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Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY

Hearing of the Manhattan State Budget Forum

New York State Budget

Testimony of Monica Bartley Community Outreach Organizer

March 2, 2019

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Re:

My name is Monica Bartley, Community Outreach Organizer at the Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in relation to funding for accessible transportation.

CIDNY is celebrating 40 years serving people with disabilities in New York City. Our goal is to ensure full integration, independence, and equal opportunity for all people with disabilities by removing barriers to the social, economic, cultural and civic life of the community. In 2018, CIDNY served more than 52,000 individuals with disabilities, helping them achieve their goals.

Transportation, after discrimination, is the second biggest barrier to employment for people with disabilities. New York City presents numerous transportation barriers if you have ambulatory, cognitive, or sensory disabilities. Or if you are blind or vision impaired. Our subways are largely inaccessible, our buses don't have enough disability-accessible seats, our taxis and car services do not have enough accessible cars to meet the need and our sidewalks and curb cuts are dangerous because of degrading concrete or insufficient ramping. Other old cities (like Boston and Washington DC) have done a better job at making their cities accessible. Barriers to access are the reason why people with disabilities can't participate fully in city life, whether going to work, to church, to stores, meeting friends for dinner, not their disability.

Travel in New York City can be very challenging for people who use wheelchairs. It requires a lot of planning beforehand and generally takes more time to complete a trip and get to our destination than for our non-disabled peers. The limited number of accessible stations tend to be spaced out by at least 30 blocks and make up less than 20 percent of the total number of

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Re:

stations. In numerous parts of the City, residents with disabilities have no access whatsoever. As a result, they remain completely barred from a mode of transportation that is essential in NYC.

I am an AAR user and recently I had a scheduled pick up time of 7:21am to go to work. I was picked up around 9:45am and arrived at my workplace 11:45am. It is a good thing my employer understands the issues related to AAR. Not having accessibility prolongs our dependence on AAR, which is an unreliable service. If I had the option of using the subway I could have gotten to work on time. This is very stressful because it affects my work performance. I am often required to attend meetings around the city, but with AAR, I cannot plan on being somewhere on time, I cannot go to a meeting that has just been announced, I cannot stay later after the meeting to talk to colleagues, and I can't take part in spontaneous after meeting activities where many colleagues bond and discuss strategies and plans for future activity.

Funding must be available to ensure that accessible subway stations are created in order to make sure we get the right to accessible transportation that federal laws provide. Congestion pricing is the main funding mechanism that is being discussed for this legislative session. While we support new sources of revenue dedicated solely to fund public transit, we want to ensure that people with disabilities whose only reliable mode of transportation is a private vehicle are given an exception considering that they are largely shut out of our public transit system. We support a requirement that funding be used to make all subway stations fully accessible. We seek a binding agreement to ensure the community that full accessibility will be achieved. We call on the Governor and the Legislature to fully fund the plan to ensure that everyone, including people with disabilities, can use the subways.



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Written Testimony of Disabled In Action before the NYS Senate on 3-2-2019

I am Robert Acevedo, a board member of Disabled In Action of Metropolitan New York. We are a grass-roots, non-profit civil rights group and our motto is "Nothing About Us Without Us." Disability rights are human rights. Our members have all kinds of disabilities and many have mobility impairments and use wheelchairs. There are 3 topics I will cover in this written testimony:

- Transportation,
- Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Services, and
- Accessible voting with Ballot Marking Devices (BMDs).

These are the types of transit that our members have problems with:

Access-A-Ride Paratransit – There are a variety of ways that people can use Access-A-Ride: dedicated vehicles through dedicated carriers on routes, ehail, brokers, and taxis. Most of these are easier to use if one does not use a wheelchair because there is way less choice if a person is a wheelchair user. Service is also better for Manhattan residents than outerborough residents who will be given pick-up times 2 or more hours to get to Manhattan, even on typically low traffic times such as Sunday mornings. Do you need 2 hours or more to go a few miles?

