

**2009 Annual Performance Review
of
The MTA and Its Operating Agencies**

Introduction

The PCAC's 2009 Performance Review marks our third report summarizing the accomplishments and continuing challenges of the MTA and its operating agencies. This report addresses a number of broad themes such as leadership, transparency, organizational structure, service performance, communication, and accessibility. These themes relate to the ability of the MTA and its operating agencies to deliver service effectively to the riders that we represent. While PCAC is vitally concerned about the critical issue of the almost \$800 million operating funding shortfall from Albany, which is part of ongoing dialogues that the PCAC and its Councils maintain with public officials and the MTA operating agencies, this larger issue is outside the scope of this report. The PCAC is encouraged by the MTA leadership's initial steps to make the overall organization more effective and efficient, and we intend our report to complement this effort. At the same time we are well aware that internal efficiencies are not enough to prevent serious damage to the system due to state funding shortfalls.¹

The PCAC recognizes that some of the issues raised in the report are the subject of ongoing work by the MTA and its agencies, the body of this document addresses issues pertaining to the 2009 calendar year. Several related developments from 2010 are included as footnotes to the Review. The PCAC and its Councils are not legislatively mandated to address the operations of MTA Bridges and Tunnels or MTA Long Island Bus; consequently they are not addressed in this document. In addition, it is important to note the MTA operating agencies differ considerably in their roles, complexity, and size, and these factors greatly influence the challenges and accomplishments that we have identified.

The year 2009 was a tumultuous time for the MTA and its agencies, and our discussion reflects this. The MTA began and ended the year facing a financial crisis and both the MTA and its agencies experienced changes in leadership in the course of the year, and even those agencies that retained their leadership were affected considerably, as individuals assumed interim assignments to fill leadership roles within the MTA. These changes may well bear fruit over time, but in the shorter term the changes left much work remaining to be done. Initiatives including the introduction of smart cards, the

¹ Thus we believe that the state must follow through with the funding million it committed to provide last spring that the MTA may need to consider using Federal stimulus funds to protect vital operations.

implementation of an integrated security system, and enhanced public information systems ended the year incomplete.

NYC Transit likewise experienced a leadership transition in 2009, the effects of which continue. PCAC applauds a number of NYCT's initiatives over the past year, such as continued Select Bus Service development, the change to a more realistic station condition assessment and repair system, greater transparency in operational metrics, and continued progress in improving station accessibility. We are concerned, however, that available resources will not be sufficient to satisfy the demands of maintaining the system and providing acceptable levels of service.

The Long Island Rail Road produced a mixed record of successes and deficiencies over the past year. We applaud the progress that has been made in dealing with chronic equipment issues, improving system performance, and transporting customers during special events and major system improvements. We are likewise encouraged by moves toward reorganizations such as the creation of the Transportation Services Department. We remain troubled, however, by continued incidents connected to lack of adherence to operating rules, including a near collision, an unauthorized train operator, and routine failures to collect fares, and by seemingly intractable issues such as station and right of way cleanliness and a lack of organizational transparency.

Metro-North Railroad continued to build on its high level of customer service and operations over the past year. While several high level positions were vacated in the year, experienced Railroad employees were named to fill these vacancies. On-time performance remains strong, and 2009 saw several service enhancements, notable among them service to Yankee Stadium and the Meadowlands. The PCAC remains concerned, however, that the continuing fiscal crisis enveloping the MTA and State will mean that the resources necessary to maintain Metro-North service and infrastructure may not be available in the future.

PERMANENT CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE MTA
REPRESENTING MTA RIDERS SINCE 1981

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Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTAHQ)

Leadership

- The year of 2009 was marked by a critical transition in leadership at the MTA. The financial crisis in the spring, and the loss of former Executive Director Lee Sander and Board Chairman Dale Hemmerdinger, followed by a period of caretaker oversight by LIRR President Helena Williams, definitely created an atmosphere of uncertainty for riders. Therefore, the appointment of Jay Walder as CEO and Board Chairman in October was a welcomed move and gave riders the prospects for a fresh start and much needed stability.

As of the end of 2009 it was still too soon to make any judgments about the merits of Mr. Walder's leadership, his appointment of Charles Monheim as Chief Operating Officer, or the replacement of NYCT's President Howard Roberts with Thomas Prendergast. Still, Walder, Monheim, and Prendergast have all worked at the MTA previously and return with high marks for achievement in their past association with the organization. Consequently, the PCAC sees 2010 with guarded optimism. The MTA leadership faces many challenges given the current fiscal outlook. The serious issues facing New York State demand that the MTA make a strong argument for continued capital and improved operating funding. We hope that Chairman Walder will make good on his promise to "show taxpayers good value and improve engagement with the communities it serves," and be a voice for the transit rider in Albany and City Hall.

Organization

- As of the end of 2009, our comments remain the same as those in the 2007 and 2008 Performance Reviews: The corporate structure of MTA Headquarters lacks rationale. We have repeatedly called for an organization audit to identify areas with too many or too little staff. There is a strong feeling that the MTA is top heavy in management.² In addition, we remain steadfast in our call for the creation of executive level leadership positions for information technology (IT) and real estate.

² In Mr. Walder's 100-Day report he has indicated that a full review of staff and positions will be carried out.

