

**Statement of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee
to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority
Before a Hearing Convened by Senator Bill Perkins, Chair of the Senate Standing
Committee on Corporations, Authorities, and Commissions, and
Senator Craig M. Johnson, Chair of the Senate Standing Committee
On Investigations and Government Operations
on the MTA 2010-2014 Capital Program**

Thursday, December 3, 2009

Good morning, my name is Ellyn Shannon. I am the Senior Transportation Planner for the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC). My position is funded by a federal grant for the purpose of reviewing the MTA's Capital Program and to then inform and update riders about the program and to give feedback to the MTA and its Operating Agencies. I have done this for the past eight years. My organization, the PCAC was established by the New York State Legislature as the umbrella organization for three legislatively-mandated Councils who represent the interests of riders on the Metro-North Railroad, Long Island Rail Road and New York City Transit system. 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.

While we recognize that the MTA's 2010-2014 Capital Program represents an enormous sum of money — the total program is \$28 billion, \$25 billion of which will be considered by the MTA Capital Program Review Board, we also need to recognize that public transportation is the engine that drives the region's economy and we cannot afford for this engine to stall.

Will it be a good investment?

In 2008 the MTA produced a study “The Economic Impact of MTA Capital Program Investments on New York State”. In this study the MTA estimates the direct impact of the 2005–2009 Capital program, the indirect impact on the supplying industries, and the induced wealth generated by the expenditures of wage earners - or the so-called ripple effect. This was done by applying the Port Authority’s economic input-output model to the \$22.6 billion CPRB portion of the MTA’s 2005-2009 Capital Program, it showed estimated benefits of up to 38,500 jobs annually for 9 years; \$29.2 billion in economic/sales activity; \$1.1 billion in state and local personal income and sales taxes; and \$11.8 billion in wages and salaries — all totaling \$42.1 billion leveraged from the original \$24 billion invested.

The report also shows that more than 60 municipalities through out the state of New York benefit from the MTA’s Capital Program through subcontractors for subway, bus and rail cars. The PCAC feels strongly that New York State and the MTA should again produce this kind of analysis to estimate the far-reaching economic benefits as they apply to the currently proposed MTA Capital Program of \$28 billion.

Is it necessary to fund all the projects?

The answer is a resounding yes. We cannot allow this valuable transportation system to deteriorate at a faster pace than we are restoring it. We cannot allow our global competitiveness to slip further behind as we continue to watch the Paris, Singapore and Hong Kong transportation systems advance, and we cannot lose the environmental gains made in recent years by pushing those individuals, who have made public transportation a way of life, to slip back into their cars because they are more comfortable, convenient and more cost effective than our public transportation system. By not fully funding the program these are the things that will happen.

The PCAC leadership and staff have reviewed the proposed plan in detail and we had extensive discussions with MTA staff on its content. Many of our comments and suggestions were incorporated into the document. .We have gone through the plan project by project and are very familiar with the state of disrepair that many of the projects will be addressing.

We must note however the concerns that we have regarding the LIRR's portion of the Capital Program. The Long Island Rail Road Commuter's Council, supported by the full PCAC, continues to believe that the omission of the Main Line Corridor Improvements Project from this document is a serious shortcoming. And we are also deeply concerned with the need to purchase additional diesel locomotives for the LIRR to assist operations when diesel locomotives break down and disrupt service.

Does the plan have major deficiencies?

Overall, we find the MTA's Capital Program has two major deficiencies: 1) the lack of identified resources for the MTA and its operating agencies to address the critical mobility needs of this region; and 2) the lack of a well informed public to support these critical infrastructure investments.

For the first we believe that you, our elected officials and the MTA need to go back and again look at revenue options explored in the debate over congestion pricing. With regard to informing the public of the large investments being made in the transportation system, we believe it is time for the MTA to have its own capital program media campaign that addresses riders in their home stations. It is time the MTA take a portion of its own advertising space on platforms and on-board trains and use it to tell the riders how their money is being spent. Riders on Long Island should know what the East Side Access project will do for them. Manhattan residents should know that the current phase of the Second Avenue Subway project will not only relieve congestion but also provide a one seat ride from the Upper East Side to Times Square and beyond. Riders on any line that is undergoing track and signal work should know how the system will be better for them once that work is completed. And, Metro-North riders should know that in the future they will be able to go into Grand Central Terminal and transfer onto a train out to Long Island. This is part of transparency. It is helping the more than 3 million riders on the MTA system understand that the Capital Program is benefitting them. In this \$28 billion dollar capital plan it is not too much to ask that a small percentage be set aside to fully inform the riders of the many remarkable accomplishments of the MTA Capital Program.

In closing we would like to say that we fully concur with a number of recommendations put forward in Citizens Budget Commission's recent report. We believe that the MTA's "dashboard" project will go a long way in addressing the need for tracking projects, and as we mentioned above we would like to see a move toward real transparency at the rider level.

Thank you Senator Perkins and Senator Johnson for the opportunity to testify on this important topic.