More people can get more rides for less cost to the State and City if non-dedicated rides are given, but some people with disabilities can only ride on the dedicated carriers in the big vehicles. On the dedicated carriers, people are sometimes being driven way out of their way to drop off or pick up passengers and are made late by this. When will this practice stop? One of our members was recently told that an elliptical route is ok, as in going way east to go west. It is not ok and results in long rides and late arrivals.

One way that AAR gets good stats is to sometimes have riders get to their destinations an hour or more early. That offsets the bad trips. Chicago was recently cited by the Federal Transit Administration for doing that because it is disruptive to the people who must take paratransit to leave extra early and arrive extra early.

Taxi Pilot – There is currently a taxi pilot for a few more months. Rides are fairly easy to get if a person is not a wheelchair user or is a wheelchair user and can transfer because the entire pool of taxis is available. One way people get better service is to

get drivers' phone numbers and call to have them pick them up, then use the app when they are right there. If a person is unwilling to game the system, then it can take 30 to 90 minutes to get a cab to come. Isn't that defeating the purpose? If that is the best way for it to work, then assign drivers to people and give out the phone numbers at the beginning!

Subways – Only about 25% of subway stations are accessible by elevators and many of those elevators are often sporadically out of service. It is a crisis for a wheelchair user or a person with a mobility disability or a parent with a young child in a stroller when an elevator is out of service and requires that they backtrack to another station and could mean another hour on the way to work! Carrying a child and a stroller on steps is dangerous. Despite what promises we are given, priority for putting elevators in stations and for keeping those elevators in service is just lip service. Excuses are given that there isn't money (why are we always last?) or the station is too hard to do or too expensive or too anything! Many, many people are affected by lack of elevators or working elevators in subway stations. It affects productivity and it affects the ability of people to get to work in the first place.

The "enhanced stations" effort was a gigantic waste of money that could have been better spent. While the stations were out of service for 6 months or more, mostly cosmetic changes were made to the stations. Who cares about fancy tiles when we can't even get into or out of the stations!

Express Buses – Many people in the outer boroughs depend on Express Buses, but they seem to be treated by New York City Transit as an unnecessary luxury. They are not a luxury even though they cost \$6.50 per ride. The buses are often late or do not show up at all for a scheduled trip. Many drivers do not know how to use the lift to board a wheelchair user. Some of the buses do not stop at the correct stops! Some stops are a muddy, inaccessible mess with no safe way to cross the street. That responsibility belongs to the DOT but no one wants to do anything. In 2010, when bus routes and service was drastically cut, we were told to take the subway instead. How?

The express buses are used by people who live in the outer boroughs to get to work or school or other things in Manhattan and to return home to their neighborhoods. They are a necessity for many people with very long commutes, and people who cannot do subway steps or stand for long distances. Many times the buses do not show up on the MTA BusTime app which is supposed to help riders know where their bus is and when it is arriving. What is the problem there? Uber has no problems showing where their vehicles are, so is the problem technology or something else?

Transit for people with disabilities in NYC is definitely a hit-or-miss situation, but our obligations and need for work, school, meetings, childcare, and entertainment are real. We need to get places!

Consumer Directed Personal Assistance is the program that allows people with disabilities who are on Medicaid to hire, train, and dismiss, if necessary, the people who will be taking care of us instead of doing it through an agency which severely limits what care its workers can do.

This program is invaluable for people with disabilities to maintain our independence, avoid being homebound, to get out into the community and participate in ordinary life while getting the assistance we need.

Huge cuts are planned for this program as well as for the Fiscal Intermediaries who administer the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Programs. This will directly negatively impact people with disabilities and could force many into nursing homes if we cannot get the care we need. If anything, the program needs to be funded even more because of people wanting to stay in their homes and be in their communities. Right now, it is hard for people in the Consumer Directed Program to find workers because the pay is so low and the benefits are poor.

We urge you to see that this program is adequately funded.

