

2009 Annual Report



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

Overview

Financial turmoil and uncertainty at the MTA marked 2009. The PCAC and its Councils spent the spring battling the MTA's proposed "doomsday" budget. This effort included testimony delivered at hearings and Board meetings and discussions with State elected officials, both locally and in Albany. Unfortunately, the funding legislation that was finally passed in May proved to be inadequate and by late fall the MTA faced a deficit of nearly \$800 million. In December riders began to see "doomsday" as a very real possibility and the PCAC was again arming itself for the fight to save the system. To make matters worse, the NYS Legislature failed to extend the appointments of our three non-voting MTA Board members by the December 31st deadline. Two months later they were reinstated.

Despite these setbacks, there were positive outcomes. The PCAC got improved standing both legislatively and through a new Memorandum of Understanding with the MTA. Members and staff continued to advocate for the riders, giving numerous interviews to TV, radio and print outlets. The PCAC website was updated, a major research report was completed and the 2008 Annual Performance Review of the MTA was released. Other activities included conferences, field trips and the Councils' President's Forums. PCAC also welcomed the future NYS Lt. Governor Richard Ravitch, NYS Assemblyman Richard Brodsky, and MTA Inspector General Barry Kluger as guest speakers.

We invite you to read more about the activities of the PCAC and the rider Councils in the following report.

PCAC Executive Committee

Ira R. Greenberg - *Chair*
William K. Guild - *First Vice Chair*
James F. Blair - *Second Vice Chair*
Andrew Albert
Gerard Kopera
Maureen Michaels
Michael J. Sinansky

PCAC Staff

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

2009 Service on LIRRCC

Maureen Michaels - Chair
Gerard P. Bringmann - Vice Chair
Gary Babyatzky**
Ronald K. Breuer
Sheila Carpenter
Owen Costello
Mark Epstein
Ira R. Greenberg*
Matthew L. Kessler
James L. McGovern**
Larry Rubinstein

2009 Service on MNRCC

Gerard Kopera - Chair
David Buchwald - Vice Chair
James F. Blair*
Richard Cataggio
Francis T. Corcoran
Randolph Glucksman
Rhonda Herman
Douglas McKean**

2009 Service on NYCTRC

Executive Committee:

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

*MTA Board Representative

**Stepped down during the year

2009 Reports and Documents

Going the Distance: Transportation
Mobility in the New York
Metropolitan Region

2009 Annual Performance Review of
the MTA

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

PCAC

STATURE OF THE PCAC

The PCAC and the MTA formally updated their relationship with a new memorandum of understanding signed in September, effective January 1, 2009. This new document firmly establishes the PCAC's independence with respect to critical aspects of personnel management, internal and external funding, and contract services to the MTA.

In May 2009 the New York State Legislature passed a major MTA financial rescue plan which included the formal establishment of the PCAC in law (only the rider Councils had been included in the original 1981 enabling legislation). As part of the May package an Office of Legislative and Community Input was created within the MTA whereby comments, concerns and recommendations from members of the legislature and members of the PCAC were to be compiled and delivered to the Legislature. Clearly, these important measures place the PCAC in a much stronger position to carry out its mission to serve the riders of the MTA.

RESEARCH REPORT ON REGIONAL MOBILITY

In October, the PCAC released its 2009 research report, *Going the Distance: Transportation Mobility in the New York Metropolitan Region*. The investigation focused on three facets of inter-operability: physical integration, fare convenience and unified travel information. Findings include:

- Many areas in the tri-state region are currently experiencing chokepoints due to the tremendous ridership increases that have occurred between 1990 and 2008. Despite the magnitude and importance of the Access to the Region's Core and East Side Access projects, which will greatly improve regional mobility, there are still many bottlenecks that have yet to be addressed.
- Similar to the physical layout of the system, a regional fare policy also influences speed and convenience for transit riders. "Smart cards" decrease boarding times and allow riders to refill funds online. While other major transit agencies in the United States have implemented smart cards, the MTA has encountered widespread difficulties in

adopting such a system. In 2009 NYCT concluded the first phase of its smart card pilot program that began in 2006. While the program was small, it showed potential.

- Another piece of the regional mobility puzzle is the access to comprehensive, easily understood, accurate and timely travel information. There are many ways to access information electronically, but not all riders have a computer or handheld devices with internet access. Thus, printed materials with appropriate telephone numbers for travel information remain critically important. Further, more effort is needed to provide web travel planner programs for travelers with disabilities.

