

NYS Legislative Agenda 2026

Representation, Transit Access & Affordability Packages for MTA Riders



PCAC

PERMANENT CITIZENS
ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE MTA

LIRRCC

LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD
COMMUTER COUNCIL

MNRCC

METRO-NORTH RAILROAD
COMMUTER COUNCIL

NYCTRC

NEW YORK CITY TRANSIT
RIDERS COUNCIL

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Overview

Created by the New York State Legislature in 1981, the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC) is the official voice of the region's transit riders. As trusted advisors to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), PCAC regularly researches issues, recommends viable solutions, and advocates on behalf of subway, bus and Staten Island Railway riders, and Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North Railroad commuters.

PCAC is the coordinating body for three riders councils: the Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council (LIRRCC), the Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council (MNRCC), and the New York City Transit Riders Council (NYCTRC). These councils were created to serve as an independent voice for users of the MTA system in the development and implementation of policy, and to hold the MTA board and management accountable to riders. To accomplish these goals, PCAC, its councils, and their professional staff undertake frequent research projects; hold regular public meetings; and provide public commentary in a variety of forums.

Each of the three councils has held one non-voting MTA Board seat since 1995, sitting on and providing input into MTA agency operating committees at all times. The PCAC's 38 total members are required to be regular users of the MTA system and serve without pay. The 11 MNRCC members and 12 LIRRCC members are appointed by the Governor's Office upon the recommendation of appropriate county executives and borough presidents. The 15 NYCTRC members are appointed by the Governor upon recommendation of the mayor, public advocate, and borough presidents.

This year, PCAC is advocating for seven bills in the New York State Senate and Assembly in conjunction with our legislative partners:

- **S.1148/A.1162 - Rider Representation Act**
- **S.7679/A.8169 - R.I.D.E.R. Act**
- **S.5164/A.5134 - Relates to the LIRR Commuter Council**
- **S.1027/A.3615 - Open meetings law reform**
- **S.8620/A.9395 - One City, One Fare Act**
- **S.####/A.#### (TBD) - Ride N.Y. Act**
- **S.3492A/A.6283A - Sustainable Housing and Sprawl Prevention Act**

Together, these pieces of legislation promote increased representation, transit access & affordability for the millions of daily riders on the MTA system.



Photo: Raymond Cho (@raytac23)

Rider Representation



Rider Representation Act

S.1148/A.1162 (Gounardes/Dinowitz)



R.I.D.E.R. Act

S.7679/A.8169 (Gounardes/Rosenthal)



Relates to the LIRR Commuter Council

S.5164/A.5134 (Comrie/Solages)



Open meetings law reform

S.1027/A.3615 (May/Simone)

Rider Representation Act

S.1148/A.1162 (Gounardes/Dinowitz)

The Rider Representation Act would add four new voting members to the MTA Board, consisting of:

- One entirely new seat for a disability advocate recommended by the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, in consultation with disability advocates.
- Three Rider Representatives of the New York City Transit Riders Council, LIRR Commuter Council and Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council, who are currently among the MTA's non-voting membership.

Currently the MTA Board is comprised of six gubernatorial appointees, four mayoral appointees, one appointee each from Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester counties, and one vote shared by four representatives of Orange, Dutchess, Rockland, and Putnam counties, colloquially known as the "quarter-pounders," in addition to non-voting rider and labor representatives. MTA riders make up 43% of all transit riders in the United States: they deserve a vote on the MTA Board. [The only MTA Board members currently required by law to ride transit are non-voting.](#)

Unlike most board members who are recommended by a single elected official, NYC Transit, LIRR, and Metro-North Rider Representatives are elected by a council of their peers. [The Rider Representation Act will give local elected officials like borough presidents, state senators, assembly members, and local elected officials a role in selecting a voting MTA Board member for the first time in history.](#)

While the current non-voting Rider Representatives typically attend every MTA Board and assigned committee meetings, missing voting members assigned to committees too often lead to a lack of a quorum – with greater consequences: when they are absent and a quorum cannot be achieved, actions on high value contracts and financial transactions have been delayed. [Of the 62 committee meetings in 2024, 10 failed to achieve a quorum – delaying a total of \\$1.238 billion in contracts. Had rider representatives been able to vote, none of these delays would have occurred.](#)

The legislation will empower riders by allowing representatives of the New York City Transit Riders Council and LIRR and Metro-North Commuter Councils to make motions, chair committees, participate in a quorum, and use their votes as leverage to secure policy victories for subway, bus, express bus, and commuter rail riders.

