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**The City of New York  
Community Board 8 Manhattan  
Roosevelt Island Committee  
Monday, November 4, 2024 - 6:30 PM  
Conducted remotely on Zoom.**

**MINUTES:**

**Present:** Paul Krikler, Sharon Pope-Marshall, and Todd Stein.

**Absent:** Judy Berdy, and Barbara Rudder, and James Starace

Approximate Number of Public Attendees: 32

**Item 1 – (06:59 minutes in) RIOC Updates**

1. Bryant Daniels
  - a. Tram Slowdown
    - i. Decision by Department of Labor (DOL), POMA, Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) to slow the tram down (moderately) to reduce instances of heavy swaying. Installation of dampers not sufficient. Swaying caused by breakdown of aging, not modernized, communications system which suffers from signal interference. Priority is rider safety and comfort. This schedule won't be forever, but unsure as to when it will revert to normal.
  - b. Red Bus Updates
    - i. Trending in the right direction still - most mornings 3 red buses and shuttle during rush hour. Significant decline in constituent services complaints.
    - ii. In the process of hiring new drivers, new fleet manager, new mechanics and hiring more mechanics. Need to continue to beef up staffing.
    - iii. Health of the fleet is on tenuous footing until two new buses hit the island. Situation was years in the making - trying to catch up and fix things in short order.
  - c. Tikkit System replacement
    - i. Around Dec 1, Tikkit will be replaced by Brightly.
    - ii. May need to sign up for a new user account.
    - iii. Will have additional features, such as ability to drop a map pin indicating issue location.
2. Questions/Comments from Community.
  - a. Frank Farance
    - i. Competing WiFi signals an issue - DOL doesn't have expertise to investigate/fix this, asking NTSB to do so.
    - ii. Buses are not running until 2 am. Told drivers need 30-day notice to return to the 2 am schedule.
    - iii. Small bus had over 30 people on board. Unsafe/illegal?
  - b. Paul Krikler
    - i. Two main issues re: tram - 1) speed and 2) crowding.

- ii. Ad mesh was opposed months ago, so not pursued. However, the situation has escalated to the point that many or most who held out against Ad mesh are willing to sacrifice views for a reliable, efficient form of transportation not inundated by tourists.
- c. Margie Smith
  - i. In favor of ad mesh.
  - ii. Have we given up exploring preferential boarding for residents? Because I don't think it's illegal and hope we have other lawyers looking at it. Law says we can't charge more - residents already pay 2 million dollars extra.
- d. Amy Namdar
  - i. Live next to the tram and still try to take it when possible, to access my children's schools. Very clearly see increasingly extended hours of entirely tourist traffic based on my observations.
  - ii. South town residents include hospital workers who need access to the tram in early hours of the morning and late hours of night. They cannot rely on the tram because it does not have a clear schedule and the schedule is not adhered to, plus operators and staff themselves can't tell us when it is coming with confidence.
  - iii. Didn't originally support ad mesh, but now fully support trying anything that will get us out of this mess and allow us access to reliable transportation without a crush of tourists all hours of day and night.
- e. Nicole Izsak
  - i. Paul Krikler reads an emailed statement of resident Nicole Izsak - 40-50 tourists led by a single tour guide at 5pm (rush hour). If this starts up more, we will have an even more untenable situation. Suggests obscuring tram windows in some way to discourage tourism.
- f. Elana Movshovich
  - i. Grew up on RI and now live here as an adult - extensive experience. Never ever, ever seen it in this state of being completely overrun with tourists. TikTok/travel influencers, whatever it is - in the past 6 months, herself, her husband, her mother (all island residents) just cannot take the tram because it means losing time. That is an absolute shame - residents should have priority boarding. We walk up to the tram expecting to have a nice ride home but end up having to go 10 min out of our way, down however many floors underground, not fair for residents to have to get home that way. Ad mesh (a shame, we like to take in the views) or priority boarding. We don't want to take 40 min to get home packed like sardines with tourists who don't understand this is a means of transportation, not an attraction.
- g. Sarah Lipinski
  - i. The tram is a pivotal part of living on RI. Can't access work, gym, etc. anymore. Subway is a bad option, especially on weekends - go down 3 broken escalators, elevators, to wait up to 20 min for a train that will come and get you further away from your destination than the tram. Agree with ad mesh, priority boarding, whatever can be done as well as anything that can educate tourists that this is a form of public transportation. Rude, pushing tourists don't understand what a lifeline this is to our community. The situation on the tram with this aggressive tourist behavior is quite unsafe and unusable for residents, who it is supposed to be for.
- h. Schulyer
  - i. Support mesh and priority boarding. Additional messaging like signs. Maybe ad mesh during rush hour only, and signs discouraging people from coming at rush hour.
- i. Frank Farance
  - i. Priority boarding not tried.

