

## 2008 Annual Report



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

### Overview

Throughout 2008, the PCAC and rider Councils, LIRRCC, MNRCC and NYCTRC, found themselves addressing a myriad of issues related to the financial health and well-being of the MTA and its operating agencies. The fight for Congestion Pricing ended disappointingly when the proposal did not make it to the NYS Assembly for a full vote. The Moynihan Station project failed to move forward. The meltdown of the economy and severe cost overruns in capital projects forced the Authority, politicians and riders to rethink how public transportation in the NY Metropolitan Region could survive and grow in the future. By the year's end, fare hikes, and service and budget cuts were looming, despite the Ravitch Commission's recommendations for additional funding sources and

advocates' pleas to Albany to take action. However, in between addressing these matters, the PCAC members and staff produced several important reports, held President's Forums, presented testimony and participated in conferences and regional planning discussions. At their meetings, the Councils were host to many distinguished guests including: MTA Chairman H. Dale Hemmerdinger; Leonard DeSimone, President of the newly created Business Service Center; Gary Dellaverson, MTA's Chief Financial Officer; Howard Permut, newly appointed President of Metro-North Railroad; and Steve Feil, New York City Transit Senior Vice President – Department of Subways.

The PCAC and rider Councils are pleased to highlight their activities in this report.

### PCAC Executive Committee

- William K. Guild - *Chair*
- James Blair - *First Vice Chair*
- Ira Greenberg - *Second Vice Chair*
- Andrew Albert
- Gerard P. Bringmann
- Richard Cataggio
- Michael J. Sinansky

### PCAC Staff

- William Henderson - *Executive Director*
- Dr. Jan S. Wells - *Associate Director*
- Elynn Shannon - *Transportation Planner*
- Karyl Berger - *Research Associate*
- Deborah Morrison - *Administrative Assistant*

## LIRRCC

Gerard P. Bringmann - Chair  
Maureen Michaels - Vice Chair  
Gary Babyatzky  
Ronald K. Breuer  
Ira Greenberg  
Sandra Krebelj-Douglas  
Patricia S. McCauley  
James L. McGovern\*  
Edward Rich  
Jerome Shagam

## MNRCC

Richard Cataggio - Chair  
Gerard Kopera - Vice Chair  
James Blair\*  
David Buchwald  
Francis Corcoran  
Rhonda Herman  
Douglas McKean  
Norman Werner

## NYCTRC

### *Executive Committee:*

Andrew Albert\* - Chair  
Michael J. Sinansky - Vice Chair  
William K. Guild  
Marisol Halpern  
Toya Williford  
Shirley Genn  
Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas  
John Hunter  
Thomas C. Jost  
Trudy L. Mason  
Edith M. Prentiss  
Sharon Santa Maria  
Burton Strauss, Jr.

\* MTA Board Representative

## 2008 Reports and Documents

Welcome Aboard: Accessibility at the MTA

2008 Annual Performance Review of the MTA

Unwelcome Mats: New York's Subway Stations in Disrepair

All documents listed are available online in PDF format at <http://www.pcac.org>

## PCAC

### RESEARCH REPORT ON ADA COMPLIANCE AT THE MTA

In October, the PCAC released its annual research report, Welcome Aboard — Accessibility at the MTA. This exhaustive study looked at how each operating agency and MTA Headquarters handle ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) issues and the level of compliance achieved since enactment in 1990. It is clear from this study that the complex nature of these regulations, along with physical and financial constraints, has been a significant challenge to implementation. Most severely tested has been NYCT with its 100-year old subway system and its nearly 5,000 buses. Through interviews, field inspections and government audit reports, the PCAC documented the history, progress and current state of accessibility at the MTA. Findings include:

- Overall, the LIRR and MNR have few issues with respect to accessibility. They have met their key station plans, provide services and amenities for customers with disabilities, and continue to upgrade and improve station amenities for them.
- NYCT, with 468 stations, has made 67 key subway stations accessible. Another 33 must be made accessible by 2020. Outages of elevators and escalators at subway stations have been a chronic problem. However, in the latter part of 2008, NYCT began implementing new procedures to improve the timeliness of maintenance and replacement.
- The entire fleet of MTA/NYCT buses is lift-equipped, has kneeling features, wheelchair securement devices, public address systems, and seating spaces reserved for persons with disabilities.

PCAC made a number of recommendations, not only to MTA, but also to the NYPD Traffic Bureau, NYC Department of Transportation, New York State and the Federal Transit Administration. As a result of this study, PCAC has added a permanent "accessibility update" section to its website to call attention to issues and improvements that impact MTA riders with disabilities. Reporters from the *Daily News* and NY1 attended the press conference; and NY1, *amNY* and *Newsday* wrote supportive articles about the report.

