

A meeting of the New York City Transit Riders Council (NYCTRC) was convened virtually at 12:00 pm on Thursday, June 25, 2020 via Zoom.

Member Attendance

Andrew Albert (Chair)	Present
Burton M. Strauss Jr. (Vice Chair)	Present
Stuart Goldstein	Present
Christopher D. Greif	Present
William K. Guild	Present
Marisol Halpern	Present
Sharon King Hoge	Present
Trudy L. Mason	Present
Scott R. Nicholls	Present
Edith Prentiss	Absent

Staff Attendance

Lisa Daglian (Executive Director)	Present
Ellyn Shannon (Associate Director)	Present
Bradley Brashears (Planning Manager)	Present
Sheila Binesh (Transportation Planner)	Present
Deborah Morrison (Administrative Assistant)	Absent
Shaul Picker (Research Intern)	Present

Non-Member Attendance

<u>Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
Carolyn Pokorny	MTAIG
Elizabeth Keating	MTA OIG
Peggy Willens	MTA OIG
Jason Anthony	Concerned citizen
Andrew Pollack	Concerned citizen
Matt Kemper	Concerned citizen
Danielle Blustein Hass	Concerned citizen
Howie Levine	MTA Intergovernmental Affairs
Mike Howard	Concerned citizen
Andrew Kurzweil	Concerned citizen
Matt Shotkin	Concerned citizen
Jasmine Melzer	Concerned citizen
Yvonne Marrow	Concerned citizen

Approval of Agenda for June 25, 2020 meeting.

Approval of Minutes for May 28, 2020 meeting.

Chair's - Board Report attached.

- This is the worst financial condition the MTA has ever been in, with horrific losses in revenue from tolls, fares and dedicated taxes. Bus and subway ridership are up to 19% of normal ridership. Ridership is up on the commuter LIRR and Metro-North.
- The MTA's COVID response effort is herculean, but the cleaning is eating up 45% of the budget. \$3.9 billion is needed in 2020, and at least \$7-8 billion are needed for 2021.
- The Capital Program is on hold, halting CBTC work. The Rutgers Tube project can continue since it is receiving Federal and Sandy funds. Work on 11 of the next 43 ADA stations will continue, in addition to East Side Access.
- The WSP report gave a worldwide overview on post-COVID best practices. New York is doing well, and is doing some initiatives they have not included, like anti-microbials and real time air-filtering, which is being evaluated. WSP praised the MTA's early cleaning and disinfection of subway cars and stations, its distribution of masks, and collaboration with Columbia's Dr. David Brenner, who has helped pioneer some new technology.
- I asked Sarah Meyer and Sally Librera to look into having stations with electric signage at entrances to alternate messages telling people to wear masks before entering.
- To reduce the spread of COVID-19, OMNY implementation is being sped up. All buses and stations will be equipped with OMNY readers, and all fare types by the end of 2020.
- This past board meeting was Susan Metzger's last meeting and Orange County will need a new representative. She will be sorely missed.
- Chief Financial Officer Bob Foran projects a \$3.75 billion loss in 2020, and a loss of \$6.6 billion in 2021. \$3.9 billion in funding from the HEROES Act is held up by the Senate.
- Options described to deal with the deficit include wage freezes, the current delay in the capital program, reductions in non-personal expenses, and a reduced workforce. While not preferable, service cuts and fare hikes are options. Foran also mentioned that long-term deficit financing was a possibility, but was not something the MTA would like to do.
- Janno Lieber spoke about projects being sped up to work during the overnight shutdown. State of good repair work, ADA upgrades, and 7 line upgrades are on hold.
- If we get into this financial doomsday, we should push for an increased gas tax to provide dedicated funding to the MTA. A 3-5 cent increase in gas prices wouldn't be felt.

Carolyn Pokorny, MTA Inspector General, and Elizabeth Keating and Peggy Willens from the MTA IG's office; MTA IG: Homeless Outreach Activities — Final Report

A. Albert: How many lines were surveyed for homelessness for the report?

P. Willens: We went to 3 of the 8 stations for the End of the Line (EOL) program. A colleague and I, as part of the January Hope Count sponsored by the city every year, also went to two separate platforms at Stillwell Avenue between 12 and 5.

