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**Testimony of the Metro-North Commuter Council to the
Board of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority
on Proposed Fare Increases
New York Power Authority, Jaguar Room
123 Main Street, White Plains, NY**

December 20, 2016

Good Evening, my name is Francis Corcoran. I represent the people of District 2 on the Westchester County Board of Legislators and am a member of the Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council (MNRCC). This evening I am speaking on behalf of the MNRCC, a group of legislatively mandated representatives of Metro-North Railroad riders. The Council was established in 1981 by the State Legislature as one of three riders' councils under the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC). Our 11 volunteer members are appointed by the Governor upon the recommendation of local officials in Westchester, Dutchess, Putnam, Orange, and Rockland Counties and the Borough of the Bronx.

The Council recognizes that the MTA and Metro-North Railroad are faced with rising costs and the MTA Board has established a system of biennial fare increases that, combined with internal savings and growth in support from a variety of taxes and governmental sources, provides resources necessary to meet these costs. We do note that riders bear a higher percentage of the cost of their ride than on other commuter rail operators at 61 percent of operating costs. We also recognize that commuting is a major expense for Metro-North riders and that some of our commuters have not seen growth in incomes to match growth in their expenses.

If fares are to be increased, we have consistently favored regular and predictable increases and this proposal is in keeping with this principle. We remain concerned, however, that regular commuters and those who travel the greatest distances on Metro-North will be the most greatly burdened by fare increases. We must keep in mind that not only do some of our commuters pay in excess of \$500 for their monthly tickets, but often they must add the cost of a monthly MetroCard and parking expenses to that total.

Because of the heavy burden that some of our commuters face, we support the provisions in these fare proposal that cap the increase in monthly and weekly ticket prices at 3.75 percent, below the overall 4 percent increase. We also support capping absolute increases in monthly and weekly tickets at \$15 and \$6.75, respectively.

We believe that there is a need for a public discussion of various stakeholders' responsibility for funding our region's mass transportation systems, and that this need

will only grow as we confront the reality of funding future requirements for capital improvements. The role of fares should be a primary focus of these discussions. In the present, however, it is critical that Metro-North have the resources necessary to ensure the safe operation of its system and to maintain the service that our residents and the economy of our region rely upon. We recognize that fare increases are one of the few tools this board has available to it to meet these obligations.

Thank you for this opportunity to present the MNRCC's views.