### FIRST ANNUAL MTA PERFORMANCE REVIEW

In an effort to document the MTA's progress in providing a better rider experience, the PCAC in January 2008 issued its first yearly performance review of MTA Headquarters and its operating agencies. This report highlighted many positive aspects, such as leadership, information accessibility, service improvements, website improvements, and the first steps to regional transportation with the launch of new bus service between Staten Island and Bayonne, New Jersey. Areas needing improvement were also detailed: transit-oriented development, delays in implementing security technology, and the failure to secure funding for a 10th Avenue station on the 7 line extension. More specific commentary was addressed in the highlights of the operating agencies.

### REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

PCAC members and staff participated in a variety of regional transportation discussions throughout the year. As a member of the Empire State Transportation Alliance (ESTA), PCAC, represented by Executive Director William Henderson, attended many meetings on the Moynihan Station proposal and traveled to Albany to meet with legislators, their staff and representatives of the Governor's Office. PCAC also participated in meetings of the Regional Citizen's Liaison Committee for the Access to the Region's Core (ARC) project, the MTA's Regional Transit Advisory Group and NYMTC's Stakeholder Advisory Committee for the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan.

### TESTIMONY

During the year the PCAC provided testimony on numerous topics affecting riders. Two very controversial subjects were congestion pricing and the Ravitch Commission recommendations for MTA long-term funding needs. Executive Director Henderson testified on behalf of the NYCTRC in support of congestion pricing with the proviso that the system be designed so that its revenues flow to the MTA to improve public transportation. He gave testimony before the Ravitch Commission in Mineola on behalf of the LIRRCC, and in Manhattan on behalf of



LIRRCC members Jim McGovern (left) and Maureen Michaels speak with LIRR President Helena Williams

the PCAC. His testimony centered on the impact of the MTA's \$27 billion debt burden on the Authority's finances. Henderson also testified at an MTA Public Hearing supporting a reduction to the threshold for the MetroCard bonus.

William Guild, Chair of the PCAC, spoke at a hearing held by the Transportation Committee of the New York City Council on "Terror Proofing the New York City Subways," and shared the PCAC's concern about the MTA security program. Guild also testified at a Transportation Committee meeting of the New York City Council about improving service on the G line.

### CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS

PCAC staff and Council members attended a number of events that highlighted transit issues: the State of the MTA Address by CEO Lee Sander; the Regional Plan Association Annual Assembly; a Symposium on Transportation Finance and a Conference on Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), both sponsored by the NYU Wagner Rudin Center; a Sustainability Forum sponsored by the MTA in celebration of its 40th anniversary; the Annual NYMTC Meeting; and the national Rail~Volution Conference which was held in San Francisco in October. At the latter meeting, Associate Director Jan Wells made a presentation on how PCAC advocates for the riders.

## LIRRCC

### PRESIDENT'S FORUM

The annual LIRRCC President's Forum was held in May. LIRR President Helena Williams addressed questions from a large crowd in the Atrium of the Jamaica Station Control Center. This new venue

was selected for the convenience of riders who could easily stop off on their way home from work. Later in the summer, the LIRRCC and staff were invited to tour LIRR's new Public Information Office (PIO) in Jamaica which included a meeting with President Williams and her staff on communication issues.

### REGIONAL PLANNING PARTICIPATION

In 2008, the LIRRCC increased its collaboration with a number of Long Island advocates. Associate Director Wells and Transportation Planner Ellyn Shannon became members of Vision Long Island's (VLI) Smart Growth Working Group which meets quarterly. They also attended VLI's annual Smart Growth Summit and Smart Growth Awards conference. LIRRCC is a founding member of the Long Island Transit Coalition, a consortium of transit advocates and business interests formed in 2008, which is urging the LIRR to vigorously push the Main Line Corridor Improvement Project (more commonly known as "Third Track"). This enhancement is a key component to the success of East Side Access, the long-anticipated direct connection of LIRR to Grand Central Terminal. As part of the Coalition, staff members Henderson, Wells, and Shannon met with several NYS Assembly members in December.

### PUBLIC APPEARANCES

Executive Director Henderson engaged in numerous interviews concerning LIRR issues, including PBS on Channel 21 (WLIW) and News 12's Long Island Speaks. Council Chair Gerard Bringmann made appearances on TV Channels 4 and 12, Bloomberg Radio and Long Island Public Radio. Transportation Planner Shannon participated in a Transportation Panel at the LIRR Jamaica station hosted by the Energia Partnership of Long Island.

### MEMBERS

Several valued members left the Council in 2008: Edward Rich, Jerome Shagam, Sandra Krebelj-Douglas and Patricia S. McCauley. As a result, the Council and staff made concerted efforts to fill

these positions, including a call for new members in the October LIRR *Train Talk* seat drop. As of the end of 2008 a number of riders had submitted applications and were being considered by the Nassau and Suffolk County Executives for nomination.

