
Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee

to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority

April – June 2002 QUARTERLY REPORT

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

PCAC

PCAC Says Farewell to LIRRCC and MNRCC Members

The PCAC said a fond farewell to LIRRCC and MNRCC members Skip Meise and Jon Pessah and MNRCC member George Begany, all of whom resigned for personal reasons. Skip Meise served on the LIRRCC for more than 15 years and Jon for one year. George Begany served on the MNRCC for 18 years. They will be missed.

PCAC Welcomes Former Member Steve Lofthouse

The PCAC and MNRCC welcomed back Stephen Lofthouse representing Rockland County. Mr. Lofthouse was originally appointed to the MNRCC in 1983. He resigned after several years to work for Metro-North as Manager-West of Hudson Services. Mr. Lofthouse is a professor of Geology and Physical sciences at Pace University.

Changes in PCAC MTA Board Representation

Andrew Albert replaced Executive Director Beverly Dolinsky as the NYCTRC's representative on the MTA Board. The New York State Senate confirmed Mr. Albert on June 18. Ms. Dolinsky very ably represented bus and

subway riders on the MTA Board for almost seven years.

Due to added personal and work related responsibilities, Rich Cataggio withdrew his name from consideration as the MNRCC representative on the MTA Board. At their May meeting, the MNRCC members selected Jim Blair to be recommended to Governor Pataki for appointment as their representative. Until Mr. Blair is confirmed, Ronnie Ackman will continue to represent the Council.

PCAC Urges Consideration of "City Ticket"

Recognizing that there are many areas of New York City not well served by New York City Transit, which are better served by Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North Railroad, the PCAC wrote to MTA Chairman Peter Kalikow urging consideration of a "City Ticket." The proposal is for the railroads to reduce the price of weekday non rush hour and reverse commute trips entirely within NYC to the prevailing transit fare or the prevailing transit fare with a small premium. This "City Ticket would allow customers to use the best mode of transportation to get them to their destination within the City.

(In July, Ms. Dolinsky met with Mr. Kalikow to discuss this proposal and other issues. In August, the PCAC received a letter from Chairman Kalikow stating that the MTA and railroads are reviewing this proposal and will respond to the Committee.)

MTA Executive Director Katherine Lapp Addresses Members at June Meeting

Ms. Lapp expressed her appreciation for the work and role of the PCAC in representing the interests of MTA riders. Then Ms. Lapp focused her remarks on Lower Manhattan. She spoke about her gratitude to all MTA employees for their tremendous effort on 9/11/01 and the ensuing months. Ms. Lapp said that the N/R Cortlandt Street station would open soon and that the 1/9 Rector and South Ferry stations would be ready for service by October.

Ms. Lapp described the three major projects the MTA wants to build downtown. They are: the Rector Connector, Broadway/Nassau – Fulton St. Transportation Center and reconfiguration of the South Ferry station.

PCAC Focuses on Lower Manhattan Transportation

During the quarter Ms. Dolinsky and staff attended Transportation and Commuters' Advisory Committee meetings of the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation and the Civic Alliance. The PCAC is concerned about spending \$250 million to study providing a one-seat ride to Lower Manhattan since the MTA already conducted a study of Metro-North access to downtown. That study determined that it did not make sense in terms of cost/benefit and that it would be better

to enhance railroad to subway connections at Grand Central Terminal.

PCAC Forms Standing Committees

The PCAC formed standing committees made up of representatives of the three councils to discuss and take regional positions in a number of areas. The committees will meet as events warrant discussion. The committees are as follows: Car Design and Maintenance, Financial Resources, Intermodal Facilities, Liaison with Other Advocacy Organizations, More Seamless Service, Publicity and Press Relations, Rebuilding Downtown, Regional Fare Policy Collection and Standardization, Regional Legislative Initiatives, Safety, and Station Design and Maintenance.

LIRRCC

LIRRCC Members Complete Report Card Collection

In its annual rite of spring, members handed out and collected approximately 1200 report cards for the Sixteenth Annual Report Card Survey. Staff will tabulate the results and a report will be released in the fall.

Council Suggestions Implemented by LIRR

Two recent Council suggestions have been implemented by the LIRR. A train information monitor listing departures has been installed in the 34 Street corridor for customers using that entrance. Contact information listing responsible entities for parking lot ownership and operation has been posted at LIRR stations so that customers know who to get in touch with.

LIRRCC Calls on Amtrak to Replace Fire Safety Manager in Penn

The Council sent a letter to Amtrak President David Gunn urging him to replace the Fire Safety Manager in Penn Station and expressing their concern that issues and problems would fall between the cracks without a single point person. When the Fire Safety Manager retired Amtrak decided to divide the responsibilities of that position among four people, one of whom is located in Delaware.

