

A meeting of the New York City Transit Riders Council (NYCTRC) was convened at 12:00 pm on Thursday, August 27, 2020 via Zoom.

### Member Attendance

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

### Staff Attendance

Lisa Daglian (Executive Director)	<b>Present</b>
Ellyn Shannon (Associate Director)	<b>Present</b>
Bradley Brashears (Planning Manager)	<b>Present</b>
Sheila Binesh (Transportation Planner)	<b>Present</b>
Shaul Picker (Research Intern)	<b>Absent</b>

### Non-Member Attendance

<u>Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
Randy Glucksman	MNRRCC
Niko Goutakolis	New York Transit Museum
Jennifer Kalter	New York Transit Museum
Concetta Bencivenga	New York Transit Museum
Kate Lanceley	New York Transit Museum
Polly Desjarlais	New York Transit Museum
Jason Anthony	<b>Concerned citizen</b>
Andrew Pollack	<b>Concerned citizen</b>
Matt Kamper	<b>Concerned citizen</b>
Matt Shotkin	<b>Concerned citizen</b>
Cate Contino	<b>Concerned citizen</b>
Yvonne Morrow	<b>Concerned citizen</b>
Kristin Klingerman	<b>Concerned citizen</b>
Mike Howard	<b>Concerned citizen</b>

***Approval of Agenda for August 27, 2020 meeting.***

***Approval of Minutes for July 23, 2020 meeting.***

***Chair's - Board Report, including MTA Finances***

A. Albert:

The outlook on the MTA's finances is the bleakest it has ever been, and the survival of the MTA, and transit agencies across the country, is reliant on a Federal bailout. There is a massive loss in fares, tolls and taxes. The health of the nation is a Federal responsibility. In the meeting, there was discussion of what the state and city could do, and the Governor later said it was way beyond the ability of any state or city to do anything about it.

The MTA has said they have not seen such a large drop in ridership since the Great Depression. We are losing \$200 million a week, and without \$12 billion in funding, taking us through the end of 2021, the Chairman outlined massive fare hikes, layoffs, and service cuts. The Senate is holding up any rescue package. The House package would give us \$12 billion through 2021. Rescuing the MTA is in the national interest.

Bon Foran said that everything is on the table. There is a definite delay in the capital program. Some capital program funds are now being used for operations, which I am not opposed to since capital projects are on hold, and we need to do everything we can to keep buses and trains running. He said that toll increases would bring in a lot more money than fare increases.

The service cuts being considered would make it impossible for the New York way of life to continue, where people can go to a station or bus stop and expect a train or bus to arrive in a few minutes and get to their destination. We are talking about a 40% cut in bus and subway service, which would mean a minimum wait of 8 minutes for a subway train and 15 minutes for a bus. This does not advance social distancing. Off-peak service on the Staten Island Railway service would be on 30-minute headways, Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North Railroad would be looking at 50% of service, with service every 1 hour or 2 hours, or more. They also mentioned that some entire LIRR branches could be closed, in addition to Metro-North service West of Hudson.

In the question and answer session following the meeting, one of the Long Island reporters asked likely candidates for complete closures, and it was let slip that it could be the Oyster Bay, West Hempstead and Greenport Branches. Second Avenue Subway Phase 2, Penn Station Access, additional ADA stations, the electric bus fleet, the R211 and R262 orders, CBTC installation on the Lexington Avenue Line and other lines, and the Long Island Rail Road electrification of the Central Branch are all on pause and at risk.

The Chairman was asked if these are scare tactics to act before the election and said that this is reality. \$1 billion of the \$12 billion the MTA needs is the loss of money from congestion pricing, which would have gone into effect in January 2021. I asked the General Counsel if it made sense to have the MTA file a lawsuit to compel the FTA to give an answer. They looked into the possibility, and said it would not be the smartest thing to do at the present time. Doing the lawsuit could threaten our federal road and bridge money in retaliation.

