

**PERMANENT CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE MTA**  
**MINUTES OF JUNE 6, 2013**

A meeting of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee (PCAC) to the MTA was convened at 12:00 noon on June 6, 2013, in the 5th floor Board room at MTA Headquarters, 347 Madison Avenue, New York City.

The following members were present:

Andrew Albert	Matthew Kessler
James F. Blair	Trudy Mason
Mark Epstein	Steve Mayo
Randy Glucksman	Larry Rubinstein
Mike Godino	Michael Sinansky
Ira Greenberg	Burton M. Strauss Jr.

The following members were absent:

Gerard P. Bringmann	Rhonda Herman
Sheila Carpenter	Thomas Jost
Richard Cataggio	Sharon King Hoge
Francis T. Corcoran	Maureen Michaels
Owen Costello	Raymond Pagano
Stuart Goldstein	Bryan Peranzo
Christopher Greif	Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas
William K. Guild	Edith Prentiss
Marisol Halpern	Toya Williford
Neal Zuckerman	

In addition, the following persons were present:

William A. Henderson	-PCAC Executive Director
Ellyn Shannon	-PCAC Senior Transportation Planner
Adam Lisberg	-MTA
George Haikalis	-IRUM
Matt Shotkin	-Concerned citizen
Stephen Lofthouse	-Concerned citizen
Joseph M. Clift	-Concerned citizen

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### ***Approval of Agenda and Minutes***

The agenda for the June 6, 2013 meeting was approved. The minutes of the March 7, 2013 meeting were approved.

### ***Chair's Report***

Ira Greenberg commented that there is a bill pending in the State Legislature that would require the MTA to establish measures of reliability and performance in order to evaluate the expenditure of capital funds. This bill specifies that the measure is to be developed in consultation with the PCAC.

Mike Godino noted that another bill was pending that would establish a Disabled Riders Council. Trudy Mason said that she was aware of the effort and said that it is unlikely that the legislation would pass. Bill Henderson said that this proposal has been floated for a number of years and that, when Bill Guild was the PCAC Chair, he and Mr. Guild met with the Assembly sponsor of the legislation, Micah Kellner. At that time they concluded that the proposed Council would not be a good fit within the PCAC structure.

### **MNRCC**

Jim Blair commented that there had been about 60,000 people at the Train Days event that was presented by Metro-North as a part of the Grand Central Terminal centennial. He said that Metro-North had done a fantastic job of managing the large crowds.

Ms. Mason requested that she receive notice of the opening of an exhibit of East Side Access photos. She also requested that a Grand Central Terminal tour be set up for PCAC members.

### **NYCTRC**

Andrew Albert said that the day before the meeting he heard about the planned long term outages on the R and G lines. He stated that the Council will work to make sure that riders are not put into subway cars like sardines. He also noted that he has spoken to Mr. Cappelli, who told him that he and Mr. Pally, along with other Board Members, will push for more service. The feeling among a number of Board members is that, since the MTA received \$40 million more in State funding than expected, these funds should go toward improving service.

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Mr. Greenberg commented that the State funding that was increased has sometimes been diverted to other uses. He said that the PCAC should look at what this amount of funding can do for service.

Mr. Albert said that at stations where the component program has been implemented riders have seen major improvements.

Ms. Mason mentioned that the Transport Workers Union is making a push to use these funds to restore staffed token booths that had been eliminated. She said that this is at base an effort to get people rehired to staff these booths. Mr. Albert responded that it is debatable whether this would be the best use of these funds. He said that where station booths were removed, intercom systems should have been provided, but largely were not.

Mike Sinansky asked whether bus service would be a use for this funding. He said that he has heard great outcry in favor of restoring the B37 bus. Mr. Albert commented that expanded bus service would be a popular way of expending some of these funds. He said that in addition to existing routes, there are a number of new bus services that could be established to fulfill City residents' unmet transportation needs.

### **LIRRCC**

Mark Epstein noted that a bill has passed the State Senate requiring the MTA to hold hearings on fare or service changes in each county that would be affected by a proposed change and to hold only one hearing each day. Senator Fuschillo was the sponsor of this legislation.

