

**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
TESTIMONY FOR HEARING BEFORE THE  
CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION  
REGARDING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IN NEW YORK CITY  
FEBRUARY 13, 2017**

Good morning Chairman Rodriguez and members of the Committee. I am Eric Beaton, Senior Director of Transit Development for the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT). I am joined by Jeff Lynch, Assistant Commissioner for Intergovernmental and Community Affairs. Thank you for inviting us to speak with you about the state of public transportation in New York City, a topic of significant import to the region's economy, and the quality of life of all of our residents. Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Trottenberg are committed to supporting a thriving public transit system, and we are pleased to be with you this morning to discuss some of the City's key priorities and initiatives on this front.

More people are choosing to live and work in New York than ever before. Our population, now over 8.5 million, is the highest in recorded history. Between 2010 and 2015, the City has created 500,000 new jobs and added 370,000 new residents. Tourism is booming, with nearly 60 million visitors coming to the city in 2015. Sustainable modes of transit, particularly New York City's public transportation system, are the engine powering this growth. In fact, traffic volumes in the Central Business District have remained flat, even as this growth shows no signs of slowing. From the nadir of our transit system in the 1970s, the City, State, and MTA together have invested billions of dollars in rebuilding our infrastructure, attracting people back on to this most sustainable of travel modes, and fueling the resurgence of this city. And at the same time, we have worked to make our surface transportation system be more efficient and safe, implementing adaptive traffic lights, bike lanes, and other improvements. But now we have a different problem: we are a victim of our own successes, and our transportation system is bursting at the seams. Between 2010 and 2015, we've seen a ten percent increase in subway ridership. If we want to continue our growth streak and have the capacity to accommodate all those who want to live and work in New York City, continued investment in public transportation is important and must be a priority.

We work closely with the MTA on issues pertaining to the core public transportation system, and that is primarily what I will discuss with you this morning. However, I want to briefly touch on some additional City initiatives that we are implementing independently to generate additional capacity throughout the City. For example, EDC is on track to implement an ambitious plan to expand Citywide Ferry Service, beginning this summer. This service is anticipated to carry 4.6 million passenger trips each year across six different routes, for the price of a subway or bus fare. The six routes will run over about 60 miles in the water. Additionally, the Brooklyn-Queens waterfront has changed dramatically over the past 15 years, yet the transportation system has not kept up. The City is continuing its planning efforts regarding the BQX in order to accommodate sustainable growth. And of course, DOT does operate a crucial transit link: the Staten Island Ferry. Mayor de Blasio is committed to enhancing this vital transit option and has committed an additional \$122 million for security upgrades and infrastructure improvements in the City's Capital Plan. Additionally, the City increased overnight service recently, and now boats leave both St. George and Whitehall terminals at least once every 30 minutes around the clock. In the coming years, we will also be adding three new vessels to the fleet to provide even better service to the public.

That all said, the MTA is still the major provider of public transit in New York City, and we continue to partner with the MTA on a wide range of issues. One often overlooked component of this relationship is the robust financial support that New York City provides to help maintain and expand the MTA's infrastructure. Mayor de Blasio recognizes that our transit system is the backbone of our economy and, in the most recent MTA Five Year Capital Plan, made a historic commitment of \$2.5 billion, the City's largest ever general capital contribution. These funds will support critical state of good repair and maintenance projects, as well as providing new station stairs and elevators where needed to support the city's growth. The City also engages directly with the MTA on key projects and initiatives. For example, we are in regular communication with the agency regarding planning and outreach for the forthcoming L Train tunnel closure.

On a daily basis, the City most directly collaborates with the MTA on bus service. As we recently discussed here at the Council, one of the significant challenges facing our transit system is that average bus speeds have been declining, reaching a historically low average of 7.5 miles per hour over the course of the day. While there are about 2.5 million daily bus trips, ridership has been following a downward trend, with a decline of nearly six percent over the past ten years, despite our record population. The reality is that in too many areas of the city, bus service is not as good as it could be. We have a duty to equitably serve the millions of New Yorkers who rely on buses. New Yorkers of all backgrounds take the bus, but we also know that bus riders are disproportionately low-income, and over the age of 65. New Yorkers with mobility impairments also rely heavily on the bus, as much of the subway system remains inaccessible. And there are neighborhoods beyond the subway system where residents must rely on the bus to connect to the rest of the city.

To fulfill the promise of equal opportunity, the City must continue to improve access to jobs, education, and other critical destinations for everyone by enhancing our bus service. As Commissioner Trottenberg mentioned at a prior hearing, the City pays for a significant share of the MTA's bus operations. We have a duty to our City taxpayers to be sure their dollars are well spent. We can enhance bus service on many fronts. Many of you are familiar with the jointly run and highly successful MTA and DOT Select Bus Service (SBS) program. Under Mayor de Blasio, we have more than doubled our pace of rolling out new SBS routes, and now have 12 total. Last year, we added three new routes: Utica Avenue, 23rd Street and the Q70 LaGuardia Link. Together, these 12 SBS corridors now in place provide over 300,000 daily rides—about 12 percent of total city bus trips. This year we plan to add three more SBS routes, along 79<sup>th</sup> Street, across the South Bronx, and along Woodhaven Boulevard. By the end of 2017, we expect that SBS will carry about 15% of all bus trips citywide. Elements of Select Bus Service can also be used to improve local bus service throughout the City. This includes installing more dedicated bus lanes and bus queue jumps as well as strategies to enhance safety along our routes. We are rolling out Transit Signal Priority (TSP) with the MTA to keep buses moving, which has improved bus travel times by as much as 30% along some routes. We appreciate the support of the Council as we continue to implement these types of initiatives.

While not under the City's control, I want to emphasize that the MTA has a real opportunity to improve bus service as it develops and procures its New Fare Payment Technology. The City's key priorities for

the new system are the support of all-door boarding along with good enforcement. It is time for New York to join other leading cities around the world where bus riders have been benefiting from all-door boarding and contactless fare payment for years.

DOT also focuses on enhancing pedestrian and bike connections to transit. Every transit trip includes a walk to or from the station and DOT's commitment to Vision Zero is ensuring that New Yorkers can safely access their neighborhood transit stop. For residents who live beyond a convenient walking distance from the subway, DOT is working to make biking an attractive option to bridge that gap. That is why the City continues to expand its bike route network, now well over 1,000 miles, and Citi Bike, which will reach 12,000 bikes and 750 stations by the end of 2017.

Even as we remain intently focused on the short-term actions we can take to enhance public transportation in New York City, we also have one eye fixed on the long-term investments that will be needed to truly propel our city and region forward. We commend the MTA on opening the first phase of the Second Avenue Subway last month, a truly great achievement. But we can't stop there: Other global cities, such as Los Angeles and London, are planning for and investing in their future. We should do the same. The Council has acknowledged the critical importance of long-term planning as well. Local Law 36 of 2015, sponsored by Council Member Lander, requires DOT to develop "a plan to create a citywide network of bus rapid transit lines connecting the boroughs of the City of New York" by September 2017. As SBS is but one part of the City's broader transportation network, we are approaching this task comprehensively and will use this study to offer a vision and set of priorities for the future of transit in New York City.

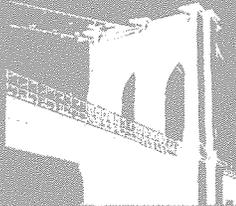
Included in this plan will be a Transit Needs Assessment. We will identify and examine those areas of the City where there are high concentrations of people with lower quality transit options, including those areas with crowding, unreliable service, slow trips and areas with a significant number of low-income, transit-dependent riders. I want to commend you Mr. Chairman, for your strong commitment to these critical issues. Our analysis will help us prioritize where to work with the MTA on additional Select Bus Service routes, as well as potential investments in other needed transit capacity and access improvements. We will also think about strategies that can improve transit all over the city, whether they be smarter fare collection and additional TSP on bus routes, or understanding the effect that shared use mobility services have on the transit system.

The Plan will be developed over the course of this year, and we intend to incorporate new and innovative tools into our public outreach efforts to ensure we engage residents throughout the City in this initiative. We are conducting on-street outreach and a series of public workshops throughout this month and early March. We also have a significant online presence, and are reaching out to New Yorkers via an online survey and mapping tool. Our website for the plan is [www.transitplan.nyc](http://www.transitplan.nyc). We have provided you with flyers that contain information on the plan, including our workshop schedule. We encourage you to reach out to your constituents to inform them of both the workshops and the online survey and mapping tool. We are pleased that we have already received over 2,000 survey responses, and ask for your help in continuing to get the word out. I want to close by emphasizing that we are grateful for your support and partnership on all of these issues. Thank you again for inviting me to testify and I look forward to answering questions.

