**Joint LIRR/ MNR Committee Meeting Testimony**

**New Year Brings New Opportunities for Metro-North and LIRR Riders**

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

Happy New Year and happy congestion pricing! With one month down, it’s working: reducing congestion for drivers, emergency vehicles and buses; improving air quality; and raising critical funds for essential transit infrastructure across the region. It’s even surviving all the spaghetti being thrown against the wall to try and stop it. Contracts are moving ahead and jobs are being created, benefitting riders and drivers.

The next Capital Plan will bring more substantial improvements to the system, with $6 billion each earmarked for the LIRR and Metro-North and the riders who rely on them. We just need Albany to unjam the dam that will allow contracts to be let and projects flow. We trust the Governor and Legislature to work collegially to get the 25-29 Plan over the finish line intact, and will prioritize that in our work too.

We know that *they* know the economic power of the Plan – but in case they don’t, the Partnership’s new report on the [Economic Impacts of the MTA’s 25-29 Capital Plan](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fpfnyc.org%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2025%2F01%2FEconomic-Impacts-of-the-MTAs-2025-2029-Capital-Plan.pdf&data=05%7C02%7Cldaglian%40mtahq.org%7Cc7f5bb1f00954d67084d08dd3ca7ee48%7C79c07380cc9841bd806b0ae925588f66%7C0%7C0%7C638733414712327114%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=7jIKqdG3LMZcRiwVmgind8bXOZ6zmjOlvzrZyC9ae7A%3D&reserved=0) spells it out clearly: the entire state, including Long Island and the Hudson Valley, will reap substantial direct and indirect benefits.

A more reliable system draws people to it and keeps them coming back for more. Metro-North’s OTP improvements translated into ridership growth, and we’ve seen that on the LIRR too. The Winter Weekend Discounts are great draws on both railroads, and on both sides of the river. We’re looking forward to more improvements for West-of-Hudson riders announced by the Governor as well. We’d like to see the MTA Away Tours on the LIRR return full strength in 2025 to entice more people onboard.

The best improvements would be fare incentives to get more people riding more affordably: allowing seniors and disabled riders to use their discounts in the AM peak; a weekly CityTicket with transfers to transit; a “mid-kid” expanded Family Fare for 12-17 year-olds; and Fair Fares on the railroads in the city, at 200% of the FPL.

We look forward to working with you on behalf of riders for an even more productive 2025!