



PCAC

PERMANENT CITIZENS
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Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC) Lisa Daglian, Executive Director Testimony for the Joint Legislative Hearing on Transportation January 24, 2024

Good afternoon, I'm Lisa Daglian, Executive Director of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, PCAC. Created by the legislature in 1981 to represent riders on the MTA's Long Island Rail Road, Metro-North Railroad and New York City's subways, buses and Staten Island Railway, our role is to advocate on behalf of riders, and advise the MTA on operational performance and capital projects through reports and policy recommendations. Thank you for holding this hearing today and for all you do to improve transit for millions of New Yorkers.

Riders can't thank you enough for the rider-centric work you did last year to fully fund the MTA's operating budget over the next few years. While most other transit agencies in the country are facing service cuts because of budget shortfalls and fiscal cliffs precipitated by low post-pandemic ridership and revenue, the MTA was able to add subway service— almost entirely thanks to the transformative budget you passed last year that funded transit like the essential service it is. We're pleased that the Governor continues to likewise show her understanding of the vital importance of transit to riders and as an economic driver to the region by proposing an 11.5-percent increase to the MTA's state funding, including funds sent without appropriation; we urge you to support this in your One-House budgets.

But there is still work to be done to make transit more reliable, safe, equitable and affordable for riders. We're excited to work with you this budget season to advance more fare discounts and options so that transit is not cost prohibitive for any rider, opening up opportunity for education, jobs, leisure travel, entertainment, and all that the region has to offer.

Making Transit More Affordable

- Affordability is a key priority 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 (**TED Section B**). 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.
- We're calling for an expansion of CityTicket to include a weekly option with transfers to subways and buses, which will further integrate our transit network and fill gaps in demand from the elimination of Atlantic Ticket Weekly during last year's fare changes. We believe the Outer Borough Transit Account is well-suited to fund this expansion and have requested that the MTA initiate a field study in 2024 to determine/confirm its feasibility.
- We're also calling for the senior and disabled/Medicare 50% fare discount to be extended to the morning peak on the LIRR and Metro-North—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

- We strongly support Governor Hochul's proposal to invest in transformative expansion projects like the Interborough Express and extending the Second Avenue Subway west to Broadway. These projects 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.
- We support **TED section A**, extending the MTA's Tax Increment Financing authority. This will help the MTA fund upcoming capital projects, critical as the next capital program is in development.

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 or otherwise use the city's streets to get to and from buses and trains (**TED Section I**).

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 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. We support the Governor's efforts 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, which will help increase housing production and move 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. With the changes

she has proposed in her Executive Budget, we hope the third time is a charm to seeing how “carrots” work where “sticks” clearly did not.

Rider Representation

- We strongly support the Rider Representation Act, [S.20/A.923](#) (Gounardes/Dinowitz), which would provide the representatives of the New York City Transit Riders Council, Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council, and Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council on the MTA board with voting membership along with a new voting board member recommended by the Mayor’s Office of People with Disabilities in consultation with disability advocates. Currently, riders have a voice on the MTA Board— but they don’t have a vote. It’s time to change that this year by ensuring that riders have official voting seats on the board.

Congestion Pricing

- Congestion pricing remains one of the most critical policies that will help bring New Yorkers faster transit, cleaner air, and less traffic. We cannot overstate the importance of making congestion pricing a reality as soon as possible. Every delay and baseless lawsuit causes delays to critical repairs and upgrades around our transit system, months and months of lost productivity for our businesses because of traffic, and more health effects for people exposed to fumes and poor air quality from cars within the central business district. Without congestion pricing, projects in each of your districts that each of your constituents depend on are at risk.
- The vast majority of people from across New York — and even New Jersey — take transit into Manhattan, and they support congestion pricing. We urge you to voice support for the program in its current form, which includes TMRB-recommended discounts for low-income drivers, a drastic overnight discount, much lower rider-paid per-trip fees for for-hire vehicles, and toll credits on crossings that enter directly into the congestion zone. Congestion pricing will improve our city, state, and region for generations to come.
- We support **TED parts C and D**, which will help reduce toll evasion and fraud. As congestion pricing begins, it’s critical that all drivers pay their toll— this will help keep costs lower for everyone else. It will also help keep our streets safer from drivers who commit other crimes.

Thank you for holding this hearing and prioritizing the needs of riders again this budget season.