

## 2007 Annual Performance Review of The MTA and Its Operating Agencies

### Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA)

#### Good

- **New Leadership.** Executive Director Elliot Sander has brought positive leadership to the MTA through his knowledge of public transportation, his personal use of the system, and his accessibility.
- **Information Accessibility.** The MTA has made strides in promoting a more open MTA organization. Steps taken this year to improve access to the MTA include an increased number of public hearings, better public hearing venues, improved presentations, an interactive “Fare Forum” public workshop, and a first “Webinar” focusing on the fare increase.
- **Funding for Expansion Projects.** After enormous work on the part of the MTA, LIRR and NYCT, the MTA secured federal full funding agreements for the East Side Access project and Phase 1 of the Second Avenue Subway.
- **Emergency Preparedness.** The MTA should be commended for its “August 8 Storm Report” in which the MTA conducted a thorough review of its response during a storm that produced intense rainfall overwhelming the transit system.
- **MTA Website.** The MTA made several improvements to the MTA website in 2007 making it easier for riders to find information. Links to relevant news and public hearing information are now located on the front page. Important new postings to the website include Webcasts of the MTA Board and Committee meetings, MTA presentations, elevator and escalator outages, and all press releases.
- **Regional Transportation First Steps.** The MTA’s regional transportation initiative had immediate success in 2007 with the inauguration of the S89 bus between Staten Island and Bayonne. The MTA also announced future service from Metro-North territory to the Meadowlands in New Jersey for sports events.

#### Needs Improvement

- **Transit-Oriented Development.** The MTA has not produced a comprehensive TOD program that creates a structure and guidelines for technical assistance programs to communities that are interested in creating transit-oriented development near the MTA train stations.
- **Information Technology.** It is time the MTA makes information technology (IT) a top priority and creates an executive level position to develop and implement a MTA-wide technology program. The Authority is after all, the umbrella organization that is responsible for efficiently managing 65,000 employees with an infrastructure that supports 2.4 billion public transportation trips each year for its customers.
- **Availability of Monthly MTA Agenda Books.** The MTA must post the monthly MTA Board and Committee Agendas on its website.

## Unacceptable

- **Delays in the Installation of Security Cameras and Other Security Technologies.** It is extremely disconcerting that, two and a half years after the MTA announced that it would begin the implementation of its state of the art Integrated Electronic Security System (IESS/C3) for its transportation network so little has been completed on this important security project. In August, 2005, Lockheed Martin was awarded the \$212 million contract for the installation of 1,000 cameras and 3,000 sensors throughout the system in addition to other components for the security system.
- **Failure to Secure Adequate 7 Line Funding.** The MTA has failed to secure an agreement requiring the City to fund unanticipated increases in project costs, the construction of a 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue/41<sup>st</sup> Street station, or the additional rolling stock necessary to service the extension. The potential diversion of scarce MTA funds to cover these expenditures jeopardizes the Authority's ability to address the higher priority needs of current riders. The 7 line extension project is an economic development project conceived by the City of New York that was imposed on the MTA Capital Program. Independent of the City's interests, it would not be a high priority for the MTA.

## New York City Transit

### Good

- **New Leadership.** Since his arrival this year President Howard Roberts has proven to be highly accessible with a willingness to listen to a broad array of constituents.

### *Service Improvements*

- **Times Square Shuttle.** NYCT made substantial improvements to the peak hour Times Square shuttle service. The evening rush hour now has 30 percent more train runs.
- **L Line Service Improvements.** NYCT increased L Line service and installed real time screens alerting passengers to when the next trains will be arriving... a first for the transit system and a welcome reward for passengers that had to endure seemingly endless weekends of service diversions to make these improvements possible.
- **Renovations of Elevated Stations throughout the System.** NYCT significantly improved the station environment for many riders by renovating several elevated stations. NYC Transit's decision to group the stations in one major service diversion also proved successful, minimizing service diversions and cutting costs.
- **Staten Island Railway.** NYCT made considerable improvements to express train service on the SIR.
- **Shea Stadium/Willets Point Additional Service.** NYCT increased 7 line service to Shea Stadium/Willets Point for sporting events.
- **Bus Service to a Major Shopping Venue.** NYCT added much needed bus service to Gateway Mall in Brooklyn.

### *Communication*

- **Substantial Improvement Communicating to Passengers During Planned Service Delays.** NYCT began sending weekday email alerts informing passengers of planned weekday service outages. The MTA and NYCT also designed new posters to alert passengers at stations about planned service delays, increased the information to passengers for alternative means of transportation, and increased staffing at stations for the most complex outages, providing passengers with greater assurances that they could reach their desired destination.

