

INSTITUTE FOR RATIONAL URBAN MOBILITY, INC.

George Haikalis
President

One Washington Square Village, Suite 5D
New York, NY 10012 212-475-3394
geo@irum.org www.irum.org

Statement at January 17, 2008 MTA Public Hearing

The Institute for Rational Urban Mobility, Inc. (IRUM) is a NYC-based not-for-profit corporation concerned with reducing traffic congestion and improving the livability of dense urban areas. IRUM calls on MTA to rescind the fare hikes approved by the MTA Board last December, and now proposed to be modified – the subject of today’s hearing. Higher fares will shift riders away from public transit and will result in more car traffic – causing increases in pollution and congestion. MTA should be reducing, not raising fares, and should instead raise tolls on its bridges and tunnels to higher levels to produce the needed revenues. In contrast to the toll increases approved last December, the fare hike proposal was not accompanied with a detailed study of the environmental consequences of that action. This is unfortunate and is not in keeping with Governor Spitzer’s commitment to a more open and transparent MTA process.

At last month’s hearing I was joined by renowned labor mediator Theodore Kheel in calling for MTA to not approve the proposed fare hikes, but instead to consider other transport pricing alternatives. To its credit, MTA staff did provide data needed for IRUM to carry out its “Balancing Free Transit and Congestion Pricing” study. An early summary of the results of this study was distributed to each MTA Board Member and to each member of the NYC Congestion Mitigation Commission last month. The completed report will be released next Thursday, and copies will be widely available. Nurture New York’s Nature, a foundation headed by Ted Kheel, provided the resources and inspiration for this study.

In closing, IRUM calls on MTA to reject, not approve the proposal to reduce the \$10 minimum payment to seven dollars to secure a 15% fare bonus, but rather to retain the current 20% bonus offered when a ten dollar minimum is purchased. Under the MTA proposal, riders will be left with a nickel on their MetroCards, after paying \$7 and taking four rides under the new plan. While MTA budget official may pat themselves on the back for nickel-and-diming transit riders to death, each time riders are confronted with the unused nickel they will be reminded that Governor Spitzer has yet to offer a coherent highway and public transport pricing policy for the MTA region.