

**NEW YORK CITY TRANSIT RIDERS COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF MARCH 27, 2008**

A meeting of the New York City Transit Riders Council (NYCTRC) was convened at 12 noon on March 27, 2008, in the 5th floor board room, at MTA headquarters, 347 Madison Avenue between 44<sup>th</sup> & 45<sup>th</sup> Streets, New York City.

The following members were present:

|                  |                    |
|------------------|--------------------|
| Andrew Albert    | Trudy L. Mason     |
| Jessica G. Rojas | Sharon Santa Maria |
| William K. Guild | Burton Strauss, Jr |
| Thomas Jost      | Michael Sinansky   |
| Toya Williford   |                    |

The following members were absent:

|                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| Shirley Genn   | Marisol Halpern |
| John M. Hunter | Edith Prentiss  |

In addition, the following persons were present:

|                    |                                 |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| William Henderson  | -PCAC Executive Director        |
| Jan Wells          | -PCAC Associate Director        |
| Karyl Berger       | -PCAC Research Associate        |
| Buckley Yung       | -NYCT                           |
| Joseph Barr        | -NYCT                           |
| Deborah Hall-Moore | -NYCT                           |
| Alan Flacks        | -NY County Democratic Committee |
| Linda Black        | -DFTA                           |
| Joseph Garber      | -CPAAA                          |
| George Haikalls    | -IRUM                           |
| Diane Lightbourne  | -Concerned citizen              |
| Yvonne Morrow      | -Concerned citizen              |
| Matt Shotkin       | -Concerned citizen              |
| Meg Reed Mian      | -Concerned citizen              |
| Ken Stewart        | -Concerned citizen              |
| Lou Sepersky       | -Concerned citizen              |

***Approval of Agenda and Minutes***

The agenda for the March 27, 2008 meeting was approved. The minutes of the February 28, 2008 meeting were approved.

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### ***Chair's Report***

**The Chair's Report is attached to these minutes.**

The members briefly discussed the format for the President's Forum and how the questions would be handled. Mr. Albert said he and the staff will come up with a procedure.

### ***Board Report***

Mr. Albert reported that many MTA Board members were extremely upset that implementation of the service enhancements have been delayed for at least three months. He noted that Lee Sander understands that people are angry and is hopeful that conditions will be better in the second quarter of the year and they will be able to implement the enhancements.

Mr. Albert briefly summarized the MTA's proposed sustainability improvements, on which he had received a briefing. He spoke about the sustainability investments, which include regenerative braking, reduction of greenhouse emissions, aluminum third rails, "green" necklace lighting on bridges and platform edge doors. Ms. Mason asked that staff request more detailed information about these projects. Mr. Henderson said he would ask Ernest Tollerson to come to the May meeting.

Tom Jost said the MTA has to be allowed to try new things. Mr. Albert said that one of the sustainability enhancements cost \$6 million dollars and that two major service enhancements could be funded by this sum.

Ms. Mason questioned why the MTA is going forward with sustainability improvements when service enhancements are being cut and riders are losing out everyday.

Ms. Mason suggested that the Council send a letter to MTA Executive Director Lee Sander expressing concern that the service enhancements have been delayed. After additional discussion, it was decided that the Council would hold off sending a letter until after Mr. Tollerson makes a presentation. Ms. Mason said she would send a letter as a private citizen.

### ***Old Business***

Ms. Mason made one last announcement about donations for Jon Schachter. She said anyone interested in giving should speak with her directly.

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Mr. Flacks asked that in the future he hopes his comments are reflected in the minutes.

Mr. Garber also noted some of his comments have not been reflected in the minutes and asked that the Transit Riders Council send a letter to NYC Police Commissioner Kelly about the rampant use of graffiti throughout the subway system.

Mr. Garber also noted that the Station Customer Assistant at Marcy Avenue is always reading and not out walking around. He noted he filed a complaint about the escalators at Union Square have been out of service for several months. Karyl Berger said that these escalators are part of the Zeckendorf Towers and New York City Transit is not responsible for maintenance of these escalators. Mr. Albert said staff will look into this issue.

Lou Sepersky also reported that the escalators at the Lipstick Building at 53<sup>rd</sup> Street and Third Avenue have been out of service for several months.

### ***New Business***

Ken Stewart suggested that the TRC undertake a study of conductor announcements on subways. He said the conductors often don't announce the train number or letter route when the train doors open at a station. He said often they make the announcements early so people on the platform don't hear the information.

Jessica Rojas reported that she has noticed LED signage on the 7 line and asked if it was going to be put on all R68A cars. Mr. Albert said staff would inquire about this initiative.

