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Transit Advocates to MTA: Don't Just Install, OMNYvate!

PCAC Calls on MTA to Revolutionize Fare Payment and Discount Options for Riders with OMNY

New York, NY (10/6/2023): It's time to OMNYvate! With a vision of more seamless travel across Metro-North and the LIRR and painless transfers to subways and buses, a set of new recommendations would allow OMNY to make transit more equitable, affordable, unified, and integrated—living up to its name, *One Metro New York*. The Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC) released its new report entitled [*Integrate, Simplify, and OMNYvate: On Track for Better MTA Fare Payment*](#), laying out a roadmap for strategies the MTA can use before and after system-wide OMNY rollout to improve the rider experience from Montauk to Grand Central to Wassaucott and Penn Station to Co-op City, and beyond.

With the LIRR, Metro-North, and New York City Transit under one roof in Grand Central—and soon, Penn Station—PCAC stressed that upcoming OMNY rollout is a golden opportunity to rethink how fares and tickets work for riders around the region. Rather than installing OMNY on the LIRR and Metro-North as an extension of the complex and confusing ticketing system that exists today, PCAC called on the MTA to use a systemwide strategy that will take advantage of the technology and efficiencies that OMNY offers with discounts, transfer opportunities, and through-ticketing across modes.

Following the release of the Twenty-Year Needs Assessment earlier in the week, riders got an idea of what the region's transit system might look like in the next two decades. The recommendations in this report are meant to help improve the way they pay to get onto the trains and buses of the future.

The report also follows the MTA's recent fare changes, which were both heralded and reviled by riders. The expansion of CityTicket to include a \$7 peak ticket ushers in the first 24/7 discount for the commuter railroads within New York City; and the introduction of rolling weekly fare capping with OMNY is one of many possible creative fare options that riders can look forward to as OMNY expands. On the other hand, the loss of the Atlantic Ticket Pilot Program, which offered a weekly \$60 LIRR ticket valid for stations between Atlantic Terminal and Southeast Queens with transfers to subways and buses, has been decried by many; and the removal of the 20-trip LIRR and Metro-North ticket at a 20% discount that hybrid commuters used for their new normal is causing pain in many pockets. Opening the conversation about how to bring riders onboard, or back onboard, with attractive fare offerings in advance of congestion pricing must start now.

PCAC's report details common-sense recommendations that the MTA can implement both before and after OMNY rollout to the commuter railroads, including:

Pre-OMNY:

How the MTA can simplify fare payment leading up to OMNY rollout

PHASE 1: Communication

- Simplify Cross Honoring Policies between Railroads.
- Continue to Incorporate Live Scheduling Information from Partner Agencies into TrainTime and the New myMTA App.
- Use a Clearly Communicated Pricing Formula for Tickets on Both Railroads.

PHASE 2: Coordination

- Identify a Core Set of Ticket Types with Easy-to-Understand Conditions.
- Unify both Railroads' AM Peak Hours.
- Identify Zones on the Railroads where Fares are Similar and Bring Prices into Alignment.
- Allow for Cross-Honoring of Tickets between the LIRR and Metro-North.
- Offer an Intra-city Combo Ticket Fare.
- Expand and Enhance Fair Fares, Including to Commuter Rail.

Post-OMNY:

How OMNY implementation can consolidate the MTA's fare systems and improve user-friendliness

- Connect OMNY with TrainTime and the New myMTA App to Expand Transfer Options between MTA Modes Prior to Full Rollout.
- Create a Weekly CityTicket with Available Transfers to Subways and Buses.
- Adopt a Common Price-per-Mile and Unified Fare Zone System.
- Automatically Show and Charge Riders the Best Fare Available to them.

OMNY's Potential: How OMNY can be used to improve the MTA's fare collection

- Communicate and Work with Riders and the MTA Employees Directly Responsible for Collecting and Selling Tickets.
- Modernize and Improve Both Railroads' Ticket Collection, with Input from Stakeholders.