# citywide transit plan NYC

Join the NYC Department of Transportation for a series of public workshops to discuss the future of Select Bus Service and public transportation in New York City. Help us understand where you go, where you want to go and how you want to get there.

## Brooklyn



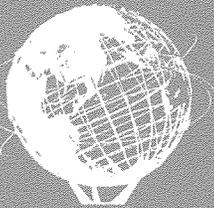
Tuesday, February 7, 2017  
6:00-8:00 PM  
Brooklyn College  
Student Center  
Campus Road & E. 27th St.  
Brooklyn, NY 11210

## The Bronx



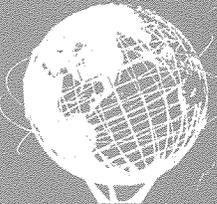
Wednesday, February 15, 2017  
6:00-8:00 PM  
Fordham University  
Campbell Hall  
441 E. Fordham Road  
Bronx, NY 10458

## Queens (Ridgewood)



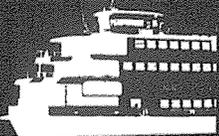
Monday, February 13, 2017  
6:30-8:30 PM  
I.S. 77  
976 Seneca Avenue  
Ridgewood, NY 11385

## Queens (Jackson Heights)



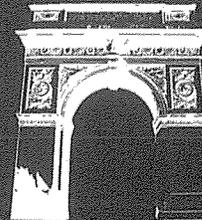
Wednesday, February 22, 2017  
6:00-8:00 PM  
Elmhurst Hospital Center  
79-01 Broadway  
Elmhurst, NY 11373

## Staten Island



Monday, February 27, 2017  
5:30-7:30 PM  
St. George Library Center  
5 Central Avenue  
Staten Island, NY 10301

## Manhattan



Tuesday, March 7, 2017  
6:00-8:00 PM  
Adam Clayton Powell Jr.  
State Office Bldg.  
163 W. 125th St. - 2nd Fl.

**Please feel free to arrive anytime during the times listed above.**



All Meetings Accessible

[transitplan.nyc](http://transitplan.nyc)



For all questions, including accessibility accommodations and translation services, contact Matt Kroneberger at [brt@dot.nyc.gov](mailto:brt@dot.nyc.gov) or (212) 839-7289 in advance of the meeting.



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1 Centre Street, 19th floor, New York, NY 10007  
(212) 669-8300 p (212) 669-4306 f  
431 West 125th Street, New York, NY 10027  
(212) 531-1609 p (212) 531-4615 f  
[www.manhattanbp.nyc.gov](http://www.manhattanbp.nyc.gov)

Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

## **Testimony of Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer Given to the Transportation Committee of the NYC Council February 13, 2017**

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My name is Gale A. Brewer and I am the Manhattan Borough President. Thank you to Chair Ydanis Rodriguez for the opportunity at today's hearing on how public transportation can better serve the needs of city residents.

Though you have heard many great ways to improve our public transit system, I'd like to focus the bulk of my remarks on affordability—an issue fresh in the minds of my constituents given the recent fare increase. Though the base fare ultimately stayed the same at \$2.75, the bonus was reduced from 11% to 5%. Additionally, the weekly MetroCard increased by \$1 to be \$32, and the monthly pass increased by \$4.50 to \$121. Fares and tolls on commuter railroads, tunnels and bridges have also been raised by about 4%.

The fare increases, though troubling to many New Yorkers already struggling to make ends meet, do not come as a surprise: they are part of the regularly scheduled increases that were approved by the New York State Legislature in 2009 as part of a plan to ensure the financial solvency of the MTA. The authority also notes that thanks to its ability to keep costs down, the proposed fare increases before us today are the lowest since 2009. This year alone, the MTA managed to achieve \$1.8 billion in savings—and I am told more cost cutting is planned in the coming years.

It is certainly commendable that the MTA has managed to control costs and keep proposed increases this year to a minimum. But we can't let these achievements distract us from a troubling reality: many low-income New Yorkers struggle to afford MTA fares even under today's current fare system.

According to a recent report from the Community Service Society, 1 in every 4 New Yorkers cannot afford subway or bus fare. For more than 300,000 working poor New Yorkers, transportation costs often exceed 10 percent of their family budgets. This, in turn, can have a debilitating impact on the economic realities for these families, limiting access to jobs, medical appointments, or forcing them to forgo other necessities.

The regularly scheduled fare increases New Yorkers can expect every two years will clearly only exacerbate these problems, and make the MTA's public transportation network even more inaccessible for thousands of New Yorkers.

For this reason, I am supportive of a proposal advocated for by the Community Service Society (CSS), the Riders Alliance, and many other advocates to offer half-price subway and bus fares to



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**Gale A. Brewer, Borough President**

New Yorkers living below the federal poverty line—about \$24,000 for a family of four. In a report released recently by CSS and the Riders Alliance, the groups estimates that such a plan would save up to 800,000 riders roughly \$700 a year.

Such a benefit could help thousands of New Yorkers access their jobs, health appointments, and homes more easily. But this discount, of course, would not come cheap—CSS and Riders Alliance estimate this half-priced MetroCard plan would cost roughly \$115 million during its first year and \$194 in its second.

The problem with a program of this size, of course, is that MTA's resources are already spread far too thin, which brings me to the second point I'd like to emphasize: our transit system is badly in need of upgrades and repairs. According to the General Contractors Association of New York, 83% of subways stations are in poor condition, and 37% of the MTA's mainline signals have exceeded their useful life. We likewise want to see work continue in a timely and cost-effective manner on needed mega-projects like the Second Avenue Subway and East Side Access. And ideally, the MTA should be able to pay for these enhancements without balancing its budget on the backs of commuters with drastic and continual increases in fares.

Both of these problems—affordability and needed upgrades—are sourced from the same problem: the MTA needs more money, and lots of it. The best way to create a new permanent, dedicating funding stream for the authority, in my opinion, is to implement a fair tolling system for bridges and tunnels leading into Manhattan. Implementing such a plan could raise billions in transit revenues, which would more than pay for the proposed MetroCard discount for low-income New Yorkers while making sure the MTA meets and exceeds its other obligations.

A thoughtful tolling plan like "Move NY," developed and advocated for by transportation expert Sam Schwartz, would institute higher tolls where more transit options exist and lower ones where there are fewer options. This is not only fairer, but it would also help redirect unnecessary traffic into and out of Manhattan's CBD.

Most important for our discussion today, however, is the dedicated funding stream this plan would create for the MTA. The Move NY plan—estimated to net \$1.5 billion each year—could help fill the MTA's persistent funding gap, ensuring that our transportation infrastructure gets needed upgrades, and provide for a half-cost MetroCard for low-income New Yorkers, all without passing the costs onto transit riders via a series of never ending fare hikes. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Council and transit advocates to ensure Albany passes such a plan—and soon.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.



**BROOKLYN  
DEFENDER  
SERVICES**

**TESTIMONY OF:**

**Yung-Mi Lee**

**Supervising Attorney, Criminal Defense Practice**

***BROOKLYN DEFENDER SERVICES***

**Presented before**

**The New York City Council**

**Transportation Committee Hearing**

**February 13, 2017**

My name is Yung-Mi Lee and I am a Supervising Attorney in the Criminal Defense practice of Brooklyn Defender Services (BDS). Our organization provides multi-disciplinary and client-centered criminal defense, family defense, immigration, civil legal services, social work support and advocacy to tens of thousands of indigent Brooklyn residents every year. I thank the New York City Council and, in particular, Transportation Committee Chair Ydanis Rodriguez for this opportunity to testify on the proposed fare hikes.

Rising fares hurt all low-income New Yorkers, and our clients are among those who have been hit the hardest. Every year, thousands of them—all of whom are, by definition, indigent—are arrested for fare evasion and face immediate and lasting punishment at significant costs to the individuals involved, their families, and our city as a whole. In fact, fare evasion was the top arrest charge in New York City in 2015, with 29,199 arrests and an additional 123,921 summonses—an average of 419 police interventions per day. Of those arrested, an overwhelming 92% were people of color. Many are detained on Rikers Island, the horrors of which are well-documented, at a cost of approximately \$500 per day simply because they might not be able to afford a \$2.75 subway fare. People can lose their children and jobs, and, now more than ever, be deported for this crime of poverty. An Executive Order issued by the President on January 25

lists anyone merely arrested, regardless of whether their case will later be dismissed or adjourned in contemplation of dismissal, as a priority for immigration enforcement.<sup>1</sup> NYPD collects fingerprints from those it arrests and transmits them through the state to the federal government, which the latter uses to track, arrest, detain and deport immigrant New Yorkers. Increasing fares could exacerbate this dynamic.

