**Good News for Riders on Budget, Tough Times Ahead with East River Tunnel Work Unless Changes Are Made**

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

On Monday, we left Committee Meetings anxiously awaiting word on the state budget and the fate of the 2025-29 Capital Program. We didn’t have to wait long. While short on details, we were thrilled with the framework laid out by Governor Hochul. It’s clear Albany understands the importance of a modern and well-maintained transit system to the millions of us who rely on it every day. A fully-funded Capital Plan will ensure a safe, reliable system that is kept in a state of good repair and brought into the 21st century with new fare arrays, train cars and electric buses; accessibility at dozens more stations; the IBX; and upgraded signals and power systems.

The MTA is on the hook for $3 billion in funding for the Plan. It won’t be easy, but you’ve spent the better part of the past year and change finding savings from efficiencies and innovations. A lot of eyes will be on you to see how you get it done without affecting reliability or frequency – ours included. We’ll have some ideas as well; it’s part of our mandate as the official voice of riders.

It's in that context that we raise our concerns about the upcoming East River Tunnel work. Shutting down a tube at a time is a recipe for disaster under any circumstance, but trusting *this* Amtrak to prioritize *our* riders is potential for unmitigated disaster and suffering that makes the summer of hell look like a warm spring day. Our concerns are rooted in recent history: lackluster performance leading to delays in projects from East Side Access to Third Track to Harold Interlocking to the catenaries between NY and NJ Penns, to name a few. The work needs to be done, but it can be done better, faster and smarter with less effect on riders across the entire northeast.

We’re looking forward to more details about riders’ priorities in the final budget, including more equitable access to affordable transit that is key to our ongoing regional recovery and will help us weather the Washington storms. We look forward to continuing to work with you to get it done.