



STATEMENT IN OPPOSITION TO PROPOSED 2011 FARE HIKE July 28, 2010

The Straphangers Campaign is greatly concerned about the fairness and impact of the proposed fare hikes for 2011 on city subway and bus riders. Riders are being asked to pay more for less, given the tens of millions of dollars in service cuts the MTA put into effect in late June. In addition, the fare already went up in 2008 and 2009. The combination of fare increase and service cuts mean that riders will likely end up paying a higher share of the costs of running the transit system.

A fare increase in 2011 was part of a deal that has fallen apart. That deal called for the various beneficiaries of transit to contribute to the MTA, including riders, drivers and employers. Like many other groups, in 2009, the Straphangers agreed to this arrangement. Unfortunately, the deal has fallen through with riders being hit with the worst service cuts in decades; the state legislature cutting \$143 million from the MTA; and a sharp downturn in the revenues coming from specially dedicated transit taxes.

The Straphangers Campaign agrees that the MTA's financial problems are real. And we agree that the MTA is also proceeding with substantial cuts to administration, reducing overtime, renegotiating contracts with vendors and consolidating such services as legal, human resources and accounting among its operating subsidiaries.

Are there real alternatives to a fare increase? Why, for example, should transit riders pay to cross the East River, but drivers on the East River bridges get a free ride? Are there other possible actions to take to blunt a fare hike, such as restoring "dedicated" taxes that were cut last year?

Is it realistic to expect help from government in 2011? That's a tough question. In 2010, we are still waiting to hear from Washington D.C. about the fate of legislation calling for \$2 billion in emergency transit operating aid nation-wide. And we got cuts instead of help from Albany and faced a budget crunch at City Hall. Governments are in financial turmoil, which is likely to get worse in 2011.

These issues will be debated over the months to come. To make sure that the discussion is robust, the MTA should provide the public with the data on how riders use MetroCards now and how that supports a variety of possible fare policies.