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# Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee

to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority

## OCTOBER–DECEMBER 2001 QUARTERLY REPORT

Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee  
Long Island Rail Road Commuters Council  
Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council  
New York City Transit Riders Council

### PCAC

#### ***PCAC Staff Transportation Planner Moves On to USDOT***

In October, PCAC Transportation Planner Joshua Schank moved on to a new position as an Analyst with the USDOT Office of the Inspector General. Although Mr. Schank had been with the PCAC for little over a year, in that time he worked on several important research reports for the PCAC and Councils. The PCAC regrets Mr. Schank's departure and wishes him well at USDOT. A new Transportation Planner, Katherine Brower, is expected to assume Mr. Schank's vacated position on January 2, 2002.

#### ***PCAC Discusses Budget Impacts of the World Trade Center Disaster with MTA***

In December, the PCAC discussed the impact of the World Trade Center disaster on the MTA budget with MTA Budget Director Gary Caplan. Mr. Caplan reported that, as of November, the MTA had experienced a \$796 million revenue shortfall in the wake of September 11. However, expected insurance payments, federal recovery aid, and a restructuring of debt service

costs will effectively reduce the figure to \$274.9 million. In 2002, the MTA expects a loss of \$40 million in originally projected revenue and \$45 million in tax receipts. The overall unmet total for losses in 2001 and 2002, \$347.6 million, will be supplied by additional New York State aid.

Concern also exists about the scope of rebuilding the heavily damaged 1/9 subway line. Unless the tunnel is rebuilt in the same design and on the same right-of-way as the original, neither the MTA's own insurance nor FEMA recovery aid will provide funding. Working out this funding question is important, because many Lower Manhattan residents and commercial interests would like to see the subway relocated closer to Battery Park City, with new pedestrian connections to nearby subway and PATH stations.

#### ***PCAC Comments on Empire State Transportation Alliance Plan for Lower Manhattan***

During the quarter, the PCAC reviewed an agenda for rebuilding Lower Manhattan transit infrastructure proposed by the Empire State Transportation Alliance (ESTA), a coalition of New York transportation and

business interests. The PCAC supported an ESTA idea to build as many linkages and pedestrian interfaces as possible between transit facilities. However, the PCAC cautioned the group not to seek sweeping improvements far beyond what originally existed in order to avoid losing out on federal recovery funds.

Lower Manhattan rebuilding issues were also discussed with transit advocate George Haikalis at a special meeting with PCAC members in December.

### ***Disaster Impacts Public Transportation Planning Studies***

The events of September 11 have had significant consequences for two regional planning studies. PCAC staff discussed these impacts with the study teams of the Port Authority/New Jersey Transit/MTA Access to the Region's Core Study and the MTA Lower Manhattan Study.

With the destruction of the Port Authority offices at the World Trade Center, the Access to the Region's Core study team lost computers, maps, and data, some of which may be irreplaceable. Since 1999, the study has examined the potential for a new Hudson River rail tunnel and capacity improvements in Penn Station. Depending upon the ability of the study team to recover or replace data, a final report is expected by first quarter 2002, advancing one remaining alternative to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement stage.

The final report for the Lower Manhattan Access Study was in development at the time of the disaster. While the main recommendation of the study was for a full-build Second Avenue subway, most lower-cost Transportation System

Management (TSM) alternatives centered on improving pedestrian connections for transit stations located at the World Trade Center. With these TSM alternatives rendered moot for the time being, the study team is working on a Summary Report to record the study's progress prior to September 11.

### ***Members Mobilize to Support Federal Emergency Stimulus Bills***

During the quarter, the PCAC made a coordinated effort to email members of the Senate Finance Committee in support of the speedy approval of federal recovery monies for New York. Staff monitored the progress of competing aid bills through both Houses. In late December, approximately \$11 billion in aid was approved for New York as part of a larger defense appropriation bill. The aid includes \$100 million for new security needs at NYC Transit and an additional \$100 million for safety and security improvements in Amtrak's Hudson River tunnels.

### ***PCAC Thanks Peter Kalikow for Leadership on MTA Issues Arising from September 11***

In November, Executive Director Beverly Dolinsky sent a letter to MTA Chairman Peter Kalikow to thank him for his leadership role in improving MTA service in the wake of the World Trade Center disaster. Primary among these improvements was the adoption of a shorter, more convenient web address for the MTA, [www.mta.info](http://www.mta.info). Chairman Kalikow had the address changed when he learned that the website was receiving up to 10 million hits a day from riders and news outlets eager to be apprised of emergency service information. The old address, [www.mta.nyc.ny.us](http://www.mta.nyc.ny.us), was found by most

to be cumbersome and difficult to remember. Ms. Dolinsky also thanked Chairman Kalikow for directing that the M9 bus be extended to southern Battery Park City, an area that lost most bus and subway service on September 11.

