

Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the Metropolitan
Transportation Authority

2002 ANNUAL REPORT

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

PCAC

New Officers and Staff Changes. In 2002, PCAC welcomed new representatives for two of its three nonvoting Council positions on the MTA Board. LIRRCC's James McGovern and NYCTRC's Andrew Albert were appointed by Governor George Pataki and confirmed by the New York State Senate in March and June to replace Lawrence Silverman (LIRRCC) and Beverly Dolinsky (NYCTRC), whose terms expired in 2001. Ronnie Ackman (MNRCC) will continue to serve on the MTA Board until PCAC Chair and MNRCC member James Blair's nomination is confirmed.

In January, PCAC mourned the sudden loss of PCAC Executive Committee and NYCTRC Executive Committee member Dr. Stephen Dobrow. The sole remaining member of the original PCAC, Dr. Dobrow's loss was a blow to the PCAC, NYCTRC and for everyone involved in public transportation.

After four years with PCAC, Associate Director Michael Doyle accepted a position at the consulting firm of Edwards and Kelcey. The PCAC welcomed new staff members Associate Director Katherine Brower and Transportation Planner Ellyn Shannon.

Lower Manhattan. In 2002, PCAC monitored activities of civic, government, and private groups involved in rebuilding transportation in lower Manhattan. In March, Executive Director Beverly Dolinsky was appointed to serve on the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation's (LMDC) Transportation and Commuters Advisory Council. Later that month, PCAC staff testified at the New York City Council Committee on Transportation's Hearing on the Future of Transportation in Lower Manhattan advocating for rebuilding the 1/9 Line, Cortlandt Street Station and PATH, and integrated regional MetroCard use for PATH, LIRR, MNR and NJ Transit.

In July, Executive Director Beverly Dolinsky, PCAC staff, and members attended the "Listening to the City" public meeting organized by the Civic Alliance to

discuss the six concept plans developed under the auspices of the LMDC and the Port Authority. In September, the PCAC Standing Committee on Rebuilding Downtown discussed proposed transportation plans and recommended that the MTA undertake an origin-destination study to ascertain how many LIRR customers would use a one-seat ride to lower Manhattan.

In October, Executive Director Beverly Dolinsky testified at the NYS Assembly's Public Hearing on Transportation and Utilities Infrastructure in Lower Manhattan One Year After September 11, 2001. Ms. Dolinsky supported the MTA and Port Authority plans to build an east-west underground connection between the WFC and the Fulton Street complex, and the MTA's proposals to improve the Fulton Street/Broadway-Nassau and the South Ferry stations. She stressed the importance of the MTA's East Side Access and Second Avenue Subway expansion projects, questioned the need for a commuter rail link to downtown, and opposed depressing West Street. Ms. Dolinsky encouraged the MTA to work with Brookfield Properties to explore implementing a J or Z super express subway to Jamaica as an alternative to a LIRR commuter rail link and a fast ride to JFK via a special A line express connection to the Air Train at Howard Beach.

Issue and Advocacy Highlights:

**Opportunities for Riders to Voice Concerns.* In February, the PCAC Councils held their annual President's Forums where riders expressed comments, concerns and questions to LIRR President Kenneth Bauer, MNR President Peter Cannito, and NYC Transit President Lawrence Reuter. The NYCTRC also held two forums for bus riders – in May and November – with Millard Seay, NYC Transit senior vice president-Buses and senior bus managers, NYC DOT and NYPD officials. The May forum was held in the Bronx; the November forum was held in Manhattan.

** Creation of a "City-Ticket".* In May, the PCAC urged MTA Chairman Peter Kalikow to create a LIRR and MNR "City Ticket" to reduce the price of weekday off peak and reverse commute trips within NYC. The fare would be priced according to the prevailing transit fare or the prevailing transit fare with a small premium. The "City Ticket" would allow customers, particularly in areas not well served by New York City Transit, to use the best mode of transportation to get to their City destination.

