

PERMANENT CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE MTA
MINUTES OF DECEMBER 6, 2012

A meeting of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee (PCAC) to the MTA was convened at 12:00 noon on December 6, 2012, in the 5th floor Board Room, at MTA Headquarters, 347 Madison Avenue, New York City. The following members were present:

Andrew Albert	Trudy Mason
James F. Blair	Steve Mayo
Gerard Bringmann	Maureen Michaels
Mark Epstein	Bryan Peranzo
Mike Godino	Edith Prentiss
Stuart Goldstein	Larry Rubinstein
Ira Greenberg	Michael Sinansky
William K. Guild	Burton Strauss, Jr.
Matthew Kessler	Toya Williford

The following members were absent:

David Buchwald	Randy Glucksman
Sheila Carpenter	Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas
Richard Cataggio	Christopher Greif
Francis T. Corcoran	Rhonda Herman
Thomas Jost	Marisol Halpern
Owen Costello	Sharon King Hoge
Neal Zuckerman	

In addition, the following persons were present:

William Henderson	-PCAC Executive Director
Ellyn Shannon	-PCAC Transportation Planner
Karyl Berger	-PCAC Research Associate
Patrick Gerakons	-LIRR
Esme Deprez	-Bloomberg News
George Haikalis	-IRUM
Matt Shotkin	-Concerned citizen
Ann Guild	-Concerned citizen
Yvonne Morrow	-Concerned citizen
Yvonne Jennings	-Concerned citizen

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Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The agenda for the December 6, 2012 meeting was approved. The minutes of the September 6, 2012 meeting were approved as amended, with a correction of attribution of comments made by a member during the NYCTRC Chair's report.

Chairs' Reports

The PCAC, LIRRCC, MNRCC and NYCTRC Chairs' Reports are attached to these minutes.

It was agreed that the PCAC will send a letter to MTA Chairman Lhota, with a copy to the unions representing MTA and operating agency workers, recognizing the efforts of workers in Sandy restoration. Trudy Mason commented that the letter should also note the precautions that MTA took to safeguard the system prior to the storm.

Ira Greenberg briefly discussed the recent fare Increase hearings. He noted that the hearings had been lightly attended and observed that the impacts of Superstorm Sandy and its aftermath seemed to be the major factors responsible for the hearings' low turnout and subdued tone.

Maureen Michaels stated that the PCAC has to take some kind of stance on fare collection. She said that one LIRRCC member has not had a ticket picked up in a month, and other members are having fares collected or tickets checked only half of the time. As a result, some riders who do not travel every weekday are starting to get wise and are buying ten-trip rather than monthly tickets.

Matt Kessler said that he resents the degree of media attention given to MTA fare and toll increases compared with the coverage given the Port Authority's recent increase in PATH fares and tolls. He said that the difference is that the MTA has a large number of well publicized fare increase hearings that receive media coverage, while the Port Authority fare and toll increase goes into effect largely without public comment or notice.

Mr. Greenberg announced that the MTA has created a 501 (c) (3) not for profit organization to benefit employees who had been harmed by Superstorm Sandy.

Ms. Michaels said that she would like to commend the MTA for restoring service so quickly after Sandy. She said that she had to be in the City on the Wednesday following the storm, and was very appreciative that service was available. She said that the MTA's decision to shut down operations follows a path that the LIRR has pursued for the past several years. Rather than operate

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service until it is impossible to do so, the LIRR now has provisions to take the system out of service according to a plan so that riders will not be stranded.

LIRRCC

Mr. Greenberg said that the PCAC and Councils should take the position that, with the revenue losses that we are seeing, the MTA and its operating agencies must ensure that fares are being collected from riders before they raise fares.

Larry Rubinstein stated that LIRR conductors are not moving through cars to collect fares and sometimes lock the cars' end doors. He said that this is a safety issue, as riders could not get to the next car in the case of an emergency.

Ms. Michaels clarified that the fare collection problem on the LIRR is attributable to a minority of the train crews. She said that the morning crews she encounters generally collect fares, but some crews don't collect fares in her car even though her ride is approximately an hour long.

