



NYPIRG

## Straphangers Campaign

a project of the New York Public Interest Research Group Fund

9 Murray Street, Lower Level • New York, NY 10007-2259 • 212-349-6460 • [www.straphangers.org](http://www.straphangers.org)

**TESTIMONY  
OF THE  
NEW YORK PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP STRAPHANGERS CAMPAIGN  
BEFORE THE  
JOINT HEARING OF THE SENATE FINANCE AND ASSEMBLY WAYS AND MEANS  
COMMITTEES REGARDING THE  
FISCAL YEAR 2020-2021 EXECUTIVE TRANSPORTATION BUDGET PROPOSAL  
JANUARY 28, 2020  
ALBANY, NY**

Good afternoon, my name is Jaqi Cohen and I am the Campaign Director for the NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign. NYPIRG is a non-partisan, not-for-profit, research and advocacy organization. Consumer protection, environmental preservation, health care, higher education, mass transportation, and governmental reforms are our principal areas of concern. The Straphangers Campaign is a project of NYPIRG. Since 1979, the Straphangers Campaign has advocated on behalf of riders of public transit in New York City.

The wellbeing of New York City's public transportation system is vital to the wellbeing of New York State as a whole. Over 40 percent of all New York State residents live within the five boroughs,<sup>1</sup> and over 8 million rides are taken on New York City's subways, buses, and paratransit each weekday.<sup>2</sup> While the City's subway system is its lifeblood, it is also an integral part of the commutes of thousands of New Yorkers traveling in to the City from its surrounding upstate and Long Island suburbs. New York State is responsible for funding, operating, and appointing leadership to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify on the executive budget on transportation and share our perspective on the importance of funding New York City's vast public transit system.

### *FUNDING THE MTA CAPITAL PLAN*

New York City's subway system is one of the oldest in the world, debuting its service in 1904. It still depends on outdated technology and infrastructure, utilizing signals put in place in the 1930s, and many outdated subway cars, many of which were built in the early 1960s. Aging infrastructure and outdated technology are in many ways directly responsible for the biggest issues plaguing our subway system. In recent years, riders have suffered from frequent. Historically, the subway system has suffered from both financial divestment and political neglect, and for years was starved for critical funding to pay for repairs and upgrades.

At the root of the many issues plaguing the subway are signals, and modernizing the subway's antiquated signaling system is key to providing better subway service. Signals that use computer-

---

<sup>1</sup> "New York City Population," Department of New York City Planning. See: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/planning-level/nyc-population/nyc-population.page>.

<sup>2</sup> "Introduction to Subway Ridership," Metropolitan Transportation Authority. See: <http://web.mta.info/nyct/facts/ridership/>.

based technology will not only allow subways to run more quickly and reliably, but it will enable the MTA to operate more trains per hour across subway lines. Installing this new technology will mean better, faster, safer, and less crowded trips for subway riders each day.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to being unreliable, New York City subways are vastly inaccessible. In New York City, access to mobility means access to greater opportunity. Yet a significant number of New Yorkers are unable to benefit from our city's expansive transit network due to limited mobility, age, or disability. Three quarters of New York City's 472 subway stations are inaccessible, and the few elevators that exist in the system are subject to frequent outages and breakdowns<sup>4</sup>. According to a 2018 report by the New York City Comptroller's office, 640,000 New Yorkers are currently living in "ADA transit deserts" without a single accessible subway station in their neighborhoods.<sup>5</sup>

In 2019, the MTA Board voted to approve the authority's 2020-2024 Capital Program. At a whopping \$51.5 billion, the plan is the largest in MTA history, costing 70% more than the 2015-2019 Program. The 2020-2024 MTA Capital Program commits \$40 billion of its \$51.5 billion budget towards New York City Transit, which operates the MTA's subways, buses, and paratransit systems. Many of the priorities set in the Capital Program reflect those of the riding public. Some of the biggest priorities funded in the plan include:

- \$7.1 billion to replace outdated subway signals with computer-based signaling technology on six subway lines;
- \$5.2 billion to improve station accessibility at 70 additional subway stations;
- \$6.1 billion to replace outdated subway cars, many of which have been used well beyond their expected useful life;
- \$4.1 billion to upgrade subway stations, which will include replacing existing station elevators and escalators that have outlived their useful life;
- \$2.3 billion to replace over 2,000 of the oldest buses throughout the bus network; and,
- \$1.1 billion toward the purchase of 500 electric buses to begin to transition the MTA towards a zero-emission bus fleet.

