

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

2005 ANNUAL REPORT

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

PCAC

In Memoriam. During 2005 the PCAC mourned the loss of two former longtime members, Alice Paul, who passed away in December 2004, and Stephen F. Wilder, who passed away in October.

New Officers and Staff Changes. The PCAC's Administrative Assistant since 1989, Mary Whaley, retired at the end of 2004. Melissa Narvaez joined the PCAC as Administrative Assistant in January. In June, William K. Guild was elected PCAC Chair, James Blair was elected First Vice Chair, and Gary Babyatzky was elected Second Vice Chair. In August, the Governor signed legislation to reauthorize the non-voting labor and riders' representative positions on the MTA Board until 2008. The state law authorizing these positions was to expire on January 1, 2006. All of the councils recommended that their existing MTA Board representatives continue in their current capacities under the new legislation.

Emergency Communications Study. In August, the PCAC released its research report on emergency communication at the MTA operating agencies, **Ladies and Gentlemen: This Is Not a Drill. . . . A Study of Internal and External Communication Policies.** The report concluded that while the agencies have successfully responded to emergencies in operational terms, there exist major flaws in their internal and external communication practices. The report received extensive media coverage, and PCAC staff testified before the NYC Council Committee on Transportation about its findings. Both the Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North Railroad adopted recommendations made in the report to provide customers with improved alternative service information over the internet for use in the event of a service disruption.

Lower Manhattan Redevelopment. The PCAC monitored the efforts of civic, governmental and private groups to rebuild the Lower Manhattan transportation system through involvement with the Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown New York and the

Fulton Street Transit Center Community Task Force. In April, we received some positive news with the announcement that the West Street Tunnel, which we strongly opposed, would be removed from Downtown redevelopment plans. In July, PCAC members and staff testified in opposition to constructing a direct rail link between Downtown and JFK Airport, stating that its benefits would not begin to approach the cost of the project.

MTA Asset Sales. PCAC members and staff addressed the MTA Board and its committees on numerous occasions to urge that the MTA refuse to accept less than full value in exchange for development rights over the Caemmerer (West Side) and Vanderbilt (Atlantic Avenue) rail yards. The Committee's non-voting representatives on the MTA Board were among the handful of Board members who publicly spoke out against the asset sale proposals and advocated structuring the bidding process to attract additional competitors.

Transportation Bond Act. In November, New York State voters approved the issuance of \$2.9 billion in bonds to finance transportation capital projects, with one-half of the total funding reserved for the MTA. The PCAC hosted a public forum on the Bond Act two weeks before the measure went to the voters, and Executive Director Beverly Dolinsky testified before the New York City Council Committee on Transportation in support of the Bond Act, asking for the Council's help in raising public awareness of the measure.

LIRRCC

New Officers and Members. In January, Sandra Krebelj-Douglas of Suffolk County joined the Council. At the Council's August meeting Gerard Bringmann was elected LIRRCC Chair, and after a tie vote in August, Ms. Krebelj-Douglas was elected Vice Chair at the October meeting. Also in October, Ira Greenberg joined the LIRRCC as the Queens Borough President's representative.

Customer Service Issues. The Council addressed a number of issues with LIRR management, including station and on-board announcements, on-time performance, escalator maintenance, station and car condition, conductor performance, car cleanliness and bathroom servicing, and recycling and refuse disposal. From mid-April through mid-June members conducted a customer communication study, which revealed a need for improved customer communication on approximately 30 percent of trips surveyed. Members traveled to Jamaica in May to meet with LIRR management. They discussed a range of service issues and received a tour of the LIRR Movement Bureau and a briefing on the redesign of the M7 car armrests. At the urging of the Council, the LIRR has

initiated a series of articles in its Keeping Track newsletter that are designed to educate riders about the Rail Road's policies and procedures.

Passenger Safety Concerns. Over the past year the Council continued to follow up on a number of safety concerns. Members continued to press for the prompt improvement of life safety systems in the East River tunnels and for additional federal funding of security initiatives. Members also raised issues of lighting at Jamaica station, police bunching in Penn Station, and on-board communication for hearing-impaired customers with LIRR management.

Riders Voice Concerns. The LIRRCC held its annual President's Forum in March. LIRR customers discussed a number of topics, including the clarity of on-board and station communication, graffiti and security problems, station maintenance and capital improvement needs, scheduling, service frequency, and on-time performance issues, and the current shortfall in the LIRR's pension funds. LIRR President James Dermody and senior LIRR staff were on hand to receive and respond to customer input.

System Capital Improvements. In May, the Council met with State Senator and Capital Program Review Board member Dean Skelos to discuss challenges facing the LIRR. In June, current and former Council members testified at several public hearings in support of the LIRR Main Line Corridor Improvement Project. The Council believes that the addition of a third track and a program of crossing improvements is necessary for the Rail Road to meet changing conditions and travel demand. Members expressed their concerns about delays and cost overruns in recent signal improvement work and heard from LIRR Chief Engineer Brian Finn about the signal program at the Council's November meeting. The LIRRCC also monitored the progress of the East Side Access project and reviewed proposals for using upper level tracks at Grand Central Terminal rather than constructing an additional station space deep under the present facility.

MNRCC

Election and New Member. In May, Richard Cataggio and Francis T. Corcoran were reelected Chair and Vice Chair of the MNRCC. In October, Gerard Kopera from Westchester County joined the MNRCC.

