

Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority

2007 ANNUAL REPORT

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

PCAC

In Memoriam. PCAC mourned the loss of Jon Schachter, a dedicated member who focused on subway and bus operations. He brought a wide knowledge of equipment and procedures to discussions and continually pressed for improved customer service. We will miss his love for transit and his dedication in striving to make the system better.

New Staff. In April 2007, Dr. Jan S. Wells joined PCAC as Associate Director. Dr. Wells has a Ph.D. in Urban Planning from Rutgers University. She came to PCAC from the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers where she was a research professor studying transit-oriented development in the New Jersey-New York region.

Administrative Structure and Website. In August, PCAC staff members were transferred to the MTA payroll and benefits system. This conversion frees up valuable administrative time and enhances medical, pension and other standard benefits offered to PCAC employees. During the fall, the PCAC website was completely overhauled and re-launched in December. New features include pictures, drop-down menus and an easy-to-use calendar to access meeting agendas and locations.

MTA Board Representatives. The three PCAC Commuter Councils enjoy non-voting representation on the MTA Board of Directors. Serving in this capacity are: Andrew Albert, NYCTRC; James Blair, MNRCC; and, James McGovern of the LIRRCC. In June, their appointments were extended to 2010 by the NY State legislature. During the year, Board member Albert successfully pressed the MTA to provide for a pedestrian connection from the E line WTC stop to the R-W line. This addition will create a walkable, covered link from Williams Street to the PATH station.

Study of Public Transportation Options in Neighborhoods with Long Commutes. In October, the PCAC released its annual research report, *A Long Day's Journey into Work*, which describes transportation choices to Manhattan from Southeast Queens, Co-Op City in the Bronx, Southwest Staten Island and Red Hook, Brooklyn. In the course of this study a number of themes became evident: 1) Though public transportation is not meeting the mobility needs of many residents in the selected areas, these places are not without public transportation resources. The PCAC recommendations focus on making more effective use of these MTA resources at an affordable price; 2) In many of the areas, the expansion of *express* bus service is being promoted as the solution to transportation needs despite the fact that express buses are one of the least cost-efficient means of public transportation and contribute to congestion. Throughout the boroughs, PCAC urges MTA and the City of New York to look first at utilizing available rail capacity (LIRR, Metro-North and Staten Island Railway) to combat congestion before introducing additional express bus service. In addition, improved *local* bus service and shuttles could more efficiently collect riders and deposit them at transit hubs such as Jamaica Center; 3) Station areas need attention. The report calls for lighting, painting and ADA improvements, better use of adjacent vacant or underused properties, and provision of more commuter parking. PCAC held a press briefing to discuss the findings.

MTA Fare Increase. PCAC members viewed the proposed MTA fare increase with a wary eye.

PCAC Executive Committee

William K. Guild
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James Blair
First Vice Chair

Ira Greenberg
Second Vice Chair

Andrew Albert

Gerard Bringmann

Richard Cataggio

Michael Sinansky

LIRRCC

Gerard Bringmann
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Maureen Michaels
Vice Chair

Gary Babyatzky
Ronald Breuer
Ira Greenberg
Sandra Krebelj-
Douglas
James McGovern
Edward Rich
Patricia Santosus
Jerome Shagam

Expressing a preference for a series of moderate, regular fare increases rather than periodic double-digit hikes, and insisting on no service cuts, PCAC staff and Council members delivered testimony at five hearings in November and December on MTA's proposed fare increase for 2008. In addition, Executive Director William Henderson, Transportation Planner Elynn Shannon and several Council members attended an interactive workshop on the fare proposals held at the NYU Kimmel Center.

Congestion Mitigation. In June, the Executive Committee voted unanimously to support the concept of congestion pricing for the improvement of transportation within the New York metropolitan region. Executive Director Henderson submitted testimony reflecting this opinion to a joint session of several New York State Assembly Committees considering Mayor Bloomberg's proposed congestion pricing plan. From October to the end of the year PCAC attended meetings of the NY State mandated Traffic Mitigation Commission and Executive Director Henderson gave testimony before the Commission in November.

Regional Transportation Planning. PCAC participated in regional transportation dialogue by presenting testimony in support of the tax-free Commuter Benefit Equalization legislation and proposed increase in service to ball games and special events. PCAC staff was also present at major regional events: the NYMTC Annual Meeting, the Regional Plan Association's Annual Regional Assembly, Vision Long Island's Smart Growth Awards and Annual Meetings, and the Rudin Center's Forum on Transportation in the Northeast Megaregion. In addition, PCAC took part in meetings of the Empire State Transportation Alliance, Friends of Moynihan Station, Tappan Zee Bridge Traffic and Transit Stakeholders Advisory Group, and the Technical Advisory Committee on ARC (Access to the Region's Core).