#### ***Commuter Councils Seek TransitChek Debit Card for Use in New Ticket Vending Machines***

In December, the LIRRCC and MNRCC expressed interest in the creation of a debit card-type medium for distributing TransitChek commuter benefits. Both the LIRR and Metro-North will receive new-technology Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs) in 2002. A TransitChek debit card would allow commuters the convenience of purchasing monthly tickets and MetroCards directly from a TVM without first having to cash in a paper TransitChek voucher at a ticket window. Transit Center, the administrator of TransitChek commuter benefits in the New York area, informed the Councils that a debit card is indeed currently being explored for use in the new TVMs.

#### ***Executive Director Testifies at State Assembly Hearing on Rebuilding Downtown***

In December, Executive Director Beverly Dolinsky submitted testimony to the New York State Assembly at a hearing on rebuilding Lower Manhattan. Ms. Dolinsky emphasized the need for a crosstown pedestrian link between the World Financial Center and the Fulton Street subway complex, also to connect with rebuilt 1/9 subway and PATH stations. Ms. Dolinsky also called for a staged regional integration of MetroCard and increased off-peak commuter rail service, including federal funds for a pilot program to shorten weekend commuter rail headways.

#### ***PCAC Considers Alternate Plan for LIRR East Side Access***

During the quarter, members received a staff analysis of the Apple Corridor plan, an idea of community transit advocate George Haikalis to operate LIRR service into the upper level of Grand Central Terminal. The current LIRR East Side Access Project calls for the construction of a new, deep-level terminal for LIRR trains beneath the existing lower level of GCT, but Mr. Haikalis believes his plan would be considerably more economical to build. While that may be, the analysis pointed out that anything but a deep-level right-of-way for the LIRR would be fraught with costly construction impacts to Metro-North and surface buildings and streets. It is also unlikely that Metro-North could agree to such a plan – it is projected that by 2020 the railroad will need the full capacity of the existing upper and lower levels of GCT to deal with increased ridership. Mr. Haikalis originally presented his plan to the PCAC in September.

#### ***New Membership Roster Published***

In December, the PCAC published its first comprehensive membership roster. The roster offers biographical and appointment details for all current Council members. The roster is available on the PCAC website in PDF format. A printed version is available upon request.

#### **LIRRCC**

##### ***Council Representative Resigns from MTA Board***

In November, LIRRCC representative Lawrence Silverman resigned from the MTA Board. A former LIRRCC Chair, Mr. Silverman's term on the Board officially expired on January 1, 2001.

However, he was allowed by the MTA to continue to serve while the Council awaited Gubernatorial and Senate approval of a new Board representative. Mr. Silverman decided to step down for personal reasons prior to the completion of the approval process.

***2001 LIRR Report Card Results Show Mixed but Positive Picture of Improvement***

In October, the Council released the results of its 2001 LIRR Report Card rider survey. For the second year in a row, riders gave the railroad an overall grade of C+. The sweeping improvements in grade witnessed in 2000 did not reappear, with most grade changes being slight declines, instead.

However, more riders than ever told the Council that they thought railroad service was getting better, including the vast majority of diesel-branch riders surveyed. Equally notable, air conditioning problems, one of the biggest complaints to appear on the Report Card in past years, dropped out of the list of riders top-10 most-wanted improvements. The Council recognizes sweeping improvements made in air-conditioning maintenance practices under the tenure of LIRR President Ken Bauer.

This year, riders also indicated that adequate Amtrak funding for fire and life-safety improvements in the East River tunnels is a top priority, and that parking, much of which is municipally owned, and on-time performance remain key problems.

***IssueWatch Debuts, Council's First Regular E-mail Report to Media***

In December, the Council published the inaugural installment of **IssueWatch**, its

first-ever monthly status report. Available exclusively via the Council's electronic mailing list, each month **IssueWatch** will discuss recent Council action on the topics most important to LIRR commuters. **IssueWatch** grew from the Council's decision earlier in the year for members to adopt and monitor issue areas of concern to riders.

Among the items included in December's **IssueWatch** were an update on the status of federal emergency funding bills that would provide for fire and life-safety improvements in the East River tunnels, the Council's monitoring of post-September 11 security railroad issues, diesel fleet technical glitches discussed by the Council at the MTA Board Long Island Committee, and a call by the Council for municipalities to eliminate resident-only parking restrictions.

