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PORT AUTHORITY OF NY & NJ

PUBLIC HEARING

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Staten Island College

Staten Island, New York

July 22, 2019

7:00 p.m.

BEFORE:

Michael Farbiarz, Hearing Officer and General
Counsel

Rossana Rosado, Commissioner

Richard Bagger, Commissioner

2 MR. FARBIARZ: MR. FARBIARZ: Good
3 evening everybody. It's 7:00. We'll
4 get started.

5 Thank you all for being here. I
6 know it's a treacherous night.

7 My name is Michael Farbiarz. I'm
8 the General Counsel of the Port
9 Authority and I'm tonight's Hearing
10 Officer. With me to my right is
11 Commissioner Rossana Rosado and to her
12 right is Commissioner Richard Bagger.
13 They serve together on the Board of
14 Commissioners of the Port Authority
15 CACs governed body.

16 Two distinct purposes for this
17 evening's Public Hearing. First, to
18 get comments from you certain on
19 proposed adjustments to Port Authority
20 tolls and fares and fees, and second,
21 to get comments on proposed adjustments
22 to the Port Authority's 2017-2026
23 Capital Plan.

24 Now, for the sake of the
25 convenience and efficiency of the

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2 various proposed adjustments separate
3 that they are described in a video,
4 single video. You're going to see that
5 video in a few moments just behind us.
6 The video will also be playing in a
7 continuous loop on repeat outside in
8 the hallway so that you can step out
9 and watch it at any point that might be
10 convenient for you.

11 In addition to the video, there are
12 proposed adjustments in written
13 materials that are available just
14 outside you can take a look at. Aside
15 from comments, tonight's Hearing is
16 also limited to three minutes per
17 person.

18 The Commissioners are here to
19 listen so there won't be a
20 back-and-forth. We'll have a clock,
21 also, to keep track of time. If you do
22 need more than a few more minutes to
23 elaborate, there will be a few
24 different ways for you to elaborate so
25 I don't have to say this again.

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2 Outside we have iPads in the back of
3 the room for typing out comments or you
4 can visit our website. We also have a
5 stenographer outside, so if you prefer,
6 you can simply address to that person
7 and they'll take down your comments.
8 And separate and apart from that, at
9 any point convenient to you until
10 September 13th we'll be accepting
11 written comments through the Port
12 Authority website, that's at
13 www.PANYNJ.gov.

14 All the comments made tonight from
15 the microphone, they'll be transcribed
16 by the stenographer and summarized by
17 Port Authority staff so that the full
18 Board of Commissioners and the Port
19 Authority gets the benefit of hearing
20 from you.

21 In addition, there's a Spanish
22 translator here, as well as an American
23 Sign Language translator here, if those
24 are potentially useful to you.

25 I'll call people up to the

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2 microphone in the order that they've
3 signed in. And so if you're here in
4 the room, if you'd like to speak and
5 haven't had a chance yet to sign-in,
6 there's a sign-in sheet just outside
7 for you, and with that, we will listen
8 to the video together and then the
9 commentary will begin.

10 Thanks.

11 (Video is being played.)

12 MR. FARBIARZ: Well, with the
13 conclusion of the video we're going to
14 begin getting public comments from
15 everyone.

16 Just a quick reminder if you've
17 just come in, there are sign-in sheets
18 outside so you can write your name and
19 then we can hear the order you came in.
20 We want to make sure we hear from
21 everyone who'd like to speak.

22 And, in addition, we have a
23 three-minute limit on comments from
24 everyone other than elected leaders or
25 their designees, but there are

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2 additional ways to comment if you'd
3 like. There's a stenographer outside,
4 there's iPads outside, and there are
5 written comments through our website
6 through September 13th.

7 Our first speaker is Congressman
8 Rose.

9 CONGRESSMAN ROSE: Thank you all
10 for being here today. You know, first
11 of all, I'd like to formally demand
12 that we schedule another Hearing
13 because no one was able to make it
14 today. It is unfair. It's unjust.
15 And we expect for that Hearing to occur
16 within the next 45 days.

17 You know, this feels like
18 Groundhog's Day for this community.
19 Yet again another toll hike, yet again.
20 And on top of that, you eviscerate --
21 ignorantly, thoughtlessly seek to
22 eviscerate a bipartisan effort signed
23 by Governor Cuomo, State Senator Lanza,
24 Assemblyman Cusick, leaders in this
25 community and leaders throughout this

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2 State to get us a discount on multiple
3 tolls over the Jersey bridges.

4 And let's think for a second about
5 what you all are going to tell us in
6 exchange. You're going to say well, we
7 made the Goethals and the Bayonne so
8 much better.

9 You guys had to do that. You had
10 to do that for the bigger ships. You
11 were forced to do that. That wasn't
12 for us.

13 Then you're going to tell us well,
14 we've got all these expensive projects
15 going on throughout New York,
16 throughout New Jersey, but you're
17 making Staten Islanders pay for it.
18 Someone from Manhattan gonna to have to
19 pay for it with an extra toll,
20 Brooklyn, Queens, Long Island, upstate
21 New York? The answer is no, no, no, no
22 and no.

23 That's why people came out here in
24 this torrential downpour because we are
25 sick and tired of being ignored and

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2 ripped off, sick and tired of this. So
3 now what we have to do is we have to go
4 through this dog and pony show. You
5 drag us out here, people in the middle
6 of the summer away from their families,
7 their friends, their jobs just to plead
8 to be treated fairly. That's what you
9 all have done to these people today.

10 It is simple. It is irrational.
11 There are so many other options that
12 you have rather than targeting Staten
13 Islanders. And so we're here today,
14 not only to protest this egregious act,
15 we are also here today to say we are
16 ready to work with you to find other
17 solutions that do not target us.

18 Folks, the people here today are
19 hardworking New Yorkers. They're
20 hardworking Americans. They're
21 patriotic. They follow the rules.
22 They put their head down and they do
23 everything right and they provide for
24 their families and you are treating
25 them unfairly, and today we demand that

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2 this not happen. We demand it.

3 So with that, again, we look
4 forward to seeing you in 45 days and I
5 promise you there are going to be
6 hundreds of people here, unless you
7 quickly reverse this egregious,
8 horrendous, horrific decision.

9 Thank you.

10 MR. FARBIARZ: Assemblyman Cusick.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN CUSICK: Hello. First,
12 I want to say to everyone in this room,
13 thank you for coming out. Thank you
14 for coming out. Thank you for coming
15 out in this flood. It's very important
16 that you're here.

17 I just want to -- before I state
18 what I have to state, I just want to
19 follow-up with what Congressman Rose
20 said. I would also like to request on
21 behalf of the people of Staten Island
22 that we have a second meeting when
23 there isn't the flood situation that we
24 have here today within the time limit
25 of your decision because that's the

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2 only fair thing to do here.

3 Ladies and gentlemen, once again,
4 we are here at a Hearing for proposed
5 toll hikes. And it is Groundhog's Day.
6 It seems that this always happens for
7 Staten Islanders and people will say
8 that's because you live on an island
9 and you have bridges. But that does
10 not mean we need to fund every project
11 that every authority in this region
12 needs to do. And because Staten
13 Islanders are the ones who are
14 responsible, responsible citizens who
15 will be pay these tolls, but it is not
16 fair. We should not be taken advantage
17 of.

18 Today, ladies and gentlemen, as you
19 know, in my career in the Assembly I
20 had been working towards fair tolls for
21 Staten Islanders, whether it's the
22 discount on the Verrazzano Bridge with
23 my colleagues in the Legislature from
24 Staten Island or in 2012 when we teamed
25 up with Governor Cuomo, then Governor

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2 Christi, the Port Authority to come up
3 with a toll discount that works.

4 Now, ladies and gentlemen, those of
5 you who weren't here in 2012 when they
6 raised the tolls then, there wasn't
7 much of a discount program for Staten
8 Islanders. And back then even the Port
9 Authority agreed that the toll increase
10 was burdensome to the people of Staten
11 Island and that's why they worked with
12 the Legislature to come up with a
13 program of three trips.

14 Today, we are here as the Port
15 Authority is proposing to dismantle
16 that, not only to raise our tolls but
17 to add insult to injury to do away with
18 a program that help residents that are
19 captured here and have to pay these
20 tolls that the Port Authority helped
21 devise. To me, ladies and gentlemen,
22 that is ridiculous. Under the proposed
23 -- the proposal here, islanders who
24 cross nine times -- now listen to this:
25 Who cross nine times would see a 120

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2 percent toll increase over what they
3 pay today, 120 percent. I've never
4 seen that big of an increase on anybody
5 in any region in my career in the
6 Legislature. That is uncalled for and
7 it is something that must be stopped.

8 Ladies and gentlemen of The Port
9 Authority Board, I commend you for your
10 service to Government and to the people
11 of the great States of New Jersey and
12 New York, but I beg you, I implore on
13 you that this is unfair to the people
14 of Staten Island. This is a plan that
15 you, The Port Authority, put together
16 with the governors of both states to
17 make sure that there wasn't a burden on
18 the people of Staten Island. Don't
19 dismantle your good work. It is unfair
20 to us here on Staten Island. It will
21 hurt this borough economically and it
22 will hurt its citizens.

23 Please, please, I ask you go back
24 to the drawing board and come up with a
25 fair program for us. I ask you to

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2 scrap this proposal and do the right
3 thing by Staten Island.

4 Thank you so much.

5 MR. FARBIARZ: Assemblyman Reilly.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN REILLY: Thank you,
7 Members of the Board. Thank you for
8 holding this Hearing. I want to echo
9 my colleagues, we definitely need
10 another one. The weather definitely
11 played an impact.

12 But like Assemblyman Cusick said,
13 thank you, everyone, who made out it
14 here. This truly is a sentiment to how
15 much this means to all of us, to all of
16 our families and our community a whole,
17 so give yourselves a round of applause
18 thank you so much for coming out.

19 The one thing that -- you know, a
20 lot of what Congressman Rose said and
21 Assemblyman Cusick, what they said, I'm
22 not going echo it, but I want to just
23 tell you how this impacts our Staten
24 Islanders, especially removing the
25 plan, the discount plan for the three

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2 trips. Think about this: You want to
3 make this plan ten trips. What if a
4 family member who works in New Jersey
5 and travels there has vacation? If
6 they get two weeks off of vacation and
7 it happens to be a holiday during the
8 week, they automatically don't get the
9 discount. You're hurting them just
10 because they have time off with their
11 families. The only way that we can
12 satisfy this is to make sure that the
13 three-trip plan remains.