### ***Old Business***

Mike Godino reported on the work of the committee that had been established to recommend changes to reduced fare eligibility for persons with disabilities. Mr. Godino said that the committee had agreed to recommend that the qualifications for ~~receiving~~receiving a reduced fare mirror the definitions of disability established under the Americans With Disabilities Act.

### ***Election of Council Officers***

The PCAC held an election of officers for a term through the June 2015 meeting. The candidates presented by the nominating committee, consisting of Chair – Randolph Glucksman, First Vice Chair – Matthew Kessler, and Second Vice Chair – William Guild, were elected unanimously.

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Mr. Greenberg noted that the bylaws of the PCAC require that if there is any appearance of a conflict of interest, it must be disclosed by the member involved, and that Mr. Glucksman had asked to speak. Mr. Glucksman explained that he is employed in a position where he at times works on projects being undertaken for the MTA and its agencies. He noted that his role in these projects is purely technical in nature, that he is not involved in matters of policy, and that he has written and sent a letter notifying Governor Cuomo and the Rockland County Executive of this potential appearance of a conflict of interest.

### ***Introduction of Adam Lisberg, MTA Director of External Communications, to discuss MTA and Agency Communication with the Press and External Stakeholders***

Mr. Lisberg commented that the only change to the biographical information that Mr. Greenberg had referenced in introducing him is that he had recently moved to Carroll Gardens. He stated he has spent a long time in journalism and was not seeking to leave the profession when he was asked to join the MTA. He said that he was approached by Joe Lhota, who explained that in his view the MTA performs much better than its reputation and that he wanted someone in the position who could effectively tell the Authority's story.

Mr. Lisberg said that this offer was attractive to him in part because he has always been a subway buff. He also said that he feels that the changes that have been made in the press office and the way that it functions are making a difference in the media and public perception of the MTA. He gave the example of the reaction that was reported in the news media when G and R subway line closures were announced. People did not lash out against the MTA, but most riders said that if the work has to be done, it has to be done. Mr. Lisberg said that one of the things that the MTA did to explain the need for these closures was to post photos of the underwater tubes that were affected by Superstorm Sandy and examples of the damage that the storm had done.

Mr. Lisberg said that when he joined the MTA the title of his position changed from Press Secretary to Director of External Communications. This change reflects the reality that the position involves more than talking with reporters. Instead, the MTA's efforts to tell its story have changed and now involve the use of Twitter and other social media, internally produced videos, and photos posted to the website and made available to the news media. Mr. Albert noted that the MTA's pictures of the damage that was done to the South Ferry station have been very effective.

Mr. Lisberg commented that everyone knows the images of Sandy's aftermath. He said that his office has to work closely with MTA Corporate Communications and its head Paul Fleuranges, because the story that appears on the web and

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the story that appears in the press should be the same. He said that he believes in saying more rather than less in communicating with stakeholders and the press. Mr. Lisberg said that his office always engages with reporters, even if they have to say that the MTA cannot talk about the story. This differs from the past, when the MTA released prepared statements and its representatives did not speak in their own voices. Mr. Lisberg said that early in his tenure he spoke to a reporter and offered to go on camera on a story, and this reporter did not know how to respond. The reporter said to him that the MTA always only puts out statements.

Mr. Lisberg said that the leadership of the MTA would like to tell its own story rather than have reporters shape the story, even if the story is painful to tell. He said that he is a believer in the MTA organization and its people. While sometimes these people make mistakes, generally they do a good job. Still, Mr. Lisberg noted that one of the issues that he has faced is that many people at the MTA are used to a more hierarchical culture, where he is more improvisational by nature.

Mr. Epstein suggested that Mr. Lisberg should work more closely with the PCAC and its councils. He said that in many cases council leadership doesn't hear about a news item until being contacted by a reporter.

Mr. Lisberg responded that in his office there are many discussions about how to release information and that sometimes information is not released as quickly as possible to ensure that it gets out in a coordinated fashion.

Mr. Greenberg said that he was glad Mr. Lisberg came to the PCAC's meeting. He stated that the work that the MTA press office does is important, because at times the public perception of the MTA became so negative that large numbers of people did not want to fund needed service or investments.