Consider some recent clients at Brooklyn Defender Services: Mr. M, an Army veteran, was stopped on his way to a job interview. Mr. W was homeless, and his shelter did not provide MetroCards. Mr. R was on his way to get his public assistance restored after an error by the Human Resources Administration resulted in a suspension of his benefits. All of these individuals were arrested for fare evasion, detained overnight in a filthy holding cell, and churned through the criminal arraignment process. All of them are black and indigent. Taxpayer funds wasted on punishing them for their poverty only made them less able to afford the fares.

According to a report by the Community Service Society (CSS), 58% of very low-income New Yorkers rely on subways and buses—more than any other economic group—yet many cannot afford the rising costs of transit. In other words, fare evasion is increasingly an economic necessity for many New Yorkers. For many others who can afford a MetroCard, the cost is still a hardship. A CSS survey found that the high cost of MetroCards prohibits many low-income New Yorkers from getting medical care and seeking jobs further from home, thus severely limiting their economic mobility.<sup>2</sup>

There are two critical steps that New York City and State can take to end this injustice. First, the State should eliminate criminal penalties for Theft of Services as it relates to fare evasion. Violators would continue to be subject to Transit Adjudication Bureau summonses, though they should be reduced to match the penalty ratios of commuter rails and tolls.<sup>3</sup> In the interim, local law enforcement should end the arrests and prosecution of people accused of fare evasion and instead focus on prevention measures. The second step is for the City and State to reinvest the resulting savings in making public transit a viable resource for all New Yorkers. Brooklyn Defender Services is proud to join the Riders Alliance, the Community Service Society, a majority of Councilmembers and many others in calling on the Mayor to fund #FairFares, a plan for half-price fares for those meeting certain income eligibility criteria. To benefit the maximum number of people in need, these criteria should be as inclusive as possible. This modest financial support would go a long way toward helping New Yorkers who are struggling to get to job interviews, work, school, or anywhere else in the city. We also recommend eliminating time limitations on student MetroCards to encourage young people to pursue as many activities as possible and prevent countless unnecessary arrests. Students should be able to use their MetroCards as needed without police intervention of any kind.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/25/presidential-executive-order-enhancing-public-safety-interior-united>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cssny.org/campaigns/entry/transit4all>

<sup>3</sup> The current \$100 fine for fare evasion is more than 36 times the fare. In contrast, riders who board the Long Island Railroad without tickets are charged a relatively modest penalty fee when purchasing one from a conductor. Riders who cannot pay sign a promise-to-pay form. Likewise, those who lack the cash to pay tolls may do so after the fact or face fees that, if unpaid, are sent to a collections agency – not law enforcement. Drivers passing through E-ZPass tolls without the requisite device receive a notice to pay and only owe the original toll amount if they pay within 30 days or \$25 to \$50 if they pay within 60 days.

Each misdemeanor prosecution costs an estimated \$1,750, according to the Police Reform Organizing Project. By that estimate, New York spent more than \$51 million prosecuting fare evasion cases in 2015, or about \$1 million per week. Taxpayers would be better served if this money were redirected toward helping—rather than punishing—those in need. Moreover, under #FairFares, low-income commuters' savings would likely be reinvested in their own communities and other New York businesses, a boon for our economy. I thank the majority of Councilmembers who already support reduced-fare options for low-income new Yorkers and I respectfully urge the entire Council to make it a priority in this year's budget negotiations.

New York can and must do better. Public transit should be the great equalizer in New York—not a feeder for the criminal justice system.



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## Committee on Transportation

### Oversight Hearing - How Can Public Transportation Better Serve the Needs of New York City Residents?

February 13, 2017

Julia Kite, Policy and Research Manager

Thank you, Council Member Rodriguez, for calling this hearing. My name is Julia Kite, and I am the Policy and Research Manager of Transportation Alternatives, New York City's 44-year-old membership organization dedicated to walking, biking, and safer streets. Public transit is crucial to our mission as a means of reducing New Yorker's reliance on private cars. Today we would like to speak about two issues central to our work as advocates: the provision of discount MetroCards for low-income New Yorkers, and the creation of car-free "PeopleWays" with enhanced bus rapid transit and pedestrian and cyclist facilities in anticipation of the L train shutdown.

#### Fair Fares for Low-Income New Yorkers

**We support Riders Alliance's Fair Fares campaign.** At Transportation Alternatives, we have long believed that public transit is an essential component of city life. Not only does a well-funded and properly-maintained public transit network reduce the need for cars, it also enables New Yorkers to take advantage of everything the city has to offer. However, if fares are so high as to make transit inaccessible for a significant proportion of the population, it is not succeeding in its basic purpose. With so many other demands on low-income New Yorkers - particularly high rents pushing those less able to pay to the outer parts of the city, and away from job centers - **the implementation of discount MetroCards should be a priority, as a matter of basic fairness.**

This discount would be **an investment in the city's greatest resource - its people.** When New Yorkers cannot take a job offer because the commute would be too expensive, or when they cannot afford to pursue further education because they need to spend a large chunk of their income on transit, we all lose out on their skills and talents that remain uncultivated. A report from the Community Service Society released last year found that more than one in four low-income New Yorkers cannot afford bus or train fare. **With MTA fare hikes on the horizon, this statistic will only become more grim.** Nobody should have to choose between being able to get to work or being able to put food on the table. New York can do better than that, and discount MetroCards would be **a helping hand up to opportunity for hundreds of thousands of people.**

What has been proposed by Riders Alliance is the norm in many other cities. It is not uncharted territory - **other public transit systems have successfully offered low-income discounts:**

- Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland, and London, among others, have means-tested fare discounts.
- By tying discounts to income or receipt of particular welfare programs, these public transit systems ensure that the benefits get to people who demonstrate need.
- The potential for abuse of the system is very low, and the financial outlay required by the City is less than half a percent of the annual budget.

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## **PeopleWays for 2019 and Beyond**

We recognize it is far from simple to keep New York City's public transit running seamlessly, and that inconveniences are sometimes unavoidable. However, they also offer us the opportunity to innovate. Since it was announced that the L train will have to be shut down between Eighth Avenue and Bedford Avenue in 2019 for tunnel repairs, Transportation Alternatives has been pursuing solutions to this challenge that would avoid the need for more cars on city streets and would also leave transportation improvements in place for long after subway service resumes. We are proposing the **PeopleWays** - a repurposing of space on 14th Street in Manhattan, Grand Street in Brooklyn, and the Williamsburg Bridge corridor between them.

- We envision the PeopleWays containing true **bus rapid transit** along with **expanded space for pedestrians and cyclists**.
- In order to avoid total gridlock caused by L train commuters having to find another way across town and across the river, **personal car usage - the most inefficient use of street space - would be prohibited along the PeopleWays**.
- Our plans have been designed using guidance from the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), BRT Planning International, and other **experts** in urban transportation.
- Our PeopleWays campaign has the support of residents, businesses, community organizations, and educational institutions in the affected parts of Manhattan and Brooklyn.

The PeopleWays would also be a boon to local businesses. **Most New Yorkers shopping on and around 14th Street, after all, do not arrive by car - they use public transit, walk, or bike.**

- **The PeopleWays would increase foot traffic**, ensuring that the tens-of-thousands of riders who use the corridor every day to continue coming to these neighborhoods.
- Doing nothing, and letting private cars attempt to compensate, would make it more difficult to access businesses, both by customers and for deliveries.
- We take as our example for success the **Fulton Street Mall in Downtown Brooklyn**, which is closed to private cars but served by buses. It welcomes more than 100,000 shoppers per day to over 150 retail businesses, and is the most successful retail strip in the city outside of Manhattan. They have a model for deliveries that can be replicated on the 14th Street PeopleWay.

Without the PeopleWays, **New York City will not be able to cope with the L shutdown.**

- Personal cars, including taxis and ride-sharing services, would take up so much space that the outcome would inevitably be **gridlock, inefficiency, air pollution, loss of business traffic, loss of productivity, and an overall disaster for the public**.
- The thought of removing cars from these major streets may seem drastic, but it is **only by having dedicated rights-of-way for bus rapid transit that the City can replace the capacity of the L train**.

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- Rather than limit mobility, seniors and people with disabilities would benefit from better bus service, bus shelters, benches, bus bulbs, and accessible pedestrian signals - a **net enhancement of the streetscape.**

In order to have the PeopleWays ready for use by January 2019, it is imperative that final planning begin soon. We look forward to working with the DOT and MTA on a way forward, and are happy to answer any questions you may have about this project.

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### Norma Ginez testimony

My name is Norma Ginez. I live in the Bronx and I'm a member of the Riders Alliance.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak at today's hearing. Already, at \$2.75 a swipe, the fares are an obstacle for me and members of my community.

I am an unemployed single mother of 3 girls. Every day, I have to take my kids to school and to childcare. I need a MetroCard not only to get to the grocery store and to take my kids to doctor's appointments, but also to get me to the political and community activities I am involved in. I care a lot about making a positive change in my community, but it's hard to get involved when I can't even afford my MetroCard.