- While the independence of the three operating agencies has been a steady theme at the MTA, the implementation of shared services has proven that there can be cooperation, coordination, and consolidation among agency activities. There is also a need to consider some vertical integration — when agencies should call upon the resources available at Headquarters and when MTA should provide stronger oversight. Specific to this last point, PCAC, in its role as providing the community input mandated by the FTA for capital projects, has been greatly disturbed by the LIRR’s handling of the Main Line Corridor Improvement project in 2009, particularly with respect to communications with the FTA. As a result, PCAC has called for an MTA Headquarters review of this troubling situation.

Security

- The PCAC understands the need to keep security projects under wraps, but the very public failure to implement the \$500 million Integrated Electronic Security System (IESS/C3) is extremely disappointing. The project now appears to be held up in a lawsuit against the project contractor, Lockheed Martin. This important project was to have installed security cameras and access control systems throughout the MTA properties and would have provided a centralized view of operations for timely and coordinated emergency response. There is no definitive word from the MTA on what the next step will be with respect to a security program. ***This lapse in moving forward with this initiative is inexcusable.***

Communication

- **Information Accessibility**

In 2009, the MTA continued to make positive improvements in communication with the public. A planned update to the website was delayed, however, so that the new design could meet the expectations of Chairman Walder.³

- **Origin and Destination Survey**

The completion of the 2008 NYC Customer Travel Survey was an extremely welcome event. This comprehensive survey of New York City riders’ travel behavior is an invaluable tool in fully understanding where to adjust service and invest the MTA’s capital funds efficiently. The PCAC would like to see additional reports generated from this valuable data. The PCAC is concerned that the already severely understaffed MTA Planning Department, which conducted the survey for NYCT, will be further reduced. ***If the department were permitted to grow to an appropriate size to support the three largest transit agencies in the country, the MTA would better be able to identify how to “make every dollar count”.***

³ A new website was unveiled in January, 2010, and is under review by the PCAC.

- **Making the Case for MTA**

Economic Impact — In yet another year of high jobless claims, the MTA has fallen short in identifying the significant employment it creates through its operations and capital program. Although the PCAC has repeatedly requested that the *Economic Impact of the MTA on the State of New York* book be updated and substantially expanded, apparently the MTA has abandoned this effort.

In addition, the MTA has not demonstrated how much money is brought back from the urban core to the outlying local economies. Hence, the resistance of the outer service areas to the Payroll Mobility Tax is understandable. The MTA should take a cue from other groups working on transit initiatives and employ a targeted educational program strategy: “Some of us ride it. All of us need it!”⁴

To these points, MTA has not used the incredible resources of area universities and researchers to document the economic benefits that the MTA system contributes to the Metropolitan Region and beyond.

Environmental Impact

The hiring of Projjal K. Dutta as the MTA’s first Director of Sustainability Initiatives is a very positive step in promoting the “green” benefits of the MTA. His mandate is to work with the Blue Ribbon Sustainability Commission to reduce the environmental footprint of the MTA and to verifiably measure the carbon benefits that accrue to the region, due to the MTA’s operations. His presentations to groups over the past year illustrate the Transit Effect Multiplier: For every unit of GHG (greenhouse gases) that the MTA emits, it helps avoid 8.24 units.⁵ As with employment benefits, the positive environmental effects of MTA transit use should be more widely and enthusiastically promoted within the Region.

Lobbying Efforts

The MTA’s reputation in Albany is the worst it’s been in decades. In 2009, many PCAC staff and Council members traveled to Albany on several occasions to engage in a direct dialogue with New York State elected officials. What we repeatedly heard was that their concerns were all too often dismissed by MTA staff, that they did not receive information in a timely way and that even those legislators that have been allies of the MTA were treated poorly and with little respect.

Harnessing the Energy of the Rider Advocates

As we pointed out last year, the Authority does not utilize the strength of rider advocates who could serve as a powerful voice on MTA’s behalf. Policy makers must be persuaded to provide the needed resources by hearing from those whose interests are directly served.

⁴ Citizens for Modern Transit, St. Louis, MO

⁵ This information was also delivered in testimony before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Housing, Transportation and Community development.

- **Availability of Monthly MTA Agenda Books**

Finally, MTA Board and Committee Agenda Books began to be posted on the website in the fall of 2009. Thanks go to Chairman Walder for pushing this action.

- **Office of Legislative and Community Input**

As part of the financial rescue plan for the MTA passed by the New York State legislature on May 6, 2009 (S5451/A8180), the MTA was required to create an Office of Legislative and Community Input. This new directive requires MTA to receive comments, concerns and recommendations from members of the legislature and members of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA. In addition, the MTA was directed to prepare a report containing the following information:

3. (a) a compilation of the comments, concerns, and recommendations received by the office;
 - (b) how these comments, concerns or recommendations were or will be addressed, such as the authority's response by the incorporation or initiation of system and operational adjustments, improvements or expansions if applicable; and
 - (c) how these comments, concerns or recommendations were or will be addressed, such as the authority's response by changing or amending the capital plan, as well as providing status updates on the progress of such plan.
4. Such report shall on a biannual basis, commencing September first, two thousand nine, be submitted to the governor, the temporary president of the senate and the speaker of the assembly, be posted on the authority's website and also be made readily available to the public.⁶

This report, compiled from June 1 to August 15, was dutifully delivered to the Governor and Legislative representatives by the deadline, but without any analysis or comment. Furthermore, the bulk of the report consisted of notice to legislators about service diversions and mailings of *Mileposts*, the MNR seat drop flyer. These items are hardly the "comments, concerns or recommendations" described in the statute. Clearly, this additional task was not something that MTA welcomed; but in having to spend the resources to do it, MTA should have provided oversight on the quality of comments and detail of responses, taken the opportunity to assess what type of issues were of concern to constituents and compiled and disseminated the results in a meaningful way in a report. ***As it stands, the Office of Legislative and Community Input has not fulfilled its mandate.***

