

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  
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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

1  
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

1  
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

1  
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 26<sup>th</sup> 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

1  
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.

1  
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 26<sup>th</sup> blizzard in 2010. As  
25 I stated at that time, we were immensely

1  
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

1  
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](http://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 5<sup>th</sup> 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

1  
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

1  
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 15<sup>th</sup>.  
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

1  
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

1  
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  
25

1  
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

1  
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

1  
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.

1  
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

1  
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

1  
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?

1  
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

1  
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.

1  
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 26<sup>th</sup> 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

1  
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 26<sup>th</sup> 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

1  
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

1  
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

1  
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

1  
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

1  
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

1  
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

1  
2 want to understand a little bit more about the  
3 consumer advocate because I still can't believe  
4 the MTA just forget about a train full of people.  
5 So, first of all, who is the consumer advocate?  
6 What's their name?

7 THOMAS PRENDERGAST: Well, it  
8 varies depending upon tour [phonetic]. You have  
9 the onset of an incident and the completion of an  
10 incident maybe as much as 72 hours. In the case  
11 of a hurricane it could be 96 hours, so the  
12 consumer advocate, the person that is in the  
13 situation room, is an assigned responsibility. We  
14 normally work doubles and then let people sleep  
15 for other 8 eights in the 24 hour day, so it could  
16 be any one of a number of people. They're  
17 generally people who have a knowledge of the  
18 system of the system very well, have a knowledge  
19 of the operations, so they either come from  
20 operations planning or rapid transit operations,  
21 and they have the sole responsibility to keep  
22 track of where trains are either stranded or  
23 stalled. Stalled is where you're waiting for the  
24 line to be cleared ahead of you and it may be  
25 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

1  
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 26<sup>th</sup> 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

1  
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

1  
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.

1  
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

1  
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

11

12 in favor and none opposed. This hearing is now

12

adjourned.

13

[gavel]

14

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: 11:20 a.m.

15

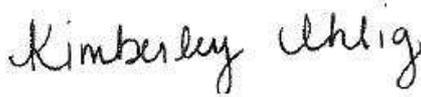
11:40 a.m. I'm sorry.

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