



NYCTRC

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RIDERS COUNCIL

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Testimony for MTA Emergency Meeting on the L Train Shut-down – January 15, 2019

Good afternoon, I am Lisa Daglian, Executive Director of PCAC, on behalf of the Transit Riders Council.

We were as surprised as most New Yorkers – and many Board members and MTA staff – when we heard Governor Cuomo announce his plan to avert the L Train shutdown. Today's long overdue Board briefing follows the initial press briefing, elected officials briefing, advocates briefing, and then more press briefings. Almost two weeks later, those of us who could rearrange their schedules on short notice will finally learn details of a plan that we heard has already been accepted by the MTA.

We've been left with many more questions than answers: all we've seen so far is a PowerPoint presentation, not a plan. We have so many questions that we created an addendum, which we are happy to share with you. What we do know is that it's complex engineering work in a confined century year old underwater tunnel. Affixing the cables could conceivably compromise the concrete casing, which would be catastrophic. Of course, we're concerned! We need to be confident that New Yorkers traveling in a mile-long tube underwater will be safe in the event of fire or failure.

Following the planned presentation, we urge you, as Board members, to ask and consider the many significant questions, including:

- What is the safety plan for silica dust removal?
- Will work trains travel through active stations and communities?
- What damage will affixing the racking system do to the tunnel walls?
- Why did PB, now WSP, discard this option years ago and how has the condition of the tubes changed?
- What travel mitigation plans will stay in place?
- What work will actually commence on April 27th?
- What's the rush now, after three years of planning and community input?

We need to do these repairs once, and we need to do them right. Let's take a deep breath and let an in-depth **independent** analysis be conducted, as announced by President Byford. We welcome innovative technologies that are less costly and more efficient – and we hope that this proposed plan will do everything we were promised. But we're mindful of the old adage that if it looks too good to be true, it probably is.

The safety of the traveling public is too important to let a political decision inform an engineering problem.

Questions:

Safety

- What is the safety plan for silica dust removal? Will the plans require a Hazard Analysis?
- How will riders and workers be protected when work trains with the hazardous dust are moved out of the tunnel and through active stations and communities?
- Where else has this technology been used in similar conditions, with cramped and badly damaged 100-year-old subway tunnels in a comparable climate?
- How long will the racking installation last embedded into 100 year old concrete subway tunnels?
- Will the exposed cables in the tunnels create an added security vulnerability?
- What alternate plans will remain in place to safely move passengers on nights and weekends when 20-minute headways are scheduled?

Time

- Will another environmental assessment need to be conducted? How long will that take?
- Will the FTA need to approve the new plan?
- How does the new proposed scope of work compare to the original plan?
- What work will actually commence on April 27th?
- Where will the work trains that will hold and remove the construction debris be stored and unloaded? What will their route be, and how will this impact service on other lines?

Costs/Finances

- How much will the new design work cost, who will do it? How long will it take?
- What savings will be realized from the new plan as compared to the original plan?
- How does this affect the work that's already been done and how will it affect the cost?
- Will this jeopardize federal funds? Will they need to be repaid? Will they be reduced? By how much?
- Since the technology likely doesn't exist in the US, is it "Buy America" compliant per state and federal requirements?

Long Term Impacts on the MTA

- If a \$477 million construction contract can be completely overhauled just a few months prior to a major shutdown, what contractors will want to do business with the MTA? How will the competitive bidding process be impacted?
- Is this a new precedent for how MTA construction projects will be handled – second guessing and last-minute vicissitudes? Who will want to bid on major projects?
- How long will the new fix last – is it 5 years, 15 years or 50 years? Will L train communities be forced to go through an endless cycle of shut downs and delays?
- How often will riders be faced with delays down the line, due to repairing the racking system?
- Why did it take three years for this halleluiah moment?