



NYPIRG

# Straphangers Campaign

A project of the New York Public Interest Research Group Fund

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TESTIMONY  
of  
GENE RUSSIANOFF  
Senior Attorney  
NYPIRG STRAPHANGERS CAMPAIGN  
before the  
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION  
hearing on  
MTA NEW YORK CITY TRANSIT  
LINE GENERAL MANAGERS  
250 Broadway  
September 24, 2009

Since December 2007, MTA New York City Transit has dramatically re-structured its management of the city subways.

The agency has moved from an organization divided solely by function – such as car equipment and stations – to one substantially by subway lines. The goal is for managers to be more responsive to rider concerns and view service more comprehensively across departmental lines.

The Straphangers Campaign has long shared this perspective. Since our founding in 1979, we have rated each of the subway lines on such aspects of service as frequency, breakdown rates, regularity, crowding, announcements and the cleanliness of cars.

Just last month, New York City Transit finished giving all the subway lines their own line general manager. We believe that the line general managers offer tangible benefits:

- **The 7 and L – the first two lines in the line general manager program and which were given new managers and more cleaners – came out on top on the Campaign's annual "state of the subways" report card both in July 2008 and July 2009.** We wrote in the 2009 report: "The 7 and the L benefited from more independent managers and more resources. As more subway lines are run by managers with greater authority and accountability, we hope that they can improve service, even if the lines are not getting added cleaning staffing and will absorb cuts in maintenance and station personnel."

- **The line general managers program has spurred initiative, yielding such innovations as:**

- **a video display monitor on L station platforms that shows where all the trains are on the line.** This innovation let's riders know car location and spacing and helps them determine if there really is a "train behind this one." Eventually, such a system can inform riders' judgments about whether to wait for a less crowded train;

- **use of car electronic signage to let you know if a 7 train is a local or express, thus reducing dwell time and speeding service;**

- **running the 5 line to Flatbush Brooklyn middays, which has added service and made intervals between trains more regular.** Previously, the 5 terminated at Bowling Green in Manhattan during middays. This forces Flatbush-headed riders to transfer two times, once to the 4 line at Bowling Green and then to the 2 line at Atlantic Avenue. Now, midday 5 line trains go into Brooklyn all the way to the terminal at Flatbush Avenue. As a results, “headways” (waits for trains) both shorter and more regular; and

- **reducing confusion by having the same model cars be all on the express or the local, instead of just assigned hodgepodge to different lines.**

- **The publication of more statistics on a line-by-line basis, such as the breakdown rate.** Transit already reported several indicators by line, such as monthly on-time performance and reliability. However, the agency compiles some measures by line but did not publish them, such as monthly MDBF and bi-annual subway car cleanliness and announcements. Now that all the subway lines are managed by line, greater line-by-line reporting fosters the agency’s aims of greater accountability and competition among the lines. For example, MTA New York City Transit does field surveys of car cleanliness and announcements by line, but currently does not report the numbers by line.

Issues remain, especially how decisions are made to allocate resources among line. But it is the hope of the Straphangers Campaign that the line managers program will yield better service for riders and encourage more innovation by managers.

Statement by  
Howard H. Roberts, Jr., President  
MTA New York City Transit  
before the  
New York City Council Transportation Committee  
September 24, 2009

Good Afternoon, Chairman Liu and members of the Transportation Committee. I am Howard Roberts, Jr., President of MTA New York City Transit, and I am here today to discuss with you the Subway Line General Manager (LGM) initiative that I've implemented at New York City Transit, which represents the first substantial reorganization of the subway system in over 100 years. Accompanying me, and I will ask each to stand up as I introduce them, are Steven Feil, Senior Vice President for Subways, and our five Group General Managers: Gricelda Cespedes, the IRT West Group (**1 2 3 7** lines); David Knights, the IRT East Group (**4 5 6** lines and the 42<sup>nd</sup> Street Shuttle); Tracy Bowdwin, the BMT Group (**B Q D N W** lines and the Franklin Avenue Shuttle); Greg Lombardi, the IND/BMT Group (**A C J M Z L** lines and the Rockaway Shuttle); and Lou Brusati, the IND Group (**E F V G R** lines).

