

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

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December 6, 2011
Start: 10:00 a.m.
Recess: 11:10 a.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

B E F O R E:
JAMES VACCA
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Gale A. Brewer
Daniel R. Garodnick
David G. Greenfield
G. Oliver Koppell
Jessica S. Lappin
Darlene Mealy
Ydanis A. Rodriguez
Deborah L. Rose
James G. Van Bramer
Vincent M. Ignizio
Peter A. Koo
Eric A. Ulrich

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Thomas Prendergast
President
New York City Transit

Carmen Bianco
Senior Vice President- Subways
New York City Transit

Darryl Irick
Senior Vice President - Buses
New York City Transit

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2 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I'd like to
3 thank everyone for coming and I would like to
4 start on time. I think that's something that we
5 should try to do more often. Good morning
6 everyone. I'm James Vacca, and I'm chair of the
7 City Council Committee on Transportation. We are
8 here today to look at the changes made by the MTA
9 in the year since a major blizzard crippled the
10 transit system and revealed shortcomings in the
11 agency's emergency response plans. I want to
12 thank Tom Prendergast, President of New York City
13 Transit as well as other representatives of the
14 MTA, who have come to testify and who assisted in
15 the preparations for today's meeting.

16 It's been nearly a year since the
17 city was hit by one of the worst blizzards in
18 recent memory. What people remember more than the
19 Christmas weekend storm though are the days that
20 came after--days when passengers were stuck in
21 trains above ground with no heat or water, days
22 when getting to work became a half day affair,
23 days when the city streets were clogged with snow
24 and hundreds of stranded buses. Last year a train
25 was stuck for 7 hours. Buses were sent on to

1 streets where other buses were already stuck.
2
3 There was a lack of communication. This hearing
4 wants to focus on making sure that those
5 situations never occur again. Last week the
6 Council Sanitation Committee had a hearing about
7 the Department of Sanitation's snow removal
8 efforts, and today's hearing is going to be
9 important. It's going to focus on straphangers
10 and how buses and trains can operate during even
11 the worst of storms or better communicate with the
12 public when they're not able to operate. In the
13 weeks after last year's blizzard, the City Council
14 including this Committee held multiple hearings to
15 understand why the response was unacceptable.
16 Some of the problems arose from extraordinary
17 circumstances. The storm was one of the worst
18 storms that we in the city had ever witnessed, and
19 it came unexpectedly to a degree. Nevertheless,
20 we as New Yorkers have the right to expect that
21 buses and trains will run or if they can't run
22 that straphangers are given appropriate notice and
23 reason. Among the many failures in the storm's
24 aftermath was a failure to coordinate within the
25 branches of New York City Transit. Entire subway

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2 lines went uncleared. Bus drivers were repeatedly
3 sent out onto unplowed routes, leading to a
4 congestion of stuck buses on many of our streets,
5 and most egregiously, it took hours to get help to
6 stalled trains. In the most infamous case, an A
7 train was stuck at the Aqueduct Station in Queens
8 for seven hours, forcing hundreds of passengers to
9 go without heat, food, or water for many miserable
10 hours before the arrival of assistance.

11 We've also heard about poor
12 coordination between the MTA and other city
13 agencies. In particular, the MTA noted that there
14 has been a deficiency of coordination with the
15 Department of Sanitation and with SAMUSA
16 [phonetic], which maintains responsibility for
17 clearing 3200 bus shelters in New York, but that
18 deficiency meant that the MTA lacked needed
19 information about the state of our roads, about
20 the state of our bus stops, and that caused
21 further breakdowns and interruptions in service.

22 Over the past year the MTA has
23 taken a hard look at its emergency preparedness
24 plans. Many recommendations have been made by
25 this Committee as a result of hearings that we

1
2 convened. The MTA has had opportunities to assess
3 lessons it may have learned from the infamous
4 December 26 snowstorm and from other situations
5 such as the Hurricane Irene where emergency
6 preparedness was put into effect.

7 Now since last December, I have
8 been told that the MTA has appointed a new
9 emergency coordinator. It has revamped its
10 situation room to monitor and organize employees.
11 It has said to have taken a hard look at winter
12 preparedness, training for its workers, bus
13 operators especially, and it's redirected
14 employees and resources to target subway lines and
15 regions of the city that are more at risk. In
16 addition I have been assured that it has added a
17 more severe emergency level to be used for extreme
18 storms like last year's blizzard. I'm told that
19 there are also other changes that I look forward
20 to hearing from the MTA, hoping of course and
21 expecting that many of those changes would have
22 come from recommendations made by straphangers and
23 especially this Committee. I think we are all
24 interested to know about these changes and we're
25 going also to explore ongoing challenges the MTA

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2 will face as they continue to improve for storm
3 preparedness. For one, we require more details
4 about the new emergency coordinator and the
5 situation rooms. I'm also hoping to hear how New
6 York City Transit is working with the Department
7 of Sanitation and SAMUSA to ensure full
8 coordinator among those entities. I want to hear
9 how the MTA is going to improve communication--
10 their ability to respond to emergencies through
11 web alerts, new smart phone applications, improved
12 GPSs on buses. With more and more users linked to
13 technology these tools are becoming less of a
14 luxury and more of a necessity. So we need to
15 know how that's being implemented and I want to
16 also learn under what circumstances could we see a
17 full or partial shutdown of our subway system? In
18 August, we saw that the entire transit system was
19 shut down for the first time in history as the MTA
20 prepared for a major hurricane, so where does that
21 possibility come into play as we speak about
22 blizzards and snow storms and the winter
23 approaching in December, January and February?
24 Also, I need to know from the MTA what triggers
25 their response. Last year the city of New York,

1
2 the Department of Transportation did not issue a
3 snow emergency declaration. Does the fact that we
4 did not have a snow emergency declaration in our
5 city trigger the MTA not to take certain steps and
6 would a declaration trigger them to take other
7 steps? And also, is there a difference between
8 what the MTA may implement on weekdays versus
9 weekends, and that also goes into communications
10 because we are a 24 hour, 7 day a week operation.

11 I want to thank the representatives
12 of the MTA today. The bottom line what happened
13 after the blizzard of December 26th can never
14 happen again and straphangers need to know today
15 that the MTA is prepared, that we have learned
16 from previous mistakes, and that there will be
17 better communication and that people will know
18 when service will be interrupted and why.

19 Also, my Committee will take up two
20 resolutions separate from the snow hearing that
21 deal with interstate buses and asking for state
22 and federal action on legislation that's pending;
23 one resolution introduced by my colleague Margaret
24 Chin and a second by my colleague Jim Gennaro.
25 They call on our counterparts in the state and

1
2 federal government to pass stricter standards for
3 the operation of intercity buses. Now as you know
4 in March, a bus crash occurred on I-95 in the
5 Bronx in my district, killing 13 people, and we
6 later learned that the driver of that bus had
7 falsely obtained a driver's license. One of the
8 resolutions we're voting on today would ensure
9 that that never happens again. Resolution 668
10 calls upon New York State Assembly to pass and
11 Governor to sign legislation that would mandate
12 criminal background checks via fingerprint for any
13 commercial bus operator in the state—the same
14 requirements that already apply to school bus
15 drivers. I want to note that since March and the
16 crash that occurred, Governor Cuomo has made
17 intercity bus operations a priority and we thank
18 him for his leadership.

