

**Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the Metropolitan
Transportation Authority**

2001 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 June 2001, PCAC elected new officers to serve a two-year term. James F. Blair of MNRCC is the new Chair, Stephen F. Wilder of NYCTRC is First Vice Chair, and Barbara Josepher of LIRRCC is Second Vice Chair.

One of Chair Jim Blair's first initiatives was the establishment of a PCAC Regional Service and Planning Subcommittee that will address public transportation issues that include more than one of the MTA operating agencies.

January 1, 2001 marked the expiration of the terms of the three nonvoting Council representatives on the MTA Board: Lawrence Silverman of LIRRCC, Ronnie Ackman of MNRCC, and Beverly Dolinsky of NYCTRC. However, they continue to serve until replacements are appointed by Governor George E. Pataki and confirmed by the New York State Senate. The new representatives are James McGovern, LIRRCC; Richard Cataggio, MNRCC; and Andrew Albert, NYCTRC.

PCAC Transportation Planner Joshua Schank accepted a new position with the USDOT Office of the Inspector General in October. PCAC welcomed back a former Transportation Planner, Karyl Berger, as Research Associate.

New MTA Chairman. In March, PCAC commended outgoing MTA Chairman E. Virgil Conway and welcomed the new chairman, Peter S. Kalikow. Chairman Conway was commended for the many improvements for riders during his tenure, including the implementation of innovative fare policies and the restoration of Grand Central Terminal. The PCAC Executive Committee met with Chairman Kalikow to outline the priorities and concerns of the three Councils. The Committee gave strong praise to the new chairman for his commitment to the completion of East Side Access and the Second Avenue Subway. PCAC also expressed appreciation for the action taken to adopt a shorter, more convenient MTA web address, www.mta.info. This was a May 2000 PCAC recommendation.

Advocacy Highlights. PCAC demonstrated its continued commitment to improving regional public transportation in 2001. In April, PCAC released a major research report, *Right of Passage: Reducing Barriers to the Use of Public Transportation in the MTA Region*. The report makes recommendations for improved signage at intermodal transfers and implementation of "kiss-and-ride" passenger drop-off locations at commuter rail stations.

Executive Director Beverly Dolinsky spoke on behalf of PCAC at two prestigious gatherings. At a panel discussion convened for the David Rockefeller Fellows Program she brought attention to issues that are important to riders in addressing the topic "Current Transportation Projects and Initiatives – How to Move Transportation Forward." She emphasized the need for improved real-time communications to passengers and the enormous annual capital and operating needs of our transportation system. A second forum, convened by the NYU Center for Excellence in New York City Governance, addressed development issues and possibilities for moving the Second Avenue Subway forward. Ms. Dolinsky spoke about the funding challenges and likely solutions. The other panelists were former MTA Chairman Richard Ravitch and NYCDOT Commissioner Iris Weinshall.

PCAC also contributed to the improvement of mass transit in London, England, in 2001. The Greater London Authority (GLA) sent delegates of the Assembly — the equivalent of the New York City Council — to meet with the PCAC to get a more in-depth understanding of key issues that affect mass transit customers and to identify relevant measures of service quality for Londoners. PCAC recommended performance, safety, and passenger environment measures as well as loading guidelines to reduce overcrowding.

25th Anniversary. At the end of the year, PCAC released a retrospective report, *Track Record: 25 Years of the PCAC*. It traces the history of PCAC, highlighting major accomplishments and ending with the challenges that await us in the next quarter century.

LIRRCC

New Officers and Members. Barbara Josepher was elected LIRRCC Chair in July. New members welcomed to the Council in 2001 were Gerard Bringmann of Patchogue, Gary Babyatzky of Massapequa, James McGovern of Manhasset, John Pessah of Smithtown, Patricia Santosus of Mineola, and Jerome Shagam of Rockville Centre. The Council said a fond farewell to Chair Sandra Alayo, Eleanor Kolchin, W. Michael Shaffer, and Lawrence H. Silverman.

Advocacy Highlights. The safety of the East River tunnels was a major concern due to a report issued by the USDOT Inspector General noting insufficient evacuation, ventilation, and communications systems in the tunnels. The Council wrote to President George W. Bush and the Long Island congressional delegation stressing the need for funding to enable Amtrak to make the

necessary repairs. At a hearing in March, the Council submitted testimony imploring Congress to do everything in its power to ensure the safety of riders who pass through the tunnels every day.

Crowding at Penn Station, the M-7 car procurement, ticket vending machines, diesel fleet technical glitches, more service, schedules, and East Side Access were among the other major issues LIRRCC addressed during 2001.

Suggestions Implemented. Since 1998 the Council had pressured the LIRR to implement a campaign asking customers to be more courteous to one another, particularly in regard to loud cellular phone conversations. Respondents to the 1999 Report Card survey overwhelmingly indicated the desire for such a campaign. In March, the LIRR responded with a cell phone courtesy campaign and a special brochure reminding riders to "talk low, so no one will know." The brochure included a special "thank you" from the Council.

Parking, a key problem for riders, received a great deal of attention from the Council in 2001. It is difficult for commuters to know who to contact with problems or complaints since so many different entities are in charge of parking facility operation and maintenance. Council members suggested to Long Island Rail Road President Kenneth Bauer that the LIRR post the names and telephone numbers of the responsible parties. Mr. Bauer was receptive to the suggestion and said that the LIRR would post this information in every parking lot and structure.