Sometimes I have to choose between MetroCards and buying a snack for my girls. There were times, especially when I was in the shelter system in 2012, that I had to beg for a swipe or walk really far in the heat or cold. I want to start searching for a job, but after expenses, I can't really afford the added cost of going to job interviews.

I am disappointed that Mayor de Blasio didn't include funding for half-priced MetroCards for low-income riders in his preliminary budget. But there's still time for him to do the right thing by including Fair Fares in the executive budget to make transit affordable to all New Yorkers. I ask the New York City Council to fight for Fair Fares in the budget negotiations and I ask Mayor de Blasio to amend his budget so low-income riders like me don't have to amend theirs. No one should have to skip class because they cannot afford a MetroCard. No one should have to skip meals beg to get ahead or get involved.

Sara Vogel Testimony

My name is Sara Vogel and I live in Clinton Hill, Brooklyn. I'm a member of the Riders Alliance, New York's grassroots organization of bus and subway riders fighting for better and more affordable public transit. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I'm standing up today for half-priced MetroCards for low-income New Yorkers because while I don't struggle to afford my MetroCard, I know many in New York do. Today I am standing with them.

I don't struggle to afford my MetroCard because through my former jobs as a NYC DOE school teacher, an educator at a non profit, and now as a CUNY graduate student, I have access to commuter benefits and it saves me about \$350.00 a year on public transportation.

Recently, Mayor de Blasio and the New York City Council implemented important legislation that allows middle class New Yorkers to save hundreds of dollars on their commute by expanding access to pre-tax transit benefits. New York did this because they know that money in the hands of riders goes right back into the community, and I thank Mayor de Blasio and the City Council for extending those benefits.

Pre-tax transit benefits have helped me afford to attend at least one more academic conference per year, and as anyone in academia knows, conferences really are the bread and butter.

In a city where 58% of low-income people have no other option but to use public transit, 1 out of 4 low-income New Yorkers can't even get on the bus without skipping meals, begging for swipes, jumping turnstiles, or making other sacrifices. The proposal for Fair Fares would help low-income New Yorkers save \$700 a year. That money would go right back into the community.

By signing the Commuter Benefits Law, the Mayor demonstrated that it is important to help middle class New Yorkers save money on their MetroCard. Don't you think it's about time we do the same thing for low-income New Yorkers? After all, it's only fair.

I am disappointed that Mayor de Blasio didn't include funding for half-priced MetroCards for low-income riders in his preliminary budget. But there's still time for the mayor and do the right thing by including Fair Fares in his executive budget to make transit affordable to all New Yorkers. No one should have to skip meals or jump turnstiles in their efforts to pull themselves out of poverty.

**Testimony by**

**David R. Jones, President and CEO  
Community Service Society of New York**

**Before the New York City Council**

**Committee on Transportation**

**Hearing on How Can Public Transportation  
Better Serve the Needs of New York City Residents**

**February 13, 2017**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on how public transit can better serve the needs of New York City residents.

My name is David Jones. I am President and CEO of the Community Service Society of New York, a nonprofit organization that works to advance upward mobility for low-income New Yorkers. Today, CSS continues its remarkable 174-year legacy in using rigorous research to drive changes in public policy to combat poverty and economic inequality. I am also one of the city's representatives on the MTA Board. The main reason I agreed to take on this responsibility was because I am concerned that the cost of transportation is becoming a barrier for those with low-incomes.

Access to public transit is an economic necessity for all New Yorkers, but especially for the working poor struggling to survive on low wages, for young people seeking a GED or commuting to college so they can get ahead, for parents trying to get their children a better education and expose them to the resources the city has to offer. But our buses and subways have become unaffordable for far too many—one out of four low-income working-age New Yorkers say they often can't afford a MetroCard, according to our survey research.

This dilemma is about to get worse. Although the base fare will be unchanged, starting March 19<sup>th</sup>, most New Yorkers will have to pay more per ride. Unlimited passes will rise to \$32 for the 7-day pass and \$121 for the 30-day pass. The type of fare that is most widely used among low-income riders, the bonus card, will cost 5.7 percent more per ride because the amount of the bonus you receive when you put at least a round-trip on your card is being reduced. Using the MTA's data, fares used by 82 percent of low-income riders will become more expensive.

Making public transit affordable should be a priority for this city and this mayoral administration which came into office promising to combat economic inequality. We, along with the Riders Alliance, transit advocates, labor, grassroots immigrant and worker groups, criminal justice organizations, workforce development agencies and good government groups have come together to call for half-price MetroCards for New Yorkers living at or below the poverty level, or about \$24,000 for a family of four. About 800,000 people would be eligible for a savings of \$726 a year off the cost of 12 monthly passes. That is a significant savings.

I've been an advocate for the working poor for more than 30 years, and in my memory few ideas have garnered this much consensus. Our proposal for half-fares has drawn the support of editorial boards including the *Daily News*, the *New York Times*, *El Diario*, *The Amsterdam News*, and *AM New York*. Indeed, even a *New York Post* columnist said, "It's not a bad idea: Mobility means opportunity." *City & State* named Fair Fares one of 2016's best ideas. It is supported by the majority of the Council, four of the five borough presidents, the Comptroller and Public Advocate, by major unions including RWDSU, 1199, 32BJ, the New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA) and the TWU, as well as the fiscal watchdog, Citizens Budget Commission. And most important, it is supported by the public: Seventy-three (73) percent of your constituents.

Current law allows the mayor to secure a discount for a class of riders, as it already does for seniors and people with disabilities, as long as the city makes up the foregone fare revenue. We estimate the cost to be about \$200 million a year, and the MTA has calculated the cost to be a similar figure, \$212 million. While that is a significant cost, it is a miniscule fraction of the city's nearly \$85 billion budget and a modest amount to achieve a bold and worthy goal: insuring physical mobility and the economic mobility it brings to New Yorkers struggling to get ahead. Our city gains an enormous competitive advantage from its extensive mass transit system that enables employers to draw from a vast citywide labor pool, but we undercut that advantage when we make transit unaffordable.

The city has plans for new watercraft and a streetcar. While these are welcome additions, they will largely serve affluent New Yorkers living in river view condos. They will require an additional fare since they won't be part of the MTA system. With deeply subsidized new transportation modes promised for the affluent, and transit tax subsidies that give a break to middle and higher income earners, shouldn't we help those who need it the most?

Yes, we know that the MTA is a state authority. And yes the state needs to invest more in the MTA because in the long run, continual fare increases every two years will be unsustainable.

So why should the city subsidize fares for its lowest income residents?

Because it is the right thing to do. Because it will advance economic opportunity. Because it is affordable and feasible. Because between 2007 and 2015 subway and bus fares rose 45 percent, six times faster than average salaries in New York City. Because a city subsidy will avoid putting even more upward pressure on the fares that other riders have to pay. Because all the savings the working poor will derive from this measure will go right back into the local economy to purchase necessities such as food, clothing and to pay the rent. Because the Mayor has the legal authority to do it without an interminable delay and fight in Albany. Because low-income New Yorkers need relief now. They need to get to work and school tomorrow. Not five years from now. Because our city should be a Progressive Leader. Especially today, when instead of wringing our hands and resisting, we should be raising our hands and insisting on positive actions within our power: Make our transit system affordable to all New Yorkers.

Thank you.

*City Council Transportation Committee*

*Hearing on How Public Transportation Can Better Serve the Needs of New York City Residents*

*Monday, February 13, 2017*

Good morning, Chair Rodriguez and members of the City Council Committee on Transportation.

My name is Jules Flynn, and I am General Manager of Citi Bike. On behalf of Motivate, the operator of Citi Bike, I'd like to submit the following testimony regarding how Citi Bike can better serve the transportation needs of New York City residents.

In 2013, Citi Bike launched with 6,000 bikes at 332 stations in Manhattan's Central Business District and downtown Brooklyn. Today, peak daily ridership has nearly doubled, growing from 42,148 trips in a single day in 2013 to nearly 70,000 trips in 2016. In fact, we broke the record of 60,000 trips a day 23 times last year, and annual ridership reached 14 million trips. In addition, Citi Bike currently has over 120,000 Annual Members and hundreds of thousands access the program using day passes.

And today Citi Bike is no longer just Bike Share for the Central Business District. We've added thousands of bikes, and it stretches from Harlem to Red Hook. This year, we'll take it further north in Manhattan, and reach neighborhoods like Astoria, Prospect Heights and Crown Heights. But there are many neighborhoods, like the South Bronx, Bushwick and eastern Bed-Stuy, that are not yet served by Citi Bike. These are places where the program would help serve both transportation and public health needs.

