



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

MTA Fare Increase Hearing Testimony

December 10, 2018

Long Island University (LIU)

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 New York City's transit system to get them to school, work, and various locations throughout our city every day. I am submitting testimony opposing the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA)'s proposed fare and toll hikes. This hike would range from a single ride of one percent to the 30-day pass of five percent, respectively, and would impact daily, weekly, and monthly pass riders who depend on the system.

This is the sixth time in eight years that the MTA is asking commuters, who live in the most unaffordable city in America, to dig deeply in their pockets and pay more to ride the buses and trains. This particular fare and toll increase is especially egregious because MTA-New York City

Transit (NYCT) is not only calling for a fare and toll increase but also for service cuts in bus and subway service. This is a slap in the face to New Yorkers who traverse the system on a daily basis and depend on reliable service for their very livelihoods. We cannot continue to place the burden of the financial stewardship of this system on the backs of the already strapped commuting public. This is not new to us as we have been enduring these fare increases every two years yet continually find ourselves in the same position of experiencing poorer service with increased delays and anxiety. It is obvious that MTA-NYCT is in dire financial straits, but it is time that we stop asking the hardworking straphangers to pay more for a crisis-addled system that consistently struggles with poor service and chronic delays. We must become innovative in finding solutions to keep the transit agency moving forward in a fair and equitable manner. Riders, businesses, and motorists all benefit from a robust transit system so any financial plan must include support from all.

We must also do better at not leaving potential funds on the table. Roughly 592,000 subway and bus riders skip on paying their fares, resulting in a \$215 million annual loss of revenue. This is an example of how customers who pay their fares daily are penalized because of fare evasion. Roughly 17 percent of MTA's 1.831 million daily local bus riders don't pay the fare, which is higher than the 4.1 percent average

among peer transit authorities nationwide. This is a huge problem for a system that is expected to face \$1 billion budget gap by 2021. MTA-NYCT must develop more innovative ways to recoup fares from fare evasions and institute better farebox capture. Although bus and train riders will be directly impacted by proposed fare increases, we must not forget about those who use our bridges and tunnels. The proposal to raise the toll on the Verrazzano Bridge from \$17 to \$19 dollars is a bridge too far, especially for an area that has few, if any, transit alternatives. If a driver has to pay that exorbitant amount every day to cross the bridge, that is approximately \$95 a week that does not go to small businesses or enrichment programs for children.

Earlier this year, MTA-NYCT President Andy Byford submitted his “Fast Forward” blueprint that outlines NYCT’s 10-year plan to modernize the system. I fully support this plan and I call on elected officials from the City and State to get behind this plan. In addition, it is time that we explore all options when it comes to the financial status of the largest transportation authority in North America. The proposals of congestion pricing and a millionaire’s tax are plans most discussed, but we should also look at other proposals such as a potential bond measure that would support dedicated funding toward our transit infrastructure. The City of Los Angeles was very successful with a \$120 billion bonding

measure that the voters supported in 2016. New York City should look to them as a potential model.

I have also noticed also that MTA has been providing limited edition “Game of Thrones” MetroCards. Prior to that, the MTA issued limited edition MetroCards in partnership with the fashion company Supreme, which attracted card purchases just as a keepsake. Though this may be small in when it comes to revenue, we can expand this to create greater equity for the system long-term. These are ideas that I hope NYCT is further exploring as they are looking into the fare and toll increase.

Our buses and trains are the economic lifeblood of our city. For more than a century, this system has provided billions of commuters with a way to get to work, school, home, and various recreational activities across this city. It is imperative that we become creative in finding innovative, long-term, sustainable funding measures with our transit and tolling fare policy. All options must be considered, such as increasing the payroll mobility tax, exploring value capture, and congestion pricing. We must stop asking commuters to pay more into a system that is becoming unaffordable and unreliable. This is not rocket science. The time for action is now.

Thank you for your time.