MNR Service. Members raised a number of issues with MNR management including track noise, Ticket Vending Machine problems, water conditions at the North White Plains station, malfunctioning Grand Central Terminal departure status monitors, and the failure of train crews to announce arrival tracks. Members consulted with MNR market

research personnel in the design of the Railroad's regular Customer Satisfaction Surveys, and staff observed several rider focus groups.

Participation in Planning Studies. With the recommendation of six alternatives for further study, the Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 environmental review process entered a new period of activity. In November, the Council heard a presentation from project staff, and the members continue to monitor the study's progress. In June, MNRCC member James Blair testified at a public scoping meeting in favor of expanding and improving parking facilities at the North White Plains station.

Passengers' Safety Concerns. Members continued to review the investigation of the September 20, 2004 Green Lane grade crossing accident. At its February meeting, the Council discussed the accident with Vice President - Operations George Walker, Chief Safety Officer Mark Campbell and Deputy Director - Safety Joe Streany from Metro-North Railroad. Mr. Walker noted that the preferred method of reducing collision hazards at Green Lane is to eliminate the grade crossing in favor of a bridge over the tracks.

Riders Voice Concerns. Riders raised a number of issues at the February President's Forum. Rider questions and concerns focused on the quality and volume of announcements and warning tones, issues surrounding station rehabilitation projects, service and rolling stock quality on the New Haven line, suggestions for alternative service plans and station locations, and a request that MNR consider implementing reduced monthly ticket fares for persons with disabilities.

Rolling Stock. Council staff attended several focus groups held to evaluate the redesign of the M7 car passenger armrests. The redesign was necessary because of frequent clothing damage caused by the original armrests. In July, the Council heard from the consultant team developing design specifications for M8 cars, which are being planned for the New Haven line. Members and guests raised a number of questions and made recommendations about the cars' design.

West of Hudson. The Council discussed a number of issues with MNR management including the condition of rolling stock, snow removal at the Harriman Station, maintenance issues at Pearl River, and the failure of ridership using the Secaucus Transfer station to grow as projected. In November, the MTA Board approved the imposition of parking fees at its West of Hudson lots.

NYCTRC

New Officers and Membership Changes. In May, Jessica Lila Gonzalez joined the Council. In June, the NYCTRC reelected Andrew Albert as Chair and elected Michael Sinansky as Vice Chair; William K. Guild, Marisol Halpern, and Toya Williford were elected to the Executive Committee. Also in June, Mitzie Wilson resigned from the Council because she moved out of state.

ADA Compliance. The Council continued to involve itself with ADA compliance issues and raise them with NYC Transit officials. Issues considered included sound levels of musicians performing in the subways, signage concerns, bus driver announcements, the ADA Key Stations plan, accessibility of subway platforms during construction projects, and Access-A-Ride service. In November, because of the volume of complaints that the Council was receiving, Transportation Planner Ellyn Shannon began a program of twice daily monitoring the NYC Transit hotline that provides elevator and escalator status information for accessible stations.

Bus Issues. Throughout the year the Council investigated reports of discourteous drivers, bus bunching, illegible, inaccurate, and incomplete bus signage, inordinate delays in changing drivers, MetroCard damage from bus fareboxes, inadequate service diversion information, and disproportionate mixtures of limited stop and local buses. Staff participated in the New York City Bus Rapid Transit Study process, which has narrowed the options under consideration to fifteen corridors. The City of New York concluded agreements that will allow the MTA to assume operations of the remaining City-subsidized buses by early 2006. The Council continued to monitor and raise with MTA Bus Company management issues arising as service moves from private to MTA operation.

New Subway Technology. In January, Executive Director Beverly Dolinsky testified before the New York City Council Committee on Transportation supporting the use of Communication Based Train Control (CBTC) technology on the Canarsie (L) line. She stated that CBTC is a proven technology implemented in many systems throughout North America and the world. The PCAC has been on record since 1982 supporting the use of CBTC technology to increase system efficiency.

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

Rules of Conduct. The Council discussed proposed amendments to NYC Transit's Rules of Conduct, with members holding a range of opinions on various provisions. Ultimately, several of the more controversial proposals, including a photography ban and changes to open beverage container rules, were withdrawn prior to MTA Board action. At the urging of NYCTRC Chair Andrew Albert, the MTA Board established a subcommittee to examine ways of ensuring that passengers who can not move between subway cars can communicate with train personnel in emergencies.

Subway Car Route/Destination Sign Survey. The Council conducted a study of the accuracy of subway car destination and route signs throughout December 2004 and January 2005. Members compiled rider's diaries for the two-months period, noting where inaccurate or inadequate information was displayed. Many of the problems appeared to result from failures to change signage at line terminals. The findings of the survey were communicated to NYC Transit management.

Subway Issues. The Council followed up on reports of station graffiti, problematic station and platform signage, malfunctioning platform gap fillers, inadequate and misleading conductor and station announcements, lines having frequent delays, incomplete or inaccurate station information displays, and concerns about the Station Customer Assistant program. In July, the Council held a press conference to call for restoration of 24-hour service at the 145th and 148th Street stations on the 3 line.

Transit Strike. In late December, transit riders endured a three-day strike on all NYC Transit and MTA Bus services, except for former Command Bus Company lines and the Staten Island Railway. The Council maintained its longstanding tradition of not becoming involved in labor-management issues, but urged union and MTA officials to resolve their differences with a minimum of disruption to riders.

Reports and Documents

Ladies and Gentlemen: This Is Not a Drill. . . . A Study of Internal and External Communication Policies (August, PCAC)

What's Happening? Where Are We? When Do We Get There? Results of the 2005 Long Island Rail Road Commuter's Council Customer Communication Survey (August, LIRRCC)

