



**Testimony of Ryan Lynch, Tri-State Transportation Campaign
MTA Fare Hike Hearing
November 7, 2012
Brooklyn Marriott**

Good evening. My name is Ryan Lynch and I am the associate director for the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, a policy and advocacy organization working for a more balanced transportation network in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. I'm also a Brooklyn resident.

The MTA should be applauded for its response in the run-up, and aftermath, of Hurricane Sandy. Getting a transit system of the MTA's size largely up and running in such a short period of time is a testament to the leadership of the agency and the hard working employees of the MTA.

Nevertheless, Tri-State is disappointed that these fare hike hearings are being held so soon after the storm devastated the region's communities, and while Brooklyn residents in Coney Island, Red Hook and elsewhere in the borough are just beginning the difficult road to recovery. In order to ensure that Long Islanders had their voice heard on the proposed fare increases, the MTA rightly postponed the Long Island hearing also scheduled this evening. The MTA should have been equally accommodating to the millions of transit users in this borough that will be impacted by the pending fare increases, but are unable to attend this hearing because they are trying to get back on their feet.

Tri-State opposes the proposed fare hikes. In 2009, we supported the state legislature's financing package for the MTA because it balanced the costs of funding the system amongst transit riders, business, and drivers. Riders paid higher fares. Businesses paid a payroll mobility tax. And, new taxes and fees were paid by drivers. But, since 2009, the state legislature has also taken \$260 million in dedicated transit money to close the state budget, which triggered the largest service cuts in a generation in 2010.

Riders are the only group consistently holding up their end of the deal. The payroll tax has been repeatedly attacked by suburban legislators, been reduced, and remains in limbo in the court system, putting roughly \$1.8 billion in dedicated funding for the MTA in jeopardy.

The MTA has done well in recent years to cut costs and become more efficient, saving taxpayers approximately \$700 million annually. But no amount of additional cost-cutting can fill the \$1.8 billion in mobility tax revenue that would be lost if the payroll tax were to be repealed. Riders cannot continue to be burdened with higher transit costs because our elected officials in Albany

and in New York City continue to shortchange a system that is so integral to the region's economy, environment and quality of life.

Governor Cuomo and the newly elected state legislature must find funds to stop this fare increase next year and find new revenue sources to support the MTA in the future. Sam Schwartz has proposed a more balanced toll structure that can help bring in more money for transit. . This plan can generate revenue that can stave off future fare increases, while reducing congestion throughout NYC. New revenue will allow the MTA to invest in the key capital infrastructure projects that will take the system into the 21st century, protecting the system from future Hurricane Sandy's.

But we need leadership from Albany to implement the tough choices that are necessary to keep the public transportation system afloat. Governor Cuomo deserves great credit for taking ownership for the MTA over the past week and a half, but this ownership must continue beyond getting the system up and running after a mega-storm.

Governor Cuomo and state elected officials must prevent the fourth fare hike in five years. Transit riders have been hit hard enough.

Thank you.