- ii. Fire Island ferries have priority boarding for residents, so why can't we?
  - iii. GDP (General Development Plan) says purpose of tram is to provide transportation as part of island's transportation and transit system. That's clearly the priority and not happening if overwhelmed by visitors.
  - iv. Concerns about ad mesh interfering with vestibular system, potentially unsafe. Also, maybe not effective in deterring photography/videography of tourists.
- j. Kevin Guzman
- i. Not a huge fan of making public transit less attractive to users. If we have to use mesh, can we remove it once things get back to normal? Or suction-cup mesh and put them on only during rush hour? Also don't think mesh is a big deterrent. Priority access, if legal, seems like the best way.
- k. Chloe Larson
- i. Priority boarding is the best thing, but in meantime ad mesh, although regrettable, seems like the best thing to try.
  - ii. Question about red buses - when will all red buses have trackers?
  - iii. Bryant answers - Bus 6 is back in service after being scheduled for retirement and probably won't get a tracker. Shuttle bus - looking into how long will take to get tracking. The two new buses on order should come with tracking. Right now, buses 11, 10 and 9 have tracking, and have to double-check on 8.
- l. Rick O'Conor
- i. Currently, above the seats there is a mesh X material. Kind of blocks the view. Can we add that same type of mesh to windows?
  - ii. Chief and deputy chief said seniors and disabled have priority access to the tram. Said they don't have to wait in line to use the elevator. Been getting emails last couple of weeks from members of these two groups saying some tram staff members are not aware of this and refuse to honor it. Can RIOC spread word among tram staffers (and PSD - Paul adds)?
  - iii. Bryant responds that the policy of RIOC is firmer - PSD Chief/Deputy Chief said if you really need help reaching the platform, talk to PSD officer and they will help you get there. There is some level of officer discretion in these instances. RIOC tries to get POMA to get more active/engaged on the platform, POMA station attendants be more visible.
  - iv. Rick's follow up: understood this access is a given - you don't need to make a case that you have something in addition to being senior/disabled.
  - v. Bryant clarifies - no, no need for anything further, but this policy isn't really written in stone anywhere. PSD will help and do the best they can.
  - vi. Rick - seems PSD do understand, but POMA staff don't. Bryant says they will circle back with POMA about this.
- m. Simina Kroculick
- i. Been a resident for many years, growing up here as a child and now raising own family here. Tram has always been a reliable and scheduled source of transportation for the island. Changed so much in the last few years - kind of crazy to see. Temporary ad mesh a great idea. Do think it needs to be in both cabins. If you only have one tram for residents, potentially longer wait times to wait for one tram. Potentially more logistical issues for people. Schedule - every 15 min was the norm; you could know easily and rely on it. Now, having no schedule - seems crazy. You could do either every 10 min or every 12 min (set hourly schedule) and not have to look at a huge mess of numbers to try to discern when it's coming. 10.5 min essentially is no schedule. This goes back to benefits of tram - reliable,

scheduled. 10 is most logical - does 30 seconds make that much of a difference in speed? If that's not possible, then 12.

- n. Herta Engelhart
  - i. Has lived 10 years on the island.
  - ii. Doesn't see the logic of how it could happen that there has been such an advertisement to bring people on the tram and there is not much more transport. The number of people coming and going has increased. There are no means of transportation. Someone has programmed to make people come and visit the island without adequate transportation.
  - iii. Schedules of red bus. Why is the red bus standing still for 5-10 minutes? Driver said it was because of schedule.
- o. Craig
  - i. Heard tram is slowed down because one kid complained that it was moving too quickly, and now it takes double as long to get across the river?
  - ii. Bryant responds that it had nothing to do with one kid. Explains tram slowdown reasons.
  - iii. Craig: go there 4 days a week to play tennis, when there's only one tram you can easily wait 20 or more minutes. It used to not be that. Now they are busy charging the tram. Sitting in the station longer to charge the onboard batteries for the tram. When winter comes, it is going to take even longer to charge the batteries due to the heating system.
  - iv. Bryant: Haven't heard of that, no plans to slow tram down any further.
- p. Kate Berg
  - i. Not senior, but not able-bodied, and disabilities are not immediately visible. Don't want to have to plead a case to PSD. Subway is not a good option - 17 min wait, cavernous system with broken escalators and backed up elevators. Don't want to fight with tourists to take tram. Hard to access medical care, preferred providers without tram due to rude tourists. Quality of life massively negatively impacted.
- q. Paul Krikler
  - i. We discussed the idea of pre-registration with PSD, for those with disabilities, to have a card that shows we are disabled. Bryant responds, there were concerns with healthcare information sharing. Kate responds that she finds sharing that more acceptable than having to disclose the healthcare information to the public. Paul: voluntary.
  - ii. Bryant: Ultimately it comes down to what is and isn't legal. Priority boarding has been found to be illegal across multiple RIOC administrations and don't see that changing anytime soon.
  - iii. Paul: Different issue here, just about disability - preregistration not priority boarding.
  - iv. Paul: For RIOC to keep track, have asked for 1) 10-minute trams 2) disability voucher/preregistration system 3) ad mesh.
- r. Zach Weaver
  - i. Conduct of tourists on the tram is frequently unacceptable - would be unacceptable on any other form of transportation.
  - ii. What about wind shear - the force and torque could be amplified due to the slowdown, especially with winter winds.
  - iii. Bryant: Haven't heard of that, sure POMA has investigated, but will ask.
- s. Rafael Balbi
  - i. Not only seniors and disabled, but also parents, have an extremely difficult time getting on the tram with tourists crowding them.
  - ii. Solutions: 1) Signage 2) More crowd control from PSD (who have been dismissive when asked for accommodation at elevator from parents).