PCAC made a number of recommendations on all three facets of mobility issues and will be using these points to monitor mobility progress in the region.

SECOND ANNUAL MTA PERFORMANCE REVIEW

In its performance review of the MTA activities in 2008 the PCAC praised improvements in communication, website enhancements, sustainability, transit-oriented development initiatives, and consolidation efforts in business services and bus operations. The report also noted weak areas: corporate structure at MTAHQ and LIRR; management of capital projects, implementation of the Integrated Electronic Security System; and promotion of the MTA's critical role in the economic vitality of the New York City region.

TRANSPORTATION DEBATES

The budget controversy in the spring brought a closer relationship with State representatives as staff and PCAC Board members made many trips to Albany to discuss MTA's need for additional resources.

In August, the PCAC, in a letter to Governor Paterson, formally protested the "soft release" of the proposed MTA 2010-2014 Capital Plan, a significant break from past procedure whereby the Capital Plan is offered publicly at an MTA Board meeting with commentary.

TESTIMONY

In early Spring, PCAC weighed in on proposals of the Ravitch Commission. The staff and Council members made a variety of statements to the MTA Board during



LIRRCC

PRESIDENT'S FORUM

The annual LIRRCC President's Forum was held in May. Chair Maureen Michaels moderated as LIRR President Helena Williams addressed questions from riders gathered in the Atrium of the Jamaica Station Control Center.

TRANSPORTATION DEBATES

The Council pressed a variety of issues with LIRR during the course of the year, including calls for: better on-board ticket collection; improvement in the performance of the diesel fleet; improvement in the condition of stations and station restrooms; better maintenance of the right-of-way; the release of the DEIS (draft environmental impact statement) for the Main Line Corridor Improvement project (Third Track); and a more valid methodology for reporting of customer satisfaction survey results. In response to this last concern, the MTA delayed planned customer satisfaction surveys until a uniform methodology for interpreting results could be established for all agencies.

TESTIMONY

In January the LIRRCC began protesting proposed service cuts and fare increases. At the MTA Board hearings in Manhattan and Garden City, the Council went on record: "The ride is unpredictable, inefficient, and uncomfortable; and the deferral of maintenance work is unconscionable and unacceptable. The operating statistics and monthly reports that you see do not accurately or adequately reflect the experiences of commuters who ride on a daily basis. Improving the quality of service means that the proposed service reductions must be reexamined and new objectives put in place and achieved."

the year, focused primarily on financial prospects. From the riders' perspective the combination of service cuts, uncertainty about future capital funding, and fare increases was unacceptable. The PCAC called on those who rejected the recommendations of the Ravitch Commission to offer better alternatives.

PRESENTATIONS, CONFERENCES AND EXCURSIONS

Research Associate Karyl Berger traveled to Washington, DC and gave a presentation about PCAC to the Maryland Area Regional Commuter (MARC) Riders Advisory Council. Throughout the year the PCAC staff members attended a variety of programs and meetings sponsored by regional leaders in public transportation advocacy.

The PCAC had the opportunity to tour the tunnel work of the East Side Access capital project. Staff members joined six PCAC members to hear a presentation by MTA Capital Construction. Thereafter, the group donned rubber boots, protective glasses, hard hats and reflective vests and descended sixteen flights of stairs into the world of hard rock caverns.

TRANSITION

Having completed his second term, NYCTRC's William Guild stepped down as Chair of PCAC at the June quarterly meeting. The PCAC gratefully acknowledges his long-standing dedication and service to the riders. Ira Greenberg of the LIRRCC was elected to replace him.

At hearings on NYMTC's Draft 2010-2035 Regional Transportation Plan and the proposed MTA 2010-2014 Capital Plan, the Council maintained its support for the Main Line Corridor Third Track and a second track from Farmingdale to Ronkonkoma, both of which will be necessary to take full advantage of the East Side Access project to Manhattan.

PRESENTATIONS AND EXCURSIONS

Staff members Shannon and Wells served on Vision Long Island's Smart Growth Committee and attended numerous events on Long Island related to improving the land use and transportation nexus.

TRANSITION

Maureen Michaels replaced Gerry Bringmann as Chair and he assumed the Vice Chair position. Former Board representative James L. McGovern relocated out of the New York area and was replaced at the MTA Board table by Ira Greenberg. Also leaving the Council was Gary Babyatzky, a six-year member from Suffolk County. Council membership was replenished with the addition of Sheila Carpenter (Suffolk), Owen Costello (Nassau), Mark Epstein (Suffolk), Matthew Kessler (Brooklyn Borough) and Larry Rubinstein (Nassau).

