



# PCAC

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**Testimony to the MTA Board  
December 1, 2020  
Fare Hearing  
Not the Time to Discuss Fare Hikes  
By Lisa Daglian  
Executive Director, PCAC**

Good evening, I'm Lisa Daglian, Executive Director of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, PCAC. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at this first fare policy hearing.

Over the course of the hearings, you'll hear from members of our New York City Transit Riders Council, Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council and Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council. Collectively, they represent riders in New York's 12-county MTA region. And collectively, they are terrified of potential service cuts of 40-to-50 percent, particularly when combined with higher fares. We all are.

We also understand that the MTA is in the direst financial situation it has ever faced. Without an infusion of federal funding, consequences to riders will be calamitous and severely hamper our region's economic recovery. Devastating service cuts would lead to massive delays and overcrowded trains and buses – further reducing people's comfort level about getting back on board. System improvements and modernization projects now on hold could be delayed by years.

We need stimulus, we need congestion pricing, we need access to any and all funds that Washington can provide. But what we don't need is talk of a fare hike. It's hard to discuss the particulars of two-percent vs four-percent increases versus elimination of time-based MetroCards, or flat fares versus monthly fares vs discounted Mail & Ride on the LIRR and Metro-North – when we don't know what it will mean in terms of how much service there will be. Is it worth paying four percent more for 40 percent less, or no more for half?

We know that in any other cycle it would be time to consider fare increases. But this year is different. Many riders don't need to travel the same way, and it may be years before they do again – if ever. It isn't the time to give them an excuse to stay off trains and buses, but to encourage them to come back: Incentivize, not penalize. But first, wait until the new Administration is seated; give them a chance to fund and improve transit. Let's reconvene in the spring. Hopefully, the future will look brighter.