The 2020-2024 MTA Capital Program is ambitious and requires an unprecedented level of funding for its promises to become reality. The Straphangers Campaign applauds the Governor and the State Legislature for passing historic congestion pricing legislation in 2019. Once implemented in 2021, congestion pricing in Manhattan's Central Business District is expected to raise tens of billions of dollars in new revenue needed towards funding the repair and modernization of New York City's transit system. **It is critical that the Legislature continue to safeguard congestion pricing so that it can be successfully implemented in early 2021.**

---

<sup>3</sup> Fitzsimmons, Emma G., and Rebecca Liebson. "Your Subway Was Delayed by 1930s Signals. A Fix Is Finally Coming." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 23 Sept. 2019, [www.nytimes.com/2019/09/23/nyregion/nyc-mta-subway-signals.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/23/nyregion/nyc-mta-subway-signals.html).

<sup>4</sup> Barron, James. "For Disabled Subway Riders, the Biggest Challenge Can Be Getting to the Train." *New York Times*, 26 July 2018, [www.nytimes.com/2018/07/26/nyregion/disabled-subway-riders-elevators.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/26/nyregion/disabled-subway-riders-elevators.html).

<sup>5</sup> Comptroller Stringer: 'ADA Transit Deserts' Leave 640,000 New Yorkers Stranded Without a Single Accessible Station in Their Neighborhood. [comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/comptroller-stringer-ada-transit-deserts-leave-640000-new-yorkers-stranded-without-a-single-accessible-station-in-their-neighborhood/](http://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/comptroller-stringer-ada-transit-deserts-leave-640000-new-yorkers-stranded-without-a-single-accessible-station-in-their-neighborhood/)

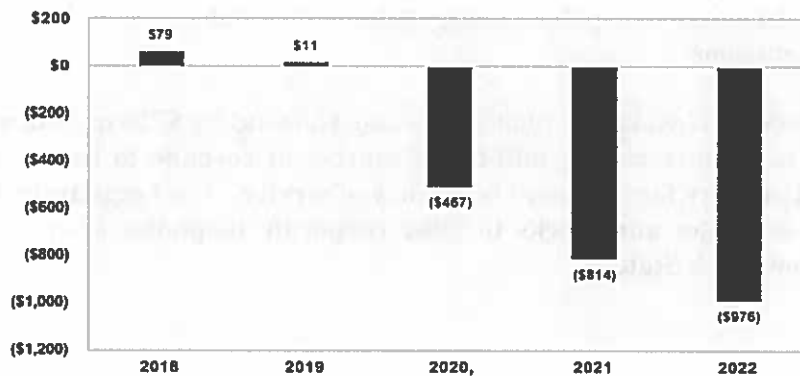
In addition to the \$25 billion expected to be raised from congestion pricing, the Governor's plan commits \$3 billion in state funding towards the MTA's next 5-year capital program and assumes an equal funding commitment from the City of New York. This leaves an almost \$10 billion gap that the MTA will be forced to make up for through borrowing. **The MTA capital program must not rely too heavily on debt, which will increase the MTA's annual debt service payments and may ultimately result in future fare increases and service cuts. Furthermore, Albany must produce the \$3 billion it has pledged towards the 2020-2024 Capital Program over the next five years and make available the balance of funds it owes from the 2015-2019 Capital Program.**

*CLOSING THE MTA OPERATING DEFICIT*

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) is the largest public authority in New York State, with an annual operating budget of nearly \$17 billion. Half of the Authority's budget is paid for by revenue raised from fares and tolls. 36% of the agency's operating budget is paid for by dedicated taxes, and an additional 7% is paid for by state and local subsidies.

