

A meeting of the New York City Transit Riders Council (NYCTRC) was convened at 12:00 pm on Thursday, April 23, 2020 via virtual conference call.

Member Attendance

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|------------------------------------|---------|
| Andrew Albert (Chair) | Present |
| Burton M. Strauss Jr. (Vice Chair) | Present |
| Stuart Goldstein | Present |
| Christopher D. Greif | Present |
| William K. Guild | Absent |
| Marisol Halpern | Present |
| Sharon King Hoge | Present |
| Trudy L. Mason | Present |
| Scott R. Nicholls | Present |
| Edith M. Prentiss | Present |

Staff Attendance

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|---|---------|
| Lisa Daglian (Executive Director) | Present |
| Ellyn Shannon (Associate Director) | Present |
| Bradley Brashears (Planning Manager) | Absent |
| Sheila Binesh (Transportation Planner) | Present |
| Deborah Morrison (Administrative Assistant) | Present |

Non-Member Attendance

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Affiliation</u> |
|----------------|--------------------|
| Cate Contino | NYCT |
| Deborah Greif | Concerned citizen |
| Jason Anthony | Concerned citizen |
| Andrew Pollack | Concerned citizen |
| Kevin Zeng | Concerned citizen |
| Omar Vera | Concerned citizen |
| Jason Anthony | Concerned citizen |
| Andy Quito | Concerned citizen |
| Matt Kemper | Concerned citizen |

Chair's Report attached.

Board Report

- The MTA has now lost 83 employees due to the corona virus; 82 have been transit employees and 1 from MNR.
- Subway ridership is down by 95%: down 90% on buses; down 93-95% on the commuter railroads. Service on LIRR is every ½ hour and on MNR service is every hour.
- MTA is projecting \$7- \$8.5 billion in losses by the end of 2020. The MTA is asking for \$3.9 billion from the federal government but will need substantially more. The \$3.9 billion will come from the federal CARES Act.
- PCAC and other transit advocacy groups are drafting letters/emails to the New York Congressional Delegation to support the request for more money.
- Long time discrepancy, New York carries 40% of the nation's transit ridership and only gets 16% of federal funds – that is so out-of-whack! Must get this wrong righted.
- MTA's Capital Program is not entirely shutdown, but many projects are on pause.
- Capital Program projects still moving forward:
 - Times Square Shuttle construction
 - Astoria Blvd. N/W station elevator installation
 - CBTC installation on Queens Blvd.
 - Jamaica complex expansion
- Capital Program projects not moving forward:
 - Rutgers Tube
 - Congestion pricing installation is also delayed – feds still have not said what type of environmental review must be conducted.
- State Legislature decided to unlock the capital program lockbox until December 2021 to help pay for operation losses – hopefully it can be locked back up.
- Resources are being used for things like cleaning stations and rolling stock – cleaning happens every 72 hours.
- Worker health deal was worked out – families who lost loved ones will receive \$500,000 for death benefits and will also get three years of health coverage.
- Cyber security project was announced – don't want things like CBTC to get hacked. It will be implemented within 12-18 months.
- Bob Foran, MTA's Chief Financial Officer, estimates that the MTA has \$3.4 billion dollars of liquidity – it won't last long – federal dollars are really important.

Andrew's Follow-up Items from last meeting:

- Edith raised the ½ hour wait time on C trains – this is not an issue anymore as other trains are making up for C train service.
- Videos of overcrowding at Grand Concourse - 149th Street and 3rd Ave. -149th Street: Interim Transit President Feinberg said they have increased 2-line service, which will go all the way to Wakefield to reduce crowding.

NYCTRC MINUTES

3

- Sharon asked why was there no service between Southeast and Wassaic – in a follow-up conversation, MNR President Cathy Rinaldi said there is weekday service but no weekend service due to very low ridership.
- Rear-door boarding on buses: How would somebody learn that they must now board through the rear door? Craig Cipriano said there are signs at the bus stops and at the front of the bus, and bus operators can make announcements for those who cannot see the signs.

A. Pollack: Glad CBTC is still moving forward on Queens Blvd. Will CBTC be implemented for Union Turnpike in Kew Gardens?

A. Albert: Yes, I believe that it is coming, but will be later down the road by the time it gets there.

S. Goldstein: Church Ave. to Coney Island, there is signage saying service is suspended indefinitely.

L. Daglian: L train project is still moving forward and will open by the end of April?

A. Albert: Yes.

K. Zeng: There are a lot of homeless on the E and 2 trains because of COVID-19.

A. Albert: Yes, this is a city problem that must be addressed – it is affecting the MTA.

L. Daglian: As soon as it becomes an issue on the subways then it will be an MTA problem – they must be part of the solution. Hopefully the MTA is working with the city to come up with a solution.

A. Albert: I want to know who replaced the Bowery Residence Committee – the problem needs to be addressed.

B. Strauss: Buses – what is the solution when the back door doesn't open by the driver?

A. Albert: There are buses that are too old, so on those you can enter when someone exits. Otherwise the driver will have to let you in the front door or come back to manually open the rear door.

C. Greif: Homeless issue on the Franklin Ave. Shuttle – the platforms need to be cleaned; they are disgusting.

T. Mason: Andrew, have you brought up the issues with the homeless and de Blasio?

A. Albert: The homeless problem did come up with various people, do you have anything to add?

T. Mason: The homeless being allowed on the subways and buses is getting transit workers sick. NYC Transit is being blamed for the problem – the city hasn't been doing anything.

