**NYC Transit Committee Testimony**

**Improving Affordability by Expanding Fair Fares (Not by Canceling Transit Improvements)**

**June 24th, 2024**

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

We’re excited to welcome NYC Transit Interim President Demetrius Critchlow and look forward to working together on behalf of riders.

We’re deeply disappointed in Governor Hochul’s decision to “indefinitely pause” Congestion Pricing. Riders around the region will suffer because of this mistake, but subway and bus riders will bear the brunt of the impacts. With 80% of the revenue slated to go towards transit projects, there will now be a major gap in funding for things like upgraded signals and accessibility projects.

Congestion pricing would also speed up buses by getting cars and trucks off the streets and out of bus lanes, complementing Automated Camera Enforcement. Even with some kind of last resort funding for the MTA, riders on buses and Access-A-Ride won’t see speed improvements like they would have with Congestion Pricing.

All of this pain for riders is coming in the name of “affordability” for the tiny minority who drive into Manhattan.

We agree that affordability should be a priority, which is why we’re working to expand Fair Fares in this year’s City budget. PCAC released a report earlier this month showing that over 650,000 more New Yorkers from every neighborhood across the city would be newly eligible for Fair Fares if the eligibility threshold was raised to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, up from the current 120%. We found a strong correlation between fare evasion summonses and where residents would be newly eligible for Fair Fares. Also that New York’s Fair Fares has the most restrictive income requirements, despite having the highest cost of living and the highest poverty rates of major cities with comparable programs.

That’s how you *actually* improve equity and affordability: by making the transit system that low-income and working-class New Yorkers depend on more accessible, so no one has to choose between a meal or a swipe.

We’re working closely with the Community Service Society, Riders Alliance, and City Council to get Fair Fares expansion over the finish line this year—riders just need Mayor Adams to agree. Thank you.