

New York City Transit Riders Council
Chair's Report
November 20, 2014

At our last meeting, we had a discussion about potential changes to our guidelines for conduct of members and staff has prepared changes that take into account the issues that we raised in our discussion. Today under Old Business we will review this draft and vote on adopting our amended set of standards that members will uphold at meetings and when representing the NYCTRC.

The big news since our last meeting is of course the opening of Fulton Center on Monday November 10. I attended a ceremony dedicating Fulton Center the day before, at which we heard from a number of elected officials involved in funding and planning the complex, including Senator Charles Schumer, Congressman Jerry Nadler, Assemblyman Sheldon Silver, and Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, as well as representatives of the MTA and Downtown Community. The facility has been a long time in coming, with planning that began in the wake of 9/11 and cost a total of \$1.4 billion to construct, including \$130 million in funds from the MTA. This substantially exceeded the original budget of \$847 million, which was to be funded entirely by the federal government.

While the facility has had some mixed reviews and the MTA has raised some eyebrows through statements comparing Fulton Center to Grand Central Terminal, the facility will play a 300,000 daily riders using the 2, 3, 4, 5, A, C, J, Z, and R lines. In addition to its transportation functions, the Fulton Center includes almost 66,000 square feet of retail and commercial space. The space is managed and operated by Westfield Corporation under a master lease. The connections between lines are not perfect, due to the historical development of the system. Eventually, the complex will connect to the downtown path station, the E line, and the 1 line once the Cortlandt Street Station is reconstructed.

Looking forward, the MTA has scheduled a series of hearings on proposed fare increases. We can talk about our position on these proposals under New Business today and discuss which members may be available to speak at these hearings. There will be eight hearings and four video testimony opportunities in less than two weeks making for a very active schedule. Some hearings will be held on the same date, as is the case with the Manhattan and Bronx hearings, and this is still possible because state legislation requiring only that one hearing be held at a time was vetoed.

Last year, we were talking about a proposal to rezone the East Midtown district, and this year there is a more limited proposal to construct office space at One Vanderbilt Avenue. In exchange for permission to build, the developer will put \$210 million into public realm improvements, including improved transit access. This proposal is just beginning its journey through the City's approval process,

but appears to be getting a warmer reception than the East Midtown rezoning proposal.

Funding for capital projects is a major cause for concern among transit advocates. As you know, the MTA submitted a proposed 2015-2019 Capital Program to the State Capital Program Review Board, which was rapidly rejected. The original proposal has a gap in funding of \$15 billion, which is of great concern. We had some discussion of the size of City contributions to the Capital Program and have provided you with a fact sheet on the history of these contribution. One thing that we do know is that the MTA cannot afford to finance the gap through fare backed bonds, which would quickly put additional pressure on the fare.

Since we just had our first blast of freezing weather, it's good to know that NYC Transit has updated and activated its Winter Operations Plan for the 2014-2015 season. The major differences in this year's plan includes new storm-fighting equipment for the department of Buses and eight new R156 locomotives for the subway system. In addition 79 revenue trains will be fitted with scraper shoes to reduce ice build up on the third rail. All articulated buses have been fitted with all-weather tires and any overnight buses that do not have all-weather tires will be equipped with snow chains during winter weather events. The new winter weather initiatives also seek to winterize signal equipment that is on outdoor tracks to prevent weather related failures and to improve coordination with the City's Department of Sanitation to improve coordination on subjects such as plowing and stockpiling of deicing materials.

Finally, please mark your calendars for our final PCAC meeting of 2014, on Thursday December 4 at noon on the 16th Floor of 2 Broadway. We will be considering our annual budget and our special guest for the meeting will be MTA Senior Director of Capital Programs Craig Stewart, who, together with his team will brief us on the current state of the MTA's 2015-2019 Capital Program and the way forward to approval.