When I last appeared before you on January 10, 2008 to discuss the Rider Report Card initiative, I shared my belief that in order to respond to the concerns our subway customers expressed through the initial report cards, NYC Transit needed to conduct its business differently---that we needed to reorganize our Department of Subways to provide the accountability that is necessary to yield measurable improvements in service. I provided you with a brief overview of the Line General Manager Program that I launched the previous month as a pilot initiative on two subway lines, with the appointment of two veteran Department of Subways' professionals to newly created posts of Line General Manager: one for the **7** line and one for the **L** line.

These two lines were selected for the pilot because they do not intersect with other subway lines, thereby allowing a Line General Manager total control over a portion of the system. As Line General Managers, these individuals assumed responsibility for virtually all elements of the day-to-day operations on these two lines, overseeing everything from service delivery to station cleanliness. As you are probably aware, I announced the complete implementation of the Line General Manager program last month, but before going any further in discussing the details of our pilot experience and the phased-in implementation of the program, I'd like to discuss the change in managerial philosophy that this initiative represents.

With more than 28,000 employees, the Department of Subways is larger than most corporations. Maintaining accountability and creating an environment conducive to flexibility and innovation in an organization so large is an enormous challenge. The sheer scale and complexity of NYCT's subway system make it unique among all of the other subway systems in the United States. All of the nation's systems combined do not have as many railcars as NYCT's fleet of approximately 6,400. The **6** line carries more people per day than any other US subway system except for Washington. The **7** line

alone, which is the seventh largest NYCT line in terms of ridership, is equivalent to the fourth largest transit system in the United States, surpassed by only Washington, Chicago, and Boston.

Looking at these unique challenges, I saw the department's existing structure as one of its biggest impediments to improving our customers' experience. It was organized into six "stovepipes," according to function: Rapid Transit Operations operated the trains, Station Operations operated the stations, Track and Infrastructure maintained the right of way and the stations, Car Equipment maintained the subway cars, and Electrical maintained the signal system and provided traction power. These functional entities encouraged employees to view their own group's goals first and often in complete isolation from the goals of the other groups, creating an inadvertent disconnect for most Subway employees from the ultimate goal of delivering quality service to our customers. My basic premise was that, to improve subway service, we needed to move the responsibility away from the functional divisions to more integrated groups closer to the customer, more responsive to employees and more accountable for the service they provide.

Organizing around the 26 subway lines in our system, each with its own set of unique operating characteristics, seemed to offer the best opportunity for better accountability and improved service for our customers. Thus, we embarked on a course designed to move the responsibility for the overall operations and decision-making on individual lines from the office into the field, where transit professionals could assess situations first hand and take a hands-on approach to tackling service and facility issues immediately and innovatively, as well as addressing customer concerns. Moreover, our customers would now have a recognizable face in the form of a Line General Manager to associate with each of these lines, and accountability was thereby established at the local level. **AND, PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANTLY, HAVING COMPLETE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR OWN SUBWAY LINE – RUNNING YOUR OWN RAILROAD – IS A TERRIFIC JOB THAT IS BOUND TO BRING OUT THE BEST IN AN INDIVIDUAL**

The pilot initiatives on the 7 and L lines assigned each Line General Manager a Deputy to help bridge the broad range of responsibilities. The remainder of the Department of Subways did not change, but all divisions were instructed to provide all necessary assistance. The line general managers were charged with cutting through divisional red tape and redirecting staff, as necessary, to address priorities established through agency policy, customer contact and the Rider Report Card.

Another purpose of the pilot was to determine what resources were needed to adequately clean subway cars and stations and to maintain stations in a good state of repair. So, from cutbacks elsewhere in NYCT's budget, we provided car cleaners at both ends of the lines, station cleaners in every station twenty four hours a day instead of only a few hours per tour, and "blitzed" all of the pilot stations with intensive repair efforts.

The Line General Managers during the pilot were responsible for train and

station operations and subway car maintenance. Of particular note were such customer friendly innovations as the new Express and Local markers on the Flushing line cars and the installation of platform monitors showing real-time train locations on the **L**.

The Rider Report Card was one of the vehicles we used to assess the pilot program's impact. Results for the next round of report cards for the two pilot lines showed an overall increase in customer ratings on the **L** and on both lines in station and car cleanliness and customer communications categories. Our Passenger Environment Survey (PES), another means of measuring the pilot's success, reflected markedly improved cleanliness in virtually all categories. In addition, the success of the pilot program did not go unnoticed by rider advocates, who generally gave the **7** and **L** lines the highest scores in the City on their surveys for overall performance and for cleanliness of cars and stations.

