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Contact: Veronica Vanterpool, 917-957-9748

Statement of Tri-State Transportation Campaign Executive Director Veronica Vanterpool after the announcement of MTA fare and toll hike proposals.

The fare proposals announced today by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority signal an agency in distress. Despite hundreds of millions of dollars in cost efficiencies made by the MTA, massive service cuts two years ago, and three fare increases in four years, the agency is still strapped for cash. While the MTA and transit riders have upheld their share of the burden of operating the system, New York City and State have failed to step up and adequately fund the metro area's transit system. Now, transit riders could pay up to 20% more for monthly unlimited MetroCards, while others could lose a valuable 7% bonus on pay-per-ride MetroCards that cost more than \$10, all because our legislators have not upheld their responsibilities. The MTA's debt is growing, costs are mounting to both run and use the system, and simultaneously, transit ridership is steadily increasing.

Transportation funding is a political problem. City and state legislators make the funding decisions that impact our daily commutes, quality of life, and the region's economic growth. Yet, stagnant funding contributions, sweeps of dedicated transit funds for non-transit use, and threats to dedicated transit taxes, such as the payroll mobility tax, perpetually undermine the financial outlook of the agency. And, very few legislators are standing up for the transit rider.

Our legislators have to find a solution, not contribute to the problem. The pockets of transit riders are not default piggybanks when city and state elected officials fail to adequately support transit. These increases significantly impact low-income transit users; 1/4 of New York City Transit riders making \$25,000 or less rely on a 7% bonus on pay-per-ride MetroCards of more than \$10 to stretch their travel budget.

With upcoming state elections and fare increase hearings in November, transit riders should call on their elected officials to find a solution. We don't need more legislative voices denouncing the fare increases. We need more voices working towards a viable, long-term funding solution. It is time for our legislature to revisit new funding ideas, such as variable pricing and more balanced tolling for the five boroughs.

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Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a non-profit organization working toward a more balanced, transit-friendly, and equitable transportation system in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.