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Press Release

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NYC Transit

IMMEDIATE

MTA NYC Transit President Howard H. Roberts' Statement on Mass Transit Use and Congestion Pricing

I want to take this opportunity to put into perspective my comments from yesterday's NYC Transit Committee Meeting with respect to congestion pricing. "No room at the inn" during rush hours on the 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 & E lines does not mean that NYC Transit cannot fully support the ridership increases projected for the impact of congestion pricing. These six lines have ample capacity off-peak; we have 16 other subway lines with unused peak capacity, and a bus system.

And, in fact, this strain on parts of the system is a big argument in favor of congestion pricing, not against it. The funds raised by congestion pricing are critical to paying for capital projects that increase capacity, from a fully-completed Second Avenue Subway to East Side Access for the Long Island Rail Road and new technologies that will allow more frequent subway service. The shorter-term solutions I spoke about yesterday also will require capital funding.

Just as importantly, we have a plan in place, which we presented in Washington, DC yesterday with the City and State, to accommodate the commuters who we expect to leave their cars at home under congestion pricing.

First, the almost 100,000 drivers expected to move from automobiles to mass transit is spread over the course of the day and throughout the region, not just the rush hour. Of the diverted riders who will use our system, we expect the majority to take new express and local buses from areas poorly served by the subways. To that end, our application to US Department of Transportation requested more than 300 new buses. While some former drivers will use the subway system, these commuters will be spread across our 22 lines and represent a minimal increase in subway ridership. In the context of the nearly 40% increase in ridership we've experienced over the past decade, this is a minimal bump that the system can unequivocally absorb.

Our situation is remarkably similar to the one that faced London when that global city decided to pursue congestion pricing. Its Underground was also pushing up against capacity limitations, and the launch of congestion pricing required an influx of new buses and bus routes. We expect the same strategy to be a success here in New York, with the revenues generated by pricing used to pay for the projects that will help relieve the crowding I described on the system.

As I said yesterday, there are no magic bullets and solutions will take time to implement. But there are two critical points that I did not make clear yesterday:

Congestion pricing is critical to putting these fixes into place.

And we will have the capacity in the system to accommodate increased ridership due to pricing, with many taking new buses to work and subway riders spread across all of our lines during peak and non-peak hours.