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**New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings on The
Preliminary Capital Budget for FY 2021-2024,
Preliminary Capital Commitment Plan for FY
2020-2024 and The Fiscal 2020 Preliminary Mayor's
Management Report
Testimony by Lisa Daglian, Executive Director, PCAC
Monday, March 9, 2020**

Good afternoon, my name is Lisa Daglian and I am the Executive Director of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, also known as PCAC. Created by the State legislature in 1981, PCAC is the MTA's in-house rider advocacy organization, representing nearly nine million daily riders on New York City's subways and buses and the Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North Railroad. I am speaking today on behalf of the New York City Transit Riders Council. Thank you for holding this hearing today and allowing us to weigh in on funding for our critical transit system.

Last year, we sought desperately needed dedicated and recurring funding sources for the MTA's FY20-24 capital program – for new signals, tracks, rolling stock, accessibility projects, station improvements and capacity expansion projects. Despite the very unfortunate fact that NYC Transit President Andy Byford won't be at the MTA to see his *Fast Forward* vision become a reality, ensuring its implementation is vital to the city's – and the entire region's – economy.

The good news is that the legislative structure is now in place to fund the most ambitious capital plan in the MTA's history, and the eyes of the region and the nation are on us. The bad news is that there is still a hold-up at the federal level, potentially delaying its planned January 2021 start. Even if the approvals come tomorrow, the reality is the MTA won't see toll revenues until mid-2021 to 2022 – after the start of the MTA's FY20-24 capital program. It is vital the MTA has adequate money to start its capital projects on time. Therefore, we ask that the city's \$3 billion contribution comes to the MTA before the \$1 billion annually – \$15 billion when bonded – that will be raised through congestion pricing. We are asking the same of the state.

Even with a possible delay in implementing full congestion pricing in time for a 2021 roll-out, the MTA has a relatively good handle on meeting its capital needs. The lack of dedicated and recurring *operating* revenue sources, however, is still of great concern. With congestion pricing a year away, ridership is growing and subway and bus service must be increased to meet the new demands it will bring. Right now, the MTA is redesigning its entire bus network – and that's a good thing. Some of the routes haven't changed in a hundred years and are in serious need of a refresh. At the same time, it is critical that the redesigns come with increased and enhanced service to meet growing demand, in the outer boroughs especially, and in subway deserts such as Co-op City, Cambria Heights and Mill Basin. They cannot simply be cost neutral reorganizations of

the networks. Ideally, the redesign should help form the glue of a truly regional system of better buses, commuter rail, and subways that will benefit all riders, particularly in advance of congestion pricing.

That's going to take money. In the face of a significant operating deficit, we are asking the city to add funding to increase bus service as a key component of redesign. How much? As much as you can find to meet the needs of the constituents you serve. We are asking the same of the state.

A very successful addition to more affordable transit in subway deserts has been the Atlantic Ticket, originally the Freedom Ticket. The Transit Riders Council takes tremendous pride in having laid the groundwork for this pilot program, and soon will be coming out with a set of recommendations for Freedom Ticket Phase II. Complicating the situation is the new Outer Borough Transportation Account discount program, funded with \$50 million a year from for-hire vehicle fees coming as part of Congestion Pricing, that will roll out in the coming months. While it will bring in some great data, it has the potential to muddy the waters as discussions get underway with the railroads in the coming months. Rest assured that we are committed to working with you on behalf of riders to move the needle on this – but again, it's going to take money. As with our original Freedom Ticket recommendations, we will be asking the city to contribute.

We appreciate your considering our comments as you begin discussion of transportation funding for the millions of riders who count on the MTA every day. Thank you.