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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **D.A. DONOVAN CALLS ON MTA TO INCREASE MONITORING OF FARE EVASION ON S.I. BUS LINES**

***\*\*\*Request in Response to Press Reports of Rampant Fare Evasion, Offers Support of DA's Office\*\*\****

STATEN ISLAND, NY – Richmond County District Attorney Daniel M. Donovan, Jr. today called upon the Metropolitan Transportation Authority to implement a program of enforcing fare collection on the bus routes serving Staten Island in response to an April 6, 2008 report by the *Staten Island Advance* detailing the ease of fare evasion and lack of enforcement in the system.

In a letter mailed April 16<sup>th</sup>, to MTA Executive Director and CEO Elliot G. Sander, District Attorney Donovan highlighted that his office conducted independent research into the issue by speaking to bus operators and riders who frequent public buses on Staten Island. “The verdict on this issue is loud and clear. There is a massive problem on many Staten Island routes with individuals, who have the capacity to pay, simply refusing to pay a basic fare. This creates an unfair burden on law abiding citizens who pay the fares, but also on motorists who pay an exorbitant toll on the Verrazano Bridge to subsidize mass transit,” stated D.A. Donovan.

District Attorney Donovan compared the situation to the flagrant “turnstile jumping” which plagued the MTA’s subway system in the late 1980s and early 1990s, “We cannot go back to they days when the law abiding citizens, and even law enforcement threw up their hands and let the criminals rule the streets and our transit system. I am committing my office to support the MTA if they are willing to take the initiative to combat this crime.”

The District Attorney cited research conducted in 1993, at the height of the fare evasion crackdown of the 1990s, which indicated that one of every six arrested fare evaders was wanted on an outstanding warrant for another crime. “When we surrender the enforcement of this crime, we are making our buses vulnerable to ‘copy cat’ syndrome with more people refusing to pay and most importantly creating an environment where hard-core criminals find our buses as preferable bases for illicit conduct as opposed to the streets,” stated District Attorney Donovan.

Fare evasion on a MTA bus is a criminal act, prosecuted as “Theft of Services” under New York State Penal Law section 165.15(3), a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by up to 1 year in jail.

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