**MTA New York City Transit Committee Testimony- Improving Service and Safety- and Congestion Pricing- Gets Riders Onboard!**

**March 25, 2024**

Good morning, I am Lisa Daglian, Executive Director of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, PCAC.

It is terrific to see new – albeit familiar – faces around the table. Welcome! You’ve come on board at a critical time for riders across the region. A historic vote is planned for Wednesday, which will bring us another step closer to implementing Congestion Pricing. It’s a day we’ve been waiting for since the law was passed in 2019.

Don’t let the grumblers get to you – they’re the same people who will complain loudest if the system starts to decay and reliability declines. Instead, this is an opportunity to look forward to all the ways to invest in riders.

That means ensuring that service and frequency continue to improve. We are so glad that our Albany electeds continue to focus on the needs of transit and the millions of riders who rely on it. It means moving forward with the bus redesigns, and with pursuing more bus lanes and busways so that we finally see speeds on these engines of equity that are faster than a chicken. It also means continuing to focus on safety in the system — both the reality and perception, for both riders and transit workers.

Addressing the slate of needs for the mentally ill through the SCOUT program, with increased supportive services and enforcement abilities, should get more people in serious need of help the care they need before they harm themselves or others. Having NYPD leadership ride trains to experience firsthand what straphangers do may better help direct resources. Collaboration among levels of law enforcement and the MTA will help identify recidivists across boroughs. And ensuring that there are tough consequences for anyone who harms a transit worker — and adding cameras more quickly to catch them — will help protect those who we rely on every day.

Congestion pricing will help get more people on board, some who may not have ridden since COVID. To them, we say welcome back! The more riders, the better for all of us. The region’s future depends on a strong transit system. Making sure all the pieces are in place starts in this room.