

New York City Transit Riders Council
Chair's Report
December 18, 2014

As you know, Chris Greif has had a rough December and had some kidney stones removed last week. Chris is making a remarkable recovery thanks to advances in medical treatment and is fortunately able to join us today. Chris, we're glad to see you doing so well and able to join us in person today.

I'll discuss my experiences in greater detail in the Board report, but this year's fare hearings have now drawn to a close. Public attendance and participation was down considerably from past hearings, which may have been due to the lower increase proposed or the later date of the hearings. There seems to be growing agreement that the public hearing format is not the best way of gathering input from riders, but what measures could improve the system remains an open question. Thanks to all members who delivered our message at the hearings.

With the holiday season, NYC Transit is once again offering the opportunity to ride on its collection of vintage buses and subway trains. The vintage buses date from the 1950's to the 1970's and will operate on the M42 route on weekdays through this Friday, December 19. The nostalgia trains operate on Sundays through the end of 2014 between 10:00 am and 5:00 pm. They run on the M line between the Second Avenue and Queens Plaza stations. These trains consist of cars that were in service on the lettered lines between the early 1930's and mid 1970's. While many of these cars can be seen in the Transit Museum, the holiday trains offer any rider a rare opportunity to board these cars and experience the subway system's past.

In addition to the holiday trains and vintage buses, the MTA's annual Holiday Train Show is on display at the Transit Museum's Gallery Annex in Grand Central Terminal. The show features a working layout and a selection of vintage model trains dating from the 1800s and will run through February 22, 2015. Hours are Monday through Friday between 8 am and 8 pm, Saturdays 10 am to 8 pm and Sundays between 10 am and 7 pm. The show will close early, at 6:00 pm, on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. Since we're still meeting in midtown, this is an excellent opportunity for those here today to see the show.

PCAC staff and I were invited to preview New York City Transit's upcoming courtesy campaign, which consists of a set of car cards to be installed in subway cars. According to Paul Fleuranges, MTA Senior Director of Corporate and Internal Communications, the campaign will debut early in January and will be left up at least through the first quarter of the year. The behaviors address include a number of members' and riders' pet peeves, some of which date back to the days of the Subway Sun but some of which have become issues more recently. Please keep an eye out for the series of courtesy campaign car cards and let us know what you think about them.

In addition to the courtesy campaign, the MTA has produced a series of on-air public service announcements focusing on safety on and around buses. The campaign goes beyond riders, addressing safety issues that pedestrians and bicyclists face involving buses. Three issues are addressed by the announcements: the dangers of texting while walking, the need to put away personal electronics and hold on when standing in a moving bus, and special hazards faced by cyclists riding near buses. The PSAs were produced in English and Spanish and will air on local broadcast television stations.

This effort is being reinforced with enhanced bus operator training and testing of technology to reduce the risk of collisions between buses and pedestrians, cyclists, and other vehicles. This technology includes equipment to provide an external audio warning when a bus makes a turn and on-board sensors that detect nearby vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists and warn bus operators of their presence. The improved training is part of an overall refocusing of bus operator training and an increase in the number of observational riders conducted by managers, as Darryl Irick discussed when he visited us in early October for what was technically our September meeting.