**IssueWatch** is geared directly to Long Island news media but is available to all. To subscribe, email the Council at [mail@lirrcc.org](mailto:mail@lirrcc.org).

***LIRR President Ken Bauer Attends December Meeting to Greet New Members***

LIRR President Ken Bauer attended the Council's meeting in December to greet the Council's newest members. Mr. Bauer spoke on his experiences as President over the past two years and discussed service and planning issues.

***Council Joins with Long Island Progressive Coalition to Oppose Long Island Transportation Plan 2000***

In December, the Council decided to formally oppose the recommendations of the Long Island Transportation Plan 2000 study. This followed a November discussion with Lisa Tyson, Associate

Director of the Long Island Progressive Coalition, regarding the plan's recommendations. The plan calls for developing a costly system of expressway and parkway buses that would mimic existing LIRR and local bus routes, likely robbing funding resources from existing public transit agencies in Nassau and Suffolk Counties. The plan also has no hope of relieving traffic congestion because it does not address land-use issues. The Council wrote to the study team expressing its opposition and asking that the plan be sent back to the drawing board for revised recommendations, based on land-use concerns, to be explored.

***LIRRCC, NYCTRC Send Joint Letter to LIRR and NYC Transit on Penn Station Crowding Issues***

In October, the LIRRCC and NYCTRC jointly signed a letter to the LIRR and NYC Transit regarding crowding issues in Penn Station. Members of both Councils have become aware of a growing pedestrian flow problem at the main escalator entrance to the LIRR concourse, adjacent to the fare-control area for the west side IRT subway. Lines for the subway booth, MetroCard Vending Machines (MVMs), and a newsstand compete for limited space with thousands of commuters transferring between railroad and subway or entering and exiting the station.

In November, both agencies responded, acknowledging the problem and committing to address it. NYC Transit is considering a suggestion made by the Councils to move the station booth and/or MVMs to less problematic locations. The Councils are pleased by the quick response on the part of the MTA agencies.

***Council Member Attends RailTalk Dinner with Ken Bauer***

In November, Council member James McGovern attended a RailTalk dinner with LIRR President Ken Bauer. The popular dinners, bringing together LIRR senior management and Mail & Ride commuters from a given station, have allowed Mr. Bauer to put a more personal face on the railroad's public outreach activities. Mr. McGovern was impressed with the level of attention given to commuters' questions and found the dinner to be a positive experience for those in attendance.

Mr. Bauer has also assented to a request to invite Council members to future dinners so that the Council can keep better informed on commuter issues. Council members would attend as observers only, since the point of the dinners is for riders-at-large to be able to communicate their concerns.

***Railroad Agrees to Post Names and Phone Numbers of Entities Responsible for Parking Lots***

In December, LIRR President Ken Bauer told the Council that the railroad would adopt the Council's suggestion to post the names and phone numbers of the parties responsible for parking facility operation and maintenance. Parking lots and structures are operated and maintained by a variety of entities, including municipalities, municipal parking contractors, and the LIRR's own parking contractors. This makes it difficult for commuters to ascertain whom to contact regarding problems or complaints. Henceforth, contact information for the responsible entity will be posted in every station parking lot and structure.

## MNRCC

### ***Council Says Goodbye to Old Friends, Welcomes New Member***

During the quarter, the Council bid a fond farewell to two longtime members from Westchester County, Ronnie Ackman and Bob Schumacher. Both Ms. Ackman and Mr. Schumacher were replaced by new Gubernatorial appointees.

Ms. Ackman was first appointed to the MNRCC in 1984 and has served as both Chairwoman and Vice-Chair of the PCAC. She was also the first MNRCC representative to the MTA Board from 1995 until the expiration of her term earlier this year. In December, she received a meritorious service award from the PCAC.

Mr. Schumacher was appointed to the MNRCC in 1985. Since his retirement in 1987 from a civil engineering career spanning more than 40 years, he has remained heavily involved in public transportation advocacy. In 2000, he received a meritorious service award from the PCAC.

In October, the Council welcomed Francis Corcoran, appointed to the seat vacated by Ms. Ackman. Mr. Corcoran is Vice President of Business Development for agency securities broker Instinet and is involved in several professional and community organizations. The Council will meet Mr. Schumacher's replacement, John Vonglis, at its January meeting.

