



**Testimony of Carlos Castell Croke
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**City Council Committees on
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Oversight: MTA and Climate Resiliency
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Good afternoon, my name is Carlos Castell Croke and I am the Associate for New York City Programs at the New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV). NYLCV represents over 30,000 members in New York City and we are committed to advancing a sustainability agenda that will make our people, our neighborhoods, and our economy healthier and more resilient. I would like to thank Chairs Rodriguez, Brannan, and Gennaro for the opportunity to testify today.

New York City's extensive public transportation system is a point of pride for New Yorkers. Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) trains and buses provide an accessible and affordable way for New York City residents, tourists, and local workers to get around while also helping to curb pollution and fight climate change as they provide a cleaner alternative to cars.

When hurricane Ida hit our city a few weeks ago, our subway system was devastated. Almost every line was affected, stranding New Yorkers and disrupting commuters. A deadly storm such as this should no longer come at a surprise. We have been saying for years now that climate change is here, we no longer have the luxury of time. If we want to prevent costly damages, keep our critical transit system running during disaster, and continue to fight climate change in the process we must invest heavily in resilient infrastructure now. This will involve cooperation and coordination between the MTA, NYC DOT and NYC DEP.

First and foremost, we must implement green infrastructure across New York, including by reclaiming a large portion of our roads as public pedestrian spaces. Green infrastructure will not only help to absorb rainwater and mitigate flooding but also increase cooling and improve local air quality as well as beautify our neighborhoods. Furthermore, greening and pedestrianizing our roads will cut down on congestion and cars which are the number one contributor to greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector. Initiatives such as these will be particularly

important for environmental justice communities that often already lack green space and have high levels of air pollution.

We must also upgrade our other forms of public transportation, such as our buses, to ensure that our network is robust and reliable. After the subways were crippled by Ida, ninety percent of MTA buses were still running. This is a remarkable achievement, proving that our buses are an equally important part of our public transit network.

In order to fund these improvements, we need significant investments in the MTA's capital plan through federal programs like the Build Back Better Act and from local sources such as congestion pricing. We must also create a comprehensive five borough resiliency plan so we can efficiently implement these programs, not just to protect our coasts, but also to preserve our inland neighborhoods and communities.

Public transit is one of our strongest weapons in the fight against climate change. It provides an affordable and sustainable way to get around while also giving New Yorkers an alternative to automobiles. However, we must ensure that our public transit network and our streets are built to withstand the increased flooding and storms that climate change will continue to bring. It would be short-sighted and irresponsible to allow the very thing public transit seeks to upend, thwart its very operation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.