

New York City Transit Riders Council

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**Testimony of the New York City Transit Riders Council
To the Board of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority
On Proposed Fare Increases
The Milton G. Bassin Performing Arts Center at York College, Main Stage Theater
94-20 Guy R. Brewer Blvd. Jamaica, NY**

December 3, 2014

My name is Bradley Brashears, I am a staff transportation planner from the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC), which represents the New York City Transit Riders Council (NYCTRC), and I am also a resident of Astoria, Queens.

The NYCTRC is one of three New York State legislatively mandated councils that make up the PCAC. The Council met to discuss the fare proposals and the following reflects our thinking:

The fare proposals that are the subject of this hearing contain less severe increases than those of the past and we appreciate the positive concerns of the MTA in formulating them. However, funding all MTA components including New York City Transit must be accomplished in a way that is fair to riders and takes into account those who are most heavily burdened by fare increases.

Therefore, we believe that a fundamental principle of MTA funding is that those who benefit from our public transit system should share in paying for its operation and upkeep. While this includes subway, bus and commuter rail riders, it should also include motorists, business and real property owners. All who rely on the vibrant economic engine that is the MTA region should realize it is only made possible because we have an extensive and efficient public transportation system.

However, we are concerned that these proposals to increase the fare only affect riders and will continue to shift the burden of funding the MTA onto the system's users. This strikes us as being patently unfair because there are no commitments of increased funding from other stakeholders.

For example, city funding for the MTA's Capital Program has been on a steady decline from 10% in 1982 down to 3% for the 2010-2014 Capital Program, and down to 2% for the proposed 2015-2019 Capital Program.

Riders have kept their commitments to financially support the MTA system. However, this structure which supports the MTA is constantly eroded by continuing threats to MTA funding streams, such as the use of what is supposed to be "dedicated transit funds" to meet New York State's general obligations.

MTA riders already pay the highest percentage of operating expenditures of any public transit users in the nation. In 2012, the last year for which national data were available, this figure was 53.2%, compared with 33.2% for systems nationally. Subway and bus riders pay 52.6 % of operating expenditures, while subway riders alone pay a stunning 73.2%. The MTA's proposals presented here reinforce an increase in the proportion of the cost that is borne by riders.

Since we have to choose only between the specific proposals before this Board, we believe that regular users of the system should be less disadvantaged by a fare increase. It is for this reason that we prefer Proposal 1, where the base fare increases from \$2.50 to 2.75, and not only keeps the bonus concept but also raises the bonus from 5% to 11%, rather than Proposal 2, in which the base fare stays at \$2.50, but all bonuses are killed.

While there is no difference in the cost of time-based MetroCards between the Proposals, the roughly one-half of MTA riders who benefit from the MetroCard bonus, especially low income persons who have difficulty paying for weekly or monthly cards, would be harmed by Proposal 2. Those who would seem to benefit most from Proposal 2 would be mostly casual users including tourists, other visitors, and those who only occasionally ride subways and buses.

We strongly urge this Board to consider the interests of its best customers and preserve and expand the bonus incentives that are provided to encourage riders to use the system. Therefore, we clearly support Proposal 1.

In addition, the Council would like to recommend the need to use technology to gather public input. Various forms of social media would allow for a broader base of rider input providing more meaningful insight and creative solutions to issues such as fare increases.

Thank you for your attention to the views of the New York City Transit Riders Council.