As a result of the success of and lessons learned in the pilot, we expanded the LGM program to all the numbered lines and the 42<sup>nd</sup> Street Shuttle in November 2008 as the first phase of our plan for a systemwide rollout. With this expansion, we created Group General Managers (GGMs) for the IRT West (**123** and **7**) and IRT East (**456** and the 42<sup>nd</sup> Street Shuttle). We also brought responsibility for right of way maintenance (track, signals, infrastructure, etc.) under the general manager organization by creating a right of way maintenance organization reporting to the group general manager. Unfortunately, due to budget constraints, we were unable to provide additional resources for cleaning and maintenance in line with what was provided to the pilot effort. Nevertheless, there were many successful initiatives undertaken during the first phase of the LGM rollout, particularly in on time performance.

The final phase of the LGM rollout, achieved this August, encompassed all of the lettered lines, bringing us to a total of 18 LGMs for the 26 subway lines. While most LGMs are responsible for a single line, in some instances where ridership is relatively low or where lines share essentially the same track, an LGM oversees more than one line. The **N** and **W** are paired together, for instance, as are the **JM** and **Z**. The 18 LGMs, in turn, report to five Group General Managers.

**THE GGMS, THE LGMS, AND THE DLGM'S WERE ALL SELECTED FOR THEIR PROVEN LEADERSHIP, THEIR ABILITY TO INSPIRE THEIR TEAMS, AND THEIR WILLINGNESS UNDER THE OLD ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE TO "ROCK THE BOAT WHEN THE BOAT NEEDED ROCKING." THEY ARE THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST THE SYSTEM HAS TO OFFER. IN MANY CASES, THEIR SELECTION MOVED THEM UP MULTIPLE LEVELS IN THE ORGANIZATION. SENIORITY WAS NOT A FACTOR. ABILITY WAS.**

In preparation for their new responsibilities, the GGMs and LGMs, who mostly grew up in a single stovepipe were put through a "boot camp" that introduced them to what it was the people in the other stovepipes had been doing all those years, other than making life difficult for them -- while also further developing their leadership and team-building skills.

In order for this program to be successful, we recognize that it is absolutely critical that the Group and Line General Managers be accessible to the customers and the communities they serve. To facilitate communications, we have a number of means available to contact them. A newly established feature on the MTA/NYCT website allows customers to select any subway line and send an email directly to that line's LGM. Between August 7<sup>th</sup>, when the feature was introduced, and September 21<sup>st</sup>, the LGMs have received 852 emails. And, while their duties place them out in the field, which makes reaching them by telephone impractical, they do reply by phone to email communication if a phone response is requested in the message. They can also be reached by sending written correspondence to New York City Transit, 130 Livingston Street, Room 6082, Brooklyn, NY 11201.

**BEFORE CONCLUDING, LET ME AGAIN RETURN TO THE ISSUE OF RESOURCES. I WANT TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT NYCT DOES NOT HAVE EVEN CLOSE TO AN ADEQUATE NUMBER OF CLEANERS TO KEEP STATIONS AND SUBWAY CARS AS CLEAN AS OUR RIDERS HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO EXPECT NOR DO WE HAVE ENOUGH MAINTENANCE PERSONNEL TO KEEP UP WITH DEFECTS OCCURRING IN OUR STATIONS. OUR LINE GENERAL MANAGERS ARE DOING GREAT WORK BUT EVEN THEY CANNOT KEEP STATIONS WITH HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF PASSENGERS PASSING THROUGH ON A DAILY BASIS SPARKLING CLEAN WITH CLEANERS PRESENT AT A SINGLE STATION FOR LESS THAN TWO HOURS OF EACH SHIFT. WHILE WE HAVE BEEN IDENTIFYING SAVINGS ELSEWHERE IN THE ORGANIZATION TO REMEDY THESE DEFICIENCIES, ALL OF THESE SAVINGS HAVE HAD TO BE DIVERTED TO MITIGATING OUR FINANCIAL CRISIS.**

With that understood, I am convinced that, by clearly assigning operational responsibility for each line in our subway system, we can greatly reduce response times to problems and concerns as they arise, create opportunities for innovation, better manage the resources we have and, in the process, improve the delivery of subway service to our customers.

I am now happy to answer any questions the Committee may have about the Line General Manager initiative, or better still, ask the Group General Managers to respond.

