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City Council Transportation Committee Hearing The MTA's Response to COVID-19 Testimony by Lisa Daglian, Executive Director, PCAC Wednesday, February 11, 2021

Greetings, my name is Lisa Daglian and I am the Executive Director of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, PCAC. Thank you for holding this hearing today. We'd like to first express our appreciation to the transit workers who have kept the system running throughout the pandemic. We also recognize and mourn those whose lives were lost.

Hard to believe it's been a year since we were thrust into the vast unknown of COVID-19. The MTA kept service running throughout to allow essential workers to get where they needed to go so the rest of us could stay home. They've undertaken initiatives and implemented protocols – some more successful than others – to help keep us safe.

The MTA's fiscal resources have been devastated as a result. More federal funding is critical to emerging from the crisis, as is restarting the capital program. The city's \$3 billion is needed sooner than later to help kickstart it. Congestion pricing will hopefully pick it up from there.

Ridership continues to be low. In January, we released a white paper entitled [*How the MTA can transition into the New Normal: Getting riders back on-board*](#), which includes our recommendations on measures the MTA should take to increase rider confidence and get them back on transit. Additional funding is essential to moving the needle on these best practices.

In the past year we've learned a lot about how COVID-19 is spread and the best ways to contain it. Accepted theory in May no longer holds true today. Yet the subways are still closed overnight to regular riders, ostensibly for cleaning and disinfecting, though science tells us that's not the most effective way to stop the spread – and trains with people on them are still running.

It's time to restore 24/7 service. Tens of thousands must find other ways to get to work, or back home, or to get vaccines between 1 and 5am. For months we've been asking for metrics and milestones to guide when the system can reopen. We've heard nothing. We're big supporters of the bus network, but it isn't a substitute for the subways.

If people can go to football stadiums and dine in restaurants and soon attend NY PopsUp events, they can certainly ride the subways overnight. We all look forward to restarting the economy and getting on with life. 24/7 subway service is an integral part of what will help us get there.