

A virtual meeting of the New York City Transit Riders Council (NYCTRC) was convened at 12:00 pm on Thursday, March 25, 2021 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	Absent
Marisol Halpern	Present
Sharon King Hoge	Present
Trudy L. Mason	Present
Scott R. Nicholls	Absent

### Staff Attendance

Lisa Daglian (Executive Director)	Present
Bradley Brashears (Planning Manager)	Present
Gav Mazurek (Research Intern)	Present
Shaul Picker (Research Intern)	Absent

### Non-Member Attendance

<u>Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
Andrew Pollack	Concerned citizen
Jason Anthony	Concerned citizen
Debra Greif	Concerned citizen
Eric Wollman	Concerned citizen
Ron Troy	Concerned citizen
Randy Glucksman	MNRCC Chair
Kathleen O'Reilly	NYPD Transit
Cate Contino	New York City Transit
Neil Padukone	Concerned citizen
Yvonne Morrow	Concerned citizen

## NYCTRC MINUTES

2

### **Approval of Agenda for March 25, 2021 meeting.**

### **Approval of Minutes for February 25, 2021 meeting.**

*Moment of silence and remembrance of Edith Prentiss*

A. Albert: Today is a sad day as this is our first meeting without Edith. We have lost a valued member of our committee. She was a valiant spokesperson for disability issues, was a member of the TRC for 14 years and fought for a variety of issues, including accessible stations, signage to direct disabled riders to elevators, the correct line up between platform humps and the doors of the different cars, signage to indicate an alternate accessible route when a GO was happening, and a fierce advocate for the correct space between the platform and trains, not only on the subway, but also on the commuter railroads. She will be sorely missed.

T. Mason: As many of you know, Edith and I were not only colleagues, but friends. One of the things I am most proud of is that I brought her onto the TRC under the auspices of then-Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum. I can't tell you how much I miss her loss, as I have had wonderful conversations and arguments with her so many times. I want to thank you Andrew and Lisa for going on to NY1 to speak about her. I discussed with Andrew the possibility of our doing a paid obituary in the little boxes in The New York Times. I asked Bradley to research about the cost, and it would be \$550 or so with taxes.

A. Albert: We just want to see the wording on it.

[Moment of silence]

L. Daglian: Does anyone object to putting the ad in the Times?

A. Albert: It is approved.

**Presentation: Chief Kathleen O'Reilly, NYPD Transit**

C. Greif: I am glad to see a lot of your officers at train stations and wanted to thank your Explorers for giving out masks with Mask Force in the Coney Island area. I hope to see more of them in other transit districts go out and help give out masks.

K. O'Reilly: When I ride the train, I bring masks with me, and remind people to wear masks. I am very excited by the Transit Explorer Program. It is very robust, which wasn't always the case.

C. Greif: We have sometimes seen homelessness on the A from Utica Avenue to Hoyt-Schermerhorn Streets in both directions. Once, someone exposed themselves on the train, and we did get an officer, who caught them. However, there are other times on the B, F, N and the Q. I hope this is something you can work on, in addition to the dancing performers on the trains while they are over the Manhattan Bridge.

K. O'Reilly: Obviously, the sex abuse and exposure crimes are very concerning. We are moving to address it, and when we see it or are notified of it, we act.

## NYCTRC MINUTES

### 3

S. Goldstein: In your opening comments, you acknowledged the police commissioner's assignment of new personnel to supplement the team. On a prior call, before your appointment, we were talking about the numbers and just needed some information about the real patrol strength. Will these additional officers supplement what you have or replace vacancies? Are we below the patrol strength pre-COVID, or is this going to bring us back where we were? Then can you talk about how you want these individuals deployed?

K. O'Reilly: Our patrol strength in transit is slightly down, as is the whole department. These 600 additional officers, and it can be as many as 700 or 800 on any given day, are above and beyond our patrol strength. We tell the patrol and services bureau where we want the officers – we don't want them to duplicate our officers. We want to spread out our officers as much as we can and want them on the platforms so they can step in and step off every train that goes through the main stations. Then we have our homeless areas mainly concentrated in Manhattan. We spoke with Commissioner Banks and asked him to provide stats from the BRC. At any given moment, the police commissioner can call me up and ask me where the additional officers are deployed, and I can tell him exactly what stations they are in. We are asking the same from DHS. We are being told there are hundreds of additional resources being deployed to deal with homelessness in various stations and we are not seeing them. We asked DHS to have the BRC provide us with their locations, so on a Monday morning if they are going to be in Penn, we can go there and assist them. That level of accountability is not really shared among city agencies and we want to see that. We want there to be real metrics.

