

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

It's with sadness and appreciation that I open this meeting, as Jim Blair has announced his intention to leave the MNRCC after twenty-three years of service. Jim has been a good friend and valued colleague in my time on the Council and it will be difficult to see him leave the MNRCC. In the business portion of our meeting, we will approve a resolution of appreciation for Jim.

As a West of Hudson rider, I was pleased to see the addition of a Port Jervis Line midday train, which will close a three-hour service gap on the line. Without regular, reliable service it will be difficult to grow Metro-North ridership west of the Hudson River. The new Port Jervis train is a part of \$20 million in additional service proposed for the MTA system. Unfortunately, the West of Hudson service will not be added until December 2015, so Port Jervis line riders will have to wait for even this small improvement.

In addition to this added service, starting November 1, 2014 the MTA will reduce annual parking fees at West of Hudson stations from \$235 to \$20 and daily parking fees from \$2.75 to \$1.25 in an effort to encourage more commuters to use the train. Particularly after the remnants of Hurricane Irene disrupted the Port Jervis line in 2011, a number of Metro-North West of Hudson riders changed their means of travel to commuter buses, which offer free parking and are often less expensive than the train. This reduction in parking costs was announced as a one-year pilot program, but often MTA pilot programs are extended far past their original end dates.

When we met with Metro-North President Joseph Giulietti, he discussed some of the difficulties of filling out his engineering staff. Last week, it was announced that Al Santini has been appointed Chief Engineer of the Metro-North Railroad. Mr. Santini comes from directing engineering on Metro-North's signal system and has 40 years of experience working with railroad signaling. In addition, it was announced that Tim McCarthy, who has been Metro-North's Senior Director of Capital Programs for several years, is being promoted to Vice President, Capital Programs.

We recently heard from former Chair and current Assembly Member David Buchwald, who is interested in ensuring that Metro-North is treated fairly in the development of the MTA Capital Program. He said that the Assembly Committee on Corporations, Authorities, and Commissions will be holding hearings on capital needs for the MTA's commuter railroads in mid-September. We expect to be invited to testify at this hearing, and in the business portion of the meeting we can discuss issues that we would like to raise.