



**MTA Fare and Toll Increase Hearing-Bronx
November 13, 2012
Hostos Community College**

My name is Veronica Vanterpool and I am the executive director of the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, a non-profit transportation policy watchdog organization in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

I'd like to applaud Governor Cuomo, Chairman Joe Lhota, and the thousands of MTA employees who worked around the clock to get our transit system running after Superstorm Sandy. If it wasn't clear beforehand, it undoubtedly became clear to millions, in NY and around the nation, that transit is the backbone of our regional economy. Governor Cuomo estimated that the downstate area and the state lost \$6 billion in economic revenue, in a period of days, as a result of the storm. Our transit system is essential to the entire state.

If our state and region are so dependent on our transit system, why are we advocating year after year for additional funding to help maintain, build, and expand our transit network? Because our elected leaders are not standing up for transit.

Tri-State opposes these fare hikes—the fourth fare hike in five years, because a balanced financing deal made by the state legislature in 2009, which Tri-State Transportation Campaign supported, is now out of balance. Business, drivers, and riders were all to pay more through higher taxes, fees, and fares and, in return, the state legislature would ensure transit funding remained intact. But, since 2009, the state legislature has taken \$260 million in dedicated transit money to close gaps in the budget. That triggered the largest service cuts in a generation in 2010. And, a critical funding stream, the payroll tax, has been reduced by the Governor and challenged in court by suburban legislators. That puts roughly \$1.8 billion in dedicated transit funding in jeopardy.

Riders have held up their end of the deal, and Albany hasn't. Even the MTA has done its part by cutting costs and improving efficiencies, saving taxpayers approximately \$700 million annually.

We've already seen incredible leadership from Governor Cuomo. Over the past two-and-a-half weeks, the governor has made it clear that the buck for New York's transit system stops with

him. The Governor, state, and city elected officials must stop using transit riders as the de-facto piggy bank when they shortchange a system that is so integral to the state's economy, environment and quality of life. Instead, they must support new revenue streams for the future. Sam Schwartz has proposed a smart, balanced toll plan that can generate revenue to stave off future fare increases, cut congestion throughout the city, and allow the MTA to build needed capital projects. It is worth serious consideration.

Lastly, we also oppose the MTA's proposal to eliminate the 7% discount on pay-per-ride. 25% of MTA customers who make less than \$25,000 a year rely on this discount to stretch their budgets even further. Eliminating this discount empties the wallets faster of those who are already struggling.

Making these investments now saves New York money, gives New York a transit system that is better for riders, and prepares one of the state's most important assets from future storms. What is the Governor going to do with the realizations and lessons learned post-Sandy? Millions are waiting for an answer.

Thank you.