

February 28, 2018

Members of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority Board

Metropolitan Transportation Authority
2 Broadway
New York, New York 10004

Dear Members of the MTA Board:

We write to highlight three policies that will be enabled by your agency's investment in a new fare payment system. We urge you to ensure the new technological capabilities are used to their fullest to make the MTA's transit systems as convenient and affordable to use as possible.

Fare payment technology has advanced rapidly since implementation of the MetroCard in the early 1990s. Beginning this year, the MTA will join its peers in London, Chicago and many other cities with adoption of a modern fare payment system, which will make it possible for New Yorkers to pay transit fares using a contactless bank card, smartphone, or MTA-issued smart card.

Key decisions on how the new fare payment system will work are being made right now. The board's leadership is needed to ensure policies that take riders' needs into account are adopted alongside the technology. Please begin discussion with MTA staff leadership as soon as possible on these payment policy changes:

Improve bus speed & reliability with all-door boarding. NYC's bus system is shedding riders at alarming rates as buses become slower and less reliable — even as the city's population and economy continues to boom. As Select Bus Service has shown, allowing riders to board through all doors speeds buses and improves reliability. The new fare payment system will make it feasible to expand all-door boarding to bus routes citywide. All-door boarding is standard in cities with modern fare payment technology: Oslo has had it since 2008 and San Francisco since 2012. Yet the procurement contract approved in October mentions only a limited all-door boarding pilot. To win riders back and ease crowded subways and streets, the MTA should issue a plan by mid-2018 to permit all-door boarding on local buses citywide and implement that plan alongside the roll out of the new fare payment system.

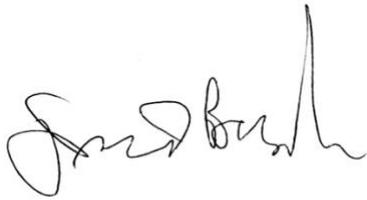
Ensure riders pay a fair price for transit. In New York, the poorest riders are stuck paying the highest fares. Riders who can afford a monthly pass benefit from significant per-ride discounts. Lower-income riders with less cash on hand often pay the costlier per-ride fare. Fare capping can eliminate this long-standing unfairness. It's a policy in which riders' accumulated single-ride fares are "capped" when they reach an equivalent unlimited-pass rate—whether that's the daily, weekly, or monthly unlimited rate. The new fare payment system will be sophisticated enough to count how many times a rider visits the system within clear time spans using per-ride tickets and

stop charging after she hits a capped amount. Transport for London and Cubic Transportation Systems, the company replacing the MetroCard, first enabled this popular feature in London in 2005 and has since expanded it.

Improve citywide mobility with a seamless city transit/commuter rail fare package. The MTA has indicated it will pilot a discounted flat-fare option for bus, subway, and commuter rail travel for Brooklyn and Queens commuters traveling within city limits. This will give riders on crowded lines or in underserved neighborhoods more travel options at a lower price. MTA should seek and project ticket sale efficiencies via the new fare technology and implement the policy once and for all across Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx early in the new system's roll-out.

When it was first introduced, the MetroCard was no more than a plastic token. It took several years and substantial external pressure to translate the MetroCard's potential into free bus-subway transfers and unlimited-ride monthly passes — policies that seem inevitable aspects of city life in hindsight. With the pending launch of the MetroCard's successor, we urge you to put riders first from the beginning by immediately adopting the full range of policy options enabled by the new fare system's technology.

Sincerely,



David Bragdon
Executive Director, TransitCenter



Nick Sifuentes
Executive Director, Tri-State Transportation Campaign

CC:

Joseph Lhota, Chairman, Metropolitan Transportation Authority
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