⁶ NYS S5451/A8180 §1279-C

Agency-wide Initiatives

- **Shared Services**

Last year PCAC was very enthusiastic about the Business Service Center (BSC). Although we still support the consolidation of procurement and payroll and other common agency tasks, the growth of this new department is a bit staggering, with full staffing projected to reach a possible 500 headcount and \$100 million plus in set-up cost. Only if the administrative headcounts at the operating agencies are proportionately reduced can the size and cost of the BSC be justified. ***We look forward to a progress report on the BSC in 2010 with details on its organizational structure and cost-saving effectiveness.***

- **Sustainability**

The final report by the Blue Ribbon Commission on Sustainability, *Greening Mass Transit & Metro Regions*, was released in January, 2009. The report features “nearly 100 recommendations for strategies and technologies to reduce the MTA region's carbon footprint while generating long-term savings and economic growth.” ***After such a strong effort, this document should be used as a benchmark for progress over the coming years and the MTA should issue an annual report on its efforts to achieve the goals set forth in this document.***

In 2009, the MTA and its agencies touted several energy efficient strategies that were undertaken: the successful installation of the first advanced sodium sulfur battery energy storage system (BESS) in New York State at an MTA LI Bus depot; the completion of the bulb replacement program in Grand Central Terminal; and in October, the MTA received \$2 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 funds to install approximately 350 wireless control points linked to rail heaters system-wide so that they can monitor third rail heaters remotely. The PCAC encourages the MTA to continue to provide regional leadership with energy-saving initiatives such as these.

- **Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)**

Progress has been slow for station development projects, in large part due to the economic downturn. However, in June 2009, the Town/Village of Harrison and MTA Metro-North Railroad agreed on a framework for jointly advancing the development of property on the south side of the tracks, which is owned by the Railroad, by formally signing a Term Sheet and a Predevelopment Agreement. At MTAHQ, the TOD working group continued to meet regularly, and efforts to work with towns on Long Island continued throughout 2009. PCAC praises these efforts but would press for more outreach to communities to tout the benefits of well-planned transit-oriented development.

- **Smart Card**

Unfortunately, there was no progress on this initiative in 2009. The NYCT pilot program was fully ready for its second and expanded stage after the success of its

first effort, completed at the end of 2008. The team at NYCT, having worked on the initiative for more than five years, was once again held back by MTAHQ's indecision. The second phase of the pilot program was to apply smart card technology to certain cross-town bus routes in 2009. As a result, the opportunity to operate cross-town buses at faster speeds, with less bus bunching and easier boarding, was lost. The MTA hopes that Chairman Walder will make good on his promise to expeditiously provide riders a higher level of mobility with ticketless travel, as he did in his time with Transport for London.

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Capital Construction Company

- **Transparency**

The past year has been one of continued frustration over the lack of communication on the progress and status of various capital projects. MTA Capital Construction Committee meetings are marked by vague and uninformative responses to Board member inquiries. Delays and cost overruns are not fully explained. Committee agenda books have failed to clearly track amendments in project cost and completion dates. This has contributed to the public's perception that the MTA cannot spend the money it is given effectively.

The New York Citizens Budget Commission expressed similar concerns in its October 2009 report, *Working in the Dark*. In response, Chairman Walder promised an on-line capital program "dashboard" whereby a person "could look up every single capital project, what it was going to cost when it started, what it's projected to cost now, what the schedule will be and if the project is on schedule." Unfortunately, this capital project dashboard did not make it to the website as of the end of 2009.⁷ ***We see no reason for a delay in this initiative given the importance of its role in the transparency of the MTA.***

- **East Side Access**

During 2009, FTA made its own estimates of cost and completion dates for this project. Its estimates for a September 2018 completion at a cost of \$8.042 billion are longer by two years and \$700 million higher than MTA projections. While the physical progress of the project has been promising, these FTA estimates give rise to expectations that East Side Access is going to be significantly late and over budget.

- **7 Line Extension**

Over the past year there has been substantial tunneling work completed (Phase I from 26th Street to 34th Street). However, because there is no FTA funding involved — New York City is paying the \$2.1 billion cost — specific details on expenditures and construction are not available. The PCAC still has major concerns about this project: failure to reach an agreement with New York City on responsibility for cost

⁷ Nor as of this writing in March, 2010

overruns, and no visible effort to secure necessary funding for a 10th Avenue station to accommodate the significant development that is occurring in the area.

- **Fulton Street Transit Center**

As of the quarter ending September 2009 (most recent report as of the end of 2009), the estimated completion date for this project is now 2014. The project seems to be emerging from the shadow of its past mismanagement and appears to be moving along, aided by a healthy infusion of Federal Stimulus Funds. The quality of the work must be monitored in light of the recently opened R/W Cortlandt Street station northbound platform, where a number of leaks in the platform area have already become evident.

The average person will have a hard time trying to follow the progress of this complex project by looking at the plethora of contract information on the website or in MTA Board Committee books. There needs to be much more clarity in reporting on this initiative, such as that described above by Mr. Walder in connection with the capital program dashboard.

