

Next issue:
Sat., Mar. 20

The Main Street **WIRE**™

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Roosevelt Island's Independent Community Newspaper

At Long Last, MetroCard Comes to Tramway Miller's \$5Mil Offer Gives RIOC and MTA Incentive to Work Together RIOC to Receive Full Income from Every Swipe



Media Attention Most City media treated the advent of MetroCard for the Tram as a "demise of the token" story, while...

Miller, In the Moment

First of all, I want to thank everybody who brought us here today. This is a great day because the last block has fallen, and fallen into place. Until today, this Tram was the last place in New York City that you couldn't use a MetroCard. Roosevelt Island residents didn't get the discount that MetroCard comes with [and] when they rode the Tram to come over and get on a bus or a subway, they'd have to pay again. The one-fare system didn't apply to them. It's been seven years that we've been struggling to get to this date and we are finally here and Roosevelt Islanders are thrilled. I particularly want to compliment the leadership that brought us here – Peter Kalikow, who's been doing a terrific job and has been very receptive on this issue, [NYCTA] President [Larry] Reuter, who also helped work out the negotiation in which the City put up money in the [NYCTA] capital budget to pay for this conversion, and Herb Berman and RIOC, who helped make this possible, and also Matt Katz and all the residents.

This is a great thing. This is really exciting. This is a meaningful thing in people's lives every day. The Tram is the symbol of Roosevelt Island. Every resident identifies with the Tram. And people all over the world identify this Tram with New York City. Visitors come from all over the world, and each time they've come they've gotten the impression that Roosevelt Island is disconnected from the rest of the City somehow.

Today, we connect Roosevelt Island with the rest of the City. We invite all New Yorkers to come. Bring your MetroCard. Visit the Island. Walk on it. It's beautiful. Visit its stores and its restaurants. Visit some friends. Use the hospitals, which are terrific and doing a tremendous job. Roosevelt Island is at the heart of the City, a small town in the biggest City in the world, and Roosevelt Island and its residents are now getting treated with the fairness and the equity they deserve. This is indeed a great day.

A full transcript of press conference remarks by RIOC President Herb Berman, Speaker Gifford Miller, and MTA Chair Peter Kalikow is available on Website NYC10044 at nyc10044.com/wire/2412/metrocard.html.

by Dick Lutz

MetroCard has come to the Tram. It took ten years and an extraordinary political-financial deal. But starting Monday, March 1, Tram riders got the MetroCard's free second rides, finally fulfilling the "one city, one fare" promise of the token-free MetroCard system.

The system cranked up Monday morning without a hitch. Holders of a supply of Tram tokens have until March 15 to trade them in for a MetroCard at either Tram terminal.

The deal, put together by City Council Speaker Gifford Miller, who represents the Island, produces a win-win for Roosevelt Island and the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC): Whether first swipe or second – first ride or second – RIOC will get the revenue anytime someone uses the Tram. As Miller told *The WIRE*, "It came down to money and we struck a deal."

Miller offered both RIOC and the New York City Transit Authority a deal they could not refuse: For five years, New York City will provide a million dollars a year for the the transit system's capital budget. In return, the Transit Authority will forego first-swipe revenue anytime there's a second swipe at a Tramway turnstile. RIOC will get the money every time someone rides the Tram, whether it's the first or second ride.

Here's how Miller described the arrangement to *The WIRE* after Monday's noontime press conference: "The way it works with every other system is everybody gives up the second ride. So with the private franchise buses and everybody else, whoever takes the first swipe gets the money, whoever takes the second swipe *doesn't* get the money. We didn't want RIOC to lose that revenue because it's needed for the operation of the Island. So I negotiated an agreement with RIOC and with the Transit Authority where, instead of the Transit Authority taking the first swipe, so that when someone comes out of the subway here, they pay [only] for the subway, the TA is going to swallow that, and let Roosevelt Island get the money from the second swipe. And in exchange I put a million dollars into the capital budget this year and each year for the next five years in order to make the New York City Transit Authority whole."

For New York City Transit, the MetroCard's free transfers have meant an overall increase in ridership. But for ten years, the Tram was the exception. Loss of revenue on second rides kept the Tramway out of the MetroCard system. Despite pressure from residents, no RIOC President was able to solve the revenue problem; it seemed insoluble, in fact, and they seemed to try only half-heartedly, if at all. RIOC, already losing a million dollars or more a year to keep the Tramway in service, wasn't able to



...City Council Speaker Gifford Miller described the event as a "great day." Residents Association President Matthew Katz (left) listened; Miller was introduced by RIOC President Herb Berman (right).

commit to the MetroCard. The isolation of the Tramway, even while it kept Tramway revenue flowing solely to RIOC, seemed to threaten the Tram as riders shifted to the subway for both its reach and its free second ride. Once F-line improvements were completed and a long series of train changes and mixed schedules settled down to dependable service, the Tram began losing ridership and its financial losses accelerated.

