



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Gustavo Rivera

## Testimony: MTA Public Hearing on Proposed Fare Changes

GUSTAVO RIVERA December 14, 2020

| ISSUE: **MTA, PUBLIC TRANSIT, TAX THE RICH**

Good Afternoon, I am State Senator Gustavo Rivera representing the 33rd District in the Bronx. I represent a constituency that overwhelmingly relies on public transit. I represent essential workers who continue to travel to our healthcare systems and front lines and constitute the stronghold of remaining riders as the pandemic has emptied our trains and busses. To be clear: it is my constituents that you are asking to help this agency make ends meet, while putting forth proposals that fail to acknowledge alternative measures or the devastating impact that these changes would have on them.

I am here to share my full-throated opposition regarding the MTA's proposed changes to your fare policy. While I understand that this crisis has put an already cash-strapped public transportation system in an even worse financial situation, we cannot ask every-day New Yorkers to bear that burden.

I will underscore that the Federal Government should be working to help fund public transit during this time, but we cannot rely on them alone to achieve this. New York can and should adopt proposals that would raise a substantial amount of revenue for public transit and other necessities. Public services need support from every New Yorker, so the MTA should join the call to make billionaires pay. The ultra-wealthy must contribute their fair share to

support the city and state that they call home. The financial burdens of the MTA cannot be placed on families who are struggling to put food on the table, while billionaires and multi-millionaires watched their bank accounts grow. They should not shirk their responsibility to the place that gave them that wealth.

As we eagerly await new federal leadership, we can look to congestion pricing as a source of revenue to support our transit infrastructure. It is absurd that the Federal Government has delayed this authorization, but I ask that the MTA be clear about all of the potential solutions they have at their disposal before resorting to increasing costs on those who can afford it the least. As I have advocated for before, it is imperative that we lockbox any revenue allocated to the MTA as we have continuously seen its funding shifted to other needs without account, leading to the financial situation we find ourselves in today.

A fare increase and cuts to services that mostly affect essential workers, frontline heroes, and the lowest income New Yorkers is an offensive proposal that should be rejected.

On behalf of thousands of straphangers in my district and around the metropolitan region, I oppose any fare hikes and the additional proposals that will create undue challenges for working class New Yorkers that ride public transit.