Rolling Stock, Infrastructure, and Information. PCAC observed a focus group discussing the defective M-7 armrests, provided testimony on the platform gap problem before the NY State Senate Transportation Committee, and successfully advocated for the MTA Inspector General's office to post their reports on their website.

LIRRCC

New Officer and By-law Change. Maureen Michaels was elected Vice-Chair. The Council also approved a revision of the by-laws to add Queens and Kings Counties to the areas where LIRRCC is charged to study methods of increasing the use of public transportation.

Customer Service Issues. The Council addressed a number of issues with LIRR management, including station and on-board announcements, communication during unplanned service disruptions, on-time performance, escalator maintenance, station and car condition, conductor performance, car cleanliness and bathroom servicing, and recycling and refuse disposal, ticket selling software, excessive horn-blowing, and the failing diesel fleet. On a positive note, Council Chair Gerard Bringmann and Executive Director Henderson spoke at a press conference held in Penn Station where LIRR President Helena Williams announced the installation of six electronic message boards.

Passenger Safety Concerns. The Council continued to monitor the measures that the Rail Road is taking to narrow platform gaps and increase public awareness of gap hazards. In February, staff presented testimony to the NY State Senate Committee on Transportation. Subsequently, a MTA Gap Task Force was formed and Board representative McGovern was appointed to serve on this panel. In September, Executive Director Henderson, Council Chair Bringmann, and Council members Michaels and Ira Greenberg met with NY State Deputy Secretary for Public Safety Michael Balboni, the senior official in charge of Homeland Security and Law Enforcement in the Spitzer administration. A number of security-related issues were discussed, including divisions of responsibility at Penn Station, the East River tunnels, and on-board patrols.

MNRCC

Richard Cataggio
Chair

Francis Corcoran
Vice Chair

Dennis Baum
James Blair
Thomas Jennings
Gerard Kopera
Stephen
Lofthouse
Martin Polowy
Norman Werner

Riders Voice Concerns. The LIRRCC held its annual President's Forum in March. LIRR customers discussed a number of topics including the Main Line Corridor Improvement Project (third track), requests for additional service, concern about closed cars and the platform position of trains, and quality of life concerns such as scratchiti and passenger courtesy with regards to cell phones and electronic games. Acting LIRR President Raymond Kenny and his senior staff were on hand to hear and respond to customer comments.

System Capital Improvements. The Council maintains its strong support for the LIRR Main Line Corridor Improvement Project. The Council believes that the addition of a third track and a program of crossing improvements are necessary for the Rail Road to meet changing conditions and satisfy travel demand. On a related note, Executive Director Henderson, Transportation Planner Shannon and Council member McGovern attended the MTA press conference announcing the federal funding commitment for the East Side Access project which will bring LIRR riders directly into Grand Central Terminal. The Council is also looking at possible improvements to LIRR facilities at Penn Station that may accompany the Moynihan Station project and will continue to be involved with planning for this facility.

MNRCC

Loss of Members and Recruitment Campaign. During the year Council members Dennis Baum and Martin Polowy of Westchester County and Stephen Lofthouse from Rockland County resigned their appointments. In the October *Mileposts* MNRCC put out a call for experienced riders, informed about the issues affecting the railroad, to pursue Council membership. Over 50 individuals made inquiries and 12 sent letters of interest to county or local officials. Nominations are now in the process of being sent to the Governor.

ADA Compliance. Research Associate Karyl Berger toured Grand Central Terminal with MNR staff and Ken Stewart, a member of the Council of Citizens with Low Vision International, to discuss potential improvements to accessible terminal signage.

Field Trips. In July, Executive Director Henderson and Council member Blair attended the groundbreaking for the new Yankee Stadium station. In October, MNRCC Chair Richard Cattagio made a preview trip on the Pascack Valley Line to launch new off-peak and weekend service. Additional passing sidings now allow trains to almost double the level of service from Rockland County. Also in October, Executive Director Henderson traveled to the annual Open House at Harmon Shops while Associate Director Wells, Transportation Planner Shannon, and Council member Blair rode the MNR inspection train to Poughkeepsie and toured the restored historic train station.