“This is about building trust, and building a public transit system that meets our needs. With so much on the line, riders deserve more than just a seat at the table—they need a voice, and a vote.”

— Senator Andrew Gournades

“Enacting this legislation would strengthen the MTA Board’s ability to lead with accountability, close the gap between advocacy and decision-making, and ensure that those who rely on the system have a true voice in shaping its future.”

— Assemblymember Jeffrey Dinowitz

“The addition of an advocate for riders with disabilities as a voting board member will provide an independent voice at a time when the MTA is making progress on station accessibility across the system, but also continues to face challenges with elevator maintenance, its Access-A-Ride program, and other accessibility concerns...”

— Christopher Schuyler, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

Relates to the LIRR Commuter Council

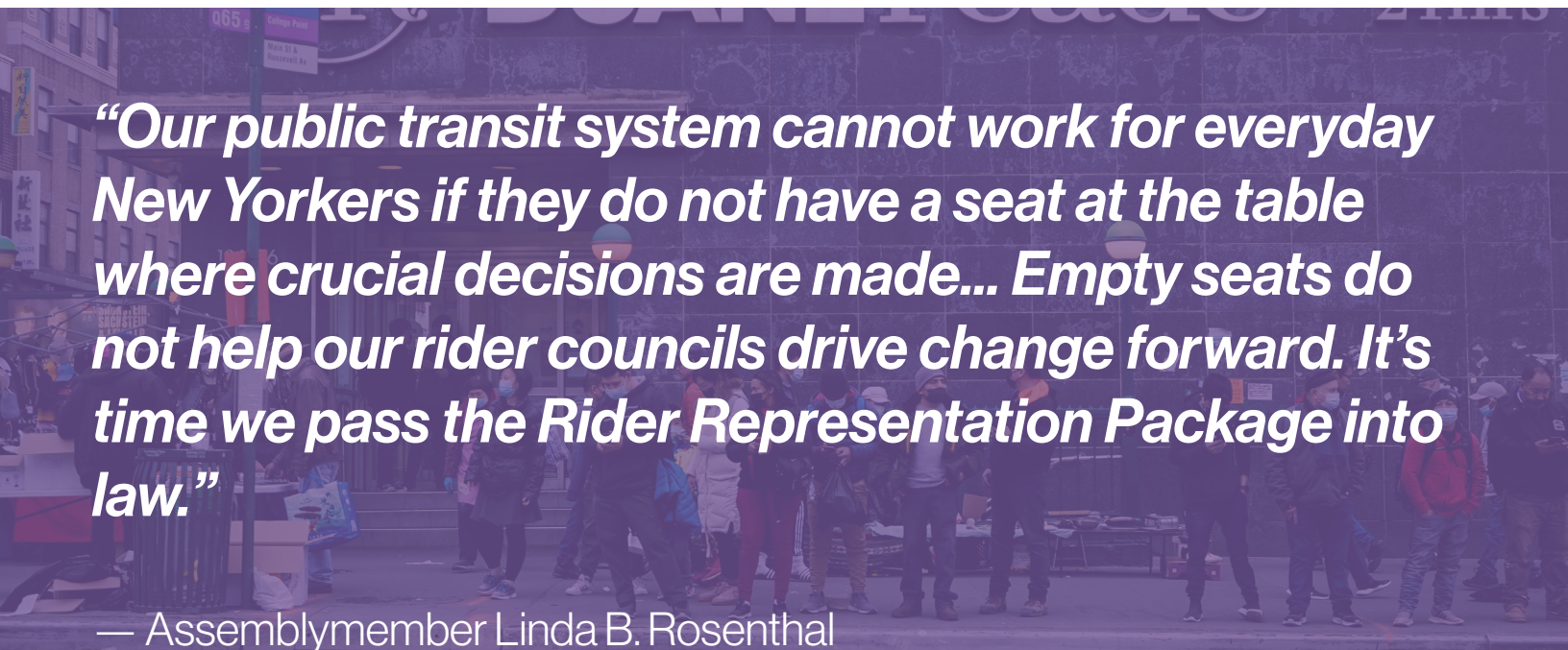
S.5164/A.5134 (Comrie/Solages)