L. Daglian: Are you continuing to monitor progress, and are there new metrics about assistance that is being provided, and could the MTA and city be encouraged to share this data publicly?

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P. Willens: The MTA said they were working to put new metrics into the MOU with the BRC, which is expiring at the end of the month. We don't know what they are but are still going to be in the role of monitoring, though with a lighter touch.

E. Shannon: It would be useful to have insight into how long it takes to clear trains of the homeless with the shutdowns. What percentage of the population takes 5 or 30 minutes to be cleared? These metrics would provide transparency into why the shutdown length is important.

If they are tracking how many people had to be removed the first night, how has the census improved?

P. Willens: "They" now refers to the NYPD, not the MTA, and the BRC. We would love to know how many people are still sheltering on trains and brought off at 1 a.m., and do not know whether the MTA or NYPD are counting it.

T. Mason: In the report, working with the MTA police was mentioned. Before May, was it the MTA police rather than the NYPD that you were working with?

P. Willens: Until the End of the Line (EOL) program was established, the MTA police did not have the authority to go onto subway trains or do enforcement work in the subway. The MTA police department and the NYPD had to reach an MOU for places the MTA police could work. During the EOL, the standard staffing level was 7 MTA police officers and 3 people from the BRC.

L. Daglian: How do the trains get cleaned during the day if the homeless are not removed?

C. Pokorny: They do the best as they can and can only really scrub it when they are empty during the overnight shutdowns.

E. Shannon: Has there been a discussion about the MTA doing their own homeless impact metrics to track when their staff could get on cars to start cleaning, or the number of delays caused by homeless people, or capturing the difficulty of getting cars clean due to homeless?

P. Willens: We know they are tracking complaints and delays. We don't know what else they might be tracking. We could learn more in our monitoring role.

A. Pollack: The E historically has always seemed to have the worst of the homeless since it does not go above ground, so I hope you can look into the E train.

C. Pokorny: The police said the E line has historically been particularly used by a lot of people to shelter in the system. They thought the shutdowns were making their jobs easier in terms of getting people off the subway and connecting with services. They have seen a reduction in the number of people sheltering in the system.

B. Brashears: I hope that the MTA is not only looking at the activity metrics, but also at the outcome metrics, and set goals and track that. There are so many actors collecting data, and it is not sufficient. It seems it would be helpful to have a big data dump into one portal so you can look in the data in one location and cross-reference it.

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P. Willens: It is a good idea. We heard from transit that MTA IT was looking at improving their database. The MTA and BRC have their own databases, but do not talk with each other.

B. Brashears: Is there cooperation among the different police forces? Has the MTA reached out to the NYPD?

P. Willens: We do not even know if the NYPD is counting the people they are escorting off of trains. Transit and MTAPD might know that, but not the MTA IG office.

W. Guild: May I assume there is no collection of data on the identities of people removed so we can do a comparison, and have an idea of how many of them return within a given time frame?

P. Willens: The outreach workers, when an offer of service is accepted, take names and an identifying fact, usually a birthday, which gets captured in their database. We think the MTA could do a better job of getting outreach workers to report how many unique individuals have left the system and not come back.

Chair's – Board Report contd...

A. Albert: I told Carolyn that we would like to see 24/7 service restored. Transit told me they have learned a lot during the intense cleaning, such as by massing staff at the end of line and feel they could maintain this level of cleaning while running the service. I understand that the Chairman in the Q&A following the Board meeting was noncommittal about returning to 24/7, but both the Governor and Chairman Foye have previously committed to doing so.

A. Albert: All R179s have been removed from service following an uncoupling of a WABTEC coupler at the Chambers Street station. All 6,000 cars with these couplers are having them inspected. With the current level of service, it is not yet necessary to press R32s back into service, but it could happen, depending on the timetable of restoring the R179s, and how fast people get back onto the system.

Action item: Find out when the panel of experts will be convened to assess the R179s.

J. Melzer: I represent Good Neighbors of Park Slope, and our subway station was on the list of the next 23 to receive elevators. How can I find out which are on the list of 11 stations?

Action item: Find out which stations are on the list of 11 where ADA work is still underway.

