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Governor Hochul's State of the State Address: Tracks to the Future for Our Region January 9, 2024

Governor Hochul's State of the State again demonstrates her commitment to advancing equity across New York, increasing affordability and access to opportunity for all. After a transformative 2023 for the MTA — thanks to the Governor and State Legislature's critical investments in transit — we're optimistic that 2024 will bring even more improvements for transit riders.

As we look forward to the release of the Executive Budget next Tuesday, the core principles and initiatives outlined in the Governor's State of the State Address provide a strong foundation from which we can build a safer, greener, healthier, more resilient New York.

Making Transit More Affordable

- Affordability is a key priority for the Governor, and for all New Yorkers. That's why it's critical to expand fare discounts and options around the MTA system. As we did on the Blue Ribbon Panel on Payment Evasion, we support the proposal to forgive a rider's first fare evasion summons if they enroll in Fair Fares. But that must also carry onto the commuter rails to expand this transit access for all New Yorkers. That's why we're advocating for city-funded expansion of Fair Fares to the LIRR and Metro-North within New York City — so that low-income New Yorkers can afford to ride on the rail infrastructure that runs through their backyards.
- Further expanding CityTicket to include a weekly option with transfers to subways and buses will further integrate our transit network. And with the Governor's prioritization of expanding access to opportunity for people with disabilities, we're calling for the senior and disabled 50% fare discount to be extended to the morning peak—currently the only time when this discount does not apply. It's time to send a clear message that New York values these groups' contributions to the workforce and their communities.

Expanding and Investing in Transit

- Governor Hochul's steadfast support for our region's transit infrastructure builds bridges for all New Yorkers by continuing on the right track for riders. Investing in transformative expansion projects like the Interborough Express and extending

the Second Avenue Subway west to Broadway will help increase transit access for New Yorkers and fulfill promises decades in the making. We also look forward to seeing a timeline for expanding the Second Avenue Subway south as Phase 3 expansion planning continues. Thanks to Governor Hochul's support for congestion pricing, funding for capital projects like these is finally in sight.

Safer Transit and Streets

- The Governor's announcement of an additional \$35 million for transit safety and investment in mental health services will also help ensure that all riders feel comfortable on transit, while expanding equitable solutions for reducing payment evasion will help ensure that the MTA has the funding to get riders where they need to go. Getting Sammy's Law over the finish line will help improve pedestrian safety around New York City, including for the majority of transit riders who walk to and from buses and trains.

Sustainability and Resiliency

- As we confront a growing climate crisis, investing in sustainability and resiliency around the state has never been more critical. We applaud the Governor's efforts to study ways to reduce emissions from the transportation sector. We hope that the State's Clean Transportation Standard Study will help even more New Yorkers get out of cars and onto transit. A supercharged Green Resiliency Grant program can help ensure that the benefits of green infrastructure extend beyond the subway entrance. We've also seen over the past few years how important it is to improve the resiliency of our transit infrastructure in the face of extreme weather, and the Governor's proposals to strengthen disaster response, creating a comprehensive adaptation and resilience plan, and giving the public tools to understand and act on climate risk will help protect riders from flooding and weather-related delays.

The Transit-Housing Connection

- No conversation surrounding affordability and sustainability is complete without discussing perhaps the most preeminent issue facing riders — and so many New Yorkers: the housing crisis. Governor Hochul's push to better realize the transit-housing connection in both the state's planning and environmental review processes and the construction of 15,000 units of housing on state-owned land near commuter rail stations will help increase housing production, moving New York closer to achieving the 800,000 units required to end a crisis decades in the making, while also helping get more riders onboard transit.

We thank Governor Hochul for her tireless work to support transit riders around the MTA region. We're confident that this year will bring a more affordable, resilient, and expansive transit system for the millions of riders who depend on it every day.