Increases public participation on the Council by decreasing the required number of members recommended by the county executives of Nassau, Suffolk, Queens, and Kings Counties from three members each to one member each, which has severely limited nominations.

Open Meetings Law Reform

S.1027/A.3615 (May/Simone)

Improves upon provisions of the open meetings law set to expire this year to allow members of the public and appointed members of boards and advisory committees, such as PCAC and its Councils, to participate in remote meetings and count toward a quorum.



“Our public transit system cannot work for everyday New Yorkers if they do not have a seat at the table where crucial decisions are made... Empty seats do not help our rider councils drive change forward. It’s time we pass the Rider Representation Package into law.”

— Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal

R.I.D.E.R. Act

S.7679/A.8169 (Gounardes/Rosenthal)

The Rider Interests Deserve Empowering Representation (R.I.D.E.R.) Act would:

- Allow local elected officials such as city council members, town supervisors, mayors, state senators, and assembly members to recommend members to be appointed by the governor to the New York City Transit Riders Council, Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council, and Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council.
- Ensure vacancies on these councils are filled in a timely manner – 14 of the three councils' 41 seats currently sit vacant.
- Conform the names of the councils used in statute with those used on official council documents and expand the jurisdiction of the Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council to eventually include the Penn Access Line.

Eight of the thirteen LIRR Commuter Council seats are vacant; six have been vacant for five years or more. Four of twelve Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council seats are vacant; three have been vacant for five years or more. Two of sixteen NYC Transit Riders Council seats are vacant; both have been vacant for five years or more.

This legislation addresses persistent vacancies by allowing local elected officials like state senators and assemblymembers to make nominations, and provides for interim appointments. Today, the authority to make nominations is limited to county executives or borough presidents.

The MTA's rider councils perform crucial advocacy on behalf of riders. Widespread vacancies on these councils threaten this work.

Access & Affordability



One City, One Fare Act

S.8620/A.9395 (Comrie/Hevesi)

PCAC has fought for decades to enhance access to the LIRR and Metro-North, both underutilized MTA assets within city limits, for New York City residents.

Flip through to see how the fight has unfolded and what state legislators can support now to see this goal through.



Ride N.Y. Act

S.####/A.#### (TBD)



Sustainable Housing & Sprawl Prevention Act

S.3492A/A.6283A (May/Kelles)

2001

PCAC introduces CityTicket concept to leverage excess railroad capacity and increase affordable transit options in subway deserts.

MTA implements the original CityTicket pilot at the endorsement of former Mayor Michael Bloomberg and former MTA Chair Peter Kalikow. The pilot was developed by a working committee that included the chairs of PCAC's three rider councils, former PCAC Executive Director Beverly Dolinsky, and railroad staff.

For \$2.50, riders could make any trip both originating and ending at any LIRR or Metro-North station within city limits. This original iteration was valid on weekends only, lacking any option for weekday commuting.

2004

2007

PCAC releases *Long Day's Journey into Work*, highlighting the difficulties of commuting from the city's subway deserts.

In the NYC TRC report ***Freedom Ticket***, PCAC identifies Southeast Queens as an ideal proof of concept location for expanding the **CityTicket**. The proposal called for reducing city commuter rail fares at all times and allowing for free transfers to the subway and bus.