14 Yet an insult by taking away -- yet
15 an insult by taking away the carpool
16 plan, as well. We already went
17 cashless tolling that started on the
18 Bayonne Bridge when it first rolled out
19 on the Port Authority, Bayonne Bridge,
20 they took away the carpool. That took
21 away our Staten Islanders that maybe
22 only went to New Jersey once or twice a
23 month. They couldn't get a discount.
24 So we were already getting clocked over
25 the head basically because we're not

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2 getting the discounts that were there
3 for so long.

4 Another thing that you're taking
5 away is the discount for signing up for
6 EZ-Pass. What about our new residents
7 and our new drivers that are going to
8 get EZ-Pass? You take away the
9 incentive, they may not get an EZ-Pass.
10 So you're defeating your own purpose.
11 The idea is to make sure that they're
12 able to use cashless tolling and
13 streamlining. Cashless tolling, if you
14 have to mail it out to them, you're
15 better off getting paid by EZ-Pass. So
16 why would you take that discount away?

17 At all turns -- at all turns, we
18 look at it, we're losing our discounts.
19 We're losing more money that goes to
20 our families, that we shop at our local
21 businesses all because we got to pay
22 tolls, tolls that keeping going through
23 the roof.

24 Unfortunately, we met not too long
25 ago here for the MTA Hearing. Far too

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2 often people come out here, we try our
3 best, we try to hold down everybody, to
4 make sure that we can fight for them,
5 but it looks like it always falls on
6 deaf ears. Now it's your chance to
7 change that opinion, to change that
8 sentiment. Make sure that we stop this
9 and we move forward in a positive way.
10 Otherwise, it's a broken Government
11 that everybody sees, whether it's MTA,
12 whether it's Port Authority, whether
13 it's the State Legislature, whether
14 it's the City Council. When we have
15 public Hearings and we don't listen to
16 the people, we basically turn them away
17 from Government, and that's the sad
18 part.

19 We can restore faith. The Board
20 can restore faith. Let's make sure we
21 do it.

22 Thank you.

23 MR. FARBIARZ: Brandon Patterson
24 speaking on behalf of Senator Savino.

25 MR. PATTERSON: So thank you for

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2 letting me speak on behalf of the
3 senator, she is -- she had a pre -- a
4 prior trip. But I know that I can take
5 -- probably ask for forgiveness rather
6 than permission here. And I know she's
7 going to want to sign on to the
8 Congressmen's plea to have another
9 Hearing, because if there's nothing
10 that gets Staten Islanders out, and
11 this is a great showing for this
12 weather, but it is the insane request
13 to add tolls to their bill every time
14 and to dig deeper into their pockets.
15 So not to echo everything that's been
16 said by the Assembly member and the
17 Congressman, but just months, really
18 weeks after the Albany delegation
19 secured another MTA discount for
20 residents, another authority are
21 reaching into the pockets of the
22 residents deeper and deeper. You're
23 taking away discounts on frequent trips
24 with no explanation, and it's just
25 another nickel and dime for the

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2 residents.

3 Now, we saw on the slide the
4 airports and the revenue that they're
5 bringing in. And the billion dollar
6 industries that are flying airplanes in
7 day in and day out are not paying.
8 Rather, the residents here are paying.
9 We're raising bridges, the ports and
10 the workers at the ports are getting
11 crushed. They're getting nickel and
12 dimes every day. And again, who's
13 paying the lion's share? The residents
14 that are here.

15 So, again, I know that the Senator
16 is going to want another Hearing
17 because I know she's going to want to
18 hear from all of her constituents
19 across the island, but enough is
20 enough. The discounts need to
21 continue. The tolls cannot be raised,
22 because if there's anything that the
23 residents here know it's that they've
24 had enough. They've had enough from
25 every authority. They've had enough

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2 from every multimillion dollar
3 authority reaching into their pockets
4 every week to get work, to visit their
5 families or just to travel.

6 So let's have another Hearing.
7 Let's continue these discounts and
8 let's stop nickel and diming residents.

9 Thank you.

10 MR. FARBIARZ: Colleen Siuzdak on
11 behalf of the Borough President.

12 MS. SIUZDAK: So I'm going to be
13 reading this testimony on behalf of the
14 Staten Island Borough President, James
15 Oddo.

16 Thank you for giving me the
17 opportunity to present testimony at
18 this Hearing. In my capacity as
19 President of the Borough of Staten
20 Island, I strongly object to the rate
21 increases and rule changes proposed by
22 the Port Authority of New York & New
23 Jersey.

24 Simply put, Staten Island, the only
25 borough with no subway connection to

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2 any other borough, is a commuter's
3 nightmare. If the medieval poet Dante
4 was writing this testimony he might be
5 tempted to add one more to his famous
6 nine circles of hell. With severely
7 limited public options, thousands are
8 forced into their personal vehicles to
9 get to and from work, a much more
10 expensive alternative than any other
11 type of commute. Staten Islanders will
12 shoulder a vastly disproportionate
13 burden if and when these new tolls are
14 enacted. Without viable mass transit
15 options, they'll be forced to pay for
16 any and all increases to pay any and
17 all increases which are de facto taxes
18 forced upon them. And worse, forced
19 upon them by agency, they cannot hold
20 accountable.

21 To make matters worse, not only are
22 commuters facing toll increases but by
23 increasing the number of trips that
24 trigger the Staten Island discount from
25 three to ten, the Port Authority is

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2 also punishing those drivers who use
3 those crossings only on weekends who
4 are perhaps going to visit a sick
5 relative or who might want to spend an
6 occasional evening in the city by
7 avoiding the Verrazzano Bridge, the BQE
8 and the East River crossings by
9 traveling through New Jersey.

10 In essence, you are taxing Staten
11 Island drivers at an equitably higher
12 rate by forcing them to pay full price
13 until they hit the ten-trip threshold.
14 I fully understand that the case for an
15 increase in revenue has been both
16 presented and accepted, but on behalf
17 of my constituents, I strongly urge you
18 to exhibit some sense of fairness
19 towards the already put upon the Staten
20 Island driver because they have so few
21 options.

22 There is already a disproportionate
23 financial burden on Staten Island
24 motorists. I urge you to avoid in
25 posing yet another one.

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2 Thank you again for giving me the
3 opportunity to speak tonight.

4 In closing, I leave you with four
5 simple words all New Yorkers and New
6 Jersians are familiar with, Do The
7 Right Thing.

8 Thank you.

9 MR. FARBIARZ: David Carr on behalf
10 of Councilman Matteo.

11 MR. CARR: Thank you for the
12 opportunity to testify this evening. I
13 will begin by noting that the choice of
14 words means something. Many times
15 elected officials are accused of spin.
16 In this case, it is the Port Authority
17 that is engaging in spin when on its
18 website it describes the reason for
19 this public Hearing as one considering,
20 "proposed changes in tolls, fares and
21 fees." The curious use of the term
22 changes instead of increases is meant
23 to try to hide what we all know is
24 really happening.

25 The fact is, there are never just

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2 changes, there are always increases no
3 matter what folks put in their
4 proposals. Words matter and the use of
5 the term changes is, frankly,
6 disingenuous and dishonest. Let's call
7 this what it really is, a toll fare and
8 fee hike just like the last one was and
9 just like the next one will be.

10 For many years Staten Island has
11 been ignominiously known as the place
12 of the high Verrazzano Bridge toll.
13 Visitors are always shocked by the \$19
14 toll when they have to pay for the cash
15 fare. And all the Port Authority is
16 now catching up to the dubious MTA
17 honor as peak cash prices will soon be
18 \$16 if this takes effect.

19 To put matters into perspective, a
20 minimum wage employee in New York City
21 will have to work slightly more than an
22 hour to afford this cash toll, while a
23 New Jersey minimum wage employee will
24 have to work more than an hour and a
25 half. One of the most concerning parts

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2 of this proposal is the dramatic
3 increase in the number of trips
4 required to trigger the Staten Island
5 bridges plan discount from three to ten
6 in a calendar month.

7 As I indicated earlier, words
8 matter. In this case, the plan has
9 been known as Staten Island Bridges
10 Plan and not the Staten Island Bridges
11 commuter plan. Those are two very
12 different concepts. I had a quick
13 glance of the description of the plan
14 on the PA's own website which said
15 nothing about the purpose of this being
16 this a commuter plan. In fact, it says
17 the opposite.

18 Let's consider the documents that
19 are now part of this proposal and how
20 words are being changed to support the
21 purpose of this new plan. The handout
22 states that you're seeking to modify
23 the Staten Island bridges commuter
24 program to target commuters by
25 increasing the qualifying trips to ten

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2 months. When did this change happen to
3 our commuter plan? This is again a
4 spin trying to make it look to those
5 looks not in the null that this program
6 is always exclusively a commuter
7 program. Changing the name and the
8 purpose of the program is a major
9 policy change just aimed as what
10 perceives to be the low hanging fruit
11 of the Staten Island residents with
12 family in New Jersey and New Jersey
13 residents with family here in Staten
14 Island.

15 By raising the required number of
16 trips necessary to trigger the Staten
17 Island Bridges discount, this plan
18 essentially eliminates it for many of
19 those utilizing the PA's Staten Island
20 crossings. This will negatively impact
21 our residents who visit family, shop or
22 take part in recreational activities in
23 New Jersey, and also affects those in
24 New Jersey looking to do the same here
25 in Staten Island.

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Imagine what it must be like for an elderly resident on a fixed income who must make the sad decision not to visit his or her grandchildren on the island or in New Jersey as often as they once did. The fact is Staten Island is intimately connected to New Jersey and this recognition is what lead to the creation of the Staten Island Bridges plan in the first place. We have no ferries or trains connecting us, and a single bus route. We need to drive over one of these three bridges. The Staten Island Bridges Plan currently exists to help families stay connected by making visits more affordable. By increasing the road trips to receive the discount to ten we will force families to make the difficult decision not to visit each other and stay connected. That is sad and will lead to the continual flight of residents from our borough.

I urge the Board of Commissioners

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2 to reject this toll fare and fee hike
3 in total and, in particular, I ask the
4 Board to reject this scheme to destroy
5 the Staten Island Bridges Plan in its
6 entirety. It is not right. It is not
7 fair and it will hurt residents of
8 Staten Island and New Jersey who rely
9 on the discounted toll to visit family
10 and friends.

11 Thank you for your opportunity to
12 hear my thoughts here tonight.

13 MR. FARBIARZ: Linda Baran.

14 MS. BARAN: Good evening. My name
15 is Linda Baran. I'm the Present/CEO of
16 the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce.