Now, though it doesn't have its reach, the Tram has near-parity with the F train, providing a free transfer to or from a bus or subway line.

The deal may ensure the future of the Tramway, at least for the few years of the deal Miller brokered. For the MTA, it takes some pressure off the F train, which could expect more serious overcrowding as additional housing units are built here and produce more riders wanting morning-rush access to Manhattan.

For RIOC President Herb Berman, MetroCard for the Tramway represents the first substantially positive development of his six-month-old term of office. In Monday's press conference, he hailed it as "another great day in the history of New York City." He continued, "The only commuter Tramway in the United States now accepts the MetroCard, the symbol of the greatest mass transit system in the United States, the Metropolitan Transit Authority. With one swipe of the MetroCard, all New Yorkers will now be guaranteed a seamless ride from the Tramway to the bus or subway. Finally, after more than a quarter century, Roosevelt Island's Tram will be part of the MTA system..."

"Although I've only been President of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation for six months, when I took this job, Governor Pataki charged me with bringing the most benefits possible to Roosevelt Island. Today's integration of the Tram into the MTA system is one of those benefits. It has been a long time com-

ing and I appreciate the diligence of individuals and groups who brought about the importance of this day to my attention, including the Roosevelt Island Residents Association under Matt Katz."

Berman introduced Miller, who also thanked Residents Association President Katz, who had accosted New York City Transit Authority President Larry Reuter about the MetroCard for the Tramway in February of 2002 at an MTA Riders' Forum. Katz did not speak at the press conference, but comments in his column in this issue.

Miller said, in the press conference, "Today, we connect Roosevelt Island with the rest of the City. Roosevelt Island is at the heart of the City, a small town in the biggest City in the world..." His remarks are condensed on this page, and available in full on Website NYC10044.

Meanwhile, That Elevator Problem



As the media waited for RIOC's MetroCard press conference to begin, RIOC workers helped a disabled passenger down Tram station steps. According to RIOC Engineer Vinnie Kopicki, the elevator, which has been out of service for months, will be running "this week."

Interview:
J. Christopher Daly
Of Sheldrake – Page 6

Meanwhile, That Bus Problem

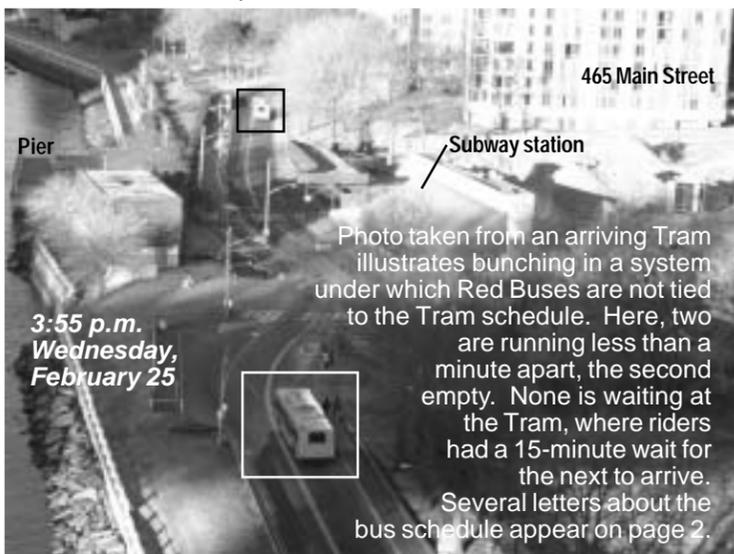


Photo taken from an arriving Tram illustrates bunching in a system under which Red Buses are not tied to the Tram schedule. Here, two are running less than a minute apart, the second empty. None is waiting at the Tram, where riders had a 15-minute wait for the next to arrive. Several letters about the bus schedule appear on page 2.



Tonight: The RIRA Sock Hop! Manhattan Park Theater Club, 8-12

Letters

To RIOC President Herb Berman:

We met at a meeting in July. I found you to be a sensible, no-nonsense guy. Therefore I will put what I have to say in such terms.

Once again, RIOC, in its infinite wisdom, is beating the will to remain on Roosevelt Island out of its residents. Stop messing around with things that you know nothing about. This Red Bus fiasco is adding insult to the injury caused by our "beloved" Governor and his RIOC appointees over the last many years. Under Pataki, Roosevelt Island has been "ruled" by clowns and buffoons who never gave a rat's ass about the people who live here. They've gone about their business quietly, not making waves (for Albany), collecting their six-figure paychecks. I don't think this is you. I think you actually care about us. I also think you are a smart and sensible man.