2015

MTA begins the Atlantic Ticket field study, establishing a \$5 one-way fare between Southeast Queens and Brooklyn LIRR stations. Notably, a \$60 weekly ticket with free transfers to the subway and bus was also established.

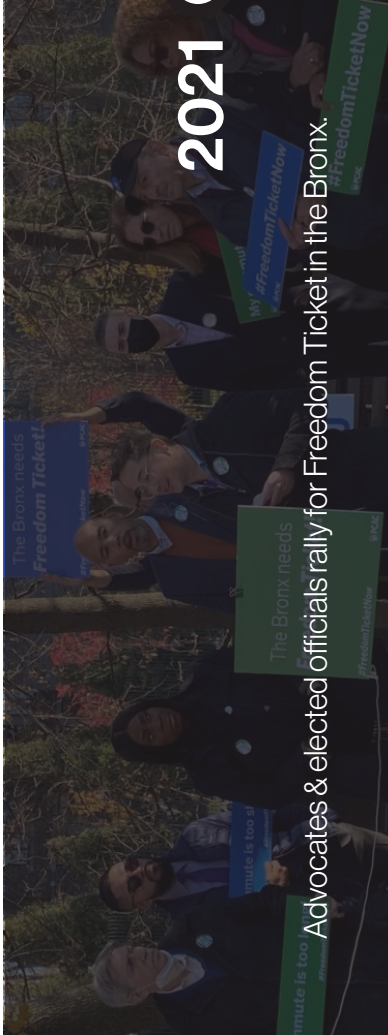
2018



Photo: Metropolitan Transportation Authority (CC BY 2.0)

The COVID-19 pandemic decimates ridership. LIRR and Metro-North ridership was at 250,000 and 450,000, respectively, in April 2020; both railroads exceeded seven million in December 2019.

2020



2021

Advocates & elected officials rally for Freedom Ticket in the Bronx.

PCAC releases *Freedom Ticket Phase II: Now, More than Ever!*, calling for free transfers on the single-ride Atlantic Ticket, the introduction of a monthly option, and expansion of the pilot to include all LIRR and Metro-North stations within city limits.

MTA expands the CityTicket from weekends only to all off-peak hours.

2022



Grand Central Madison opens

The LIRR & Metro-North are brought under the same roof.

2023

Photo: Metropolitan Transportation Authority (CC BY 2.0)

Over two dozen elected officials and 15 organizations call on the MTA to launch a weekly CityTicket with free transfers to the subway and bus.

