

**METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (MTA)
PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED 2008 FARE AND TOLL OPTIONS
TESTIMONY OF BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT
MARTY MARKOWITZ**

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2007

GOOD EVENING M-T-A BOARD CHAIR DALE HEMMERDINGER— EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ELLIOT SANDER AND M-T-A BOARD MEMBERS AND WELCOME TO BROOKLYN.

THANK YOU FOR HOLDING THIS PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED 2008 FARE AND TOLL INCREASES ON THE M-T-A SUBWAYS, BUSES, COMMUTER RAILROADS, PARA-TRANSIT VEHICLES AND BRIDGES AND TUNNELS.

I AM GRATEFUL TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK ABOUT THIS ISSUE SINCE IT AFFECTS EVERY SINGLE ONE OF OUR RESIDENTS, PARTICULARLY HERE IN BROOKLYN WHICH HAS THE LARGEST NUMBER OF NEW YORK CITY TRANSIT RIDERS.

DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN IS A FITTING LOCATION TO BEGIN THIS DIALOGUE — IT HAS A HIGH CONCENTRATION OF OFFICES, RETAIL, RESIDENTIAL HOUSING, GOVERNMENT OFFICES, ACADEMIC AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS — AND IS AT THE CENTER OF BROOKLYN'S LOCAL AND REGIONAL MASS TRANSIT ACCESS — ALL OF WHICH MAKES IT THE THIRD LARGEST CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT IN NEW YORK CITY.

SIMPLY PUT, MY MESSAGE TODAY IS THAT NOW IS NOT THE TIME FOR ANY M-T-A FARE OR TOLL INCREASES.

AS BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT I MUST FIRST CONSIDER WHAT THE 2.5 MILLION RESIDENTS OF THIS BOROUGH WANT AND NEED — AND OF COURSE OUR RESIDENTS DON'T WANT TO PAY MORE WHEN THEY ALREADY PAY A GREATER SHARE OF COSTS THAN RIDERS ON THE COMMUTER RAILROADS AND OTHER TRANSIT SYSTEMS —AND BROOKLYNITES CONTRIBUTE MORE THAN THEIR FAIR SHARE TO SUPPORT THE CAPITAL PROGRAM AND EXCESS T-B-T-A REVENUES.

FROM A PUBLIC POLICY STANDPOINT — FOR EVERY REASON FROM REDUCING CONGESTION TO COMBATING GLOBAL WARMING — WE SHOULD BE DOING EVERYTHING IN OUR POWER TO ENCOURAGE RIDERSHIP.

THAT SAID, MANY OF US AGREE THE M-T-A NEEDS FINANCIAL HELP.

YOU ARE TO BE COMMENDED FOR PLEDGING NOT TO CUT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES TO OUR RESIDENTS DESPITE PROJECTED DEFICITS AND ALSO FOR —

- ADDING TRAINS TO THE CANARSIE LINE—
- PROVIDING 24 HOUR SERVICE ON THE Q59 TO WILLIAMSBURG—
- EXTENDING SERVICE ON THE B83 TO THE GATEWAY MALL AND ON THE B61 AND B77 IN RED HOOK.

ON THE M-T-A WEBSITE, YOU PROPOSE A NUMBER OF ACTIONS IN ORDER TO CLOSE THE BUDGET GAPS YOU ANTICIPATE OVER THE NEXT FOUR YEARS — AND ONE OF THOSE IS ADVOCATING FOR MORE STATE AND CITY SUPPORT.

I COULDN'T AGREE WITH YOU MORE. IT IS CLEAR THAT THE M-T-A IS UNDERFUNDED BY GOVERNMENT.

I JUST LEFT A PRESS CONFERENCE HELD IN SUPPORT OF ASSEMBLY MEMBER JAMES BRENNAN'S PROPOSED LEGISLATION — WITH COMPANION LEGISLATION PROPOSED IN THE SENATE — THAT WOULD PROVIDE THE M-T-A WITH INCREASED LOCAL AND STATE FUNDING FOR OPERATING COSTS AND REIMBURSEMENTS FOR THE COST OF REDUCED STUDENT FARES.

THIS IS THE COURSE WE NEED TO TAKE — MAKING GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABLE FOR MORE OF THE COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH PROVIDING A SAFE, EFFICIENT, RELIABLE AND AFFORDABLE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM FOR OUR RESIDENTS.

THAT IS WHAT GOVERNMENT IS SUPPOSED TO DO. AND NOT JUST CITY AND STATE GOVERNMENT. FARES IN NEW YORK CITY ACCOUNT FOR MORE OF THE REVENUES FOR OPERATING COSTS THAN IN MOST OTHER TRANSIT SYSTEMS IN THE COUNTRY.

MAXIMIZING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IS IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST — FROM REDUCING CONGESTION TO ADVANCING ENERGY EFFICIENCY, TO IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENT — ALL OF WHICH ARE PRESSING NATIONAL ISSUES.