### ***Fred Wilkinson Plaque Debuts at Mt. Vernon West***

A plaque in memory of former MNRCC member Fred Wilkinson has finally been

installed at Mount Vernon West. Metro-North agreed in 1999 to the Council's request for a plaque to be placed at that station in recognition of Mr. Wilkinson's longstanding efforts on behalf of commuters, but renovation activities at the station needed to be completed first. The plaque reads:

"In Memoriam – Fred Wilkinson – Devoted Public Servant and longtime Mt. Vernon citizen who worked tirelessly on behalf of public transportation. Member of the Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council from 1981 to 1998. A friend to MTA Metro-North and its customers from the Company's inception as a public-benefit corporation in 1983. Always available to offer advice and guidance to those who needed it. It is to the memory of his work and his support of the work of others that this station is dedicated."

### ***Council Discusses Systemwide Parking Issues with Metro-North***

In November, the Council discussed parking issues with Metro-North Facilities Planning and Parking Director Randall Fleischer. Mr. Fleischer gave a slide presentation summarizing the status of railroad parking projects, and noted that there is still some uncertainty regarding post-September 11 travel and parking patterns. Mr. Fleischer also underscored the fact that Metro-North, like the LIRR, only controls about a third of all the parking spaces at its stations (today numbering more than 33,000), the remainder owned by municipalities that in many cases place restrictions on non-resident parking.

### ***Council Chair Testifies at Hearing on Proposed Woodbury Common Station***

Council Chair Rich Cattagio testified at a public hearing in Orange County regarding Metro-North's plans for a station facility at Woodbury Common. Mr. Cattagio noted both the need for the station and concerns of local residents regarding likely increases in traffic. In order to accommodate growing need, he asked the railroad to expand parking at Harriman while plans for a Woodbury Common station proceed.

### ***Council Requests Park & Ride Pilot Project at Harriman***

The Council recognizes that the success of Rockland County's Tappan ZEEexpress bus rose in response to persistent advertising on the part of Metro-North. In November, the Council wrote to the railroad to request that a similar, pilot Park & Ride bus project be implemented and marketed in Orange County, from Harriman or other existing Metro-North stations. Such a service would help reduce crowding at Hoboken Terminal which worsened tremendously with the destruction of the World Trade Center PATH station. The Council also asked that West-of-Hudson riders not be charged a fare differential when riding from Tarrytown on the Hudson Line.

### ***Council Staff Attends Advisory Committee Meetings for Penn Station Access Study***

In November, Council staff attended meetings of the Technical and Citizens Liaison Committees of the Metro-North Penn Station Access Study. Intermediate service options and station locations were announced, with official materials discussing the alternatives to be released by the beginning of first quarter 2002. The study team will

concentrate analysis efforts primarily on peak and off-peak service to Penn Station on the Hudson and New Haven Lines, with possible station locations at 59th Street in Manhattan and Co-Op City, Hunts Point, and Orchard Beach in the Bronx. However, new stations will only be built if a peak-hour service option is chosen.

### ***GCT Lexington Avenue Door Rehabilitation Back on Track***

Last quarter, Metro-North President Peter Cannito informed the Council that the project to rehabilitate the Lexington Avenue doors in Grand Central Terminal's Graybar Concourse would proceed as planned. Funding for this long-delayed final piece of GCT's revitalization was cut earlier in the year due to budget constraints, but was replaced amid Council protest. The Council recently learned that contractor bids for the work came in above what Metro-North had anticipated to spend. However, at the MTA Board table this quarter, Mr. Cannito assured the Board that the project will proceed as planned.

### ***Railroad Works to Correct Announcement Problems on Old ACMU 1100 Electric Fleet***

Since 2000, the Council has closely monitored announcement problems on the railroad's aged ACMU 1100 electric fleet. Public-address system outages have plagued the fleet, and when they occur crews seem unwilling to perform walk-through announcements as required by railroad policy. During the quarter, the railroad examined the possibility of installing a wireless public-address system, but the idea was found infeasible. Instead, comprehensive repairs have been made to the hard-wired connections between railcars that the railroad hopes will last until the cars

can be retired in 2004. Both the railroad and the Council will be watching to see if the repairs prove successful.

## NYCTRC

### ***Council Report Suggests Reopening Closed Subway Entrances with High Entry/Exit Turnstiles***

In November, the Council released a report suggesting that Transit further explore options to reopen long-sealed subway entrances by installing unmanned High Entry/Exit Turnstiles (HEETs) and MetroCard Vending Machines (MVMs). The report was the result of a summer survey of closed entrances included on a list provided to the Council by NYC Transit. In response, the agency agreed to consider the Council's suggestions and install HEETs where feasible. The Council notes that prior to the release of the report, Transit reopened some entrances using HEETs.

