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FERRER, TWU, COMMUNITY GROUPS FIGHT FOR TOKEN BOOTHS

Borough President Fernando Ferrer today joined a coalition of advocates and community groups and the Transport Workers Union to protest the MTA NYC Transit's plan to close subway token booths and the state agency's failure to engage communities in its planning process. At the Canal Street Station on the Lower East Side, Ferrer issued the following statement:

"I join with the broad coalition of community groups and neighborhood advocates to state my unequivocal opposition to the foolish and ill-advised closing of subway token booths, the failure of the MTA and NYC Transit to hold public hearings, and their reckless efforts to reduce mass transit service. The MTA must change its outrageous and dismissive behavior; community consultation must be a part of any planning process. Good things happen when government engages the community it serves.

"Last month, I visited Queens to demonstrate the disturbing impact of MTA NYC Transit's plan to close subway token booths across the City. Joined by Queens Assemblywoman Catherine T. Nolan, the Transport Workers Union and leaders of the borough-wide Queens Civic Congress, outside the Queens Plaza Station in Long Island City, I criticized the MTA and NYC Transit for failing to hold public hearings and for tampering with our mass transit service.

"Two days later at a City Council hearing, I repeated my concerns, including how token booth clerks do more than dispense tokens.

"Token booths clerks serve as the eyes and ears of the subway, helping to provide safety for riders and protect against vandalism. The MTA and NYC Transit need a service plan that provides service and does not become a prelude to cutting more personnel. MetroCard machines don't call an ambulance. MetroCard machines don't call the police. Human beings do. We need real, live token booths clerks.

"The MTA makes clear its plans to cut the current level of staffing, so this scheme means both the loss of jobs and a real threat to all those who ride our subways. I call on all elected officials to join the riding public in this fight for their safety, comfort and to make the MTA beholden to the wishes of the riding public.

"Last month, the Daily News reported on vandalism at Metrocard machines and the plans to reduce many of the token booth positions over the next two years as part of a wider effort to close the booths altogether.

"Let me give you an example of how important token booth clerks are. Earlier this year, I honored booth clerk Richard Vazquetelles whose quick actions last December saved a rider who fell on the No. 6 line's tracks at the Longwood Avenue station. The hero clerk immediately called the Transit command center in Brooklyn to stop the approaching northbound train less than five minutes away and then contacted EMS. If not for the presence of this token booth clerk, this rider would have died.

"I call on the Governor and the Mayor to direct their MTA board appointees to act responsibly and in the public interest. These appointees ought to think about the riding public first and the need to maintain a first-rate subway and bus system. When we ought to encourage mass transit and reward the riders who have flocked to the subways and buses since the advent of the one-fare ride, the MTA and NYC Transit now take steps that just might divert riders back to their cars. That makes the least sense of all. The mayoral appointees appeared asleep at the switch when the MTA and NYC Transit considered these changes.

"On top of a mindless plan to reroute the F and G lines and add a new V line that most riders will shun, the TA cavalierly plans to reduce access and security at over 100 stations and then to do the same to the entire system. This must not stand.