BEFORE RAISING FARES AND TAKING MONEY OUT OF THE POCKETS OF WORKING PEOPLE — I URGE YOU TO WAIT UNTIL WE KNOW THE OUTCOME OF BOTH THIS PROPOSED LEGISLATION AND THE CONGESTION PRICING INITIATIVE.

AS WE ALL LOOK TO THE FUTURE, NEW YORK CITY MAYOR MICHAEL BLOOMBERG IS TO BE COMMENDED FOR PROPOSING SOME VISIONARY INITIATIVES IN HIS PLAN-YC — WHICH AIMS TO SET THE CITY ON A SUSTAINABLE COURSE TOWARD THE YEAR 2030 AND BEYOND.

CONGESTION PRICING — OR SOME FORM OF IT — IS ONE COMPONENT OF HIS PLAN THAT I COULD SUPPORT — AS LONG AS CERTAIN EXEMPTIONS ARE IMPLEMENTED. AS LONG AS CONTINGENCIES FOR SENIORS AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS ARE MET, I BELIEVE SOME TYPE OF CONGESTION PRICING COULD HELP US REDUCE GRIDLOCKED TRAFFIC, AND IMPROVE AIR QUALITY AND OUR HEALTH.

AND WE SHOULD ALSO CONSIDER SOME OF THE MANY GOOD SUGGESTIONS THAT HAVE BEEN PRESENTED BY PUBLIC OFFICIALS, INCLUDING CONGRESS MEMBER ANTHONY WEINER AND CITY COUNCIL MEMBER LOU FIDLER.

CONGESTION PRICING HAS ITS FRIENDS AND ITS FOES BUT IF WE WANT IT TO BE A SUCCESS, TRANSIT MUST BE FAST, RELIABLE, AND AFFORDABLE.

BUT LET'S FACE IT, HITTING OUR RESIDENTS AND COMMUTERS WITH A FARE INCREASE AT THE SAME TIME THAT WE'RE URGING THEM TO GET OUT OF THEIR CARS IS COUNTER-INTUITIVE. IF YOU PENALIZE STRAPHANGERS AND MOTORISTS BY INCREASING FARES AND CHARGING CONGESTION FEES SIMULTANEOUSLY, YOU WORK AGAINST EFFORTS TO GET COMMUTERS TO USE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION.

THIS IS THE TIME TO BE SPENDING MORE ON PUBLIC TRANSIT — TO IMPROVE SERVICE AND WIN BACK THE TRUST OF RIDERS WHO LOST SOME FAITH DURING THE SHUTDOWN ON AUGUST 8TH.

WHEN I SAY WIN BACK TRUST IN BROOKLYN, I DON'T JUST MEAN KEEPING FARES STEADY — I MEAN THINGS LIKE —

- GIVING BROOKLYN ITS FAIR SHARE OF A-D-A ACCESSIBLE STATIONS AND MAKING SURE ESCALATORS WORK —
- ADDING AN F EXPRESS TRAIN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE—
- IMPROVING SERVICE ON THE R TRAIN ESPECIALLY IN BAY RIDGE AND THE 4TH AVENUE CORRIDOR

ALTHOUGH IT WILL REQUIRE BOTH CREATIVE THINKING AND FISCAL RESOLVE, SERVICE NEEDS TO IMPROVE WITHOUT RAISING FARES.

SINCE I AM OPPOSED TO ANY FARE INCREASES AT THIS TIME, I WON'T EVEN GET INTO THE OTHER CONCERNS I HAVE ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF PEAK AND OFF PEAK FARE STRUCTURES —

WHICH I BELIEVE WOULD BE UNFAIR TO EMPLOYEES WHO ARE ON THE NINE TO FIVE CLOCK— AS SO MANY OF OUR WORKING AND MIDDLE CLASS RESIDENTS ARE!

I WON'T EVEN GET INTO THE FACT THAT INCREASING THE ONE-WAY TOLL ON THE VERRAZANO BRIDGE IS A TERRIBLE IDEA, ESPECIALLY FOR BROOKLYN —

SINCE CURRENT CONSTRUCTION AND ONE-WAY TOLL COLLECTION ON THE VERRAZANO BRIDGE ALREADY CAUSE DELAYS AND CONGESTION HERE —

AND TWO-WAY TOLLS ARE A MUCH MORE FAIR OPTION THAT WOULD ENABLE THE M-T-A TO RECOUP THE REVENUES YOU SO DESPERATELY NEED.

I'M NOT EVEN GOING TO GET INTO ALL THAT SINCE I KNOW THAT THE M-T-A WILL DO THE RIGHT THING AND WAIT —

NOW IS NOT THE TIME FOR THE M-T-A TO INCREASE THE FARES AND TOLLS.

BROOKLYN AND NEW YORK CITY ARE ON THE MOVE. AND WE SIMPLY CANNOT KEEP THIS CITY IN MOTION — UNLESS THE FARE REMAINS FAIR.