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TESTIMONY MTA HEARING MANHATTAN, NOVEMBER 13, 2012
COUNCIL MEMBER GALE A. BREWER, CITY COUNCIL, 6TH DISTRICT

My name is Gale A. Brewer, and I represent the residents of the upper West Side and Clinton in Manhattan. Thank you for the opportunity to testify tonight regarding MTA fares and the financial challenges of the MTA.

Like others, I am sure, I congratulate the MTA Board, staff, and the working men and women of TWU Local 100, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 726 and other workers for their hard work and success in restoring the trains and buses to their routes and their grateful riders after Hurricane Sandy.

Regarding funding, the MTA needs more resources to do its job. I certainly will work with my colleagues in the City Council to find mid-to-long term transit funding; the City used to contribute significant operating resources to the MTA but recently has ceased to support the operating budget in the same way. We will also all work with you and the transit advocacy organizations to build support in Albany to provide additional funding. All New Yorkers need to take responsibility for addressing and fixing the MTA's financial challenges. The MTA's successes in restoring service as soon as possible after the storm will go a long way however in building the necessary support with lawmakers.

Obviously I am not supportive of riders carrying the burden of the financial problems of the MTA, and I do not support fare hikes. The Riders' Burden is the following: New York City Transit already has the highest fare box operating ratio in the nation at 53%. That's the share of operating costs covered by fares. And in other cities: In comparison to New York City Transit's 53% ratio, the average for large systems nationwide that operate both buses and subways was 38% in 2011, and that is according to the Federal Transit Administration. Looking at big cities that run both subways and buses, the fare box operating ratio in Boston was 38%, Chicago 44%, Los Angeles 27%, Philadelphia 37%, and Washington, D.C. 42%. The comparison is just as stark for subways alone. The fare box operating ratio in 2010 was 72% for the New York City subways alone, while it's lower for other cities: Washington, D.C (62%), Chicago (53%), Philadelphia (51%), Boston (50%), and Atlanta (34%).

In summary, I look forward to working with the advocacy groups and others to engage in a multi-year focus on shifting the conversation so that legislators and decision makers in the executive branch focus more on providing the resources necessary to provide good service, rather than focus on increasing the fare on the backs of riders.