Passengers' Safety Concerns. In June, PCAC met with MNR staff to discuss steps that the Railroad has taken to address the platform gap issue. They considered ways in which MNR might reach those passengers, such as parents with small children, who are most at risk from gap hazards.

Riders Voice Concerns. Riders raised a number of issues at the March President's Forum: service on the New Haven Line, a fare surcharge proposed for Connecticut customers, scheduling, connecting services, bicycle policy, suggestions for new service, cell phone use, environmental issues and need for additional customer information.

Rolling Stock. At the October Council meeting, MNR senior staff revealed design plans for the M-8 cars in development for the New Haven Line. These specifications are based on previous focus groups, observed by PCAC, held to gather passenger input and opinions.

NYCTRC

*Executive
Committee:*

Andrew Albert
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Michael Sinansky
Vice Chair

William K. Guild

Marisol Halpern

Toya Williford

Shirley Genn
Jessica Lila-
Gonzalez
John Hunter
Thomas Jost
Trudy L. Mason
David Rohde
Sharon Santa
Maria
Jon Schachter
Burton Strauss,
Jr.

Staff

William
Henderson
*Executive
Director*

Dr. Jan S. Wells
*Associate
Director*

Ellyn Shannon
*Transportation
Planner*

Karyl Berger
*Research
Associate*

Deborah
Morrison
*Administrative
Assistant*

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; the Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council; and, the New York City Transit Riders Council.

The Councils were created to give users of MTA public transportation services a voice in the formulation and implementation of MTA policy and to hold the MTA Board and management accountable to riders.

To learn more, visit our website at www.pcac.org

If you wish to join the email list for PCAC or any of the Councils, call or email us at mail@pcac.org

NYCTRC

Waiting and Watching Report Released. In this project the NYCTRC addressed the problems of bus bunching and unacceptable waiting times between buses. During the fall of 2006, Council members collected arrival and departure times for each bus observed at a survey point, allowing them to make a comparison between actual and scheduled frequency intervals (headways). This project also sought to systematically examine the quality and accuracy of bus destination signage. The report recommends that NYC Transit and MTA Bus work cooperatively with the City of New York to improve the conditions for bus operations, such as bus lanes, improved loading facilities, and traffic signal technology. Signage issues observed during the survey appear to be due to equipment difficulties and inattention to detail on the part of the operator.

ADA Compliance. The Council expressed concerns to NYC Transit management about major changes to eligibility determination for the Access-A-Ride program without community input. Research Associate Berger attended a New York City Council hearing on this issue. She also attended meetings of NYC Transit's ADA Compliance Coordination Committee throughout the year.

Bus Service. In January, Executive Director Henderson attended a forum on Staten Island designed to allow the public to present specific problems on specific routes of the Express Bus service. He also testified at a public hearing on Staten Island that the extension of the S55 bus route into the southern part of the Borough is a step in the right direction, but a great deal still remains to be done in expanding service to rapidly developing areas of New York City. NYCTRC pushed for bus service to Gateway Center Mall and Atlas Park Mall in Queens, both of which have been implemented. The Council continued to pressure NYC Transit management about the lack of coordination between placement of bus shelters and signage in relation to the actual bus stops.

Subway Issues. PCAC held a press conference in January at the corner of 41st Street/10th Avenue to underscore the need to build a station at this location as part of the 7 Line Extension project. This event was covered by New York 1 and Channel 11 television stations and the *AM New York* newspaper. In another initiative, PCAC staff advocated for improved Shuttle service between Times Square and Grand Central Terminal. Trains now depart promptly and peak PM service has increased by 30%. The long awaited groundbreaking for the resumption of the 2nd Avenue subway project was attended by Executive Director Henderson and Council Chair Andrew Albert. Staff was also present at the ribbon cutting ceremony of the new Myrtle-Wyckoff station building of the L and M lines. In October, NYCTRC member William Guild testified at a New York City Council hearing in favor of cell phone service in the subways.

During the year the Council followed up on a variety of subway issues, including reports of poor station and platform signage, inadequate station cleaning and painting, inconsistent subway entrance light globe colors, malfunctioning elevators and escalators, placement of service diversion posters, and insufficient or misleading service information. NYCTRC expressed particular concern to NYC Transit management about poor communication during unplanned service disruptions, such as that which occurred during the severe flooding in August.

Reports and Documents

A Long Day's Journey into Work (October, PCAC)

Watching and Waiting (February, NYCTRC)

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