**MTA Board Meeting Testimony - Riders Ring in the New Year with Congestion Pricing, a New Queens Bus Network, and Hopes for a Fully Funded Capital Plan**

**January 29, 2025**

Happy Lunar New Year! I’m Brian Fritsch, Associate Director for the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, PCAC.

We hope the Year of the Snake brings us all good fortune and wisdom. We got some of that recently with the long-awaited start of congestion pricing and applaud Governor Hochul for moving it forward. We’re thrilled to see the program working as intended by reducing congestion for drivers, emergency vehicles and buses; making our streets safer and reducing crashes; improving air quality; and raising critical funds for essential transit infrastructure across the region.

But we also received some alarming news when the Legislature rejected the 2025-29 Capital Plan. This leaves riders hanging in limbo while Albany puts its collective head together to come up with a solution for fully funding the Plan.

Luckily, they don’t have to think too hard: PCAC will soon release a report which details nearly two dozen funding options for Albany to pick from, although some sources are clearly more equitable than others.

Rooted in the 20-year needs assessment, the Capital Plan barely keeps up with construction inflation and is made up almost entirely made of critical State-of-Good-Repair, resiliency, and accessibility projects—as well as the transformative IBX. These projects can’t wait.

The Plan will also generate an estimated $106 billion of statewide economic output over five years, supporting 72,700 jobs. We need a fully funded Capital Plan to build a better region and economy now. Nothing is cheaper the longer you wait.

I’ll end by applauding the tremendous amount of work and outreach that has gone into the Queens Bus Network Redesign, which has been five years in the making. Some people don’t want to see any changes, but as the borough has grown, it’s critical that the bus system evolves to make buses faster, safer, more reliable, and more frequent. We are hopeful that you will continue to adapt and expand service as field testing turns into actual experience and urge the board to support the plan. Thank you!