**Joint Committee Testimony**

**Progress Made, But More Work to Do on Fare Discounts**

**April 29, 2024**

Good morning! I’m Jack Connors, Research and Communications Associate at the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC). First, happy 190th birthday to the LIRR!

This legislative session, PCAC advocated for a slew of fare discounts for riders on the LIRR and Metro-North. Riders around the system, but particularly on the commuter railroads, shared in the most recent Customers Count survey that creative fare discounts and deals rank at the top of the list of improvements that would get them to ride transit more.

While we’re disappointed that our proposals — creating a weekly CityTicket with transfers to subways and buses, expanding Fair Fares to the commuter rails within NYC, and extending the senior/disabled/Medicare discount to the AM peak — did not end up in the enacted budget, we’re thrilled that you’ll be taking action on 10% discounts for monthly tickets for LIRR and Metro-North riders within New York City in advance of Congestion Pricing. It’s what the OBTA was created for as part of the original 2019 legislation.

We’re not giving up on the other discounts, which will increase equitable access to affordable transit for more New Yorkers, and look forward to working with the MTA, the city and elected leaders across both to make them a reality for riders. The sad irony is that the Rider Reps won’t be able to vote on the discounts. Hopefully, one day that will change too!

In our many conversations about fares over the last few years, we’ve received the same response over and over again when explaining that senior, disabled, and Medicare-eligible riders cannot currently use their discount during the morning peak: “How does that make any sense?”

We agree—it doesn’t make sense! We’re hoping to work together with the MTA Board and leadership to close this legacy gap in the fare structure.

We’re also looking forward to working with the City Council to expand Fair Fares to the LIRR and Metro-North within New York City and raise the eligibility threshold to 200% of the federal poverty level.

There’s still work to be done to make sure that all riders can afford the fastest transit available to them, and we’re thankful for the strides that have been made this budget season. Thank you.