"Riding and paying for the train should be simple," said **Gerard Bringmann, Chair of the LIRR Commuter Council and PCAC and MTA Board member**. "As the MTA moves forward with OMNY on the commuter railroads, now is the perfect time to take advantage of the opportunity to create more fare options that work for riders in their

evolving commuting patterns. Expanding more flexible ticket types with a 10-trip ticket at a 15% discount to replace the loss of the 20-trip is key to responding to the needs of commuters in a post-COVID world. Our recommendations will help make sure that riders can travel easily between all of the modes the MTA has to offer.”

“Expanding OMNY and improving information sharing between regional transit operators will be critical for improving the experience of West-of-Hudson riders like myself,” said **Randy Glucksman, Chair of the Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council and MTA Board member**. “OMNY expansion to Metro-North and the LIRR has the potential to create a more seamless trip, while encouraging more trips between the two, and we hope that the MTA will consider these recommendations and embark on a new era of fare payment.”

“As a strong advocate of better integration between the commuter railroads and New York City Transit, I’m thrilled about the potential of OMNY to expand transit options for riders,” said **Andrew Albert, Chair of the NYC Transit Riders Council and MTA Board member**. “We saw through the success of the Atlantic Ticket Pilot Program and newly expanded CityTicket that offering creative fare discounts is critical to expanding transit access, particularly for those living farther from subways. Taking advantage of this opportunity to create a weekly CityTicket with transfers to subways and buses; creating a lower-cost Combo Ticket for those traveling within the city; and ensuring that riders are always charged the best fare available to them will prove that transit is the best way to move around the region.”

“OMNY offers so many possibilities for reimagining the fare system on the LIRR and Metro-North. As we get closer to seeing it become a reality throughout the system, it makes sense to see how it can be used to once again provide the discounts that riders grew to love and rely upon but in a new form, a weekly CityTicket. Starting the conversation now about how to create a real through-ticketing system for seamless travel as OMNY implementation is scheduled for the commuter railroads is key to getting it right. We look forward to working with the MTA, elected officials and other stakeholders to see our recommendations come to fruition for the benefit of riders across the network,” said **Lisa Daglian, Executive Director of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC)**.

State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal said: "30 years after the MetroCard was introduced, it is time to bring our subway payment system into the 21st century. OMNY's rollout is an opportunity to finally simplify our fare system and integrate our seemingly disparate railways and transit systems. As we continue to work towards increasing ridership across the system, we must prioritize making it as easy as possible for passengers to get on board and pay their fare. I want to thank PCAC for their leadership and representing the needs of our riding public."

NY State Senator John Liu stated, "The eventual expansion of OMNY will be a refreshing change of pace away from our outdated fare collection system that will bring technology and innovation into New York's public transit. Simplifying and integrating this

new infrastructure on Metro-North and LIRR are essential steps to making this rollout successful, and I thank PCAC for putting forth thoughtful solutions on how to connect riders to this technology across our transit network."

"The PCAC report thoroughly analyzes the challenges and opportunities encountered by the Long Island Rail Road and the fare payment system as we anticipate the OMNY expansion across the region. Now is the ideal time to rethink how fares and tickets work on the commuter railroads and unify the MTA network. Simplifying our fare system isn't just about saving money; it's about making public transportation more accessible and efficient for all New Yorkers," stated **Assemblywoman Michaele C. Solages**. "I applaud the PCAC's dedication to improving the fare payment system and the commitment to enhancing the rider experience. As we progress, I am committed to working collaboratively with the PCAC, MTA, and fellow stakeholders to transform these recommendations into actionable initiatives that benefit all commuters."