17 On behalf the Chamber, our 700
18 members and the 20,000 employees we
19 represent, I would like thank you the
20 opportunity to address the Board of
21 Commissioners tonight.

22 Let me start out by acknowledging
23 the Port Authority for the commitment
24 to the completion and the opening of
25 the Goethals and Bayonne Bridge. Both

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2 bridges served Staten Island well for
3 decades. But given present day traffic
4 volumen, commercial growth and new
5 standards, they will function obsolete.
6 The Port Authority recognized the aging
7 infrastructure and found a way to
8 create financing solution to the
9 public/private partnership model to
10 update, replace these major arteries.

11 We thank you for you that because
12 we did work on that for a very long
13 time, trying to get those bridges
14 replaced.

15 I am here today to express the
16 Chamber's concern around the funding to
17 support the reassessed capital plan,
18 the impact it will have on the tolls
19 and the three local Port Authority
20 bridges. Bridge tolls already
21 negatively impact local businesses and
22 these proposed increases will only
23 exacerbate the problem.

24 In a very real sense, the Staten
25 Island business community is becoming

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2 isolated from the rest of New York City
3 by high MTA tolls on the Verrazzano
4 Bridge and on the cusp of being cutoff
5 from New Jersey and the rest of the
6 country by the Port Authority tolls.
7 Our businesses simply cannot compete
8 outside of the borough. For that
9 reason and the course of doing business
10 in New York City, many of them are
11 leaving.

12 During peak hours small vehicles
13 will have to pay \$38 for round trip,
14 larger vehicles in excess of \$114.
15 High tolls on our economy, not only are
16 they -- not only do they discourage
17 businesses from operating here, they
18 discourage off-island residents from
19 seeking employment here, shopping at
20 local establishments, and not taking
21 advantage of the many amenities Staten
22 Island has to offer.

23 To add insult to injury, Staten
24 Island has limited public transit
25 alternatives. We cannot get to work or

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2 access major transportation hubs
3 without a car. Our residents have no
4 other choice but to drive. The MTAs
5 S89 is the only bus that goes into New
6 Jersey.

7 We pay some of the highest tolls in
8 the country, but all too often receive
9 no return on our investment. And while
10 we have two updated bridges, we don't
11 have the alternative transit options to
12 get us across those bridges to get to
13 places like Newark Airport, Metro Park,
14 the Hudson by the Light Rail or The
15 Path. The existing Staten Island
16 Bridge Plan must, must be retained at
17 three crossings per month. And while
18 the \$4 imposition of an airport ground
19 transportation access fee sounds
20 minimal, it doesn't sit well with
21 Staten Islanders because there are no
22 alternative transit provisions to get
23 us to or from the three major airports.

24 Additionally, there does not seem
25 to be a dialogue amongst the agencies

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2 to improve regional access. I was at
3 an MTA meeting last month where I was
4 told that the agency was not talking to
5 the Port Authority about bringing the
6 proposed North Shore bus rapid transit
7 across the Goethals or the Bayonne
8 Bridges. No discussion took place
9 about connecting us to regional
10 transportation hubs in New Jersey. I
11 was told I would need to speak to the
12 Port Authority about that myself, so I
13 figured I would throw that in.

14 Additionally, many islanders talk
15 about, you know, how great the new
16 bridge is, especially the Goethals
17 Bridge, but how many times have I heard
18 why hasn't the Port Authority done
19 something about improving Staten Island
20 bound on-ramp connection to the Bridge.
21 Many Staten Islanders have no idea that
22 the ramps are New Jersey DOT ramps who
23 is ultimately the responsible party to
24 make sure these things happen. Fingers
25 are pointed at the agencies, the

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2 elected officials, the Governor.

3 All I can say is where there is a
4 will, there is a way. Let's not kick
5 the can down the road any further.

6 The Staten Island Chamber of
7 Commerce recognizes that The Port
8 Authority does not receive tax revenue
9 making its tolls and fare structure the
10 primary way to pay for infrastructure
11 projects. We understand the importance
12 of assessing and moving forward with
13 the 2017-2026 Capital Plan. However,
14 new and additional revenue for the
15 ten-year plan should not be raised on
16 the backs of the community who are
17 paying some of the highest tolls in the
18 nation. The Port Authority must not
19 impose toll increases that our
20 community simply cannot sustain.

21 All we ask is that we be treated
22 fairly and are provided with affordable
23 and reliable access to the region. As
24 a community we are truly at a
25 disadvantage. Give us the

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2 consideration we deserve.

3 Thank you.

4 MR. FARBIARZ: Assemblywoman Nicole
5 Malliotakis.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MALLIOTAKIS: Good
7 evening, everyone. Thank you. Thank
8 you for being here.

9 You know, I will summarize. I only
10 have three minutes. I will do my best
11 to summarize my testimony to hit all
12 the points.

13 Well, first of all, let's just talk
14 about the general cost of living. You
15 all are familiar and you all live in
16 the area and you realize the cost of
17 living in this city, in this state has
18 gotten to the point where we are really
19 driving people out, and I know that's
20 something that we've talked about.
21 It's not just a talking point, it's
22 real now. People are truly leaving the
23 state in droves because they can no
24 longer afford to live here; property
25 taxes, the rising water bills, the bus

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2 fares, the tolls, the congestion
3 pricing that is going to be coming
4 soon, the cameras where you can't move
5 five feet in this city without having a
6 toll, a revenue-generated camera. It's
7 come to a point where New York City and
8 New York State is becoming unlivable.

9 Now, I grew up here. I was born
10 here. I love this city. I love this
11 community. I want to be able to remain
12 here. My family wants to be able to
13 remain here. My neighbors want to be
14 able to remain here, but this seems
15 like a conversation that we're having
16 all the time on Staten Island and
17 across our state. You know, there was
18 a Property Tax Commission, there was
19 the MTA Hearing, now it's the Port
20 Authority Hearing. And the message
21 really has to be sent back that enough
22 is enough.

23 First, we're talking about
24 increasing the toll which, yes, I
25 understand that was something that was

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2 already built into the plan, but
3 reducing our commuter discount, that is
4 not something that was ever discussed
5 prior. You know, that was something
6 that was worked on bipartisan fashion
7 with Senator Lanza, Assemblyman Mike
8 Cusick, with the support of the
9 delegation, with the support of the
10 community that fought very hard to get
11 that discount. At that time there was
12 no transparency, as there isn't any
13 now. At the time I had to sue the Port
14 Authority in 2012 just to get them to
15 release the economic impact toll study.

16 It seems now we're making the
17 decision to eliminate our discount on
18 the carpool as well as reduce our
19 discount on the number of trips without
20 releasing any information, not being
21 transparent to the public. You know,
22 this is coming at the same time when
23 the MTA wants to implement two-way
24 tolling.

25 So think about this: The very same

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2 day the House of Representatives passed
3 a bill to do two-way tolling, you come
4 out with a plan to increase our tolls
5 by taking away our discount. That
6 seems to me like this is whole regional
7 mess, and perhaps the port Authority is
8 looking up -- looking to make up some
9 shortfall in revenue that may be
10 resulting from two-way tolling. Do we
11 know? No, we don't know. And why
12 don't we know? Because the Port
13 Authority hasn't been transparent about
14 the reasoning for increasing these
15 tolls and reducing our discounts.

16 The MTA has not been transparent
17 about releasing the study it did on the
18 impact to a tolling would have on our
19 community. And we want to know exactly
20 what will be the impact of this
21 increased toll aside from the economic
22 impact on those of us who do utilize
23 that bridge. Yes, it's going to hurt
24 the senior citizen who wants to go to
25 Atlantic City, enjoy a weekend there or

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2 three weekends, perhaps, but now they
3 will have to go ten weekends to get the
4 discount. The student that works
5 part-time and goes part-time to school,
6 perhaps to Seton Hall University, as I
7 did, has to utilize that bridge. This
8 is going to have an impact on everyday
9 Staten Islanders and that is why I'm
10 here to ask you to please go back to
11 the governors that you report to.

12 Look, my colleagues and I, we're
13 little fish in the sea, we do what we
14 can to fight for this community. We --
15 you know, I'm battling right now with
16 the MTA on a number of things. I have
17 just been denied a Freedom of
18 Information Law request on a number of
19 things.

20 What we want you to do is help us
21 because we know that the power really
22 truly remains with the two governors
23 that the Board reports to, and so they
24 need to look for alternative methods to
25 help provide more transparency, to

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2 bring in alternative sources of
3 revenue. I've suggested in the past
4 selling real estate that the Port
5 Authority has, but they're really in no
6 business to be the middleman or that
7 they should be offsetting. There have
8 been suggestions that have been put out
9 there for alternative sources of
10 revenue.

11 I implore you, as we have written
12 to the Governor asking him to step in
13 on this issue. But they need to find
14 alternative sources of revenue. They
15 cannot keep coming back to this
16 community and picking pockets of my
17 constituents, my family, my neighbors,
18 and the residents that I fight for
19 every single day.

20 So, that's my message. I will
21 submit my written testimony. And I
22 really thank you for at least being
23 here, but please, I know you're here
24 because you have to be here, we
25 understand that, and many people don't

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2 come out because they think it is a dog
3 and pony show. Let's prove to them
4 that it's not. Let's prove to them
5 that we are listening to the people of
6 this community and that we want to
7 really make a difference here so that
8 we can afford to live on Staten Island
9 and remain members and productive
10 members of New York State.

11 Thank you very much.

12 MR. FARBIARZ: Alice Suslowitz and
13 then Malinda Montemavano.

14 MS. SUSLOWITZ: First of all, I
15 just want to say thank you for allowing
16 me to speak. Secondly, I want to say
17 that I implore you not to do this
18 because as a Staten Island resident and
19 also a realtor here on Staten Island,
20 this will be detrimental. We're
21 already having a lot of issues because
22 of the mortgage rates, interest rates.
23 New Yorkers are fleeing in droves. And
24 obviously if you did this to us, the
25 three times is enough. It's enough.

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2 It's not something that people think
3 really cry over, but ten times, that's
4 stiff. You know, not the average
5 person can do that. I make three trips
6 at most. And I'm trying to give the
7 money to the local community. I think
8 it's unfair and it's unjust.

9 We have all the Staten Island Mall,
10 the Target here and everything else,
11 they have the tax on the gases now in
12 New Jersey, so it doesn't even benefit
13 us to even go to Jersey anymore, but
14 now we're forced to go. We have to
15 make the three trips, which I'm fine
16 with that 'cause I like to shop. I
17 like to go visit family, but I don't
18 want to be forced to go ten times.