S. Goldstein: We have to make sure there is situational awareness of what the others are doing. We asked the question of your predecessor after there were changes in how your officers were deployed for undercover operations, and the answer with respect to transit was that they continued to be used in that fashion. Is that your plan as well?

K. O'Reilly: Prior to our being able to surge all those additional officers I put a majority of my plainclothes, barring two small units, into uniform to increase the omnipresence so people felt safe. Since we were able to surge, we were able to pull some of them back.

M. Halpern: You were talking about the stations where you were concentrating the officers. Is there a criterion that has to be met for the stations to be selected? My concern is the B and D in the Bronx, and some of the terminal stations in the borough, which is where many issues arise.

K. O'Reilly: I was specifically speaking in regard to the homeless conditions in certain stations, like Penn Station and Grand Central. I had asked DHS to concentrate on five particular stations in Manhattan, and they said they could only focus on one station, which I was not particularly happy with. I leave deployment to my borough commanders, who know the system better than I will ever know. We oversee it here, and try to maximize deployment at all our stations, especially on busy lines.

M. Halpern: Fare evasion might be low on the priority list compared to the crimes you see on the system, but it contributes not only to loss of revenue, but to the ability for characters to get into it. That used to be a deterrent to catch those coming in who were looking to do crime.

K. O'Reilly: Our fare evasion summonses have greatly increased since I took over. We do know that the people who come into transit to commit crimes are not paying. I know there are mixed

## NYCTRC MINUTES

### 4

reactions from some of the Board members, who think we are targeting minority communities. That is not the case. We are targeting people who we know once they get into the system will commit a crime. We take fare evasion very seriously. The arrest portion of that has been greatly reduced due to what is happening in DA offices around the city.

D. Greif: I use a walker and have to use the AutoGate. What frustrates me is that the minute I put in my card multiple people run through. They have almost knocked me down, and the same thing happened to Edith. I got the AutoGate card because I have to use a mobility device to walk and I don't want people to sneak in. What can be done? I don't want officers to think I am purposely letting them through.

K. O'Reilly: Obviously, if people are running through, and there is an officer right there, they can act. My advice is not to engage with them, as it increases the chance of your being assaulted. Leave it to the police.

J. Anthony: Two weeks ago, I was on the 3 from Penn Station towards Atlantic Avenue. I got on the train and saw a person acting very suspiciously, riding between the cars, and discreetly took a picture of him. He sat in the corner in a weird position, and the person sitting across from the person said I was a snitch. I tweeted you guys out because you follow me on Twitter and didn't get a response until several days later, until I got a phone call from Inspector Porteus. We need more presence inside the subway, especially in Jamaica Center. A transit worker was recently assaulted at my home station. What will be done about these incidents?

K. O'Reilly: We are addressing it. There have been fewer assaults of MTA workers this year. We do have major presences at Atlantic Avenue and Jamaica Center. Feel free to report things if you are doing things discretely, but don't get involved in enforcing the law to ensure you don't get assaulted. Bring it to the attention of a police officer.

A. Albert: I have mentioned the issue of Jamaica Center. So many people are there selling rides. At Sutphin-Archer, one station away, there are so many people trapping unsuspecting tourists and selling them swipes. It has gotten really bad.

K. O'Reilly: I will take a ride out there today and take a look myself.

J. Anthony: I have seen several officers in stations without masks and not being six feet apart from each other. If you have multiple officers together in one spot, something could go on in a station undetected.

K. O'Reilly: We are trying to make sure people have masks. In terms of social distancing, that is not what we are doing.

S. Hoge: Is it correct that two officers have to be together, because so often they seem to be engaged with each other more than paying attention? Another thing that is disturbing is that they are often engaged in their cell phones when they are on duty. What regulations are there about cell phone use and pairing up?

K. O'Reilly: Our officers pair up for their safety. They often are using their cell phones to look at wanted posters, to get updates, messages that come out from their commanding officers, to look at suspicious people, so sometimes they are looking at it for work. Obviously, it is also a

## NYCTRC MINUTES

### 5

safety issue if they are not paying attention to their surroundings. I am not saying it is solely work-related. I am moving to address both of those concerns.

