

# Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA

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## Statement of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority at the Public Review Meeting for the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council Draft Regional Transportation Plan

July 16, 2009

Good Afternoon. I am Ellyn Shannon, of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (PCAC). The PCAC was established by the State Legislature to be the umbrella organization for three legislatively-mandated Councils representing the interests of public transportation users: the Long Island Rail Road Commuter's Council, the Metro-North Rail Road Commuters Council, and the New York City Transit Riders Council, which were created in 1981.

We welcome the opportunity to comment upon NYMTC's Draft 2010-2035 Regional Transportation Plan. The PCAC believes that improving the region's transportation will require meaningful long-range planning, and we encourage NYMTC to continue stimulating the discussion as part of this planning process.

The draft plan includes a number of important projects that are vital to improving the region's transportation systems. We are pleased to see a number of critical projects in the plan such as the Second Avenue Subway, East Side Access, Communication Based Train Control in the subways, the LIRR Main Line Third Track, and rehabilitation of Metro-North's Croton maintenance complex.

It's an ambitious list of projects, but in fact much more needs to be done. We note that a number of critical projects, such as additional rail yards and the extension of electrification in the LIRR system and the Tappan Zee Bridge, have no specified timeframe. These projects must move from good ideas to be implemented "sometime" to firm commitments to action with specific timeframes. Still other projects, deal with existing problems ten years or more into the future such as the relief of congestion on the 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue/Broadway subway line. In the coming five years there are only a handful of Bus Rapid Transit projects programmed for implementation, which is disconcerting when one of the advantages of BRT is the relatively short time required to initiate service.

We believe that it is important for the regional transportation plan to lead the development of the area's transportation system and not serve merely as a compilation of decisions already made. Many pressing transit needs in this

region are addressed in the plan as studies, but the plan does not provide for any form of implementation in the study areas such as station area planning, station access, and new transit services in heavily traveled corridors.

This discussion of needs and projects now leads us to funding and it is the constraints on funding for transit in the region that are largely responsible for the inability of governments and agencies to address existing transportation issues promptly. The struggle to obtain adequate operating funds for the MTA earlier this year makes it clear that much remains to be done in this area. While the plan addresses funding and we recognize its complexities, the importance of funding to the areas transportation system demands that an explicit program for funding these necessary improvements be developed. Perhaps this can be addressed outside of the regional transportation plan, but the funding question must be seriously dealt with in a regional context if our transportation system is to be what is needed for the vitality of our region.