Ms. Mason stated that she felt that there can be a closer relationship between the MTA and PCAC and that the PCAC can serve the MTA by functioning as a voice of riders. For this to happen there must ~~be better~~ be better interaction between MTA and PCAC.

Mr. Lisberg commented that one area for improvement is that the MTA does ~~not~~ do not do a good job of explaining who its Board members are and how they differ from each other.

Mr. Glucksman stated that one pet peeve of rail fans is how little reporters often know about transit.

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Ellyn Shannon pointed out that when she came to the PCAC the MTA issued only a few press releases per quarter. She commented that they are making great progress toward getting positive stories into the public domain.

Mr. Albert asked whether the press office is involved with determining the content of car cards in the subways. Mr. Lisberg responded that this function is under Paul Fleuranges.

Mr. Epstein stated that he wants to collaborate with the press office to forge a working relationship on MTA issues. Mr. Lisberg agreed that this would be positive and agreed to work toward this end.

Mr. Lisberg responded to Mr. Glucksman's comment about reporters not having much knowledge of transit by explaining that the MTA directs selected reporters to subject matter experts within the organization so that they can understand the issues and better interpret them to the public. He said that as an example, his office had worked with the Wall Street Journal reporter who broke the story on the closure of the R train after the reporter noted that he was seeing more signal failures on the R. The press office connected the reporter with Joe Leader at NYC Transit and took him into Montague Tube for a first-hand look at the storm damage. He held the story for 2 months, in exchange for having the story first.

Mr. Albert pointed out that after Superstorm Sandy, there were no notices that Montague tube would have to be rebuilt. Mr. Lisberg replied that he only knew the rebuilding would be necessary in the last 4 to 6 weeks. Mr. Albert suggested that it would have been smarter to reroute the R train over the Manhattan Bridge.

Ms. Mason mentioned that in this political season, candidates are calling for New York City to take over the MTA. She wondered if there is some way of educating people about what MTA is and why it was organized as it is. Mr. Lisberg responded that it is hard enough to get people to get the Authority's name right and to realize that it is a State agency rather than a department of City government. Ms. Mason said that the public's misconception is heightened by the political campaign. Mr. Lisberg agreed that the MTA does not want to engage with people who are using the debate solely for political advantage.

Ms. Shannon asked whether there will be an overhaul of the MTA website. Mr. Lisberg responded that this is a decision for Paul Fleuranges office.

Mr. Henderson asked about the impact of moving press staff formerly housed in the operating agencies under the control of MTA Headquarters. Mr. Lisberg commented that it was done before he came to the MTA, but there was still some grumbling about the change when he joined the agency. In the previous system, press people had a direct connection with operating people at each agency.

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Changing this was a loss, but now there is a lot of interoperability among the press staff. When the staff people who typically work with the commuter railroads are not available, the staff person who typically handles NYC Transit issues can deal with commuter rail issues that arise. It also helps that all of the press staff are in the same office and can learn about issues throughout the MTA.

Joe Clift stated that when documents are put on the MTA site in PDF format they are not made searchable, even when the documents originated in MS Word format.

Mike Godino commented that the website is not accessible for people who are blind. He asked if anything was being done to bring it into compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. Mr. Lisberg stated that this was Mr. Fleuranges area, but there are discussions about accessibility all the time. The MTA needs to figure out what agencies are doing this the best and see what can be done to emulate them.

Ms. Shannon wanted to know if the ~~PCAC could~~ PCAC could be engaged with the MTA prior to major announcements. Mr. Lisberg noted that the next Capital Program is huge communication issue. One of the problems with effectively communicating its importance is that individual "ribbon cutting" projects are much easier to sell.

Larry Rubinstein suggested that we need the MTA press staff to come to the PCAC more, because the organization can advocate for the MTA.

Mr. Greenberg asked Mr. Lisberg what was his impression of the MTA prior to coming here. Mr. Lisberg responded by stating the MTA had tripped over themselves. It was difficult as a reporter to get information from the MTA. He said that if your press office is consistent, this shows reporters that the agency is competent.

### ***New Business***

No new business was discussed.

### ***Adjournment***

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00.

Respectfully submitted,

William Henderson

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Executive Director