



PCAC

PERMANENT CITIZENS
ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE MTA

1977 2017

40 YEARS OF ADVOCACY



Advocating for MTA riders for 40 years

If you were living in New York City during the fiscal crisis of the 1970s, you have vivid memories that the subways reflected what was going on in the city as it was plagued with crime, graffiti, derailments, track fires, failing signals, and cars and stations with conditions that only the brave dared to enter. Subway ridership at that time was 990 million annually compared to 1.75 billion in 2016.

The years of system-wide disinvestment brought it to a near state of collapse. You had the strong sense that the “system was out of control”. In 1977, based on a recommendation in the MTA Management Study, former MTA Chairman Harold Fisher, created the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee (PCAC) to the MTA, as the official voice of MTA riders. This newly formed group gave riders a platform to comment and advise the MTA on service and policy issues.

Riders of the three MTA operating agencies had long complained of declining service and the lack of accountability. Thus, the PCAC undertook research on a variety of relevant topics (see report list at pcac.org/reports) and made informed recommendations in an effort to improve service. In 1981, with the adoption by the NY State legislature of the first MTA five-year Capital Program plan, PCAC members and regional legislators sought to ensure the average rider had input into the plan. As a result, the New York State Legislature enacted legislation which enhanced the representation of suburban riders with the creation of three independent Councils: Long Island Rail Road Commuters Council (LIRRCC); Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council (MNRCC); and the New York City Transit Authority Advisory Council (now the New York City Transit Riders Council or NYCTRC). The PCAC has continued to scrutinize and monitor the capital planning process and its relationship to the performance of the system, and has tirelessly advocated for a stable and adequate funding source so the system would never fall into such a deplorable state again.

Members are recommended by local officials to the New York State Governor who approves them to the Councils. The Councils hold monthly public meetings, undertake research projects, and maintain a support staff of transportation planning and data analytical professionals. In 1995, the New York State legislature again supported the riders by providing the PCAC with 3 non-voting seats on the MTA Board. Members are chosen by the respective councils to be their representative.

Over the last forty years the PCAC and Councils have worked with the MTA and its operating agencies to improve conditions for all riders. While the MTA has come a long way from the decay of the 1970s and 80s, recent events such as track fires, derailments, failing car equipment, overcrowding, signal failures, and drastically decreasing system reliability have made the role of the PCAC and its Councils even more crucial in representing riders.

Four Decades of Accomplishment

✓ MTA Implemented

- 1977 PCAC established ✓
- 1979 PCAC proposes creation of Transit Adjudication Bureau ✓
- 1981 Establishment of the three Rider Councils ✓
- 1982 PCAC proposes automated fare collection ✓
- 1983 PCAC proposes NYC Transit Passenger Environment Survey ✓
- 1985 LIRRCC introduces LIRR Commuter Bill of Rights ✓

PCAC hosts NYC mayoral/city council candidate debate on transit issues
- 1986 LIRRCC releases first Report Card Survey
- 1988 PCAC hosts all-agency President's Forum
- 1991 NYCTRC blocks transit cuts in politically weak areas
- 1992 MNRCC helps improve Metro-North Customer Satisfaction Survey ✓
- 1994 NYCTRC proposes revisions to Passenger Environment Survey ✓

PCAC AND THE COUNCILS THROUGH THE DECADES

1977 - 1989

Decades of disinvestment led to the fears of a complete system meltdown in the early 1980s. With near collapse looming, MTA Chairman Richard Ravitch pleaded with Governor Hugh Carey, members of the NY State legislature, and NYC Mayor Ed Koch to take action. As a result, the legislature passed the Transportation System Assistance and Financing Act of 1981, which gave the MTA authority to issue bonds to secure the necessary funding. In September 1982, the first five-year Capital Program was enacted to bring the system up to a “state-of-good repair”. The PCAC closely analyzed the capital planning process and reported on the adequacy of the proposed projects and their financing methods. The PCAC and Councils have continued to perform this important analysis in each successive funding cycle.