In its current state, the MTA is a cash-strapped agency, in part thanks to years of financial neglect, internal budget mismanagement, and revenue diversions. Its own budget estimations project an operating deficit of \$814 million by 2021 unless it can cut costs and/or find new sources of revenue.<sup>6</sup> Riders fear that such a drastic operating budget deficit could lead the MTA to raise fares or slash transit service in the near future. Their fears are not unfounded. In 2010, faced with a \$750 million operating deficit, the MTA was forced to eliminate service on over 100 bus routes and two subway lines, while reducing paratransit service and slashing over a thousand jobs.<sup>7</sup>

**MTA PROJECTED OPERATING DEFICIT<sup>8</sup>**  
**Projected Financial Plan Operating Results**  
 (\$ in millions)



\*Source: *Metropolitan Transportation Authority Budget Dashboard*

<sup>6</sup> Guse, Clayton. "MTA Plans No Service Cuts in 2020, but Transit Official Warns of Deficit in the 'Gazillions'." *New York Daily News*, 11 Nov. 2019, [www.nydailynews.com/new-york/ny-mta-financial-plan-20191111-oct2fcg13jg35pytvffgqn7wyi-story.html](http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/ny-mta-financial-plan-20191111-oct2fcg13jg35pytvffgqn7wyi-story.html).

<sup>7</sup> Namako, Tom. "MTA Approves Massive Service Cuts." *New York Post*, New York Post, 24 Mar. 2010, [www.nypost.com/2010/03/24/mta-approves-massive-service-cuts/](http://www.nypost.com/2010/03/24/mta-approves-massive-service-cuts/).

<sup>8</sup> MTA Operating Budget Basics, Metropolitan Transportation Authority. See: <https://new.mta.info/budget/MTA-operating-budget-basics>

While the current MTA budget does not plan to directly cut service, it fails to fund much needed frequency improvements on subways and buses needed to ease overcrowding, bolster the MTA's bus network redesign efforts, and accommodate new ridership when congestion pricing takes effect in early 2021. It also guts a highly successful paratransit program providing on-demand e-hail service to riders.

A properly funded, well-running public transportation system is not only necessary to keep New York City moving, but it's critical to reducing New York State's carbon footprint. 29% of the nation's greenhouse gas emissions come from transportation, the bulk of which is made up by single-occupancy vehicles such as cars and trucks. For a city that prides itself on its vast public transit system, it is still one that is heavily reliant on single-occupancy vehicles. 16% of New York City's overall greenhouse gas emissions come from private cars.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, the MTA avoids 19 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions per year as public transit produces fewer greenhouse gases per passenger than cars.

Private car ownership and registrations in New York City have increased while transit ridership has fallen.<sup>10</sup> This is no coincidence. As subway and bus performance has fallen, many riders have fled for other modes of transportation, including buying cars or using ride-share services which utilize single-occupancy vehicles. Poor performing transit runs the risk of leading riders to less climate-friendly modes of transportation.

While the MTA, which is responsible for remarkably lowering New York State's carbon footprint, has been subjected to budget raids and diversions, oil and gas companies have remained heavily subsidized in New York State for years. It is estimated that each year, New York State spends up to \$1.5 billion dollars on tax breaks that subsidize the oil and gas industry and promote the usage of dirty fossil fuels.<sup>11</sup> Corporations that have profited from fossil fuels should be held accountable for contributing to the current climate crisis, and subsidies directed at these corporations should be spent on public benefits, like public transportation, that reduce New York State's overall greenhouse gas emissions.

