**MTA Board Meeting Testimony**

**Riders to MTA Board: Let’s Move Congestion Pricing Forward!**

**December 6, 2023**

Good afternoon. I’m Kara Gurl, Planning and Advocacy Manager at the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC).

The topic of the day is congestion pricing, and the billions in critical funding it will bring in for transit projects. After years of public input, the lengthy federal environmental review process, and months of TMRB deliberations, the ball is officially back in the MTA Board’s court.

It’s not every day that you get to vote for a once-in-a-generation policy that can reduce congestion, improve the environment and air quality, and invest in the transit system of the future. But today, MTA Board members, you have the opportunity to do just that, by supporting these TMRB recommendations. Riders are counting on you, Board members, to get congestion pricing over the finish line.

The November Financial Plan that came out last week showed the good news and the risks to the future. Riders no longer need to look in horror at red ink and financial deficits that could have meant major service cuts or drastic fare hikes. Thanks to the Governor and state legislature, we’re experiencing service improvements and a fiscally sound MTA for years to come, particularly as ridership continues to return.

But the picture isn’t all rosy: we need congestion pricing in place and in action, or we risk financial impacts across the transit system. Of course, congestion pricing is—and should be—lockboxed for capital investments like signal upgrades, state of good repair work, accessibility improvements, and expansion projects like the Interborough Express. But every lawsuit and delay creates risks to capital project funding, which in turn leads to an increase in debt and more pressure on the operating budget. Riders’ worst-case scenarios—service cuts, drastic fare hikes, and falling farther away from a state of good repair—become very real possibilities if we can’t implement congestion pricing sooner rather than later.

The investment riders need is finally in sight. None of us can afford to wait any longer for cleaner air, less congestion, and funding for transit. Please, vote to adopt the TMRB’s sensible and equitable recommendations for the first congestion pricing program in the nation—riders of today and tomorrow will thank you.