19 The second resolution we're voting
20 on today calls upon the United States Congress to
21 pass and President Obama to sign the Motor Coach
22 Enhanced Safety Act, which would mandate a variety
23 of enhanced safety features on intercity buses,
24 including crush resistant roofs, shatter proof
25 windows and seat belts for every passenger. Some

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2 of the bus companies that have very good track
3 records already implement such measures, such as
4 Bolt Bus and Mega Bus, but this legislation would
5 apply to all, and I think would address many of
6 the bad actors that we have in the intercity bus
7 field. Unfortunately I have to tell you that when
8 it comes to intercity buses, the Council is
9 limited on what we can do. I wish we had more
10 power to do more about what happens within our own
11 city, but because of the interstate nature of
12 these buses, we have to look to especially the
13 federal government and to some degree, the state.
14 We're not going to stop our fight. Just lacking
15 jurisdiction is not a reason to keep quiet on what
16 we perceive to be a major threat to the safety of
17 New Yorkers. To have bus companies with a history
18 of problems just change their corporate name and
19 continue operation under a different name with the
20 same bad actors in place is unacceptable and it
21 puts people at risk in our city, so this issue is
22 going to be a continuing focus of this committee
23 as long as we know that we have an important
24 public safety role to play.

25 I want to thank you all for coming.

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2 I'd like perhaps introduce our members who are
3 here. To my extreme left, we have Gale Brewer,
4 Peter Koo, Jessica Lappin, Council Member Dan
5 Garodnick. Lyle Frank [phonetic] is our counsel.
6 I thank you all for coming. Please, if you have
7 the cellphones, can you put them on vibrate so
8 that the hearing will not be interrupted. Okay?
9 Everyone. We'd like to welcome officials first of
10 the New York City Transit Authority and the MTA.
11 Mr. Bianco is here, New York City Transit, Tom
12 Prendergast, President New York City Transit, and
13 Darryl Irick, Senior Vice President Department of
14 Buses. So we welcome you and Mr. Prendergast,
15 would you like to lead off, and there are two
16 other people on your panel, can you introduce them
17 beyond the people I introduced?

18 THOMAS PRENDERGAST: [off mic].

19 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay. Please
20 make sure when you speak that you talk into the
21 microphone. Okay? Introduce yourself at that
22 point. I'd like to now introduce Mr. Prendergast
23 to lead off the testimony. Thank you.

24 THOMAS PRENDERGAST: [off mic]

25 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I don't think

1
2 your mic is on, sir... although your voice is loud.

3 It's good, but got to get you with a microphone.

4 [background conversation]

5 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Now it's on,
6 sir.

7 THOMAS PRENDERGAST: Good morning,
8 Chairperson Vacca and members of the Committee on
9 Transportation. I'm Tom Prendergast, President of
10 the New York City Transit. I'm joined by my two
11 Senior Vice Presidents, Carmen Bianco and Darryl
12 Irick. These gentlemen should be very familiar to
13 you because we appeared before this Committee for
14 over four hours—just these two gentlemen appeared
15 for you last month on issues related to security.
16 We're here today to discuss the topic of MTA
17 readiness for the winter of 2011 and 12.

18 When we appeared before this body
19 for more than four hours last January, you were
20 understandably very unhappy with our performance
21 as Chairperson Vacca just mentioned as you were
22 with the performance of other city operated
23 agencies for what in arguably an inadequate
24 response to the December 26th blizzard in 2010. As
25 I stated at that time, we were immensely

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2 disappointed with ourselves in not being able to
3 provide New Yorkers with all that they deserved
4 during that extreme weather emergency. We were
5 clearly not fully prepared for the unprecedented
6 conditions generated by an exceptional storm.
7 However, we immediately began a process of review
8 and change that was required to address our
9 shortcomings and we have continued to work in that
10 vein over the past year to further improve our
11 winter storm performance. Many of the changes
12 that we were able to quickly execute were tested
13 with success during subsequent snowstorms in
14 January and February, and they were recently
15 tested again in the timeframe of Hurricane Irene
16 and the first winter snow storm of this season
17 which occurred just before Halloween. The changes
18 we enacted immediately included appointment of an
19 emergency coordinator to facilitate MTA-wide storm
20 response coordination and information sharing,
21 establishment of situation rooms to manage storm
22 response activities, adoption of procedures for
23 preemptive curtailment of service when conditions
24 render service untenable, designation of dedicated
25 customer advocates to ensure the wellbeing of

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2 customers who are on immobilized vehicles and
3 equipment, improvements in procedures to deliver
4 more detailed and reliable bus service status
5 information on the mta.info website and
6 improvements in bus operating procedures for
7 evaluating and responding to degraded road
8 conditions throughout the city. Our internal
9 agency review was followed by rigorous all agency
10 analysis and review and that effort concluded the
11 summer with the issuance of a written report MTA
12 Storm Performance Review, which can be accessed at
13 www.mta.info via the transparency link under the
14 board materials for June of 2011. Hard copies of
15 this report were forwarded to both Chairman Vacca
16 and Speaker Quinn back in June, along with a point
17 by point response to the observations and
18 recommendations they offered in correspondence
19 dated May 5th of this year with specific references
20 to - - and recommendations embodied in that
21 report.

22 For those of you who may not have
23 had the opportunity to review this report, this
24 MTA-wide effort expanded upon the initial review
25 and findings of each of the MTA agencies with

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2 additional lines of internal as well as external
3 inquiry. The guiding objective of the all agency
4 review was to identify a course of action that
5 could improve MTA performance in future storms
6 incorporating lessons learned from the December
7 storm and other storms along with international
8 good practices in storm management. The report
9 provides a factual overview of key events that
10 occurred during the December storm and is
11 structured according to the four phases of a storm
12 event. The first phase is storm tracking and
13 readiness when an approaching storm is monitored
14 and appropriate response is first formulated;
15 mobilization phase when storm procedures are
16 activated staff and other resources are
17 prepositioned to respond and customers are
18 informed of potential service interruptions,
19 execution when the storm arrives, snow and ice
20 clearing commence, operations are adapted to suit
21 conditions and customers are continually updated
22 on the status of service and recovery when the
23 storm concludes, snow and ice clearing continue,
24 operations are restored and customers are updated
25 on service recovery. The study assesses the

1 performance of New York City Transit and each of
2 the other MTA agencies through each of these four
3 phases of the December storm, highlighting areas
4 of strength and opportunities for improvement.
5 Based on these performance evaluations, the report
6 presents a series of recommendations applicable
7 across all MTA agencies. These recommendations
8 address operations, customer communications,
9 staffing and equipment and are designed to foster
10 improved storm performance in the future. Based
11 on the agency wide recommendations, a customized
12 action plan for each individual MTA agency is
13 presented in an appendix to the report taking into
14 consideration the unique challenges each agency
15 faces during a snow storm as well as unique
16 strengths and shortcomings in the performance of
17 each. New York City Transit has individual action
18 plans for subways, buses and para transit services
19 and these plans have guided our continued efforts
20 over the past several months to improve our
21 extreme weather readiness.
22

23 I'd like now to take a few moments
24 to provide you with a status update on some of the
25 more key elements of those action plans. With

1
2 respect to subways, the 2011 and 12 winter
3 operations plan, which is revised every years
4 updating on lessons learned from prior years, was
5 completed last month. It includes the new planned
6 five alert level, which encompasses procedures for
7 controlled service curtailment. You will recall
8 that this new alert level was established
9 immediately following the December 2010 storm and
10 implemented for the first time during the
11 subsequent January 2011 storm. Our Department of
12 Subways has specific guidelines in place as to
13 when alert levels should be declared relative to
14 the forecast of the storm arrival. It's also
15 worth noting that the rail control center will now
16 call the winter operations plan seven days a week
17 instead of five. If you recall, we used to make
18 that call on a Friday for the entire weekend. We
19 now make that call each and every day of the week.
20 We have a plan in place to protect critical
21 infrastructure by continually monitoring the
22 allocation of resources and making adjustments
23 according to the need and actual conditions that
24 exist. We also have improved protocols for using
25 work trains and snow fighting [phonetic] equipment