**NYPIRG supports the Governor's plan to increase state aid by \$725 million and encourages the Legislature to explore raising additional sources of revenue to help close the MTA's operating deficit and pay for increased frequency of service. The Legislature should support legislation that evaluates and works to close corporate loopholes awarded to fossil fuel companies by New York State.**

---

<sup>9</sup> Gordon, Aaron. "Is NYC Doing Enough to Address the Looming Climate Crisis?" *Curbed NY*, Curbed NY, 8 Oct. 2018, [www.ny.curbed.com/2018/10/8/17952564/un-climate-change-report-new-york-transportation](http://www.ny.curbed.com/2018/10/8/17952564/un-climate-change-report-new-york-transportation).

<sup>10</sup> New York State DMV Vehicle Registrations, 2007-2017. See: <https://dmv.ny.gov/about-dmv/archives-statistical-summaries>

<sup>11</sup> Krueger, Liz, and Kevin A. Cahill. "Support Action on Climate Change, Save Taxpayer Dollars." *Times Union*, Times Union, 20 Sept. 2017, [www.timesunion.com/opinion/article/Support-action-on-climate-change-save-taxpayer-12215735.php](http://www.timesunion.com/opinion/article/Support-action-on-climate-change-save-taxpayer-12215735.php).

## INVESTING IN THE MTA BUS NETWORK REDESIGN

At 2.5 million trips each day, New York City's bus system is far and away the largest in the country, providing more trips on an average weekday than L.A., Chicago, and Philadelphia combined.<sup>12</sup> The City also has the slowest buses in America—a fact that bus riders here know from bitter daily experience. So slow, in fact, that the Straphangers Campaign gives annual awards for excellence in slowness and unreliability. As a result of poor service, many riders have stopped taking the bus altogether. Since 2012, New York City bus ridership has declined 15%, making service vulnerable to service cuts.<sup>13</sup>

**SLOWEST, HIGH-RIDERSHIP BUS ROUTES PER BOROUGH, 2019<sup>14</sup>**

Route Number	Speed (MPH)	Borough	Ridership
M14A	4.3	Manhattan	26,637
B35	4.8	Brooklyn	27,273
Bx19	4.8	Bronx	23,259
Q54	6.4	Queens	10,567
S48	7.8	Staten Island	6,700

New York City's subway system is one of the largest in the world, with 472 subway stations across the boroughs and enough rail to reach from New York City to Chicago. Yet despite the size of New York City's vast subway network, less than two-thirds of New Yorkers live within walking distance from a subway station, living in what is commonly referred to as "transit deserts".<sup>15</sup> In contrast, 94% of all New York City residents live within walking distance (one quarter mile) of a bus stop.<sup>16</sup> Bus ridership may have dropped dramatically in recent years, yet there are still a considerable number of New Yorkers for whom taking alternative modes of transit is simply not an option.

Subway and rail deserts particularly impact New York City's marginalized communities, many of whom depend heavily on bus service for travel. In New York City, 75% of bus riders are people of color, 55% are foreign-born, and over 12% are over the age of 65. The average salary of a New York City bus rider is \$28,455 compared to that of the average subway rider at \$40,000.<sup>17</sup> In lieu

<sup>12</sup> List of United States local bus agencies by ridership,

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_United\\_States\\_local\\_bus\\_agencies\\_by\\_ridership](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_local_bus_agencies_by_ridership)

<sup>13</sup> Speaker Corey Johnson's "Let's Go: A Case for Municipal Control and a Comprehensive Transportation Vision for the Five Boroughs": [http://council.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/LetsGo\\_TransitReport\\_05.pdf](http://council.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/LetsGo_TransitReport_05.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Straphangers Campaign's 2019 Pokey and Schleppe Awards:

<https://www.nypirg.org/pubs/201907/Straphangers%20Campaign%20Pokey%20Awards%202019.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Regional Plan Association. "Build New Subway Lines to Underserved Areas of the City." *The Fourth Regional Plan*, [fourthplan.org/action/new-subways](http://fourthplan.org/action/new-subways).