During the 1980s PCAC advocated for and applauded implementation of Passenger Environment Surveys at NYC Transit and the two commuter railroads, wrote extensively about the importance of securing stable financing, promoted the notion of a “City Pass”, developed ways to keep the transit fare from increasing, and drafted the LIRRCC Commuter Bill of Rights. Throughout the decade, the PCAC and Councils provided riders with the ability to provide input by hosting public forums with MTA Board members, an all-agency President’s Forum, and producing annual [LIRR Report Cards](#).

1990 - 1999

The decade kicked-off with PCAC’s continued efforts to address MTA funding issues. The PCAC has always urged the city, state, and federal entities to increase and identify stable funding sources for public transit. These efforts were intensified in 1992 when a federal commitment to transportation funding emerged in the landmark Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). The PCAC closely analyzed and monitored ISTEA and its successor bill, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21).

Public input at MTA Board meetings was solidified in 1995 when the PCAC gained non-voting seats on the MTA Board. Our new MTA Board member Beverly Dolinsky proposed the public session allowing for public input at the start of all MTA Board and Committee meetings.

In 1994, after years of lobbying by the NYCTRC for an automated fare collection system, MetroCard was introduced by NYC Transit. By decade’s end, the encoded fare cards would allow volume discounts, daily, weekly, and monthly passes, and free bus-to-subway transfers. During the 1990s the NYCTRC undertook major research projects that focused on bus and subway performance, signage at stations and bus stops, station cleanliness, and service diversion notices.

Meanwhile, MNRCC entered the decade advocating and eventually applauding the comprehensive restoration of Grand Central Terminal. The Council also successfully lobbied for a new operating agreement with New Jersey Transit giving Metro-North more control over West-of-Hudson commuter rail service, which led to the publication of a combined West-of-Hudson (Port Jervis and Pascack Valley) schedule.

Throughout the decade, the LIRRCC closely monitored railcar maintenance problems. This was the era when the LIRRCC’s LIRR Report Card results spurred a major overhaul of LIRR air-conditioning maintenance practices. The Council’s oversight also prompted key changes in third-rail shoe beam maintenance.

In addition, PCAC and Councils’ strongly presented recommendations to the MTA regarding three major initiatives: the LIRR East Side Access project, Metro-North’s Mid-Harlem Third Track Project, and NYC Transit’s Manhattan East Side Alternatives (MESA) Study, a precursor to the Second Avenue Subway project, as well as input on the rehabilitation of the Franklin Avenue Shuttle.

1995 Riders Councils secure seats on MTA Board

1996 NYCTRC works to save and have the Franklin Avenue Shuttle rehabilitated ✓

1999 LIRRCC proposes improvements to LIRR air-conditioning maintenance protocol after complaints ✓

MNRCC proposes combined West-of-Hudson schedule ✓

PCAC pushes for faster rollout of NYCT Reduced Fare and Mail & Ride program ✓

LIRRCC & MNRCC membership expanded to include NYC railroad riders

2000 NYCTRC prevents controversial NYCT Bronx 2/5 subway changes ✓

2001 LIRRCC Report Card results prompt LIRR cell phone courtesy campaign ✓

NYCTRC concerns lead to NYCT Service Diversion Notice Task Force ✓

2002 MNRCC calls for MNR cell phone courtesy campaign ✓

NYCTRC subway signage report leads to the correction of 21 NYCT signs ✓

2004 PCAC “CityTicket” program is implemented, reducing City railroad fares ✓

2005 PCAC influences operating agencies to improve alternative service diversion information ✓

2000 - 2009

By the 2000s, the PCAC and its councils won battles on a variety of issues: work began on a new Mid-Harlem Line third track; a deep-tunnel option for East Side Access was chosen to minimize construction impacts; and the MTA committed to study and build a Second Avenue subway to Lower Manhattan. Due to the steady increase of and access to computer technology, the PCAC called for the MTA and its agencies to finally accept customer e-mail.

The State Legislature voted to expand the LIRRCC and MNRCC to include a member from each of the three New York City boroughs served by commuter rail service: Brooklyn and Queens for the LIRRCC; and the Bronx for the MNRCC.

