



# Meeting Minutes of

## May 27, 2021

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A virtual meeting of the New York City Transit Riders Council (NYCTRC) was convened at 12:00 pm on Thursday, May 27, 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	Present

### Staff Attendance

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

### Non-Member Attendance

<u>Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
Andrew Pollack	Concerned citizen
Jason Anthony	Concerned citizen
Andrew Kurzweil	Concerned citizen
Binu Thomas	Concerned citizen
Eric Wollman	Concerned citizen
Demetrius Crichlow	New York City Transit
Cate Contino	New York City Transit

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### **Approval of Agenda for May 27, 2021 meeting.**

### **Approval of Minutes for April 22, 2021 meeting.**

#### *Chair and Board Report*

A. Albert: The MTA prepared an RFP for four Access-A-Ride providers, and Curb was disqualified since they had advanced knowledge that they were the highest bidder. They went to court and got a temporary restraining order. The MTA was enjoined from doing the procurement yesterday. It is expected to be adjudicated before next month's board meeting.

24-hour service is back, and we hit 2.3 million riders a day last week, much earlier than McKinsey anticipated. The MTA started its Take-The-Train campaign, advertising nearby destinations accessible by train.

It was announced that there will be 60 electric buses rather than 45 by year's end. There will be vaccine vans going to every depot to try to get the remaining 40% of the workforce vaccinated. Last month, Stuart raised an issue of cleaning at Fulton Center, and I found out the station is cleaned thrice daily. I mentioned issues with the William Street area and it will be addressed.

S. Goldstein: There has been a difference at William Street. I still don't believe what they are saying in terms of that frequency.

A. Albert: Due to safety concerns, additional cameras are being installed in stations. Everyone heard about the brouhaha between the MTA and NYPD. We thought 644 officers were added, but there are actually 2,673 additional officers. They are not all in service at the same time. Chief O'Reilly was adamant this was a good number. The NYPD will now disclose how they are distributed around the system. Since they keep stressing rush hours, I asked if we had these police in the off-peak, and if they are concentrated around the system or in certain areas.

S. Goldstein: If the media and MTA are still saying there are issues with fare evasion, how they are deployed and how they are looking at it is still a concern. They said they were deployed at key stations. Does that mean frequency of train service, population of ridership? It might not be where crime is occurring. We have unanswered questions that I don't think we should let go.

L. Daglian: Something that has come up in these conversations is the separation of fare evasion and other crimes. People want to see cops on platforms and in trains rather than at the turnstiles, and this is what the MTA has been addressing. They won't tell us where they are deployed. We have continued to hammer that deployment should be data-driven and that riders want to see people in uniform-they don't care whether they are NYPD or MTAPD.

A. Albert: I understand riders like to see police on platforms, but the people who are committing most of the crimes are not paying their fares, so if you stop them, you reduce crime. Crime has been overall down in the subways, but slightly up on Metro-North. More than 70% of people convicted of assaults had histories of mental illness.

B. Strauss: What is the status of the fare increase?

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A. Albert: There has been no discussion. I don't believe there is appetite for a fare increase among many of the board members.

T. Mason: Part of the governor's presentation today on East Side Access was a 4-minute video, that I would suggest having us see for our PCAC meeting. It would be helpful to have Janno speak with us at some point. They talked about whether this would have any effect on the fare or reductions, and Janno did not know about our work on Freedom Ticket.

A. Albert: I neglected to mention that President Rinaldi of Metro-North mentioned that the Waterbury Branch will get a PTC overlay installed as part of its undergoing reconstruction for cab signaling. It had been exempt from PTC due to the low frequency of service.

L. Daglian: We had a press conference with Senator Schumer on Long Island last week to bring national attention to the WageWorks issue. The Senator promised to get the IRS to address it or move it forward legislatively. We are continuing to work with colleagues in advocacy regarding transit equity and the transportation reauthorization bill. We have been interviewing people for two staff positions, and will hopefully have them filled by the end of the summer.