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L. Daglian: We have spoken internally, with some of the MTA leadership, with other advocacy organizations, and at a joint hearing of the Assembly and Senate about different revenue generating options. The focus the MTA wants to hammer home is the need for Federal action. Tripling the gas tax could bring about \$1 billion, and if congestion pricing somehow gets through, raising \$1 billion, which could be bonded for \$15 billion, does that reduce the amount of money we get if there is a rescue package?

E. Prentiss: What is the current gas tax rate?

S. Binesh: For New York, the gas tax is 8 cents per gallon, and not all of it goes to the MTA.

T. Mason: My legislative contacts have said that they would be against a gas tax increase. We should discuss this at our next PCAC meeting.

A. Albert: The Chairman said that it is likely that by the November board meeting, the decisions about what cuts would be made would be decided. Labor made clear at the Board yesterday that they have been on the front line and would not go for a no raise situation. The Senate and Assembly held a joint hearing on how COVID-19 is affecting the MTA. Some elected officials from the Long Island and Metro-North regions mentioned how riders are afraid to get back on the train because they went on once and saw how few people were wearing masks.

L. Daglian: One of the issues raised by labor, particularly on the LIRR, was concern about asking people to wear masks as it is not their job. There was call for additional enforcement. I have heard that compliance on subways is down to 86%. We at the PCAC have called for data-driven deployment of MTA police officers, and there is an opportunity to see how that can be handled in terms of mask enforcement. Some of the other advocacy organizations that have signed on to a reduction in the size of the police force have talked about other systems that have used ambassadors that are not armed to enforce mask wearing. The question is what steps are taken if someone refuses to wear a mask.

A. Albert: I was horrified to continue hearing about the smashing of windows on the 7 train. I spoke to the head of subways about this and heard that they are all occurring en route and that police do their examinations at Corona Yard. They are getting very close to arresting the suspect. This caused some service cuts.

A. Albert: Parsons/Archer and Sutphin/Archer will be closed in the last few weeks of September to repair tracks that badly need to be repaired.

*Virtual Presentation and Tour: **New York Transit Museum and the Evolution of Subway Car Design***

### **Old Business: None**

### **New Business**

L. Daglian: George Haikalis asked whether the PCAC supported the resumption of fare collection on buses given the financial situation that many riders are dealing with.

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A. Albert: Since service is the top priority to me and since it is losing so much money, and since many people will likely not pay their fare, I think the resumption of fare collection and additional usage of the six seats in the front of the bus makes a lot of sense.

A. Albert: OMNY should be in place by the end of this year, December 2020. Time-based, reduced fares, and all other types will be available by December 31<sup>st</sup>.

L. Daglian: Will not be available on LIRR and MNR.

S. Goldstein: Was there any talk about our Atlantic Ticket – any rollbacks on this fare?

A. Albert: No, did not come up at all.

L. Daglian: The LIRRCC has called for better announcements that all fares are off-peak – people are still paying full fares.

S. King Hoge: Will we be returning to 24/7 subway service?

A. Albert: They are waiting for the New York State Health Commissioner to give the okay that it is safe to go back to 24/7 service.

L. Daglian: We continue to ask how long it takes to clean the trains; how long it takes to remove the homeless; and if there is a way to condense the closings and to see a plan for reopening – metrics to reopen.

A. Albert: We are trying to get a new speaker to talk about the Mercury program installing signs to keep you informed of what is going on platform by platform and station by station. We hope to bring you that in September.

### ***Adjourned***

**This meeting was conducted via Zoom Conference Call:**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UgdsCFj1TuA&list=PLDXH0sqF0KIh7Y8wGBf9JTP\\_0LU2sQvBm&index=107](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UgdsCFj1TuA&list=PLDXH0sqF0KIh7Y8wGBf9JTP_0LU2sQvBm&index=107)

### **Action Items**

- **None**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Daglian  
Executive Director