



# PCAC

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## Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA Public Comment in Support of MTA's North Shore BRT Draft Environmental Impact Statement

**November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit public comment regarding the North Shore Bus Rapid Transit Draft Environmental Impact Statement in support of this critical project that will improve transit access.

As rider representatives and trusted advisors to the MTA, the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC) regularly researches issues, recommends viable solutions, and advocates on behalf of the region's MTA riders, including those who use the Staten Island Railway and buses that serve Staten Island.

Thousands of New Yorkers depend on bus connections to and from ferries on the North Shore to get around the borough, whether they live or work on Staten Island. This includes many who make the long commute from the St. George Ferry Terminal to JFK8, the Amazon Fulfillment Center. With a higher population density and a lower rate of car-ownership than the borough overall, Staten Island's North Shore is perhaps the most transit-dependent part of the borough. Despite this, the North Shore has for decades been drastically underserved by MTA service. The existing deficits on the North Shore's bus routes (the S40/S90, S44/S94, S46/S96, and S48/S98) are well known: severe overcrowding during peak commute periods; a lack of convenient transfers to other modes; and most bus trips running five or more minutes late.

The status quo is simply unacceptable, and North Shore Bus Rapid Transit would help ensure that more New Yorkers can depend on transit on Staten Island. In moving forward with this project, the MTA would recognize this and right the wrong created by the closure of the North Shore Branch in 1953— making good on its promise to better serve Equity Areas. The North Shore BRT would also help advance economic development activity on Staten Island, including the New York City Economic Development Corporation's "Staten Island North Shore Action Plan."

Between now and the target build date of 2035, we hope the MTA will study other projects that will complement this effort and deliver long-sought transit connections between Staten Island and New Jersey's Hudson, Essex, and Union Counties, as well as New York City. To do so, we recommend the MTA:

- Improve existing Staten Island Railway service and stations, including installing loudspeakers at stations to provide real-time updates and information.
- Study the feasibility of extending the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail to the eventual Elm Park/Morningside Road North Shore BRT stop using the Bayonne Bridge, which was constructed with the possibility of adding rail in mind. This could be funded and operated by the Port Authority, the bi-state agency charged with advancing projects that better connect and serve New York and New Jersey.
- Work with the Port Authority to provide bus service between West Shore Plaza and Newark Liberty International Airport.
- Partner with local stakeholders to advance the goals outlined in the Staten Island North Shore Action Plan: enhancing station-adjacent land use and ensuring Staten Islanders can access housing near North Shore BRT stops.
- Ensure that North Shore BRT service is provided 24/7, 365 days a year.
- Coordinate bus schedules along the North Shore BRT alignment to ensure timed connections to the Staten Island Ferry, Staten Island Railway and local bus routes, as described on page 2-33.
- Improve existing Express Bus service to get residents from other parts of Staten Island into and out of Manhattan more easily and reliably, to ensure that residents have viable transit options for reaching the Central Business District, particularly as Congestion Pricing begins.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit public comment. We look forward to seeing this project come to life and improve access to opportunities for residents of Staten Island and beyond.