

New York City Transit Riders Council
Chair's Report
January 23, 2014

Welcome to the January NYCTRC meeting and best wishes to all for the New Year. 2014 promises to be an active year with many issues for us to address. The MTA has a delicately balanced budget for the coming year, the Governor's proposal for the State budget promises a modest increase in support to public transportation, the MTA is set to receive the first \$886 million in Sandy reconstruction funds from the federal government, and the legal challenge to the Payroll Mobility Tax (PMT) has been dismissed by the State's highest court. On the other hand, there's still pressure to reduce the coverage of and revenue from the PMT, the issue of how to pay for a new five year Capital Program for 2015 through 2019, which may include substantial expenditures for mitigating flooding risks, is yet to be resolved, and the later this year the MTA will formally propose a fare increase for 2015.

Since we last met NYC Transit has made a number of announcements of new real time transit information technology. On January 15th NYC Transit President Carmen Bianco unveiled countdown clocks that are being installed at four Staten Island Railway stations. The countdown clocks are part of an initiative made possible by New York City capital funding that will also include real time information through a web dashboard, NYC Transit's Subway Time app, and a data feed usable by other third party applications. Councilmember Ignizio provided the funding for this first phase. Installation of countdown clocks at other stations is contingent on funding from the Borough's two other Councilmembers.

The MTA also announced that real time information for the L train will be available on the MTA Subway Time app and on line. As with the Staten Island Railway information, L train data will be included in the data feed that the MTA provides for use for third party applications. Of course, this is possible because of the Communication Based Train Control system in place on the L line, and work is continuing to develop a real time information system to work with legacy signal systems on the other B Division subway lines.

Monday, January 6 marked the 20th anniversary of the MetroCard system's introduction at the Whitehall Street and Wall Street stations. MetroCard and the fare policy changes that it made possible have had a huge positive impact on riders, the transit system, and the City. Transfers between buses and subways and unlimited ride cards are in large part responsible for the record ridership that we are seeing today and view of subways and buses as a preferred means of getting around New York City.

In spite of all of MetroCard's positive impacts, it's time for it to go and a new fare system to be put in its place. We've been calling for a new fare system for a decade because we've seen MetroCard's limitations. Among these is that there

is limited capacity to store data on the cards, and this in turn restricts the system's flexibility. The system is slow and susceptible to mis-swipes at turnstiles and read errors at bus fareboxes, which delays bus boarding and entry into stations. It's also costly and contributes to fare collection costs that amount to about 10 percent of the fares collected. MetroCard costs are likely to rise as its technology gets ever more outdated and costs for maintaining the system rise higher and higher.

Unfortunately, we haven't seen much tangible progress on a new fare system since December 2012 when the NYCTRC heard from Michael Devitto of NYC Transit on the subject. MTA currently expects to issue a request for proposals for a contractor to implement a new contactless system in mid-2014, with a contract award made in 2015. The new system would then roll out by 2019.

On December 20, Mayor Bloomberg took a ceremonial first ride on the extension of the 7 line. Unfortunately, it was a non-stop trip between 42nd Street and 34th Street, as there is no station at 10th Avenue. I had another commitment and couldn't attend the ceremony, but NYCTRC was ably represented by Stuart Goldstein, and Bill Henderson and our PCAC Chair Randy Glucksman also were on hand. The extension is a great addition to the system; it's also a lot less useful than it could have been if the 10th Avenue station had been left in the plan. We expressed both of these sentiments in the statement on the project that we issued on December 20.

NYC Transit will once again make seasonal adjustments to its bus schedules in April. The planned changes will result in a slight increase in overall service. A copy of the changes is included in your packets today.