

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

2004 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 2004, Associate Director Katherine Brower left the PCAC to pursue a graduate degree in landscape architecture and William Henderson joined the staff as Associate Director. In September 2004, Gerard P. Bringmann was elected First Vice Chair, replacing Stephen F. Wilder. Toya Williford was elected Second Vice Chair. In November, Andrew Albert began his term as the PCAC's full representative to the MTA Board at the conclusion of James L. McGovern's eighteen-month rotation.

Planning for the Future. In July 2004, Executive Director Beverly Dolinsky testified before the New York State Advisory Panel on Transportation Policy for 2025 concerning future transportation needs and before the MTA Board on the need for a safe and reliable downstate transportation system. Ms. Dolinsky also testified several times before the MTA Finance Committee and MTA Board on the proposed 2005-2009 MTA Capital Program.

Extending CityTicket. The MTA Board voted in October to continue the CityTicket program as a pilot for 2005. The CityTicket program, proposed by the PCAC in 2001 and initiated in January 2004, allows weekend riders to travel on commuter railroads within New York City for \$2.50. With the 2005 MTA fare increases, the CityTicket fare will rise to \$3.00. PCAC/MTA Board members James McGovern, James Blair, Andrew Albert, and PCAC Executive Director Beverly Dolinsky are members of a working committee that developed CityTicket.

Encouraging New Technology. In October 2004, the PCAC released its research report, *In Your Pocket: Using Smart Cards for Seamless Travel*. The report reviewed smart card technology, examined the experience of transit agencies in Chicago, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. with smart card fare collection systems, and recommended an implementation path for the MTA. The PCAC hosted a press briefing to discuss the study and answer questions, which provided an opportunity to explore issues in the report in depth and resulted in very favorable press coverage.

Lower Manhattan Redevelopment. The PCAC monitored the continuing efforts of civic, government, and private groups to rebuild the Lower Manhattan

transportation system and advocated for balanced planning through the Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown New York. In May 2004, Executive Director Beverly Dolinsky testified in favor of reconstructing the South Ferry Station. In June, Associate Director William Henderson testified in favor of rebuilding West Street as a surface street, and Ms. Dolinsky testified in favor of the Fulton Street Transit Center. In November, Ms. Dolinsky testified before the New York City Council Committees on Economic Development and Transportation and the Select Committee on Lower Manhattan in opposition to the JFK Airport Rail Link. The PCAC is part of a consortium of transportation and environmental groups opposing this project. In December, PCAC member and NYCTRC Chair Andrew Albert spoke as a panelist at the Municipal Art Society's Engaging Lower Manhattan briefing series in opposition to the JFK Airport Rail Link.

West Side Redevelopment. The PCAC continues to review proposals for redeveloping the west side of Manhattan. The PCAC presented testimony at three MTA and City hearings on the redevelopment plan in September. While recognizing the potential benefits of redevelopment to the City and region, the PCAC insists that the MTA receive full compensation for property conveyed as part of any redevelopment plan and that the extension of the #7 subway line occur at no cost to the MTA.

MTA Fare Increase. PCAC members and staff testified on the MTA fare increase proposal at five public hearings before the MTA Board in November 2004 and at a public hearing on a proposed increase in the CityTicket fare in December. The PCAC testimony focused on the need for fundamental change in financing mechanisms for the MTA. Also in November, Executive Director Beverly Dolinsky testified before the Assembly Standing Committee on Corporations, Authorities, and Commissions on the structural financial difficulties facing the MTA.

LIRRCC

Passenger Safety Concerns. Over the past year the Council investigated a number of safety issues. The condition of Amtrak's East River tunnels has been a continuing concern; the LIRRCC has worked to speed refurbishment of vital life safety systems in the East River tunnels. In September 2004, an electrical fire in one of the tunnels provided a reminder of the tunnels' vulnerability.

The Council also maintained its dialogue with the LIRR about other safety issues, including trains overshooting platforms or missing stops, storage of hazardous materials, crime and police staffing, emergency information, and pedestrian safety.

Customer Service Issues. The Council addressed a number of issues with LIRR management, including unpublished connection information, the pace of construction on repair and capital improvement projects, inadequate, incomplete, or inaccurate information during service disruptions, and the performance of new

customer message boards. After the Council discussed with LIRR officials plans for commuters during the Republican National Convention, the MTA produced and distributed additional customer information about bus stop and bus service changes.

System Capital Improvements. The LIRRCC supports cost-effective capital improvements that expand passenger capacity and improve the quality of the rider's experience. The Council is a founding member of the Coalition for the LIRR Third Track and continues to speak out on system improvement planning and implementation efforts including the East Side Access project.

Riders Voice Concerns. The LIRRCC held its annual President's Forum in February. LIRR customers raised a number of issues, including the need for additional service, response to winter weather, the status of capital improvements throughout the system, the CityTicket program, and the new M7 cars. LIRR President James Dermody and senior LIRR staff were on hand to receive and respond to customer input.

MTA Fare Increase. In November, LIRRCC members Gerard Bringmann and Patricia Santosus testified before the MTA Board on the proposed fare increase. Associate Director William Henderson presented Mr. Bringmann's statement on the modified MTA Financial Plan proposal at the December MTA Board meeting.

MNRCC

Membership Change. In February 2004, Andrew Forman, the Council's Dutchess County representative, resigned from the MNRCC after five years of service because he is no longer commuting.

