



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew Gounardes

State Senator Andrew Gounardes Urges No MTA Fare or Toll Hikes

ANDREW GOUNARDES December 15, 2020

| ISSUE: **MTA, TOLL INCREASES, NYS SENATOR ANDREW GOUNARDES**

Brooklyn, NY - State Senator Andrew Gounardes today urged the MTA not to implement fare and toll increases on the backs of middle-class New Yorkers and essential workers. Gounardes made the case in submitted testimony for the MTA Virtual Fare and Toll Public Hearing on Monday, December 21st from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. (full testimony below), suggesting that such fare and toll hikes would be a regressive tax that has the potential to send the city's transit into a death spiral of cuts and hikes. He also asserted his readiness to stand with the MTA to fight for federal funding.

"It is already a massive financial burden on the average southern Brooklyn family just to get to work. Increasing the cost of an unlimited Metrocard and raising already sky-high tolls would push families to the breaking point. The Verrazzano toll is already the highest in the nation at a staggering \$19. Southern Brooklyn families need resident discounts, not increases. I urge the MTA to take action to prevent these increases which will unfairly harm essential workers and families trying to get by," said **State Senator Andrew Gounardes**.

Full testimony:

Testimony from State Senator Andrew Gounardes; MTA Virtual Fare and Toll Public Hearing

Monday, December 21st, 10:00am - 1:00pm

As a State Senator representing the 22nd Senate District in southern Brooklyn, I am writing to express my concerns about the fare and toll hikes proposed in your November board meeting. While I appreciate the historic nature of the Authority's \$12 billion budget gap, raising fares and tolls now before federal relief is finalized will act as a regressive tax against essential workers while imperiling our region's long-term recovery.

The MTA faces extraordinary budget challenges which will force difficult choices and shared sacrifice. Yet with fares still down over 60% from this time last year, many fear that a 2-4% increase combined with a 40% service cut will permanently shrink ridership, sending the MTA's finances into a death spiral. Those left holding the bag will be our City's essential workers, who are not afforded the luxury of working from home and have already sacrificed so much during this pandemic.

Additionally, the proposed \$6.70 increase in tolls alongside the elimination of residential discounts will hit essential employees in the suburbs and outer-boroughs of the City while discouraging visitors whose spending could help stabilize New York's economic predicament. These changes will have a particular impact on New York City commuters who use the Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge, which, at a staggering \$19, charges the highest toll of any bridge in the country. This would further devastate southern Brooklyn commuters who have never benefited from a residential discount like their Staten Island counterparts traveling the other direction. We should be expanding rather than eliminating these residential discounts for the working-class families of our city.

I stand ready and willing to assist you in the fight to procure federal funding in any way that I can - but raising fares and tolls now before a new Washington administration is sworn in risks permanent reductions in ridership while increasing financial pressures on essential

workers. I therefore urge you once again to avoid this regressive tax on COVID's frontline heroes and working class families across our city.

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