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Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

BOROUGH PRESIDENT GALE A. BREWER TESTIMONY TO THE MTA REGARDING PROPOSED TOLL AND FARE INCREASES DECEMBER 1, 2014

My name is Gale A. Brewer, and I am the Manhattan Borough President. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the MTA's proposal to raise fares and tolls, and for providing this opportunity for the public to comment as well. I'd also like to thank the MTA Board, staff, and workers of TWU Local 100, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 726, and other workers for all they do to keep our transit system operating smoothly.

I understand that the MTA needs more resources to do its job in order to continue providing New Yorkers with a world class transit system. Our city boasts the largest subway system on the continent, with a daily ridership of 5.5 million. Los Angeles would need for its entire population of 3.8 million to ride our subway system 1.5 times each day to achieve this figure. The MTA bus system, too, with its 5,700-vehicle fleet, is the largest in the nation. Clearly, considerable resources are needed to continue to support such a vast system.

However, from the many constituents I've spoken to on this matter, it is also understandable that New Yorkers are frustrated by the ever-increasing costs they must incur simply to travel to work, school, or a doctor's appointment. In fact, the proposed fare and toll hikes being discussed here today represent the fourth time in seven years that the MTA has raised its fees on riders. The proposed increases being discussed today are less than those of years past, and that is a good thing. However, I continue to believe that the MTA's budget shouldn't be balanced on the backs of its riders. This is particularly true since riders are contending not only with a continuing increase in transit fare, but also a decrease in the quality and frequency of transit service.

For instance, after budget cuts in 2010, the residents of lower Manhattan were forced to contend with drastic changes in service to three bus routes—the M1, M5, and M6—that served the Greenwich Village, Soho, Little Italy and Chinatown neighborhoods. Following these cuts, the M6 line was discontinued and the M5 bus was extended down to South Ferry, eliminating important transit stops along its previous route on Houston Street. Additionally, as a result of its extended route, it is my understanding that the M5 bus is frequently late, overcrowded, and runs only six buses an hour for the entire length of its route from 178th street to South Ferry. These changes have made travel much more difficult for all of the area's residents who previously depended on these routes, but they have been particularly hard on our borough's senior and disabled populations. Community Board 2 recently passed a resolution encouraging the MTA to restore the service on these buses back to their previous routes. I would encourage the MTA to



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adopt this proposal, or to develop a similar plan that will ensure better bus service to this area of Manhattan.

Similarly, the residents of West Harlem and the Upper West Side are contending with a reduction of service along the M104 bus route. This route, in fact, has already been significantly altered in recent years. In 2010, the MTA shortened the route, discontinuing its path across 42nd Street, which provided critical east side access for the residents of the Upper West Side and West Harlem. In 2011, similarly, the MTA reduced the frequency of stops along the route. The further reduction of service this year has left the M104 gutted, and has severely restricted transit options for the areas residents.

I applaud the MTA for listening to residents who have been unduly affected by cuts in bus service in the past. For instance, when the MTA suspended weekend service along the M8 in 2010, a route that runs east to west in the Village, many residents, particularly seniors and the disabled, were understandably upset. Without the M8 on the weekends, there was a 14 block distance between other crosstown buses in the neighborhood: the M21 on Houston or the M14A on 14th Street. In this instance, the MTA was responsive to the feedback of community members, and recently restored weekend service this past April. I urge the MTA to once again listen to community feedback with respect to the bus routes mentioned in this testimony, particularly as the agency continues to ask more from transit riders in the form of increased fares and tolls.

I'd also like to thank the MTA for building the Mother Hale Bus Depot, and for doing it in consultation with the community. The result is a healthy, green building that is an asset to workers and neighbors. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.