A. Pollack: We have had so many incidents of random people getting assaulted at the Kew Gardens-Union Turnpike station. How is your team going to address that?

K. O'Reilly: It isn't one of the busiest stations so I will speak to the commanding officer of Transit District 20 and see if we can use an additional presence there.

A. Albert: Are we assuming that the officers are on unpredictable routines so the criminals do not know when and where they will appear?

K. O'Reilly: Certainly, with the plain clothes element. We want people to see our cops out there, and they just as much act as a deterrent. We are very fluid.

A. Albert: What percentage of your officers are plain clothes?

K. O'Reilly: About ten percent.

T. Mason: Could you describe the relationship between the cops and DHS?

K. O'Reilly: We are sister agencies and cooperate with them to help them provide service to the homeless. We identified some stations where we want them to look at the homeless conditions, and a priority list for every patrol bureau of problematic homeless people we know is out there, and we ask them to engage with them. In particular, I asked them about BRC. We want to see where they are being deployed. We are constantly told there are hundreds of outreach people working in the subway, and my district commanders and myself are not seeing it. We need to know where they are, and when they are going to be there so we can help them.

Additional memories of Edith Prentiss were shared following Chief O'Reilly's Remarks:

S. Goldstein: I sat next to Edith very often, and you could hear the passion when spoke. That was my fondest memory. She was a true advocate for all transit riders, not just people with mobility issues. We are going to miss her.

C. Greif: I knew Edith even before TRC. We went out to check stations, signage and elevators. While a lot of people say what is one person going to do, I say more than you realize. She was a strong advocate. It was very shocking to find out that she passed away. Her legacy will not end. We will be continuing to advocate for improved accessibility.

L. Daglian: The Daily News ran an editorial about Edith, about all the work she has done, particularly on taxis, and to make the entire transit system accessible. When the hometown newspaper runs an editorial that says you have made a difference in people's lives, that is a real testament to your legacy, and it is certainly something worth striving for. When I had the opportunity to speak to NY1 about Edith, they said what do you think she would say about all the people saying nice things about her, I said she might say "such a curmudgeon, why do so many people like me so much." Edith was such a passionate advocate. She cared so much about making things right and doing the right thing.

## NYCTRC MINUTES

### 6

M. Halpern: I have seen her in different venues, and she has always been the most honest person I can find when it relates to advocacy and was always being herself. That speaks a lot to her character. While a lot of people might not have liked how she expressed herself in some cases, it added to the compassion she had for those that needed that voice that no one was hearing. I am going to miss her. Her mindset will be missed. I hope we can continue being that voice for her.

T. Mason: Her family did a private burial, but some elected officials, including her city councilman, Ydanis Rodriguez, are planning on doing a memorial service for her in April or May, and I will let you all know about it when I have more information. It is open to everyone who would like to speak. Another thought some of us came up with was that we know how she advocated for elevators, especially the one at 181<sup>st</sup> Street, her station, and a suggestion has been made to have a ceremony to put up a plaque and call it the Edith Prentiss memorial elevator.

A. Albert: Victor and I are talking about that.

B. Strauss: I wanted to second what has been said. I have been around Edith for a long time, and really appreciate her advocacy, and think she did one hell of a job.

S. Hoge: I second and third what everyone has said. While she might have been technically disabled, she was one of the most able people I knew in advocating, arguing, defending, and speaking for what was right. I hope at least one elevator is dedicated to her. I will never step into one without appreciating her. We will miss her very much.

J. Anthony: When I found out about the passing of Edith, I was in shock and disbelief, and had to spread the word. She taught everybody a lot and was a very powerful messenger because her words affected others, even me, and while she could sound grumpy, it wasn't because she wanted to – it was because she was affected because she did not have a way to use mass transit like everyone else. I am very lucky that I have elevators in all my nearby stations, except for Nevins and Hoyt-Schermerhorn, but there are some people who are not lucky, and Edith was a fierce advocate for them, and she will be very missed. Her legacy will be continued by all of us, especially by Chris and myself.

A. Pollack: It is because of her advocacy that we, for the first time, have elevators at multiple stations on the G line. I would have never thought that the line would have gotten an elevator.