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2 to transport staff around the subway networks, so
3 we can put them in locations where they're needed.
4 Moreover, we've reorganized the command and
5 control structure to recentralize the operating
6 responsibilities across the entire subway network
7 and as mentioned early, subways has introduced a
8 centralized incident command center for the
9 coordinated field management of storm conditions
10 and other significant operating events. This
11 structure supported the successful shutdown of the
12 system during Hurricane Irene and the reopening of
13 that system in a short order, and very
14 importantly, we have procedures for managing stuck
15 trains and for all significant operating events.
16 The rail control center now has a dedicated
17 customer advocate whose sole responsibility is to
18 focus on customer safety and security and
19 especially on those who may be trapped on one of
20 our buses or trains. Finally subways has been
21 periodically conducting tabletop exercises since
22 February 2011 for all different types of operating
23 events, whether they be snow storms, whether they
24 be floods, whether they be hurricane events, power
25 outages, et cetera. And the first 2011 winter

1
2 operations tabletop was conducted on November 15th.
3 There are also many improvements in which subways
4 is continuing to work including the implementation
5 of a mass call system to facilitate the more rapid
6 mobilization of hourly staff. This system has
7 been installed and tested and subways personnel
8 are currently completing forms to make sure that
9 all of the critical information on all employees
10 have been updated and are current. We expect to
11 begin to revamp the staff training curriculum to
12 incorporate crisis management techniques and we
13 are working on a number of equipment improvements
14 including the procurement of new snow throwers to
15 further improve our ability to remove snow from
16 the system.

17 Turning to buses an enhanced 2011
18 and 12 winter operations manual has been issued to
19 employees across all of MTA's bus operations.
20 Similar to subways, it includes a new alert level
21 which provides for controlled service curtailment
22 as well, and establishes guidelines as to when to
23 declare alert levels relative to the forecasted
24 storm arrival. In addition buses has met with the
25 Sanitation Department on several occasions in

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2 tabletop exercises and has a revised set of
3 priority plowing routes that have been established
4 in conjunction with sanitation to facilitate the
5 clearing of priority bus routes to the extent
6 possible. Arrangements have also been made for
7 sharing real time plowing information via transit
8 representatives at the city's Office of Emergency
9 Management Emergency Operations Center. As in
10 past years, sanitation will be providing salt to
11 the MTA bus operation and as a backup, buses have
12 access to salt that is the possession of MTA's
13 bridges and tunnels. This year the city vendor
14 responsible for clearing bus stops will also be
15 represented in the Office of Emergency Management
16 during activations of the operations center
17 providing yet another connection to help
18 facilitate self-continuation or resumption of
19 service. Like our department of subways, buses
20 has introduced a centralized situation room for
21 coordinated management of storms and other
22 significant events effecting our operations and
23 has been conducting its own tabletop exercises in
24 anticipation of the upcoming winter since early
25 September of this year. In addition, buses has

1
2 completed and successfully tested what we refer to
3 as a snow desk application that automates the
4 process of monitoring immobilized buses. There is
5 also now a protocol for senior level managers to
6 be assigned to the situation room at all times to
7 advocate for customers who are on immobilized
8 buses. Very important with regard to staffing,
9 we've established protocols to minimize exposure
10 to personnel shortages during the holidays,
11 including holding over hourly and supervisory
12 staff as needed and deploying additional staffing
13 from depots and support departments as required.
14 In the area of equipment, we now have a consistent
15 policy for tire chaining based upon a specific
16 condition of forecasts. This policy requires
17 chaining of the articulated fleet when the
18 severity and speed of the storm warrants it, while
19 also taking into consideration the service area of
20 the buses. Whenever possible articulated buses
21 scheduled to be used in service overnight are to
22 be replaced with 40 foot standard buses and all
23 buses to be in service overnight regardless of
24 type will be sent into service with chains again
25 as conditions warrant. Other key equipment we

1
2 have in place includes tow trucks, front loads,
3 snow fighters. We also equip our road trucks and
4 other road support vehicles with salt, shovels and
5 straps to respond to immobilized vehicles. We are
6 continuing to consider other equipment including a
7 bus with a sand spreader, which could assist our
8 lower floor buses. Finally we are continuing to
9 advance the installation of GPS tracking on buses
10 and as previously we advised you our plans include
11 the expansion of the bus time pilot currently on
12 the B63 route to all the bus routes in Staten
13 Island on our about the first of the new year,
14 2012. With respect to our access a ride para
15 transit service, we have developed a dashboard
16 storm monitoring system to track immobilized
17 vehicles and customers - - notifications and trip
18 cancellations on a half hourly basis. We have
19 also coordinated procedure with OEM and city first
20 responders for rescuing customers on immobilized
21 vehicles or those who develop medical needs during
22 storms. Also in place is a new para transit
23 specific storm action plan that includes processes
24 for curtailing all non medically essential
25 service. This plan was tested earlier this year

1
2 during storms in January and February as well as
3 during Hurricane Irene. In addition, procedures
4 have been developed for deploying extra unassigned
5 vans to enhance the ability of the command center
6 to maintain service during storm events.

7 Procedures are also now in place for 24 hour
8 staffing in the command center to provide the
9 continuous coverage needed during storms. Para
10 transit equipment needs are also being addressed.
11 Tires snow chains have been purchases to outfit
12 10% of a fleet in accordance with the action plan
13 and protocols have been developed for deploying
14 only vans during storm operations as they handle
15 better in snow than the sedans do. Additional
16 para transit improvements are also under way. We
17 are continuing to work towards to launch of an
18 interactive voice response customer calling system
19 for access a ride customers to aid in
20 communicating service suspensions by the end of
21 next summer. We're in the process of developing
22 proposals to introduce new communication channels
23 such as e-mail.

24 I'd now like to discuss how the MTA
25 is addressing a key agency wide failing during the

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2 2010 blizzard--lack of MTA wide response
3 coordination and information sharing. Since the
4 beginning of the year, MTA headquarters has taken
5 a more active coordinating role during significant
6 weather events. As mentioned earlier, an
7 emergency coordinator position has been
8 established and that individual is responsible for
9 coordinating emergency response during a storm or
10 other event for all MTA agencies. The emergency
11 coordinator participates in activations of the
12 emergency operations center at the New York City
13 Office of Emergency Management and works with
14 other MTA staff assigned to the emergency
15 operations center during emergencies and in
16 planning an after action reuse with the MTA
17 agencies and OEM. Within the MTA the chairman,
18 the chief operating officer, the agency heads and
19 the new emergency coordinator and other
20 headquarter executives conduct frequent calls
21 during all natural hazard emergencies throughout
22 the entire time of how we handle them to ensure
23 that there is a region wide situational awareness
24 and operational awareness and to facilitate the
25 sharing of resources both within the MTA within

