

Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council  
Chair's Report  
April 10, 2014

Metro-North has launched a series of six informal customer forums at Grand Central Terminal and outlying stations to give riders with the opportunity to speak with the Railroad's senior management, including President Joseph Giulietti. These forums are part of the communication actions outlined in Metro-North's 100-day action plan. Sessions have already been held at Grand Central Terminal on March 26 and White Plains on April 3. Another session is being held at Stamford today from 5:00 to 7:00 pm, and has caused us put on hold our meeting with President Giulietti until May 22. Additional forums are scheduled on May 1 7:00 to 9:00 am in Grand Central Terminal, on May 6 at Croton-Harmon, and on May 14 at Harrison. These last two sessions will be held from 5:00 to 7:00 pm.

At the end of last week, the National Transportation Safety Board released a collection of materials from their docket on the December 1 Spuyten Duyvil derailment. Included in these materials are the transcript of the NTSB's interview with the train engineer and the NTSB Chief Medical Officer's report on the train's engineer's condition. The documents are the source of the stories that have discussed the engineer's sleep apnea condition that was diagnosed after the derailment. These materials are on the web at <http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/search/hitlist.cfm?docketID=55841>.

After I contacted his newspaper to correct a LoHud website banner that stated this diagnosis was made with regard to the conductor and implied that the conductor was operating the train, I was contacted by a Journal-News reporter who asked us to comment whether Metro-North has done enough to ensure public safety and what else the MNRCC would like to see done. I responded to the reporter that the investigation is still active and we will respond to these questions appropriately when the complete findings and recommendations on the incident are released.

One of the interim recommendations that resulted from the Spuyten Duyvil derailment was that Metro-North implement automatic speed enforcement at five curves and five bridges on its system. In late March, Metro-North completed this work well in advance of the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA's) September 1, 2014 deadline. These speed restrictions were put in place by modifying existing signal systems. As a result of this work the signal display in operating cabs now automatically indicates reduced allowable speeds as trains approach these ten locations. If the engineer does not reduce the train's speed accordingly, the system will bring the train to a stop.

An FRA report outlining the findings of its 60-day "Deep Dive" review of Metro-North was released on March 14 and was highly critical of the Railroad. Among the findings in the report the FRA said that Metro-North has a deficient safety culture. The report also stated that the Railroad overemphasizes on-time performance to the point that safety is being jeopardized by compromises made in inspection and maintenance of track and train operations. The report criticized the lack of accountability for safety concerns and Metro-North's training and record keeping systems, giving the Railroad 60 days to submit a plan to improve training and the effectiveness of its safety department.

President Giulietti acknowledged that safety had lost its position as Metro-North's top priority and pledged to correct shortcomings identified in the report.

On March 12, Metro-North was affected by the severe natural gas explosion at 116<sup>th</sup> Street and Park Avenue. Although no Metro-North trains were in the area at the time of the explosion or stranded outside of stations, the proximity of the blast and the debris that it rained on the tracks made it necessary to shut down Metro-North service in Manhattan until the tracks could be inspected and debris cleared.

During the service suspension, Metro-North implemented a service plan that relied on riders using subways, which cross honored Metro-North tickets, to reach temporary terminals on the Harlem, Hudson, and New Haven Lines. This arrangement worked smoothly, and riders who needed to travel on Metro-North were accommodated. We recommended to Metro-North management that Hudson Line tickets also be cross honored on West of Hudson trains, as this would provide another option for some riders and we had not seen this arrangement announced. Metro-North responded that they were cross honoring as we recommended, and fortunately outbound service from Grand Central Terminal was restored at the beginning of the evening rush period. It was good to see Metro-North rise to this challenge, as riders had grown to expect.

Finally, I should review our meeting calendar since holidays and scheduling conflicts have forced us to make some changes. Our meeting today is one week earlier than normal due to the holiday conflicts, and in May, we will not have our usual business meeting, but instead will be in Grand Central Terminal at our normal meeting time on May 15 to meet the riders whom we represent. We'll operate from a space next to the Station Master's Office and use the time to talk with riders, give them information about the Council, and receive their comments and concerns. On the next Thursday, May 22, we will have a special meeting with Metro-North President Giulietti to share our views with him and hear his vision for the future. Please make every effort to attend both of these meetings as you are able.