B. Brashears: We had a great meeting with Phil Eng and Cathy Rinaldi about Freedom Ticket. We seem to be on the same page on the need to help riders financially and travel-time wise. We are trying to release this by mid-June, and are waiting to hear their concerns. We have recommendations for both city and suburban riders, and are not being prescriptive. We know there is a great model in Atlantic Ticket, and found other case studies that show reducing fares increases ridership. We are also working on a host of blog pieces we want to get up. Gav Mazurek, our intern since September, accepted an internship with the MTA, and will hopefully return to us in the fall. She did great work on electric buses and on MTA solar, and hopefully we can share it with you once we get more information.

L. Daglian: Rob Marino, a great friend of the NYCTRC, is retiring tomorrow. We will miss him.

### **Old Business**

S. Hoge: There are issues with the connection for Wassaic service. It was marked wrong on the board, and a few other passengers and I waited at Track 2 at Southeast and the train left. The train that left GCT at 11, and the connection was at 1:05.

A. Pollack: A friend of mine has noticed many runs on the Q46 going missing as of late, but I have heard that the hiring freeze is being lifted.

A. Albert: The hiring freeze has been lifted. There are also some runs on the subway not being made due to a staff shortage. I hope this will be rectified soon.

*Presentation: **Demetrius Crichlow, NYC Transit Executive Vice President of Subways***

A. Albert: Do you have a candidate for succeeding John Santamaria at this point?

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D. Crichlow: I have a couple options. John's loss was major, and I have a close eye on the car equipment side, but my immediate concern is on Maintenance of Way, which has lost not only their top head, but also two levels below. With the release of the hiring freeze we are starting to hire train operators, which takes nine months if I am promoting someone from within. After we bring people on, they might not necessarily be the best at their job, and I am taking on a lot of people at the same time. You have to be worried about the quality of training, and the time you invest in these employees. It will take a while until we get to a place where we are set.

Currently, TSSs, in addition to responding to broken down trains and door problems, are assigned 35 to 50 people to oversee on different trains around the system, so you can imagine the level of training those employees wind up getting. To address this problem, I proposed to Sarah that we bring on a group of supervisors by year's end to focus solely on people with less than a year in title, and people with operating infractions or time and attendance issues.

A. Albert: Has this affected quality of service in your estimation?

D. Crichlow: Absolutely. I am less concerned about infractions as we have not had new people in a long time, so we have a lot of seasoned people operating. The challenge is we have many fewer people than needed to operate service. It is a juggling act of how to best cover vacancies or choose which jobs not to cover. Until we bring people on, it will be a challenge. One benefit of the C and F supplement was that it allowed us to better manage our current workforce.

L. Daglian: Does this give you an opportunity to look at a structural change to the way the entire operation runs? How are your interactions different concerning capital work than it would have been before it was consolidated?

D. Crichlow: Subways has always been very good at handling the momentous tasks in front of us, such as addressing a derailment or a hurricane. We can do better at looking at the longer-term vision, and should be looking at the opportunities and challenges with the current systems we have, more than I feel we have done in the past. One thing I have told Sarah is that we need a group in Subways that focuses on having a strategic vision of where we are headed.

C&D's function is to put out projects, and generally Subways is great at accepting them. The challenge is whether that project is best for the organization. As an organization there has to be a decision made early on that the project has to meet these specifications. We need to be more strategic. You need people who can see not only what is right for a specific department, but for the organization and customers. Sarah agrees with me on this.

C. Greif: There is a massive unsafe gap in the middle of the platform at Columbus Circle on the local track in both directions. I put in a complaint. I hope you do something about these humps.

S. Picker: A major percentage of the cost of CBTC is the installation of auxiliary wayside signaling, which is not needed most of the time and adds additional parts that can fail. Other similar systems like Toronto have work train CBTC. Can you speak to RTO's vision on that?