1 agencies outside the MTA family. Employee
2 availability in communication strategies are also
3 part of the agenda on these calls. These new
4 procedures, which have been in effect since
5 January have succeeded in enhancing the MTA's
6 response to a variety of emergencies including the
7 January and February winter storms as well as
8 Hurricane Irene during the summer. In the
9 emergency operations center of OEM, MTA has the
10 ability to reach out quickly to the various city
11 agencies and to respond to those agencies. The
12 MTA headquarter representative working with OEM
13 has direct access to headquarter executives as
14 well as the agency presidents facilitating faster
15 responses to certain situations. For instance,
16 MTA's bus operations and bridges and tunnels now
17 work with other agencies with tow truck to a tow
18 truck test taskforce established by OEM to quickly
19 assist one another. For the first time MTA is
20 conducting periodic all agency winter storm
21 executive communications and decision making
22 exercises to practice communications activities
23 and decision making that must take place during
24 winter storms and other emergencies. Participants
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2 will also include MTA executive director, Joe
3 Lhota, as well as other top headquarter and agency
4 executives. Among the discussion topics are
5 immobilized trains and buses, curtailment or
6 suspension of service, potential evacuations, all
7 difficult issues that may have to be addresses
8 over the coming months. Additionally to enhance
9 our communications with customers, MTA has taken
10 steps to ensure its communication systems function
11 well during any type of emergency. The IT group
12 constantly monitors website traffic and if need be
13 can quickly modify the site to ensure adequate
14 capacity for all of our customers who use the
15 Internet to access our service information. It's
16 worth noting however that because we have enhanced
17 our capacity, we did not need to take this step
18 during Hurricane Irene and we believe we have
19 adequate capacity to accommodate all hits that we
20 would receive during a winter storm. Our current
21 website design allows us to quickly post and
22 modify service information for all MTA agencies
23 and in addition, we have deployed a special
24 weather page that becomes the MTA.info home page
25 during weather related events effecting our

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2 operations. Consistent with the City Council's
3 request, the page provides links to 311, air
4 train, PATH, et cetera. We consistently provide
5 the press with timely updates, send e-mail alerts
6 to subscribers and also now use social media such
7 as Facebook and Twitter to reach out to our
8 customers. Moreover, the MTA now partners with
9 New York State DOT to provide current service
10 information for all MTA agencies by telephone
11 using 511. The 511 system provides our customers
12 with easy to remember phone number access for all
13 MTA transportation information. The MTA now has
14 protocols in place for providing 311 with service
15 status updates and alternative transportation
16 options enabling 311 and 911 to direct MTA service
17 inquiries to the appropriate MTA communication
18 channels and enabling the MTA to track the MTA
19 related 311 and 911 complaints during storms and
20 other significant operating events. As you can
21 see, we've accomplished much in a relatively short
22 period of time and are well on the way to
23 accomplishing more. We have a comprehensive well
24 thought out action plan and we're steadily moving
25 toward the goals established to optimize our

1
2 responses to severe storm conditions as well as
3 other emergency situations.

4 I'd like to take this opportunity
5 at this time to personally thank the
6 Transportation Committee and the Council as a
7 whole for your in depth review of this critical
8 matter and the thought and effort that went into
9 your recommendations. I'd like to close my
10 remarks by acknowledging the commitment and
11 consistent effort the men and women of New York
12 City Transit who work tirelessly and often
13 heroically to keep New York City moving as safely
14 and as comfortably as possible, even during times
15 of crisis. Make no mistake about it, we are
16 acutely aware that public always has and likely
17 always will be judged by the mantra, "You're only
18 as good as your last rush hour or your last snow
19 storm." We are now available to answer any
20 questions that you may have.

21 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you.
22 Thank you, Mr. Prendergast, and I thank you for
23 the thoroughness of your presentation. Many of
24 the points you hit on are extremely relevant to
25 our conversation today. Thank you.

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THOMAS PRENDERGAST: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: And for your preparation. Before we go further, I would like to call the roll on the two resolutions concerning intercity buses that I spoke of in my introduction. Let me first indicate the additional members that have joined us. To my extreme right, Council Member Debbie Rose and Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer have joined us. To my extreme left, Council member Vincent Ignizio, Council Member Jumaane Williams, Council Member Oliver Koppell. I have all the members introduced now. Why don't we do this? Resolution 0892 calls upon the United States House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate to pass and for the President to sign H.R. 873 and S. 453 entitled the motor coach enhanced safety act of 2011, which would seek to overhaul or increase the safety of intercity buses and Resolution 1000 of 2011 calls upon the New York State Assembly to pass and the Governor to sign A. 813 in relation to the qualifications of bus drivers. The Chair will now call the roll and the Chair recommends an aye vote on both resolutions and they are coupled

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2 for that purpose. Let me call the roll. Council
3 Member Brewer?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I vote aye.

5 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Council Member
6 Garodnick?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GARODNICK: Aye.

8 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Council Member
9 Koppell?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Aye.

11 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Council Member
12 Lappin?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LAPPIN: Aye.

14 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Council Member
15 Rose?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Aye.

17 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Council Member
18 Van Bramer?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Aye.

20 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Council Member
21 Ignizio?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: Yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Council Member
24 Koo?

25 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Aye.

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2 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Council Member
3 Vacca votes aye. It has passed, and I will leave
4 the roll open for a period of time as our
5 Committee will continue for other members to cast
6 their vote when they arrive. Mr. Prendergast
7 again, thank you. I just had some questions. It
8 appears to me that your preparations are not
9 dependent upon the New York City Department of
10 Transpiration declaring formally an emergency.

11 THOMAS PRENDERGAST: That's
12 correct.

13 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay. So we
14 can rest assure the MTA will be in place based on
15 your own guidelines even if the city fails again
16 to declare an emergency.

17 THOMAS PRENDERGAST: Absolutely,
18 and I'd like to elaborate. The relationship we
19 have with the city is such that we will extend
20 ourselves and make sure they're aware of what
21 information we have with respect to storms
22 approaching us, what actions we think we need to
23 take and what actions we may ask them to take to
24 support and complement what we're doing. But an
25 answer to your question, we will make our own

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2 decisions irrespective of whether they call an
3 emergency or not.

4 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: We are counting
5 on you to do so.

6 THOMAS PRENDERGAST: Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: We are counting
8 on the MTA to proceed based on what they determine
9 to be the best interest of the straphangers, not
10 waiting for a declaration of emergency that never
11 came last year from the New York City Department
12 of Transportation.

13 THOMAS PRENDERGAST: Yes, and we
14 should have done it last year. We should have
15 acted on our own last year.

16 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you. Mr.
17 Prendergast, let me ask you another question. Of
18 course, you know many of our trains are above,
19 many of our trains are below, some trains are
20 both. Is there a contingency where you may be
21 able to run trains below, but then not have them
22 go above, so straphangers would know that a route
23 is reduced rather than totally shut down?

24 THOMAS PRENDERGAST: Yes. I mean
25 the use of the word curtailment is specifically

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2 used for that purpose. Long before you go to the
3 shutdown of a line or the shutdown of a system,
4 you can look at options that can curtail service,
5 provide the maximum amount of service that the
6 public would expect to see, but not necessarily do
7 it in places where we're having difficulty to keep
8 tracks or bus routes clear, and to assure the safe
9 and reliable transport of those customers on those
10 tracks. The size of the New York City subway
11 system is such that as you noted so much of it is
12 underground, there are many places we can run the
13 service underground and turn trains and keep them
14 away from those open cut sections that may be
15 exposed to snow or other weather related events.

16 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: God forbid we
17 have a situation where trains are stuck and
18 passengers are in the train at the time. Have you
19 developed a mechanism where you can reach those
20 passengers, assure their safety, supply them with
21 water in the interim? What have you done based on
22 your planning to make sure that what happened last
23 year on the A train will not happen, but if it
24 does happen, there will be a response from the MTA
25 during that critical period?

