



**Testimony of YaTing Liu, Tri-State Transportation Campaign
MTA Finance Committee Meeting
December 14, 2009**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am YaTing Liu, federal advocate for the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, a regional policy watchdog organization working for a more balanced transportation network in downstate New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.

After successfully winning a \$2 billion financing solution in June 2009 to plug the MTA's operating deficit, we are both angered and frustrated by the new operating budget shortfall facing the agency in 2010. We understand this is a result of lower than expected revenue from the payroll tax combined with the state's \$143 million cut to balance the NYS budget deficit. We know it's not the MTA's fault. Blame Albany, not the MTA.

Regardless of the cause, fare hikes and service cuts should not be on the table. Transit riders should not shoulder this pain. We've already paid our share with a 10% fare increase. The MTA must keep its promise to riders or its credibility will suffer.

One wonders where Mayor Bloomberg is in all this. The City's contribution to the MTA has remained stagnant for years. Is our pro-transit mayor going to let riders suffer the loss of subway lines and bus service?

The agency also needs to start looking for assistance from the federal government. Years ago, the federal government provided modest operating assistance to transit agencies. Since 1998, when the federal government ceased this assistance, transit agencies have struggled to stay afloat. This year, as more Americans sought the affordability of transit, hundreds of agencies across the country were forced to cut service or raise fares.

With President Obama's announcement of a jobs bill, it is incumbent upon struggling transit agencies to seize this opportunity to push for transit operating assistance in the legislation. The transportation portion of the bill is expected to be \$50 billion, leaving an opportunity for both capital and operating budgets to be funded. Investing in transit, especially operations, is the single best way to produce jobs in the transportation sector, up to 41,000 jobs for every \$1 billion invested, which is why we strongly advocate for the MTA, state legislature, and transit users to push for transit operating assistance in the federal jobs bill.

Thank you.