket fares for commuters living the farthest from New York City at \$500, and support the 4.5% increase on weekly and monthly tickets that would still be at a lower cost than pre-pandemic because of the 10% discount implemented last year. That's true everywhere except for West-of-Hudson riders, who didn't get the discount, and we're glad they will be held harmless. Given their lack of transit options and opportunities, they deserve a break!