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2 THOMAS PRENDERGAST: First of all
3 the main idea in running a rail system is to try
4 to keep trains moving and keep the line clear, but
5 there comes a point in time, especially in
6 blizzard conditions, where you have heavy snow
7 falling, high winds that your ability to do that
8 becomes impaired and you have to quickly change
9 gears and curtail service and not place people in
10 those sections where trains that could become
11 stalled become stranded. A stalled train is a
12 train that stopped on tracks waiting for the
13 railway to clear ahead of them. A stranded train
14 is one where it's clear that you're not going to
15 be able to get it running again before the storm.
16 The idea is to stay ahead of that issue and not
17 trap any trains. There will be cases where we
18 will have a train trapped. It's our desire not to
19 have that happen. What happened in the case at
20 Aqueduct last year was we forgot about that train.
21 We forget about it, and it's inexcusable. We have
22 followed a procedure that was adopted by Long
23 Island Rail Road where they have personnel who
24 sole responsibility either in the situation room
25 or the incident command center is to be in charge

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2 in taking care of the people who are on stalled
3 and stranded trains. They have no other
4 responsibilities save that. So as an incident
5 unfolds and people are aware in the command center
6 that that person that's responsible for them--
7 people have been on a train 60 minutes, 75
8 minutes, 120 minutes--they're starting to force
9 the issue of what are we going to do to move that
10 train and get those people to a safe location? If
11 we are unable to do that with our own resources,
12 Department of Buses sending people, us sending a
13 reach train to try to rescue them, we will reach
14 out to New York City and New York State resources
15 to be able to affect that, and if that requires us
16 to get with sanitation to be able to plow a route
17 and then send a bus there, that's what we will do.
18 That's the difference. The key difference is the
19 fact that we have assigned responsibility in the
20 situation room or the incident command center that
21 the person is responsible for the care and
22 wellbeing of the people on stranded trains and no
23 other responsibilities 'cause what happened before
24 that is someone was overloaded. They were worried
25 about moving trains, worried about other things.

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2 They inexcusably forgot that we had these people
3 stranded on a train.

4 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I was
5 encouraged by your remark indicating that Mr.
6 Lhota will be personally involved in some of the
7 emergency room type operations. Many of us
8 straphangers want to know that that's going to be
9 a fact. Rather than just going to news
10 conferences, we want to know that the head of the
11 MTA is going to be hands on and I'd like you to
12 describe what you anticipate Mr. Lhota's role to
13 be based on what we heard.

14 THOMAS PRENDERGAST: What we did
15 immediately following the December 26th storm in
16 2010 was to actually put in place a process where
17 the chairman and chief executive officer, the
18 chief operating officer, and the agency heads,
19 along with the emergency coordinator at the MTA,
20 Judith Walker, before a storm reaches us, we're
21 sharing information on what our various weather
22 information sources are telling us and we're
23 sharing information on what levels of plans we're
24 going to put in effect. That regular meeting of
25 those people occurs on a periodic basis depending

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2 on the storm. If it's an intense storm and a
3 blizzard, it may be as frequent as every three or
4 four hours. If it's something like the hurricane,
5 it's probably every six to eight hours, leading
6 up, but once in the teeth of the hurricane, it was
7 every four hours. The individuals that
8 participate on those calls are generally close to
9 their home station, so in my case I would be close
10 to the situation room in New York City Transit.
11 Darryl, MTA Buses, 'cause he wears two hats; he's
12 Long Island Bus, MTA Bus as well as New York City
13 Transit would be at the location to best
14 facilitate his decision making for the bus
15 network. Carmen would be in the situation room.
16 The Chairman was at 347 Madison. There's
17 advantages to him to be close, whoever the
18 chairman or chief executive officer is to be close
19 to the MTA police network of intelligence so that
20 they can process information. There is no one
21 formal meeting place where the agency heads, the
22 chief operating officer and the chief executive
23 director meet, but there are virtual meetings
24 occurring every four hours, and they prove to be
25 very successful in the snow storms in January and

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February and especially during Hurricane Irene.

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Now you know that last year straphangers were not happy with the December 26th blizzard response and you've acknowledged that there were major mistakes. In summary, what can you tell straphangers today about what we can expect from the MTA differently than last year?

THOMAS PRENDERGAST: Well, we have reinstituted and reminded everybody the mantra of "You're only as good as your last snow storm." We can't rest on our laurels of how good we've done. Each and every storm as it gets identified we have to treat exceptionally seriously, notwithstanding at times you're going to get a wide variation of reports from the different weather services, but what has served us well is when we prepare for the worst and then when the worst doesn't come, you're that much more ahead of the game. So that's point number one. Point number two is I believe the meetings and the virtual meetings as I talked about with the chairman, chief operating officer and the agency heads are extremely invaluable because you're sharing information, but you're

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2 also learning what other people are doing, and
3 you're taking actions in response to that. Then
4 the periodic effect of the situation room and the
5 incident command centers are different as well
6 because we've reenergized senior management's
7 requirement to part of those processes. Not the
8 interfere, not to get into the detailed decision
9 making, but to provide an overarching view to make
10 sure the right decisions are being made. I think
11 you heard in our testimony earlier in January when
12 we were here before this Committee that there was
13 a mantra to run at all costs. There are times
14 when you have to change that mantra as I mentioned
15 before where it's clear that you can't continue
16 top rate service. If you pick people up at a
17 station, you don't have assurity [phonetic] that
18 you'll get them to their destination, you have to
19 start curtailing that service and bringing it
20 back, and that's where the levels of
21 responsibility come into play, so that's
22 difference. The other thing that is extremely
23 important is this issue of assigning somebody the
24 sole responsibility for the care and wellbeing of
25 people on stalled or stranded trains because if

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2 you overload anybody irrespective of how competent
3 they are, they're going to drop something, and if
4 you have somebody that's critical to the movement
5 of trains to give them the added responsibility to
6 care for somebody on a stalled train, one of two
7 things is going to happen—they'll either do a poor
8 job of caring for the people on the stranded train
9 or do a poor job of moving trains or buses, and we
10 need to basically divorce them of those
11 responsibilities and make sure that they're
12 properly tasked with what they have to do.

13 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I need to be
14 assured by you that all staff have been briefed
15 and are fully aware of the new protocols and I
16 mean not just management staff, I mean the bus
17 driver, the train operator. Have your staff from
18 top to bottom been briefed on what is expected of
19 them should we have another snow emergency?

20 THOMAS PRENDERGAST: They've been
21 more than briefed, and I'll let Darryl and Carmen
22 go into the details of what we've done in the form
23 of retraining and reeducation for employees, but I
24 can tell you that one of the things that I also
25 forgot to mention when you said, "What is

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2 different this year versus last year" is that the
3 focus points again on the tabletop exercises. To
4 be able to take somebody through the running of an
5 incident that is not a true incident—it's an
6 incident according to the script and you apply the
7 standard operating procedures and you let people
8 make decisions and you don't have to do it in the
9 actual heat of battle is an exceptionally powerful
10 tool in making sure people understand what actions
11 they should be taking. The credit for the
12 excellent response of Hurricane Irene go to a lot
13 of people beyond New York City Transit although
14 our execution of that plan was very well, but the
15 City took a very active effort after Hurricane
16 Katrina in New Orleans to develop an operating
17 plan and procedure for a hurricane hitting a major
18 area, and some of the more difficult decisions we
19 had to make weren't scripted for us but they were
20 embodied in standard operating procedures where we
21 knew what we had to do when we made those
22 decisions. You weren't agonizing over them as you
23 had to implement them, but I'll let Carmen and
24 I'll let Darryl talk about how we have made sure
25 cascading down into the organization down to the

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2 hourly level people understand what's expected of
3 them during storms. Darryl?