Citi bike has the potential to help close the transportation equity gap in our City. Bike share is one of the fastest and most cost-effective ways to add transit options to underserved neighborhoods: both capital and operating costs are a fraction of what other modes require. Unlike other forms of public transportation, bike share can be implemented quickly and flexibly, adding as many or as few stations at a time as budgets permit. Further, bike share also has the added benefit of helping to address health inequity by enabling easy access to physical activity in underserved communities that are disproportionately affected by chronic diseases like diabetes and obesity.

Citi Bike continues to work actively to ensure bike share is accessible for all New Yorkers. Citi Bike maintains an affordability program for New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) residents and members of select Community Development Credit Unions (CDCUs). Individuals enrolled in the affordability programs pay a reduced \$60 annual membership fee in 12, \$5 monthly installments, compared to the standard Citi Bike price of \$163 a year. In addition, Citi Bike offers a 15% discount on membership for all IDNYC cardholders. And we have been working with community organizations from East Harlem to Bed Stuy to conduct multilingual community outreach to ensure that low income New Yorkers can reap the benefits of bike share.

Further, bike share connects individuals to other forms of transportation: according to a Department of Transportation (DOT) survey from 2013, 53% of Citi Bike users combine Citi Bike with other forms of transportation. This means bike share is enabling communities underserved by traditional forms of public transportation a new, safe, and affordable transportation option.

With all these benefits, bike share stands out as the lowest cost, fastest, and most efficient way to develop infrastructure and reduce the City's transit deserts. We look forward to working with the City Council and the de Blasio administration to continue growing Citi Bike's success. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I am happy to answer any questions.

# 1199 SEIU

United Healthcare Workers East

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Julio Vives  
Lisa Wallace  
Margaret West-Allen  
Daine Williams  
Cynthia Wolff  
Gladys Wrenick

GENERAL COUNSEL  
Daniel J. Ratner

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER &  
DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION  
Michael Cooperman

\* Acting

## TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE FEBRUARY 13, 2017

Thank you Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez and members of the Transportation Committee for this opportunity to address how public transportation can better serve the needs of New York City residents. I am here on behalf of 1199 SEIU-UHWE which represents 200,000 health care workers residing in New York City, such as 70,000 in home care, as well as part time cashier jobs in Rite Aid and support staff in clinics. The vast majority of our members rely on public transportation.

These members and other low wage earners are adversely affected by fare increases, no matter how small. The round trip fare of \$5.50 comes to \$27.50 for a 5-day workweek. Added cost of multiple trips -- to drop off children, to get to medical appointments, for running errands, and visiting loved ones -- creates hardships, requiring budget adjustments just to make ends meet and to be able to afford some basic necessities like food, housing, and utilities. We are finally making gains on wages in this state and we just can't afford to have the extra income absorbed by fare increases.

While hundreds of thousands of low wage earners are struggling, it is worse for those who are unemployed and/or seeking employment. Missed opportunities are quite discouraging when they are trying to schedule appointments or get to interviews, but are not able to afford a round trip fare. Their cash flow constraints make it impossible to take advantage of weekly or monthly MetroCard discounts.

There is growing support to establish a half fare program for low income New Yorkers, referred to as the Fair Fares campaign. It is an idea whose time has come. Reduced fares are already provided to students, senior citizens and the disabled, many of whom live on fixed incomes.

It is incumbent upon our leaders to address income inequality by removing any barriers that prevent people from prospering. 1199 SEIU-UHWE proudly supports funding to extend the half fare program to low income New Yorkers and we urge the City and the State to find the means to do so. Such a program will go a long way toward providing transportation parity to all New Yorkers.

Thank you again for this opportunity to discuss this important topic.

### NEW YORK CITY PRINCIPAL HEADQUARTERS

310 West 43rd St.  
New York, NY 10036  
(212) 582-1890  
www.1199seiu.org

**ALBANY**  
155 Washington Ave.  
Albany, NY 12210  
Tel. (518) 396-2300  
Fax (518) 438-1140

**BALTIMORE, MARYLAND**  
611 North Eutaw Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
Tel. (410) 332-1199  
Fax (410) 332-1895

**MASSACHUSETTS**  
150 Mt. Vernon Street, 3rd Fl.  
Dorchester, MA 02125  
Tel. (617) 284-1199  
Fax (617) 474-7150

**BUFFALO**  
2421 Main Street, Suite 100  
Buffalo, NY 14214  
Tel. (716) 982-0540  
Fax (716) 876-0930

**FLORIDA**  
14645 NW 77th Avenue, Ste. #201  
Miami Lakes, FL 33014  
Tel. (305) 623-3000  
Fax (305) 826-1604

**GOUVERNEUR**  
95 E Main Street  
Gouverneur, NY, 13642  
Tel. (315) 287-9013  
Fax (315) 287-7226

**HICKSVILLE**  
100 Duffy Ave., Suite 3 West  
Hicksville, NY 11801  
Tel. (516) 542-1115  
Fax (516) 542-0919

**NEW JERSEY**  
555 Route 1 South, 3rd Fl.  
Iselin, NJ 08830  
Tel. (732) 287-8113  
Fax (732) 287-8117

**ROCHESTER**  
259 Monroe Ave., Suite 220  
Rochester, NY 14607  
Tel. (585) 244-0830  
Fax (585) 244-0956

**SYRACUSE**  
250 South Clinton, Suite 200  
Syracuse, NY 13202  
Tel. (315) 424-1743  
Fax (315) 479-6716

**WHITE PLAINS**  
99 Church St.  
White Plains, NY 10601  
Tel. (914) 993-6700  
Fax (914) 993-6714



**I thought...How can public transportation better serve the needs of working age New Yorkers?**

Well, there is a solution if you are willing to understand what millions of NYC residents have to endure every day.

That solution comes in the form of a subsidized metro-card for low-income people between the ages of 18 to 65...THIS is the reason we are here today!

THIS new metro-card will enable those affected to enjoy the benefit of a HALF-PRICED fare. The passing of this initiative will help to release some of the chains that low-income people carry every day.

How will it help low income families?

1. It will allow us the chance to have days where we do not have to choose between a train ride or a meal.
2. It will give us a chance to maintain the 3 necessities of life...food, shelter, and clothing.
3. It will give us a chance to maybe even save some money for emergencies instead of living in fear of what we would do in such a case.
4. We might even be able to provide better quality meals for our families and try to see a better quality of life overall.
5. It could give us a chance to pursue our educational needs in order to improve our standing in the working world and in our communities.

I could go on and on. The benefits would be endless. Everything big starts small... and this is the start we need. All you have to do is picture yourself walking a day in our shoes and you will see the struggle...the burden...the heart-wrenching decisions we face.

The thought of a half-priced metro-card for low income people is one of the best ideas to surface for many many reasons.

It is the chance we need...It will give us some hope...It can unlock the doors to a better life...Yes, it is that serious!...I just wish people could understand that.

I have one more thing to add...and it will sum up exactly how we feel about this idea...

Trust me...I would gladly pay the full train or bus fare if I was able...but for now, a half-priced fare is FAIR enough for all of us...at least until we are able to afford the full fare...

**I ENCOURAGE YOU TO MAKE FUNDING TO SUBSIDIZE SUBWAY AND BUS FARES FOR LOW-INCOME NEW YORKERS A TOP PRIORITY AS YOU RESPOND TO THE MAYOR'S PRELIMINARY BUDGET.**

Thank you for listening.

Good morning Council Member Rodriguez and members of the Transportation Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Darelys Abreu. I am 23 years old and a mother of a 5 year old daughter by the name of Maryellis...I am a student at Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow, a program assisting me obtain my High School Equivalency Diploma through the Department of Education, job training, and college access. I am a low income parent struggling to do "good" in this big stress-filled city. I am representing not only myself here today...but millions of other people struggling to make it to the dinner table every night. Yes, there are many of us out there...more than you know.

We all know the train and bus fares in this city are extremely high and there is no evidence that they will ever go down...as a matter of fact, the fares will go up next month.

If you simply took a train or bus to and from work daily...2 rides... it would cost you over \$110 per month...that does not include the various additional trips for doctor's appointments, benefit appointments, school scheduled practice tests, interviews, and other community events. I could go on and on all day...

**THIS is a STRUGGLE** not only for me...but for millions of people in this city.

I haven't even included expenses for housing, food, clothing, and other necessities. **YOU KNOW HOW EXPENSIVE THOSE CAN BE AS WELL.**

I am presently in school working hard to earn my HSE diploma. I am doing everything I can in the most honest way possible...YET it is so difficult for someone like me....a low income mother and student trying to make a difference for my daughter....trying to establish myself as a professional....with a career...trying to be an inspiration not only to my daughter...but to everyone else who I come in contact with.

Yes...I was given a school metro-card in my program. You would think it was a problem solved. It wasn't! My program has a strict dress code where I have to dress professionally...like this...every day!

