

**Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council
PCAC Meeting
Chair's Report-Randy Glucksman
June 12, 2014**

Metro-North conducted a series of six informal customer forums at Grand Central Terminal and outlying stations to give riders 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 were held at Grand Central Terminal on March 26 and May 1, White Plains on April 3, Stamford on April 10, May 6 at Croton-Harmon, and on May 14 at Harrison.

In lieu of our May meeting, the MNRCC held a Meet the Commuter Council event in Grand Central Terminal. As always, it was an excellent way of learning what is on the minds of our fellow riders. As you may expect, issues of operations and safety were high on the minds of riders, and we received many comments about the new East of Hudson schedules that Metro-North had recently rolled out.

These new schedules went into effect on May 11 and were designed to improve performance and reliability while accommodating new safety measures. The timetables provided for a shorter commute for 96 percent of morning peak riders when compared to the prior timetables and were created by studying the actual operating experience of trains and removing extra running time added to accommodate track work. Unfortunately, the new schedules did not work as well as planned, and Metro-North will be adjusting some New Haven and Harlem Line schedules on July 7. The Railroad in early June also added cars to ten New Haven Line trains to deal with overcrowding during peak travel periods.

In early April, 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 116th 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.

On March 3 Metro-North released a 100-Day Action Plan, which is designed to be a first step toward reestablishing safe and reliable service on Metro-North. The plan includes four major aims: restoring a culture of safety, operating safely, communicating better, and restoring Metro-North's previous on-time performance. Yesterday was the 100th day of the plan and a number of the initiatives in the plan have been completed, although others such as implementing a confidential close call reporting system, installing real time train

information monitors throughout the system, and reorganizing the Maintenance of Way Department remain works in progress.

Metro-North is piloting two solar powered real time bus, subway, and train information kiosks at its Woodlawn station. This system provides more detailed information than the pilot bus time information displays installed on Staten Island but is still powered by the sun. This allows kiosks to be located without connection to the electrical grid. The MTA's private sector partner is paying the cost for these pilot units, once again showing that there is great interest in developing information systems for the transit system and attracting riders to view the advertising that will likely be displayed on them.

Finally, yesterday afternoon, our Council hosted President Giulietti to allow our members to meet Metro-North's new leader and to share our concerns and comments about the Railroad. It is positive to have a leader at the Railroad who is focused on the operations of the system and making sure that Metro-North is run correctly.