



**NYCTRC**  
NEW YORK CITY TRANSIT  
RIDERS COUNCIL

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**Testimony of William Henderson, Executive Director  
Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC)  
before the New York City Council Committee on Transportation**

**Thursday, November 12, 2015**

Good morning, my name is William Henderson, and I am the Executive Director of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC), which is an umbrella organization comprising three riders' councils including the New York City Transit Riders Council (NYCTRC). Both the PCAC and the NYCTRC have long advocated for better transit connections in NYC neighborhoods that are transit underserved.

The Council believes that the MTA must invest resources in measures that will meet the system's growing ridership. Innovative, efficient, and timely solutions are needed to accommodate this increasing demand. As population and job growth continues city-wide, areas in the outer boroughs are lacking adequate transit options to support this growth. Therefore, the Council encourages both the City of New York and the MTA to work together to identify solutions to meet ridership demands on all MTA modes of travel.

The first step should be to reduce commuter rail fares within NYC, which would provide affordable fares while drastically reducing travel times for outer borough commuters. In 2003, the PCAC worked with the MTA to create City Ticket, which created a lower weekend fare on both Metro-North and Long Island Rail Road within city limits. Now, as NYC Transit's ridership has increased and will continue to do so, it has become imperative to reexamine the City's commuter railroads to see how they can relieve pressure on our overcrowded subway system, as well as improving transit service in the areas of our city most underserved by transit.

In several weeks, the Council will be releasing a new report entitled, *The Freedom Ticket: A Southeast Queens Proof of Concept*. Freedom Ticket will expand the premise of City Ticket and allow customers to use any MTA mode that meets their needs, be it bus, subway, or commuter rail, within a given zone, for a reduced rate on weekdays.

The NYCTRC envisions implementation of Freedom Ticket in Southeast Queens, where the nearest subway access can be up to five miles away, resulting in long and difficult commutes with many required connections. In neighborhoods like Rosedale, Queens over thirty-four percent of the commuting population travels 60 minutes or more each way to work. Travel to and from these neighborhoods on NYC Transit can be over an hour and a half each way, compared to only thirty-seven minutes on the LIRR.

Unfortunately, the current price of a LIRR fare from Rosedale to either Penn Station or Atlantic Terminal is \$10, prohibitively expensive for most, and substantially more expensive than the \$2.75 NYC Transit fare. Therefore, the NYCTRC proposes that the MTA implement a new fare class, the Freedom Ticket, to reduce per-ride, weekly, and monthly fares on its commuter railroads and provide transfers to NYC Transit to complete the trip. This fare may be greater

than the existing local transit fare, but must still be affordable to riders, including provisions for weekly and monthly fares to reduce the cost of travel for commuters.

It is crucial in this time of record-breaking ridership and limited financial resources that we use all our assets in the most efficient manner possible. Lowering fares on the City's commuter railroads is key to accommodating the increasing demand on our subway system, and can be done at an affordable cost to the MTA. The NYCTRC envisions the expansion of Freedom Ticket, beyond the Proof of Concept, to include all LIRR and MNR stations where neighborhoods are far from subway connections and ultimately all City stations. Only through these type of efforts can the MTA be able to keep up with its growing ridership and move people more quickly across all five boroughs.