Well, I used my school metro-card one day as I was heading to my program and I was stopped by the police. They did not believe I was a student who was in school...and they didn't care that I had all of my school documentation on me to prove I was being honest. They wouldn't even look at it. People don't realize the complex problems we face day by day...hour by hour...and minute by minute.

The ticket was for \$100 and I had to take time off to go fight it in court...Why? because that \$100 is the difference between a meal or no meal for myself and my daughter for a week or more.

This was an added struggle I didn't need...added to my already over-stressed schedule I thought to myself...There needs to be a better way....something...somewhere...anything.

## **Love Andujar – Testimony**

Good morning. My name is Love Andujar and I live in the Bronx.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on how Public Transportation can better serve the needs of the residents of New York City.

I'm sure people will offer many good suggestions today; at the top of the list should be making public transportation affordable for all New Yorkers. New subways and faster buses with free Wi-Fi mean nothing if you can't afford to ride them.

The current fare of \$2.75 each trip is difficult for me and many other lower- income New Yorkers to afford, and MetroCards will be more expensive March 19<sup>th</sup>. The base fare will stay the same, but the price of weekly and monthly cards will go up and the bonuses you get when you add money to a MetroCard will be reduced. Many of us depend on those bonuses.

I'm a mother of 2. I'm on a fixed income and I'm attending an administrative training program to prepare myself to re-enter the job market. A 30 day MetroCard is almost 20% of my monthly income and every penny counts in my household. I can't afford it, but it's necessary in order for me to take care of my responsibilities. If it wasn't for the occasional help that I received from the Community Service Society I would not have made it this far.

There are many New Yorkers like me that are trying to finish their education, find work, get to their jobs, take their children to school and/or take their children to the doctor. We can't afford \$121.00 for a monthly MetroCard, but we do what we have to do even if that means asking for a swipe to get on the train.

That's why I support the proposal for half-price MetroCards for the lowest-income New Yorkers. I urge the City Council and the Mayor to please include funding for the Fair Fares in the budget you are now considering.

The Council passed Transit Tax Benefits that give a tax breaks to middle and higher income New Yorkers, but the lowest-income New Yorkers need a break too.

Thank you very much for your time.

**New York City Council  
Committee on Transportation  
Hearing, February 13, 2017  
Testimony of The Bronx Defenders  
By Deborah Lolai**

Good Morning, Chairman Rodriguez and members of the Committee. My name is Deborah Lolai and I am a client advocate at The Bronx Defenders. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on this important matter.

The Bronx Defenders is a community-based and nationally recognized public defender office dedicated to serving the people of the Bronx. Since its founding almost 20 years ago, The Bronx Defenders has rooted its work in the knowledge that preventing people from becoming caught in the revolving door of the criminal justice system requires addressing both the conditions driving people into the system as well as the devastating circumstances that result from criminal justice involvement.

To fully understand the impact the reform under consideration here today would have on our clients' lives, it is important to paint a picture of the community we serve and its struggles. Our office is located in the South Bronx, which is the poorest congressional district in the country. Almost 38% of its residents live under the poverty line. It may be difficult for some of us in this room to understand the decisions required of those living in such poverty, but many of our clients have to choose between eating a meal on any given day or buying a Metrocard to get to school, work, appointments, or court.

This proposal to make public transportation affordable is both smart policy and the right thing to do.

Since the implementation of broken windows policing, many arrests in low-income communities, such as the ones we serve, are for fare evasion, including jumping a turnstile or getting on the bus without swiping a Metrocard. Between 2008 and 2013, nearly 37,500 people received sentences for fare evasion that involved time behind bars, and this does not include the thousands of arrests which resulted in sentences requiring paying a fine or completing community service.

Making public transportation affordable for the communities we serve *will* result in fewer arrests. Our clients do not sometimes jump turnstiles because they want to steal from the MTA; they occasionally do so because they do not have the money to buy Metrocards. Our City spends an enormous amount of money on these cases when they result in an arrest: from the point the officer makes the arrest, to the likelihood of incarceration during the pendency of their cases

because they cannot afford bail, to the many court dates the client must attend -- all these costs could be avoided by making Metrocards realistically accessible to the poorest people in our City.

Making public transportation affordable is not just smart policy, it is also the right thing to do. What comes to mind for me is a 16 year old client I worked with who had a developmental disability. He was sentenced to probation, which will also require him to use public transportation to travel to his probation appointments. If he does not attend, he will be in violation of probation and pulled deeper into the system. If he jumps the turnstile, he could pick up a new charge, with the same result. This is a clear example of the criminalization of poverty and the most vulnerable in our society.

Many of our clients depend on affordable public transportation to maintain custody of their children or to get them back from foster care. ACS often requires them to participate in several programs and services, in various locations, not to mention the appointments just to visit with their children. When parents lack the money for a Metrocard, they are literally choosing between seeing their children and risking arrest.

Make no mistake: an arrest for fare evasion is not just an arrest. It can cost our clients their hard-earned jobs, the public benefits they depend on for survival, their children, their housing, and can even, incredibly, subject them to deportation. All of these devastating consequences of an arrest could be prevented simply by making Metrocards accessible to low-income people.

These are just a few examples of why we need to make public transportation affordable for the most vulnerable New Yorkers. When I have conversations with my clients about what they believe would be the most helpful in avoiding recidivism, continuing their education, or maintaining employment, their response is, overwhelmingly, realistic access to Metrocards. This is a challenge we can meet. It is time to do so.

Thank you.



NYPIRG

## Straphangers Campaign

a project of the New York Public Interest Research Group Fund

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TESTIMONY OF  
JAQI COHEN  
STRAPHANGERS CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR  
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Mass transit is a great equalizer. Robust transit systems connect community members to jobs, schools, libraries, civic centers, and other resources – increasing economic, political, and social opportunity beyond an individual’s immediate surroundings. Despite being such a crucial resource, many New Yorkers face difficulty accessing subway and bus service. Since 2005, riders in New York City have faced six fare hikes, and a decrease in fare bonus and increase in weekly and monthly MetroCards approved just last month. While many New Yorkers struggle to pay the fare, it is especially burdensome on the poor, many of whom simply cannot afford the cost of subway or bus fare.

Low-income New Yorkers are disproportionately burdened by increased transportation costs. More than one third of all low-income, working-age New Yorkers have reported that the rising transit fares have prevented them from either seeking or accepting employment further from where they live.<sup>1</sup> Transit inaccessibility further perpetuates the cycle of poverty by limiting educational and employment opportunities for low-income New Yorkers, and rising costs make it exceedingly difficult for these individuals to live in New York City or even attempt to complete a college degree. For example, according to the most recent Student Experience Survey conducted by the City University of New York (CUNY) in 2016, about 60% of all CUNY students live in households making less than \$30,000 a year.<sup>2</sup>

New York City already offers reduced fares to many of its residents. Senior citizens over the age of 65, New Yorkers with disabilities, and high school students under the age of 18 already benefit from discounted MetroCards, but unfortunately many low-income New Yorkers do not benefit from these programs. Additionally, middle class New Yorkers are able to save hundreds of dollars each year through pre-tax benefits towards their MetroCards. If implemented, an estimated 800,000 New Yorkers would benefit from a reduced-fare system, saving individuals over \$700 annually.<sup>3</sup>

The Straphangers Campaign feels strongly that no New Yorker should have to risk losing a job or forgoing a college education due to the cost of a MetroCard. It is time that New York City provide financial relief to its neediest residents and adopt a fair fare system, much like Seattle, San Francisco, and Chicago have already done,<sup>4</sup> and allow for low-income New Yorkers to have the opportunity to get on board.

<sup>1</sup> Rankin, N.; Stolper, R. (2016). *The Transit Affordability Crisis: How Reduced MTA Fares Can Help Low-Income New Yorkers Move Ahead*. Page 13. Retrieved from Community Service Society’s website at: <http://www.cssny.org/publications/entry/the-transit-affordability-crisis>

<sup>2</sup> Table Two, Socio-Economic Status of CUNY Undergraduates. <https://public.tableau.com/profile/oira.cuny - /vizhome/2016StudentExperienceSurvey/MainMenu>

<sup>3</sup> Rankin, N.; Stolper, R. (2016). *The Transit Affordability Crisis: How Reduced MTA Fares Can Help Low-Income New Yorkers Move Ahead*. Page 3. Retrieved from Community Service Society’s website at: <http://www.cssny.org/publications/entry/the-transit-affordability-crisis>

<sup>4</sup> Luzer, Daniel. “In Some Cities, Your Bus Fare Now Depends On Your Income”. *GOVERNING*. May, 2015. Retrieved from GOVERNING’s website at: <http://www.governing.com/topics/urban/gov-seattle-bus-fare.html>

## **Lisa Hamner Testimony at City Council Hearing**

**February 13, 2017**

Good Morning. My name is Lisa Hamner and I am addressing you today in support of reduced fare MetroCards for low-income New Yorkers. Despite having worked full time for over 25 years, I now find myself in a situation I would have previously found unimaginable. Due to a perfect storm of domestic violence and my daughter's serious illnesses I now find myself a resident of the Tillary Street Women's Shelter. Because of the treatment I have received for Major Depressive Disorder and PTSD, and so that I can participate in my daughter's treatment I was declared temporarily disabled to work. My current sole source of income comes from public assistance. I receive \$114 per month. A hole in my shoe can create a crisis. I do not wish to live off of taxpayers and I am not a lazy person. I found a program in Manhattan that would train and certify me in Microsoft Office programs. I took the assessment and was given a school schedule for 3 days a week of training. MEOC is 8.6 miles from the Tillary Street shelter. HRA will provide monthly MetroCards to graduates of the program once they have attained employment, but not to look for a job. Though I have Fibromyalgia, which is at times excruciating, I can and have walked from my shelter to Harlem and I have walked from the Bronx back to Brooklyn after attending my daughter's mental health treatment, but there are times when a 3-hour walk is not practical.