4 DARRYL IRICK: Right, so in regards
5 to bus operators who are the most exposed in the
6 12/26 storm, we've engaged in a very aggressive
7 training campaign that started in July where we
8 talk about inclement operating of buses, tactical
9 training on how to deal with lack of traction
10 issues with buses, chain operation with buses and
11 deal with different protocols that have been
12 reestablished in the Department of Buses in
13 regards to deal with snow storms. Also, as Tom
14 spoke about it, we've exercised at least eight
15 tabletop exercises where we looked at a myriad of
16 different emergency situations, not just snow
17 storms, and we feel that the outcome has been
18 extremely good as we're very proud of the outcome
19 of Hurricane Irene as it related to bus
20 curtailment of service and restoration of service.
21 It's an ongoing process as it related to briefing
22 staff, but we're way into it, and we feel that the
23 outcomes are good.

24 [background conversation]

25 CARMEN BIANCO: Let me just add to

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2 what President Prendergast mentioned. My name is
3 Carmen Bianco, and I'm the senior vice president
4 of Subways. Over the course of the past year, we
5 have held 11 tabletop exercises that included
6 everything from major snowstorms, how to deal with
7 power failures, how to deal with hurricanes, and
8 our latest one was just within the past few weeks,
9 which was dealing with the winter plan. We've
10 also taken the winter plan as its been revised and
11 we have extracted from that the highlights of the
12 plan so that we can cascade that down through the
13 organization down to all levels of managers and
14 supervisors providing them a) the highlights of
15 the plan, b) their individual responsibilities
16 towards the plan, so the communications are
17 flowing. After each one of these tabletops that
18 we hold, we actually do a port mortem to make sure
19 that we have captured the lessons learned and that
20 we are making sure that we include those lessons
21 in future activities. So the lines of
22 communications are open. We've spent a lot of
23 time practicing on different scenarios. We've had
24 a lot of opportunities over the course of the
25 winter last year where we expected a much more

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2 severe storm to occur, never received that severe
3 storm, but we didn't lose the opportunity. We
4 actually used that time train across our system on
5 what would happen if. We make sure that we make
6 the most out of each and every one of these
7 opportunities.

8 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: One thing I
9 have to emphasize and then I'm going to go on to
10 my colleagues. One thing I have to emphasize that
11 came out of our hearings that I do see you
12 specifically addressed in your testimony was that
13 when we have blizzards and snow storms and major
14 occurrences like that we're not going to be using
15 the articulated buses. We're going to be using
16 the smaller buses, not the articulated double
17 decker buses. We're going to make sure that those
18 buses have chains. That was something that this
19 Committee felt very strongly about, and it didn't
20 make sense to me last year that the articulated
21 buses were being sent on the streets already
22 overwhelmed with snow and that they were stuck on
23 hills. I want you to just go over that for a
24 second because I needed to hear that. I thought I
25 heard it in your testimony, but I want to make

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sure that that's going to be the case.

DARRYL IRICK: So we have really strengthened our protocols around the use of articulated buses in snow storms. There is now specific level of snow in terms of inches that it would depend on the profile of the storm, the conditions, the tracking of the storm, the temperature and what have you, where we feel that we will not be able to obtain good traction, those buses are coming off the road. Wherever possible, we will curtail service and use 40 foot buses. On the overnight service where we have a substantial amount of buses, most of our buses are in the garage in the overnight, we have the ability to absolutely use 40 foot buses instead of articulated buses on night buses or night buses.

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: What is your capacity for chains. Tell me about the chains. Do you have capacity for chaining both types of buses if you have to—if you have to put the articulated bus out, do you have the capacity to chain that bus as well as the non-articulated?

DARRYL IRICK: Absolutely. Some 10, 12 years ago when we started to reuse chains

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2 again in our operation, it was the articulated bus
3 that stimulated that so that bus is the primary
4 reason why we use chains because it has horrible
5 traction during snow and ice conditions. So yes,
6 we do have the capacity to chain all articulated
7 buses if we're going to use them, and we have
8 enough capacity to chain at least 20% of our
9 standard buses.

10 [background conversation]

11 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay. I'd like
12 to now go on to questions from the Council Members
13 who are here, who have questions. Council Member
14 Lappin is first.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LAPPIN: Thank you,
16 Mr. Chair. In 2010, I think a big part of the
17 fiasco was the mayor was out of town, deputy
18 mayors were out of town. It wasn't clear 100% who
19 was in charge, and it's not clear to me today who
20 at the MTA will be in charge—and you said in your
21 testimony within the MTA the chairman, the chief
22 operating officer, the agency presidents and new
23 emergency coordinator and other executives will
24 conduct frequent calls. You talked about the
25 consumer advocate. Who is in charge?

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2 THOMAS PRENDERGAST: Well until
3 he's confirmed and named as chairman and chief
4 executive officer, Joe Lhota's title right not is
5 executive director. He is in charge. There is no
6 ifs, ands or buts about it.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LAPPIN: Okay, so he
8 will make every call?

9 THOMAS PRENDERGAST: Yes, based
10 upon—I mean the way the command structure works is
11 he makes that call or that person makes that call
12 based upon the input from all the other agency
13 heads. But in answer to your question, that's the
14 person who has the authority and they're the one
15 that is in charge.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LAPPIN: Okay, and
17 he is out of town. Who makes the call?

18 THOMAS PRENDERGAST: The way the
19 SLP is written, it would be the chief operating
20 officer, which right now is Nuria Fernandez
21 [phonetic].

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LAPPIN: Okay, and
23 so it's very clear to everybody who is in charge?

24 THOMAS PRENDERGAST: Absolutely.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER LAPPIN: Okay. I

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want to understand a little bit more about the consumer advocate because I still can't believe the MTA just forget about a train full of people. So, first of all, who is the consumer advocate? What's their name?

THOMAS PRENDERGAST: Well, it varies depending upon tour [phonetic]. You have the onset of an incident and the completion of an incident maybe as much as 72 hours. In the case of a hurricane it could be 96 hours, so the consumer advocate, the person that is in the situation room, is an assigned responsibility. We normally work doubles and then let people sleep for other 8 eights in the 24 hour day, so it could be any one of a number of people. They're generally people who have a knowledge of the system of the system very well, have a knowledge of the operations, so they either come from operations planning or rapid transit operations, and they have the sole responsibility to keep track of where trains are either stranded or stalled. Stalled is where you're waiting for the line to be cleared ahead of you and it may be cleared and the train can be moved. Stranded

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2 means it's clear the line's not going to be open
3 until you have some extraordinary effort so
4 they're there for the duration. The way it
5 happens is pretty simple is that once again this
6 is inexcusable is that if we know that people are
7 safe on a train—the train is warm, the train has
8 heat and there's no extenuating medical conditions
9 of any customers on board—what the organization
10 would do is, "Okay, those people are okay. Let's
11 make sure other trains that are either stranded or
12 moving throughout the system are safely moving
13 throughout the system." So in that sense, they
14 forgot about them, but what happens is hours go
15 by. I've been on planes where the same thing
16 happened. You're sitting on the tarmac. They
17 don't have enough gates and I've been on planes
18 seven or eight hours, so it's not excusable, but
19 that's what happens and that's how people forget
20 about them. But if you give somebody the sole
21 responsibility of keeping track of the two or
22 three trains, you know after about an hour, they
23 go over to the person responsible for that line
24 and say, Darryl, what are we going to do? We got
25 to move those people? If you tell me the lines

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2 are going to open up in a half hour, I'll keep
3 them on the train, we'll go. If you tell me
4 they're not going to, I'm going to call buses and
5 we're going to try to get a bus response. I'll
6 call sanitation, try to get a plow truck over
7 there, and that literally was done a number of
8 times across the MTA family because by the time we
9 cleared the Halloween storm, every MTA agency had
10 at least one stranded train. Long Island Rail
11 Road preceded us. We had the train stalled at
12 Aqueduct in December 26th and Metro North had two
13 trains stranded in the Halloween storm. The issue
14 of the advocate does work very well.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LAPPIN: I hope so.
16 I hope we're not striving to be stranding people
17 on the tarmac for hours and hours. I just want to
18 make sure it's very clear so this person is a
19 rotating person; it's not somebody who's assigned,
20 and what are they—

21 THOMAS PRENDERGAST: [Interposing]
22 No, no. They're assigned at the time of the
23 incident, and their sole responsibility is that
24 for the tour of the—

25 COUNCIL MEMBER LAPPIN: And who

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assigns them?