A question was asked about why an elevator was not installed to make the Mosholu Parkway station ADA accessible when it was renovated. Mr. Albert said that only identified key stations are required to be made accessible and surmised that because it has very little downtown ridership it is doubtful that it would be named a key station.

***Introduction of Buckley Yung, NYC Transit Manager, Bus Service Planning – Operations Planning and Joseph Barr, Deputy Director – New York City Department of Transportation to discuss the Bus Rapid Transit program.***

A copy of the presentation is on file in the PCAC office.

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Mr. Yung briefly reviewed how the program got started and got to the point of implementation.

Mr. Yung explained that the first route will be the Bx12, which is currently served by local and limited service. The BRT service will make fewer stops and replace the limited service. He said the two measures that dictated the routes that were ultimately chosen included ridership on the line and compatibility with the BRT concept. One route in each borough was chosen as part of the pilot program.

Mr. Yung explained that when Howard Roberts and Janette Sadik-Kahn became NYC Transit President and Commissioner of the NYC Department of Transportation, respectively, they chose to reassess the corridors that had been selected and decided to postpone the plan for the Queens BRT corridor because of stiff local opposition to the plan. He noted that they did add a few “enhanced transit corridors” that are not full blown BRT programs but will increase the service within these corridors. The enhanced transit corridors include the Fifth Avenue/Madison Avenue one-way pair and 34<sup>th</sup> Street, which incorporates a less intensive first phase and a more intensive second phase project including a transitway.

The Bronx BRT will operate from 7 am to 7 pm, Monday through Friday. Mr. Yung said that eventually bus lanes on Pelham Parkway will be built. He said the service will begin on June 29<sup>th</sup> when the June bus operator pick goes into effect.

Mr. Yung said they are currently testing red painted bus lanes on 57<sup>th</sup> Street.

Mr. Yung briefly described how the method of payment would work. He said that the fare collection system would use modified MetroCard Express Machines (MEMs) that will provide a receipt that must be retained by the rider. The machines will be located on the street at the BRT shelters. He said a customer who pays cash must buy a fare from a repurposed New York City MuniMeter machine and obtain a receipt before boarding the bus. Either receipt would serve as “proof of payment”. He said that NYC Transit’s Property Protection Unit will conduct “proof of payment” enforcement to ensure that riders have paid their fares.

Mr. Yung said they are moving ahead with the Staten Island pilot traffic signal prioritization project. He said that while the system is being tested over a limited distance, there has been a 20 percent improvement in bus travel time within the test area.

Mr. Yung said they have put together a branding scheme for the service so that it will be easily identifiable. He said that a unified brand will be used on the buses, shelters, and vending machines. He said the service will be called “Select Bus Service”.

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Mr. Yung said that NYC Transit undertook some market research on Fordham Road and only four respondents out of the 1,000 shoppers interviewed had driven to the shopping district.

Mr. Barr explained that the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue/Madison Avenue corridor has 100 buses during the peak rush period.

In response to Mike Sinansky's question why there are no BRT routes in Queens for the pilot program when 40 percent of the original routes were located in Queens, Mr. Barr noted that the residents from Community Board 12 maintain that congestion is not a problem on Merrick Boulevard except for the last mile heading into Jamaica and so there is no need for BRT service in this corridor. He said they are scoping out the next step for Queens. He noted that as part of the congestion pricing initiative the City will do traffic signal prioritization in Jamaica and Flushing. Mr. Sinansky asked why this is not being done on Hillside Avenue as well. Mr. Yung noted that many people in Queens are not ready for bus lanes.

Mr. Jost asked if the BRT team had looked at ways of getting express buses past local buses without leaving exclusive bus lanes. Mr. Barr said they have not looked at that issue yet and noted that it is hard to get additional space necessary for passing facilities in places such as Fordham Road because of the high demand for sidewalk space to accommodate pedestrians.

Mr. Jost suggested that they look at the St. George Staten Island Ferry terminal as a candidate for traffic signal prioritization and asked if they had considered installing a zipper barrier on Hylan Boulevard to prevent pedestrians from crossing in unauthorized places. He suggested that signs need to be a big part of the service on Staten Island because of pedestrian safety issues that already exist on that street.

Burt Strauss asked why the Manhattan Select Bus Service is not stopping at 72<sup>nd</sup> Street. Mr. Yung said there will either be a stop at 72<sup>nd</sup> or 77<sup>th</sup> Street. Mr. Strauss asked whether the new service would reduce the amount of time that a bus remains stopped, and Mr. Barr indicated that the percentage of time spent at bus stops and waiting at traffic lights may not be reduced, but that it would remain stable only because both the time the bus is moving and the time the bus is stopped would be reduced as total trip time is decreased.