Prompted by the 9/11 attacks that devastated the subway network in Lower Manhattan, the NYCTRC advocated for changes and additions to bus routes to accommodate loss of subway service in the area and highlighted the need to post timely service change information throughout the system. As part of the rebuilding effort, PCAC Executive Director Dolinsky served on the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation's (LMDC) Transportation and Commuters Advisory Council that was tasked to address the transportation priorities in Lower Manhattan.

Throughout the decade, the PCAC and Councils focused largely on the need to improve customer communications and performance metrics, repair of the Amtrak East River Tunnels, improved commuter railroad parking availability, improved subway station conditions, system-wide ADA compliance, and implementation of the "CityTicket" program on the LIRR and MNR. The NYCTRC held bus forums across the boroughs to hear rider concerns, and the LIRRCC and MNRCC advocated tirelessly for improving customer communications and the need for both railroads to undertake cell phone courtesy campaigns.

In 2005 the Transportation Bond Act was approved, which provided \$2.9 billion in bonds to finance transportation capital projects, with one-half of the total funding reserved for the MTA. The PCAC hosted a public forum on the Bond Act two weeks prior to the vote. Also, the PCAC voted to support the proposed congestion pricing legislation, but the proposal never made it out of committee for a vote.

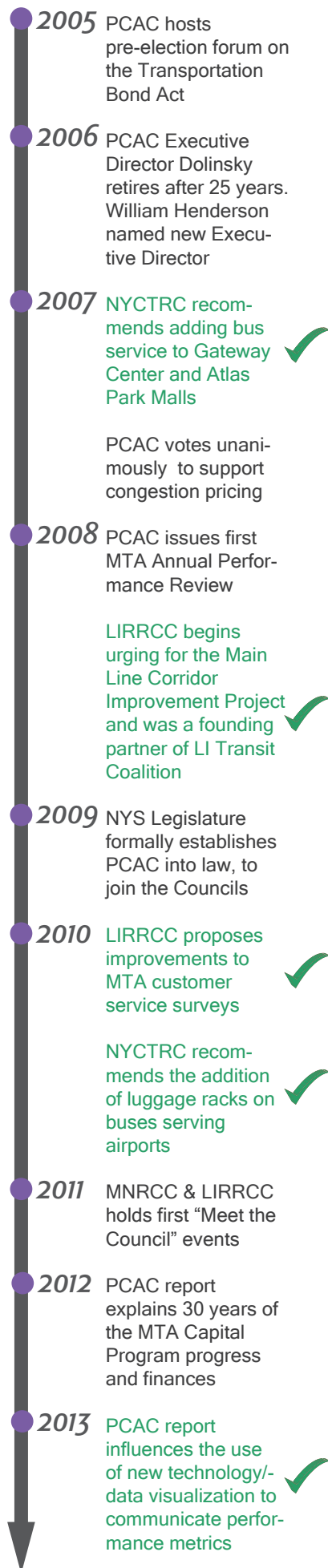
The second half of the decade started off with the retirement after 25 years of the long influential PCAC Executive Director, Beverly Dolinsky. The end of the decade saw the collapse of the national economy which had a huge impact on the MTA region and prompted the PCAC and its councils to spend the spring of 2009 battling the MTA's proposed "doomsday" budget that included drastic cuts to subway, bus and rail service as well as work to ensure the system was in a state of good repair.

2010 - 2017

The PCAC and Councils continued the effort begun in 2009 fighting service cuts and fare increases due to Albany's draconian funding withdrawal; NYCT was forced to remove subway station booth agents before cameras and intercoms could be fully installed. Subway and bus service was dramatically reduced as was employee headcount throughout the entire MTA. Several winter storms hit the system and underscored that a lack of adequate staffing magnified the deplorable response to the events. Communication about service to riders was especially hard hit. During this time, the PCAC was actively engaged in the conversation through meetings, testimony and letters, trying to prevent and then reduce the size of the funding reductions.

