

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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Testimony to City Council Committee on Transportation, October 23
Chaired by Hon. John Liu
(former QCC Vice President and Transportation Chair)

The Queens Civic Congress applauds this hearing raising questions about the fare hike and submits this letter, addressed to the Governor, dated September 19, 2002:

Hon. George Pataki
Governor
633 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10017

RE: Queens Civic Congress urges Governor to hold the line on the bus and subway fare

Dear Governor Pataki:

On behalf of the Queens Civic Congress, a coalition of over 100 civic, community, cooperative and tenant organizations in the borough of Queens, I write to urge you to direct your appointees on the Board of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority to hold the line on transit fare through at least 2004.

The Congress has followed the financing of the City's transit system by both the MTA and the state and finds the current system grossly unfair to residents of the City. Frankly, the funding scheme discriminates. Just as New York State needs to address the inequity in its financing of New York City's public schools, the discriminatory funding of the City's transit system as operated by the MTA, disproportionately calls on New York City residents and commuters to pay more than non-city residents. Under the current financing scheme for mass transit, any fare hike would represent nothing less than a very regressive tax hike in excess of \$750 on many New Yorkers who struggle to make ends meet.

Let's look at the facts:

- *New York City accounts for 84% of all state riders moved by some form of mass transit;
- *New York City buses and subways receive only 63% of state transit aid, an annual shortfall of \$325 million, equivalent to about \$0.35 cents in the cost of the \$1.50 fare;
- *The LIRR and MetroNorth move only five percent of all state riders;
- *The LIRR and MetroNorth combined receive 23% of state transit aid, an annual windfall of \$275 million.
- *Bus and subway fare generate from \$2.0-2.1 billion annually since the 1997 fare hike;
- *New York City contributes \$300 million annually to MTA operations, including
 - \$158 million to match NYS aid;
 - \$67.6 to maintain LIRR and MetroNorth stations within the five boroughs;
 - \$45 million for student bus and subway fare passes;
 - 13.8 million for reduced fare cards for seniors;

- 17.2 million for reduced fare cards for the disabled;
- *Since 1996 subway ridership increased 29% but service increased only 11%’;
- *Since 1996 bus ridership increased 50% but service increase only 27%;
- *NYC transit riders fares pay 60% of operating costs; this compares to 54% for MetroNorth; 44% for LIRR, 37% for PATH (in 2000) and 48% for New Jersey Transit (in 2000); nationally this compares to 44% for Chicago, 41% for Philadelphia, 32% for Los Angeles and Miami-Dade, and 29% for Boston (in 2000).

An investment in New York City mass transit means more than repairs, new cars and buses and routes, it means a stable, affordable fare that encourages mass transit and provides an affordable means for workers and visitors to get around. New Yorkers look to you to show leadership and a commitment – NOW! – to hold the line of transit fares.

Sincerely,

Tina
Vice-President
Chairwoman / Transportation Committee

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The entire Queens Civic Congress Platform may be viewed on the internet at:
<http://www.queensciviccongress.org/Platform/02platform.htm>

The next Queens Civic Congress meeting, its Annual Legislative Reception, an invitation only event, takes place Sunday afternoon, November 17 at the Douglaston Club.