



**Testimony of John Kaehny, Reinvent Albany
To Bridges and Tunnels Committee of the MTA
Regarding NY Crossings**

July 24, 2017

Good afternoon, I am John Kaehny, executive director of Reinvent Albany, a statewide watchdog group that advocates for more transparent and accountable state government --- including for state authorities like the MTA. We have not appeared before this committee before, but we have been involved with the MTA on issues like the Transit Funding Lock-Box, and Open Data.

First, thank you board members for your public service and for accepting a very important job. My group is very aware that you are volunteering your time and are given large amounts of complex policy and budget information to review on your own.

You maybe volunteers, but you, the board, own the MTA's bridges and tunnels. I am here today to ask you to fulfill your responsibility to the public and the MTA by doing three things.

First, get a full, specific and public accounting of the costs of each component of the New York Crossings initiative --- which was announced with great fanfare by Governor Cuomo in October 2016.

Second, vote to approve or disapprove the budget for each component of NY Crossings rather than approving piecemeal contract amendments that mask their true and total cost.

Third, disclose and publicly approve all MOUs with other agencies involving NY Crossings, including funding for the Harbor Lights component via ESD or the Power Authority.

New York Crossings is the umbrella name for a wide range of expenditures on MTA Bridges and Tunnels centered around Open Road Tolling, but also including seismic and flood measures and decorative elements including Harbor Lights, art deco towers at bridge and tunnel entrances (“architectural enhancements”) and wave designs on gantries.

A recent article in Politico put the cost of these decorative elements at approximately \$350 million. Reinvent Albany has documented eight contract amendments that were approved by this Committee totalling about \$43 million dollars just for the decorative towers (“architectural enhancements.”) Earlier this year, the Power Authority board was told twice that the MTA would reimburse it for \$216 million for the cost of Harbor Lights. The MTA board was never told of this agreement. Just today, the governor announced that Empire State Development would pay for Harbor Lights. But who will pay for the upkeep of Harbor Lights, and how much will that cost?

The MTA Board owns the bridges and tunnels, and it should know and approve of any project that involves them. How much will the decorative Towers cost? How much will Harbor Lights Cost? The Waves?

Nowhere has this Committee approved specific budgets for the decorative Towers, Harbor Lights or Wave designs --- projects which may each cost more than \$50 million dollars, or in the case of Harbor Lights over \$200 million. These are very high costs for decorative elements, and they should be specifically identified, discussed and voted on by this board.

Thank you.