THOMAS PRENDERGAST: In the case of subways, it would be the chief transportation officer. In the case of buses...

DARRYL IRICK: Chief transportation officer.

COUNCIL MEMBER LAPPIN: Okay.

[crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER LAPPIN: There's more than one?

THOMAS PRENDERGAST: Well, there's one for buses, the chief transportation officer for buses and a chief transportation officer for-

COUNCIL MEMBER LAPPIN:
[Interposing] That wasn't clear.

THOMAS PRENDERGAST: I'm sorry.
My apologies.

COUNCIL MEMBER LAPPIN: So there are two consumer advocates, not one consumer advocate?

THOMAS PRENDERGAST: Yes, that's correct. Yes. Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER LAPPIN: Okay. And those two consumer advocates are empowered to do

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what? What do they have the authority to do on their own?

THOMAS PRENDERGAST: They have the authority to go right to the chief transportation officer and say, "We've got a situation here that needs to be dealt with. We can no longer just let these people sit on this vehicle and they're okay." The dynamic on the bus side is drastically different than the rail side. There are very few locations on the system where we can't get somebody off a bus and to a place.

DARRYL IRICK: In the last snow storm in October—we have a good example—we were providing shuttle service up in the north New York for Metro North and we had had a pretty good and effective day in terms of navigating through the snow; however, due to a shutdown road, we have a bus of approximately 20 passengers for Metro North that were stuck on a bus not because of anything that we had done wrong, but the traffic had just come to a halt. They had closed roads. We have this customer advocate in the situation room, and his sole purpose was to make sure that those people were cared for. Some of the actions that

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2 were taken was to get in touch with state police,
3 if there was any medical emergencies have them
4 respond. We were there for approximately six to
5 seven hours to a point where Metro North was no
6 longer running and we actually through the public
7 advocate—the customer advocate—considered putting
8 20 people up in hotels that night. So those are
9 just some of the things that the public advocate
10 is empowered to do and consider in an emergency.
11 It's a very effective piece. It was one of the
12 great pieces that came out of the lessons learned
13 from last year's storm.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LAPPIN: Okay.

15 THOMAS PRENDERGAST: In that
16 particular incident, I served two roles. I was
17 not only president of New York City Transit. I
18 was the acting executive director for all
19 operations matters because Joe Lhota had not
20 started yet. Jay Walter [phonetic] had left, and
21 so that incident came to me through the customer
22 advocate, through Judith Walker, the MTA agency
23 coordinator, up to my capacity as well the two
24 stranded trains, and we reached out to state
25 entities to affect the ability to plow roads and

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2 get people rescued. So that's the difference.
3 One thing I would like to say also even in the
4 Aqueduct one, we didn't get a chance to elaborate
5 to the Committee when we were here in January.
6 What actually happened at Aqueduct--we have to
7 manage this, we can't just throw up our hands and
8 say we can't manage it--is the airport made a
9 decision to close, so all the people who came to
10 airport and expected flights to go then couldn't
11 find themselves taxis to go home, so they came to
12 us and they came to us and then we accepted them.
13 Once we accept them, we own them. There's no ifs,
14 ands or buts about it. We need to do we need to
15 reach out to the airport to the port authority and
16 say if you're in the point where you're going to
17 shut down your services and you're going to send
18 people to us, we need to know about that in
19 advance and maybe we're going to tell you we're
20 shutting down 'cause we can't carry them 'cause it
21 may have been better that they stayed at the
22 airport, they stayed in a terminal in far better
23 conditions than staying on a train.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LAPPIN: Right. I
25 mean best case, they stay at home obviously.

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2 THOMAS PRENDERGAST: Yeah, but in
3 this-

4 [crosstalk]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LAPPIN: But in this
6 particular instance, yes, better for them to be
7 somewhere where they have heat and somewhere we
8 they have water and somewhere where they have food
9 and can be managed better. Okay. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you.
11 Next we have Council Member Brewer who has gone.
12 Council Member Koo?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank you,
14 Chairman Vacca and thank you President Prendergast
15 for coming to testify. I represent Queens - -
16 which is the major transit hub, - - number seven
17 train, Long Island Rail Road and 20 or 30 buses.
18 So my question is you gave a very detailed plan on
19 the MTA readiness, but in your testimony you
20 testified you only have purchased only 10% snow
21 tires-"chains have been purchased to outfit 10% of
22 the fleet." So does that mean during the whole
23 snow storm, only 10% of the buses will come out?

24 DARRLY IRICK: Absolutely not.
25 Every snow storm is different. The profile of it

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2 as I spoke earlier depending on wind gusts,
3 accumulations and what have you. The whole idea
4 is not to get buses stuck, so we now consider we
5 haven't done this in the past previously to the
6 December storm, the opportunities for an orderly
7 curtailment, in the worst case an orderly shutdown
8 of the system, rely on chains or snow tire is not
9 a silver bullet. In fact, there's a very finite
10 period of time in terms of snow accumulations
11 where chains are effective, so we didn't want to
12 put all our eggs in that one basket. We do have
13 the ability to chain buses when necessary and use
14 the best kind of buses particular RTS buses, which
15 is some of our older fleet. We find them to be
16 rather effective in snow three to four inches,
17 what have you. But chains are not the primary
18 factor of how many buses go out in service during
19 a storm. We have to look at several other factors
20 in terms of accumulation, the scope of the storm,
21 how it's tracking, et cetera.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: I have a
23 second question. In my district, there's a Long
24 Island Rail Road Station, which is not handicapped
25 accessible. You have to walk twenty something

1
2 steps to go up to the platform. Usually during a
3 snow storm, we have a lot of people have a hard
4 time going up the steps because the steps are very
5 slippery. Have you - - a plan like how often you
6 salt the steps?

7 THOMAS PRENDERGAST: Because I used
8 to work and used to run the Long Island Rail Road,
9 I can give you a response. They're severely
10 limited by the amount of resources they have
11 available to be able to clear all the platforms
12 and stairways. Even though we have substantially
13 more if not significantly more resources in New
14 York City Transit, we're limited as well. So
15 depending upon when the storm arrives and how long
16 it is and whether or not the putting down of salt
17 will keep snow from accumulating all of those
18 factors come into play, but the railroad normally
19 sends people out to clear the platforms and its
20 stairways, but there's always a delay from when
21 the first snow falls and when the platforms are
22 clear.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: I noticed they
24 only came before the storm - - did it once, and
25 after that, we don't see anyone come. If a storm

1
2 lasts two or three days most people cannot use the
3 service because they can't go up the stairs.