### Needs Improvement

- **Rider Report Card.** Assessing the benefits of NYCT's Rider Report Card initiative is problematic due to flaws in process and methodology.
- **Performance Measures.** NYCT's current wait assessment measure is used as a measure of the impact of on-time performance on riders, but can mask severe bunching problems. An acceptable wait assessment measure should include information about the average deviation from service standards encountered by riders.
- **Traffic Checking.** Performance measures should be based on more frequent observations of a broad range of both high and low volume stations. Information available from technology, such as automatic train supervision, should be incorporated into traffic checking database.
- **Placement of Bus Shelters.** NYCT must work harder to coordinate with NYCDOT on the placement of bus shelters in relation to bus stops.
- **Express Buses.** NYCT should publish express bus route seated loads in the monthly NYCT Board Committee book.

- **Cleaning and Maintenance.** Station and car cleanliness has long been a major issue for riders. In August 2007 Transit initiated an ambitious pilot program to provide additional cleaning staff at 64 stations. We applaud these moves and look forward to seeing positive results in the coming year. However, as this effort represents less than 15% of the total system, we urge that expanded cleaning and maintenance services be provided in a much greater number of stations.

### Unacceptable

- **Communication during Unplanned Service Disruptions.** As noted in the MTA's own "August 8 Storm Report":

*"The lack of an (NYCT) explicit protocol left the agency unable to provide timely information to the news media when faced with an unprecedented weather event and a number of unfortunate circumstances that kept key staff out of reach. (The inability of the web site to handle the traffic demand on August 8 is discussed elsewhere in the report, but it is worth noting that it put additional strain on the media relations effort.)"*

- **Subway Stations without Public Address Systems.** In this era of security alertness and unpredictable service outages, it is astonishing that 86 NYCT stations still have no public address systems.
- **Automatic Train Supervision (ATS) and Public Address/Customer Information Screen (PA/CIS) Projects.** The ATS and PA/CIS projects are items of serious concern. The ATS project is 34.4 percent over budget and both projects are three years behind schedule. It remains questionable when full completion of these projects will actually occur.

## **MTA Bus**

### Good

- **Improved Service.** MTA Bus has effectively combined seven former private bus lines into a single agency, resulting in greatly improved service. The many positive changes include extending and modifying bus routes to better serve major traffic generators, such as the Atlas Park Mall in Queens, and shifts in routes designed to improve service and operations.
- **Training and Professionalism.** The MTA Bus Company has made investments in training that promise to yield benefits of improved service to its customers. Other efforts, such as the implementation of new financial systems, are also helping to transform the image of the Company from that of an operation of questionable reliability to a modern, professional transit agency.
- **Equipment and Facilities.** MTA Bus has undertaken a major effort to modernize its rolling stock, which has improved conditions for riders greatly. Behind the scenes, improvements to support facilities are not visible to riders, but are likely to pay dividends in terms of better and more reliable service.

### Needs Improvement

- **Funding.** A long term system for funding the MTA Bus system must be developed to replace the short term arrangements initially put in place.

- **Data Collection and Analysis.** MTA Bus needs to have adequate resources to gather detailed ridership and performance data. A robust traffic checking program is a necessary base for effective operations planning.

## Long Island Rail Road

### Good

- **New Leadership.** The Long Island Rail Road Commuter's Council (LIRRCC) was very encouraged by the appointment of Helena Williams as LIRR President. Her knowledge, experience, energy and openness about the need to make improvements at the LIRR are most welcome. Smart moves in her first six months include hiring former MNR President Donald Nelson to undertake a comprehensive review of the LIRR's operations and to advise on improving the track configurations at Jamaica. Ms. Williams also engaged consulting firm Booz Allen Hamilton to evaluate the failing diesel fleet.

### *Service Improvements*

- **East End Shuttle Service.** The LIRR's East End Shuttle Service pilot project adds six weekday trains between Speonk and Montauk in addition to bus service from the local train stations to the major business districts they serve. The pilot is a great service improvement for the East End of Long Island. The LIRRCC is very interested in seeing the program extended through the busy summer season.
- **Miscellaneous Service Enhancements.** The LIRR instituted substantial service improvements in mid-2007 by adding AM and PM peak period, evening, weekend, and summer service to a variety of stations and branches.
- **Leaf Season.** The LIRR took a proactive approach to autumn "slip-slide" this year with a number of initiatives. The effort succeeded in minimizing the service disruptions resulting from car shortages that occur when equipment must be taken out of service to repair damaged wheels.
- **New Car Equipment.** The LIRR's new M-7 cars have greatly improved service reliability as the cars continue to perform well above expectation.

### *Customer Service*

- **Gap Remediation.** The LIRR has become a leader in its public information campaign to make riders aware of the gap and its efforts to reduce the gap at station platforms.
- **Message Boards in Penn Station.** In October, the LIRR unveiled six video information screens that are placed throughout the LIRR concourse. The screens inform passengers of real time service disruptions in addition to regular train schedule information.