D. Greif: Edith is very special to me. She and my late mother both had the same birthday so it was very easy to deal with her. We worked on many projects together, and fought not only for more elevators, but for more ramps. When an elevator goes out, that really messes us up. We can't get out of the station, and have to find out another way to get around. If we have the ramp, we can get off, and we can go home, go someplace. We also worked very hard on signage, and about the gaps between trains and the platform. When my wheelchair almost fell into the gap at 34<sup>th</sup> Street, she said we have to fix this and narrow the gap. If I didn't have two men on the outside trying to help me, you would have probably read about my dying and falling the whole way through in my wheelchair.

B. Brashears: When I first came to the PCAC, 7-8 years ago, the very first project I worked on was with Edith – it was the hump study you referred to that looked at raised platforms and

## NYCTRC MINUTES

### 7

wheelchair boarding areas. Through that experience, by my following her around the system and seeing what she had to encounter every day, I was so impressed with her, and saw that she was so resilient. I saw her in areas in places where normal people in wheelchairs would not go to board. I would literally see her jump in her chair to enter the subway cars. She really taught me a lot and gave me a much better perspective and made me want to be a better advocate for people with disabilities. It was really sad, because, a couple of weeks ago, I was supposed to meet her in Yonkers and we were going to test out the raised platforms there, and unfortunately, she never showed, and we figured out why. It was very sad for me as it would have been a great experience to work with her again and look at the lack of accessibility throughout the system. My heart goes out to her as it always has, and I think she was a truly amazing person, and really taught me a lot.

A. Albert: I think everyone has summed up Edith's impact on transit, on us, on her fellow riders, on the future of the system, on how we look at station modernizations in a whole new light, and we can never thank her enough for that. As everyone has said in their different beautiful ways, she will be sorely missed, but the fight goes on.

#### *Chair and Board Report*

A. Albert: Pat Warren, the chief of safety, has said the number of new COVID cases is still a great concern. They are seeing about 32 new cases over a seven-day period. There are now vaccination centers at Livingston Plaza and Grand Central, and one in Jamaica will be opening soon. There will be another in the Broadway Junction area that is coming. Bob Foran has told us that the \$6.5 billion that we have gotten from the COVID relief bill prevents those massive service cuts we were all afraid of. Obviously, it doesn't prevent "right-sizing" as we have seen on the C and the F, and recently, on the Long Island Rail Road, which is getting reversed on Monday, thankfully. Also, the use of lockbox funds for operating will go back to being used for capital because the \$6.5 billion will go toward operating. It looks like there might be even more money coming to carry us through 2024. We are all hopeful. Janno Lieber has said that 60% of the (C&D) workforce is now vaccinated. As more vaccination centers open, that number will rise.

For anyone who did not see the news yesterday, the LIRR TrainTime App was just updated. Not only can you see in color code how crowded each car is, but you can see the number of riders in each car—they have sensors that will tell you that. Hopefully Metro-North will get it soon.

S. Goldstein: I don't know if this is true, but some of my staff who use the railroad are saying that even though the app shows capacity in cars, the information is not accurate because it does not account for people who bought a ticket on the train, and people whose tickets were shown, but not scanned by the conductor. Some staff who were actually using the railroad to commute relied on that and found that it was not actually a complete match. Has this issue been brought up by others? They got this information from the conductor.

A. Albert: I think that is incorrect. President Eng did mention that when he was asked how occupancy is measured that it is via sensors. It has nothing to do with tickets or fares. It is actual people being sensed by these sensors. I can inquire further about the accuracy.

L. Daglian: The M9s have the technology that count passengers as they get on, while the M7s have been retrofitted to count by weight. The M9s had some technical issues and had to be

## NYCTRC MINUTES

### 8

taken out of service, so they didn't have the same level of specificity they had in the past. There were a multitude of glitches that multiplied into a terrible experience for riders. Everything that could go wrong went wrong when they instituted the new schedules. They had to put the M3s back in service, and they have also been retrofitted with the weight sensors. With the reduction in schedule, there were also fewer cars in the consists, so there was a multitude of errors that led to that failure of planning, which led to all the problems people saw. Gerry Bringmann, the chair of the LIRRCC, rides the railroad daily and saw firsthand what those problems were, and we wrote a letter to the Governor asking that he reinstate service, and two hours later he did. The app was not to blame – it is a tool to help. I think that cannot be the only way to tell people how to ride safely. There has to be sufficient service to do so as well.