Passengers' Safety Concerns. Members expressed concern about a number of passenger safety issues. At its October 2004 meeting, the Council heard from a rider who on September 20 was aboard MNR train #638, which collided with an automobile transport trailer at the Green Lane grade crossing. The Council has requested the findings of all investigations into the accident and will monitor their progress and any lessons learned.

MNR Service. Members raised a number of issues with MNR management, including malfunctioning ticket vending machines, Grand Central Terminal accessibility difficulties, schedule information, and defective train seats. Members consulted with MNR market research personnel in the design of their regular Customer Satisfaction Surveys and of a survey for Secaucus Junction users.

West of Hudson. The opening of New Jersey Transit's Secaucus Junction in late 2003 ushered in a new era for West of Hudson commuters, but anticipated ridership growth has not materialized. Through the year MNRCC members developed and communicated to MNR officials a number of recommendations aimed at improving service and boosting ridership. In December, MNRCC

members met with Metro-North personnel and concerned citizens to discuss strategies for increasing West of Hudson ridership.

Participation in Planning Studies. During the year members continued to review the progress of the I-287/Tappan Zee Bridge Study; in August, the MNRCC heard a report from the Study Manager.

Riders Voice Concerns. Riders raised a number of concerns at the March 2004 President's Forum. Rider questions and issues focused on needs for additional service, station, line, and car maintenance, increasing system capacity, conductor announcements, and financial issues related to service in Connecticut.

MTA Fare Increase/Finances. In November, MNRCC Chair Richard Cataggio testified at the hearing held in White Plains on the MTA's fare proposal. Later in November, MNRCC Board Representative James Blair testified before the Assembly Standing Committee on Corporations, Authorities, and Commissions hearing on the finances of the MTA.

NYCTRC

New Officers and Members. In June 2004, the NYCTRC re-elected Andrew Albert as Chair and William Guild as Vice Chair, and Michael Sinansky, Stephen F. Wilder and Mitzie Wilson to the Executive Committee. In July, John Hunter joined the Council, replacing Stephen F. Wilder. Marisol Halpern replaced Stephen F. Wilder on the Executive Committee in August. David Rohde joined the Council in September and Burton Strauss, Jr. joined the NYCTRC in October.

Celebrating the Subway Centennial. In October 2004, the Council released a brochure commemorating the first one hundred years of the New York City subway. The brochure, which contains ten lists of ten items of note, was originally distributed in printed form but remains viewable on the PCAC website (www.pcac.org).

Evaluating Station Conditions. In August 2004, the NYCTRC reported the results of its survey of subway station conditions in *Hit or Miss: A Survey of New York City Subway Stations*. The survey evaluated the cleanliness, condition, and services provided in fifty stations representing a cross section of the subway system. This effort was undertaken to follow up on a similar survey conducted ten years ago and to assess the efficacy of New York City Transit's Passenger Environment Survey (PES). The report recommends modifying the PES to better reflect customers' perceptions and using the PES as a management tool to improve station conditions. The report generated wide press coverage and was cited by Borough President Adolfo Carrión in his effort to secure improvements to Bronx subway stations.

Bus Issues. Throughout the year members investigated reports of discourteous drivers, inaccurate information on the MTA's telephone travel information line, misleading bus stop signage, dangerous ice and snow conditions at bus stops, MetroCard damage from bus fareboxes, defective bus temperature controls, and disproportionate mixtures of limited stop and local buses. Executive Director Beverly Dolinsky and Associate Director William Henderson participated in several presentations and workshops in November and December regarding the New York City Bus Rapid Transit Study. The Council continued to monitor the MTA takeover of City-subsidized bus lines and to insist that any takeover of the private bus lines be at no cost to bus and subway riders.

Subway Issues. The Council continued to follow up on reports of fare evasion, train delays, inaccurate signage, incomplete or inaccurate station information displays, inadequate conductor announcements, crowded trains, litter and inadequate waste receptacles on platforms, defective public telephones in stations, drawbridge malfunctions, and faulty escalators and elevators. In May 2004, Beverly Dolinsky testified in favor of improvements to the South Ferry Station, and in June she testified in favor of the proposed Fulton Street Transit Center at hearings held to receive comment on the environmental impact statements for these projects.

ADA Compliance. Throughout the year the Council continued to monitor ADA compliance issues and to discuss them with NYC Transit officials. Issues examined included slippery subway platform warning strips, passenger difficulties distinguishing audio tones at turnstiles, escalator problems and systems for notifying station personnel of malfunctioning escalators, confusing and garbled platform and train announcements, and Access-A-Ride service.

Riders Voice Concerns. The annual President's Forum, held in February, was well attended and produced a wealth of comments, questions and complaints for NYC Transit management. Riders' concerns at the forum centered around station maintenance issues, suggestions for changes in subway service, customer information needs, and problems using MetroCards.

MTA Fare Increase/Finances. In April 2004, Executive Director Beverly Dolinsky testified before the New York State Assembly concerning the finances of the MTA. In May, Ms. Dolinsky testified before the New York City Council Committee on Economic Development, insisting that the MTA receive full compensation for its development rights in Downtown Brooklyn. In November, Vice Chair William Guild testified on behalf of the NYCTRC at the MTA fare proposal hearing in Manhattan and Council member Michael Sinansky testified on the proposal at the hearing in Brooklyn.

Reports and Documents

Hit or Miss. . . . A Survey of New York City Subway Stations (August, NYCTRC)

In Your Pocket: Using Smart Cards for Seamless Travel (October, PCAC)

New York City Transit Riders Council Celebrates 100 Years of the New York City Subway (October, NYCTRC)

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