Mr. Greenberg commented that some of the factors responsible for non-collection are not continuing problems. He said that there are issues due to Sandy that have resulted in tickets not being collected and that the PCAC may want to wait until they are resolved before mounting an effort to increase ticket collection.

Mr. Rubinstein said that conductors are often the focus of customers' anger about LIRR issues and may avoid interacting with passengers as a result.

Mr. Blair asked whether the number of dollars lost through a lack of ticket collection is known or can be estimated and whether this amount can be compared with costs of gating stations. He said that the gating option has been considered in the past and whether this is a reasonable means of reducing the problem and increasing revenue must be explored.

Edith Prentiss noted that when conductors do not travel through the cars it poses problems for riders with disabilities. She said that disability community advocates are trying to convince riders with disabilities that they must pay fares, but as bus fareboxes were not accessible for many years to bus riders using lifts, many of these riders have become accustomed to not paying.

Ms. Michaels asked whether it is possible for commuter rail riders with disabilities to ride in a designated place that ensures train crews will be aware of them and any need for assistance. Ms. Prentiss responded that locating such a place is not as simple as it may seem. She said that persons using wheelchairs need a minimal gap between platform and train, and that the gap can vary from station to station.

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Mr. Rubinstein stated that his employer felt ill in Penn Station and that the MTA Police rushed him upstairs, where he was taken to the hospital with a heart attack. He commended the MTA Police Department for their quick action.

NYCTRC

Andrew Albert said that it took a week and a half to restore R service to Brooklyn after the storm. He also noted that there has been service added on the J, 1, and 7 subway lines, but that there has been no decision made to restore 2010 cuts to the subway system's B division lines.

Mr. Greenberg questioned why NYC Transit is running the Rockaway Shuttle H line service according to the current service plan. Mr. Albert replied that the service plan incorporates the rail shuttle and a bus shuttle to reach the A line and that there is substantial regular bus service available as well. Mr. Greenberg said that the H service appears to be mainly symbolic. Gerry Bringmann commented that he had ridden the H train several times, and found it to be virtually empty.

Mr. Albert noted that the MTA had run a bus shuttle between the Rockaways and the Queens fare hearing, but that it was not heavily used. Mr. Greenberg said that he had used the MTA's bus shuttle to access the Long Island hearing and that it was slow and used by only two individuals.

Mr. Albert also noted that there were several comments on fare evasion made at the fare hearings. Mr. Greenberg observed that riders on the railroads know about the lack of fare collection. Ms. Mason said that she has a new perspective on fare evasion that she gained during the period where her transit pass was lost. She said that to travel at reduced fare without using funds on a reduced fare MetroCard, a rider has to pay the fare at a staffed station booth in a system where many station booths have been shut down. In many cases the paid station area does not extend from one side of the line to the other, and riders have to go to the wrong side of the station to pay their fares, which is ridiculous. Riders seeking to use a return trip ticket face the same problems. As a result, many seniors just enter through open exit gates in parts of stations where there are no staffed station booths.

Ms. Michaels noted that this is a different issue than on the commuter railroads, as the situation on the LIRR is not fare evasion, but a failure of train crews to collect tickets. Ms. Mason acknowledged that the issues are different, but said that NYC Transit riders are beginning to think that it is acceptable to evade paying the fare. She said that fare evasion on NYC Transit buses is a continuing problem. Bus drivers have been attacked, and as a result some drivers wave people on even if they do not pay their fare. Ms. Mason said that we need to figure out how much revenue is being lost.

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Mr. Albert responded that whatever estimate of the cost of fare evasion is provided, it is likely to be too low. He said that the NYCTRC's position on the fare is that the MTA must collect the fares due before it asks for fare increases.

Mr. Greenberg said that the consensus of the group is that fare evasion is increasing and that this problem needs to be addressed. He noted that Jim Blair has raised the issue that riders are paying more of the system's operating costs and said that we should also note that travel is becoming less affordable as incomes have not increased. Ms. Mason asked where funding for increasing costs would come from, if not from increased fares, and noted that she has been an advocate for implementing congestion pricing.

