

Keep NYC Free

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For Immediate Release

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Statement to Metropolitan Transportation Authority

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Thank you to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) for this hearing. Before I get to the focus of my testimony that NO NEED EXISTS TO RAISE ANY FARE ON OUR BUSES AND SUBWAYS, I take this opportunity to applaud the members of the MTA board who finally recognize the need to act as transit advocates. This shift from a board that provided cover as mayors and governors led the way in depleting city and state funding for transit operations might just help make a difference this year. Keep NYC Free and the members of our coalition welcome this fresh approach stand ready to partner to achieve the needed outcome: low fares, steady resources to ensure that and stable revenues for necessary projects.

Now, allow me an opportunity to make absolutely loud and clear what some folks making policy need better understand: the resources exist to hold the line on the fare at current levels and – just as important – to ensure that the MTA MAINTAINS AND IMPROVES EXISTING SERVICE LEVELS.

Last week, my colleague Walter McCaffrey [discussed](#) our coalition's sound and preferable [approach](#)* to the incomplete approach offered early last month by the Commission on MTA Financing chaired by former MTA Chairman Richard Ravitch. The “Inc” grade for incomplete rested not just on it including an inefficient and inequitable toll tax. Even more glaring – an outrageous failure to get City Hall and Albany to make up historical shortchanges in support for transit. What chutzpah to allow Albany and City Hall off the hook.

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So let's move beyond talk of tolls that makes little sense and merits rejection. Let's seize the opportunity to recognize that especially in this lousy economic and fiscal climate, investment in transit serves our nation, our state and our city. It represents a consummate form of economic development. Our coalition alternative [plan](#) recognizes that imperative; it finds the resources that empower the city and state to step up and make up their dramatic skimping on supporting transit. Why not earmark a modest \$0.04 state gasoline levy (\$255 million), a reasonable vehicle registration fee (\$250 million), rational fines for illegal parking (\$75 million), appropriate parking meter rates (\$50 million) and more realistic (city) fees for the use of street space by construction contractors and utilities (\$500 million) to fund the City and State shares.

Our [plan](#) also identifies a fair way to those who come here to work so support transit which benefits them whether or not they use it: a non-resident revenue [reform](#) that apportions its proceeds between City and suburban transit projects (\$1.8 billion).

The MTA board can help make a difference in this effort by supporting alternative resources, including many advanced by our coalition, and rejecting the imposition of any toll-tax.

Please visit our website, www.keepnycfree.com. It includes our [plan](#) and other useful information. Our Keep NYC Free coalition welcomes an opportunity to discuss our concerns and recommendations with the full board, a board committee, or individual board members. Let's not lose an opportunity to take some good ideas and set the stage for a rationally funded, stable mass transit. Our nation, our economy need it. Together let us say, yes we can save the fare; yes we can devise stable funding for transit operations, and yes we can obtain our fair shares of transit from City Hall, Albany and especially Washington, and yes we can legislate steady revenues to maintain, improve and expand the transit system. Thank you for your interest.