Testimony of Roland Lewis, President & CEO  
New York City Council Committee on Transportation  
May 4, 2015  
re: Res. No. 652 – Calling on Congress to pass, and the President to sign, the GROW AMERICA Act

The Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance (MWA) is a bi-state coalition of over 800 community and recreational groups, educational institutions, businesses, and other stakeholders committed to restoring and revitalizing the New York and New Jersey waterways. Our waterways have been revitalized with active recreation, environmental education, and waterborne transportation, and the harbor has for centuries been a vital conduit for commerce and an engine of economic development.

MWA strongly supports Resolution 65 calling on Congress to pass, and President Obama to sign, the GROW AMERICA Act. Congress must act quickly. The proposal submitted by President Obama and Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx would replace the existing federal surface transportation funding law, which expires on May 31. The GROW AMERICA Act, which increases federal funding for transportation by $87 billion through Fiscal Year 2018, allocates $72 billion allocated to public transit projects. As a region dependent on mass transit for mobility and access to jobs, the New York metropolitan area stands to gain significantly from the passage of the Act into law.

The GROW AMERICA Act will provide additional resources for waterborne transportation that may help serve New York’s growing ferry transit. The bill calls for approximately $70M in annual funding for “construction of ferry boats and ferry terminal facilities,” awarded competitively, for which New York may be eligible to support capital costs of upgrades to the Staten Island Ferry or Mayor de Blasio’s recently announced citywide ferry network.

The overall need for – and the benefits of – investments in public transit are clear. With the capacity of trans-Hudson rail tunnel traffic at a breaking point, and the Metropolitan Transit Authority’s (MTA) five-year capital plan still bearing a $15B shortfall, New York has immediate transit needs. New York is the economic engine of the northeastern U.S., and reliance on public transit helps alleviate traffic congestion and reduce the adverse impacts associated with greenhouse gas emissions.

MWA urges this Committee and the entire City Council to pass this resolution on behalf of all New Yorkers, and send a clear message to Congress that our transit systems are of vital importance to the economic competitiveness of the region, and of the nation. Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.