- **South Ferry Station Reconstruction**

This project is technically finished – it opened in Mid-March of 2009. Unfortunately, less than a year later, the station leaks in many places and tiles are beginning to fall off from a wall above an escalator. There is also in the station a lack of boarding announcements, adequate signage, and visual contrast to assist sight-impaired riders.

Finally, as we stated last year, there is still no accountability for the design errors, poor construction, and inadequate oversight that delayed the completion and impacted the quality of the project. This is another capital project story that makes transit advocates cringe as critics use it to illustrate how the MTA should not be given more capital funds.

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Long Island Rail Road (LIRR)

Leadership

- The Council's appraisal of the leadership at the LIRR during 2009 is mixed, while there have been positive efforts in some areas, there are still major deficiencies in conditions affecting riders that need to be addressed. An example on the plus side is the favorable impact the Diesel Task Force has had on improving the ailing diesel fleet. The task force was created by LIRR President Helena Williams in 2008. The successful execution of the Valley Stream interlocking project kept passengers well informed of service disruptions while executing this highly complex project. Also under Ms. Williams' leadership the LIRR provided excellent service for special events throughout 2009 and should be commended for these efforts.

In contrast, we are concerned that Ms. Williams has been unable to effectively insure that employees adhere to work rules and codes of conduct that meet the highest professional standards. A near head-on collision at Bridgehampton on the Montauk Branch, a civilian caught operating a train, and lax ticket collection practices demonstrate the need for an effort to improve and maintain workforce compliance that goes beyond simple disciplinary action.

The Council is also concerned that the LIRR lacks a strategic business plan for the future. Although the MTA Planning department produced its 20 Year Needs Assessment, which includes the LIRR, the LIRR has no document that lays out a short or long term vision for its employees or its riders.

And the Council is disappointed in the continued lack of response by the LIRR to its requests for information and data, such as our request for the Main Line Corridor DEIS, the LIRRCC has unsuccessfully requested information, regular status reports on investigations, and outcomes of several recent incidents:

- The Council requested a complete list of the stations that do not have Public Address capabilities.
- The Council requested an explanation of the process of calculating on time performance, including the trains that are included in the calculation and

whether any canceled trains are excluded, the standard for a train being counted as “on time”, and the location relative to the platform of the sensor indicating that a train has arrived at its terminal.

- The Council requested data on the number of trains delayed by flooding.
- The Council requested a status report on the replacement of armrests on M7 Cars.
- The Council requested a list of police actions broken down by type of action and information on the overall volume of police activity on the LIRR and its service impacts.⁸

The Council feels it is extremely important to have relevant and timely documentation in order for it to adequately address rider issues.

Organization

- In the PCAC 2008 Annual Performance Review, we noted that the LIRR’s management organizational structure lacks coherence by description and function. The Council again requests a review to clarify this structure, identify roles, areas of redundancy and staffing deficits.

The Council was informed in October that the Transportation Department merged with Passenger Services and will now be known as Transportation Services, thus handling all of the services that directly impact the customer, both on and off board. We will closely monitor the benefits of this new structure and determine how well it results in improved attention to rider concerns.

Service Performance

- **On-Time Performance**

The Council is pleased by the positive trend reflected in the reported 2009 on-time performance of 95.2 percent. The timeliness of the diesel fleet remains an issue, but we expect some improvement through recommendations of the Diesel Task Force. We would like to emphasize that on-time performance percentages, averaged over the many LIRR lines, do not necessarily capture an individual rider’s experience. The rider experience depends on time of travel, what station the trip is made from, when the train promptly completes pulling into the station (trip counters are not

⁸ It should be noted that requests for information by the Council are made under its enabling legislation, NY PUB. AUTH. LAW § 1266-D 4. (1981): “The council may request and shall receive from any department, division, board, bureau, commission, agency, public authority of the state or any political subdivision thereof such assistance and data as will enable it properly to carry out its activities hereunder and effectuate the purposes set forth herein.” In 2010, the Council was satisfactorily briefed with information on station public address capabilities, on time performance calculations, and trains delayed by flooding and was informed that the armrest issue is under study.

located at platforms) and whether a train is merely late or is cancelled. For example the on-time performance measurement does not reflect that a rider may have been delayed by an hour and not 10 minutes, rather it only reflects only a division between on-time and not on-time. The Council believes that the LIRR is striving for better operating results, especially in the difficult area of diesel service, but on-time performance of trains is not the same as the on-time experience of a rider.

- **Event Service**

The LIRR is to be congratulated for providing additional service to many entertainment and sports venues on in Long Island, in Queens, and in Manhattan and to connections in Penn Station to the New Jersey Meadowlands for concerts and football games. This year was particularly challenging with the US Open golf tournament being held in Bethpage State Park. However, the coordinated service by the LIRR with Long Island Bus was very successful and gained high marks from visitors. The LIRR reported that approximately a third of the spectators came by train.

- **Standee Report**

In June 2008, the LIRRCC requested LIRR President Helena Williams to add a report on standees to the monthly LIRR Committee board book, similar to the one in the Metro-North Committee book. Ms. Williams agreed to the request; however, the report was never added to the book. In October 2009, the LIRRCC MTA Board representative again requested that a report on standees be included in the Committee book. While President Williams agreed to the initial request in 2008, to date, this information has not been added to the book.

