



Regional Plan Association

... a research and planning agency supported by voluntary membership to promote the coordinated development of the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut Metropolitan Region.

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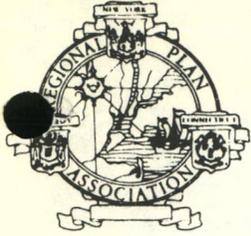
SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK POST

I applaud your editorial's list of immediate needs. But your indifference to capital spending blockages is an invitation to write the same editorial every few months.

The subway system has come to the present state because, in large part, the capital program has been ignored--particularly the administrative delay in spending the millions already available. To illustrate: Transit Authority Executive Director Simpson's explanation of why subway maintenance is near collapse is that the cracked trucks of the R-46 cars take the bulk of the Transit Authority's maintenance time. The cracks were discovered over three years ago--yet design of the trucks was started only last November. The three-year gap was filled with administrative stumbling blocks without which we could have had safe R-46 cars running now.

John P. Keith
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NEW YORK POST, TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 1981

POST EDITORIAL

Still no light at the end of the tunnel

THE subway and bus fares are set to go up to 75 cents by summer — and even higher — to help raise a staggering \$1.4 billion a year in capital funds to re-equip the mass transit system over the next 10 years.

More bond issues. More 10-year-plans. More promises. We've heard them all before — and we know that somehow there is never, and never will be any light at the end of the dark and gloomy MTA tunnel.

Unanswered once again is the daily heartfelt cry from the traveling public: *Yes, but what about today?*

TODAY, when inevitably we'll be stood up by late trains?

TODAY, when we'll be forced to endure more filth and graffiti?

TODAY, when we'll be squeezed like

sardines in evil-smelling tin cans? **TODAY** when all too many of us will be mugged?

● What about tonight when we line up for trains which don't show where they're going?

● What about tomorrow morning when no one will take the trouble to tell us why the trains are not arriving at our station?

HARDLY A DAY GOES BY WITHOUT A REPORT FROM ONE AUTHORITY OR ANOTHER THAT PEOPLE ARE BEING DRIVEN AWAY FROM THE SUBWAYS AND BUSES BECAUSE THE SERVICE IS SO UNRELIABLE, BECAUSE IT IS SO FILTHY, BECAUSE IT IS SO INSECURE.

The public perception of the mass transit system is clear. They do not trust it.

The need is urgent.

The need is for the Transit Authority to regain credibility. It is not going to achieve that by applying a 15 cent fare increase to a 10-year plan.

It will be able to achieve it by taking some

Continued

obvious, immediate steps to make the system more effective cleaner, reliable and secure.

Ordering 1000 new subway cars isn't going to solve any of the immediate problems.

The present cars are less than 30 years old. They have a designed life of 35 years. Why can't they be made to run properly?

Tokyo's transit system, TEITO, which is roughly the size of New York's, has a failure rate of one subway car per 6 million miles. The TA's failure rate is one car every 6000 miles.

That is a scandalous difference. It raises huge questions about the TA's management. Will \$1.4 billion a year simply be throwing more good money after bad management?

If we are not doing proper maintenance because we don't have either the skilled men or enough men, why don't we get them?

This is not a problem which depends for solution on deliveries of new subway cars in two or three years' time. It is a problem that can be solved immediately.

DECIDE PRIORITIES

The TA should decide its maintenance priorities and either hire the manpower necessary to do the job or contract it out — and now, not next month or the month after that.

Excuses about immediate short-term improvements can no longer be tolerated.

There are many to be made — and they are all obvious to the traveling public.

First, destination signs. On the Lexington Avenue IRT, five out of eight cars a day now run without any destination signs.

If there is one offense by the TA which makes people angry it is being obliged to get on a train without knowing where it is going. *If the TA wants to improve its credibility, let it attend to those destination signs.*

Second, closed doors. Eighty per cent of the old subway cars are run-

ning with doors that don't open properly. This is accounting for most of the large increase in reported passenger injuries. *If the TA wants to improve its credibility, let it announce not just another million-dollar program but a specific plan to repair 400 sets of doors within six months.*

Third, lights. Two out of eight subway cars are running with their lights out. Few things are more scary to women passengers. Yet this is a problem that could be solved overnight.

Fourth, central heating and air conditioning. If the TA wants to improve its credibility it should be insuring that all air conditioning units are effective for the coming summer months when the temperature down there will be 110 degrees.

Fifth, security. The system needs more cops — on the stations and on the trains.

The largest city in the world should not be relying on a band of teenagers to help out on the basic obligation of all cities to provide its people with security.

The way to make an immediate improvement is to phase out the present 400 platform controllers — who never know what is happening anyway — and replace them with cops.

STICK WITH TOKENS

Sixth, tokens. By all means, stick with tokens rather than switch to the newfangled ticket machines which are usually out of order.

Instead of selling tokens just from booths, make them available in supermarkets, banks and corner stores.

Lastly, better information. If the TA wants to improve its credibility it can do so within a month by installing a functioning public address system in each station to inform frustrated passengers when there is a train due or, if it is delayed, what alternative is available and how to get to it. **It should know**

what is going on and be seen to know what is going on.

What of the graffiti which offends so many and increases the sense of anxiety and degradation of all mass transit riders?

Assigning more police to guarding the subway yards won't solve the problem but putting the graffiti artists before a court and sending them to detention centers may reduce it.

The records show that today's 14 year old graffiti artist is the future 20-year-old mugger.

There are many more short term improvements available to the TA.

QUICK THINKING

We have listed only a few. But if any are to be introduced at all will require the TA bureaucracy come out of the 1950s and 1960s and start functioning in the 1980s.

It will require quick thinking, innovation, enterprise.

These are not problems which will be solved by throwing billions of dollars at them over the next 10 years.

They will not be solved by a governor sitting in Albany refusing to admit to himself what all polls have long since shown — that people will pay extra for safe, reliable service.

They will not be solved by a Mayor saying that the problem is not his because he does not appoint the MTA chairman, nor say how it should spend its funds.

They will not be solved by the MTA pinning its hopes on long term funds raised by still more bond issues.

The problem belongs to us all. We won't solve it by closing some distant financial budget gap. We will go far to solving it by acting together, with determination, by insisting that the short-term and obvious improvements which can be made are made — and made immediately.