J. Melzer: Regarding the Schumer meeting, other than asking our members whether our friends and relatives could contact these out of state senators to bring the HEROES ACT to the floor, is there anything in general our membership could do to help?

L. Daglian: There is a letter-writing campaign to ask members of Congress to speak on the floor about the importance of this issue. Reinvent Albany put out a report last week that looked at the national economic impact of the MTA on individual states. That is a good place to remind those elected officials of the importance of ensuring there is a well-funded agency that can fund their constituencies.

L. Daglian: I was using the elevator at the 63rd Street station at the Third Avenue side. When it gets crowded, will there be elevator attendants to keep people at a distance, and limit the number of people that get on? There are no distance markers in the elevators. You can't be six feet apart. It would be helpful to know the strategy to reduce crowding in elevators.

A. Albert: We can reach out to Sarah Meyer about that. You are not going to have six feet on trains either, so masks are key. And the elevators might have real-time air filtering blowing in them if it proves successful.

Action item: Reach out to Sarah Meyer about how the MTA plans to reduce crowding in elevators, whether via social distancing markers, elevator attendants, or other methods.

A. Pollack: NICE Bus in Nassau County is resuming fare collection on June 27th, and I heard from Craig Cipriano that there was supposed to be a plan for bus driver safety.

A. Albert: I asked Craig about enclosures for the bus operators that are germ-proof and they are definitely looking into that. Apparently, some of them are causing glare, so they are really experimenting with different ways to protect the bus operators.

Old Business:

J. Anthony: Yesterday, when getting out of work, I took the S40 at 5:40 p.m. and could not get a seat until after Richmond Terrace and South Avenue. I have been raising this issue for months, but the issue started in 2018 with the opening of the Amazon warehouse and got worse due to the pandemic. The S90 LTD is only in effect in peak-direction on weekdays, from Amazon in the morning, and from St. George in the afternoon. There is no social distancing on the buses. Buses load up right at the first bus stop.

A. Albert: If your bus is loaded after the first stop, it is obvious it needs more service.

Action item: Find out about the possible restoration of reverse-peak S90 LTD service, and increases in service to Amazon in Staten Island.

J. Anthony: I have been pre-booking my essential trips the day before. The drivers arrive to my apartment to pick me up ten minutes before the trip time.

L. Daglian: It would be great to know how many people are using the essential connecting service.

Action item: Look into ridership for the essential connecting service.

C. Grief: We have still seen some drivers not following instructions, even making up their own rules, concerning allowing the elderly and people with mobility impairments to board and exit at the front of the bus. Could the Jackie Gleason, East New York, and Fresh Pond depots be investigated?

Action item: Look into whether drivers at Jackie Gleason, East New York, and Fresh Pond Depots are allowing the elderly and mobility impaired to board and exit through the front door.

New Business

S. Nicholls: The plain clothes sex offender unit has been disbanded with no more dedicated patrols. We will return to 1980's style of crime in the subway - as ridership goes up so will assaults.

A. Albert: They must be aware of this problem. I will reach out the Chief Delatorre to see what they have in store for this problem.

Action Item: Andrew to inquire about the plain clothes sex offender unit and what plans the NYPD is developing to address this issue.

C. Grief: Mark Epstein, Long Island chair, tragically passed away, and I wanted to know if we could have a moment of silence in respect.

A. Albert: We can certainly have a moment of silence.
[Moment of silence]

Adjourned

This meeting was conducted via Zoom Conference Call: [Zoom Video](#)

Action Items

- Find out when the panel of experts will be convened to assess the R179s.
- Find out which stations are on the list of 11 where ADA work is still underway.
- Reach out to Sarah Meyer about how the MTA plans to reduce crowding in elevators, whether via social distancing markers, elevator attendants, or other methods.
- Find out about the possible restoration of reverse-peak S90 LTD service, and increases in service to Amazon in Staten Island.
- Look into ridership for the essential connecting service.
- Look into whether drivers at Jackie Gleason, East New York, and Fresh Pond Depots are allowing the elderly and mobility impaired to board and exit through the front door.
- Andrew to inquire about the plain clothes sex offender unit and what plans the NYPD is developing to address this issue.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Daglian
Executive Director