2024

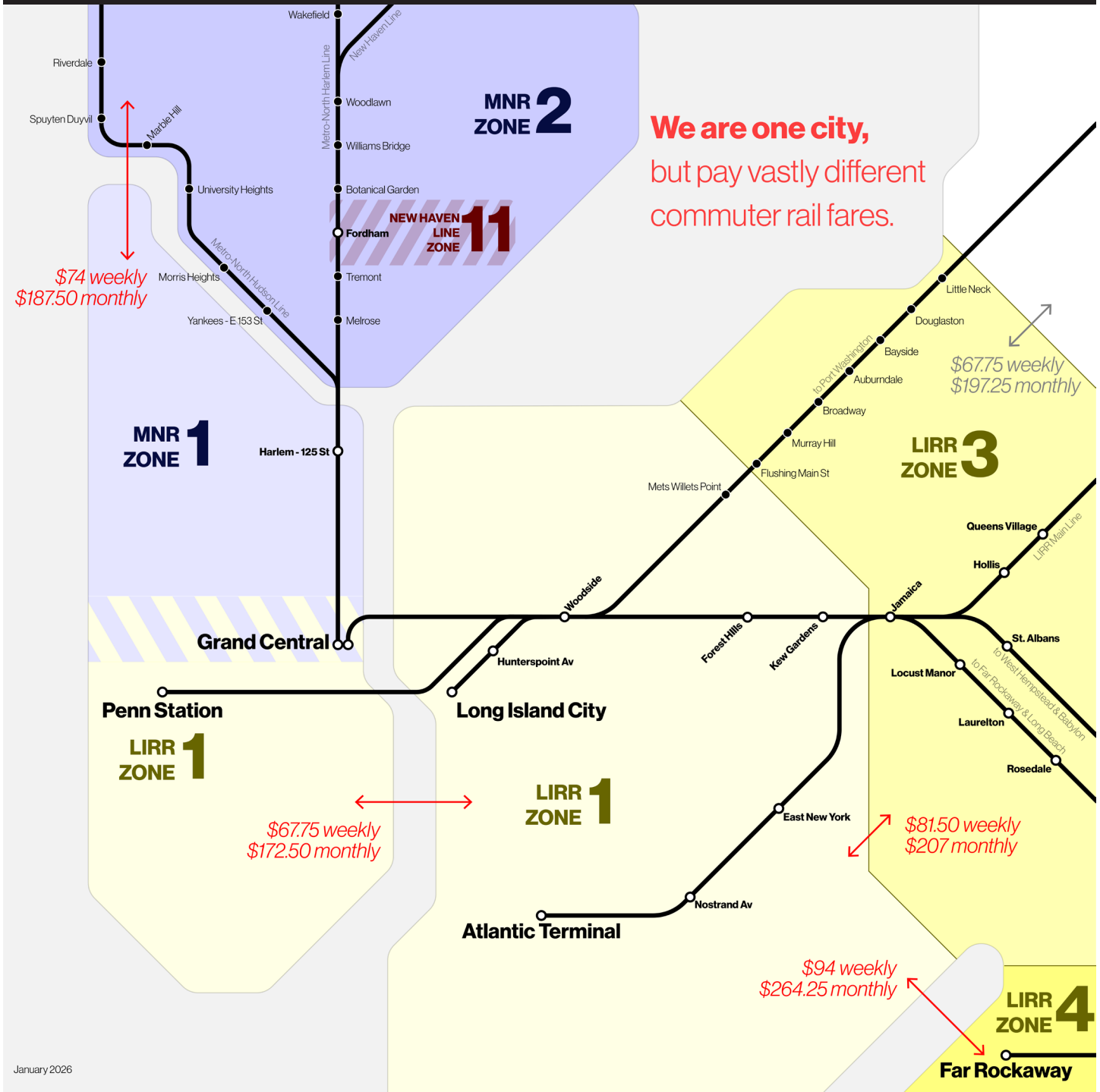
MTA launches the Far Rockaway and peak-hour CityTicket, making discounted intra-city travel on the railroads 24/7. The CityTicket remains single-ride only, with no free transfers to the subway and/or bus.

