**MTA Capital Program Committee Meeting Testimony**

**Congestion Pricing Is Needed For Safety Improvements**

**November 29, 2023**

Good afternoon. I’m Jack Connors, Research and Communications Associate at the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, PCAC.

With the city on edge due to conflicts far beyond the MTA service territory and hate crimes on the rise, it’s more important than ever that riders feel safe on the system. A host of shoving episodes has grabbed headlines in recent weeks, leading straphangers to cringe fearfully against poles while they wait on platforms – or some to forgo the system altogether. That’s unacceptable.

We understand that the constraints imposed by our legacy system make it impossible to install platform screen doors at many stations. That said, there are actionable alternatives outlined in the Track Trespassing Task Force that we hope to see implemented. This includes laser intrusion detection systems that send automatic alerts whenever a person or object above a certain size enters the track, platform blue lights shown to reduce suicide, and where feasible, basic guardrails on platforms that a give passengers added peace of mind.

Most of all, the public deserves to know the preventative work the MTA is doing to check subway shoving, and service disruptions that come with track intrusions. We’re happy to see the estimated cost of the platform screen door pilot reduced by $8 million, but the start date has been pushed from this past August to sometime in 2024. This is one case where being transparent with riders and publicizing progress towards our shared goal of zero shoving incidents and zero suicides can only increase confidence.

Riders are depending on a lot of projects in this month’s Committee Book. From untangling Jamacia to achieving 97% accessibility on LIRR to replacing the Park Avenue Viaduct: all of it hinges on implementing Congestion Pricing. We are eagerly awaiting the TMRB recommendations and next week’s Board vote, and urge the MTA to be more vocal about what failing to implement congestion pricing will mean for its capital program and the transit system we all rely upon. Once again, the riding public deserves to hear it like it is; New Jersey’s regressive, misguided lawsuit constitutes a fundamental threat to the betterment of our region’s transit, not to mention public health.

Thank you.