



PCAC

PERMANENT CITIZENS
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**Statement of William Henderson, Executive Director
of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee
to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority
to the Manhattan Borough President's Public Hearing
on Manhattan Traffic Congestion**

Thursday September 17, 2015

The Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC) was established by the New York State Legislature as the umbrella organization for three legislatively-mandated Councils that represent the interests of riders of the Metro-North Railroad, Long Island Rail Road and New York City Transit systems. A representative from each Council also participates as a non-voting member on the MTA Board. The Councils were created by the New York State Legislature in 1981 to monitor the operation of the MTA's operating agencies and make recommendations to improve their performance.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify on the contributions that the MTA can make toward reducing traffic congestion in Manhattan and the actions that will be necessary for these efforts to be effective.

We believe that public transportation is integral to the management and reduction of congestion in Manhattan. Without the network of buses, commuter railroads, and subways operated by the MTA, effective movement of people and goods in Manhattan would be impossible. It is only through shifting some persons from the streets to the rails and through buses making efficient use of surface streets that we are able to move around Manhattan at all.

Continued economic and population growth is forecast for New York City and the surrounding region, and the most recent Census estimates already surpass the City's population projections for 2020. While growth may not continue at this pace, positive actions are needed to prevent the worsening of congestion and to improve the current situation, and many of these actions involve preparing the transit system to accommodate this increased population and activity.

The first and most obvious action that we must take concerning public transportation is to continue to improve the existing system to provide more efficient operations and additional capacity for riders. Last Sunday, an extension to the 7 Subway line opened to serve the rapidly developing Far West Side, but we have to do more. We must complete the 10th Avenue station that was in the original scope of this project and make sustained

progress on building the full length Second Avenue Subway. We must continue to increase capacity through station improvements, such as those planned at Grand Central, and modernization of outdated subway signals to increase train throughput. These are costly improvements, and funding them will be a challenge. We need to find innovative means of generating resources to fund these improvements from the increased economic activity that they attract and foster, as was done to fund the 7 subway extension. Today's riders cannot provide the resources to build the future system by themselves.

Necessary upgrades aren't confined to the subways; we need to continue to add bus lanes and facilities for Select Bus Service, as was implemented on 86th Street this summer, and to improve street furniture and other amenities at bus stops to make the bus system function better for riders as well. Improvements such as a bus command center, which is in the MTA's Capital Program, can improve operations by allowing dispatchers to use real time information to adjust operations to better serve riders. Many of these improvements lie within the City's scope of responsibility, and our elected leaders must ensure that adequate funding is available for them.

Second, if we want surface public transportation to be effective and attractive to riders, enforcement of traffic, bus stop, and bus lane rules is critical. When buses have to load outside of designated stops or move from bus lanes because of a vehicle that is improperly in these areas, it not only inconveniences bus riders but blocks other traffic lanes. Despite the threat of enforcement, we still see regular instances where buses must leave designated lanes or load outside of bus stops because of improperly parked or stopped vehicles.

Third, we need to make transit use more convenient and flexible for riders. Real time information from systems like Bus Time or the countdown clocks in the subway have changed the landscape for riders, but we need to make this information more broadly available through a variety of channels. A new fare system, with features that automatically manage accounts to give riders the best deal, is long overdue. In addition to new fare collection technology, we need to give riders more flexibility in the services that they use. We are strongly in favor of what we call a Freedom Ticket, which would allow riders to choose the best combination of transit to travel between their origins and destinations within New York City, whether the modes used are buses, commuter railroads, or subways or any combination. This would not only benefit underserved areas of the City, but may also move some drivers from automobile trips into Manhattan to affordable and convenient transit trips.