A meeting of the New York City Transit Riders Council (NYCTRC) was convened at 12:00 pm on Thursday, March 24, 2022 in the 20th floor Conf. Room 4 at 2 Broadway, New York, NY 10004, and via Zoom.

**Member Attendance**

Andrew Albert (Chair) Present

Burton M. Strauss Jr. (Vice Chair) Present

Stuart Goldstein Present

Christopher Greif Present

William K. Guild Absent

Marisol Halpern Present

Sharon King Hoge Present

Karen Hamilton Present

Cicely Harris Present

Trudy L. Mason Present

Scott R. Nicholls Present

**Staff Attendance**

Lisa Daglian (Executive Director) Present

Kara Gurl (Research & Comm. Associate) Present

Bradley Brashears (Planning Manager) Present

Jessica Spezio (Administrative Assistant) Present

Shaul Picker (PCAC intern) Present

**Non-member Attendance**

**Name Affiliation**

Will Schwartz Government Affairs

Michael Shiffer MTA C&D

Cate Contino NYCT Asst Dir. Govt Affairs

Andrew Kurzweil Concerned citizen

William Stanford Concerned citizen

David Kupferberg Concerned citizen

Ron Troy Concerned citizen

Kevin Duggan AMNY

Deborah Greif Concerned citizen

Mike Howard Concerned citizen

Dennis Lytton Amtrak LA

Dave Colon Streetsblog

Dave Steckel MTA Press Office

David Meyer NY Post

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| ***Approval of Agenda for March 24, 2022 meeting.*** |
| ***Approval of Minutes for February 17, 2022 meeting.*** |
| ***Chair’s Report***  **New NYC Transit President-Richard Davey:**  A. Albert: We have a new NYC Transit President arriving May 2, 2022. Mr. Davey was formerly the Secretary of Transportation in Massachusetts. He is very familiar with light rail, heavy rail, and commuter rail. He will be the first permanent president since Andy Byford and he will be taking over for Craig Cipriano, who will stay on as Chief Operating Officer. He lived in New York for many years, and he hasn’t owned a car in over ten years; he is also very familiar with the Lexington Line.  **Ridership update:**  A. Albert: We are in the 60% of ridership levels prior to the pandemic. As companies continue to bring employees back to the office, we should start seeing the numbers rise even more.  **Safety update:**  A. Albert: The new safety teams are out and on the trains, but homeless issues continue. We have seen an increased police presence on the trains and are hopeful people will feel safe and come back into the system.  K. Hamilton: I definitely have seen an increased police presence, but I see them in large groups and riding the trains but it’s not broad enough. I was actually being harassed and none of them did anything.  A. Albert: If that ever happens again, please get me a badge number. I believe they have a meet location, and they get distributed from there. If there were that many, that could have been the reason for such a large group.  **Weekend G.O.’s:**  A. Albert: If you’re riding the trains on the weekends, please go on the MTA website and look into your trip in advance. A lot of conductors are making great announcements and informing the riders of the reroutes and alternate travel, but it can be complicated. I have also noticed some trains with incorrect destination signs on the exterior of the train. I reach out and have them instruct the train crews to ensure the signs state the correct destination.  **Mask usage dropping:**  A. Albert: I have noticed a significant drop in mask usage. We were well into the 90% of people using them but now I will say it’s probably about 85% usage. I’m not really seeing police officers enforcing the mask usage either.  D. Greif: I have noticed people haven’t been wearing them on buses either. I also don’t see any signs on the buses anymore. People have ripped the signs off and aren’t abiding by the rules.  C. Greif: We have to see why the signs aren’t on the buses anymore. Can we reach out and see what is going on?  A. Albert: I will reach out to Frank Annicaro and ask him what the bus depots are doing and if there are still signs to put on the buses to enforce mask usage. The law is still in effect until April 15 at least.  **NICE getting electric buses:**  A. Albert: Nassau County is getting a few electric buses for their fleet. They don’t have as many as we do in the city but it’s a great start. They start fast, they are quiet, and people seem to like them.  **New electric bus charging facility-Gun Hill Road:**  A. Albert: We have a new charging station on East Gun Hill Road in the Baychester section of the Bronx.  S. Goldstein: You’re saying the electric buses are quiet, but I’ve heard it’s a safety concern because they are too quiet and you possibly can’t hear them coming. If this is an issue, we should look into it before we keep ordering more of these buses and fix any issues before they occur.  A. Albert: Yes, they are quiet, but they do make a hissing noise and I believe the bus makes announcements on the exterior. I will ask what noises or announcements the driver can make to alert people on the street.  S. Goldstein: If I may suggest as an option for the bus shelters to display electronic mask signs along with the advertisement’s signs. You would be able to see them while waiting for the bus  **Fitch raises MTA bond rating-AA+:**  A. Albert: This is good news which makes it cheaper for us to borrow but this could affect our credit ratings. The gas tax holding would prompt this.  L. Daglian: As soon as we heard of the whispers of the gas tax holiday, we put out a statement immediately. The letter that we signed onto from Reinvent Albany has a host of people who signed onto it as well.  **Quality of life crackdowns-fare evasion:**  A. Albert: Fare evasions continue to be on the rise. I ride the system often and it seems that every time I take the train, I see people jumping the turnstile.  S. King Hoge: At Grand Central a few weeks ago, I asked a police officer to come to monitor the slam gate while I entered with my luggage and the officers let three people in through the slam gate. It defeats the purpose of watching the gate if they are letting people in.  D. Greif: I’ve also noticed since using my OMNY card that people stand right by the gate entrance and pretend to hold the door for me to gain free entry through the gate.  ***Old Business:***  S. Goldstein: It seems that the exterior cleaning of the older equipment along the 8th Avenue line, as opposed to the newer trains, isn’t consistent. Are they still cleaning the interiors at the end of the lines?  A. Albert: I have also noticed some dirty R-46 trains, but I’ve seen some clean ones. I don’t think it’s on purpose that the new trains are cleaner. Also, to answer your other question, yes, they are still cleaning the interiors on the end of the lines.  K. Hamilton: I have a question for Lisa. What was the result of the Equity Hearing with Selvena Brooks-Powers? Do we know what will come of that session?  L. Daglian: It was supposed to include the MTA, but it ended up being focused on the DOT. They were discussing a lot of bus issues, bus lanes, and cameras. There are still conversations going on in Albany regarding bus camera placement.  K. Hamilton: I have to say on the Merrick Boulevard bus lane, people have been abiding by the bus lane rules for the most part. I have also heard some business owners along Jamaica Avenue say they aren’t getting as much foot traffic as they used to.  L. Daglian: I think that’s one of those settling issues. People will adapt to the busways. I think the conversations with the DOT commissioner should continue.  T. Mason: I have heard that a continued issue on the bus lanes is the bikes, scooters, and electric devices that use the bus lanes.  ***New Business:***  C. Greif: The anniversary of Edith Prentiss’s passing was just this past Wednesday. I went to go see her plaque and I’m having it cleaned for her. Thesecond thing is Mask Force is coming up. We still need some volunteers. If anyone is interested, please go online and sign up.  A. Albert: I’m sure many of you received the email on the passing of our PCAC member Orrin Getz. Randy has been keeping us informed on his status. We will miss him dearly.  L. Daglian: We are continuing to work on getting new members. We are thrilled to have our newest members, but again we are continuing to work with the mayor’s office and with our county executives. |
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| **Presentation: *The Interborough Express****, Will Schwartz Deputy Chief, State and Local Government Affairs & Michael Shiffer, Sr. VP for Regional Planning, MTA C&D*  Video link: <https://youtu.be/ytYpqPRpwPg?t=3499>    S. Goldstein: Do you have any thoughts on which operating agency will oversee this project and which makes more sense?  M. Shiffer: Honestly, I think it’s too early to say which model makes sense. We are considering all of our options at this time.  L. Daglian: I know that they are looking into making subway station connections but are you also considering LIRR connections?  M. Shiffer: Yes, the Atlantic Avenue Branch and how to actually make that connection.  L. Daglian: The FRA rules have changed regarding light rail separation from freight. I’m happy to share information about that with you.  M. Shiffer: We are looking at that; clearly, we have no plans to operate on the same tracks. The freight and commuting tracks will be separate.  A. Albert: I’ve seen maps of the proposed IBX and it has three connections on the L Line, is that necessary?  M. Shiffer: You might have seen a concept map. People are speculating and we want to hear from folks on where it makes sense to have the stops.  A. Albert: If they decide the end is Woodside, will there be a bus connection to LGA?  M. Shiffer: I know they have said there could be a connection at Jackson Heights and possibly Astoria. As you know it’s a dense, exciting area, but it hasn’t been determined yet.  D. Greif: Will the stations be accessible by elevator and by ramps as well?  W. Schwartz: Yes, all the new stations going forward will be accessible or will have some accessibility.  K. Hamilton: What can we do to get better connections through all five boroughs? We need better connections to the Bronx from Queens and into Brooklyn without going into Manhattan.  W. Schwartz: We made a conscious decision to wait and will be making those connections on the Queens Bus Redesign. Some of those options will be made then, along with global connectivity issues and expansion as we look toward the next capital program and the 20-Year Needs Assessment.  C. Greif: I think this would be a great opportunity to at some point connect to LGA. Also, if Will and Michael can keep ACTA informed on the updates that occur.  W. Schwartz: We would be happy to keep you all informed and we can present this to ACTA as well. We can follow up offline about this.  S. Goldstein: Have there been any talks with the Port Authority about connecting the five boroughs? Years ago, there was supposed to be a light/ heavy rail connection from Staten Island to Bay Ridge in Brooklyn. Has any of that been mentioned?  M. Shiffer: We can certainly look at it, but their study is looking to connect Newark Airport to the area of Bayonne, New Jersey. As you know, there was a history of ferries going to Bay Ridge and the Verrazzano Bridge isn’t constructed in a manner to accommodate rail trains, but it can and it does accommodate buses.  S. Picker: For a heavy rail alternative, have you refined it to sharing with freight? This would dramatically reduce costs.  M Shiffer: We are always looking to mitigate all the options. Since the plan is to have very frequent service ‒ every five minutes or so ‒ it would be necessary for it to have its own line.  D. Kupferberg: Have they ever considered FRA approved vehicles like on the River Line in New Jersey?  M. Shiffer: Yes, these options are still possible. Quite frankly, we have the infrastructure to electrify the line so that would be ideal. We are still considering the various options at the upcoming meetings. |
| **Adjourned** |
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**Action Items:**

None

Video link: [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytYpqPRpwPg**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytYpqPRpwPg)

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Daglian

Executive Director