2001 Report Card. In October, the Council released the results of the 2001 LIRR Report Card. Riders gave the LIRR an overall grade of C+ for the second year in a row. More riders than ever said they think the LIRR is getting better. Air conditioning problems, a frequent complaint for many years, dropped out of the top 10 most wanted improvements. Riders indicated that adequate funding for fire and life safety improvements in the East River tunnels was a high priority.

MNRCC

Membership Changes. In 2001 the Council welcomed new members Dennis Baum of Mt. Kisco, Francis Corcoran of Bedford Corners, and John Vonglis of New Rochelle. Two long-time Westchester representatives, Ronnie Ackman and Robert Schumacher were replaced on the Council. Ronnie Ackman was appointed to the MNRCC in 1984. During her tenure, Ms. Ackman served in many executive positions on the PCAC and MNRCC and became the Council's first representative on the MTA Board. Mr. Schumacher, who was appointed to the Council in 1985, continually advocated for improved public transportation in the MTA region.

The MNRCC and PCAC mourned the passing of George Zobelein who represented Metro-North's Rockland County riders. He was a strong advocate for all commuters and, in particular, West-of-Hudson riders.

Advocacy Highlights. Since 2000, the Council has closely monitored announcement problems on the railroad's aged ACMU 1100 electric fleet. In 2001, Metro-North Railroad examined the possibility of installing a wireless public address system, but this solution was deemed infeasible. Instead, comprehensive repairs were made to the hardwired connections between the railcars with the hope of solving the problem until the cars can be retired in 2004.

Throughout the year the Council addressed system-wide parking issues. Chair Rich Cataggio was persistent in his demand for expanded parking for the Harriman Station. He also testified at a hearing on a proposed Woodbury Common station, noting the need for the station and the concerns of local residents about increased traffic.

Another key issue for the Council in 2001 was the importance of not delaying the rehabilitation of Grand Central Terminal's Lexington Avenue entrance doors because of budget constraints. Members felt strongly that this project merited priority status because leaving broken, decrepit doors at a public entrance to the wonderfully restored Terminal sends a poor message to the public.

Suggestions Implemented. Over the course of the year, Metro-North implemented several Council suggestions, including new station signage standards to ensure the illumination of every station identification sign so that riders can see them clearly after dark. MNR changed the typeface of its in-house published schedules making them easier for customers to read. The railroad publicly thanked the Council for this recommendation. And at the end of the year, at the Council's request, MNR installed warning stripes on the glass panels at the newly renovated White Plains station to prevent commuters from bumping into them.

NYCTRC

Impact of September 11. The Council sent a letter to New York City Transit President Lawrence Reuter thanking employees for their efforts to keep the subway and bus system running in the wake of the World Trade Center disaster. The impact of the events of September 11 on the transit system was a major focus of the Council. Letters were sent suggesting improvements to the emergency service plan, such as an extension of the M9 bus to Battery Park City, and stressing the need to widely disseminate service notices and post them as soon as changes were made. New York City Transit extended the M9 route immediately.

Advocacy Highlights. The Council released a report, Reopening Closed Subway Entrances Using High Entry/Exit Turnstiles (HEETs), recommending that Transit explore options to reopen closed subway entrances by installing HEETs and MetroCard Vending Machines. The report was the result of a survey of closed entrances by Council members and staff. Transit agreed to consider the Council's suggestions and install HEETs where feasible.

Service related issues remained high on the Council's agenda throughout the year. The Council weighed in on Transit's Manhattan Bridge service reroutes and the controversial plans for the opening of the 63rd Street tunnel. Worried about weekend W service terminating at Pacific Street, members and staff met with NYC Transit Operations Planning staff. The Council learned that this service plan allows Transit to complete a number of signal and track work projects in Brooklyn and Manhattan. Members were assured that other through services would remain available on weekends, including the new Brighton line Q local. The Council testified in support of the moving walkway at Court Square and recommended that the new V service run frequently and on weekends.

During the year, the Council heard from customers at its Annual Subway and Bus Forums and from Transit staff on many issues including the Stillwell Avenue Rehabilitation Project and related service plan, the Second Avenue Subway project, the operating budget, planning for service diversions, subway noise, September 11th, and Access-A-Ride.

Suggestions Implemented. In response to three years of repeated complaints by the Council about difficult to understand and poorly placed service diversion notices, NYC Transit convened a multi-departmental task force in 2001 to address the problems. Plans include new Customer Information Center bulletin boards, permanent frames on platform columns to hold diversion notices and strip maps, the implementation of a toll-free diversion information number from all in-system pay telephones, a weekly diversion summary for Transit staff, and improvements to the MTA Web site.

Thanks to the efforts of Executive Director Beverly Dolinsky, the Mail&Ride brochure for Reduced-Fare MetroCard customers was made more user-friendly. Transit also agreed to a request by Ms. Dolinsky to install posters in subway cars publicizing the hotline for riders to find out about escalator and elevator breakdowns.

Reports

Right of Passage: Reducing Barriers to the Use of Public Transportation in the MTA Region (April, PCAC)

2001 LIRR Report Card Rider Survey Report (October, LIRRCC)

Reopening Closed Subway Entrances Using High Entry/Exit Turnstiles
(November, NYCTRC)

[All documents listed are available online in PDF format from the PCAC website at www.pcac.org.]