In 2010, PCAC issued our MTA Annual Performance Review for 2009, and weighed in on a variety of initiatives, including the 34th Street Select Bus Service corridor, the development of Moynihan Station, and the Mega Capital Projects. PCAC also spent time analyzing performance metrics. The work resulted in an important research report, Minutes Matter, which described the on-time performance measures reported by the agencies and the lack of accountability for delays caused by canceled trains.

The LIRRCC was instrumental in moving the MTA to make structural changes to the customer satisfaction surveys. The LIRRCC and MNRCC continued to focus on improved customer communications, especially during winter storms. The LIRRCC submitted complaints to the LIRR about unpaved station parking facilities and the shortage of LIRR parking at stations. The LIRRCC collaborated with the LIRR to draft and post a "Pledge to Customers", and also advocated for the LIRR ban on electronic cigarettes in areas where smoking is not permitted.



The NYCTRC provided input to NYCT on new service diversion notices and revised performance indicators; subway and bus accessibility issues; and applauded the installation of luggage racks on bus routes serving airports based on their suggestion. In 2013, the Council released [Bridging the Gap: It May Be Further than You Think!](#), where the Council assessed subway station boarding-area platform gaps and made recommendations to the MTA Office of ADA Compliance to improve system-wide wheelchair accessibility.

The PCAC released [The Road Back: A Historic Review of the MTA Capital Program](#), in 2012. The report highlights the 30 years of political, financial, and infrastructure challenges of rebuilding the system. In 2013, the PCAC released [MTA in the Age of Big Data](#), promoting the usefulness of data analytics to assist MTA decision makers and public stakeholders.

In 2014, PCAC partnered with the Urban Land Institute (ULI) in a series of roundtable discussions with regional stakeholders focusing on the need to invest in the MTA network. The high-level collaboration resulted in the report and website [Keeping NY on Track: The Importance of the MTA Transit Network in a Changing World](#).

Recent Council highlights include: LIRRCC's push for legislation to establish parity between pre-tax benefit limits for commuter parking and public transit; MNRCC's successful call to have MNR cross-honor West-of-Hudson riders on the Hudson line and provide shuttle buses following service disruptions caused by the Hoboken train crash; and NYCTRC's continued efforts to implement the [Freedom Ticket](#) pilot program to institute lower railroad fares within NYC with a free transfer to NYCT subways and buses.

The impact of the 2010 budget cuts have come into play this year as substantial infrastructure failures have wreaked havoc on subway service, and these failures have been easier to quantify with the release of NYCT's Subway Performance Dashboard. PCAC staff and the Transit Center have advocated for and worked with NYCT staff to create the dashboard and improve the metrics with the Train Travel Time and Customer Wait Time measures, which have been great enhancements to the existing indicators. The newly visualized data provides NYCT management with improved tools to guide their decisions, help make the case for secure and sustainable funding to invest in the system, and much needed transparency for public stakeholders.



2014 PCAC and the Urban Land Institute NY (ULI-NY) hosts roundtable discussions with regional leaders to invest in the MTA network

LIRRCC advocates for LIRR policy for 24-hour access to waiting areas in severe storms



2015 PCAC/ULI-NY produce report website "Keeping NY on Track"

NYCTRC proposes Freedom Ticket Pilot Program.



2016 MNRCC recommends provisions to cross-honor West-of-Hudson MNR tickets and provide shuttle buses after Hoboken crash



NYCTRC gains local and state support for the Freedom Ticket proposal

2017 NYCTRC celebrates with the release of the NYCT Subway Performance Dashboard



And the work continues...

PCAC and Council Reports



LIRRCC
LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD
COMMUTER COUNCIL

Mark Epstein (Chair), Gerard P. Bringmann (Vice Chair),
Sheila Carpenter, Owen Costello, Michael Godino, Ira Greenberg*,
Raymond Pagano, Bryan Peranzo, Larry Rubinstein

* MTA Board Representative



MNRCC
METRO-NORTH RAILROAD
COMMUTER COUNCIL

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Francena Amparo, Richard Cataggio, Francis T. Corcoran,
Rhonda Herman

* MTA Board Representative



NYCTRC
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Sharon King Hoge, Trudy L. Mason, Scott R. Nicholls, Edith M. Prentiss

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