- iii. Speaking for the 200 Parents on RIParents WhatsApp.
- t. Anna
  - i. Parent of a 2-year-old living in 425. Very difficult as a smaller person to take the tram with a 2-year-old and pushing tourists.
  - ii. Support screens, reexamine priority boarding from a legal perspective, what other political things should we be pursuing for this.
  - iii. As an MD with a disorder of the vestibular system, the ad mesh is fine from a vestibular point of view. Would be happy to travel in a blacked-out box at this point, just to get a kid to daycare.
- u. Rie
  - i. Legal perspective - can't restrict transportation?
  - ii. But what about the fact that we are a class of people (residents) that are being restricted, in favor of tourists, who are not even using it as a means of transportation, but as an attraction, or entertainment?
  - iii. Let's go back and examine priority access, restricted hours.
  - iv. Bryant: think that is a difficult legal case to make, because right now is unrestricted - there is no saying who can and can't go. References his 1.5 hour commute each way from Northern Westchester - it's not pleasant.
  - v. Not sure what ad mesh would really do to deter tourists. Can try signs reminding no rude behavior.
  - vi. Rie: Works on E 84th St. It takes 1 hour or maybe 1 hour and 10 minutes. Bryant's commute from Westchester is only a bit longer.
  - vii. This is approaching a transportation crisis. F is abysmal so we depend on the tram. Residents are being left out in the cold/restricted. This is something we have to really push as a community because it seems like there is a brick wall we are up against - not willing to listen or change at all despite the growing cry from residents.
- v. Paul Krikler
  - i. 20 people have spoken about this issue. People's views have changed massively.
  - ii. Reminds Bryant of three things to report back on from RIOC:
    - 1. 10- or 12-minute tram schedule.
    - 2. Ad mesh.
    - 3. Pre-registration system for access for elderly, people with mobility issues. Parents with young kids.
- w. Rafael Balbi
  - i. Could we please add written correspondence to the follow ups? Would like to see this in writing. This is only going to get worse. Let's not push this aside. Paul asks Rick to drop link in chat of article written previously regarding priority boarding and other issues discussed tonight.
- x. Rick O'Conor
  - i. Done articles in past about RIOC's rationale and how Rick thinks it is incorrect. Wanted the legal analysis, not just the final statement. Bryant will email it.

## **Item 2 – (75:00 minutes in) Library Updates**

Brandon Korosh provided the library updates.

1. New Release Film Screening - November 6th - Quiet Place.
2. Community Room has new projector and speaker system.
3. New Scrabble Group - Fridays at 12 pm.

4. November 15th at 12 pm - Idea Generation Session sponsored and led by CEC (Civil Engagement Commission) - see how city budget can be spent on community needs (participatory budgeting). Register over phone or in person at the library. Capped at 20-25 people. Can show up without registering, but no guarantee you will be admitted.
5. Historical Society - Redeveloping Roosevelt Island - North Island 50 Years Later - Tues November 19th 6:30 pm.
6. New Writers' Support Group Wednesday Nov 20 5:30 pm. No previous writing experience necessary. Will provide prompts.

### **Item 3 – (77:00 minutes in) Community Updates**

None.