"As a longtime advocate for transit equity, I'm pleased to see that the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC) has proposed several recommendations in its new report that will help streamline the full rollout of OMNY for riders across the city and state. I represent a diverse, working class community in Queens, and these proposals, particularly to expand Fare Fares to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, expand OMNY to Citi Bike and NYC Ferry, and creating a weekly CityTicket with transfers to subways and buses, would have tremendous positive impacts on my constituents' daily lives. Thank you to PCAC for all of its hard work, and I look forward to seeing how the MTA will continue to OMNYvate," said **Assemblymember Jessica González-Rojas**.

"Millions of New Yorkers rely on our mass transit system to get around our city and state each day, with many utilizing two or more methods of transportation. It is nonsensical to have different ticketing systems, pricing tiers, fare collection processes and discount programs, and making mass transit more easily navigable is critical for the vitality of our region," said **Queens Borough President Donovan Richards Jr.** "For the benefit of every New Yorker who rides the bus, subway or railroad, we must make mass transit as simple and efficient as possible. I look forward to working with the PCAC, the MTA and all our partners to put forth reasonable solutions in service of that mission."

"Millions of New Yorkers rely on our public transportation system to get to their destination and an OMNY expansion will only make commuting easier and more efficient," said **Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson**. "I want to thank PCAC for their advocacy to improve our transit infrastructure and commitment to ensuring riders across our city have access to our transportation system."

"Effective OMNY expansion can streamline fare payment and improve accessibility across the region's transit system," said **NYC Council Majority Whip Selvena N. Brooks-Powers, Chair of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure**. "I note the importance of accessibility and affordability in transit desert communities like in Southeast Queens, whose residents often rely on commuter rail or buses to connect to

the City's core transit infrastructure. I am grateful for the PCAC's advocacy on behalf of riders, and I look forward to working toward OMNY expansion that benefits New Yorkers in every borough."

"It has been nearly 40 years since both the Long Island Rail Road and Metro North Rail have been a part of the MTA. Together with the subways they move millions across the region. The release of *Integrate, Simplify, and OMNYvate: On Track for Better MTA Fare Payment* creates an exciting new map to take us into the next 40 years of regional travel," said **Felicia Park-Rogers, Director of Regional Infrastructure Projects for Tri-State Transportation Campaign**. "Commuters, visitors, and transit riders across New York, Connecticut, and New Jersey will dramatically benefit from a seamless, unified fare payment system with easy transfers between trains, subways, and buses and a rational and coordinated approach to fares. The concrete and practical solutions laid out in this report will make the hassles riders today take for granted nothing but a distant memory. These recommendations have the power and specificity to unleash the potential of OMNY. If implemented they will allow riders to take full use of our vast regional transit system, and to do it seamlessly and more affordably. Instead of scratching their heads in confusion at the station, riders will finally be able to say 'that was easy.'"

"Confusing fare structures are a barrier to access for many people in the region. These are sensible proposals to ensure equity by making sure that people get the best fare available to them. This is especially important for disabled and older passengers who may be able to expand their accessible travel options through inner city rail. I commend the PCAC on this thorough assessment of opportunities for improvement in the next phase of OMNY," said **Jessica Murray, Chairperson, MTA Advisory Committee Transit Accessibility**.

"Riders are ready to make the most of OMNY and we need our leaders to catch up," said **Riders Alliance Deputy Director Caitlin Pearce**. "MTA and City officials need to work together to make the most of the new fare payment system, starting with equitable access for people with fare discounts and neighborhoods far from the subway. Thanks to our PCAC colleagues for this comprehensive effort to lead us into a more seamless future where riding transit is second nature throughout the region."

"Affordable and reliable public transit is key to shifting commuters out of personal vehicles and onto trains and buses," said **Elizabeth Adams, Deputy Executive Director at Transportation Alternatives**. "The rollout of OMNY to Metro North and LIRR presents a unique opportunity to rethink and streamline MTA fare collection. The recommendations in this report are especially critical as our city prepares for more suburban transit commuters with the onset of congestion pricing, and we hope to see the MTA implement them shortly."