

New York City Transit Riders Council  
Chair's Report  
June 26, 2014

As we emailed members and those on our mailing list, our originally scheduled speaker for today is unable to join us. Instead, we will be hearing from MTA Capital Construction President Michael Horodniceanu, who will discuss the status of the Fulton Center and 7 Line Extension projects and the challenges that are creating delays in their completion dates.

We have a new member, Scott Nicholls of Staten Island, who was appointed by the Governor last week, replacing Tom Jost. Mr. Nicholls was unable to join us today due to a prior commitment, so I'll save his introduction for next month. In the New Business portion of our meeting, we'll consider a resolution of appreciation for Tom's service to the Council.

In your packets today is a set of bus service changes released by NYC Transit that are scheduled to go into effect in September. The changes result in a slight increase in service overall, and an unusually large portion of the changes involve express bus routes. One disturbing part of this package is the indication that impacts predicted for the M104 route as a result of cuts made in 2010 are occurring. As you may recall, the M104 previously extended across 42<sup>nd</sup> Street from its current route on the West Side, and we predicted that the loss of the crosstown portion of the route would make travel less convenient and drive down ridership. Now we are seeing the end results of the route change and associated lower ridership in these service cuts. The reduced schedule is likely to further depress ridership and accelerate a spiral of decline on a once-vital bus route.

NYC Transit will be installing Help Points at 102 Stations by the end of 2014, and planned work under the 2010-2014 Capital Program will bring the total number of stations with Help Points to 222. Currently, there are 166 Help Point units installed in 36 stations. As you know, I have been a vocal advocate of including cameras in these units; since the Help Points were designed to be camera-ready but the camera capabilities are not included in these installed and planned units. The argument that NYC Transit makes for not exercising the camera option is that the communication bandwidth needed to transmit images is not available, but the potential usefulness of cameras in the Help Points make them a must.

We had some good news earlier this month, as additional service on the M and G trains began on June 8 and June 9. This service is especially valuable in light of the reports we are hearing about changing travel patterns with more demand for service between Boroughs other than Manhattan and at times outside of traditional rush hours. Also in the good news category, at the urging of State Senator Daniel Squadron, the MTA has announced that it will be conducting a study of the A and C lines with an eye toward determining whether service levels

are appropriate for changing ridership patterns. You may remember that improvements to G line service also had their origin in a similar study request from Senator Squadron.

In addition, this coming Sunday, June 29, NYC Transit will reinstate the B37 bus, although with a shortened route, and make improvements on the B8 and B70 routes. These changes are largely being made to reverse the impacts of the NYC Transit's 2010 service cuts. In your packets today is a copy of one of NYC Transit's announcements of the changes.

The news is not good everywhere, though, as NYC Transit has resumed weekend shutdowns of the 7 line. The work being undertaken includes replacement of aging elevated track panels, the installation of Communication Based Train Control to improve throughput and reliability, and the rehabilitation of the Steinway tunnels to address infrastructure that had deteriorated and was not in a state of good repair as well as damage from Superstorm Sandy. Unfortunately, the work this year will not be the last disruption on the line, as the CBTC and the tunnel rehabilitation work are both part of multi-year projects and the replacement of track panels is an ongoing effort.

On June 13 Chris Greif represented the NYCTRC at the dedication of ADA improvements to the Utica Avenue (A, C) station. The project centers around the installation of three ADA-accessible elevators linking the platforms to street level, and the improvements were available for riders to use on Memorial Day weekend. The formal dedication, however, did not occur until June, when NYC Transit and local elected officials ceremonially cut the ribbon on these improvements. The project cost \$16.95 million, fully funded by the Federal Transit Administration, and makes the station the 82<sup>nd</sup> ADA-accessible station in the subway system. Another ADA accessibility project on the A line, at the Ozone Park-Lefferts Boulevard station has begun and is scheduled for completion in 2016.

Finally, we all know that we are in the last year of the current MTA Capital Program and that a new Capital Program will have to be approved and funded to allow critical improvements to continue into the next five years. Finding the funding for the next Capital Program is extremely challenging, with no identified source other than the assumed federal contribution. Now from the US Department of Transportation comes word that this funding may not be as certain as we would hope. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx wrote last week that unless Congress addresses shortfalls in the Highway Trust Fund, its transit account could be facing insolvency before the end of December. If the balance in this fund dips too low, the federal government will begin to delay transit project reimbursements to maintain a balance needed for operations. At a minimum, this could increase MTA debt service costs because of the need for bridge financing until federal funds are secured, and potentially could have more serious consequences for the MTA.