Jim McGovern Pursues Widening Staircase at Penn

LIRRCC member Jim McGovern met with Seymour Portes, NYC Transit program manager – Capital Program Management, about widening the narrow staircase at the south end of the 1 local downtown platform at Penn Station. Mr. McGovern learned that Amtrak owns the adjacent space, which could be used to widen the staircase and that a design for widening the staircase was completed years ago. Mr. Portes said that he would look into expediting the process.

Council Concerned about Difficulty Using Police Emergency Telephone Numbers

The Council expressed concern that the emergency telephone numbers to reach the police that are posted on the timetables are not answered in a timely manner. Staff has been calling these numbers to measure how long it takes for a response. Suggestions will be made based on their results.

Escalators Moving in the Wrong Direction at Penn Remain a Problem

LIRRCC member Jerry Shagam has been keeping a report on escalators in the Eighth Avenue corridor at Penn

during the PM peak. So far the record has been dismal. Instead of going down, more often than not, the escalators are moving up. The LIRR posted stickers at escalators warning that it is a violation to tamper with the escalators. Uniform and plain-clothed police have been stationed near the escalators to discourage unauthorized use and Amtrak employees have been notified that MTA police will issue summonses to anyone interfering with the escalators.

Council Discusses LITP 2000, Penn Station Redevelopment and LIRR Schedules

The Long Island Transportation Plan 2000 consultants discussed their findings and proposed plan for relieving traffic congestion on Long Island at the Council's April meeting. In May, Michael Royce, acting president – Penn Station Redevelopment, presented the plans for converting the Main Post Office into a new station for Amtrak, New Jersey Transit and the LIRR. In June, Dave Sumner, LIRR general manager – Customer Quality & Service Planning described how LIRR schedules are made and the constraints in Penn Station.

MNRCC

Steve Lofthouse Reappointed to Council

The Council was delighted to welcome Steve Lofthouse who again represents Rockland County. Steve, a transit buff, is very interested in and knowledgeable about transportation issues. He replaced George Zobelein who passed away last year.

John Vonglis Resigns

John Vonglis, a resident of New Rochelle, who was appointed to the MNRCC in January to replace Martin Goldstein, resigned due to a job relocation. Mr. Vonglis is working for the Bush administration in Washington, D.C. as an Under Secretary of Defense.

Broken Car Seats a Continuing Problem

Council Vice Chair Jim Blair and Associate Director Kate Brower met with Metro-North personnel to discuss the problems and remedies for broken car seats. Metro-North has developed a fix to prevent the seat foam from pushing through the frame. All new seats will have this “J” hook mechanism on two sides and the fitting is also being installed on old seats. Mr. Blair remains concerned that unless the seat bladders are attached on all four sides the problem will continue. Mr. Blair promises to keep monitoring the seat situation.

Council Persists in Quest to Have Lexington Avenue Doors Fixed

The Council continued in its quest to have the Lexington Avenue doors to Grand Central Terminal repaired. The door project has been officially designated a capital project with the passing of the MTA’s most recent Capital Program Amendment. MNR is working out an agreement with S L Green and hopefully the repairs can begin.

Council Welcomes Howard Permut to April Meeting

At the April meeting, members heard from MNR Senior Vice President – Planning & Development Howard Permut about the railroad’s plans for parking and station access, service

improvements, and capital projects. Mr. Permut told the Council that the biggest obstacles facing ridership growth are parking and station access. MNR has instituted many new initiatives, such as feeder bus and ferry service, to provide alternative access to stations.

Mr. Permut mentioned that Metro-North has experienced problems with the new Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs). The manufacturer is working on a software solution for the machines credit/debit capabilities.

Donna Evans, MNR Director-Corporate & Media Relations Addresses Council

At their May meeting members heard from Donna Evans about the railroad’s rider communication efforts. Corporate & Media Relations produces Mileposts, Mileposts West and Outposts. The Spanish version of Outposts, the publication for reverse riders, has been well received.

Metro-North’s courtesy campaign has been a success and the railroad plans to continue the posters and customer courtesy corner in its publications. Ms. Evans also mentioned the special hot car telephone number to report air-conditioning problems quickly, another successful Metro-North effort.

NYCTRC***NYS Assembly Resolution Honors Steve Dobrow***

Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan and twenty-five assembly members on March 11, 2002 granted a New York State Assembly resolution honoring the life of Steve Dobrow and his valuable contribution to public transportation. This resolution is a fitting tribute for Steve’s untiring efforts.

Annual Bus Forum a Success in The Bronx

On Tuesday, May 7, the Council held its Annual Bus forum in the Bronx for the first time. Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrion, Jr. addressed the participants and audience about a number of bus problems in the borough including service along East Gun Hill Road and improved information about Access-A-Ride. Twenty-eight speakers expressed their views about bus service to senior officials from New York City Transit, the New York City Department of Transportation and the New York Police Department.