- **Snow Storm Preparedness and Response**

The blizzard of December 2009 brings into question the Rail Road's planning and preparation for delivering service under adverse conditions: A total of 150 passengers were stranded on a train for three hours in a snow storm without a working bathroom, little heat, and inadequate communication by the crew. The Council found the LIRR's response and communication efforts during the storm unacceptable.⁹

Capital Projects

- **Main Line Corridor Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)**

We continue to press the LIRR to release the LIRR Main Line Corridor Improvement Project DEIS. The Main Line Corridor project (also known as "Third Track") is necessary to alleviate the bottleneck of train traffic between Hicksville and Queens Village, improve reverse commuting schedules on the LIRR and obtain the maximum benefit out of East Side Access.

⁹ It appears that LIRR did learn from this incident. During two heavy snow storms in early 2010, much more communication was provided.

In February 2009, the FTA asked the LIRR to clarify its intentions for the project. Previously, the FTA had reviewed the DEIS that the LIRR submitted to them and made comments on the document. It is our understanding that no further response has been provided by the LIRR to the FTA.

In March 2009, the LIRRCC requested to see a copy of the Main Line Corridor DEIS that was sent to the FTA. The LIRR did not provide this document, citing fiscal constraints as the reason for suspending the DEIS. Because this position was in direct contradiction with prior LIRR statements indicating the decision to not move forward was due to the potential for political backlash in certain communities, the LIRRCC wrote to MTA Chairman Jay Walder.

The Council's November 2009 letter to Chairman Walder requested that the Main Line Corridor project have a thorough review by MTAHQ planning staff. Chairman Walder forwarded the letter to Ms. Williams to respond, but she did not address our request.

- **Valley Stream Interlocking**

The Council applauds the LIRR on the completion of this major modernization program, the Valley Interlocking Signal Cutover Project, with a minimum of disruption. The work required a 48-hour suspension of train service through Valley Stream, which affected customers using the Babylon, Montauk, Far Rockaway, Long Beach and West Hempstead Branches. Advance communications to commuters and riders were effective in raising awareness about the disruption, and the LIRR substituted buses and other trains to accommodate riders. This demonstrates that LIRR can provide needed information to the public and successfully carry out a complex project as planned.

- **Other Capital Improvements**

The LIRRCC recognizes that the Rail Road continues to make other infrastructure improvements across its large diverse network of track and equipment. We greatly support these efforts.

Station and Equipment

- **Station Work**

The Council was pleased to see the Huntington Station reopen for its 100th anniversary, having been renovated in partnership with the local community. Also, the completion of the Penn Station restrooms and waiting room makeover was a very welcome event. Notably, the Brentwood Station renovation began in 2009.

- **Station Access**

The 100 new parking spaces at the Ronkonkoma Station are most welcome. However, as we noted last year, the Council is disappointed by the lack of a station access strategic plan, especially in light of the future East Side Access impacts on commutation patterns.

- **Diesel Fleet**

In 2009 LIRRCC members and PCAC staff met with the LIRR diesel fleet and operations staff. It is clear that the LIRR's Diesel Fleet Task Force has set as a priority the task of identifying the multitude of issues affecting the diesel fleet. The Council supports the efforts and improvements that the Task Force has been able to make to this problem-plagued fleet. Yet, the Council also recognizes that this equipment still performs with an unacceptable Mean Distance Between Failure (MDBF) record — 18,000 miles to the expected 30,000 miles, causing substantial delays and inconveniences for too many riders.

In 2009, the LIRRCC focused its efforts on the degree to which the LIRR is prepared to handle the breakdown of one of its locomotives. It is not satisfied that the LIRR put forward its 2010–2014 Capital Program with no provision for additional diesel locomotives. These extra engines could be strategically placed throughout the LIRR system during rush hours to insure that a replacement locomotive is standing ready for the quickest response possible.

Further, in the original proposed 2010–2014 Capital Program the LIRR claimed that its rolling stock was “in a state of good repair”. We disagreed with this assessment and successfully pressed to have it removed.

In December, the LIRRCC wrote to LIRR President Helena Williams requesting that starting January 1, 2010, the LIRR begin to generate metrics for passenger impacts and the LIRR response time to the diesel fleet disruptions in order to guide the Rail Road in its evaluation of service to its customers. To date there has been no response.

Communication

- **Conductor Cell Phones**

In February 2008, the LIRR signed a train crew cell phone contract with Verizon Wireless, not to exceed \$1.7 million, for an initial 18-month period. In addition to voice communication, the cell phones also were equipped with text-messaging capability. The LIRR put the cell phones in the field with more than 1,000 train personnel. The 18-month period has now long passed. The Council believes that the LIRR should report on the status of the contract with Verizon, as well as the usage and maintenance of these cell phones over the period, and document how these phones have improved communication. The train crew's reported lack of cell phones in the December snowstorm raised questions as to the full use of the phones.

- **Watch the Gap and Courtesy Campaigns**

LIRRCC is pleased that the Rail Road continues to support its important gap education program and courtesy reminders. Unfortunately, gap incidents still continue to occur.

- **Rider Alert System**

As we noted last year, the LIRR needs to continue to publicize how riders can sign up for this service.

Fare Collection

- After repeated complaints from riders about the failure of conductors to collect tickets, the LIRRCC made a series of recommendations to the LIRR in August regarding ticketing and on-board ticket collection practices. The recommendations would both generate revenue and significantly add to the comfort of passengers. The Council has seen little improvement since our recommendations were made, although we have and will continue to pursue better LIRR management oversight and auditing.

