

**Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council**  
**PCAC Meeting**  
**Chair's Report-Randy Glucksman**  
**March 6, 2014**

President Howard Permut retired from the Metro-North Railroad effective January 31. Joseph Giulietti, formerly Executive Director of the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA), was chosen to succeed Mr. Permut and assumed office on February 10. As you may know, Mr. Giulietti 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 fifteen years in his initial tour. I've received a good deal of positive feedback about Mr. Giulietti, and his initial actions as President have been encouraging. The MNRCC is looking forward to working with the new administration at Metro-North.

Mr. Giulietti assumed leadership at Metro-North at a difficult time, with a number of weather-related disruptions in service and numerous weather-related equipment problems, and Metro-North didn't always make the right call in response to winter conditions. The first Friday of his tenure 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. A preliminary outline of this 100 day plan was released this past Tuesday, and it includes many of the issues and responses that have been discussed over the past year, along with plans to take a fresh look at how service is delivered on Metro-North.

The December 1 derailment and the resulting changes at Metro-North have given the MNRCC a full plate of 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. I won't rehash the derailment 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 accident is under investigation by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). 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.

On January 14 the NTSB released its preliminary report on the events of December 1. 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.

In mid-February 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 February 11 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. 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.

New Metro-North East of Hudson schedules took 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 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.

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 had a number of impacts on the area's transportation system, and as you know NJ Transit had major difficulties transporting fans to and from the game. NJ Transit used a fleet of locomotives and bi-level coaches to operate a shuttle service between the Secaucus station and the Meadowlands. I was concerned that, in order to replace the bi-level coaches used for the shuttle, cars would be taken from the West of Hudson operation. I expressed this concern to Metro-North and they said they would monitor the situation.

On Metro-North's West of Hudson lines, an upcoming leadership transition in New Jersey may have implications for service. NJ Transit has announced that, effective March 2, its former Executive Director James Weinstein was 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 leads to a new and more collaborative relationship between Metro-North and NJ Transit and better service for West of Hudson riders.

Finally, 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](http://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 that were developed by Transit Museum researchers in preparation for the Centennial.