4 THOMAS PRENDERGAST: [Interposing]
5 They can't get the stairs, so. But the railroad
6 does have a plan to go through and clean all of
7 its... and it also supplements I believe some of its
8 own resources with some contract employees when
9 they need to.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: My last
11 question is how about snow removal at the bus
12 stops because last time a lot of the sanitation
13 push all the snow to the bus stop and made a high
14 wall-like 5 feet high or 4 feet high so people
15 have a hard time to get on the bus. - - other
16 agencies to do the snow removal now?

17 DARRYL IRICK: It's a twofold
18 issue. In bus stops where there are bus stop
19 shelters, we've worked closely with Dot and their
20 subcontractors - - to do a better job at clearing
21 bus stops during the storm and right after the
22 storm, and the city OEM operations - - will be
23 manning or staffing that operation to respond to
24 the issue of bus shelters. Sanitation has the
25 responsibility to respond to bus stops at large.

1
2 We don't have the capacity to do an - - response
3 to that, but we will - - supplement that with our
4 own capabilities after we've helped to clear roads
5 and turnarounds for our buses.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: The main
7 responsibility belongs to sanitation?

8 DARRYL IRICK: Yes.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Oh.

10 [background conversation]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: --last
12 question. On the personnel issue--during a
13 snowstorm how can you mobilize people to go to
14 work if they're stuck at home? Do you have a
15 policy like if they don't come to work, the people
16 in the office and the transit they don't have to
17 continue until replacements are there?

18 THOMAS PRENDERGAST: A number of
19 things... First of all we changed our policy instead
20 of having a five day a week call out, we have a
21 seven day a week call out, so we can call an
22 individual plan for each weekend day. It used to
23 be we called the plan on Friday that carried all
24 the way through. So people are on notice that
25 they may be called on a day by day basis. We can

1
2 call and order people out to work. That's pretty
3 clear what the contract allows us to do. Whether
4 or not they come in is dependent upon our reaching
5 them, their ability to get into work in the snow
6 storm. We had a very good relationship and a good
7 approach with the TW [phonetic] where we were
8 working people basically double tours and asking
9 them to stay and even paying them for that third
10 tour because we were assured we would get them
11 back for another double when they slept that eight
12 hours. You can't really work people more than 16
13 hours. You start to get them to be not only
14 effective, but they start to be very difficult for
15 them to make sure that they don't hurt themselves
16 while they're working. We will do actions like
17 that to assure that we have the resources we need
18 to be able to fight storms, and it worked very
19 well during the hurricane.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: but you don't
21 provide transportation for—

22 [crosstalk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: They want to
24 go to work but they have no transportation.

25 THOMAS PRENDERGAST: We did. Quite

1
2 a few of our employees on a day in day out basis
3 use public transportation to get to work but not
4 all. So in the course of a storm especially what
5 was unique about the storm Hurricane Irene, we
6 shut down that service, so they were saying, "How
7 should we able to get in?" Some of them carpooled
8 together, transportation personnel. Others we
9 would get them to a location and we'd use shuttle
10 buses and we also used car services to get people
11 to work as well.

12 [background conversation]

13 DARRYL IRICK: We also provided
14 accommodations for many of our bus workers and I
15 believe subway workers also to stay over so that
16 we had ample people to restore service once the
17 storm cleared.

18 THOMAS PRENDERGAST: The policy we
19 had is we worked them a double and then we would
20 sleep them on the facility. We would get food for
21 them. I guess you pay overtime for that, but
22 you're assured of having that resource when
23 they're done and they're back at work. And also
24 you're not exposing them to harm's way getting to
25 and from work in very difficult conditions. It

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works for everybody.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you. Let me clarify for Council Member Koo that we have also worked with SAMUSA. SAMUSA has a contract with the City of New York and therefore they are responsible for keeping their bus stop shelters accessible from snow, and I do think they also realized that were not that happy with last year's job, so I expect better. Two quick questions. Has the Department of Buses determined the best locations for staging tow trucks? Do you have locations in certain boroughs where you will have staging areas for tow trucks?

DARRYL IRICK: The answer is yes.

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: So that's all laid out?

THOMAS PRENDERGAST: There's a couple things I'd like to add and Darryl can go even further. There's a variety of different equipment that buses has—snowfighters to be able to clean and salt and spread, some tow trucks to be able to pick up stranded vehicles. The primary

1
2 responsibility is for areas close to and in depot,
3 so that you can move buses in and out to make sure
4 that's done. Also, major terminal areas like
5 you've got major terminal areas in Queens for
6 example, St. George Ferry Terminal in Staten
7 Island and in order to assure that those are
8 clear, buses will use its resources. While we can
9 share with you designated locations - - ahead of
10 time will be likely the locations to store this
11 equipment, it once again depends upon the
12 conditions of that particular storm because in
13 some cases, those pre-identified conditions are
14 running very. Sanitation has cleared the street
15 and it would be a waste of the resource to put it
16 there, so the information that we have regarding
17 locations is not hard and fast; they're based on
18 empirical evidence of where they can best be used,
19 but you may see some vehicles not stored, not
20 there in a storm because there's no need for them
21 there. They're someplace else.

22 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: the Department
23 of Sanitation I think you know has updated their
24 list of streets, primary streets and secondary
25 streets and it's accessible now. I want to make

1

2 sure that the MTA is aware of that and that you
3 have the way with all to access it that you know—
4 and perhaps if there are corrections that have to
5 be made, you've given input now before the a storm
6 comes.

7

DARRLY IRICK: To answer you, Jim,
8 we have an ongoing dialogue and a very good
9 dialogue that as a result of last year's storm the
10 Department of Sanitation and just as a short
11 answer, there is alignment on the priority routes
12 that they've identified and the routes that we've
13 identified, so there's a complete alignment. We
14 communicate with them on a regular basis,
15 especially now as we move closer into the winter
16 season.

17

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Let me call the
18 roll on the two resolutions first 'cause Council
19 Member Ulrich has arrived. Council Member Ulrich
20 on the two resolutions concerning intercity buses,
21 how would you vote?

22

COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: Mr.
23 Chairman, I vote aye.

24

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay. I think
25 there are no other speakers here today. I think

1
2 many straphangers are adopting a wait and see
3 attitude and maybe they're not coming yet, but I
4 do want you to know that come April or May, this
5 Committee will reconvene and we will ask the
6 question, "Are we better off today than we were a
7 year ago?" That is the question we will ask. We
8 thank you very much. I'm encouraged by this
9 report and we look forward to working with the MTA
10 to make sure that there's safety and there's
11 transportation during the coming winter.

12 THOMAS PRENDERGAST: Thank you very
13 much.

14 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay. Thank
15 you. We will hold the record open for thirty
16 minutes for other members to arrive so that they
17 can vote on the two resolutions concerning
18 intercity buses. Without further business, this
19 Committee will now adjourn. It is 11:10am.

20 [gavel]

21 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: We have two
22 additional members who would like to vote at this
23 time on the resolutions concerning intercity buses
24 and I would call the roll again as we left the
25 roll open. Council Member Greenfield?

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COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Aye.

2

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Council Member

3

Rodriguez?

4

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Aye.

5

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay. Thank

6

you.

7

[long pause]

8

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: This is

9

Councilman Vacca, chair of the Transportation

10

Committee. The final vote on both resolutions is

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12 in favor and none opposed. This hearing is now

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adjourned.

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[gavel]

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CHAIRPERSON VACCA: 11:20 a.m.

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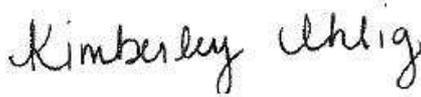
11:40 a.m. I'm sorry.

16

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Kimberley Uhlig certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

Signature _____



Date _____

12/29/11