



THE ASSEMBLY  
STATE OF NEW YORK  
ALBANY

RICHARD L. BRODSKY  
Westchester County

CHAIRMAN  
Committee on  
Corporations, Authorities and Commissions

February 16, 2010

Jay H. Walder  
Chairman and CEO  
347 Madison Avenue  
7th Floor  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Hon. Walder,

We write to you as long-standing advocates for mass transit funding, as those who have regularly supported state funding for the MTA's capital and operating needs, and as those who represent students and parents across the MTA region. We understand the continuing difficulties caused by the national recession, and the difficult decisions you are making as a consequence. We believe that we share a desire to reform, expand, and improve the MTA, even as new leadership takes over, and as PARA 2009 makes real changes in legal, operational and fiduciary practices at the MTA.

That being said, we write to make sure you understand the depth of our concern about MTA plans to end free and discounted student travel. We cannot criticize any exercise that reviews all MTA expenditures and services in the face of the economic downturn. But we reject any decision by the MTA to end free and discounted student travel as an element of a final package of changes.

We reject that decision because it is not an accurate or intelligent analysis of the MTA's fisc. While the MTA asserts it needs \$214 million in additional state and city aid to preserve the program, the actual cost of free and discounted student fares is close to zero. We reject the MTA's assertion that the program must be valued at the ostensible lost revenue, and point out that state and city funding for the program actually exceeds the cost of providing the service.

We reject that decision because it is a dangerous, unfair, and self-defeating political tactic. We understand the use of political tactics in budget controversies. But there are limits, and the decision to put students and families out there as a pawn in the struggle to increase City and State funding crosses a line.

Simply stated, we ask that you immediately withdraw the threat to student fares, that you review the actual cost of the program across the MTA region, that you ensure that all students in the region be treated equally, and that you work with us to develop a fairer, clearer, and more successful negotiating strategy to get the MTA more money. For better or worse, this issue is becoming a defining moment for transit advocates in and out of the Legislature. In the spirit of fairness and cooperation, we ask for a timely response to this letter.

Best wishes


  
Richard Brodsky

  
Michael Benjamin

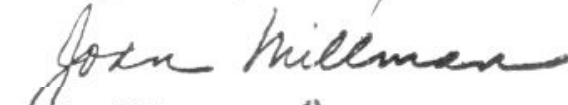
  
James Brennan

  
Jeffrey Dinowitz

  
Andrew Hevesi

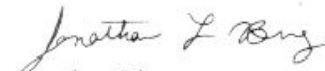
  
Rory Lancman

  
Margaret Markey

  
Joan Millman

  
Peter Rivera

  
Michael Benedetto

  
Jonathan Bing

  
Marcos Crespo

  
Carl Heastie

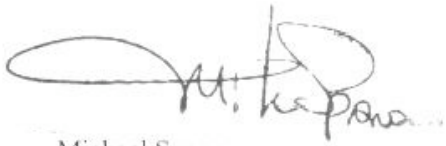
  
Micah Kellner

  
Joseph Lentol

  
Grace Meng

  
Audrey Pheffer


  
Linda Rosenthal



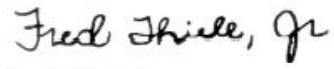
Michael Spano




Matthew Titone



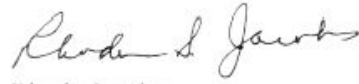
Vivian Cook



Fred Thiele Jr.



Carmen Arroyo



Rhoda Jacobs