



September 8, 2025

MTA Government and Community Relations
2 Broadway, 16th Floor
New York, NY 10004

MTA Government and Community Relations,

We write to you today in opposition to the proposed fare hikes by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Board of Directors. The proposed fare and toll hikes for New York City Transit, Long Island Railroad, Metro-North, and Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority services are a slap in the face to commuters who have already been hit with increased costs from the Congestion Pricing scheme. The MTA, elected officials, and advocates for Congestion Pricing argued that New York City commuters could “just take transit” and now that the shift has been made and ridership on the commuter rails and subways have increased, these same people are trying to take more money out of their pocket by increasing fares. Governor Hochul even suspended the implementation of Congestion Pricing in June of 2024 due to “affordability concerns” and now Congestion Pricing has been implemented with planned toll increases over the coming years and now fares are being increased. What has changed over this short period of time? This has all of the makings of a bait-and-switch tactic used by the MTA to hide their internal operational and financial failures.

The MTA has made clear that they either cannot or do not care to stop fare evasion on their subways, buses, and commuter rails and now have chosen to take more money from their law-abiding riders and vehicle commuters by way of Congestion Pricing and fare increases. The MTA loses roughly \$700 million annually from fare evaders. Instead of ensuring that all riders pay their fair share, the MTA has taken steps to excuse bad behavior and punish law-abiding New Yorkers who continue to pay for services. The proposed fare and toll increases across the MTA’s subsidiaries would amount to roughly \$400 million in additional annual revenue on top of the estimated \$500 million generated from Congestion Pricing in 2025. This makes the MTA’s

intentions plain; it is easier to take more money from law-abiding New Yorkers than to crack down on criminals who jump the turnstiles.

Time and again, the MTA has steadfastly refused to take a look under the hood at their exorbitant expenses, and has instead relied on imposing ever higher costs on their riders. The MTA's costs and expenses continue to be the highest compared to comparable domestic and international transit systems. For example, the MTA was legislatively required to undergo a transformation that included a complete personnel and reorganization plan in 2019. A New York State Comptroller report auditing the progress of this transformation over a time period ending in October of 2022 found that the MTA failed to even "have a working plan for Transformation," despite hiring multiple consultants to accomplish this specific goal. Further, the report found that the only "savings" accomplished through the entire transformation were done by eliminating positions that had been vacant prior to the operation being undertaken, therefore no savings were identified during the audit.

Instead of implementing sound, transparent, and accountable solutions, the MTA continues to funnel public funds into outside consultants and out-of-state firms, often through opaque and questionable processes that lack meaningful oversight. One particularly troubling example is the MTA's \$35 million contract with Allied Universal Security Services, a private firm based in Pennsylvania. This firm was hired under dubious circumstances to deploy armed guards throughout New York City's subway system, supposedly to combat fare evasion. Yet the process lacked transparency, and it remains unclear how the decision to hire Allied Universal was made. Even more troubling, according to New York Post reporting, these armed guards sometimes sleep during their shifts and are often not at their assigned posts.

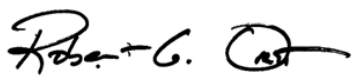
This is not an isolated case. The MTA has developed a pattern of relying heavily on high-cost consultants rather than investing in sustainable, long-term, in-house expertise. For the Second Avenue Subway project alone, the agency has entered into nearly \$1 billion worth of contracts with outside consultants. These ballooning costs raise serious questions about financial stewardship, especially in the face of ongoing service disruptions, maintenance backlogs, and fare hikes.

At a time when riders are being asked to pay more for less, and when trust in public institutions is already fragile, the MTA must be held accountable for how it spends public dollars. New Yorkers deserve a transit system that works for them, not one that enriches private firms at the expense of transparency and efficiency.

Instead of continually passing the buck, and shifting costs onto the commuters of the region, it's time to pump the brakes and instead take a serious look at why the MTA has such high costs, and take active steps to make living in New York more affordable. The Legislature should pass, and the Governor should sign into law, S.533, sponsored by Senator Martins and Senators from the

MTA region, which would require that an independent accounting firm conduct a forensic audit of the MTA, and would repeal the Congestion Pricing scheme or S.4705 and S.5905, sponsored by Senator Lanza that repeals congestion pricing and establishes an independent forensic audit. The MTA has lacked true transparency for far too long and continues to operate in the shadows while reluctantly providing hand-picked information to share with the Comptroller and the Inspectors General. An independent audit of the authority will allow not only lawmakers but the public to see where their taxpayer dollars are going and why they are continuously footing the bill for poor governance and decision making. It's clear that the MTA must first address their irresponsible spending and decision making before even thinking about increasing tolls and fares on hard-working New Yorkers.

Sincerely,



Robert G. Ort
Senate Minority Leader
62nd District



Senator Andrew Lanza
24th District



Senator William Weber
38th District




Senator Steve Chan
17th District



Senator Patricia Canzoneri-Fitzpatrick
9th District



Senator Alexis Weik
8th District



Senator Rob Rolison
39th District



Senator Steve Rhoads
5th District



Senator Anthony Palumbo
1st District

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jack M. Martins". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "J" and "M".

Senator Jack M. Martins
7th District

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "DGS". The signature is very stylized and abbreviated.

Senator Daniel G. Stec
45th District

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mario R. Mattera". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Senator Mario Mattera
2nd District