MNRCC

PRESIDENT'S FORUM

In March, the Council welcomed MNR President Howard Permut to the annual president's forum held in the MTA Board Room. He answered questions from riders about customer service, station conditions, service, and safety

TRANSPORTATION DEBATES

The Tappan Zee Bridge and West of Hudson Regional Access Study were



the focus of many trips by staff to Newburgh, Suffern and West Nyack for presentations to stakeholders.

The Council initiated an outreach program aimed at elected officials and community groups which was launched in December with the release of a new informational flyer.

TESTIMONY

Like its sister Councils, MNRCC members spent considerable time in the spring attending and testifying at hearings concerning the proposed MTA budget cuts. The Council was concerned that severe financial cuts would threaten Metro-North's outstanding reputation and its contributions to the economy and quality of life of the region and State. In addition, customer service and maintenance reductions could not only compromise the high level of service, but also jeopardize the appeal of Metro-North's crown jewel, Grand Central Terminal.

PRESENTATIONS AND EXCURSIONS

Guests of the Council in 2009 were: Robert MacLagger, MNR Vice-President of Planning, and several members of his staff to explain how game day service to the new Yankee Stadium Station would work; a MNR senior conductor who described a typical day and the responsibilities of the train crew; and John Kennard, MNR Director of Long Range Capital Planning, to discuss the 2010-2014 capital needs.

In September, the Rockland County Legislature held a "Summit on Financing the Tappan Zee Bridge & I-287 Corridor". PCAC Associate Director Wells attended, along with Randy Glucksman, Council member from Rockland County. Glucksman and Wells also joined the MNR staff on the West of Hudson inspection train to Spring Valley and Port Jervis.

TRANSITION

Gerard Kopera was tapped as Chair of the Council when Richard Cattagio stepped down after seventeen years. Many thanks go to Rich for his impressive service record. David Buchwald was elected to Vice Chair.

The Council was sorry to see Doug McKean (Westchester) leave but was pleased to welcome Randy Glucksman of Rockland County.

NYCTRC

PRESIDENT'S FORUM

On June 17th the NYCTRC hosted the annual President's Forum at 2 Broadway in Manhattan. Chair Andrew Albert moderated as NYCT President Howard Roberts and his staff answered a wide variety of questions from a large crowd of riders.

TRANSPORTATION DEBATES

During the year the Council spoke out on issues of concern: It called repeatedly for the need to control the excessive noise and crowding at the Times Square Station; stood in opposition to the restructured financial arrangement with the developer of Atlantic Yards; successfully petitioned for luggage racks on buses that serve airports; and pushed for the need to address ADA issues at South Ferry Station for sight impaired riders. The Council also gave input on new routes for Select Bus Service and technology projects such as AVL (automatic vehicle locator) and the Customer Information system (CIS) pilot on 34th Street.

TESTIMONY

Council members made appearances at the many budget hearings in the spring, giving testimony in support of funding for the MTA. Of particular concern were the severe service cuts proposed during off-peak hours on subways and buses, considered a threat to the safety and reliability of the system. Compounding service cuts was the proposed elimination of subway station customer assistant and agent positions, a clear erosion of rider security. Finally, the Council was greatly opposed to the possible elimination of the W and V subway lines, which will add to crowding on other lines.



PRESENTATIONS AND EXCURSIONS

During the year the Council invited a long list of informative speakers, including Board member Doreen Frasca and recently appointed NYCT President Thomas Prendergast.

A number of NYCTRC members and staff traveled to the Smith-9th Streets Station to see the on-going restoration of the Culver Viaduct. The work on the Viaduct is part of a large capital project that also modernizes an interlocking and rehabilitates the station and an employee facility. The group also visited stations on the Sea Beach Line which are in serious disrepair.

In August members of the NYCTRC toured a new environmentally friendly bus manufactured by DesignLine which was rolled out in a pilot program on 42nd Street in Manhattan (M42). Council members gave numerous suggestions to NYCT for improvement of the interior arrangement for disabled passengers.

TRANSITION

Joining the Council in 2009 were Stuart Goldstein, appointed by the Mayor, and Sharon King Hoge, appointed by the Public Advocate.