**Expanding Fare Discounts Means Expanding Access to the LIRR and Metro-North**

**Testimony to the Joint Committee on the LIRR and Metro-North**

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

This year, PCAC has been advocating for more fare discounts and deals for LIRR and Metro-North riders. We were thrilled to see the FARES Act in the Senate’s One-House Budget Proposal, which includes three key proposals to make the commuter railroads more affordable for riders:

* **First, extending the half-fare Senior and Disability discount to the morning peak**—the only time when this crucial discount currently does not apply.
* **Second, expanding Fair Fares to the LIRR and Metro-North within New York City, and improving outreach.** Fair Fares has helped riders on subways and buses afford the fare, and it’s time for that to apply to the commuter railroads that run through low-income riders’ backyards around the boroughs. We’ve asked the city to fund this.
* **Third, creating a Weekly CityTicket with transfers to subways and buses.** Adding a transfer option to subways and buses is a critical step towards a more integrated, affordable transit system, where riders can use subways, buses, and the commuter railroads on one CityTicket. The OBTA should be used to pay for this given the purpose of this account is to improve transit outside of Manhattan, not fund toll discounts.

We also support the Assembly One-House Budget proposal to raise the eligibility criteria for Fair Fares to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. Fair Fares is such an important program for low-income New Yorkers, but the income threshold is currently far too low for so many riders who struggle to pay the fare. Coupled with expansion to the LIRR and Metro-North within NYC, so many more riders would be able to benefit from more reliable, frequent, and affordable transit!

We hope to see all of these proposals in the enacted state budget this year.

No rider should be priced out of the fastest transit available to them. We need discounts that will make the LIRR and Metro-North more accessible to all riders. Thank you.