### Needs Improvement

- **Service and Access to City Stations.** The LIRR must take steps to improve access and increase service to the LIRR New York City stations. The access issues, poor service and station conditions were highlighted in the PCAC 2007 report: *A Long Day's Journey Into Work*.
- **Customer Courtesy.** The LIRR has initiated a new campaign to encourage better customer behavior. While the campaign is a positive step, the LIRR must be vigilant about enforcing cell phone and seat space protocols. These are tricky issues, but abuses are widespread and greatly resented by riders.

## Unacceptable

- **Communication.** The LIRR's ability to communicate is a failure at every level and there has not been clear and decisive leadership to address it. The full breadth of communication concerns range from technology issues to personnel issues. The LIRR must commission a study, similar to the Operations Review done by Don Nelson, to assess, identify and address communication issues that have created intense rider frustration and anger at the LIRR.
- **Diesel Fleet Performance.** The LIRR's diesel fleet, and particularly the dual mode fleet, has been plagued with perennial problems causing a severe impact on service delivery. While an analysis by Booz Allen Hamilton is underway, we are concerned that no long term plan for the fleet has been announced.
- **Community Outreach.** The *LIRR is seen as a bad neighbor*. Complaints continue unabated from commuters and the communities about the deplorable condition of the station areas and right of way, insensitive tree care along the right of way, and the unnecessary blowing of train horns. The LIRR must do a better job at reaching out to local elected officials and the communities that they serve.
- **Land Use and Transportation Link.** The LIRR continues to be disconnected from Long Island's emerging smart growth movement. The agency lacks a proactive program that engages citizen organizations and elected officials in promoting transit-oriented development and better access to the Rail Road.

## Metro-North Rail Road

### Good

- **Service Improvements.** With newly installed sidings on the Pascack Valley line, Metro-North was able to add much needed service to the line. Increased service on all three East of Hudson lines has also been initiated.
- **Station Improvements.** A variety of station improvements are in process, including work at Ossining, Scarborough, Philipse Manor and Cortlandt.
- **New Equipment.** Design development of the M-8 fleet has moved into the final stage.
- **New Station Development.** Construction is underway on the new Yankee Stadium station, which will enhance public transportation to the area and reduce neighborhood traffic around the stadium on game days.
- **Community Outreach.** MNR is commended for its proactive efforts to communicate with newly elected officials in MNR territory and its on-going outreach to existing elected officials.

### *Customer Service*

- **On-Board Ticketing.** The in-house MNR information technology (IT) staff successfully developed and implemented a pilot program for its Hand-Held Ticket Selling Devices. The new system will allow conductors to accept cash or credit/debit cards and also record sales information in near real time, improving the railroad's auditing ability. The units will debut in-system April 1, 2008. Full functionality will be available on all devices used by all train crews by mid-year.
- **Station Information.** The in-house MNR IT staff also developed new real time arrival screens, which are currently being tested at the White Plains station. The screens will provide real-time information on track assignment and train arrival/departure times in addition to showing delays in real time. Metro-North expects to debut the White Plains screens in early 2008 and then roll out the program to sixteen additional key stations over a two-year period.

### *Land Use and Transportation Links*

- **Establishment of a Transit-Oriented Development Program (TOD).** Metro-North has recognized TOD as a major planning activity and hired experienced personnel to pursue this direction for business development.
- **TOD Initiative in Beacon.** Metro-North has successfully worked with the City of Beacon, NY and local organizations to establish a TOD district around the Beacon train station. A "Be in Beacon" campaign has been launched to attract developers to the 18-acre site.
- **Connecting Services Program.** Metro-North continues to expand connecting services (shuttles, ferries and taxis) at its stations. Ridership on the Hudson RailLink bus and the two cross-Hudson ferries, Haverstraw-Ossining and Newburgh-Beacon, exceeded 600,000 in 2007.
- **End-to-End Transportation Program.** Metro-North has contracted with Enterprise Rent-A-Car for service at 23 stations. Customers arriving at these stations who need flexible transportation for purposes such as sightseeing, family visits, etc. will soon be able to rent a hybrid vehicle by the hour or day to take them to their final destination.
- **Retail Services at Stations.** Metro-North has announced it has given a 10-year lease for the operation of a specialty café at the historic Hastings station.

## Unacceptable

- **M-8 Seating Plans.** MNR's consideration of a 3-facing-3 seating arrangement adjacent to vestibules on the new M-8 cars (similar to the M-7 cars), is troubling. Currently, New Haven line cars have a 3-facing-2 arrangement to allow space for large luggage or a stroller. It is quite surprising that Metro-North would consider removing this important element of car design. For many riders with children and luggage this is a necessary amenity that defines the quality of the trip. We strongly urge Metro-North to use the proven 3-facing-2 design.