Members and Staff Survey Subway Directional Signage

During the quarter members and staff reviewed directional signage in 106 subway stations. This was conducted as a follow up to similar 1987 and 1997 surveys. Members were reporting misinformation particularly with the number of recent service changes so the decision was made to reexamine the state of signage. A report of the findings will be released at the end of the summer.

Executive Director Meets with Top Bus Managers

Beverly Dolinsky met with NYC Transit Senior Vice President Millard Seay and Jennifer Sinclair, NYCT chief transportation officer – Buses, to discuss the status of the Automatic Vehicle Location & Control System (AVLC) project. The project has been renamed the Service Management Customer Information (SMCI) Project. Ms. Dolinsky has been long concerned about his project because knowing when the next bus will arrive is so important to riders. Mr. Seay said that the complexity of implementing a

system with the density and height of New York City buildings and the requirement of updating the system every 30 seconds has posed enormous problems and delays. London's system uses a signpost technology that is revised every three minutes.

Andrew Albert Meets with MTA Chairman and Larry Reuter to Discuss V Service

Council Chair Andrew Albert met with MTA Chairman Peter Kalikow and NYC Transit President Larry Reuter about the V service. His message was that in spite of what its detractors are saying, the V is performing as anticipated. Mr. Albert outlined the Council's concerns about the V service and suggested that Transit give the V more time before making any changes to the current plan. The V will be extended to Brooklyn when the Bergen Street switch is rebuilt in 2004 and new cars are in service. Transit is planning an extensive marketing campaign targeting riders to use the V into Manhattan, as the ride is only five minutes longer than E service. Mr. Albert was also told that the NYCT Capital Program Management reviewed options for constructing a G terminal at Queens Plaza and determined that it would be very expensive to build.

Council Learns about Transit's Traffic Checking Operations

At the Council's March meeting, James Leopard, NYCT senior director - Traffic Checking Operations, spoke about his unit's data collection activities. He said the information they collect is used to determine bus and subway schedules, route and system planning, schedule adherence, and to measure environmental conditions. Mr. Leopard said his top priority has been to upgrade and expand the training program for his

employees as a majority of the checkers work part time and turnover is very high.

***Customer Service Communication
Subject of April Meeting***

In April, the Council learned about procedures for making announcements on subways from Termaine Garden, NYCT Rapid Transit Operations, director – Customer Service Communication. Mr. Garden said that a rigorous training program has been established for all subway employees who have direct contact with the riding public. Routine station announcements must include the name of the station, the train number or letter, the direction of the train including reference to the next borough, transfer options at the current station, and the name of the next station on the route. A decal with scripts for delay problems and instructions on frequency of announcements is posted for reference in the conductor's cab.

Council Hears about Crowd Control Initiatives

At the May meeting, John Gaul, NYCT Rapid Transit Operations – assistant chief transportation officer, spoke about NYC Transit's crowd control initiatives. Many of these initiatives, such as the Step Aside markings on platforms, additional platform assistants, the Sick Customer Response program and enhanced police coverage were implemented as part of the 1998 Lenox Invert project. Mr. Gaul said these initiatives have been continued and expanded to other parts of the system because of their proven track record in improving service reliability. He stressed that customer communication and coordination efforts with other departments are critical to the success of these programs.

About Us

The PCAC is the coordinating body and funding mechanism for the three riders councils created by the New York State Legislature in 1981: the Long Island Rail Road Commuter’s Council (LIRRCC); the Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council (MNRCC); and the New York City Transit Riders Council (NYCTRC). The Councils were created to give users of MTA public transportation services a say in the formulation and implementation of MTA policy and to hold the MTA Board and management accountable to riders.

To learn more about us, or to download reports and documents, including our **Frequently Asked Questions** pamphlet and documents noted in this Quarterly Report, visit our homepage, www.pcac.org.

PCAC Executive Committee

James Blair
Chair

Stephen F. Wilder
First Vice Chair

Barbara Josepher
Second Vice Chair

Andrew Albert

Richard Cataggio

Council Officers

Barbara Josepher
LIRRCC Chair

Richard Cataggio
MNRCC Chair

James Blair
MNRCC Vice Chair

Andrew Albert
NYCTRC Chair

Stephen Wilder
NYCTRC Vice Chair

Staff

Beverly Dolinsky
Executive Director

Katherine Brower
Associate Director

Ellyn Shannon
Transportation Planner

Karyl Berger
Research Associate

Mary Whaley
Administrative Assistant

Join Our Electronic Mailing Lists

If you would like to begin receiving PCAC documents—including Quarterly and Annual Reports, research reports, meeting agendas, and minutes—via e-mail in PDF format, **instead** of via U.S. post, please email us at mail@pcac.org with your request. Please be sure to note the mailing list you would like to join (LIRRCC, MNRCC, NYCTRC, or full PCAC), or, if you are already on our mailing lists, indicate which of your existing printed subscriptions you'd like us to convert to electronic format.