



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

**New York City Council Committee on Transportation
Testimony of Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams
Oversight – The MTA in the Era of COVID-19
February 10, 2021**

Thank you, Chair Rodriguez, and the members of the City Council Committee on Transportation for the opportunity to submit written testimony for this oversight hearing on the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) in the era of COVID-19.

The MTA, like the vast majority of our city services and economy, has been devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Ridership has plummeted and has failed to rebound in a way that recaptures same levels of farebox revenue. In addition, dedicated tax revenues raised to support the MTA continue to come in under budget, leading to huge deficits that must be addressed in order to protect service levels and affordable fares.

At the same time, under the guise of protecting the public from COVID-19, the MTA has continued to shut down 24-hour service with no significant impacts on improved public health benefits, leading to unnecessary hardships for our essential workers or anyone that may work a non-traditional workday, as well as those trying to access 24/7 COVID-19 vaccination and testing resources.

In order to shore up the MTA's finances, as well as support our city's economic recovery, we need immediate action at the Federal level to approve the long-delayed congestion pricing plan that will generate billions of dollars for the MTA's capital program. However, we must also demand that New York City receive its fair share of Federal transportation resources in the forthcoming recovery bill. New York City is the economic heart of the country's economy and our transit system is its beating heart.

However, we must also do more to provide better service locally on more shoestring budgets. This is why I have called for better use of our existing assets such as our underutilized commuter rail network, which has the potential to provide faster and more cost effective commuting options for intracity travelers on the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) and Metro-North (MNR). I led the effort to establish a pilot program called Atlantic Ticket along the Atlantic Branch and Southeast Queens. This pilot has been successful, and we need to expand this to other LIRR and MNR branches.

In addition, we must ensure that any subway station that falls within a half a mile of one another automatically have free out-of-station transfers.

Third, we must simply open long-closed subway entrances and exits to improve access to and from our transit system.

These three actions are cost effective, increase mobility, maximize existing MTA assets, and, most importantly, will increase mobility for residents and ease the burden on riders' already strapped bottom lines.

We must also restore and make permanent the successful "eHail" and Advanced Reservation Program for Access-A-Ride (AAR) users that was unceremoniously canceled in 2019. It makes perfect sense to reinstate these programs that not only provide better service for AAR users but can also employ on-demand taxis as well as green and yellow taxi cabs at a time when the taxi industry is hurting.

Finally, the MTA must work with New York City Mayor de Blasio to rapidly expand bus lanes and busways in the city. I have long called for the Mayor to establish at least 30 miles of busways to improve mobility during the pandemic and after we recover. However, we need a good partner in the MTA to make this a reality as well.

The health of our transit system is integral to the health of our public and to the health of our economy. We have an opportunity to create a modern, state-of-the art transit network if only given the opportunity. I look forward to working with the Council and all parties to make this a reality.

Thank you.