

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

### Member Attendance

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 Prentiss	Present

### Staff Attendance

Lisa Daglian (Executive Director)	Present
Ellyn Shannon (Associate Director)	Present
Bradley Brashears (Planning Manager)	Present
Sheila Binesh (Transportation Planner)	Present
Deborah Morrison (Administrative Assistant)	Absent
Shaul Picker (Research Intern)	Present

### Non-Member Attendance

<u>Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
Jason Anthony	Concerned citizen
Andrew Pollack	Concerned citizen
Matt Kemper	Concerned citizen
Matt Shotkin	Concerned citizen
Jasmine Melzer	Concerned citizen
Cate Contino	NYC Transit Gov't & Comm.
John Santamaria	NYC Transit

***Chair's - Board Report including MTA COVID-19 Response Update attached***

MTA losses between the extra cleaning and the loss of fares, tolls, and dedicated taxes, and also real estate taxes are taking a humongous toll – we could be \$14 to 16 billion in the hole by 2024. The Chairman told the Board that everything is on the table, and Transformation Chief Anthony McCord will be free to cut people and will report on it in September. There will be an August board meeting.

The Board is anxious to talk about options that might need to be taken to cut the deficit, and agrees that fare hikes and service cuts are unpalatable. I and David Mack raise the issue of increasing a gasoline tax to take care of ourselves. If everyone decides to drive, congestion and air quality would become bad enough that people will move out of the region. In addition, we are joining advocacy groups in writing letters and tweeting to elected officials to let them know funding for transit is a national issue. Some are predicting we won't have normal ridership until 2023 or 2024.

The majority of the capital program is on hold. Rutgers Tube work will commence in August, with construction beginning September. Changes will be in effect nights and weekends for 9-10 months, with F trains running via the Cranberry Tube. The renovations will be done similar to the Canarsie Tunnel project, with cabling on racks, and repairing what is needed. Nobody believes it will last as long.

Tom Quigley, the general counsel, announced that the new debarment regulations are now in effect after yesterday's vote. The new regulations allow for more bidders and put penalties at the discretion of project managers. The contracting community is on board. There are also new all agency procurement guidelines, which should encourage more bidders. People will be deciding who gets which bid based on pricing, speed of delivery, and track record, and each project manager will decide who gets the procurement. There is a movement to lessen reliance on consultants to cut costs. They are also looking at wage freezes, cutting headcount and layoffs.

L. Daglian: A reduction in consultants at the same time that there is a hiring freeze will mean less work is done.

A. Albert: ADA renovations at Tremont Avenue and 149<sup>th</sup> Street-Grand Concourse will continue, and the elevator installation at 59<sup>th</sup> Street and Fourth Avenue is being sped up.

***Approval of Agenda for July 23, 2020 meeting.***

***Approval of Minutes for June 25, 2020 meeting.***

***Chair's – Board Report contd...***

L. Daglian: We continue to call for metrics to understand the plan for reopening overnight service, how long it takes to remove people from the system at the end of line, and how long it

## NYCTRC MINUTES

### 3

takes to clean. There is an uptick in ridership from 5 to 7 a.m., and we have heard that people are waiting on line to get into stations at 5 a.m. The 4 to 5 a.m. hour is critical to look at to restoring overnight service.

A. Albert: There is a brand-new bus from Midwood in Brooklyn to Columbus Circle, the B99, providing direct access from Downtown Brooklyn to Manhattan, instead of having riders go to Williamsburg to go to Manhattan.

There was an issue about crowding in elevators. There are weight capacity limits but not occupancy limits. Sarah Meyer and Connie DePalma's office are looking at adding signage on the outside of elevators advising distancing. There are no plans to restore reverse-peak S90 Limited service at the moment. Craig Cipriano has said they have been in talks with Amazon to mitigate the problem, whether it is to change hours for employees or provide a car service.