### **Item 4 – (78:00 minutes in) Animal Welfare on Roosevelt Island**

1. Amy Namdar
  - a. Speaking on behalf of community - dog owners, parents. Pretty concerned about the poisonings on RI. 4 dogs known to have been exposed to neurotoxin. Possibly around Duane Reade, or Southpoint, somewhere in South town. Know DEC came and investigated – but asked just RIOC grounds crew if their practices were safe. Think it goes a lot further than that - many stakeholders, landowners/building managers - Cornell, RIOC, RIOC's contractors, Related and other buildings etc. are all potential sources of this poison. Hoping we can work together to go a bit further to get to the source of the issue. Now over to Rosanna to talk more about the situation over the years.
2. Rossanna Ceruzzi
  - a. Rodenticides/pesticides are long term issues we've been fighting as a community. At one point, about 10 years ago, we had a sort of agreement with RIOC where RIOC would use only organic pesticides and stay away from generation 1/generation 2 rodenticides. Generation 2 is the stronger one that should kill rats with a single piece of bait. However, the black plastic bait stations in residential/public areas are most vulnerable. Dogs sniff and walk in these areas, but also children and adults sit and picnic in common areas, and wildlife feeds there. Rats don't go in the bait station and drop dead. They take whatever is in there and leave pieces of it around. Rodenticides are devastating our wildlife and poisoning our pets. 3 cases of dogs intoxicated by poison access. Very alarming, especially if we look at the number of children. If you look on the internet, EPA, you can see how many children have come into contact with this poison. Flaco the owl famously died in part from rat poison. Thousands of animals die every year due to misused rodenticides. Because of a dog's death and several poisonings of dogs at the same time, RIOC (Charlene Indelicato administration) previously agreed that in public areas, precautions would be taken/appropriate pesticides/rodenticides used. But now we're back 10 years and second-gen pesticides/rodenticides are being used again. DEC regulations stated that these boxes should be labeled, and dated, with what is inside, and warnings when placed in public areas, but this isn't happening. The boxes also should be secured to the ground so they can't be moved around. The majority don't respect the regulations. DEC mandates that we, residents, can ask for the label for the ingredients of the poisons that are in those boxes. We need to know - we must know. Dog walkers can't know there's poison if it's not labeled. Warnings should be posted, whether the application is done by RIOC, a contractor of RIOC, or residential buildings, all buildings, and businesses. Avoiding non-organic products.
3. Bryant Daniels
  - a. DEC checked RIOC's operations, didn't find anything.

- b. RIOC asked does DEC to do outreach - spread awareness of different pesticides/herbicides - RIOC said would be nice if they could do that for buildings on our island.
4. Paul summarizes points of follow up for RIOC:
- a. Big warning signs where poison is used.
  - b. Much better warning labels on the actual poison boxes.
  - c. Organic materials should be used.

#### **Item 5 – (91:00 minutes in) Smoking in Good Shepherd Plaza & Public Parks**

1. Kevin Guzman
  - a. Smoking in public spaces parks and playgrounds, courtyard by church. Parents being driven out of these public spaces by clouds of cigarette and marijuana smoke. Secondhand smoke is a serious public health risk. Children deserve to play in a clean area. Cigarette butts picked up by Rosie the turkey, squirrels, etc. Feels like it isn't a priority. Two people smoking marijuana in a running car, PSD did not take it seriously and claimed it was legal. Really want to address this in the church courtyard in particular. Change.org petition with many signatures, would love to share.
2. Rosanna Ceruzzi
  - a. Would like to point out smoking should be banned in the parks as well. E.g., Southpoint Park. We should look into the regulation and who is responsible for what signage, enforcement etc.
3. Francois Fagan
  - a. two young kids spending time in parks/children's playground. Commonly smoking around all these areas not legal or acceptable.
4. Rafael Balbi
  - a. Also encountered this issue. Where are we supposed to go? Smoking is everywhere. Son picked up cigarette butts.
5. Anna W.
  - a. Have small baby - live by church - very stressful and unpleasant, hazardous, and poisonous. Everywhere we go it's weed or cigarettes. We need signage and enforcement. Walk or bike around. Give tickets.
6. Anna
  - a. Supports all efforts to reduce smoking and rat poison on the island.
7. Kevin Guzman
  - a. Ask what we can do about this because it is a big issue.
  - b. Paul: write down your points and email to Bryant.

Paul summarizes point of follow up for RIOC - RIOC to investigate authority to make Good Shepherd Plaza and Parks/Playgrounds nonsmoking.

#### **Item 6 – Old Business**

No items of Old Business were discussed.

#### **Item 7– New Business**

No items of New Business were discussed.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 8:16 PM.

**Paul Krikler, Chair, Roosevelt Island Committee**