19 And also, most importantly, I think
20 this is taxation without
21 representation. You know, I think
22 enough is enough. It's got to stop. I
23 think, you know, if you guys -- I'm
24 sure you probably don't pay what we
25 pay. If you had to pay this \$19 out of

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2 your pocket I'm sure we wouldn't be
3 having this conversation right now.

4 It's got to stop. Enough is
5 enough. You know, we're not a piggy
6 bank. You know, this is the local
7 community. We're losing people in
8 droves. My own family are leaving and
9 they're going very far away from New
10 York and New Jersey. They're going to
11 tax friendly states. It's just enough.
12 It's got to stop. I think obviously
13 and I want to remark with the
14 politicians, same thing, I think it
15 should be redone because I did several
16 Facebook posts and I talked to several
17 people, but the rain -- I was up
18 against rain, natural disaster --
19 natural causes, I'm sorry.

20 Again, I just want to plead with
21 you. I think enough is enough. Ten
22 trips is too much. I think ten trips
23 is like a mafia. You know, like we're
24 being forced. It's not fair. Three
25 trips, okay, but ten trips, no.

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2 Again, I thank you and I hope this
3 wasn't a waste.

4 MR. FARBIARZ: Malinda Montemavano
5 and then Peter Killen.

6 Okay, Peter Killen.

7 MR. KILLEN: Thank you. And I do
8 want to thank all our electives who
9 came up here earlier to speak to you
10 very forcefully, because it's very
11 important. The ten trips, it's
12 outrageous. The three trips were --
13 sometimes I could make the three -- the
14 fourth trip, sometimes I couldn't, and
15 I got my EZ-Pass bill and I would pay
16 the price.

17 You're also hitting the people of
18 New York, of Staten Island, if we're
19 going by taxi or by private
20 transportation other than car to the
21 airports. An additional \$4 for a car
22 to come into the airport to drop
23 somebody off or to pick them up, that's
24 not coming from the taxi companies,
25 that's coming from the people of Staten

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2 Island. That's also a big, big hit.

3 And I'm not sure where you meet
4 your Board or what you have for lunch
5 or dinner when you're meeting there,
6 but please listen to our elected
7 officials, listen to these men and
8 women who came out today, and it was
9 pouring later -- earlier this evening,
10 as you all know, and do something about
11 getting rid of those additional seven
12 trips to New Jersey.

13 Thank you very much.

14 MR. FARBIARZ: Gaye Wiesner and
15 then Dominick Calis.

16 MS. WIESNER: Good evening. Hi.
17 I'm not here to speak for the commuters
18 because I'm no longer a commuter, and
19 there are plenty who will speak for
20 themselves. I'm a senior citizen and I
21 do occasionally have occasion to visit
22 family or friends in New Jersey.

23 I used to grumble because I didn't
24 always make the three times a month for
25 passy and I would be charged \$25 to go

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2 to Jersey twice as opposed to somebody
3 who would go to Jersey three times and
4 be charged, I believe it was \$18.75.
5 Now, the ten trips will wind up costing
6 us more. I think the cutoff will be
7 somewhere around five or six trips
8 where somebody going either five or six
9 times will wind up paying more to go to
10 New Jersey to visit family and friends
11 than somebody who is going ten times,
12 and I think there needs to be a thought
13 process in that, perhaps some sort of
14 laddering of the discount where nobody
15 who goes fewer times should be paying
16 more than somebody who was going more
17 times.

18 In terms of peak and off-peak, many
19 senior citizens do not or try very hard
20 not to drive overnight. The weekend
21 off-peak hours I believe are -- let me
22 see if I can find it here -- from
23 9:00 p.m. to 11:00 a.m. in the morning.
24 That would require that I visit my
25 family only overnight if I want to have

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2 a discount, or I suppose I could go for
3 breakfast from 7:00 in the morning to
4 11:00 in the morning.

5 So I would really ask if this group
6 would rethink this, consider some sort
7 of laddered discounts so somebody going
8 only six times does not pay more than
9 somebody going ten times for the trip,
10 and consider people who are senior
11 citizens who aren't ever going to
12 travel probably more than ten times a
13 month unless they're still working.

14 Thank you very much and thank you
15 to our elected officials who came to
16 talk to us.

17 MR. FARBIARZ: Dominick Calis and
18 then Mendy Miroczing.

19 MR. CALIS: Hi. I've been a Staten
20 Island resident since 1987. Tolls
21 keeping going up. We're trapped on
22 Staten Island. Four bridges, tolls
23 keep going up. All those projects
24 don't relate us. We should get
25 residential discounts.

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2 Carpool, Staten Island residents
3 have HOV switches, Port Authority
4 doesn't honor it. They should honor
5 that HOV switch. Everybody else
6 basically said what we have to say,
7 that they're raising tolls and people
8 are leaving Staten Island. You know,
9 Staten Island is a good borough. I
10 love it here.

11 MR. FARBIARZ: Mendy Mirocznig and
12 then Marie Wausnock.

13 MR. MIROCZNIG: Good evening
14 Commission members, the elected
15 officials present, and fellow Staten
16 Islanders. Tonight I am speaking as a
17 fellow Staten Islander who was troubled
18 to have learned that the Port Authority
19 once again is planning on making
20 everyday life more expensive for Staten
21 Islanders and I, therefore, feel
22 compelled to speak out against this
23 tragedy.

24 The Port Authority has proposed
25 increasing tolls on the six bridges,

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2 tunnels under their authority,
3 including the major transit routes in
4 this borough; the Bayonne Bridge, The
5 Goethals Bridge and the Outer Bridge
6 Crossing. Staten Islanders depend on
7 these transit routes for their
8 livelihoods, visiting the sick in the
9 hospital, maintaining friendships.
10 We're on an island. We're landlocked.
11 The only off this island is by taking
12 one of these connections.

13 Additionally, the Port Authority
14 has spoken and contemplated reducing
15 the number of drivers who qualify for
16 the Staten Island Bridge Plan discount
17 program. If this change will take
18 effect, it will have a dispurent
19 (phonetic) impact on the hardworking
20 people in this room. The people in
21 this room, they came out in the rain,
22 in the thunderstorm with a flood watch.

23 The cost of living rises but not
24 the paycheck. And if this so far, and
25 there is so far emphasize, myself

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2 included, how much we could bear to
3 pay. The Staten Island's Bridge Plan
4 discount program which was spearheaded
5 by the Dean of the Staten Island
6 Delegation, Senator Cusick, supported
7 by Senator Lanza, was hard advocacy and
8 the step in the right direction. I
9 personally take offense at the idea of
10 raising this toll and so do the people
11 in this room, especially to fund
12 projects that do not help the
13 infrastructure of the people of this
14 borough.

15 I implore you, please have a heart.
16 Have mercy on of the people in this
17 world who represent people all over the
18 island. Don't make this happen.

19 MR. FARBIARZ: Marie Wausnock and
20 then Lucy Martorano.

21 MS. MARTORANO: Good evening,
22 everyone. I went to the dictionary
23 this afternoon and I looked up the
24 definition of a word. I'm going to
25 give you the verb definition of the

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2 word first. In the following verb form
3 it means to assault, violate, to spoil
4 or destroy a place. The word I just
5 described is rape. The word rape, you
6 are raping Staten Islanders at the toll
7 booth and rape is a crime. Let's not
8 forget the back door toll that went
9 into effect, electronic tolls. There
10 are no longer carpool discounts to the
11 bridges, which equates to a toll hike.

12 Let's not forget that the last
13 toll, it was important that the Outer
14 Bridge and the Goethals Bridge were
15 profiting, not taking in, profiting
16 \$150 million with the last toll hike.
17 With all these profits, I see that
18 these profits must be much greater by
19 now.

20 In a few weeks I will be 60 years
21 old. In my entire life I have seen the
22 tolls go up and up and up and elected
23 officials have still not found a way to
24 bring Staten Islanders real toll
25 relief. Stop the nonsense of saying

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2 you have no jurisdiction over the Port
3 Authority. Our Governor and the
4 Governor of New Jersey have all the say
5 about the Port Authority, so let's get
6 these two men, sit them down and work
7 this out.

8 We all know that you are proposing
9 Staten Island resident discounts to go
10 up to ten trips a month and I'm saying
11 that I think you're saying ten just to
12 come up and say oh, we'll make it five.
13 That's not acceptable. Our elected
14 officials were voted in to represent
15 the constituents. Well, please find me
16 one constituent that that thinks these
17 ten trips is acceptable. Bring me one
18 that thinks three is acceptable.

19 Let me say it again, it can and it
20 -- once again, 'cause I come to many of
21 these forums, and it can and should be
22 done. Staten Island residents should
23 have a forever fixed toll of \$2 to \$4
24 round trip because we have of no other
25 way of returning home. So, I am

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2 speaking on behalf of every Staten
3 Island resident and ask our elected
4 officials, Senator Lanza, Senator
5 Levito, Nicole Malliotakis, Michael
6 Cusick, Max Rose, Debbie Rose, Steve
7 Matteo, Joe Borelli, Charles Hall, Mike
8 Reilly, Max Rose, I'm asking them to
9 stand up to the Governor and put the
10 brakes on the Staten Island resident
11 rates. No more photo ops. No more
12 saying you can't. You signed on to
13 lawsuits that were brought by the
14 Automobile Club of America. Band
15 together, demand a Congressional audit,
16 an investigation of the Port Authority,
17 as this is out of control.

18 We have families that live in New
19 Jersey and we would like to visit them
20 without having to take a loan out to
21 pay our EZ-Pass bills. We would like
22 to shop. We would to see a show, go to
23 a sports event or even go to the beach,
24 but if those go through Staten
25 Islanders will not be able to do any of

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2 these things anymore. The ten-time
3 rule means you have to go to just about
4 -- you have to go every other day to
5 New Jersey, which is ridiculous. And
6 that is why you are going to try to
7 raise it to five, which is ridiculous.

8 I urge every Staten Islander, if
9 this goes through and it gets raised to
10 anything more than three, hold your
11 elected officials accountable and
12 remember who to vote for when they are
13 up for reelection.

