Statement of Ernest Tollerson
Director, Policy & Media Relations
NYS Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Testimony before the Subcommittee on Housing,
Transportation and Community Development
Of the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee

July 7, 2009

Good Morning Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Vitter and Members of the Subcommittee. I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the major role transit networks in metropolitan areas throughout the United States can play in reducing carbon-dioxide emissions and shrinking the carbon footprint of our cities and metropolitan regions, home to 65% of Americans and the source of 75% of the nation's GDP.

First, a brief word about the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. The MTA network is one of the world's largest. We provide 8.5 million subway, bus and commuter railroad rides daily – or 2.7 billion rides each year, accounting for nearly one-third of all transit riders in the nation. The MTA also operates seven bridges and two tunnels that carry nearly 300 million vehicles a year – the most heavily used bridge and tunnel system in the nation.

We all know that there is no silver bullet that will enable this nation to cut carbon emissions 80% by 2050. We need an integrated set of strategies and tools, including renewable sources of energy, the right breakthroughs in battery technology and a smart grid. Transit ought to be a major part of a comprehensive strategy. If new investments in the transit sector are used to maximize transit's carbon-cutting potential, the nation can achieve its near- and long-term goals. The climate legislation the Senate is drafting offers an opportunity to fund transit networks in a way that will unlock our carbon-cutting potential. Unlocking it will yield more transit, greener transit and, most important of all, greener communities – places where the amount of carbon it takes to live, work and enjoy life is dramatically lower than it is today.

As a sector, we are reaching the point where we can accurately score the climate-stabilization benefits of transit through: mode shift (from cars to transit**);** transit's role in minimizing congestion; and, the most powerful source of carbon reduction, the integration of transit and green density (residential and commercial) around transit stations, which reduces trip length and frequency while encouraging walking and biking.

The MTA's carbon footprint totaled 2.7 million metric tons of greenhouse-gas emissions in 2008. However, the greenhouse-gas emissions the MTA generates are offset many times over by the carbon emissions the MTA helps avoid by getting people out of cars and onto subways, buses, bus rapid transit and commuter rail.

For every metric ton of carbon an MTA service emits, the MTA helps avoid more than 8.24 metric tons of greenhouse gases, which is a weighted average for the MTA's 5,000-square mile region. Put another way, the MTA's 2008 carbon footprint of 2.7 million tons resulted in a net reduction of nearly 20 million metric tons (19.8 million tons). That's the equivalent of the carbon stored annually by a healthy forest of 7.7 million acres.

Transit's full climate-stabilization benefits will only be unlocked if the new investment in upgrading transit infrastructure and expanding transit networks also encourages the clustering of green commercial and residential development around transit. Transit-oriented development offers much more than new housing and lifestyle choices. TOD makes it easy to dramatically reduce the greenhouse gases produced by the way you live,

shop, work and pursue many leisure-time activities. Throughout the U.S., upgrading transit and expanding transit is already creating green density in places many of you represent. It's visible in the thousands of housing units developed around the Hudson Bergen Light Rail line in New Jersey, the explosion of residential development around the MTA Metro-North rail station in Yonkers and in the Euclid Avenue corridor project in Cleveland, Ohio, a $168.4-million public investment that has attracted billions in private investment.

The revised Waxman-Markey bill allocates 1% of the value of allowances to transit networks. In light of the carbon-cutting potential of U.S. transit agencies, especially transit's potential to give people the option of living in communities with fewer cars per household and lower auto use, the MTA and other transit agencies believe that allocating a larger share of allowances to transit would enable the nation to accelerate its efforts to reduce greenhouse gases. Here at the MTA, we suggest that Congress invest 7.5% of allowances in transit, with 5% to increase access and expand transit networks and services, including:

- New lines, system extensions, bus rapid transit, light rail, feeder and distributor services, all of which foster TOD;
- Signal upgrades that boost the frequency of service;
- New green fleets (buses and rail cars); and
- LEED standards for stations, bus depots and rail yards.

We also suggest that you allocate 2.5% to green and improve the carbon efficiency of existing transit infrastructure, including:

- Smart Fleets projects (light-weighting rolling stock, regenerative braking, on-board power, wayside power); and
- Green station renovations.

This call for allocating 7.5% of allowances to transit is consistent with the American Public Transportation Association's call for a minimum of 10% of allowances for transit and other strategies to reduce vehicle miles traveled.

Every day America's transit networks bring about major greenhouse-gas reductions the old-fashioned way -- through mode shift and reducing congestion. With the appropriate provisions in your climate bill, you can advance the nation's GHG-reduction goals by:

- Expanding transit's capacity to get people out of cars and onto transit, and
- Upgrading existing transit lines and expanding transit networks so that transit can transform our cities and metro regions into communities with low-carbon lifestyles and low-carbon places to work.

This solution set can be deployed now, not in five or 10 years. In short, your bill can unlock transit's potential to green the way we live, work and enjoy life in communities throughout the nation. Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.