17,500 trips are being made overnight between 1 and 5 a.m. There were 8,000 trips made pre-COVID19 essential service; not sure whether just bus or essential vehicles

L. Daglian: Can we get a breakdown by hour, and information on the cost of operating the service? Are there other more cost-effective ways to serve people during these hours? I would also like to reinforce the point that this information should be readily available and transparent.

A. Albert: I am not sure whether the 17,500 figure is only for buses or also for-hire vehicle trips.

**Action item: Get a breakdown by hour for essential service and the cost of operating the service**

Craig said that all depots, including Jackie Gleason, Fresh Pond and East New York Depots, were notified to inform bus operators of who is allowed to board from the front door.

There are plain clothes sex offender units assigned to the subway in each district. The Staten Island Railway is being policed by the MTAPD, and buses are being done by the local precinct. The units have not been disbanded on the MTA system.

L. Daglian: We have been working with transit agencies locally and nationally to support the HEROES Act. Earlier this month, a press conference was held with many transit providers across the country, expressing the importance of the HEROES Act. A big part of the outreach is not only to the Senate, but to members of the House to bolster their support. Every time another letter is sent to them, it gives them an opportunity to speak on the floor in support of the bill.

E. Prentiss: Several times, drivers have allowed people who board through the back to sit in the front, going past the curtain, forcing people like me in wheelchairs to be left on the curb as there is not enough space. Drivers have also allowed people with shopping carts to board through the lift. I made a written complaint to the dispatcher at 168<sup>th</sup> Street and have not heard back.

L. Daglian: Deborah Morrison is retiring effective July 30<sup>th</sup>. We are not able to hire anyone else due to the hiring freeze. I can have a conversation with Cate Contino on how to forward those kinds of complaints, and we will get back to people on a new process.

## NYCTRC MINUTES

4

### **John Santamaria, Vice President and Chief Mechanical Officer, New York City Transit — Presentation**

A. Albert: We have had feedback from our members on the location of poles for wheelchair passengers and those with disabilities and shorter people. Can we tell from this picture whether this is going to work?

J. Santamaria: This picture does not show it well, but I can get you a top view drawing to show it. We tried to address height issues as well. We incorporated a lot of input from passengers at the Hudson Yards mock up.

E. Prentiss: Could the light strips be programmed to show red instead of green if a door is not working?

J. Santamaria: We are looking at it now. We are thinking about whether we want the red on at all times, or only as the train is approaching a station?

A. Albert: It would be good to have them display red all times if the doors are not working to let passengers know in advance.

L. Daglian: Can the TRC be part of the testing rider group?

J. Santamaria: Once the cars come in we can work that out.

A. Albert: Is there enough room next to the doors if the seats are flipped down with someone sitting in them?

J. Santamaria: Alex Elegudin brought this issue up, and we are looking at it. It will be more challenging to find enough space on A Division cars, which are a foot less wide. They will have areas with bumpers and no seats. The technical specifications and renderings for the R262s are done. We cannot issue the RFP as we do not know where the budget stands. The wheelchair areas are larger, and we have added more open areas and bumper seats. All cars will have hearing loops. We are looking to add voice to text function communication. If an announcement needs to be made, it can be converted to text-on-phone for people.

L. Daglian: Is it possible to retrofit older cars with hearing loops and voice-to-text?

J. Santamaria: This is driven by how many years a car fleet has left and the budget.

A. Albert: What information can you share about the status of the R179s?

J. Santamaria: Sarah Feinberg and the MTA executive team were concerned about the last incident, and put together a panel that will look at their overall safety, not only of the cars, but also the process of buying and accepting cars. You should expect the R179s to return to service in weeks, not months. The cars are being checked weekly. The MTA will make an announcement for a panel of third-party experts to look at the R179s.

E. Shannon: Competition in car building is problematic. Has there been a look at what federal investment could be made to build subway cars domestically?

## NYCTRC MINUTES

### 5

J. Santamaria: There hasn't been. We have four car builders that are qualified to build for us, Alstom, Kawasaki, Bombardier and CRRC. Alstom and Bombardier will soon be one. There are 4-5 other companies with factories in the United States that do not bid on our contract, like Hyundai-Rotem, Stadler and CAF. They are required to have a New York presence.