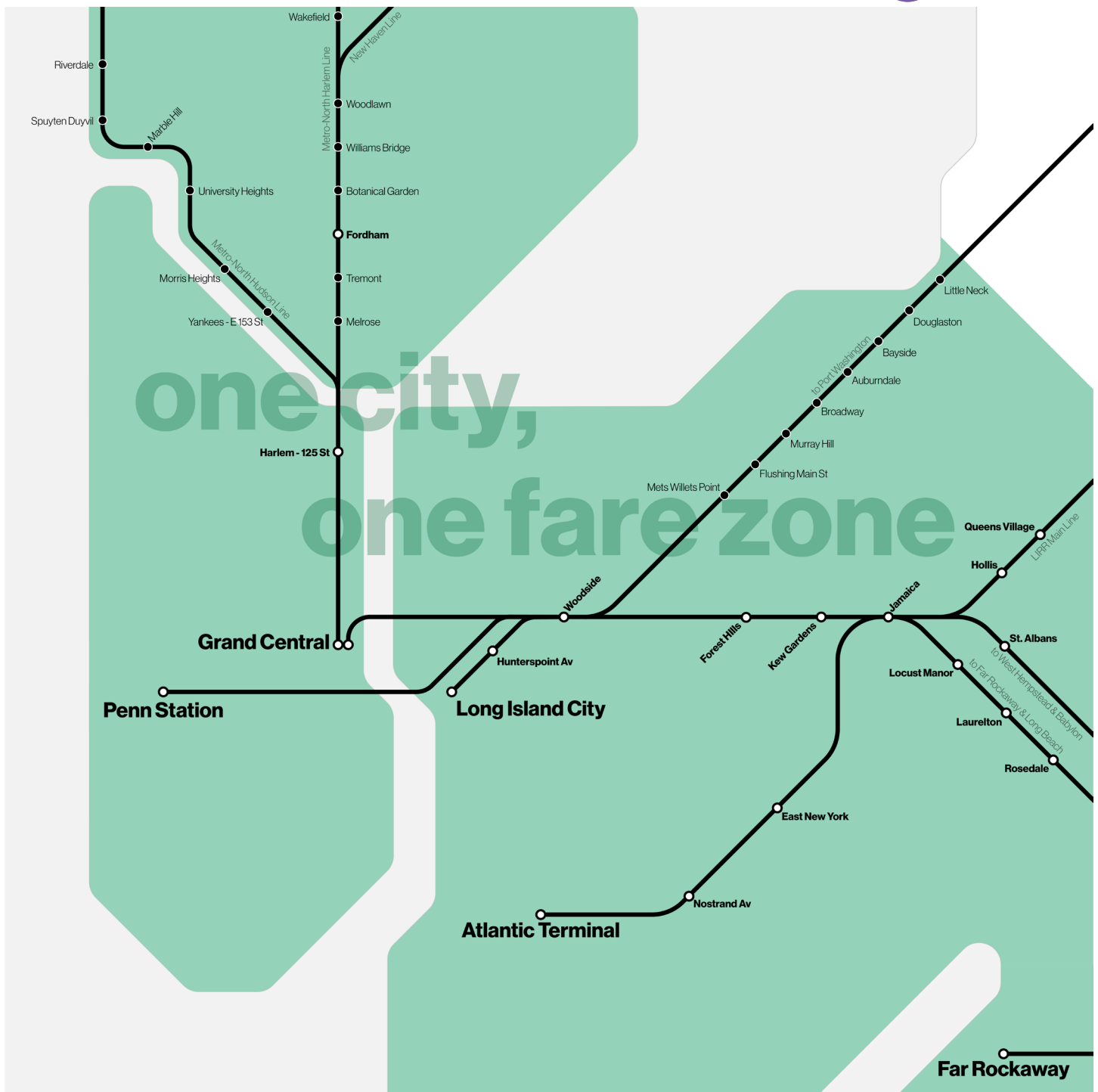
MTA ends the single-ride and weekly Atlantic Ticket.

One City, One Fare Act

S.8620/A.9395 (Comrie/Hevesi)

Currently, the Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North have six distinct fare zones within city limits. Though the CityTicket offers a discounted fare for travel within New York City, \$7.25 during peak hours and \$5.25 off-peak, it is valid only for single trips or day passes and offers no transfer to subways or buses. The same conditions apply to the Far Rockaway Ticket. On top of paying for transfers, frequent riders across the boroughs face vastly different prices when buying weekly and monthly tickets.





The One City, One Fare Act would make transit more affordable for more New Yorkers by:

