



PCAC

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MTA Central Business District Tolling Program

Public Meeting: New Jersey

Testimony by Kara Gurl, Research & Communications Associate, PCAC

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Good morning! I'm Kara Gurl, Research and Communications Associate at the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC). I'm also speaking as someone who can't drive but has friends and family in New Jersey. I frequently take the PATH and New Jersey Transit to get there from Brooklyn, and while neither option is perfect, public transit gets me where I need to go. I know that congestion pricing will only speed up my and so many others' trips to Jersey by reducing traffic and funding critical transit improvements to get us to and from the PATH and NJT.

The argument that transit doesn't get you anywhere in, out of, or to New Jersey doesn't ring true. Instead of trying to stop congestion pricing from happening, elected officials west of the Hudson might consider investing the same energy in improving their own transit systems.

Transit riders need congestion pricing now more than ever. It's the only feasible way to substantially raise funding for the MTA without raising fares. It will bring in a steady stream of money for key improvements to the region's transit and commuter rail far beyond the five boroughs. Facing COVID and worsening climate change, the additional billions of dollars from congestion pricing could not be more important for riders coming from Jersey and beyond. For those who still choose to drive, it will help speed the trip.

Particularly relevant this Climate Week, the environmental benefits of congestion pricing cannot be understated. As we learned from historic storms this summer, the MTA needs significant funding to build a more resilient regional transit system that can withstand the forces of extreme weather. Congestion pricing will bring the billions of dollars we need to repair our transit, while also improving air quality, decreasing traffic around the metropolitan area, and making the region less car dependent.

Constant bumper-to-bumper traffic can be a thing of the past, improving quality of life and commutes all over the region. We deserve reliable and frequent service across our subways, buses, and commuter rail. Finally, thanks to congestion pricing, the 21st century transit system our 21st century region desperately needs is in sight.