S. Picker: The goal of removing seats on the R160s was to increase capacity. Has this actually increased capacity? The R160s have the capability to recycle doors, so if someone holds the door in one car, not all the doors in the train have to reopen. Why isn't this being used?

J. Santamaria: The removal of seats on the R160s increased capacity and overall passenger flow. Dwell times went down and cars seemed to clear more quickly. It is hard to measure. I asked Operations Planning to do visual checks, but it is hard to gauge. Door recycling for each individual car is difficult to do, but not impossible. It would likely take more time as the conductor would have to find the button for the right door to keep open.

C. Grief: Will there be easier access for people to enter the R211 cars?

J. Santamaria: The R211 will have similar suspension control as the R160s and R179s, where it determines the load weight of the cars, and the height of the car is controlled that way. I have a secret pilot to potentially let passengers know which trains are less empty than others. I don't think it is going to work.

L. Daglian: Is it possible to measure capacity like what is done on the LIRR on the subway?

J. Santamaria: It is not possible right now. We are testing several companies on a pilot basis. The only challenge I see that car scan be empty for many reasons. A door could be cut out, there could be no A/C, or a homeless person in the car.

A. Albert: Unlike the LIRR, buses are using electronic counters, which might be a better way.

J. Santamaria: I looked at that as well. Electronic counters would be very expensive as you would have to place them on all eight doors into each car, which would have to be maintained. There is a 10-15% accuracy from the weight. The R211s are going to have a lot of information coming from the cars.

J. Anthony: Could signage in the cars show which side that the doors will open on?

J. Santamaria: This feature is going to be part of the R211s. Passenger information signs in the cars will also have arrows pointing to the side the doors will open for people with disabilities, and lights will flash as well as an automated announcement.

J. Melzer: If you remove end seating and put in bumper seating, how many priority seats would be left in each car? Are you reducing the number of priority seats per car?

J. Santamaria: The niche between the doors and the seat is wider and the doors are much wider. Since we have pocket doors, this means smaller windows, and fewer seats per car, which increases capacity.

### **Old Business**

L. Daglian: It came to our attention that there was no codified formal mechanism for making a recommendation for a representative on the MTA Board. We sent draft bylaw language to you earlier today for consideration. To change a bylaw, we need to read it and recommend it for a vote at the next TRC meeting. The language is: "The New York City Transit Riders Council will recommend to the governor's office a candidate for the council's non-voting seat on the MTA Board. In the event of a vacancy, the council shall nominate a candidate at a regular meeting of the NYCTRC, and the vote taken at the next regular meeting."

**Action item: Put the bylaw change in next meeting's agenda for a vote.**

### **New Business**

J. Anthony: The ADA signage for alternate routes on the elevators at Atlantic Avenue on the southbound 4th Avenue Line platform has not been updated to show the next accessible stop is New Utrecht Avenue or 62<sup>nd</sup> Street. It tells riders that the next stop is Bay Parkway on the D.

**Action item: Ask to have the signage corrected at Atlantic Avenue.**

S. Hoge: Can we propose a tax on the use or sale of motorcycle and bikes for transit?

T. Mason: The PCAC should write its own letter, not signed with other groups, to all of our elected pushing congestion pricing as every time the Governor brings it up with the President, he expresses no interest in it.

**Action item: Draft a letter from the NYCTRC pushing for congestion pricing.**

L. Daglian: Whatever is raised from other sources cannot make up for the lack of federal funds.

### **Adjourned**

This meeting was conducted via Zoom Conference Call: [Zoom Video](#)

#### **Action Items**

- **Get a breakdown by hour for essential service and the cost of operating it.**
- **Put the bylaw change on the agenda for the next meeting.**
- **Ask to have the signage corrected at Atlantic Avenue.**
- **Draft a letter from the NYCTRC pushing for congestion pricing.**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Daglian  
Executive Director