D. Crichlow: I can tell you my vision, but not the organization's. I visited Toronto as part of a program that takes executives from different agencies to different organizations to see what they do and do not do well. The day I went they had a CBTC failure, and weren't able to get trains out of the yard. That failure would cripple New York. While we may not need all the

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wayside signals, you need a certain level of service here unlike anywhere else. When Toronto introduced it, it was on their entire system, which we can't do. We take portions of the system, and introduce it with old and new, which creates a host of challenges. We have to weigh the risk of running service at severely reduced frequencies versus the cost of installing wayside signals. You are right, it is definitely cheaper, and when it is operating properly, it is perfect.

S. Picker: I know there have been some efforts with track barriers, and I was wondering if you can speak to any plans to address delays and capacity losses driven by flagging.

D. Crichlow: There have been some recent discussions on what materials can be used, and on what is and is not safe in terms of track barriers. No one wants to be the manager responding to the hospital after an incident. I would love to run more service, but also understand the consequences if we don't get it right. Any changes we introduce on the track safety side will be handled with a high level of scrutiny.

A. Albert: We got a demonstration once of ultrawideband and how accurate it was. If CBTC went out, would the ultrawideband part of the service still operate?

D. Crichlow: There have been a lot of discussions on it but there has not been an organizational decision on whether it will be used. If it gets certified, which is being looked at now, it could be used as a duplicative system on Queens Boulevard. Duplicative systems have additional costs, but it might be worth pursuing instead of having zone controllers on the systems.

A. Albert: Speaking of the benefits of CBTC, if you have it on the Queens Boulevard Line, but you only have it as far as 47<sup>th</sup>-50<sup>th</sup> on 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 50<sup>th</sup> Street on 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, what happens when the more frequent trains reach the territory when you can't go more frequently?

D. Crichlow: CBTC offers the possibility of new trains, but in conjunction with Queens Boulevard the terminals may not offer the flexibility to add additional trains.

J. Anthony: There was a program called track sweep that deep cleaned the tracks, but I have heard no updates since 2018. I have been seeing more litter on the tracks than ever before.

D. Crichlow: With COVID and the loss of headcount, it is unclear how many programs started as part of SAP in the last 2-3 years, like track sweep, are currently staffed and how many of these initiatives are being used. One thing I have talked about since I got here was identifying things we made progress with, like SPEED, see what their status is, what needs to be done, and where we still have opportunities. Due to staffing shortages, there are fewer people to operate work trains, which pull the vacuum trains, meaning we have been operating them less often than we used to. We need to bump it up, and get back to the SAP programs.

S. Goldstein: At our last meeting I expressed some concerns about the frequency of cleaning at Fulton Center in the mezzanine. I am still not seeing any effort to pick up debris or even do wiping in the evening. I live in Brooklyn on the F, and I see frequent cleaning there on the mezzanine level at the hour I get home. Andrew said there were three different cleanings that take place, so I am not sure if one is being missed?

D. Crichlow: As we are hiring back up, HR is targeting priority positions like train operators, conductors, track workers, and signal maintainers. Later, we will fill cleaner vacancies. Without

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an increase in cleaning headcount, people that would normally be cleaning out trash cans are also cleaning all the touch points in the stations twice a day. It is much more challenging at some of our larger facilities to fit this within their tours. We have tried to give cleaners further out more stations to clean, to free up cleaners to focus more on the business district area, but we don't want to neglect one community or another.

S. Goldstein: For a position like this that does not require extensive skills, you may have flexibility in hiring temporary staff to help with this, if funding and work rules permit.

D. Crichlow: We have certain contractors on the car side assisting with cleaning efforts. Sarah has said we will maintain the same level of cleanliness. It will be a challenge, and we have to find a way of doing things differently, especially if we don't have contractors at terminals.

***Adjourned***

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

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Daglian  
Executive Director