

Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council
Chair's Report
February 21, 2014

Metro-North's new President Joseph Giuliatti returned to the Railroad on February 10. As you may know, Mr. Giuliatti was one of Metro-North's original team, joining the Railroad after service with Metro-North's predecessors Penn Central and Conrail, and worked at Metro-North 15 years in his initial tour. He left New York for the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority, where he served as Deputy Executive Director and, for the past 14 years, Executive Director. We look forward to meeting with Mr. Giuliatti and welcoming him as our guest at a future meeting.

It has been a difficult month, with a number of weather-related disruptions in service and numerous weather-related equipment problems, and Metro-North hasn't always made the right call in response to winter conditions. Last Friday was particularly problematic, as Metro-North made a decision to operate service on a Saturday schedule, but was quickly overwhelmed as Friday's weather was better than expected and the number of riders at stations far outpaced the number of available trains. Metro-North issued a public apology for this miscalculation and has committed to developing a comprehensive plan to improve safety, on-time performance and customer communications.

On the West of Hudson lines, an upcoming leadership transition in New Jersey may have implications for Metro-North service. NJ Transit has announced that its Executive Director, James Weinstein, will be leaving the agency effective March 2 and will be replaced by Veronique ("Ronnie") Hakim. It was something of an open secret even before the problems surrounding Super Bowl transit service that Mr. Weinstein would be departing. Ms. Hakim may be familiar to some of our members, as she spent over 20 years with the MTA, first in the legal department of NYC Transit and most recently as General Counsel of the MTA Capital Construction Company. She left the MTA in 2010 to become the Executive Director of the New Jersey Turnpike Authority. We hope that this change will lead to a new and more collaborative relationship between Metro-North and NJ Transit, which operates Metro-North's West of Hudson service.

Grand Central Terminal's centennial year is over, but a new website has been launched to preserve much of the information and images that were collected in preparation for the centennial. The New York Transit Museum is permanently maintaining an online form of its Grand by Design exhibition at www.gcthistory.com. While the online version cannot match the experience of the original exhibit in Grand Central Terminal's Vanderbilt Hall, the website incorporates elements of the exhibit's design and also makes available extensive resources on Grand Central developed by Transit Museum researchers in preparation for the Centennial.

The Federal Railroad Administration last week completed its 60-day comprehensive safety assessment of Metro-North, which was titled "Operation Deep Dive." The findings of this process have yet to be released, but on Tuesday of this week the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) made a set of additional safety recommendations to Metro-North. These recommendations called for the use of inward and outward facing audio and image recorders in operating cabs and the installation of permanent speed restriction signs along rights-of-way.

The purpose of the audio and image recorders recommended by the NTSB is not only to aid in the investigation of incidents, but to ensure that operating rules are followed on an ongoing basis and in developing procedures to deal with crew fatigue and inattention. The recommendation relative to speed restriction signs addresses Metro-North's practice in posting signs at only some points where permanent speed restrictions are in place. The investigation of the accident is ongoing, but it is the NTSB's practice to release safety recommendations in advance of the completion of the investigation so that improvements in safety will not be delayed until an investigation is complete. A copy of the letter outlining the NTSB recommendations is included in your packets today.

Please mark your calendars for the quarterly PCAC meeting which will be held on Thursday, March 6th. MTA Chairman and CEO Tom Prendergast will be our guest speaker, as he was forced to cancel plans to join us in December due to the Spuyten Duyvil derailment. We can discuss issues that we want to raise with the Chairman in the New Business portion of our meeting today.