Voting – Ballot Marking Devices (BMDs) for People with Disabilities

Ballot marking devices (BMDs) are essentially an all in one computer and printer that can accommodate many types of disabilities and allow people to vote independently. Every polling place has at least one. Early voting polling places must have them, too. But there is one huge problem: the Ballot Marking Devices are old and obsolete and often do not work at all or have problems such as not being able to load or eject the ballot. They are at least 11 years old which is too old for software and a computer to work well. They need to be replaced as soon as possible.

Thank you,

Robert Acevedo, Disabled In Action of Metropolitan NY Board Member

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Budget Forum Testimony
March 2, 2019

My name is Naomi Cooper. I am here because I am a senior citizen who lives in the Central Business district and I have a car. I am here to talk about congestion pricing and how it will affect me and my neighbors. The Governor wants the Senate to vote for a congestion pricing plan without having the details available. This is wrong, and a reason by itself to reject this plan.

I retired to Manhattan from Brooklyn because of the ease of apartment living and because of the availability of public-transportation. But our governor says that my quiet street in the east 50s is part of the central business district and that every time I move my car I will have to pay over \$11, this is on top of the small fortune I pay to keep my car in a garage.

You might ask why do I have a car?

I have a car because I want to visit my grandchildren in Westchester and my family on Long Island. Traveling by car is the only practical way to get to those places. To do this I must leave and then return to the central business district, and if this proposal goes through pay a fee each time. I know the MTA needs more funding, but Central Business District residents need to be protected too.

I sincerely hope that you will help me and help all of us make sure that Central Business residents get an exemption from this \$11 fee. I'm a senior citizen but I do not drive my car to Bloomingdale's or MoMa. I only drive my car out of the Central Business District. I believe Manhattan residents who live and garage their cars in the central business district should have some type of special exemption from congestion pricing.

I also ask you to know what's in the plan before you vote, know before you say yes to Governor Cuomo.

Topics for Budget forum

Judith L. Marcus

3/1/19

Congestion Pricing - against

Is an unnecessary & additional burden on NYC residents and people that must commute in a car to NYC for earning a living.

Governor Cuomo & NYS representatives should have been allocating some tax money to maintain the subways, since they have been in office. This must be part of the budget for this year and future years.

EX the millions spent on the Tappan Zee Bridge name change was large misappropriation of funds, as those millions should have gone to maintaining the subways, buses, etc.

Suggestion for traffic control: all food store deliveries can be done during non-rush hours.

MTA

The administrative area of the MTA needs to be reorganized and cut down in size, along with adjustment of privileges/benefits. These perks need to shut off when employees leave (retired or just leave the company).

This following is a sample of large revenue losses

1. Elimination of Token booths
2. Faulty bus Fare machines which are broken and stay that way indefinitely.

Note: I was an outside consultant working in the MTA IT area and witnessed some of the waste. The remaining comments are from the transportation usage.

Unnecessary/unfair Commercial Tax Benefits given Landlords with vacant properties. This allows them to increase rents exponentially, which is causing Manhattan to lose boutique stores, 'mom & pop' stores, etc. This is creating a big box city with too many banks, CVS, Walgreens, etc. in essence losing the New York City charm.

3/1/19

Judith L. Marcus

From: login_brock_marcus1@yahoo.com
Sent: Thursday, February 28, 2019 12:29 PM
To: Judith L. Marcus
Subject: Conjestive pricing

Flag Status: Flagged

Places an unfair financial burden on people living in Manhattan, especially below 60th street. Most of these people are already paying outrageous fees to garage their cars.

Companies doing business in Manhattan will pass this cost onto customers making the high cost of living in NYC even higher.

People who don't use the subway are being asked to subsidize those who do.

What guarantee do we have that the money earmarked for the MTA will be used for that purpose? We have a president who wants to build a wall with money allocated for other purposes. What is to stop a mayor or governor from using this money after a hurricane?

Traffic could be reduced if trucks making deliveries came into the city during off peak hours.

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)