## MNRCC

### PRESIDENT'S FORUM

MNRCC bade farewell to outgoing President Peter Cannito at the annual President's Forum held in March. The Council gratefully acknowledged his exemplary leadership and many accomplishments over his nine-year tenure. Prior to answering questions from riders, President Cannito gave a presentation on the Railroad's accomplishments in celebration of its 25th Anniversary.

### TAPPEN ZEE BRIDGE HEARINGS

Throughout 2008 Transportation Planner Shannon regularly attended the Tappan Zee Bridge Traffic and Transit Stakeholders Advisory Working Group. She monitored the decision-making process for the replacement of the bridge and associated provision for public transportation from Suffern in Rockland County, across the bridge, and through Westchester County to Port Chester. The project is under the leadership of NYSDOT, NYS Thruway Authority and Metro-North Railroad. By the end of 2008 the three-agency team had recommended the bridge be replaced with a transit-ready bridge and that bus rapid transit (BRT) and commuter rail transit (CRT) be added to the corridor. Shannon also began to watch the West of Hudson Regional



Transit Access Study, initiated late 2008 and jointly funded by Metro-North Railroad and the Port Authority. This study is examining rail access to Stewart Airport and the potential for upgrades to the Port Jervis line (which runs through Orange and Rockland Counties) to reduce travel time into New York City.

### **TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT**

Staff members Shannon and Wells toured the Yonkers station and surrounding transit-oriented development with MNR personnel. This multi-million dollar station renovation is the linchpin of the Yonkers waterfront revival and an outstanding example of public-private cooperation: the MNR, the City of Yonkers, and the private development community. They also attended an open house exhibit for proposed redevelopment around the Harrison station. This initiative is a joint collaboration between Metro-North and the City of Harrison whereby the Railroad's surface parking lots will be replaced with structured parking and mixed-use development.

### **PRESS CONFERENCE**

MNRCC Chair Richard Cataggio participated in a press conference at Beacon Station held by U.S. Representative John Hall (D-NY 19) to announce the passage of the House "Saving Energy Through Public Transportation Act" (H.R. 6052). The bill called for grants to mass transit authorities to reduce public transit fares.

### **MEMBERS**

The Council regretted the loss of members Norman Werner and Thomas Jennings from the MNRCC, but was

pleased to welcome new members David Buchwald and Rhonda Herman of White Plains, and Douglas McKean from Rye.

## **NYCTRC**

### **STATION REPORT**

A top accomplishment of the Council in 2008 was the release of the station survey report: Unwelcome Mats. This work was the outcome of the members' survey of conditions in 50 subway stations. The results showed that nearly half of the stations (46%) need more attention. A well attended press conference was held at the 149th Street-Grand Concourse station and all major New York City newspapers published articles on the report. Radio coverage included CBS 880 and WNYC. Chair Andrew Albert did TV interviews with NY1, Channel 4 and Channel 7.

### **PRESIDENT'S FORUM AND BUS FORUM**

In April, the annual President's Forum was held at 2 Broadway in Manhattan with NYCT President Howard Roberts and members of his staff. The annual Bus Forum with Joe Smith, Senior Vice-President of Buses, was held in June at Queens Borough Hall. Both Forums were well attended by the public.

### **REPORTERS' PANEL**

In January, NYCTRC hosted transit reporters from the top New York City news outlets for a panel discussion about newsworthy transit topics. Participants were: Pete Donohue (*Daily News*), William Neuman (*NY Times*), Bobby Cuza (NY1), Marlene Naanes (*amNY*) and Patrick Gallahue (*NY Post*).

### **FIELD TRIP**

In lieu of the regular August meeting, Council members and staff took a tour of the new Select Bus Service (SBS), which was initiated in the Bronx and upper Manhattan earlier in the summer. This service includes a number of innovations, such as off-board fare payment and controlled signalization of traffic lights.

### **PRESS CONFERENCE**

Council Chair Albert and staff members Henderson and Shannon participated in a Transportation 4 America press conference calling on the presidential candidates to implement a five-point plan for economic prosperity through transportation.

### **MTA FARE INCREASES**

Member Edith Prentiss appeared with City Comptroller William Thompson and Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer to raise objections to the potential 150% increase in Access-A-Ride fares, set in motion with the passage of the "doomsday" MTA Budget. Executive Director Henderson met with the Transportation Committee of Manhattan Community Board 6 to discuss the hardships that East Side residents would face if the Budget were to be implemented. Staff also presented the NYCTRC's position on the proposed budget in the public speaking and business portions of MTA NYCT Committee and Board meetings.

### **MEMBERS**

During 2008, the Council accepted the resignation of John Hunter with regret, but was pleased to be joined by Edith Prentiss, who is from Washington Heights and a member of the disabled community. Ms. Prentiss brings a new and insightful perspective to Council discussions and was an invaluable resource for the PCAC research report on ADA.

NYCTRC Chair Andrew Albert (left) sits alongside NYCT President Howard H. Roberts and Senior Vice-President Cosema Crawford at the President's Forum