14 MR. FARBIARZ: We have Lucy
15 Martorano and then Alice Suslowitz.

16 MS. SUSLOWITZ: I was Lucy in case
17 I didn't have enough time.

18 MR. FARBIARZ: We have Alice
19 Suslowitz and then Dana Koengsberg.

20 MS. SUSLOWITZ: Hi. I've been
21 living in Staten Island for 50 years
22 now. When I moved here the toll was 50
23 cents and now I'm a senior and I am
24 trapped. I can't go over the bridge.
25 My family can't come and visit me

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2 because the tolls are absolutely
3 ridiculous. This is just like being in
4 prison. We can't go anyplace. There
5 is no way we can get out and there is
6 no way anybody can come in.

7 We're talking about inflation.
8 This is past inflation. They want us
9 to remain in our houses and we're
10 trying to stay here, but there's no way
11 that we can when nobody can come and we
12 can't go out.

13 That's just about all I have to
14 say. But this is absolute madness and
15 it's got to stop. I'm speaking for the
16 seniors of Staten Island. They got to
17 do something for us. We don't have
18 senior housing here that's affordable.
19 We all are going to have to go
20 someplace, but we can't even afford to
21 go to New Jersey because the tolls are
22 too high. So, we're just like in
23 limbo. And this is -- somebody's got
24 to help us, so that's what I'm you
25 asking for.

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2 Thank you.

3 MR. FARBIARZ: Dana Koengsberg and
4 then Mel Pedersen.

5 MS. KOENGSBERG: Hello. First and
6 foremost, I did not know I was going to
7 be doing this until got here tonight,
8 so please bear with me. When I came
9 here I started speaking with some of
10 the people in the crowd and I gathered
11 your literature you kindly provided for
12 us because I'm a teacher, that's what I
13 do. And the people in the crowd were
14 really not informed about a lot of the
15 things, including the fact that the
16 toll -- the discount would be
17 increased.

18 And I went through your one, two,
19 three, four, five, six pieces of paper
20 here and only one of them that I could
21 find, and I combed through them, I
22 could be wrong, but only one of them
23 had the fact that this discount would
24 be increased from three trips to ten.

25 This is a public Hearing. If it's

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2 a public Hearing, I would hope that the
3 public would better informed about
4 this, and we can only do that if we
5 have the proper resources. That's
6 number 1.

7 Number 2, three trips to ten, I
8 mean, I have a sister that lives in New
9 Jersey. Let's pretend I have nothing
10 else to do with my time and I wanted to
11 visit her on Saturday and Sunday every
12 single weekend that we have in a month,
13 that's eight. That still does not
14 qualify. Ten seems like a very
15 arbitrary number, and I don't think any
16 of us really appreciate that it seems
17 like we're being held hostage. That's
18 all I have to say.

19 Thank you.

20 MR. FARBIARZ: Mel Pedersen and
21 then Carol Bucciero. Carol Bucciero.
22 Roy Adams. Vincent Meade. Marc
23 Trombino.

24 MR. MEADE: I'm Vincent. I just
25 wasn't sure if the person before was

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2 coming down and was actually moving.
3 Sorry about that.

4 MR. FARBIARZ: Who are you, sir?

5 MR. MEADE: Vincent, Vincent Meade.

6 MR. FARBIARZ: Thank you.

7 MR. MEADE: All right. Just before
8 I start, please refrain from applause
9 until I finish. I'm not a public
10 speaker because I lose my train of
11 thought very easily.

12 Thank you.

13 Like good evening, everyone. Thank
14 you for holding this Hearing. Good
15 evening, everyone. I don't need to
16 echo our elected officials when say
17 like that it is outrages that the rates
18 are going up, and that while I
19 understand the argument about like
20 inflation rates, like the argument in
21 regards to increasing the number of
22 like trips and one needs to make in
23 order to meet the threshold to get a
24 discount is like increased to like more
25 than three times.

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2 Like -- like in all other
3 arguments, like I'm surprised one
4 aspect of Staten Islanders like is even
5 mentioned in like in the discussion.
6 Like somebody who actually has to work
7 in New Jersey in order to make a living
8 'cause that's where the work is
9 available. Like occasionally since I
10 freelance as work, I go to Secaucus,
11 New Jersey to do some work, as well as
12 Redding, New Jersey to try to make ends
13 meet. So like in order to like make it
14 sometimes, I have to play like --
15 assuming if I work like full-time
16 throughout the year, like 20 days a
17 month of a workday, then I have to pay
18 an additional \$75 -- I'm sorry, \$750
19 more a year to even get -- to even like
20 commute back and forth just to go to
21 work, not like -- that isn't even
22 including the time to go on vacation or
23 to visit other parts of the country or
24 any of the relatives such as some of
25 our grandfathers, like relatives over

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2 in Bayonne, New Jersey.

3 So like I believe it's useful like
4 not just to read complaints but also
5 bring a possible solution. I remember
6 like -- like the discussion about the
7 MTA like tolls splitting, like usually
8 it was used to address the toll
9 shopping that was going on from New
10 Jersey over to the other boroughs at
11 like the discounted rate that applies
12 to all that have the plan, not just
13 Staten Island residents, like which
14 includes people with EZ-Pass holders of
15 New Jersey to get the reduced toll,
16 which is -- which contribute to just a
17 proportion amount of traffic that flows
18 into from New Jersey as opposed to like
19 using a somewhat equal proportion
20 throughout the other connections to
21 Manhattan which, therefore, would go to
22 the other boroughs if and when
23 necessary.

24 What I would suggest is like
25 closing the loophole, like ensuring

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2 that Staten Island residents get like a
3 discount that they deserve to cross
4 like into New Jersey in order to make
5 it work, in New Jersey or even
6 Manhattan, because they have a double
7 whammy of a toll in that regard, and
8 close the loophole if that allows
9 truckers -- if I have my facts
10 correctly, possibly anywhere in New
11 Jersey to exploit the like -- the
12 strictly eastbound tolls like to get
13 into Staten Island and be able to like
14 get out through Manhattan like for free
15 without even having to pay like the
16 full like \$15 toll for like any
17 individual trucks, and with that I used
18 my time.

19 MR. FARBIARZ: Carol Bucciero and
20 Roy Adams.

21 MR. ADAMS: Good evening, everyone.
22 First of all, I would like to thank Max
23 Rose for making sure everyone knew
24 about this, especially on social media.
25 If it weren't for him and maybe a

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2 little of New York 1, I wouldn't have
3 come this evening.

4 I been a Staten Island resident for
5 the last two and a half years or so,
6 and one thing that I've noticed about
7 the tolls is that basically Port
8 Authority is strong-arming because of
9 the fact that we do have to cross a
10 bridge to get here, and there is no
11 other access to get me here.

12 My husband and I -- I'm partially
13 handicapped, he is fully handicapped.
14 We have to use our car to get anywhere
15 99 percent of the time. Once in a
16 while he can take Access-A-Ride, but if
17 you have ever taken Access-A-Ride you
18 know how difficult that is.

19 First of all, raising the tolls
20 with one of us on a fixed income, that
21 is just detrimental. Furthermore,
22 raising the limit from three trips to
23 ten trips, now we don't go to New
24 Jersey often, but there are times when
25 we are stuck in Manhattans where we

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2 cannot do anything but go through New
3 Jersey. So, therefore, we have to pay
4 a toll to get into New Jersey and then
5 pay a toll to get out of New Jersey,
6 which is outrageous. There are other
7 times when the Verrazzano Bridge is
8 closed for certain events. We have to
9 go through New Jersey. We won't
10 receive a discount. That's unfair to
11 us because, in fact, once again that is
12 our only means of egress from this
13 island when the Verrazzano Bridge is
14 closed.

15 You're strong-arming us and it's
16 enough. We shouldn't be paying any
17 more than what we're paying now.
18 Actually, we should be paying less as
19 residents because we have no other
20 egress.

21 Thank you.

22 MR. FARBIARZ: Sir, if you can just
23 share your name with us.

24 MR. TROMBINO: Oh, yeah. Marc
25 Trombino, Local 580 ironworker. The

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2 Bayonne Bridge and the Goethals Bridge
3 to simply accommodate rail traffic, if
4 people could take mass transit across
5 all the new bridges, trains
6 specifically, that would help reduce
7 the toll burden greatly, and I appeal
8 to The Port Authority to continue using
9 union laborers on all the projects to
10 get quality work on time. Local 580.

11 By the way, I did this structure of
12 the ceiling and it's still holding up.
13 Union laborer.

14 Thank you.

15 MR. FARBIARZ: Reinaldo Torres and
16 then Michael Tannousis.

17 Reinaldo Torres.

18 MR. TORRES: Good evening. My name
19 is Reinaldo Torres and I am a member of
20 Local 28, the sheet metal workers
21 local. I'm also a resident of Staten
22 Island for 29 years, and I just wanted
23 to say that you know there is a lot of
24 emotions running. I don't know what
25 the answer is 'cause this is a

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2 complicated issue that we have here,
3 but I will tell you this, that my
4 membership, and I know all the union
5 trades that are in this room tonight
6 appreciate what you do because when you
7 have a project you use all 100 percent
8 union labor. And you know what? You
9 get what you pay for. You pay the
10 highest wages, you get the best work.

11 Now, that said, and since there are
12 some politicians in this room today, I
13 really don't want to go off, but I have
14 to say this while they're here, Staten
15 Island has enormous problems. As a
16 construction worker, I can't even work
17 on Staten Island because we have
18 workers that are coming from New Jersey
19 doing the work here on Staten Island
20 and we try to do things and Staten
21 Islanders don't even care. I don't
22 even know if our politicians care about
23 it, but I want to work on Staten
24 Island. You know what? I want to be
25 trapped on the island. I want to work

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2 on Staten Island. I don't want to pay
3 \$13 a day for an express bus or pay the
4 toll to go over the Verrazzano Bridge.
5 You know, that's ridiculous.

6 So what I'm saying to you, yes, I
7 agree with some of the residents here
8 that, you know, the discount should not
9 go away, but leave the increase for
10 those that are coming into this island
11 and eating our lunch, because that has
12 got to stop, and I think that our
13 politicians should take a look at that
14 and solve that problem because, you
15 know, a slight toll increase is a minor
16 problem compared to the problems we
17 have on this island.

18 Thank you.

19 MR. FARBIARZ: Please state your
20 name for us, sir.

21 MR. TANNOUSIS: Good evening,
22 Commissioners. My name is Michael
23 Tannousis. I am a lifelong Staten
24 Islander. I have to tell you, I'm
25 35 years old and every single year it

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2 is getting harder and harder to be a
3 Staten Islander. If it's not the MTA,
4 it's the Port Authority. If it's not
5 you guys, it's the city agencies,
6 Department of Transportation,
7 Department of Environmental Protection,
8 everything. It is harder and harder to
9 be a Staten Islander each and every
10 year.