<sup>16</sup> Mayor de Blasio's 2019 "Better Buses Action Plan". <https://www1.nyc.gov/html/brt/downloads/pdf/better-buses-action-plan-2019.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> TransitCenter. "Bus Turnaround 2018: Fast Bus, Fair City." <http://busturnaround.nyc/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/BusTurnaroundAction-Plan.pdf>

of accessible subway stations, many New Yorkers with disabilities depend on the city's extensive bus network as the MTA's entire fleet of buses is wheelchair accessible.<sup>18</sup>

The best way for the transit gap among communities to disappear is for more frequent and effective quality bus service to exist in where there are transit deserts. Building new subways or other rail is simply too slow and too costly to be the only solution, or even the main solution. For instance, the first phase of the Second Avenue subway – three stations – cost over \$4.5 billion. Connecting communities by bus service is a far more viable option. Yet as riders know from bitter daily experience, bus service in its current state unacceptably slow and unreliable.

As New York City's population continues to grow, improving and expanding bus service is its best chance for a better commute for *all* New Yorkers, regardless of where they live, who they are, or how much money they make. In order to accommodate future population growth, reduce our carbon footprint, and increase transportation equity, New York City must build a robust bus system that prioritizes its riders.

There is hope that bus service in New York City can turn around for the better. As part of the MTA's *Fast Forward* plan to overhaul transit service citywide, New York City's bus network is undergoing a full network redesign, the first of such changes in about half a century. Redesigning the city's bus network is crucial to improving bus service across the five boroughs in order to streamline and consolidate superfluous service, reconsolidate spacing between bus stops, and create new and updated bus routes that reflect current day commuting needs of bus riders. Unfortunately, due to funding, the MTA's goal is to keep these network redesign plans "revenue-neutral", meaning that the authority can do little to increase frequency of service or provide new, additional bus routes. In order to successfully transform bus service, provide connectivity to transit deserts, and bolster New York City's bus system to accommodate more riders as the implementation of congestion pricing grows near, it is critical that the MTA have the funds and the will necessary to invest in the success of its citywide network redesign plan.

**The MTA should commit to increasing funding towards its citywide bus network redesign plans. The Straphangers Campaign the legislature to prioritize New York City's bus network and guarantee that the MTA directs operating funding to invest in more frequent bus service.**

### *REFORMING ACCESS-A-RIDE*

Subways and buses are not the only way for straphangers to travel the boroughs. Access-a-Ride is the MTA's surface paratransit service, required by the federal Americans Disabilities Act for New Yorkers with disabilities who cannot access fixed-route transit service like subways or buses. Access-A-Ride is a 24-hour, 7-day a week service, operating in all five boroughs as well as parts of Westchester and Nassau counties. Access-A-Ride currently provides vital transit service to 150,000 New Yorkers annually.

Access-A-Ride has a long history of providing poor service. Vehicles often arrive late or not at all, riders are taken on unnecessary detours, and riders often cannot predict or even anticipate when they will arrive at their destination. Access-A-Ride is a "shared-ride" service, meaning drivers will

---

<sup>18</sup> MTA Bus Facts, Metropolitan Transportation Authority, <http://web.mta.info/nyct/facts/fbus.htm>

often pick up multiple passengers on their trip. This often leads to longer trips, and it is not uncommon it to take multiple hours for an Access-A-Rider to reach their final destination, even if they're not traveling very far.