** Promoting PCAC's Work.* In August, PCAC Executive Director Beverly Dolinsky was featured in a New York Times Public Lives column. The article discussed Ms. Dolinsky's role as the riders' advocate on the MTA Board and her strategies to effectuate change at the helm of the PCAC. In November, Ms. Dolinsky spoke about Transit's operating budget, the expenses and subsidies and different ways of bridging a deficit in a panel at the New School entitled, Mass Transit Fare Increase: Fair or Foul? In December, Ms. Dolinsky discussed how and why the

MTA was created and responded to call in questions about the organization on National Public Radio's "Brian Lehrer Show".

* *Proposed MTA Restructuring.* In November, the LIRRCC and MNRCC met jointly to discuss the proposed MTA restructuring. The Councils are very concerned about how this will work and requested information about the MTA's plans from MTA Chairman Peter Kalikow.

* *Reducing Parking Demand at MTA Railroad Stations.* The PCAC urged the MTA to give higher priority to the use of shuttle bus services to reduce parking demand at the MTA railroads in a December report, *You've Got Connections! Increasing Shuttle Bus Services to the MTA Railroads.*

LIRRCC

New Officers and Members. The LIRRCC began the year by electing Barbara Josepher as Chair and Gerard Bringmann as Vice Chair. During 2002, members said a fond farewell to Caesar Malaga, Jon Pessah, and 15-year member Martin Meise.

Issue and Advocacy Highlights:

* *Penn Station Track Escalator Problems.* The Council followed up with LIRR management regarding problems with off-or reverse-peak direction escalators during peak hours at Penn Station Tracks 13/14, 15/16 and 17.

* *Passenger Safety Concerns.* Members focused on the lack of police patrols in the 7th and 8th Avenue corridors at Penn Station, management of construction at Massapequa, and the status of providing a pedestrian overpass at Bethpage. In July, the LIRRCC and the NYCTRC requested that the MTA widen a narrow staircase and other projects to improve pedestrian flow on the downtown local 1 line platform at Penn Station.

* *Position on LITP 2000.* After meeting with Parsons Brinckerhoff and other representatives about the Long Island Transportation Plan 2000, the Council took a position against the plan. Members felt the plan lacked adequate consideration of land use, opportunities to use the LIRR and how it would be funded.

* *Penn Station Fire and Life Safety Manager.* The Council urged David Gunn, President and CEO of Amtrak, to fill this important position at Penn Station as soon as possible. Mr. Gunn filled the position in November.

* *New M7 Rolling Stock.* In August, LIRRCC and MNRCC members toured the new M7 cars at the LIRR Hillside Maintenance Shop. The cars incorporate

LIRRCC suggestions, such as aisle handholds, headrests across three seats and recessed coat hooks. LIRRCC Chair Barbara Josepher was quoted in two articles about the new cars.

* *LIRR Report Card*. In November, the Council released its annual LIRR rider survey of LIRR service and conditions. In the report, *The Long Island Rail Road Report Card 2002*, riders gave railroad service a grade of C+ overall. Although the letter grade remained the same as 2001, the numerical score indicated a statistically significant improvement. The Council urged the LIRR to take bolder steps to solve many of the identified service problems in the short-term. Long Island Newsday ran an extensive article on the report and the story was carried on News 12 and ABC TV.

Suggestions Implemented. The LIRR installed a new monitor with departure / arrival information in the 34th Street entrance corridor at Penn Station. Name and contact information for the entities responsible for LIRR station parking lots were posted at all LIRR stations. Police Emergency telephone numbers were changed on LIRR train schedules to ensure a more efficient MTA response.

MNRCC

New Officers and Members. In August, Richard Cataggio was re-elected as Chair and Francis Corcoran was elected as Vice Chair. The Council welcomed back former MNRCC member Stephen Lofthouse, who resigned in 1985 to work for Metro-North as Manager - West of Hudson Services. During the year, the MNRCC said a fond farewell to 18-year member George Begany, and recent member John Vonglis.

Issue and Advocacy Highlights:

* *Seat Replacement and On-Board Maintenance*. In April, members met with MNR management and repair shop staff to discuss seat replacement policies and to tour the seat upholstery shop. During the year, concerns were also raised about the lack of on-board maintenance cards to facilitate car maintenance activities.

