



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

MTA Fair Increase Hearing Testimony

December 19, 2016

Brooklyn College

Good Evening.

My name is Eric L. Adams, and I am Brooklyn's borough president, representing 2.6 million residents who ride and depend upon the New York City Transit system to get them to school, work, and various locations throughout our city. I am submitting testimony against the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (MTA) proposed fare and toll hikes.

This is the fifth time in seven years that the MTA is asking commuters, who live in the most unaffordable city in America, to scrape the bottoms of their pocketbooks and pay more to ride the buses and trains. For most riders on the transit system, this means more money taken away from their hard-earned paychecks to be able to get to school, work, or anywhere else in the city. Brooklyn residents understand that we need to identify ways to invest in new buses and train cars, but hard-working Brooklynites and New Yorkers are continuing to shoulder the burden for funding this system without additional support from Albany.

According to MTA's data on income groups for ridership between September 2015 through August 2016, 30 percent of riders are using the monthly MetroCard and 40 percent are using the Pay-Per-Ride MetroCard, which includes an 11 percent "bonus" if a customer adds \$5.50 or more at the time of purchase. That encompasses 70 percent of transit riders. This is a major concern. The MTA must stop balancing the budget on the backs of those who are already contributing a significant portion of their income to the system.

Innovative proposals need to be seriously explored and/or considered before the MTA announces to the public every two years that they will have to pay more for a fiscally hemorrhaging system that should already be providing quality transportation services. Among these proposals are the Freedom Ticket, which presents an opportunity to support underserved neighborhoods such as Brownsville and East New York with a reduced fare option on the Long Island Railroad (LIRR). It takes only 10 minutes to travel from the LIRR's East New York station to Atlantic Terminal; however, a peak hour ticket is \$8.25. On the other hand, it takes 26 minutes via subway from Broadway Junction to Atlantic Terminal, but the ticket cost is \$2.75.

Earlier this year, I submitted a letter to MTA Long Island Railroad regarding the Freedom Ticket program. In that letter signed by the majority of Brooklyn's elected officials, we called for this pilot program to kick off in southeast Queens and along the Atlantic Avenue corridor. The MTA indicated in their response that they would explore this option during the 2016 fare policy discussion. However,

the MTA, to date, has not conducted the robust analysis, as promised, and I call upon them to incorporate the Freedom Ticket in their fare analysis.

Struggling communities throughout Brooklyn are stretching their incomes as far as possible. With increases in rent, health care, and groceries, public transportation should be as affordable as possible for those who rely upon it. In Brooklyn alone, numerous riders earn only as much as \$31,039 a year. Between 60 and 80 percent of central and northern Brooklyn households do not have a vehicle. All the more reason why our public transportation system is vitally important and must remain affordable to all Brooklynites and New Yorkers.

Another proposal that I support is half-priced fare for low-income New Yorkers and subsidized fare for college students. We must continue to explore every affordable, reliable, and viable option to help our low-income residents who are dependent upon our transit system the most.

Transit systems, such as the Washington DC Metro, have an extensive and growing transit ridership, as well as a fare structure that offers a reduced cost for its customers through the Metro SelectPass, which costs \$45 a month for a bus and rail as well as a DC Student Electronic Unlimited Monthly for \$30. Additionally, Even Los Angeles — known as our nation’s “Capital of Car Culture” — has an extensive and growing transit network. They also have a 30-day reduced fare option for its student customers.

I share both of these examples to demonstrate that, while our transit network is the largest and most used in North America, we are still not doing enough to provide transit equity by offering solutions to our most vulnerable customers.

Our transit system is the economic lifeline of our economy. It is integral to protecting our environment and quality of life. If we do not get creative in finding innovative funding streams with our transit fare policy, we will risk even more fare hikes, longer commutes, and potential cuts.

Thank you for your time.