According to the MTA's own *Trip Planner* site, a subway ride from MTA Headquarters at 2 Broadway in Manhattan to Grand Central Terminal is expected to take 13 minutes, yet Access-A-Ride's own Maximum Ride Time guidelines determine the same trip taken via Access-A-Ride is expected to take over an hour.<sup>19</sup> According to the MTA's paratransit dashboard, Access-A-Ride's on-time performance in September 2019 was 95%. But the agency's metrics don't tell the full story. A dedicated Access-a-Ride carrier is considered "on-time" even when it picks up passengers up to 30 minutes later than its scheduled arrival time, as well as a 15-minute arrival window for broker vehicles. A 2016 audit of the program conducted by NYC Comptroller Stringer's office found that in 2015 alone, 31,492 Access-A-Ride customers were left stranded without a pickup, and less than 50% of one broker car services' trips were considered "on-time".<sup>20</sup>

Adding to the frustration of many Access-A-Riders are the firm trip booking restrictions in place. Access-A-Riders are required to book their travel at least a day in advance, with trips booked no later than 5PM the day before travel, meaning freedom of day-to-day travel is severely limited.<sup>21</sup> If a rider needs to cancel a trip, they must do so three hours before the trip is scheduled, or risk obtaining a violation from the MTA. Riders with numerous violations risk losing access to Access-A-Ride service altogether.<sup>22</sup>

While there are no shortages of challenges facing Access-A-Riders each day, there is hope for change. In 2017, many Access-A-Riders celebrated the creation of a new e-hail pilot program, which allowed Access-A-Rider to hail a yellow or green cab through a ride-hailing app on demand. For the 1,200 riders enrolled in the program, this pilot transformed paratransit service for the better, providing shorter trips, easier trip-hailing, and more flexibility for its riders. Despite its popularity and broad support from riders and advocates alike, the fate of Access-A-Ride the on-demand e-hail pilot is dire. While the MTA announced it plans to expand its on-demand e-hail paratransit pilot service to an additional 1,200 riders, it will significantly reduce service. This service reduction includes a limit on rides to 16 rides per month as well as a \$15 subsidy cap. The future of Access-A-Ride should be one that includes, and expands, unlimited on-demand e-hail service to all paratransit riders.

If done right, on-demand e-hail service has the potential to become one of the greatest success stories to come out of the MTA in recent years. The MTA has a chance to transform a service that has failed its riders into a shining example of what paratransit can look like in transit systems all of America's big cities. Yet the MTA has chosen to weaken its program that has been lauded as

---

<sup>19</sup> Metropolitan Transportation Authority, *Maximum Ride Times*, Guide to Access-A-Ride Service: <http://web.mta.info/nyct/paratran/guide1.htm#RideTimes>

<sup>20</sup> Comptroller Stringer: Audit Report of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's Oversight of the Access-A-Ride Program. <http://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/audit-report-of-the-metropolitan-transportation-authoritys-oversight-of-the-access-a-ride-program/>

<sup>21</sup> Metropolitan Transportation Authority, *Making a Reservation and Managing Trips*: <https://new.mta.info/accessibility/paratransit/making-a-reservation-and-managing-trips>

<sup>22</sup> New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, *Using Access-A-Ride Factsheet*: <https://nylpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/AAR-Fact-Sheet-Using-Final-8.2012.pdf>

“life changing” by so many of its users, opting instead to provide pilot users with on-demand service on a severely limited basis.<sup>23</sup>

**The MTA should commit to expanding its successful e-hail pilot program to all Access-A-Riders, and the legislature should secure any additional funding necessary to do so. The Straphangers Campaign also urges the Legislature to pass S7371 to restore the MTA’s existing on-demand e-hail paratransit pilot program.**

#### *CONNECT TRANSIT DESERTS WITH COMMUTER RAIL DISCOUNTS*

In June of 2018, the MTA announced it would be launching “Atlantic Ticket”, a pilot program designed to provide discounted fares to commuter rail riders traveling between Brooklyn and Queens using the Long Island Railroad. The pilot program was so successful, MTA decided to extend the program, finding that in some cases riders were leaving Penn Station an opting to travel from Atlantic Terminal in Brooklyn instead.<sup>24</sup>

