

**New York City Transit Riders Council  
Chair's Report  
October 2, 2014**

Welcome to our September NYCTRC meeting, which we're holding in October due to scheduling conflicts. Thanks to all of the members who were able to make room in their schedules and come out for this meeting. Unfortunately, we still don't have a date for moving the office to 2 Broadway and with construction down there and all of that's happening at the MTA, space is very tight. As a result we're in cramped quarters today. As a reminder, the NYCTRC will be having two meetings this month, with our regularly scheduled date falling on October 23.

If you have been in the subway system the past few weeks, I'm sure you've noticed an increased security presence. Rising tensions around the world, combined with the United Nations General Assembly sessions and the Jewish holidays, have made it necessary to have a heightened police and National Guard presence throughout the transit system. Though the UN General Assembly sessions have ended, we should expect to see increased security in the system for at least several months. Also, although they're not primarily an anti-terrorism tool, the new R211 subway cars will be delivered with in-car cameras installed. Now if only we could get NYC Transit to exercise the camera option in the Help Points that are being installed throughout the system.

As I'm sure you know, the Montague Tubes that carry the R train between Manhattan and Brooklyn were returned to service on September 15. This reopening was fairly low key and coordinated through the Governor's office, but the low level of fanfare does not hide the fact that NYC Transit accomplished a great deal in the thirteen month period that the tunnels were shut down. The project was completed ahead of schedule and under budget, reversing the effects of the salt water that flooded the tunnels during Superstorm Sandy and creating a safer, stronger and more resilient facility. Examples of the improvements that make the tunnel more resilient are the relocation of a signal relay room from track level to a higher floor, the sealing of a circuit breaker room in the tunnel with heavy-duty waterproofing and a submarine-quality door, the installation battery backed-up emergency lights and power and antenna cables that withstand water inundation, and the addition of new pumping equipment within the tunnel.

Unfortunately, we have not seen the last of shutdowns to repair Sandy damage. Nine subway tunnels were flooded by Sandy, and of course the South Ferry station was devastated and requires a complete rebuilding. We all know about the damage to the A Line in Southeast Queens, and on the commuter railroads the LIRR's Long Beach Branch was severely damaged and a large portion of Metro-North's Hudson line was submerged and is sustained damage. Just yesterday, we learned that two of Amtrak's East River Tunnels, which are used by the LIRR, will face shutdowns of at least a year each to make repairs. All of this repair work will stress the NYC Transit system, and we will continue to monitor it and provide information to our members.

Once again NYC Transit is back in the news with First Amendment issues connected with advertising on its property. In this case, the MTA rejected a request by American Freedom Defense Initiative (AFDI) to run advertisements addressing the Middle Eastern conflict on MTA buses. The advertising was rejected on the grounds that it was reasonably foreseeable that displaying the advertisements would imminently incite or provoke violence or other immediate breach of the peace, and so harm, disrupt, or interfere with safe, efficient, and orderly transportation operations.

The MTA had in 2011 rejected an AFDI advertisement under a broader standard that was ruled invalid on First Amendment grounds by a federal judge. A legal challenge is expected in the current case, as the MTA struggles to establish a Constitutionally-permissible standard for advertising content acceptability. It may be that the only way out of this issue for the MTA is to refuse all issue-oriented advertising, as some have suggested, but the MTA has to date resisted this option.