Community Outreach

- **Local Image**

LIRR still has an image problem with riders, communities and with advocacy groups. This feeling is fostered by the railroad debris littered on the right-of-way and station conditions, particularly involving with bathrooms and unsanitary pigeon droppings on walkways and platforms. These scenes greet the rider everyday, painting a negative picture of the Rail Road in their minds. The LIRR has responded to many of these complaints, but neither the Council nor the communities have been informed of any formal long-term plan or timeline to address the appearance of the LIRR.

- **TOD**

The MTAHQ TOD working group has taken up the push for transit-oriented development around LIRR stations. Several towns have shown interest and that is encouraging.

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Metro-North Rail Road (MNR)

Leadership

- President Howard Permut, appointed last year, has done a commendable job of continuing the high standard of customer service and operations at Metro-North Railroad (MNR). MNRCC was pleased when Permut, in response to several retirements, named highly experienced employees to fill the vacancies: Raymond Burney as Senior Vice President of Administration, Robert Lieblong as Senior Vice President of Operations, Robert C. MacLagger as Vice President of Planning and Seth J. Cummins as Vice President and General Counsel. These appointments give the Council confidence that the leadership of MNR will remain strong.

Organization

- MNR has a clear organizational delineation with precise department names and position titles.
- The Council would also like to acknowledge the Railroad's Vision 2013 program, a five-year strategic business planning effort that has a special emphasis on succession planning.

Service Performance

- **On Time Performance**
The MNRCC congratulates Metro-North on its outstanding 97.8 percent on-time performance record for the year. Feedback from riders indicates that this accurately reflects their experience.
- **West of Hudson lines**
In April, the West of Hudson train schedules for MTA Metro-North's Port Jervis and Pascack Valley Lines were adjusted so that all the trains could operate more

reliably. In June, the Pascack Valley Line began to operate four Metro-North Railroad express trains on the weekend, with no stops in New Jersey, and on weekdays and weekends the last departures from both Hoboken and Penn Station to Port Jervis were extended 35 and 45 minutes, respectively. These improvements were greatly welcomed by the West of Hudson travelers.

- **Opening of the Yankee Stadium Station**

The completion of the new Yankee Stadium (E. 153rd Street) Station will provide train service 365 days a year to serve local residents and encourage economic development in this area of the Bronx. The service has been quite well received, generating a half-million riders in 2009. On game days direct service is now provided on all three lines for weekend and holiday games, along with direct return service from weeknight games. The Council applauds MNR on this major service improvement by providing convenient access to one of the most important entertainment venues in the New York region.

- **Service to the Meadowlands**

A breakthrough service innovation occurred in the fall with the inauguration of direct train service on the New Haven Line to the New Jersey Meadowlands Sports Complex. This was a feat of coordination whereby three rail agencies worked together to transport riders through three states: The service uses NJ TRANSIT's new bi-level coaches, MNR and NJ TRANSIT crews and Amtrak's tracks across the Hell Gate Bridge through Penn Station, New York, and on to Secaucus, New Jersey. There customers change trains for the quick shuttle to the Meadowlands Station next to the stadium. Congratulations to all three agencies for their efforts in this important step in regional mobility.

Stations and Equipment

- **Station Work**

In 2009 Metro-North continued its station improvement program (2005–2009 Capital Program) as it began construction on the Cortlandt Station, including parking and access improvements. In addition, the long-awaited restoration of the 1890 Tarrytown Station started last spring. Also beginning in 2009 platform work and extensive station upgrades got underway at the Rye and Port Chester Stations. Along the Hudson Line, the Ossining, Scarborough and Philipse Manor Station restorations, begun in 2007, continue on schedule. This pattern of preservation and restoration of facilities is appreciated by the riders and the communities served.

Also noteworthy is the continued policy by MNR to allow for commercial use of stations, giving life to the stations throughout the day. In 2009 there was a new restaurant addition to the Mount Kisco train station.

- **Infrastructure**

MNR continues to upgrade its track and bridges. The Port Jervis line saw the replacement of ties and rail in several sections, plus improvements on the Ramapo

River Bridge. Other capital projects should also be highlighted, including bridge replacements at Carmel Brook and the Park Avenue Bridge in Mount Vernon and the rehabilitation of catenary support structures along the New Haven line.

- **Railcars**

The arrival of the first two new M-8 cars just prior to year-end was a very welcome event. Although the delivery was a few months late, this is clearly a milestone in the efforts to upgrade the aging fleet on the New Haven line. In another positive move, it was announced that the West of Hudson service will be augmented by the overhaul of six 3,000-horsepower F40 locomotives which will include new, larger fuel tanks for more efficient operations.

Communication

- The Council is pleased that Metro-North Train Time, the real time notification system which was initiated last year at the White Plains Station, has now been rolled out throughout the MNR system.
- It is regrettable that the annual customer survey was not conducted this year due to an MTA move to coordinate methodology among the operating agencies. Unfortunately, a valuable point of information is now unavailable.

Station Access

- The award of a new parking management contract to LAZ Parking bodes well for riders. New amenities include state-of-the-art digital electronic meters that accept credit and debit cards and which are linked to a Pay-by-Phone Program. This is an added customer convenience, especially for customers running late who can bypass meters. LAZ also has a website linked to the MTA Metro-North site that allows customers for the first time to conduct online sales transactions and receive email alerts.