The report, **Reopening Closed Subway Entrances Using High Entry/Exit Turnstiles**, is available in PDF format on the PCAC website.

### ***Council Discusses September 11 Issues with NYC Transit, Offers Suggestions***

At its regular meetings during the quarter, the Council discussed issues related to September 11 with NYC Transit officials. In October, Mysore Nagaraja, NYC Transit Senior Vice-President – Capital Program Management, spoke on the disaster's physical and capital impacts to the transit system. In November, Larry Gould, Acting Senior Director – Operations Planning, discussed Transit's immediate and longer-term

service-planning in response to the disaster.

The Council also wrote to NYC Transit offering suggestions to improve service, including an extension of the M9 bus to southern Battery Park City, implementation of number 5 subway service to the outer loop track at South Ferry station, and the provision of unlimited two-hour transfers for Pay-Per-Ride MetroCard users. The Council also asked for One-Day Fun Pass sales to be implemented at station booths and for Transit to better coordinate with NYCDOT bus operators during service disruptions and security alerts.

Shortly after the Council's letters, MTA Chairman Peter Kalikow announced the extension of the M9 bus for the benefit of southern Battery Park City residents. At the same time, Mr. Kalikow also announced the MTA's new web address (**[www.mta.info](http://www.mta.info)**). The Council issued a press release to thank Mr. Kalikow for these improvements. A shorter, more convenient MTA web address had been sought by the Council for two years.

The Council feels that acceptance of customer e-mail would be the logical next step. All other major U.S. transit agencies have communicated electronically with customers for several years.

### ***Council Staff Attend Latest Round of Second Avenue Subway Study Meetings***

In November, Executive Director Beverly Dolinsky attended a Technical Advisory Committee meeting of NYC Transit's Second Avenue Subway Study. The Federal Transit Administration has approved the commencement of Preliminary

Engineering (P.E.) prior to the completion of the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the full-build subway and an engineering consultant has been approved by the MTA Board. Over the past few months, the study team has consulted with community stakeholders regarding possible station sites and new Lower East Side and Lower Manhattan routing alternatives. The study team noted that the MTA intends to construct the subway in such a way that future extensions into the Bronx and Brooklyn will be maintained as feasible.

Also in November, Associate Director Mike Doyle attended a meeting of Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields' Manhattan Second Avenue Subway Task Force. The Borough President's staff said that Ms. Fields supports the new, full-build plan. They also registered a disagreement with some community interests who have decried Transit's decision to redo engineering plans originally done for the 1970s version of the subway. The Borough President's staff noted that the city, its transit needs, and tunneling technology have all changed fundamentally in the last 30 years, making adherence to 1970s-era plans a fruitless idea.

#### ***Council Hears from Access-A-Ride Program Head***

In December, Patricia O'Brien, Department of Buses Vice-President in charge of Paratransit, and Howard

Ende, who will assume responsibility for Paratransit in 2002, discussed the program with the Council. Throughout the quarter, the Council monitored several complaints regarding the program that had been brought to Council members by Paratransit customers. The Council raised these and other issues with Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Ende, who acknowledged moderate problems as the Paratransit program ramps up to increased service and improved scheduling planned for 2002.

#### ***Council Considers Supporting Community Push for a Brooklyn Transit Agenda***

In October and again in December, the Council heard from Carolyn Konheim, a principal of transportation planning consultancy Konheim & Ketcham, regarding the creation of a transit agenda for Brooklyn. Ms. Konheim, working with Community Consulting Services, presented to the Council a draft report recommending a variety of low- and moderate-cost improvements to bus and subway service in Brooklyn. In January, the Council will consider supporting the agenda, including the possible sponsorship of a Brooklyn Transit forum to discuss the agenda's recommendations with the public.

**About Us**

The PCAC is the coordinating body and funding mechanism for the three riders councils created by the New York State Legislature in 1981: the Long Island Rail Road Commuters Council (LIRRCC); the Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council (MNRCC); and the New York City Transit Riders Council (NYCTRC). The Councils were created to give users of MTA public transportation services a say in the formulation and implementation of MTA policy and to hold the MTA Board and management accountable to riders.

To learn more about us, or to download reports and documents, including our **Frequently Asked Questions** pamphlet and documents noted in this Quarterly Report, visit our homepage, [www.pcac.org](http://www.pcac.org).

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