Mr. Albert explained that he is not saying that the MTA should not raise fares because of fare evasion, but that it must put its own house in order. He noted that several members of the Board are talking about establishing benchmarks for appropriate shares of costs that would be borne by riders, and State, City and Federal governments.

Mr. Blair said that he is not certain that the PCAC should be responsible for determining the revenue sources that should fund the MTA and that the MTA has more resources to determine the feasibility of particular funding arrangements. Ms. Mason suggested that PCAC could put forth a list of possible actions to be used to raise revenue for the MTA, and Mr. Blair agreed with this.

Mr. Greenberg commented that there are many revenue options and that actions such as rationalizing tolls may have benefits. He said that a letter could be sent to Governor Cuomo and State legislative leaders. Ms. Mason suggested that the letter also be sent to Mr. Lhota and the MTA Board.

Mr. Greenberg said that there are two issues that need to be addressed, fare evasion and State aid. Ms. Michaels said that it is necessary to rethink the antiquated zone structure on which fares are based and examine how this structure is working. Mr. Albert observed that there is already some variation in the way that zone structures are applied, as the cost per mile in outlying LIRR zones is lower than that of Metro-North.

MNRCC

Mr. Blair commented on four items included in the written report, including the impact of Sandy, Metro-North's event at the Bedford Hills station to showcase a new approach to maintenance, developments on access to Purdy's Station, and the Council's involvement with the Grand Central Terminal Centennial celebration. In addition, he noted that David Buchwald has departed the MNRCC to assume a seat in the State Assembly and said that he has suggested to Mr.

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Buchwald that he return to a future PCAC meeting to speak about his experiences as a Member of the Assembly.

Mr. Blair noted that he had attended a briefing for the MTA Board on the impacts of Sandy given by Metro North staff. The major themes that he took away from the meeting were the benefits of advance planning and the improved ability to react to events created by establishing a situation room structure and the critical value of communication and the fragility of the communication network.

Mr. Blair said that Metro-North's West of Hudson operations had lost several trainsets in the storm and that New Jersey Transit is responsible for this equipment. As a result four trains had to be taken out of service and a four hour service gap was created. The suspended service is scheduled to come back by mid-February.

Old Business

On the subject of fares, Mr. Blair said that the MNRCC is prepared to advocate for an expansion of the family fare as a way of increasing off-peak ridership. He noted that there were comments made at the fare hearings on the percentage of operating costs that the riders are bearing. Mr. Albert said that there is a need for a family or special event fare. Mr. Rubinstein said that there should also be a group discount to make train travel cost competitive with driving with multiple passengers in a car. Ms. Michaels suggested that the discount on off-peak ten trip tickets could be eliminated, as off-peak fares already incorporate a discount over full fares.

Mr. Greenberg suggested that the PCAC should look at changes in ridership patterns in forming suggestions for fare changes, as off-peak periods are becoming more heavily traveled. Mr. Blair commented that the MTA should be looking more actively at new electronic means of communication, particularly for persons with disabilities. By using these technologies the MTA could better communicate the information needed to safely navigate the system.

New Business

The Committee considered the proposed 2013 PCAC budget. Ms. Michaels commented that the budget is too low to do the things that the members want to do. Mark Epstein stated that he believes that PCAC needs more funding and that a possible source would be direct funding by the State. Mr. Greenberg responded that an option would be for the PCAC to go to Albany and ask for separate funding.

Mr. Albert stated that we should get a sense of the wishes of the group and what the members want to do. Toya Williford commented that she agreed with Mr.

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Epstein that the PCAC should advocate for more funding. She said that a committee should be formed to look into alternative sources of income.

A resolution was offered to establish a committee of the PCAC to investigate ways of raising additional revenue for PCAC, including setting up a not for profit organization to provide support for PCAC projects. The resolution was approved.

The proposed 2013 PCAC budget was approved.

Ms. Prentiss pointed out that the automatic door at 3 Stone Street has been broken for years. Mr. Henderson said that he would report the issue and ask for it to be repaired.

A member of the public, Yvonne Jennings, shared her concerns about video surveillance in the subway system.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

William Henderson
Executive Director