

**Testimony of the New York City Transit Riders Council to the  
Board of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority  
on Proposed Fare Increases and Service Reductions  
The Marriott Hotel at the Brooklyn Bridge, Brooklyn, N.Y.  
January 28, 2009**

My name is Toya Williford and I am a member of the New York City Transit Riders Council (NYCTRC). The Council was created in 1981 to represent the users of the New York City Transit system and consists of fifteen volunteer members appointed by the Governor upon the recommendation of the Mayor, the Public Advocate and the five Borough Presidents.

As representatives of transit riders in New York City we find the proposed fare increases and service cuts that are before you to be unacceptable. We also know that in the face of inadequate funding this Board has little choice but to propose substantial fare increases, but this reality does not make the fare increases any more acceptable. It is particularly offensive to hold paratransit customers, many of whom can scarcely afford their current cost of travel, hostage to a potential \$6.00 fare. We have called and will continue to call forcefully upon our elected representatives to support new funding sources for the MTA that will ensure that these unacceptable fare increases will no longer be necessary. We demand that each MTA Board member does the same.

The proposed fare increases under consideration are dire, but the proposed service cuts are even worse. Holding the line on fare increases isn't meaningful to the rider if a service he or she depends upon no longer exists, and this will be the situation for many transit users if these proposals are implemented. Transit in New York City is a system, and you cannot compromise major elements of the system without damaging the whole. New Yorkers depend on transit to get around the City twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. This level of service that is proposed is simply not adequate for a city that is open for business at all hours.

The severe service cuts proposed in off-peak hours are a serious threat to the safety and reliability of the system. For Brooklynites, thirty minute subway headways in the overnight hours would make the system all but unusable. Would you choose to enter a desolate subway station in the early morning hours, knowing that your wait for the next train could be as long as half an hour? Additionally, rerouting the N over the Manhattan Bridge will result in closing six stations (two in downtown Brooklyn and four in Lower Manhattan) and force riders to seek out other options during this three hour time frame.

Combine these new schedules with the elimination of ten Brooklyn bus routes in the overnight, and you are making overnight transit service an unpredictable and daunting experience.

By extending the Q to Astoria as a replacement service for the W train, it is likely that N, Q and R services will become more unreliable. Further packing people onto already crowded trains by increasing the seated load guidelines from 100% to 125% on B division trains will cause riders to seek other means of transportation. Is that what we want to do?

We are also greatly disturbed that our subway stations will become even more lonely and dirty under these proposals. Eliminating Station Customer Assistant and agent positions may make sense on paper in cases where there is a staffed booth elsewhere in a station, but in reality the staffed booth may be far from much of the station and not accessible without returning to street level and locating the appropriate station entrance. Many stations in the subway system already suffer from a lack of human presence, and reducing staffing will only exacerbate this condition. In addition, history has shown that reduced station area track cleaning will lead to increased flooding and track fires. It is important to take into account the costs that these delays will incur before adding up the savings from these draconian actions.

We fully support increasing efficiency in the system, but these proposals cut muscle and bone rather than fat. For example, the move to eliminate bus service parallel to subway lines like the B25 and B75 ignores the fact that these two modes of travel often serve distinct groups of users. Many bus riders are unable to use the subway system due to mobility constraints, and the subway system is far from fully accessible. The sad fact is that these ill considered cuts do not even make a large dent in the MTA's deficit, as in 2009 they close less than 5 percent of the \$1.2 billion hole in the Authority's finances.

The New York City Transit Riders Council calls upon this Board to consider the resources that are needed to provide an acceptable level of service and to take decisive action to pursue these resources. We reject a budget that raises fares dramatically only to keep the transit system on life support.