

Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council
Chair's Report
October 14, 2014

I'm sure by now our members have heard of press reports of MTA Chairman Thomas Prendergast's comments in an interview conducted in March 2014 in connection with the National Transportation Safety Board's investigation into several major accidents on Metro-North during 2013. The interview was conducted by the NTSB investigator in charge of reviewing the incidents at Metro-North and was recently released to the public.

There's some very troubling information in this interview about breakdowns within Metro-North that led to the incidents that occurred last year. Many of the identified problems are connected to staffing and succession issues that we have been exploring as a Council over the past two years, from ensuring that appropriate leadership is in place at the top levels of the Railroad, to the problem of retirements and vacancies in the supervisory ranks, to identifying talent within the organization. We've distributed the transcript of this interview to members, and can discuss our next steps in our meeting today.

While Chairman Prendergast's comments are certainly alarming and a call to action, there is some good news at Metro-North as well. The MTA has agreed to partner with a developer, Avalon Bay, to build a transit-oriented development on space now used for surface parking at the Harrison station. The agreement was worked out by Metro-North in conjunction with the Town and Village of Harrison and will result in the construction of 143 apartments, 27,000 square feet of retail space and two pedestrian plazas, while increasing the number of parking spaces at the site to 569.

At least 475 of these parking spaces will be available for commuters, which is an 85 percent increase from the 257 spaces available in four Metro-North parking lots that are far too small for the demand. This development not only provides the housing that an increasing number of commuters are seeking without raising parking demand, but also satisfies existing unmet demand for parking. It's definitely a win-win situation.

Metro-North also has been recognized for its work to increase the energy efficiency of Grand Central Terminal through replacing and upgrading chillers, cooling towers, fans, compressors, air handlers, and the Terminal's steam distribution system. The project required \$23.4 million of work and was recently selected as a winner of one of the 2014 BuildSmart NY Awards. These awards were created by Governor Cuomo to recognize commitment to investment and innovation in technology in building projects.

In addition, the project will save \$3.3 million and 5.5 million kilowatts of electricity annually and will have a payback period of 11 years, while the savings will continue for decades. Because of an arrangement with the New York State

Power Authority, the project was done at no upfront cost to Metro-North. I've reported on this work in the past and we congratulate Metro-North for this award.

Finally, at the beginning of October we received word from Amtrak that its two North, or Hudson River, tunnels will have to be closed for approximately a year to repair damage from flooding during Sandy. These crossings are critical for West of Hudson riders and are a reminder of the importance of building alternative rail capacity for crossing the Hudson. Shutting down one of the tunnels for repairs would reduce the capacity of the system by 75 percent, to 6 trains per hour.