11 Now, ladies and gentlemen, I am now
12 -- I live in Staten Island and I work
13 in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. I'm already
14 paying a toll each time I go. I also
15 have family in New Jersey, so I am back
16 and forth to New Jersey and I go three
17 times or more every single time.

18 Now, with the new -- with what
19 you're proposing, I will no longer
20 benefit from this, from the toll
21 reduction, and it is unnecessary.

22 I spent eight years as a
23 prosecutor. I prosecuted robbery cases
24 and, ladies and gentlemen, I'm telling
25 you now I know highway robbery when I

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2 see it. In fact, in this case,
3 although in a robbery case where
4 somebody could press charges, you guys
5 raise this toll and there is absolutely
6 nothing that we can do about it, so
7 please, I echo Assemblyman Nicole
8 Malliotakis, please prove those people
9 that say that this is a dog and pony
10 show wrong and leave the discount as
11 is.

12 Thank you.

13 MR. FARBIARZ: Howard Cohen and
14 then Yehude Farkas.

15 MR. COHEN: Good evening.
16 According to your website, around 10
17 million people a month use Port
18 Authority crossings to get around.
19 Clearly, The Port Authority is part of
20 a vital transportation network that is
21 essential to the lifeblood -- it is the
22 lifeblood of this region, of the city,
23 of the greater region in general.
24 Clearly, it's a very important system
25 of crossings to get people to their

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2 jobs, to get people to businesses, to
3 get people around. Therefore, it
4 confuses me immensely that there is no
5 source of funding for these crossings
6 outside of our banks, our wallets, the
7 commuters. There is no source of
8 funding aside from money that is made
9 from your airports and your bridges and
10 tunnels, and if this is so important to
11 the city, to the state, to the region,
12 to the country, our economy is very
13 large, why is there no source of
14 funding in assets?

15 To the Port Authority, and I ask to
16 the politicians here, why is there no
17 funding? And the answer is that The
18 Port Authority is an independent
19 authority with exactly zero oversight
20 and zero accountability to the voters,
21 aside from the governors who use it as
22 a source of patronage and corruption.
23 The Path train, which is one of the
24 only commuter rails in the country
25 which have no source of governing

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2 subsidies, who is paying for it?
3 Staten Island. The World Trade Center
4 building, the Freedom Tower, it's a
5 beautiful building, but who paid for
6 it? Staten Islander toll payers. The
7 monstrous debacle of The Path station,
8 the 4 billion-dollar monstrosity, who
9 paid for that? Staten Island toll
10 payers. That's why. 4 billion
11 dollars, beautiful, marble, very
12 extravagant. We did not have to pay
13 for that. We don't have to pay for any
14 of the real estate ventures. We don't
15 have to pay for any of that.

16 We should pay what it costs to
17 cross that bridge and not a dime more.

18 I would like to also suppose that
19 The Port Authority cares about the
20 environment, I imagine large government
21 organizations do. It's a very
22 important situation. But if you care
23 so much about the environment, why is
24 there no carpool discount? Why is
25 there no mass transit? Why was the

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2 Bayonne Bridge raised and reconstructed
3 without the means of constructing it to
4 the Light Rail? Why was there no plan
5 for this? How could you be a 21st
6 Century transportation network without
7 mass transit? Do you not care about
8 the environment? Do you care about it
9 less than the Republicans? Is that the
10 message I'm getting?

11 I also want to thank you for the
12 opportunity to come and speak tonight
13 because the last time I had an
14 opportunity to speak was in 2011 when
15 the toll was raised from \$8 to \$11 --
16 to \$12 and raised again four more
17 times. Now it's going to doubled.

18 And I haven't had a chance to speak
19 when it was raised from \$12 to \$13 to
20 \$14 to \$15, now it's going to be raised
21 to \$16, and I'm glad I had a chance to
22 have my say.

23 Thank you very much.

24 MR. FARBIARZ: Yehuda Farkas and
25 then Mohammed Chowdhury.

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2 MR. FARKARS: I'm an attorney on
3 Staten Island. I'm an attorney in
4 Brooklyn. I'm an attorney in New York.
5 I'm an attorney in the State of New
6 Jersey. I practice widely throughout
7 the Federal courts, the State courts.

8 I agree with my fellow
9 constituents, this tool is
10 unconstitutional and it's
11 unconstitutional not only because it is
12 highway robbery, but because it
13 violates precedent, Federally
14 established precedent which has been
15 the law of the land for quite a while.

16 In Northwest Airlines versus the
17 County of Kent, 1994 U.S. Supreme Court
18 decision, the Supreme Court laid out
19 three prongs, essentially, for whether
20 or not a toll or a fee is
21 constitutional. I'll read them.

22 A toll is a constitution if it is
23 based on some fair approximation with
24 the facility's use. A toll is
25 constitutional if it is not excessive

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2 to relation to the benefits conferred.
3 And, finally, the dormant constitution
4 from which you probably don't
5 understand, it does not discriminate
6 against Congress.

7 I believe there are 3,141 counties
8 in the United States. As far as I am
9 aware, we are the only county that you
10 cannot exit or enter without paying a
11 fee. If you think about that for a
12 second, that means every other
13 jurisdiction in the United States you
14 can enter and you can exit and you can
15 involve yourself in commerce in those
16 localities. In Staten Island, you
17 can't. It's impossible.

18 The toll is unconstitutional, it
19 violates our basic laws. It violates
20 our basic laws to raise it. It's an
21 absolute and unfair undertaking.

22 I'll yield my time.

23 MR. FARBIARZ: Mohammed Chowdhury
24 and Victor Ragucci.

25 MR. CHOWDHURY: Good evening,

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2 Commissioners and our elected
3 officials, and of course the Staten
4 Islanders residents. Thank you for
5 coming here today to listen.

6 (Inaudible). As you said, my name
7 is Mohammed Chowdhury. I am the
8 secretary for Alliance of South Asian
9 American Labor. I also happen to be a
10 New York State public employee for the
11 (inaudible) council leaders, so I
12 represent here not only the South
13 Asian, but I'm talking about this toll
14 hike plan from Port Authority, I'm
15 talking about supporting the Staten
16 Islanders. I'm supporting our elected
17 officials who has been trying to save
18 the Staten Island resident from, you
19 know, again and again toll hike that is
20 creating financial burden, huge
21 financial burden to Staten Islanders.

22 Before I go further, I'd like to
23 ask if when you are talking if you can
24 provide us some information so we can
25 go back to the community and explain to

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2 the community members why the Port
3 Authority is asking for toll hike or
4 trying to reduce our benefit, what
5 advocated -- what was negotiated by our
6 elected officials here, because they
7 will ask us what is the reason Port
8 Authority asking for more money, why is
9 the Port Authority asking to reduce our
10 existing benefit while the Staten
11 Islanders are suffering financially.

12 Because as many speakers said
13 earlier, Staten Island is a landlock
14 community. Anywhere we go out of the
15 city with our car, we have to pay toll.
16 So I think we are the only borough,
17 only county that we are getting this
18 burden. Our people are financially
19 already feel huge burden on us because
20 everything is going up and income is
21 not going.

22 (Inaudible) organization is trying
23 to fight to increase the rates and is
24 not happening according to their
25 (inaudible), you know, the cost of

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2 living adjustment. (Inaudible). It is
3 imposing now New York City has a little
4 bit more, but it is not enough to start
5 charge what you are asking.

6 We have now up to three trips to
7 New Jersey, we can get some benefit.
8 If you take it to above that, it will
9 be extremely difficult for many Staten
10 Island residents. Please take consider
11 this one, do not increase the trip
12 limit. If you can, see if you have
13 this fund, give discount for Staten
14 Island residents. And I believe, we
15 believe the Staten Island residents
16 deserve the discount (inaudible).

17 Thank you.

18 MR. FARBIARZ: Victor Ragucci and
19 then Irshad Sheikh.

20 MR. RAGUCCI: Good evening ladies
21 and gentlemen. This meeting here
22 tonight reminds me of a time all of
23 50 years ago, 55 years ago when the
24 Verrazzano opened, it was 50 cents
25 until the bridge is paid and that's it.

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2 I still been living -- I been
3 living here almost 60 years and nothing
4 I see that my real estate taxes gone
5 up, my utility bills go up, my cable
6 goes up. I am retired living on a
7 fixed income. Where am I going to get
8 the money that you people from Port
9 Authority wants more increase for the
10 bridges? Is this money needed to pay
11 management or to pay toll? I think is
12 to pay management.

13 I will suggest it to all our
14 politician involve if it's possible to
15 charge the Port Authority a percentage
16 of whenever your automobile goes over
17 the bridge and then pay your rent on
18 every bridges in the City of Staten
19 Island because we do need the money
20 here but we don't need another increase
21 on bridge.

22 Well, I appreciate I had the chance
23 to speak up. I know it's not doing any
24 good, but maybe all the rest of them,
25 friends over here and neighbors do

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2 better than I did, but I thank you very
3 much for the opportunity to speak up.

4 Thank you.

5 MR. FARBIARZ: Irshad Sheikh and
6 then Mark Blazejesky.

7 MR. SHEIKH: Good evening. I'm
8 Irshad Sheik. I'm a pharmacist. I
9 been in the community since the last
10 35 years and living in Staten Island
11 22 years. It give me a lot of distress
12 when I heard the toll hike -- toll is
13 going high, as I have a lot of family
14 members and friends there and wherever
15 we go restaurants and spend my money
16 and then they raise the taxes and the
17 revenues. And there are a lot of party
18 halls and restaurants where I'm going.

19 By putting this situation
20 obstruction, I will be locked in
21 situation. By putting those geographic
22 boundaries, it is unfair to the
23 community of Staten Island to raise
24 hike. I consider it highway robbery.

25 MR. FARBIARZ: Mark Blazejesky and

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2 then Pearl Minsky.

3 MR. BLAZEJESKY: Good evening. I'd
4 like to thank everybody for coming out.
5 This is one of the few opportunities we
6 have to speak up, and with the way the
7 weather was, I know it was not easy for
8 a lot of the people. My phone's been
9 alerting me to flood warnings and all
10 that while I'm sitting here, so I am
11 aware that people made a real effort to
12 get out here.

13 One of the things that I personally
14 feel is that Staten Island is a
15 stopover spot from Jersey and from Long
16 Island and points in between. Every
17 afternoon and every morning we host
18 throngs of vehicles that cross our
19 small highway, really a limited amount
20 of stretch to get from here to there.
21 Not to come here, not to spend money
22 here, not to support our businesses and
23 our communities, but just to pass
24 through, and those people passing
25 through contribute zero to Staten

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2 Island except for exhaust fumes,
3 perhaps, or -- think about it, there's
4 really not a lot that we're gaining out
5 of this.