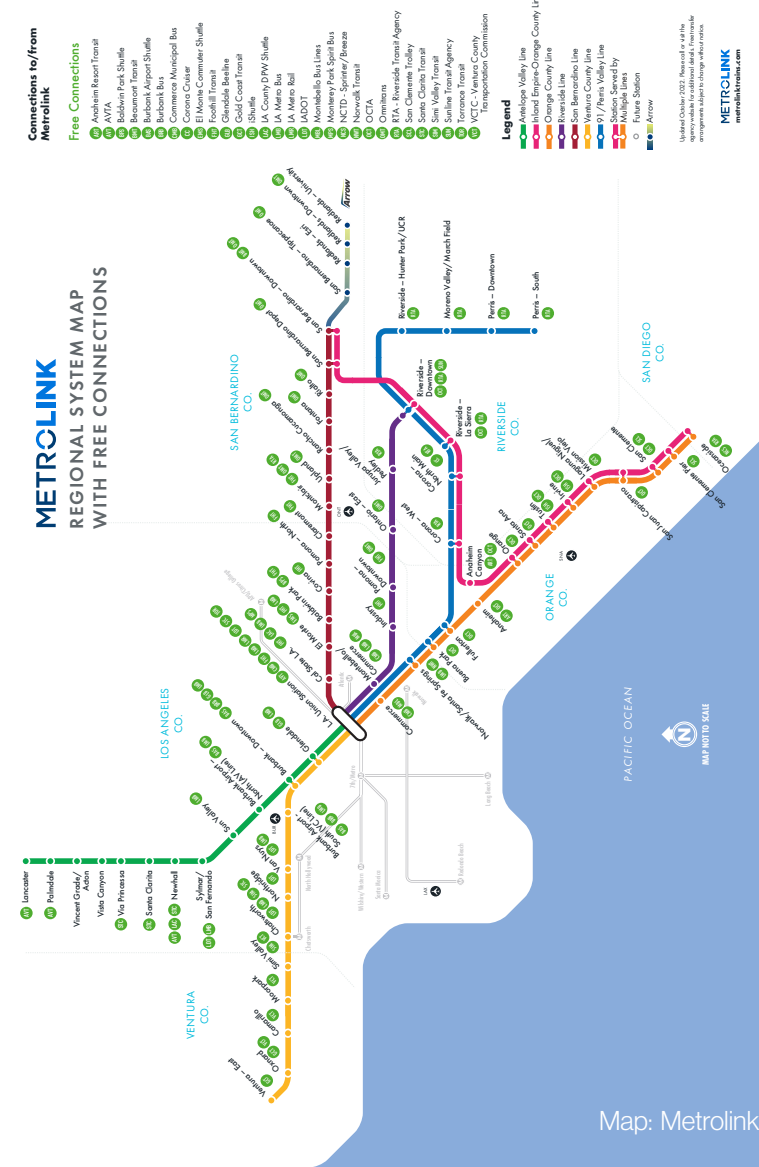
- Creating a single, unified fare zone for all of New York City for both the LIRR and Metro-North, across all ticket types.
- Allowing riders to use their city zone weekly and monthly tickets to transfer freely to the subway and bus.
- Permitting riders to transfer between the LIRR and Metro-North in New York City on the same ticket.

1-day, 7-day and monthly passes are available for Zone 1A riders and include free transfers to the subway and bus. Zone 1A includes most commuter rail stations in Boston city limits and additional stations in surrounding Cambridge, Somerville, Medford, Malden and Chelsea.

[illegible]

...SoCal?

MetroLink in Los Angeles and surrounding counties offers free transfers between regional rail lines and local transit, including L.A. Metro and bus. Transfers are valid on all ticket types, including monthly passes and single rides.



Map: Metrolink

Ride N.Y. Act

S.####/A.#### (TBD)

Directs the Departments of Transportation, Motor Vehicles, and Office of General Services, in tandem with transit providers around New York State, to begin an integrated travel project, enabling contactless fare payment, simplified enrollment in reduced-fare programs for veteran, disabled, senior, and Medicare-eligible New Yorkers, and standardized transit information statewide.

Sustainable Housing and Sprawl Prevention Act

S.3492A/A.6283A (May/Kelles)

In addition to destroying 64,000 acres of New York's forest land between 2001 and 2019 ([RPA](#)), urban sprawl makes transit service cost prohibitive. This legislation promotes infill development, allowing riders to live closer to the transit they depend on.

The Avalon Harrison apartments were built as part of a transit oriented development adjacent to the Metro-North station in Harrison, New York. The project is mixed income, mixed use and more than doubles the amount of available parking spaces.



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