

**Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council**  
**Chair's Report**  
**January 16, 2014**

I want to start by wishing everyone a Happy New Year. We had an eventful 2013, and since we last met much has happened. Because of the December 1 derailment and the changes in Metro-North that have resulted from that incident, we will have a full plate of new challenges for 2014. At the same time, we want to continue to increase our outreach and let commuters know that we represent them and advocate for their interests. We're going to need each of our members to be active, since this is going to be a busy year.

I don't want to rehash the derailment of December 1 and the events that followed from it in my report, as we all saw a number of media accounts about this incident. It's sufficient to say that this was a tragedy that should not have happened and that the derailment has impacted Metro-North in many ways and will continue to influence the future of the Railroad for many years. The Council issued a statement on the accident after it occurred and wrote to Metro-North President Howard Permut with a number of questions about the railroad's practices and policies related to safety and the communication of information to riders. Jim Blair will comment on the MTA Board's response to the derailment today in his Board Report.

The accident is under investigation by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), and this investigation is expected to take twelve months or more. The Federal Railroad Administration is also approximately halfway through a comprehensive safety assessment of Metro-North that will conclude on February 13. Until the NTSB investigation is complete, Metro-North is limited in what it can say publicly about the accident or its investigation. As you may remember, the Association of Commuter Rail Employees, the union that represents train crews, was removed from its status as a party to the investigation because of its public statements about the matter.

Before I leave the subject, I want to note one recent piece of news about the derailment. This past Tuesday the NTSB released its preliminary report on the events of December 1. You have been provided a copy of this report. Most of the information in the preliminary report is factual in nature and has been reported elsewhere, but it does note that after inspection and testing, the NTSB found no anomalies in the signal system, train brakes, and other mechanical equipment or in the track in the derailment area. The report also estimated the costs of the accident, not including damages to those injured and the survivors of those killed, at \$9 million.

As you know Howard Permut has announced his retirement from the Metro-North Railroad effective January 31. Joseph Giulietti, who is currently Executive Director of the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA), has

been chosen to succeed him as Metro-North President but his starting date is yet to be determined. Mr. Giulietti spent 15 years at Metro-North starting in 1983 prior to his work in Florida. I've received a good deal of positive feedback about both Mr. Giulietti and Tri-Rail, the system operated by SFRTA, and am looking forward to working with the new administration at Metro-North.

New Metro-North East of Hudson schedules will take effect on Saturday, January 18. The original plan for these schedules was that they would reflect decreased running times of one to five minutes in peak periods and up to four minutes in off peak periods due to completion of major infrastructure projects along the Railroad. These projects are in place, but changes in operating rules made after the December 1 derailment would make it extremely difficult to operate trains according to the schedules developed in November 2013. As a result, Metro-North produced new schedules that include the return of service to the Melrose and Tremont stations and some improvements in running time as a result of track work completed in the Bronx. More substantial running time improvements will have to wait until late this spring, when additional infrastructure projects are completed and safety-related changes are refined.

Metro-North also launched a new train time app in mid-December 2013. The app provides real-time train status and track information, service alerts and advisory notices on planned changes, station information, schedules and fares, elevator and escalator status, parking availability and getaways package information. It is available for both iPhone and Android smartphones.

NJ Transit recently rolled out its MyTix ticketing application for use on all of its trains, and I questioned why this app could not be adopted by Metro-North. We sent a letter to MTA Chairman Tom Prendergast asking about the possibility of adopting the MyTix app and received a response stating that the MTA is in contact with NJ Transit staff to exchange information about fare payment projects and investigate options for interoperability. Unfortunately, Chairman Prendergast described full regional interoperability as a part of the MTA's long term vision and did not commit to any course of action involving MyTix.

A 5 percent fare increase for riders originating or ending their trips at Connecticut New Haven Line stations took effect January 1, 2014. This increase does not impact riders traveling between New York stations, except for persons using New Haven Line stations near the New York-Connecticut border where some fares had been artificially reduced to keep them below fares to and from Connecticut.

The Super Bowl game on February 2 and the events leading up to the game will have a number of impacts on the area's transportation system. For the game itself, NJ Transit will use a fleet of locomotives and bi-level coaches to operate a shuttle service between the Secaucus station and the Meadowlands. The "Train to the Game" service, which was available from the New Haven Line for early afternoon games at MetLife Stadium this season, will not be operating for the

Super Bowl. Metro-North is giving its East of Hudson riders traveling to the game directions to Penn Station, where they can board NJ Transit service to Secaucus for transfer to shuttles to the stadium.

West of Hudson riders won't be directly impacted by this service plan, but in order to replace the bi-level coaches that will be removed from service starting next Monday, January 20, NJ Transit will run longer single level trains. These single level coaches have to come from somewhere, and I've communicated my concern to Metro-North that shifts in equipment could have an impact on their West of Hudson Service.