In addition to my situation, I have seen how issues of poverty affect transportation for other residents in my shelter. Far from being leeches who expect a free ride, one of the women in my dorm rises at 4 a.m. to take two trains and a bus to her job as a cashier in Riverdale. She works full-time and yet cannot purchase a monthly MetroCard because she can't put that much money down at once and would have nothing left to get to work if the card got lost or stolen.

The woman in the bed next to mine has been in and out of the hospital with diabetes, and an enlarged heart. I found her sobbing because she could not get to her doctor for an appointment because she did not have money for the train and she was too weak to take the chance that someone would take pity on her and give her a swipe.

The average New Yorker complains when fares go up because it is an inconvenience. Belts may need to be tightened. I see first hand that people living in poverty in this city without an address and who struggle to eat have their physical and mental health on the line when transportation is not available. Poverty should not preclude one from dignity. There is no dignity in begging a stranger for train fare to get to a doctor, a job, or to bring your child to school.

I ask you please to consider in the city's budget funds to provide reduced fare public transportation to those who are struggling on a daily basis. They are just asking for the chance to pull themselves up and achieve the same American dream we all hope for.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



**Statement of Adriana Espinoza  
Manager, New York City Program  
New York League of Conservation Voters**

**City Council Committee on Transportation  
How can public transportation better serve the needs of NYC residents?  
February 13, 2017**

Good morning. My name is Adriana Espinoza, and I'm the Manager of the New York City Program at the New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV). NYLCV represents over 28,000 members in New York City and we are committed to advancing a sustainability agenda that will make our people, our neighborhoods, and our economy healthier, more equitable, and more resilient. I would like to thank Chairman Rodriguez for the opportunity to testify before the Committee on Transportation regarding access to public transportation in New York City.

NYLCV is committed to increased access to low-carbon modes of transportation in NYC, and would like to offer support for two proposals that would help to provide public transportation options for all New Yorkers.

First, there are many neighborhoods, especially in the outer-boroughs, that are public transportation deserts. Expanding Citi Bike to strategic locations in the outer boroughs could help bridge the gap between these neighborhoods and the nearest bus stop or subway station.

According to the most recently available data from December 2016, Citi Bike averaged 26,021 rides per day with 585 active stations. Some of the most popular origins and destinations have consistently been near large transit centers like Penn Station, Port Authority, and Union Square. This accounted for 69.3 million calories burned and offset 900,933 pounds of carbon in December 2016 alone according to a calculation published in the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (MTA) 2012 Sustainability Report.

Thus, expanding Citi Bike to areas underserved by public transportation would have the benefits of improving public health, lowering reliance on private vehicles, and reducing GHG emissions.

Second, NYLCV would like to communicate our support for the Freedom Ticket pilot program announced to begin this fall in Brooklyn and Queens, which would institute a flat fee with unlimited transfers for bus, subway and commuter rail rides within city limits.

Recently, the New York City Transit Riders Council found that residents living in areas of Southeast Queens spend an average of fifteen hours per week commuting. That is more than twice the citywide average of six hours and eighteen minutes. Continuity of service between bus, rail, and subways is imperative to decrease commute times and ease the financial burden facing many low-income residents. We believe this program will make New York a more transit-friendly city, and a transit-friendly city is a more sustainable one.





Finally, NYLCV would like to commend the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) on their commitment to Mayor de Blasio's goal of reaching 20 Select Bus Service routes citywide. As part of this effort, we are pleased to see the launch of a citywide mass transit planning process. NYLCV was supportive of Intro 211 from the time it was introduced in 2014, and we applaud the recent launch of a substantive engagement process as a precursor to the transit plan. We can't realize a sustainable future without a robust transit network that meets the needs of all New Yorkers. Select bus service offers communities without subway access a mode of transportation that is efficient, affordable and has a low carbon footprint.

The above changes would not only better serve NYC residents, but also bring us closer to reaching OneNYC's 80x50 goals. I'd like to thank the City Council for support over the years on transit issues that concern our members and look forward to continuing this work in the future. Thank you for your time.



# RWDSU

Stuart Appelbaum, *President*  
Jack C. Wurm, Jr., *Secretary-Treasurer*  
Joseph Dorismond, *Recorder*  
Gemma de Leon, *Executive Vice President*

## Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union

Testimony by Jessica Garcia, Deputy Political Director,  
Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU), UFCW

Before the Transportation Committee, New York City Council

### Oversight Hearing: How Can Public Transportation Better Serve the Needs of NYC Residents? February 13, 2017

Good Morning, Councilmember Rodriguez and members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Jessica Garcia. I am the Deputy Political Director for the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU), UFCW. We represent 40,000 workers in New York State and 100,000 workers nationwide. Our members work in retail, food processing, and other low-wage sectors. On behalf of President Stuart Appelbaum and thousands of retail and car wash workers in New York City, I am here to testify on the issue of affordable transportation for low-income New Yorkers.

As you know, in March the MTA is scheduled to increase fares for “bonus,” 7-day and 30-day MetroCards. While single ticket fares will remain the same, the fare hikes will impact over 80% of New York City’s working poor, per the MTA’s own figures.

Transit expenses eat up more than 10% of poor families’ budgets, making transportation one of the biggest costs to families second only to housing. High transit fares limit people’s ability to get to work, to access training opportunities and to pursue higher education. It forces low-income families to juggle paying for food, rent and utility bills. At RWDSU, many of the workers we organize and represent struggle with NYC’s high cost of living. Some, particularly car wash workers, are forced to look only for work that is close to home - walkable or reachable by bike - to avoid high commuter costs, limiting their opportunities and work options.

As a solution, we support the Community Service Society and the Riders Alliance proposal to subsidize a half-fare MetroCard for the working poor. It would benefit 800,000 New Yorkers struggling at or below the federal poverty line (\$24,036 for a family of four). Those eligible would save over \$700 a year, a significant amount for low-wage workers in various industries, including thousands who work in retail.

While we recognize that the MTA is responsible for MTA fare hikes, and the state needs to do its part in funding the MTA, we see an opportunity for New York City to create an innovative program that addresses the needs of its people, much like it has led in creating access to paid sick days and universal Pre-K. The cost to the city would amount to 0.3 percent of the city’s annual budget. A small amount when you consider the benefits to families and to business.

San Francisco, Seattle and London have already implemented similar proposals. Support in New York City has been growing since last year. Some of you on the committee have already endorsed it. We join you here to declare on the record our support and look forward to working with you to make #FairFares a reality for New York City’s working poor.

### Bienvenida Testimony Testimony

My name is Bienvenida Cabrera and I live in The Bronx. I'm a member of the Riders Alliance.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

The cost of a MetroCard makes it difficult for struggling New Yorkers like me to afford or even get to where we need to go.

At \$2.75 a swipe, I have had trouble getting around. I am recently unemployed, and I have struggled to get to job interviews because I couldn't afford to get on the bus or the train. I have struggled simply to get to the unemployment office because the cost of transit is too much for me. I have even had to walk to doctors appointments.

To get to where I need to go I have had to choose between paying my electric bill, or buying groceries in order to afford a weekly MetroCard. Recently, I had to skip lunch in order to get to the hospital, and even then I still had to ask a neighbor for help getting home.

Having to do these things makes me feel very hopeless. Having to constantly decide what I do based on whether or not I can afford a MetroCard makes me sad.

I'm fighting for Fair Fares because it is something that low income people need. Even those who are working still have too many expenses to fully provide for the families. My community needs the cost of transit to go down if we are ever going to get ahead. It's unfair that the city expects that working people should have to pay more.

*with low income*

I am disappointed that Mayor de Blasio didn't include funding for half-priced MetroCards for low-income riders in his preliminary budget. But there's still time for the mayor and do the right thing by including Fair Fares in his executive budget to make transit affordable to all New Yorkers. And I ask the New York City Council to fight for Fair Fares in the budget negotiations. No one should have to skip meals or jump turnstiles in their efforts to pull themselves out of poverty.