A. Albert: The optics of the standing room only cars, all seats filled, did not play very well, and there was a quick reversal. There were some trains added before the Monday schedule change, and the schedule change will not bring back half hourly Port Washington Branch service as they are putting in new ties, and that work will have to be done on a lesser frequency. Service will likely go back when this work is done.

C. Greif: They also updated the app for accessibility. This is something Edith and I did on the LIRR ADA task force. Quemuel and I were testing the app, and it worked pretty well. This is something Edith was advocating for as we want to make it easier so people know where to go on the platform to get to the elevator, ramp, or escalator.

A. Albert: Another piece of good news is that with the resumption of the Capital Program, and with the approval of congestion pricing becoming much clearer in Washington, we will get lots more accessible stations, in addition to Penn Access, Second Avenue Subway, East Side Access.

T. Mason: Could you speak more about the resumption of construction on the Second Avenue Subway and any more information you have on this?

A. Albert: It is definitely going to happen. We don't have the exact timetable yet. Penn Access is moving forward. Interim President Feinberg has mentioned that C and F service have not returned to former levels. We don't know why those riders are being singled out. At the last board meeting, I mentioned that this does not just affect C and F service, as due to the less frequent service, there are holds taking place at Jay Street, at West 4<sup>th</sup> Street, and 59<sup>th</sup> Street, where those lines intersect, meaning other lines are being held.

T. Mason: Will more money be put into East Side Access, and will it be sped up? Is the opening date in 2023, 2024?

L. Daglian: The governor is committed to a 2023 opening date. That work has never stopped because the project is fully funded and is on schedule. The LIRR has put out an RFP to run different levels of operations at Grand Central. The only concern we have is to make sure service levels and service planning meets the need of the ridership of tomorrow.

A. Albert: Work has continued on Harold Interlocking. There are issues with the Park Avenue skyscraper which reaches deep underground that they need to sort around, but they are dealing with it. The LIRRCC has not yet seen a service plan for East Side Access.



## NYCTRC MINUTES

9

L. Daglian: We are continuing to work with the advocacy community on a number of different fronts. There is still a push for more federal funds. The MTA got \$15 billion in Federal stimulus, which is close to what they asked for, but there is still a couple of holes in the budget in the out years. We are switching slightly to the reauthorization legislation that is coming up later this year to push for a fairer formula, so the MTA gets money apportioned based on ridership. It currently gets 16% of the funding but has 40% of the ridership. We are looking to ensure there is some dedicated operational funding, and that there is restoration of any service adjustments/cuts going forward.

On the state level, the state budget is coming due April 1. Budget negotiations are coming to a head now. We are hopeful the \$98 million withheld from the MTA last year will be restored. The Senate and Assembly have both passed budget resolutions that do not include the raiding of \$145 million from the MTA coffers and ensure the MTA lockbox remains locked. We hope to keep those funds off-budget.

There has been legislation introduced to develop a new permanent advisory committee to the MTA regarding pedestrian and bicycle access on MTA facilities, particularly bridges. Andrew and I are reaching out to the Assemblyperson who wrote that legislation in regard to that. There was an interesting session that TransitCenter did on the restoration of 24/7 service. Senator Comrie led the charge assuring people 24/7 service would return and reiterated his supported for reduced fare programs like Atlantic Ticket. We will have a lot more to say on that in the near-term as Bradley works on an updated Freedom Ticket proposal.

### ***New business***

T. Mason: I just wanted to tell everyone that we all know about the \$1.9 trillion, including \$6 billion for us. There will be a new measure put forth for \$3 trillion. Whether it has any chance of happening, no one knows. It is mostly for infrastructure, including a lot more money for transportation. In Albany, the budget is moving forward and the lockbox is going to stay locked, and anything removed is now back. The legalization of marijuana will happen next week, and some of the revenue will go to transportation needs.

B. Strauss: Has Governor Cuomo approved the lockbox situation?

T. Mason: I cannot speak for the Governor but have been told by people in a position to know what I said.

C. Greif: Mask Force is coming back on Earth Day this year. We are also hearing that some of the advocate groups are thinking of making a statue of Edith. With all the accessibility art that Edith was working on, they were thinking of wanting to draw Edith to point to where the elevator is, where to stand in accessibility areas.

### ***Adjourned***

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

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 PM.

*NYCTRC MINUTES*

*10*

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Daglian  
Executive Director