While New York City’s subway is its lifeblood, it is not easily accessible for many New Yorkers, as less than two-thirds of all New Yorkers live walking-distance from a subway stop. 18 of New York City’s 32 commuter rail stations are located in subway deserts, yet the cost of commuter rail fare is often too expensive for many New Yorkers to access the system. Due to the existing fare structure, commuter rail riders traveling within New York City’s five boroughs end up paying more per mile to travel by Long Island Railroad or Metro North than those traveling to Manhattan from New York City’s suburbs.<sup>25</sup> A 2018 report by the New York City Comptroller’s office found that the cost of providing a fare discount to commuter rail riders within the five boroughs equal to the cost of a subway, bus, or paratransit fare would cost the MTA \$50 million per year.<sup>26</sup>

**The Straphangers Campaign supports the Governor’s plan to expand both station and rail capacity at Penn Station, which will hopefully incentivize more New Yorkers to choose transit when commuting into Manhattan. This expansion should be accompanied by a fare discount for LIRR commuters within the borough, similar to the Atlantic Ticket program, to provide equitable transit access to New Yorkers living in subway deserts.**

#### *EQUIPPING A PUBLIC AUTHORITY WITH PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY*

If the MTA Is to overhaul its transit network, build new infrastructure, and bring New York City’s public transportation network into the modern age, it will need support and trust from the public to ensure its success.

---

<sup>23</sup>Rappaport, Joe. “Op-Ed: The Truth about NYC Transit and People with Disabilities.” New York Daily News, 5 Dec. 2019, [www.nydailynews.com/opinion/ny-oped-the-truth-transit-disabilities-20191205-267uytkfjncqfg4wql6c3y2ohm-story.html](http://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/ny-oped-the-truth-transit-disabilities-20191205-267uytkfjncqfg4wql6c3y2ohm-story.html).

<sup>24</sup>Quigley, Liam. “Atlantic Ticket Program Extends LIRR Rider Discounts for Another Year.” *amNewYork*, 14 Oct. 2019, [www.amny.com/transit/lirr-atlantic-ticket-1-32910144/](http://www.amny.com/transit/lirr-atlantic-ticket-1-32910144/).

<sup>25</sup>Evelly, Jeanmarie. “City Residents Riding Commuter Rail Pay More Per Mile than Suburbanites.” *City Limits*, 4 June 2018, [www.citylimits.org/2018/06/04/city-residents-pay-more-per-mile-than-suburbanites-when-riding-mta-commuter-lines/](http://www.citylimits.org/2018/06/04/city-residents-pay-more-per-mile-than-suburbanites-when-riding-mta-commuter-lines/).

<sup>26</sup>Stringer, Scott. “Expanding Access in One Swipe: Opening Commuter Lines to Metrocards,” October 16, 2018. <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/expanding-access-in-one-swipe-opening-commuter-lines-to-metrocards/>.



One clear way the MTA can win back trust is by reforming its outdated and opaque FOIL process. Currently, FOIL requests submitted to the Authority are processed differently among its 8 different agencies, requiring individuals to submit requests to each individual agency. Each of the MTA's agencies respond to FOIL requests via paper mail, as opposed to digitally. The outdated process through which the MTA collects and processes these requests has resulted in late responses to requests, incomplete records kept at the MTA, and a bureaucratic nightmare for those seeking to access information from the MTA that should be made publicly available.<sup>27</sup>

The MTA could benefit by following the model set by its colleagues at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey by adopting an Open FOIL platform. This would enable the MTA to easily process, track, and provide responses to the thousands of FOIL requests it receives each year, and relieve the public seeking information from the MTA of a tremendous administrative burden.

**Given the size and scope of the Authority, it is critical that the MTA's foil process is transparent, accessible, and easy to navigate. To ensure greater accountability and transparency at the MTA, the legislature should pass legislation requiring the MTA to adopt Open FOIL.**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

---

<sup>27</sup> "FOIL that Works- Increasing MTA transparency and accountability by putting FOIL online." *Reinvent Albany*, <https://reinventalbany.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/FOIL-that-Works-MTA-FOIL-Report-October-2018.pdf>