* *MNR Rider Communication*. During the year, members focused on improving passenger cell phone courtesy and MNR's customer communication about maintenance and capital projects affecting service, such as short car trains and the delayed delivery of the new Comet V cars on the Pascack Valley and Port Jervis Lines.

* *Station Parking and New Station Locations*. During the year, members suggested an interim solution to President Cannito for Harriman station's lack of parking, monitored progress of a proposed stop at Schunemunk Mountain, and

participated in a December meeting about the Environmental Impact Statement for a new station at Woodbury Common.

* *Grand Central Terminal (GCT)*. The Council continued to be concerned about the impact of LIRR's East Side Access on MNR customers, improvements for low vision customers, and MNR's efforts to replace the Lexington Avenue entrance doors to aid pedestrian flow.

Suggestions Implemented. In response to the Council's continued concern about cell phone courtesy, MNR required conductors to make announcements about cell phone courtesy on every train. To assist visually impaired customers, new tactile signs with Braille and raised letters were installed on the first column at all entrances to platforms at Grand Central Terminal.

NYCTRC

New Officers and Members. In June, NYCTRC re-elected Andrew Albert as Chair and elected William Guild as Vice Chair. In January, the Council mourned the loss of Dr. Stephen Dobrow who generously shared his vast knowledge of transportation systems. During 2002 the Council welcomed new member Toya Williford and bade farewell to 16-year member Alice Paul.

Issue and Advocacy Highlights:

* *Bus Issues*. Members met with Millard Seay, NYC Transit senior vice president-Buses in January to discuss bus issues including articulated buses. During the year, members evaluated new route signage visibility and followed up on driver courtesy, stop and rear door announcements; bus bunching, notices and stopping policies along diverted routes.

* *Subway Signage*. The Council evaluated the accuracy, consistency, clarity and placement of subway signage, recommending systemwide improvements in a September report, *Troubling Signs: A Signage Survey of the New York City Subway System*.

* *"Motorists' Choice" Plan*. The Council urged Mayor Bloomberg to support the adoption of a "motorists' choice" plan. Members stressed the need to examine potential negative impacts of tolling the East River bridges on neighborhoods, to dedicate revenues generated to transit operating and capital budgets, and to revise allocations of the MTA Bridges and Tunnels surplus to support mass transit.

* *Subway Car Announcements*. The Council urged NYC Transit to update subway car announcement software to reflect service changes, require conductors to make announcements to avoid passenger confusion, and place corrective stickers on strip maps in subway cars.

* *Subway System Crowd Control.* The Council met and followed up with NYC Transit regarding procedures and initiatives for crowd control on subway platforms and escalators.

* *NYC's Franchised Private Bus Lines.* NYCTRC urged Mayor Bloomberg to continue to provide City subsidies to maintain current levels of service and maintenance should the MTA take over operation of the franchised private bus lines. The Council is adamant that the MTA's takeover be at no cost to bus and subway riders.

* *Lower Manhattan Transportation.* Members met with Brookfield Properties to discuss their proposal to bring LIRR commuters and Queens residents into Lower Manhattan. The Council's alternate proposals included a J or Z super express subway to Jamaica and an A line express to the Air Train at Howard Beach.

Suggestions Implemented. In response to the NYCTRC's report on subway signage, 21 out of 31 sign problems were corrected. Early in 2003, NYC Transit will undertake a complete review and evaluation of subway station signage including globe policy. Due to confusion caused by pre-recorded announcements, NYC Transit agreed to use stickers to correct the R142 / 142A electronic strip maps in cars on the 2, 4, 5, and 6 lines.

Reports

Troubling Signs: A Signage Survey of the New York City Subway System (September, NYCTRC)

2002 LIRR Report Card Rider Survey Report (November, LIRRCC)

You've Got Connections! Increasing Shuttle Bus Services Connecting Commuters to the MTA Railroads (December, PCAC)

[All documents listed are in PDF format.]