Customer Service

- Metro-North's new ticket machine center in Grand Central Terminal, located just under the archway leading to the Lexington Avenue subway, has met with high rider approval. This new customer service facility is intended to alleviate long lines at ticket windows and in the other ticket vending machine center opposite Track 32 diagonally across the Main Concourse. The new center houses nine machines, bringing to 28 the total number of ticket vending machines in Grand Central.
- Another action welcomed by the riders is the initiative to place more food vending machines at more stations. For rider convenience, the machines will accept credit and debit cards as well as cash.

Community Outreach

- **Overall Assessment**

MNR has demonstrated strong efforts in community outreach and has a reputation for pursuing an effective working relationship with the communities that it serves.

- **Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)**

It is very encouraging that MNR continues to advance its TOD initiatives. The Railroad moved forward in its efforts at Harrison Station when it reached an agreement in June 2009 with the community about the framework for development of property owned by MNR. This 3.3-acre parcel is a significant contribution towards this project and will provide the foundation for prospective developers to propose mixed-use development and the associated parking garage that will leverage improved transit access into a revitalized downtown and business district. The Council supports this smart growth effort.

PERMANENT CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE MTA

REPRESENTING MTA RIDERS SINCE 1981

2009 Annual Performance Review of The MTA and Its Operating Agencies

New York City Transit (NYCT)

Leadership

- For NYCT it was an unsettled year with all the leadership changes at the MTA. Former President Roberts pushed forward with his Subway Line General Manager program, implementing this action on all subway lines during the summer. He also brought to the forefront the issue of on-time performance and how it is calculated and presented in the monthly committee books. Although it was clear in the fall that President Roberts would not be part of the Walder team, there is no question that he left his mark on the agency. Mr. Roberts was a great advocate for riders with disabilities and he worked tirelessly to improve the rider experience. While the NYCTRC questioned its statistical validity, the "Rider Report Card" program gave the riders a voice and the feeling that management cared and was listening.

At this point, the vision for the reorganization of subways remains a work in progress. Recently appointed NYCT President Thomas Prendergast has been impressive, reaching out to the NYCTRC and addressing the Council in December. His words and demeanor were encouraging and the Council looks forward to working with him in the future.

Organization

- **Regional Bus Organization**
The combination of operations of NYCT Bus, MTA Bus and LI Bus has been a very strong and welcomed move. Under the guidance of President Joseph Smith, the Bus Company continues to improve operations and the rider experience.
- **Line General Manager Program (LGM)**
As stated above, the LGM program was implemented throughout the subway network based on the success of the LGMs on the lettered lines. While it is important to acknowledge the benefits that come from this reorganization, the jury remains out on a number of issues such as station maintenance and car equipment. In addition, the Council expressed its concern about the need for overall management at major hubs, such as Times Square and Atlantic Terminal, which was never addressed.

Service Performance

At the beginning of 2009, NYCT was putting together their package of service reductions that were part of the spring fare hearings. Fortunately, the cuts were not implemented. However, in the fall a service reduction package was developed in response to the perpetually collapsing MTA budget. Still, there were a few service improvements made during 2009 which the Council applauds:

- **Select Bus Service (SBS)**

Select Bus Service (SBS) continued to perform well on the Bx12 in the Bronx and the planning process got underway for Select Bus Service on the M15 and B44 routes. In addition, the M34 and M16 routes along 34th Street were upgraded with a bus lane, albeit with only occasional enforcement, and pilot project to test CIS (Customer Information System) technology that features automatic on-board stop announcements and estimated arrival times on bus shelter displays. The reaction was quite positive from riders, and the NYCTRC hopes that Transit will not only continue this initiative but expand it to other routes.

- **5 Line**

The 5 Line was extended into Brooklyn during midday periods. For Brooklyn riders, this was a welcome addition to their service options.

- **4 line**

The 4 line Jerome Avenue express service pilot project was carried out for seven weeks from late October to mid-December. This effort was aimed at shortening travel times along the 4 Line with the addition of Bronx Express 4 service between Woodlawn and 149th Street-Grand Concourse. This enhanced service operated during the weekday morning rush and cut about four minutes off the previous schedule (but, in actuality, this time was lost at the merge at 149th Street). Recent upgrades to the center track signaling system within the 2005–2009 Capital Program have made this pilot possible. A decision to make this change permanent has not been announced as of this writing.

Capital Projects

- The Council recognizes the Herculean efforts by NYCT in replacing and upgrading the vast network of subways, depots, stations, etc. While there are large visible projects such as the South Ferry Station and the Culver Viaduct, we recognize there are endless smaller jobs that are needed to keep improving the system. The NYCTRC appreciates the dedication by the agency to this task.

Stations and Equipment

- **Component Assessment**

The ceiling collapse at the 181st Street Station in the summer raised a serious red flag about the continuing deterioration of stations and the importance of proceeding

with the capital program work. It became clear that visual inspections were no longer adequate. Therefore, the Council expressed its enthusiastic approval when NYCT unveiled its Asset Condition Plan which redefines the qualifications for an asset being designated in a “State of Good Repair” (SGR). This new approach, using a station component rating system, will allow serious problem areas in stations to be addressed without having to wait for funding of a complete station renovation, thus resulting in a better allocation of scarce capital funds. The NYCTRC congratulates the NYCT for its work over the last two years to bring the term SGR more in line with the actual condition of the asset and with the actual experience of the rider.

- **South Ferry Station**

PCAC was thrilled to see this station finally completed because it has made a marked difference in service reliability and enhanced the experience for the passengers. However, given the management problems discussed under the CCC section, it is disappointing, but not surprising, to see water damage already leaving its mark on the station so soon after opening.

