

**New York City Transit Riders Council
PCAC Meeting
Chair's Report — Andrew Albert
September 4, 2014**

We have a new member, Scott Nicholls of Staten Island, who was appointed by the Governor last week, replacing Tom Jost. Mr. Nicholls is a resident of the southern portion of the Island and is a daily commuter. He works in Manhattan and is retired from a previous career as a member of the NYPD. If it's agreeable with the Chair, I'd like to ask Scott to say a few words about himself and to ask each of the PCAC members to introduce themselves, their Council, and the official who recommended them.

I also want to announce that Steven Mayo, who was appointed to the NYCTRC on the recommendation of the Mayor, has resigned due to a change in workplace location and resulting difficulties in attending NYCTRC and PCAC meetings. We appreciate Steve's service over the past three years and wish him the best. We are currently working with the Mayor's office and the Public Advocate to return the Council to full strength.

On July 23rd we released our report on communication during subway service diversions, entitled *Every Which Way But Direct! A Review of Service Diversion Communication*. Thanks to NYCTRC members Chris Greif, Marisol Halpern, Sharon King Hoge, Trudy Mason, Edith Prentiss, Mike Sinansky, and Burt Strauss for coming to the event and sharing their insights on the issues raised in the report, and particular thanks to Bradley Brashears for all of his fine work compiling the report and for setting up the event. We had a good group of media on hand, including AM New York, the New York Post, News 12, WPIX-11, Fox 5, and the Epoch Times. As a result of the release, we got the cover of AM New York the morning after the release, as well as coverage through other media outlets.

At the report release, we presented the findings of our study and recommendations for improvements, including changes in the content and placement of signage, and the report was well received by the news media members who attended its release. We met with NYC Transit and MTA Corporate Communications staff shortly before the report release and will continue to work with them on improving communications during service diversions. The report is on the PCAC website, but if anyone would like a printed copy please speak with a member of the staff and they will make sure that you get one.

Also on July 23, Edith Prentiss, Chris Greif and Karyl Berger, along with a host of other disability advocates, were asked to provide input to New York City Transit regarding proposed designs for the Step Aside program. NYC Transit believes

that this program can be helpful to decrease dwell time for trains in stations. They reviewed designs that would be placed at boarding areas for wheelchair users and NYC Transit also conducted a focus group on these designs at the Astoria Boulevard station and interviewed over 1,000 riders about the choices. We will keep you informed as NYC Transit chooses the final designs that will be used in the system.

This summer, between Friday July 25 and Tuesday of this week, a portion of the G subway line was closed. Shuttle buses replaced G line service between the Long Island City-Court Square and Nassau Avenue stations to allow for repairs of the extensive damage done to the Greenpoint Tube and the equipment in when it was flooded by salt water in Superstorm Sandy. Corrosion resulting from salt water makes rail equipment much more susceptible to failures and made the extensive repairs necessary. NYC Transit also resumed weekend shutdowns of the 7 line this summer to replace aging elevated track panels, install Communication Based Train Control and rehabilitate 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. This work will continue for several years into the future.

At the July MTA Board meeting, management once again presented a package of service enhancements, including rapid response teams to deal with signal and right-of-way issues and reduce subway service delays in the Lexington Avenue corridor, the extension of J line weekend service, and additional bus service in several places.

Another round of bus service restorations and enhancements that were approved last July took effect on June 29. The enhancements included restorations of services that were cut in 2010, along with some new expansions to meet evolving service needs. The changes include a rerouting of the Bx23 bus to serve all sections of Co-op City, the extension of the Q19 along Astoria Boulevard and the rerouting of the Q102 bus, the addition of weekend service on the Q103 bus, the rerouting of the M100 bus, and the restoration of the B37 bus as far north as the Barclays Center, with routing changes to the B3 and B70 buses. We saw some additional enhancements, including the establishment of a new M12 bus route to serve the Far West Side, at the end of August.

Speaking of the B37 bus, Chris Greif joined with others in the Bay Ridge area to hold a welcome back celebration for the B37 bus on Tuesday July 1. The event was attended by a number of elected officials, including our guest today Borough President Eric Adams, Senator Martin Golden, Assembly members Felix Ortiz and Nicole Malliotakis, and Councilman Vincent Gentile. Bill Henderson also attended the event. There was good press coverage of the event, including NY1, News 12, and Brooklyn community newspapers. The B37 is important because it provides north-south mobility in Bay Ridge, Sunset Park, and Boerum Hill for those who are unable to use the 4th Avenue subway, which has no ADA

accessible stations south of Pacific Street. Unfortunately, the route was not extended past Atlantic Avenue, making a transfer necessary for those traveling to and from Downtown Brooklyn.

On Wednesday July 16 I spoke before the MTA Transportation Reinvention Commission. I talked about the need to serve new markets and unmet demands within the City the importance of increasing the efficiency of operations to provide better service. I also talked about the need for more accurate information and the ways that technology can make a complicated system easier to understand through better communications with riders.

I also talked about our concept of a Freedom Ticket and how increasing the use of commuter rail within the city could take advantage of an underused resource and improve service for people within the City, particularly in parts of the City that are currently underserved. In my remarks I also discussed some potential methods of funding the MTA's considerable capital improvement needs and stated that regardless of the funding mechanism that is developed, it must include a lockbox provision so that funds that were intended for the benefit of the MTA system will be spent on the MTA system, and not diverted to the State's general fund.

We continue to be dismayed by the lingering impacts of some of the 2010 service cuts. While many of these cuts have been reversed, in the recent bus service changes there was a reduction in M104 trips due to shrinking ridership. This reduced utilization was exactly what we predicted when the crosstown portion of this route, extending over 42nd Street, was removed to reduce costs. Now that the travel on the route is less convenient and ridership is dropping, NYC Transit appears to have created a spiral of decline on a once-vital bus route, as the reduced schedule further depresses ridership.

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 in June, as 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.

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 82nd 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.

At our June meeting, we heard 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.

At our July meeting, Brooklyn borough President Eric Adams spoke to the Council via telephone as due to scheduling issues he was unable to reach the meeting in person.