



Eric L. Adams
Brooklyn Borough President

New York City Subway System Testimony
August 8, 2017
New York City Council Committee on Transportation

Good morning.

I am Eric L. Adams, Brooklyn's borough president, representing 2.6 million people who rely on the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (MTA) rail and subway network to get them to school, work, and conduct their daily lives throughout New York City.

Straphangers have endured months of increasingly deteriorating conditions including persistent delays, signals failures, and track fires, while having to foot the bill of an ever-increasing MetroCard. Persistent problems have led to decreased economic output and lost tax revenue.

With this significant impact on the City's economy, I have requested the New York City Independent Budget Office (IBO) to conduct an economic impact analysis on the delays in the subway system so we can better understand what these challenges mean in dollars and cents to businesses and tax coffers. We expect to have their findings in the near future.

At worst, these problems have put commuters' lives at risk. In order to keep our City competitive, it is critical that the subways are brought to

a level of operation that is reliable for all New Yorkers, and that can compete with global cities such as London, Paris, and Tokyo. The frustration and hardship that commuters are experiencing is unacceptable.

Ideas about ways to fix the system have been proposed from both our region and from cities from around the world. Governor Cuomo has stated that this summer was going to be the “Summer of Hell” with regard to the Penn Station rail crisis, but if you ask the average commuter, it is hell everyday across the entire transit system.

These drastic times call for bold, Big Apple-style reform measures. Yet, we cannot move forward due to disagreement about whether it is the City or the State that bears primary responsibility for footing the bill. I can say, unequivocally, that having served in both State and City government, when it comes to the MTA, the buck stops with the governor.

Today, our transit system has reached its breaking point. We must provide the necessary investments for our subways, which operate on a 24-hour basis and serve nearly six million passengers a day, in order to keep our system not only in a state of good repair but also to bring it into the 21st century. The subway must be dependable for all of its customers. With a growing population and boom in tourism, it is imperative that the New York City subway receive its fair share of funding.

There needs to be dedicated and protected funds that cannot be redirected elsewhere. Just last month, it was revealed that the cash-strapped MTA helped bail out three upstate ski resorts at the price tag

of \$4.9 million from its own coffers. We need full accounting of the money allocated to the MTA and how it is being spent by Albany.

I am supportive of Mayor de Blasio's "Fair Fix" call for a dedicated income tax surcharge for the most financially prosperous among us; a charge that is estimated to raise \$700-\$800 million a year to not only support our creaking infrastructure but will support the implementation of the "Fair Fares" concept for those struggling the most in our communities.

I reiterate, however, that this new funding stream must be dedicated and protected. New York City should not devote a single additional dollar to funding the MTA until a fully accountable and transparent plan is set forth by the governor, including a payback of dues incurred by the MTA for years of disinvestment as well as a fair consideration of rebalancing the board to reflect the voices of each county that contributes to the system's full ridership, especially the five boroughs of New York City.

As Brooklyn's borough president, I am a frequent rider of our subway system and I also talk to fellow commuters who ride and rely upon the system. For children who are getting to school, adults who are getting to work, and everyone else, our subway system serves as the workhorse of the City's economy. Without it, the city we know today will cease to exist.

Thank you for your time.