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**Statement of Council Member Daniel R. Garodnick**  
**4<sup>th</sup> Council District**  
**New York City Council**

before

**The Metropolitan Transportation Authority**  
**Regarding Proposals for Increases in Fares and Changes in Levels of Service**

January 14, 2009

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the subject of the MTA's proposed fare increases and service changes. My name is Dan Garodnick, and I represent the East Side of Manhattan in the City Council. Let me be the first to recognize the challenges of the MTA's budget, and your need to find ways to address the shortfalls. As you know, I am concerned about impacts of a number of cuts and fare hikes, but will spare you a laundry list here. Rather, I want to focus on one proposal that I view as particularly unjust – the proposed increases for utilizing the MTA's Access-A-Ride service.

Doubling the MTA's Access-A-Ride fare for disabled New Yorkers is inherently inequitable and unquestionably bad public policy.

MTA documents and public statements make it clear that most of the savings expected from the drastic Access-A-Ride fare increase will come because people with disabilities, many of them with low incomes, will determine that they cannot afford to spend \$8, \$10 or \$12 (double whatever the base subway/bus fare rises to) for a routine round trip.

The fact is, because the few station elevators and escalators are so frequently either out of service or non-existent for many disabled New Yorkers, Access-A-Ride service is the only option.

We are all aware of the MTA's serious budget difficulties and I am hopeful that steps will be taken at the State and Federal levels to avoid or minimize the service cuts and fare increases that have been proposed. Nevertheless, as we tighten our belts, we

cannot establish policy that so blatantly discriminates against one segment of our population, especially a segment that already copes with recognized challenges to mobility.

People with disabilities cannot and should not be marginalized in this way. To require them to pay double is inappropriate, a violation of the spirit, if not the letter of the anti-discrimination laws enacted at every level of government, and inconsistent with concepts of fairness and equity.

I applaud Borough President Stringer, Assembly Member Kellner and other elected officials for drawing attention to the MTA's ill-conceived plans for Access-A-Ride and look forward to a revised plan that more fairly shares the MTA's budget burdens among all of its stakeholders.