

New York City Transit Riders Council
Chair's Report
April 24, 2014

The most heavily discussed transit news since we last met is the tentative contract settlement that resulted from talks between Transport Workers Union Local 100 and the MTA. If this agreement is approved by the MTA Board and TWU 100 Executive Board and ratified by workers, it will result in a new five-year contract for most of NYC Transit's represented workforce and provide for an 8.25 percent wage increase over the length of the contract, additional employee contributions for health care, paid maternity and paternity leave, and several improvements in employee benefits. The first two years of the contract term have already passed, and the agreement would expire in January 2017. We as a Council do not become involved in labor negotiations, but it is good to see that a settlement has been worked out.

As you know, the MTA's previous position had been that any contract must include no net increase in unit labor costs for a period of three years. This settlement provides for wage increases of at least 1 percent in each of its years. The additional cost of this settlement above the current financial plan is to be funded by cutting planned MTA payments to reduce unfunded liabilities of an LIRR pension plan, as well as cutting contributions to a trust established to cover retirees' future non-pension benefits.

NYC Transit is proposing two new bus services. One of these is a West Side Manhattan route operating between Columbus Circle and the West Village. The second is a new express route operating between Eltingville on Staten Island and Midtown Manhattan. Both routes are planned to begin operations in September 2014. The MTA has scheduled a public hearing to receive comments on these proposed services and weekend service improvements to three existing routes, the M8, Q31, and the Q77, in this room on the evening of May 14.

The anticipated date for the opening of Avenue L and Gates Avenue stations on the B44 SBS was not met by NYC Transit and NYCDOT. The stops were to be in service on Monday, April 21, but the installation of fare machines did not occur as scheduled. Fare collection at these stops will not begin until testing of the machines is complete and will be delayed until late this week or early next week.

We have previously talked about the BusTime information displays that are being piloted at two stops on Staten Island. Now 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 Staten Island pilot units, but is still powered by the sun, which 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.

At last month's meeting we had a question about the selection of Kone as the suppliers of the escalators and inclined elevators for the 7 extension project. The choice of Kone was made via a subcontract with the prime contractor for the station, an EE Cruz and Tully joint venture. The responsibility for selecting subcontractors, and the risk if they do not perform, falls to the prime contractor for the project, who may be subject to liquidated damages for delays as specified in the contract.

Members were recently sent information on NYC Transit's plans to shut down the 7 line on multiple weekends in various segments between 74 Street-Broadway in Queens and Times Square. These shutdowns have created a great deal of controversy and, under pressure from community leaders and elected officials, Transit has modified their plans to reduce or eliminate outages on several weekends. This may be a situation where there is no solution that is totally acceptable for everyone. Work on the line must be completed to rehabilitate the Steinway tubes carrying the line under the East River, to repair Sandy damage, and to install Communication Based Train Control (CBTC) on the line.

There will be other major service subway disruptions in Brooklyn on each weekend in May. For five consecutive weekends between May 2 and June 2, the 2, 3, and 4 lines will terminate at the Franklin Avenue station, with shuttle buses replacing the lost service. The main reason for this disruption is the replacement of switches at Nostrand Avenue and President Street, although NYC Transit will take advantage of the outage to perform other needed work. Doing the work on weekends avoids the need to implement slow speed orders on the affected track, which would make reduced rush hour service necessary.