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Testimony by Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams to the New York State Assembly Standing Committee on Corporations, Authorities and Commissions on the MTA 2015-2019 Capital Plan

Good afternoon, my name is Eric Adams and I am the Brooklyn Borough President. I represent 2.6 million residents, many of whom are riders that depend on New York City Transit and the Long Island Rail Road to get them to work, school, and various recreation points throughout our city.

I want to thank Assembly Member James Brennan, Chair of the Assembly Committee on Corporations, Authorities and Commissions and his staff for coordinating this hearing, as well as the other members of the committee for their commitment to public transportation.

I am here today to offer testimony on the upcoming MTA Capital Plan for 2015-2019. Brooklyn is a borough on the rise, a burgeoning destination for tourists and a hub for hundreds of businesses large and small. To continue our growth and success, success that helps support the tax base of our great state of New York, our transportation system must be upgraded to reflect a 21st century borough that, if it stood alone, would be the fourth-largest city in America, with a geographic footprint of almost 100 square miles.



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I would like to focus my testimony today by highlighting a few areas that the MTA and New York City Transit should focus on in the upcoming Capital Plan:

Item 1: Disability Support

NYC Transit needs to stay committed to making the subway system accessible to customers with disabilities, and that means accelerating its work to upgrade every station to be fully accessible, according to the standards by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

There are 170 subway stations in Brooklyn and only 21 of those stations are currently ADA-compliant. The MTA plans to make an additional seven stations in Brooklyn ADA-compliant by 2020. 28 out of 170 stations is a wholly inadequate number; that is a paltry 16%. Brooklyn has the largest population of senior citizens in the City, nearing 500,000 residents, as well as a disabled population of more than 300,000 residents. These residents deserve the same access to the subway system as all other New Yorkers. But only having 28 ADA compliant stations by 2020 denies them that access.

The MTA must make the necessary investments to be in compliance with the ADA and afford their customers, my constituents, access to the subway system. To this end, the MTA should speed up its timetable to complete accessibility-related work at the seven remaining stations in



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the current queue as well as commit to doubling the number of ADA-compliant stations operating in Brooklyn by 2025.

On the same note, a 21st century transit system should incorporate all the trappings of modern technology. Audio and visual screens on our subway trains, as well as our buses, would be a great asset to our disabled and visually/hearing-impaired riders, keeping them informed in the same fashion we expect our able riders to be. I encourage the MTA to explore this important investment.

Item 2: Transit Infrastructure Investment

As I mentioned before, Brooklyn is experiencing tremendous growth across the whole borough, from East Williamsburg to East New York and from Cobble Hill to Coney Island. Many of our biggest growth areas are focused along our subway corridors. There are several projects where the MTA should make key infrastructure investments to provide significant improvements in system capacity, investments that will support the growing ridership and advance our borough's potential.

In the neighborhoods of Ocean Hill-Brownsville and East New York, a majority of residents are highly dependent on public transportation. The two main lines that service those neighborhoods are the 3 and the L, which intersect by the Junius Street and Livonia Street stations. These two station entrances are only 250 feet from each other. With continued growth projected for these Brooklyn neighborhoods, the



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MTA should connect these two lines to allow passengers to transfer to and from the 3 and L line.

Secondly, the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) provides a critical link between Jamaica, Queens and the Atlantic Avenue Terminal. This rail line runs parallel to the lines that intersect at Broadway Junction in Cypress Hills, a major hub of residential and commercial development. This neighborhood will continue to grow as the Mayor pursues his plan for building 80,000 new units of affordable housing across the City, a plan I have supported by calling for the upzoning of the Broadway Corridor, stretching from the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway to the Junction. The MTA should build a connector link between the New York City Transit lines that intersect at Broadway Junction and the East New York station on the LIRR, a station that is only one block away. This investment will help further both residential and commercial growth along the Broadway Junction corridors, as well as provide a crucial intersystem link for passengers transferring between train lines.

Third, there is a real need to increase public transit's reach in the areas of Brooklyn that have not had significant access. A generation ago, no one imagined that Brooklyn's waterfront would be some of the most sought-after real estate in the country, for both residential and commercial purposes. Yet for all the growth that the waterfront has experienced, from Greenpoint all the way down to Red Hook, this area is poorly served by public transit. As the MTA continues to build out its system throughout high-growth and high-need areas in Manhattan, it



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should turn its attention to similar high-growth and high-need areas in Brooklyn and create a light-rail line that connects the neighborhoods along Brooklyn's waterfront. This line should continue into Long Island City and service the entire East River waterfront, connecting many of the borough's commercial, industrial and residential centers. Such improvements would spur additional economic development and job creation along Brooklyn's waterfront, especially in growth industries such as manufacturing, technology and the innovation economy.

The MTA should work with leadership on the city and state level to find feasible ways to ensure funding and planning for these important investments in our future can progress forward.

Item 3: Bus Service Expansion and Enhancement

Public transportation in Brooklyn is not just dependent on the subway system. New York City Transit bus service is an important and critical asset to Brooklyn, especially in the southern and eastern neighborhoods of the borough where the subway does not reach. Simply put, we need to make Brooklyn more accessible to Brooklynites, and the excessive commute times to Manhattan, Queens and other points in our own borough have delayed growth and frustrated riders.

I commend the MTA for bringing back the B37 line from Bay Ridge to downtown Brooklyn and I urge the agency to restore service on the whole down all the way down to Borough Hall in the next phase of its capital plan. Next, the MTA should focus its attention on restoring the



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B70 to 7th Avenue and the B8 service to the Bay Ridge-95th Street R station at all times.

The most significant investment the MTA can make in our bus system is more bus rapid transit or select bus service along major corridors throughout the borough. For example, BRT or SBS service along Flatbush Avenue, Eastern Parkway, Utica Avenue, and Kings Highway would open up many of the neighborhoods of southern and eastern Brooklyn and provide a more direct link to the more northern areas of the borough. Additionally, the east-west route along Kings Highway would serve the added benefit of providing a fast and convenient connecting link between the F, N, B, and Q subway lines.

Now, a bus or a train is only as good as the schedule it keeps. Timely and efficient trains and buses are the key to making our world-class system tick. I'm glad to see the MTA is investing in countdown clocks for subways and buses, and I was proud to allocate \$60,000 from my capital budget allocation this year towards this initiative. The MTA should quicken the pace that it is installing these clocks and set a goal for 100% installation across the borough by the end of the decade.

I want to once again thank Assembly Member Brennan for holding this hearing. I hope mass transit needs of Brooklyn and its 2.6 million residents will be supported by the MTA's Capital Plan.