6 We are basically hosting an
7 invasion daily and we get nothing for
8 it. I think we shouldn't have to pay a
9 toll at all either way. You know, I
10 think they want to come here because
11 it's the quickest to get to Brooklyn
12 and Long Island or even Manhattan.
13 They don't come here to help us. They
14 just come here because we're the way
15 through and we're the people that have
16 to host this and deal with it.

17 We can't get out of our driveways.
18 We can't get on the highways. We can't
19 do our own shopping because the
20 highways are jammed shut with people
21 who we don't know and basically don't
22 even like, so I think we shouldn't have
23 a toll at all, and I would hope that
24 you would consider lifting the Staten
25 Island toll completely. People who

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2 live in Staten Island deserve more.

3 The bottom line, this is the worst
4 kind of taxation without
5 representation. It's something that's
6 done with the borough, by nameless
7 bureaucrats, yourself of course
8 excluded from that. I'm sure you're
9 charming people.

10 Overall, you wind up forfeiting
11 your rights as citizens to people who
12 just make decisions and go about
13 figuring out ways of making more money
14 out of the people that they can
15 squeeze. I see unprecedented
16 investment. You know, every investment
17 should have a return on the investment
18 and the return on the investment should
19 not be how much can crush the little
20 guy to get a few more bucks over the
21 course of their commuting years.

22 So, thank you. I appreciate your
23 time and hope everybody has a chance to
24 speak.

25 Finally, I was told there would be

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2 cake. Is there cake?

3 Thank you.

4 MR. FARBIARZ: Pearl Minsky and
5 then Kathy Romanelli.

6 MS. MINSKY: Everybody I heard
7 speak so far have been very polite. I
8 don't intend to be polite. I don't
9 understand why you have the nerve to
10 come here to talk to us. It is a
11 disgrace. Years ago, the same damn
12 thing. It's a disgrace. There was
13 money to put a Z up for the Verrazzano.
14 There was money, big money to put a Z
15 up there, right?

16 What kind of salaries do you earn?
17 Do any of you live on Staten Island?
18 Do you live on Staten Island? You're
19 not going to answer, okay. You know,
20 you're being not very polite to someone
21 that came up to speak to you. It's
22 disgrace.

23 All these people who are here are
24 not earning your salaries, I'm sure of
25 that, and then they have to pay for to

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2 take the bridge. This is a good day
3 for me to be here because I came here
4 from the hospital in Manhattan. My son
5 had to come and pick me up in Staten
6 Island. He doesn't live here. Had to
7 pay for the bridge, take me into
8 Manhattan, come back and go home and go
9 over the bridge.

10 Three years ago my husband died.
11 He had two children; one living
12 upstate, one living on the island.
13 They come over every single day while
14 he was in the hospital dying and paying
15 those fees, and now if I am going to
16 die, they gonna have to pay even more
17 to come to me in the hospital on Staten
18 Island. That is a disgrace.

19 I don't know how you can sit there
20 and look at us. I can't look at you.
21 That's enough.

22 MR. FARBIARZ: Kathy Romanelli and
23 then Gary Bendel.

24 MS. ROMANELLI: Thank you for
25 listening to us. I felt compelled to

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2 come here to voice my outrage at
3 another toll increase. It's
4 horrendous. Staten Islanders have been
5 paying through the nose for years only
6 because the Port Authority, the MTA
7 just think they could toll us to death.
8 It's horrendous.

9 I want to voice my -- I'm totally
10 annoyed with this, and I hope that you
11 listen to all of the people that came
12 out. My sneakers are soaked. I'm
13 totally wet, but I wanted to come to
14 say please listen to the people of
15 Staten Island. We deserve a discount.
16 We deserve not to pay.

17 When I was a freshman at Curtis
18 High School, I wrote a paper about
19 Staten Island. Staten Island was the
20 only borough that had to pay to get
21 home every single night. Nothing has
22 changed. Nothing has changed that we
23 are on an island and we have to pay to
24 get off and we have to pay to get back
25 home. We are the forgotten borough

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2 only when it comes to tolls.

3 Thank you.

4 MR. FARBIARZ: Gary Bendel.

5 And just a reminder, if anyone else
6 would like to speak, please sign-in
7 outside and then please do come
8 forward.

9 Thank you, sir.

10 MR. BENDEL: Thank you for hosting
11 this program here in Staten Island on a
12 very windy and rainy evening. I'm sure
13 a lot of people have not been able to
14 get here. I came from Manhattan and it
15 took about two hours, but I wanted to
16 express my dismay that the Port
17 Authority, on top of the MTA, is
18 looking for an increase. They have
19 \$34 billion of capital improvements.

20 Now, I know that an individual, a
21 family person, if he's earning a living
22 and he can't afford his expenses, he
23 cuts his expenses. The Port Authority
24 doesn't think that they have a limit.
25 They realize that they can toll people,

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2 tax people at any time they want, and
3 this applies to MTA just as well.

4 There are limits what we can pay.
5 As the lady before me spoke about the
6 island we live on, we pay to get in, we
7 pay to get out. We have no way to
8 exist except traveling with the toll,
9 the bridges. So you have to consider
10 the people that live here.

11 Also, I understand they are trying
12 to eliminate one of the discounts that
13 Staten Islanders have, or to limit it.
14 In other words, for right now if we
15 travel into Staten Island using the
16 Port Authority bridge, after three
17 trips per month we have a discount.

18 They want -- according to the
19 proposal I read, they want to increase
20 it to ten trips per month. I mean, you
21 can't go and visit your friends. You
22 can't go shopping in New Jersey because
23 you're going to have to pay those
24 exorbitant tolls.

25 So I think the Port Authority

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2 should look at their budget and cut
3 where they can. I don't think that the
4 people of New Jersey and New York and
5 Staten Islanders can afford all these
6 improvements. For example, you're
7 doing Path improvements. I know it
8 helps every Staten Islander; it doesn't
9 help anyone. I mean, you have a Newark
10 Airport Terminal 2, all right, it will
11 pay for itself. Let it pay for itself
12 before we start to construct it. I
13 mean, Air Train at Newark Airport, many
14 of these things do not apply to us.

15 The only thing that applies to us
16 is an additional toll that we can't
17 afford to pay. So I think you should
18 consider that before increasing the
19 tolls again.

20 Thank you very much.

21 MR. FARBIARZ: Aliza Gruenfeld and
22 Ester Magid.

23 MS. GRUENFELD: That's actually my
24 grandfather. I go to school in New
25 Jersey and it's actually a private

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2 school because there is no school on
3 the island that accommodates what I
4 need, and not only is it the price of a
5 private school, but the busing is now
6 going to go up, private busing. There
7 is no busing, you know, here to there
8 and it's going to go up, not a little
9 bit, and a lot.

10 There's 30 girls on my bus, and
11 that's a lot of people. We're going to
12 have to pay more money on top of very
13 high, you know, school prices and it's
14 just a lot. And not only that, I never
15 really thought about it, but I have to
16 think like college in like two years or
17 a year, and I have to think about if I
18 go to school in New Jersey or if I go
19 to school off my -- you know, Staten
20 Island, then I have to now pay a toll,
21 and I probably can't afford a toll and
22 I can't afford college, so at that
23 point it's not only thinking about
24 that, it's thinking about how am I
25 going to get there and how I am going

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2 to pay for that. It's a lot of extra
3 for like no reason.

4 So, thank you.

5 MR. FARBIARZ: Esther Magid.

6 MS. MAGID: I want to thank
7 everyone who came up before me. I just
8 want to tell a simple story. From the
9 beginning of October until the
10 beginning of June I went every day to
11 New Jersey because there are no certain
12 facilities located within, you know,
13 the Metropolitan area, believe it or
14 not. They're either upstate or in like
15 Westchester County or over in New
16 Jersey.

17 So right over by Rahway, New Jersey
18 was a facility that my husband was able
19 to recover and then get rehabilitation
20 and then subsequently further
21 rehabilitation, including
22 hospitalization in the State of New
23 Jersey, very good facilities, and
24 finally now he is back here. But from
25 the beginning of October until the

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2 beginning of June, I went every day
3 endlessly. My daughter, as well, not
4 because I was shopping, not because I
5 was going to a beach, because I had to
6 see my husband over there, and my
7 daughter, as well, and I'm retired, so
8 I'm on a fixed income, and this really
9 hurts us.

10 Meanwhile, we're all John Q Public
11 over here and paying through the nose
12 and I'm looking at people who live in
13 Queens and Long Island bitching and
14 moaning they have to pay their fare on
15 the subway and oh, that they're
16 delayed, and I said wait, wait until
17 you would ever want to live here. Oh,
18 we never would want to live here, and
19 they make fun -- they make fun of us
20 because they see us, we're John Q
21 Public and we're getting victimized.

22 Like that lady said, we're being
23 assaulted and raped endlessly. They're
24 emptying out my pockets that I've paid
25 so hard. I worked for New York City.

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2 I was a public servant. It's not fair
3 to us. Why can't the other four
4 boroughs included also pay their share?
5 Why am I paying for the Long Island
6 Rail Road? Why am I paying for the
7 George Washington Bridge? Why?

8 That's all I have to say. I am
9 outraged and I agree with everybody
10 here.

11 MR. FARBIARZ: John McNamara, then
12 Bernard Kormel.

13 MR. McNAMARA: Hi, John McNamara.
14 It's -- the tolls aren't the only thing
15 that are being raised, it's also the
16 public transportation, the express
17 buses and the local buses. There are
18 people just -- I pay. I'm the one who
19 is taking the public transportation.
20 There are teenagers, school kids get
21 that get bus -- what we call bus
22 passes, MetroCards, and are just
23 walking on. It's not only them, it's
24 the adults, as well.

25 You might want to look into giving

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2 the bus drivers a little bit more power
3 and probably putting more cops on the
4 buses because people are just -- there
5 are fare beaters and there's nothing
6 being done about it. That is a lot of
7 money being raised every day. So
8 again, you might want to do something,
9 at least look into doing something, put
10 more cops and giving the bus drivers
11 more power. They're basically told
12 don't get into it, don't argue with
13 anyone. 'Cause I've seen these poor
14 people being abused because, you know,
15 if they put something in they basically
16 on a good day are being cursed out.