### **Pedro Valdez Rivera Jr. Testimony**

Good morning. My name is Pedro Valdez Rivera Jr. a Riders Alliance Member. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I live in an N.Y.C.H.A. building in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn. And I am living with seven other family relatives: My single mother, my three sisters, my brother, my nephew and my niece.

I'm the only family member that does have a reduced fare card due to my mental disability known as a mild autism spectrum disorder. Sometimes, the rest of my family has to spend much of their income for either a seven-day or a thirty-day unlimited MetroCard to get there where we going. However, they have to share that same unlimited MetroCard.

**I urge Mayor de Blasio** to help make the transit system affordable for all New Yorkers by offering half-price fares for the City's lowest-income New Yorkers as we do for seniors, students and people with disabilities, like me. Let's make our turnstiles the entry point – not the barrier -- to upward mobility.

### **Monica Martinez Testimony**

Hello, my name is Monica Martinez. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am a member of the Riders Alliance and a native resident of the Bronx. I'm here to fight for half-priced MetroCards for low-income New Yorkers.

My husband and I struggle to get by. He works at a pizza place but I do not have a job. It helps that my husband can ride his bike to work, but in the winter this is impossible and so we have to make sure we have enough money for MetroCards for everyone. I have three kids, and my eldest goes to school in Manhattan. This means that I rely on the subway and bus to attend all of her important school functions. I must budget very carefully to make sure I have the money to attend PTA meetings, parent teacher conferences, and similar events.

The price of the MetroCard gives me a tremendous amount of anxiety. My greatest fear is that I will be out with my kids and not have enough money to get home. As a result, when we are out I often skip meals to ensure that I always have enough cash on hand to get me and my family home. It is not uncommon for me to walk one of my kids to a doctor's appointment because we can not afford to take a train or bus.

My family needs a reduction in the price of the MetroCard. Fair Fares could really help us, and we hope that the Mayor puts it in the budget as soon as possible.

## RB testimony

Hello, I'm Rebecca Bailin, campaign manager at the Riders Alliance. Today you're hearing testimony from New Yorkers, struggling and not, who are calling on the city to help fund one program that would break down a major barrier to economic opportunity and community life in New York City. That barrier, is of course, a MetroCard.

For New York City residents, public transportation is a necessity that allows access to all other necessities. Trains and buses connect families in different boroughs, they get us to job interviews and to college classes, and they allow us to engage in political and democratic life when we need that engagement the most. But not, of course, if buying a MetroCard is completely out of reach.

The New York City Council and the Mayor's office has acknowledged this burden for all New Yorkers and demonstrated a commitment to helping to ease the cost for middle class New Yorkers by signing the Commuter Benefits Act into law. This law, one that the Riders Alliance and transportation advocates fought for, is helping hundreds of thousands of middle class New Yorkers like myself save hundreds of dollars every single year. It is truly a huge burden lifted and we thank you for that.

But many New Yorkers cannot take advantage the Commuter Benefits Act, and those who can't are disproportionately low-income residents struggling to get by. Now more than ever, we need Fair Fares. When New York is so unaffordable for our most struggling community members it only makes sense and it is only right, that we show the same commitment and extend these savings for those who are working so hard to get ahead but are blocked by the turnstile. That's why we're here today to ask Mayor de Blasio and the New York City Council to take this next, obvious step to make New York City truly affordable.

### Statement of Rabbi Jeffrey Gale

A large number of my congregation are elderly Holocaust survivors and pensioners living on fixed incomes and feel the burden of high transportation costs. How much the more so does this apply to the poorest elements of Washington Heights.

I volunteer as a reading buddy at an afternoon school for needy Latino children. The hot meal they receive may be the only one they have that day. Their families are truly disadvantaged by high transportation costs.

The Hebrew word for charity is tzedakah. It really means righteousness or narrowing the gap between the haves and have nots. The highest form of tzedakah in Judaism is helping the disadvantaged to support themselves.

That's what subsidized metro cards are all about. They enable the disadvantaged to climb out of poverty. By investing a tiny additional percentage of the overall budget of NYC, we help to alleviate the much greater cost of social inequality.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/13/17

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Letitia Boule

Address: 175 Tapscott Street

I represent: Theater of the Oppressed NYC

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Gajtana Simonowski

Address: 99-45 67th Rd # 302, Forest Hills

I represent: Love Andujar NY 11375

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/13/2017

Name: Shulamit Warren for  
Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer

Address: Centre Street, 19th fl.

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/13/17

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lillie Carino

Address: 330 W 42 St, NYC 10036

I represent: 1199 SEIU

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Will Carry

Address: Senior Dir. for Special Projects

I represent: NYC DOT

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Eric Beaton

Address: Senior Dir. Transit Development

I represent: NYC DOT

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jeff Lynch  
Address: Ass. Comm Intergov + Comm Aff.  
I represent: NYC DOT  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: February 13, 2017

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Yung-Mi Lee  
Address: 177 Livingston Street, 5th Floor  
I represent: Brooklyn Defender Services  
Address: Brooklyn, New York 11201

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Appearance Card

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in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/13/17

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: CHIWONISO KAITANO  
Address: 1368 FULTON ST, BK, 11216  
I represent: TRACEY CAPERS RESTORATION CORP  
Address: 1368 FULTON ST, BK, 11216

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Quinton Mack

Address: 266 E 165<sup>th</sup> St Bronx N.Y.

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: Jules Flynn

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Motivate / Citi Bike

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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 in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/13/17

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Julia Kite

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Transportation Alternatives

Address: 111 John Street, New York, NY 10038

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Karzem Alston (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 120 E. 102nd St, APT 2A

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Sara Vogel (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 963 Kent Av #182 Brooklyn 11205

I represent: Riders Alliance

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/13/17

Name: Majidah Nishizaka (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Theatre of the Oppressed NYC

Address: 68 Jay St, Brooklyn 11201

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: February 13, 2017

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rabbi Jeffrey Gale

Address: 351 Fort Washington Ave, NY 10033

I represent: Hebrew Tabernacle

Address: 351 Fort Washington Ave 10033

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition FairFare

Date: 2/13/2017

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jessica Garcia

Address: 4420 Broadway NYC 10040

I represent: RWDSU

Address: 370 7<sup>th</sup> Ave NYC 10001

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/13/17

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Deborah Lolai

Address: 1166 Grand Concourse, 30-D, Bronx 10456

I represent: The Bronx Defenders

Address: 360 East 161<sup>st</sup> St, Bronx 10451

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/13

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Love Andujar

Address: 225 Willis Ave Bronx NY 10454

I represent: Myself.

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/13/17

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lisa Hammer

Address: 200 Tillam Street Brooklyn NY 11241

I represent: myself

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: Feb. 13, 2017

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Brett Shanley

Address: 311 40th St Apt 1D

I represent: City of New York

Address: 902 Broadway

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**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 02.13.2017

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Christo Thomas

Address: 902 Broadway, NY NY

I represent: Collegiate Congress

Address: 902 Broadway NY NY

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 in favor  in opposition

Date: 02.13.2017

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: GIUSEPPE DIMIGLIO

Address: 902 BROADWAY

I represent: PACE UNIVERSITY / COLLEGIATE CONGRESS

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 02/13/17

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Pedro Valdez Rivera Jr.

Address: 953 Dekalb Ave, Apt. 17B, BK, NY, 11221

I represent: Riders Alliance

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/13/17

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Adriana Espinoza

Address: 30 Broad St, 30<sup>th</sup> FL, 10004

I represent: NY LCV

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Monica Martinez

Address: 185 E 162<sup>nd</sup> Bronx NY

I represent: Riders Alliance

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Darelys Abreu

Address: 652 Park Ave Brooklyn NY 11206

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Bianca Cusack

Address: 1144 Nelson Ave #5B

I represent: Riders Alliance

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. Fair Fano's Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Febecca Barlin

Address: 389 Prospect Ave Brooklyn 11215

I represent: Riders Alliance

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/13/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: YANNI DECONESCU

Address: 25 THORNTON ST.

I represent: OPPORTUNITIES FOR A

Address: BETTER TOMORROW 25 THORNTON

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Norma Ginez

Address: 128 E CLARKE PL W BRONX NY

I represent: Riders Alliance

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/13/17

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JACI COHEN

Address: 368 STATE ST, BK NY

I represent: NYPIRG STRAPHANGERS CAMPAIGN

Address: 9 MURRAY ST NY NY

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**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sharon Bardales

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Borough of Manhattan Community College

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: David R. Jones

Address: 633 3rd Ave 530 E 76th St NY

I represent: CSS

Address: 633 3rd Ave, N.Y. NY

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