

**New York City Transit Riders Council
PCAC Meeting
Chair's Report-Andrew Albert
March 6, 2014**

Technology has been a recurring theme for the NYCTRC since the last PCAC meeting. NYC Transit is on the verge of completing the rollout of its BusTime information system. The BusTime system will go live on Brooklyn and Queens routes starting Monday March 9, which will mean that information on all NYC Transit and MTA Bus routes will be available to riders for the first time. BusTime information is available in real time on smart phones, on the web, and by text message.

To use BusTime a rider must have a text or internet capable mobile phone or other form of internet access, but a countdown clock that informs riders the location of the next bus in number of stops away is currently being tested. This may provide another solution for more heavily used bus stops. BusTime technology is also the basis of an internal bus tracking system that will be used by NYC Transit to improve bus performance and will eventually lead to bus service being managed from a central command center, similar to transit's rail control center.

Continuing with real time transit information technology, NYC Transit is installing countdown clocks at four Staten Island Railway stations, supported by New York City capital funding. This system will also include real time information through a web dashboard, NYC Transit's Subway Time app, and a data feed usable by other third party applications. In addition, real time information for the L subway line has also been added to the MTA Subway Time app and is available on line. The L train information will be included in the data feed that the MTA provides for use for third party applications. NYC Transit continues working to provide real time information for those B Division lines that do not have Communication Based Train Control, but these systems are about five years away, according to NYC Transit.

In subway stations NYC Transit is rolling out the On the Go touchscreen displays on platforms and other station areas. Eventually, these displays will replace many of the large system maps that have graced subway station platforms for many years. The rollout of the new equipment was expected to occur about six months ago, but experience with prototype units led to a redesign that delayed the current pilot phase. Seventeen units are installed in the Grand Central complex, both near the Shuttle and on the Lexington Line platforms. Another 16 units have been installed on West Side subway lines, but are not yet live.

Finally, we reached a milestone with a piece of older technology in the NYC Transit system. January 6 marked the 20th anniversary of the MetroCard system's introduction at the Whitehall Street and Wall Street stations. This technology and the fare policy changes that it made possible have had a huge positive impact on riders, the transit system, and the City and are largely responsible for the record ridership that we are seeing today. Nevertheless, it's time for MetroCard to go and to be replaced by a new

fare system. Because of the system's limitations and its rising costs, we've been calling for a new fare system for a decade. Unfortunately, replacing MetroCard is a slow process; a request for proposals for a contractor to implement a new contactless system is expected in mid-2014, with a contract awarded in 2015. The new system would then roll out by 2019, which is approximately the end of the current system's useful life.

As Randy Glucksman notes in his PCAC Chair's report, on December 20 Mayor Bloomberg took a ceremonial first ride on the 7 line extension to 34th Street and Eleventh Avenue. The main issue that the Transit Riders Council has with this project is that its Tenth Avenue station was eliminated from the plan in order to bring costs within the City's budget. We believe that the Tenth Avenue station is so critical to West Side transportation that it will eventually be built, but at much greater expense than if it had been included in the original project. This extension is a great addition to the system but it could have been a lot better if the 10th Avenue station had been left in the project. We expressed both of these sentiments in the statement on the project that we issued on December 20.

On Tuesday December 17 we participated in two meetings aimed at strengthening service to transit-poor areas of the city. Trudy Mason attended the Pratt Center for Community Development's New York City Transportation of Tomorrow forum, at which they released their latest report advocating for full featured Bus Rapid Transit in New York City to serve transit starved neighborhoods. Later that day Bill Henderson participated in an advisory committee meeting for the Regional Plan Association's study of transit needs and options in the Boroughs. Both of these efforts are in keeping with *A Long Day's Journey into Work*, the PCAC's 2007 report on areas underserved by transit.

In our 2008 survey of subway station conditions, we highlighted the deplorable conditions of the 149th Street – Grand Concourse Station, and work has finally been done to address many of the issues that we raised. NYC Transit announced in December 2013 that it has completed \$19 million in component work on the station. Water leaks have been reduced and water damage has been repaired, platform edges have been renewed and the entire complex has been painted. The effect of this relatively minor investment is striking and illustrates the ability of Transit's component repair system to significantly improve riders' experience.

The NYCTRC has long advocated that the MTA and NYC Transit generate revenue from underutilized space in subway stations. A pop-up location of the retailer Uniqlo at the Union Square complex in the holiday season was very successful, and the MTA is moving forward on making six additional locations in subway stations available to businesses on a month-to-month basis while permanent tenants are sought. We have discussed the pros and cons of these station uses and will be monitoring them to ensure that they do not inconvenience or present a hazard to riders.

We have also received word that the conversion of the M60 route to Select Bus Service operation is going forward and will be in place this spring. The route was in the planning process but stalled because of opposition expressed by elected representatives and some community members. In Brooklyn, NYC Transit has made

some changes to the newly established B44 SBS and the parallel B44 local route in response to the comments of elected officials and riders. This spring, SBS stops will be added on the route at Avenue L and Gates Avenue. The exact date for these additions will depend on weather and the ability of the NYC Department of Transportation to install necessary infrastructure at these new stops.

Also, in response to reports of overcrowding on the B44 local bus following the launch of the SBS service, effective February 3 NYC Transit added service to the route. On February 10, Chris Greif attended a press event with Council Member Jumaane Williams celebrating the additional stops and service. In April, NYC Transit will make changes that will make it possible to ride the route from end to end without a transfer on most trips.

MTA Capital Construction has announced completion times for two major projects affecting subway riders. On February 25 MTA Capital Construction Company President Michael Horodniceanu said that the Fulton Center will open in June and that the 7 train extension is scheduled to be completed in October. This represents a delay in the opening of the 7 line extension, which is due to problems the escalator systems in the extension have had in passing acceptance testing.