# DEPARTMENT OF SUBWAYS

## GROUP GENERAL MANAGERS



**Gricelda Cespedes**

IRT West

Michael Torrillo (MGM)

①

Joe Leader (LGM)

Anthony Bartolotta (DLGM)

②

John Doherty (LGM)

Javier Rocha (DLGM)

③

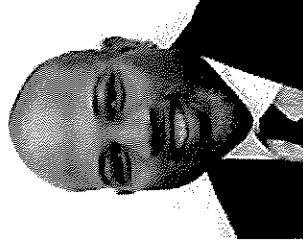
Demetrius Crichlow (LGM)

Paul Camera (DLGM)

⑦

John Hoban (LGM)

Dan Mazzella (DLGM)



**David Knights**

IRT East

Warren Tobin (MGM)

④ ⑤

Stephone Montgomery (LGM)

Jeannie Kwon (DLGM)

⑤

Robert Smith (LGM)

Vito Delio (DLGM)

⑥

Paul McPhee (LGM)

Joseph Tassiello (DLGM)



**Tracy Bowdwin**

BMT

Danny Ronnan (MGM)

⑥ ⑦ ⑧

James Leopard (LGM)

Mark Totillo (DLGM)

⑨

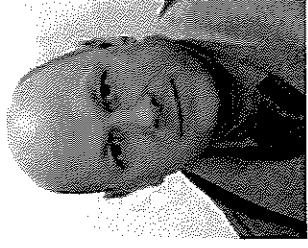
Evelyn Koehler (LGM)

Michael O'Halloran (DLGM)

⑩ ⑪

Joseph Ragusa (LGM)

Howard Smith (DLGM)



**Gregory Lombardi**

IND/BMT

Alan Doran (MGM)

⑫ ⑬

Herbert Lambert (LGM)

William Matheson (DLGM)

⑭

Frank Jezyski (LGM)

Joseph Bromfield (DLGM)

⑮ ⑯ ⑰

Thomas Wehrman (LGM)

Tracy Pruitt (DLGM)

⑱

Melvin Oliver (LGM)

Linda White (DLGM)



**Louis Brusati**

IND

Patrick Sohan (MGM)

⑲

Deidra Taylor (LGM)

James Parro (DLGM)

⑳ ㉑

Dwayne Anglero (LGM)

Terri Rumph (DLGM)

㉒

Pamela Elsey (LGM)

John Chandy (DLGM)

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Peter Velasquez (LGM)

Jayendra Shah (DLGM)

**Legend:** MGM = Maintenance General Manager

LGM = Line General Manager

DLGM = Deputy Line General Manager

As of June 29, 2009



New York City Transit *Going your way*

DEPARTMENT OF SUBWAYS

# IRT West



**Gricelda Cespedes**

1



**Michael Torrillo**  
(MGM)



**Joe Leader**  
(LGM)

2



**John Doherty**  
(LGM)

3



**Demetrius Crichlow**  
(LGM)

7



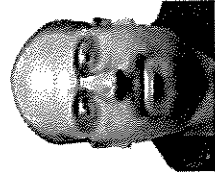
**John Hoban**  
(LGM)



**Anthony Bartolotta**  
(DLGM)



**Javier Rocha**  
(DLGM)



**Paul Camera**  
(DLGM)



**Dan Mazzella**  
(DLGM)

**Legend:** MGM = Maintenance General Manager

LGM = Line General Manager

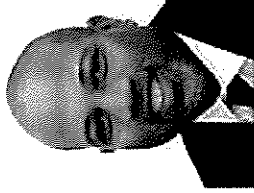
DLGM = Deputy Line General Manager

As of June 29, 2009



## DEPARTMENT OF SUBWAYS

# IRT East



**David Knights**

4

S



**Warren Tobin**  
(MGM)



**Stephone Montgomery**  
(LGM)



**Robert Smith**  
(LGM)



**Paul McPhee**  
(LGM)

5



**Jeannie Kwon**  
(DLGM)



**Vito Delio**  
(DLGM)



**Joseph Tassiello**  
(DLGM)

6

**Legend:** MGM = Maintenance General Manager    LGM = Line General Manager    DLGM = Deputy Line General Manager

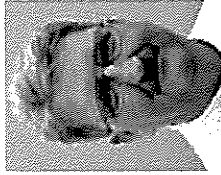
## DEPARTMENT OF SUBWAYS

# BMT



**Tracy Bowdwin**

**B Q S**      **D**      **N W**



**Danny Ronnan**  
(MGM)



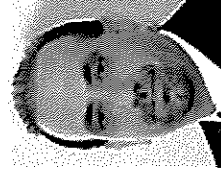
**James Leopord**  
(LGM)