NYCTRC MINUTES

4

A. Albert: Yes, nobody brought up the issue of the homeless getting transit workers sick, so yes this needs to be addressed.

Andrew Pollack: Queens Village bus depot - Q31 bus there are many homeless going to and from Jamaica.

L. Daglian: Marisol commented in the chat that the city is opening drop-in services for the homeless.

C. Greif: 110th Street fire – we have to do something regarding safety – this should never happen at a subway station.

O. Vera: Tweets online that have been unfair to the Transit team. What else can they do? They are going after Sarah Feinberg, who is not responsible for this.

A. Albert: Unfortunately, the top person always gets blamed – it is a problem no doubt about it.

A. Quito: Member of Passengers United – When is the timeline to implement CBTC on the J/Z line?

A. Albert: There is no current plan for CBTC implementation on the J/Z lines.

Approval of Agenda for April 23, 2020 meeting.

Approval of Minutes for March 26, 2020 meeting.

A. Albert: Update on Freedom Ticket proposal – elected officials and advocates are running with the idea and writing a letter to the MTA.

B. Brashears: We are using this as a tool not only to reduce travel times and fares, but as a way to regain the ridership that has basically disappeared due to COVID-19 when we get back to our “new normal”. Finding areas where capacity exists, making Atlantic Ticket better, and looking at our suburbs to provide a discount since there are so many available seats – pre-COVID. We need to have further discussions with the MTA regarding our approach and then we can move forward.

C. Greif: How at this time, people can't go out – We should be sending out information about the Atlantic Ticket via social media, etc... that this is a good program that currently exists.

B. Brashears: Are you saying that the marketing needs to be improved for Atlantic Ticket?

C. Greif: Email blast to our elected officials and people who are already supporters of this.

B. Brashears: We have been talking with elected officials and must have continued conversations with the MTA. Better marketing for Atlantic Ticket is needed. So, yes, we will be doing this when the timing is right.

NYCTRC MINUTES

5

A. Albert: Reads Sarah Feinberg's press statement that Trudy Mason provided regarding the homeless situation on the subways and the responsibility of the de Blasio administration.

T. Mason: Recommends writing a letter about the subway homeless problem, calling on the mayor to do something just as Sarah Feinberg said.

Action Item: Send a letter to call on the mayor/city to do something about the subway homeless problem.

C. Greif: We need to be cautious of what we say in the letter. We need to be clear that the safety of passengers is very important.

M. Halpern: We do have to be sensitive in our letter about the homeless that the city needs to address the problem. This is not a new situation; it just has been made worse by the pandemic. Where will they move them, etc...? Many homeless do not take the services that are provided to them.

S. King Hoge: The letter should be framed that it is the city's responsibility to be dealing with the homeless. It is not our role to tell the city how to deal with it, just that it must be addressed.

S. Goldstein: We must be sensitive, but I support writing the letter. I am an essential worker, going to work every day and there is a lack of police presence in the system. It is both an enforcement and social service issue, so we need to be sensitive in how we write the letter. The police are attending to many other issues right now.

A. Albert: Asks Stuart to send an email with the car numbers so we can report problems that he sees in the system regarding the homeless and onboard cleaning issues. Panhandling is also an issue with walking around not wearing masks and approaching passengers.

T. Mason: Department of Homeless Services is supposed to be dealing with this. Only 12 people have been referred to homeless services since this started – amNY article.

M. Halpern: MetroCards – the offices are closed; how can people get replacement cards expedited. Half fares – how to these people get their cards replaced in a timely manner?

A. Albert: Send me the details so I can find out how best to solve this problem.

S. Goldstein: There is a joint taskforce between the Department of Homeless Services and the Transit Bureau. But when the police are involved, they are there to simply enforce the rules. Maybe the letter needs to be broader. There is a total disregard of subway rules, as far as people laying out on the trains, etc...

A. Albert: Are you suggesting sending a copy of the letter to Chief Delatorre?

S. Goldstein: Yes, that is correct.

Action Item: Send copy of NYCTRC letter on the homeless to Chief Delatorre.

C. Greif: The letter also needs to be sent to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

NYCTRC MINUTES

6

L. Daglian: The state is now in charge of city resources regarding the homeless.

S. Nicholls: Just keep this in mind, the police force is currently down by 20% since April 1st.

S. Goldstein: Why don't we look at this as a health issue? Why don't we ask the city to give the homeless masks, as we will not solve their housing issues overnight.

Old Business: None

New Business

C. Greif: Edith Prentiss is on the new ADA Committee. Explains topics being discussed at the Committee.

D. Greif: Mentions the difficulties of getting on/off a bus with a walker. One time the driver blocked off the seats where the wheelchairs go, so I couldn't sit down.

E. Prentiss: It doesn't require mobility equipment to board the bus; if you ask the driver to open the door and allow you to enter. And whatever the MTA is doing; the bus drivers are getting better. However, problems remain in Manhattan.

A. Pollack: The Governor is looking to bring in the state police to patrol the subways.

T. Mason: The state police have already been assisting – this is nothing new. He is not bringing in the state police to patrol the subways. It has more to do with the city's administration; it's not about bringing in the state police.

Adjourned

This meeting was conducted via Webex Conference Call.pc

Action Items

- **Send a letter to call on the mayor/city to do something about the subway homeless problem.**
- **Send copy of NYCTRC letter on the homeless to Chief Delatorre.**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Daglian
Executive Director