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Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

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**Testimony of Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer
Before the MTA Board of Trustees Finance Committee**

Good morning. My name is Gale A. Brewer and I am the Manhattan Borough President. Thank you Chair Schwartz and members of the Finance Committee for holding this additional meeting to discuss the upcoming budget amendments detailed in the MTA's November Financial Plan. I am here to discuss one issue in particular, and that's the MTA's deferral of the M96 upgrade to Select Bus Service.

As you know, under the Mayor's Bus Forward Plan, the MTA and city DOT were set to upgrade the M96 to SBS next year. However, included in these budget documents is an amendment to defer the upgrade until 2021, at the earliest, and possibly as late as 2023. The MTA's stated reasons for SBS deferral has been budget savings and the planned borough-wide bus redesigns.

However, as I've previously stated, these reasons just don't apply to the M96. The route, one of the shortest in the city, is inexpensive to upgrade, at a cost of just \$1.8 million dollars. And the M96 route will not meaningfully change following Manhattan's bus route redesign. Simply put, there's no reason to wait.

A couple of weeks ago, the MTA and DOT briefed Community Boards 7 and 8 on the positive benefits of the M79's upgrade to SBS just over a year ago. What we've seen is fantastic: travel times decreased by 8%, the time buses idled at stops was reduced by 21%, and most importantly, **ridership improved by 9% even though it had been dropping prior to SBS implementation.** As ridership decreases have been a key problem for the MTA's finances, this should be of great interest to us all.

The M96 route and its 14,000 daily riders deserve to benefit from the comparable improvements SBS has delivered for the M79. Note that the M96 route has been losing ridership every year since 2013.

Just before Thanksgiving, I wrote a letter to President Byford and Acting Chairman Ferrer requesting that they reverse this decision. As you may know, I reiterated this request at the MTA Fare Increase hearings. Today, I am once again issuing the same request to reverse the deferral of the M96 upgrade to SBS and instead to resume implementation.

At last month's MTA Board Meeting, DOT Commissioner Trottenberg stated that riders are hungry for the kinds of upgrades that come with SBS - I couldn't agree more. And the M96 represents the exact kind of low-cost but high-reward bus route the MTA should prioritize.

Thank you.