**Evelyn Koehler**  
(LGM)



**Joseph Ragusa**  
(LGM)



**Mark Totillo**  
(DLGM)



**Michael O'Halloran**  
(DLGM)



**Howard Smith**  
(DLGM)

**Legend:** **MGM** = Maintenance General Manager      **LGM** = Line General Manager      **DLGM** = Deputy Line General Manager

# DEPARTMENT OF SUBWAYS IND/BMT



**Gregory Lombardi**

A S



**Alan Doran**  
(MGM)



**Herbert Lambert**  
(LGM)

C



**Frank Jezycki**  
(LGM)

J



**Thomas Wehrman**  
(LGM)

M Z

L



**Melvin Oliver**  
(LGM)



**William Matheson**  
(DLGM)



**Joseph Bromfield**  
(DLGM)



**Tracy Pruitt**  
(DLGM)



**Linda White**  
(DLGM)

**Legend:** MGM = Maintenance General Manager

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As of June 29, 2009

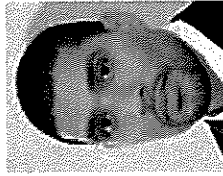
## DEPARTMENT OF SUBWAYS

# IND



**Louis Brusati**

**E**



**Patrick Sohan**  
(MGM)

**F V**



**Dwayne Anglero**  
(LGM)

**G**



**Pamela Elsey**  
(LGM)

**R**



**Peter Velasquez**  
(LGM)



**James Parro**  
(DLGM)



**Terri Rumph**  
(DLGM)



**John Chandy**  
(DLGM)



**Jayendra Shah**  
(DLGM)

**Legend:** MGM = Maintenance General Manager

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As of June 29, 2009

**Statement by President Curtis Tate Transport Workers Union, Local 100**  
**Public Hearing of New York City Council, Transportation Committee**  
**regarding the NYCT Line Managers Program**

City Hall, Hearing Room  
New York, NY  
Thursday September 24, 2009

The Line Manager program has been underway at MTA NYC Transit's Department of Subways for only a short time, and so any evaluation of its impact at this time is necessarily tentative.

The Line Manager program emphasizes delivering customer service. To the extent that it focuses on this mission, as opposed to decisions based on misguided priorities that have nothing to do with transportation, Local 100 is supportive, and we consider the program and its results thus far to have been positive.

There are many possible problems in a bureaucracy. One of these is buck-passing. In an organization sufficiently complex, it can prove impossible to figure out who is ultimately responsible when a problem must be solved. There may be organizational charts that look complete. But the test is found in grappling with real-life problems.

Let me give you an example. Not too many years ago, we had employee facilities -- locker rooms, lavatories, etc. -- with conditions that would have been declared cruel and unusual punishment if they had been found in prisons. For our union, fixing this was a priority. But how? In a system where everyone wanted to give you orders, no one was responsible for solving the problem. Who, for example, was responsible for a substandard quarter for train crews located in a station? Was it the Rapid Transit manager? The station supervisor? A facilities manager? Round and round it would go as the buck passed and the problem went unsolved.

This has changed dramatically. It has changed due to a policy of improving substandard employee facilities; and due to an orientation of management and the union working together on this. It has been given additional backbone by the Line Managers program. If there is any ambiguity in lines of responsibility, it ends by the time a problem comes to the Line Manager. Moreover, the Line Manager can cross department lines and cut through red tape.

For example, we tried for years to get something done about the deplorable condition of the 5 Line crew quarters at Flatbush Avenue. When the Line Manager addressed the problem, improvements came promptly. Similarly, there were ongoing safety problems at Livonia Yard that were resolved when the Line Manager acted.

In the context of meaningful policies and orientation, this program does seem to help.

Here is another issue. Look at the roster of line managers, and you are looking at the faces of New York. You are seeing a rainbow that is regrettably unusual to find at this level of management. You cannot find anything comparable, for example, in the organization of the parent MTA.

Does diversity matter? We think it does. It gives confidence to employees and to passengers. In a diverse city, it is evidence that candidates are not simply being selected from an old boy's club. This is a break with the not-too-distant past, and one we are happy about.

I should make it clear that management remains management and labor remains labor. We are going to clash. But when rational, productive approaches are followed, there is a greater chance of reaching a fruitful resolution.

Thus far, the Line Managers program has yielded positive results. So long as it remains tied to meaningful policy and orientation, this should continue.

Thank You