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**Testimony to the MTA Board
December 7, 2020
Fare Hearing
Riders Are Hurting: Encourage Them to Get Back On-Board
By Stuart Goldstein
Member, NYC Transit Riders Council**

Good evening, my name is Stuart Goldstein, and I am speaking at today's fare hearing on behalf of the New York City Transit Riders Council, NYCTRC. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

The MTA is in a dire financial situation and needs \$12 billion from the federal government to get through 2021. Without that infusion of funding, consequences to riders will be devastating.

The riders we represent are already hurting.

That's why we cannot support discussions regarding fare hikes at this time, regardless of the scheduled biennial increases. We don't see how you could vote on fare increases without knowing what service will look like. We do know that paying 4% more for 40% less is a terrible trade-off – and the timing could not be worse. The region's riders, especially low-income families and our brave essential workers, cannot be hit with a fare hike at this time or many will be forced to find other travel options, ultimately hurting the MTA with ever-decreasing ridership. It isn't the time to give them an excuse to stay off trains and buses, but to encourage them to get back on board.

The MTA has a unique opportunity to attract riders back, responsibly and safely, by providing fare discounts. We know some MTA Board members support such incentives. For example, the TRC inspired the Atlantic Ticket pilot program, which has been quite popular with riders. It provides a discounted fare on the LIRR between ten southeast Queen stations and Atlantic Terminal with transfers to subways and buses, speeding up trips for thousands and allowing them to ride the Rail Road when many otherwise could not afford to do so. Expansion is needed to encourage more riders to come back to the system. Alternatively, a fare hike at this time would alienate what is left of the MTA's ridership, further hampering our region's recovery.

These are unprecedented times that require unprecedented actions and a complete rethinking of how we fund, operate, and provide transit to our region's riders. We need stimulus, we need congestion pricing, we need access to all the funds Washington can provide. But right now, we don't need talk of a fare hike. Thank you.