- **F line Study**

With an eye toward improving service along one of the longest lines in the subway system, NYCT conducted a study of conditions along the entire length of the 27-mile F Line. The results acknowledge the line's below average performance, due in part to its length, the age of its infrastructure, and the complexity of its operation. In August members of the NYCTRC toured the Culver Viaduct and the Smith-9th Street Station, which are located on the line, and were stunned by the amount of deterioration present. It is encouraging that work is finally being done to address some of the issues, but it is expected to be a long, slow process.

- **DesignLine Buses**

The NYCTRC greatly appreciated being invited by NYCT to tour a new environmentally friendly bus manufactured by DesignLine of Charlotte, N.C., and to give comments on its interior layout and accessibility features. This new bus, the ECO Saver IV, is a hybrid electric 42-footer that's much quieter and has lower emissions than other buses. It was rolled out in a pilot program on 42nd Street in Manhattan (M42). The Council is pleased to see this move toward greener operations. The implementation of a larger complement of these buses will be a major step toward sustainability efforts at the MTA.

- **Luggage Racks on Airport-bound Buses**

The Council was very pleased when NYCT took the Council's suggestion and created a pilot program with luggage racks installed on select buses that serve airports. This action alleviates the chronic congestion from suitcases in the aisles.

Accessibility

- **New Elevators**

In 2009 a number of subway stations have been completed as part of the 100 Key Station Agreement with the Federal government and New York State. These include South Ferry (1), 47-50th Street-Rockefeller Center (B, D, F and V) and Chambers Street (1,2,3), which brings the total number of ADA stations to 70. It is gratifying that the NYCT is ahead of schedule (67 needed to be completed by 2010); but, given the current tight financial situation, it remains to be seen if the remaining 30 can be finished by 2020.

- **Mets-Willets Point Station**

A very sore point with wheelchair riders was the total inaccessibility of the old Willets Point Station. In light of the opening of the new Citi Field in April, NYCT made a greatly appreciated effort to provide some accessibility at the station. At the Flushing/Main Street-bound local platform two existing wooden elevated walkways (ramps) connecting the platform to the station mezzanine were modified to make them ADA compliant and the agency invested \$4 million in a ramp to connect the existing ramps to the sidewalk on the south side of Roosevelt Avenue. This initiative, promoted by former President Howard Roberts, should be recognized as a great example of commitment to the disabled community. The Council looks forward to the time when the transit connection to this important entertainment venue is made fully ADA compliant.

Communication

- **Trip Planner**

Two new features of NYCT's on-line itinerary service, Trip Planner, are most welcome: First, an interactive map opens up a new way for customers to search, locate and pinpoint destinations, as well as places of interest in and around the five boroughs. Secondly, an advanced interactive voice response (IVR) and speech recognition technology enables customers to access bus and subway travel itinerary information via the telephone 24/7 without the need to wait to speak to an agent. NYCT is to be congratulated for continuing to improve assistance to riders in finding their way around the system. It should also be noted that Trip Planner contains accessibility information which is extremely important to the disability community.

- **Improved Committee Meeting Books**

Former President Howard Roberts did a tremendous amount of work to improve the metrics of Transit's operations shown in the Committee Meeting Agenda books. This increased transparency helped to improve riders' confidence and is to be commended. A highlight of this effort would be the presentation of actual on-time performance figures.

- **Public Address/Customer Information Screens (PA/CIS)**

The completed installation of the long delayed CBTC and PA/CIS system on the L line is an encouraging step for customer communication in subway stations. Real-

time train arrival messages are also now available in five stations along the Pelham 6 Line in the Bronx. Though still in the initial testing phase, this marks an important milestone in the effort to provide NYCT's subway customers with up-to-date travel information employing 21st Century technology. This is a major component of the MTA's effort to substantially upgrade customer communications across its entire network. However, there are many stations still without public address systems and NYCT needs to move expeditiously to remedy this situation for the reassurance and security of all subway riders.

- **Service Diversion Notices**

The NYCTRC continues to consider this a problem area. While the service diversion information is now more readily available on the internet, with more clarity, the big problem remains at stations where the notices are hung. These posters are often not placed in a timely fashion or put in locations not easily noticed by the public. In addition, stations not receiving service during the diversion are often not adequately closed off, resulting in a person entering a station unnecessarily. The Council understands that planned diversion signage is one of the items that Chairman Walder has targeted to address and we look forward to improvements in 2010.

- **Notice of New Elevators**

This is an ongoing issue for the Council. MTA/NYCT has failed in conveying information about accessibility to the riding public and the disability community. It is sad that wheelchair users need to read sources outside the MTA to know when a new elevator has opened. Specifically, while the opening of South Ferry was heralded with much fanfare (a public ceremony and press), the opening of the elevator at Chambers Street was practically a secret. Similarly, there has never been an announcement that the platform elevators are running at 59th Street/ Columbus Circle.

- **Customer Service**

Removal of many booth agents, resulting in unstaffed entrances without HEETs, intercoms, or cameras, compromises the safety of the system and leaves its customers with few options in case of emergency. The prospect of an additional 500 locations without agents will further erode confidence in the security and accessibility of the system.

Community Outreach

- The NYCT needs to present the benefits of capital program related service diversions. Not only is the placement of the service diversion notices described above problematic but they do not communicate the importance of the diversion in improving the service for riders.