17 So that's all aside from the
18 raising of the tolls and everything,
19 which is a little expensive. You know,
20 we're paying almost \$3 to get on a
21 local bus just to be, you know, ripped
22 off and everybody else is get ripped
23 off and it's getting out of control,
24 and that's it.

25 Thank you.

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2 MR. FARBIARZ: Bernard Kormel.

3 MR. KORMEL: Hi, I'm Bernard Kormel
4 and I'm a Staten Island resident for 30
5 years or so.

6 First I want to thank all of our
7 public officials for coming out here to
8 express their dissatisfaction with
9 these particular decisions that these
10 people are beginning to make.

11 Secondly, I think it's time for us
12 to rethink things. You in the Port
13 Authority, that's the kind of things
14 would set up and so forth and you do
15 these kinds of things and you kind of
16 use a little incrementalism to get
17 things across.

18 There was no tolls for us. No
19 increase in tolls for us while you
20 increased for everybody else, then it
21 was three times a month and then we'll
22 give you the discount and now it's ten
23 times a month and then we'll give you a
24 discount.

25 I'm reminded of the lobster who is

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2 put in the boil of water. You got that
3 one? You braze it slowly. It's called
4 incrementalism so you won't notice it.

5 Well, the problem is that we notice
6 it because we don't have public
7 transportation. Why don't we have
8 public transportation? Because our
9 authority, the Port Authority, hasn't
10 investigated subway. You know why we
11 don't have a subway? Do you know? Do
12 you know; yes, no? You can't answer.
13 Shake your head yes, no, I don't know.
14 You can't even do that.

15 We don't have a subway because a
16 railroad man was empowered one time and
17 he decided that Staten Island should
18 not get the subway 'cause his railroad
19 income would be affected so he cut it
20 out the budget. That's why we don't
21 have a subway.

22 It's in the plans. I think you
23 should take the time to rethink what
24 things should be, not simply continue
25 to incrementally do things as you've

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2 been planning to do.

3 So I have two proposals for you;
4 one, you need a committee. The first
5 committee is called the committee of
6 unintended consequences. That's the
7 committee that says okay, this is what
8 we proposed. What the hell else can
9 happen? I mean, don't say yes or no,
10 you can't do it, but it's a good idea.
11 It says let me rethink everything we've
12 done and say okay, what happens if we
13 do it here or there.

14 Staten Islanders will tell you what
15 the intended consequences are. One,
16 they will screw up everything including
17 the degree of commuting patterns that
18 go on. Interaction with the Federal
19 Government. Only one way, one-way
20 tolls, two-way tolls, and cost of
21 living here, for \$20 to get the hell
22 back on the island at least the first
23 time, now it's three, four, Christ,
24 five times. I mean stay on the Staten
25 Island. What if we can't afford to go

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2 off the island? These are the
3 unintended consequences of poor people
4 who can't do this. People are locked
5 on the island. Oh, okay, well, okay.

6 This second thing, before I run out
7 of time, is that you should be
8 considering the whole restructuring of
9 the entire Port Authority concept. I
10 guess it's time to rethink the whole
11 thing. Maybe you don't agree because
12 your jobs may be affected and you
13 should be doing that as possibly as
14 another thing you do; i.e., let's
15 consider what it would be like if we
16 could get a better thing than we got,
17 and we'd like to put that in our
18 proposals rather than the incremental
19 increase and do the same thing over and
20 over and over again in the same way
21 we've done it for all these years.

22 Thank you for listening. I'm dry
23 now. I was wet when I came in here.

24 MR. FARBIARZ: Alice Suslowitz and
25 then Mel Pedersen. Carol Bucciero.

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2 Malinda Montemavano.

3 MS. MONTEMAVANO: I spoke already.

4 I was one of the first people.

5 MR. FARBIARZ: Great. Thank you.

6 I'm at the end of my list. If
7 anyone else would like to speak, please
8 do sign up first and we'll be here for
9 a while waiting for anyone who does
10 sign up and would like to speak.

11 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Hi. I already
12 spoke, but I just want to make one
13 other comment. Someone spoke about
14 peak hours -- this lady, I don't know
15 where she went, peak hours, 9:00 to
16 1:00 in the morning or whatever it is.

17 The fact of the matter is, I don't
18 live in Staten Island only during peak
19 hours, I live here all the time, so we
20 shouldn't have this peak hour nonsense.

21 That's all I want to tell you.

22 MR. FARBIARZ: Marina Savina.

23 MS. SAVINA: Hello. The last one.

24 I didn't expect to talk, but just a
25 couple of words, too.

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I'm a hospital worker. I work in NYU Hospital. You know where is it? It's one of the big and great hospitals. We help people to survive. As a state worker, I try to come to the hospital to help people survive, so I have two way or MTA buses. With this real dependent on traffic and now because we have to reduce, so it's like at least 20 minutes between buses, or I have rail road. Somebody mention you can't use because to get here to NYU it will take me two and a half hour, what I can't afford, of course, and hospital can't afford to wait for me. The other way would I use, if it's off the hours, is my car. So I'm paying the bridges, our toll for bridges to in and out when I have no choice, right?

Plus, my daughter lives in New Jersey with her kids. If I want to see my daughter and her kids, my grandkids, I have to drive to Jersey and pay toll again. Is there any solution on what

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2 we can have? Ferry is, but you can't
3 take ferry, too long. Rail road, 45
4 minutes. Not everybody could can
5 afford if you going to work. Buses,
6 you know, I mention already, it's
7 expensive, but it's traffic dependent.
8 So it's only one solution. Not one
9 solution, but of course, but one of the
10 solutions, for us to live here on
11 Staten Island to make life little bit
12 easier transportation in and out of the
13 city and reducing price for -- I guess
14 for tolls, all of our pockets, somebody
15 mentioned before, you know, Verrazzano
16 supposed to free for us, you know, a
17 long time.

18 I've been living on Staten Island
19 for 20 years and for 20 years increase,
20 increase, increase not only Verrazzano
21 Bridge, all bridges.

22 Again, from my heart, from my
23 family, from family of community I'm
24 asking you please help us Staten
25 Islanders to live here, reduce all

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2 tolls or at least don't ask us to pay
3 more as a Staten Islander.

4 Thank you.

5 MR. FARBIARZ: For all of those who
6 would like to speak again, please
7 sign-in and then come forward.

8 Thank you.

9 MS. MARTORANO: Okay. I understand
10 you have to stay here until 9:00 and
11 you only have five minutes, so what
12 else can I tell you? There's so much,
13 so much, so much, so much. Oh, I can
14 tell you a short story.

15 I have a problem with the Port
16 Authority of raising of the bridge at
17 the Bayonne Bridge 'cause I live over
18 there. Make a long story short, I only
19 have five minutes left, they came to my
20 community and said we were going to be
21 impacted by the -- this really affects
22 what's happening here -- for four and a
23 half years I personally fought the
24 Port, that is right, because they told
25 me that my neighborhood would be

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2 impacted with the building of the
3 bridge, air pollution, noise pollution,
4 all that kind of stuff, and we were.

5 But long story short, people across
6 the street from me were given these
7 compensation packages, \$5,000 for each
8 household for new windows, new air
9 conditioners, power wash their house,
10 hotel stays, car wash vouchers, all
11 sorts of stuff. But my side of the
12 street they told us no, no, no, it's
13 further away, you don't get anything,
14 so I kept fighting them. Every letter
15 that I wrote to you guys, I would sign
16 my name and under my name I would
17 write: "Not going away." And we
18 fought for four and a half years.

19 But the moral of the story here is
20 after four and half years after being
21 told no, no, no, my side of the block
22 is not included, the change of the
23 leadership in The Port Authority who
24 took care of the bridges, I believe her
25 name was Olga Kessler, maybe you guys

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2 might know her, okay, but the change of
3 leadership after four and a half years
4 said yeah, you know, that woman is
5 right, they should be included, and my
6 side of the block, finally, after four
7 and a half years, was given the same
8 compensation package as across the
9 street.

10 So what I'm trying to say here is
11 there needs to be change of leadership
12 at the top, okay, because the
13 leadership we have now, I'm not kidding
14 when I say this, you know, photo op,
15 here I'm at the Port Authority, no,
16 that doesn't work anymore.

17 Is it 9:00 yet? Can you guys go
18 home now? So that's the moral of the
19 story, change of leadership at the top.

20 MR. FARBIARZ: We have a moment or
21 two left. If people would like to make
22 further comments, please sign-in and do
23 so.

24 In addition, as I've mentioned at
25 the outset, you'll have the opportunity

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2 of written comment until September 13th
3 through the Port Authority's website.

4 Thank you.

5 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Seriously folks,
6 consider what it would be like if you
7 can be organized yourselves and
8 reorganize the entire concept of what
9 The Port Authority is trying to
10 accomplish. Consider what it is, what
11 you could do. Best thing you can do is
12 to create another bureaucracy but not
13 your own and your bureaucracy, try a
14 new one. Bureaucracy gets stale, and I
15 believe it's time for the Port
16 Authority to rethink or rethink The
17 Port Authority because, frankly, your
18 concept is stale.

19 Maybe our legislatures will take
20 care of that, maybe you can get the
21 committee to that investigate that,
22 maybe we can get the governors to think
23 about that. Maybe we need more
24 governors in this the situation. Maybe
25 we need a whole other kind of way of

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2 doing it, but the best thing we have to
3 understand it, you guys, you guys, best
4 way to say it, this is what we should
5 do because what we're doing is not
6 necessarily working the best way it
7 could.

8 You're doing a great job, but let's
9 try and see what we can do. If you
10 really do a great job --

11 MS. MARTORANO: I have an idea for
12 the great job. The idea came from
13 Senator Markey. Who remembers Senator
14 Markey? It's a shame we did not follow
15 his advice and see from the city and
16 take control of Staten Island and our
17 bridges. It's not The Port Authority,
18 they're our bridges.

19 God rest Senator Markey. I loved
20 him.

21 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: He was a good
22 man.

23 MS. MARTORNAO: Good man, very good
24 man.

25 Think about it, folks, what would

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be if I didn't have my job and I had
another job?

MR. FARBRIAZ: Thank you, everyone.
Get home safe.

Tonight's proceeding is done.
There are two further Hearings and an
opportunity to write written comments.

Thank you.

(Time noted: 9:00 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, SUZANNE CATALANO, a shorthand
reporter and Notary Public within and for the
State of New York, do hereby certify:

That the within Hearing is a true and
accurate record of the stenographic notes
taken by me.

I further certify that I am not
related to any of the parties to this action
by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way
interested in the outcome of this matter.


SUZANNE CATALANO

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