

**Statement of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the Metropolitan
Transportation Authority before the NYSDOT Public Forum on Transportation
Needs in New York City**

**Center for the Arts, College of Staten Island
March 5, 2008**

Good Evening. I am William Henderson, Executive Director of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA. The PCAC serves as the umbrella organization for three commuter councils: the Long Island Rail Road Commuter's Council, the Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council and the New York City Transit Riders Councils. The PCAC was established in 1977, and its constituent Councils were legislatively mandated in 1981 to represent the interests of riders. I want to thank the New York State Department of Transportation and Commissioner Glynn for hosting this forum.

The focus of this forum is traffic congestion and that is certainly a relevant issue here on Staten Island. As a Staten Island resident, I can confirm that we have entered an age where what was formerly rush hour traffic can be found on almost any day and in almost any time period. As a metropolitan area, we are consistently in the top ten in the nation in terms of per capita time lost to congestion, which lengthens the work life of commuters stuck in congestion by the equivalent of almost two work weeks. This represents time taken away from families and friends and from the activities that add richness to life.

Experience has shown that increasing street and highway capacity alone will not solve the problem of congestion. Building our way out of congestion is not an option. Where this solution has been attempted, additional drivers have appeared to consume the increased capacity. The only feasible way of reducing congestion is to shift a substantial portion of the trips that are now bringing traffic to a standstill to public transportation. In order to do this, we must provide additional convenient and attractive service that will entice travelers to leave private automobiles behind and move to buses, rail, and ferries.

It won't do, however, to provide more public transportation by simply rolling additional buses out onto already clogged streets and highways. Additional capacity in traditional modes is important, but to substantially shift mode choice, we have to offer something other than the same start and stop, bumper to bumper trip that is available in a private automobile. If drivers are to become riders, they must be offered something better. Fortunately, we have some solutions in the planning toolbox, such as bus signal prioritization, creative use of unutilized and underutilized existing rail rights of way, creating better linkages between transit systems, and bus rapid transit, and we are beginning to put them into practice. We recognize that funding will be tight and that we need to leverage our existing resources to provide additional service. In the next twenty years, we want to see Federal and State legislation and policy provide support for creative efforts to better serve the riders whom we represent.