In response to Mr. Strauss' question about right turns, Mr. Barr said they must do a better job of enforcement so that the problems that currently occur on Madison Avenue do not appear in the SBS corridors.

In response to Ms. Mason's question as to why the nomenclature for the program has been changed from BRT to SBS, Mr. Yung said that BRT is the general term for this type of service and that SBS is the branded term for the New York City

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service. He said in other cities where there is BRT service, the service has been given identifying names like SBS. He explained that enhanced bus service refers to bus lane improvements. Mr. Yung said that a bill has been introduced in the NY State Assembly that deals with bus lane enforcement cameras.

In response to Karyl Berger's question about how the on-street fare collection equipment will be attended to, Mr. Yung said the maintenance teams will visit the sites where it is located several times each day to ensure that the equipment is in working order.

Linda Black expressed concern about customer safety is using the machines. Mr. Sepersky expressed similar concerns about safety.

Kay Dunham said she is opposed to elimination of the limited bus service when SBS is implemented. Mr. Yung said there will be a four-minute frequency for these buses, and so service will not be compromised.

In response to Mr. Sepersky's question of how the City plans to prevent private citizens from triggering signal prioritization systems, Mr. Yung said that while the pilot program uses a basic technology, there are many systems in the market that make it easy to restrict use to only those vehicles transmitting a certain code or frequency and these systems also provide ways to change the code or frequency from time to time.

### ***Adjournment***

The meeting was adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Karyl Berger  
Research Associate

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Follow-up Issues for March 27, 2008 meeting:

- Schedule Ernest Tollerson for May meeting presentation on sustainability.
- Ask what NYCT can do to get privately maintained escalators at the 14<sup>th</sup> Street/Union Square and Lexington Avenue (E, V) stations returned to working order
- Ask whether all R68A trains on the 7 line are being outfitted with LED “local/express” signage.

### **New York City Transit Riders Council Chair's Report March 27, 2008**

Please mark your calendars for the President's forum which will be held on Wednesday, April 16 from 5 to 7 pm at 2 Broadway.

March has been a busy month. On March 11, Bill went to Albany with a group from the Empire State Transportation Alliance to lobby for congestion pricing. Unfortunately, this was the day after the Spitzer scandal broke, and between this distraction and other business that kept the Assembly and Senate in session, the ESTA members were not able to see as many people as they had hoped. Another group went back last week to speak to the legislators who had been missed. While some legislators seem to be firmly opposed, most of the reaction that the ESTA group received was that the legislators did not fully understand the implications of congestion pricing and were worried about its impacts on their constituents.

Since that time, the climate for congestion pricing has changed considerably. Our new governor has come out in support of the concept and forwarded an implementation bill to the State Legislature. The bill echoes the recommendations of the New York City Congestion Mitigation Commission and provides for net revenues to flow to the MTA to support its capital program. The City administration has shifted its efforts into a higher gear, and several opinion polls have shown public support for congestion pricing if its proceeds are used to improve public transportation. The way it's going, however, things could change dramatically again since by my

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count we have 108 hours to the State's deadline for approval of the program.

On Monday, Karyl Berger attended the New York City Council hearing on congestion pricing. She heard testimony from City agencies. The hearing continued on all day with testimony from congestion pricing advocates and opponents, and in the evening, Bill Henderson testified in support of congestion pricing with the proviso that the system must be designed so that its revenues flow to the MTA to improve public transportation.

Karyl also attended the NYC Council Committee on Transportation's initial operating and capital budget hearings for New York City Transit on Tuesday, March 25. Since it was held the day after the announcement of the suspension of planned service enhancements, many of the Council Members' comments focused on this decision. There will be a second budget hearing where the public is able to testify, and we will take advantage of that opportunity to make a statement.

NYC Transit has begun distributing its Rider Report Card for buses. The first surveys are being distributed on Staten Island. You have a copy of the survey form in your packets today.

We sent a letter to President Roberts and Ronnie Hakim, acting President - MTA Capital Construction Company, about the issue of the contractors, delays, and cost overruns on capital projects. We will have Stanley Grill, Vice President – NYC Transit Division of Materiel, as a guest at our next meeting to discuss some of these issues.

We sent a letter to President Roberts about the importance of posting signs about the availability of alternative elevator service at or near a subway station. In the letter, we referred to our meeting last February with Griselda Cespedes where we discussed the possibility of installing signage directing riders to alternative escalators and elevators.

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We received an answer regarding the availability of borough bus maps incorporating MTA Bus routes. For Brooklyn and the Bronx, maps dated June 2008 will integrate NYC Transit and MTA Bus route information and should be available by July 2008. For Queens, an integrated map will be available in either late 2008 or early 2009.