I have lived here for 25 years this June. I grew up in this neighborhood. I've seen it change. I've seen it neglected to a *shameful* point by our Governor and his RIOC cronies. The Red Bus's *regular* schedule is one of the last positive things we could count on around here, which is pretty damn sad in itself. It is clearly for the greater good of *all* Roosevelt Island residents that the Red Bus be on a regular, predictable schedule. It just makes sense, if you live here and use it, that is. How would you like it if I came to Mill Basin and started messing around with the bus routes and schedules there? I might have some seemingly good ideas, but I wouldn't know if they really worked for you *and your family* unless I lived there.

I challenge you. Live here for a month. Park in the dilapidated Motorgate, take the Red Bus (if you can catch it), take the subway (if you can handle walking the 12 flights up & down) and the Tram, buy your groceries here (wait for the mysterious Red Bus to randomly appear), invite your friends over at *night*, get a sense of what it might be like to depend on some of the services RIOC is in control of providing. *Then* make policy changes as an *informed and experienced* man.

Damon LaScot

To RIOC President Herb Berman:

I've just read Matthew Katz's column in *The Main Street WIRE*, where he states that you've received no complaints about the new bus route and schedule. I'd like to share my experiences. I make the school commute into the City each weekday morning with a 7-year-old. We've been late every morning since the changes took place. We've left our home earlier, but we continue to wait for the bus, and my daughter is still getting red marks on her attendance sheet. Unfortunately, walking isn't a viable option with a child or we'd do it. It's incredibly frustrating to see an empty bus trailing ours after having waited for so long, and this occurs most mornings.

I've never seen anyone get on at the Southtown stop, but lots of people are now getting off there and walking to the subway. I can't imagine that the Southtown grounds people are happy with that. It seems strange that the Southtown residents would board a bus to go the short distance to the Tram or the subway. I would imagine that if they were to take a bus, it would be to go north to Gristede's or some other Main Street destination. And if this is the case, it would be better to have the route reversed – subway, Tram, and then Southtown.

While I'm not an expert, it makes sense to me that the buses should run according to the Tram schedule. It's not a good thing to have the elderly and handicapped people wait outside at the Tram, with no seating, for up to ten minutes. While there is a warm waiting room, an approaching bus can't be seen from it and it takes these people extra time to make their way to the bus stop. The subway stop already is equipped with an easy access waiting area.

To date I haven't spoken to anyone who is pleased with the changes, and I've heard plenty of comments.

Amy Richmond

To the Editor:

About MetroCard for the Tram... Everything comes to one who waits... and waits... and waits... and waits... and waits...

Teri Sheridan

To RIOC President Herb Berman:

I am a 27-year resident of the Island. I know things change and often change is good. The change in the bus route is not good. I know you've heard all the reasons why. Please return it to the schedule we residents know and depend upon.

Mary Cavanaugh

To the Editor:

You only have to watch one Southtown resident walk home from the subway to know that the architects and landscape designers have made a bad mistake. There should be a paved path running from "Subway Street" (what used to be Main Street before they moved it) across the expanse of grass and up the stone wall behind the new buildings to their front entrances. If that were done, the bus could drop Southtown residents right there at the head of the path on "Subway Street," obviating – for the moment anyway – the need for a new bus route at all.

Bobbie Slonevsky

To RIOC President Herb Berman:

Thank you for bringing the MetroCard to the Tram. However, I would like to add my voice to that of my neighbors' objections concerning the lack of a Red Bus schedule. Some predict it may mean a loss of revenue. For example, Northtown residents fear walking at the Tram for a half-hour at night – there is no attendant or public safety person on duty – and walking in the rain or cold is the only alternative. I realize it was not on "your watch" that the Southtown developers were allowed to ignore the old-timers. They permit dogs; they built no path to the subway for their residents' back door; they provide in-house child care at the expense of our existing nursery school. Now we should accommodate them? Perhaps they could pay for additional buses.

Please note that hundreds of us elected Matthew Katz president of our Residents Association. When he makes suggestions to RIOC, he represents a majority of our concerned citizens. He is not speaking as just another individual.

I attended one of your open houses. Sad to say, it was so crowded that I had to leave before I could make a point that has bothered me for some time – parking on Main Street. In addition to school buses, official vehicles (Public Safety used to park behind their offices), and delivery trucks, cars with handicapped stickers are allowed to park 24/7. This may be understandable in other parts of the City, but we are a community that is totally handicapped-accessible. There is even a section of Motorgate devoted to the handicapped, and it remains empty. I know I risk sounding insensitive, but I cannot drop off groceries for ten minutes in front of my building because there are no spaces available.

Joan Pape

To RIRA President Matthew Katz:

I understand that you were part – if not *the* one – of the movement that requested addition of the Island to the MetroCard system.

My wife and I want to thank you for this initiative and its result.

We also appreciated your support when we had problems with the Tram and the Red Bus a few weeks ago.

Thanks to you and thanks to *The WIRE* for making this Island a better place to live.

Jerome Coullare

For this issue, *The WIRE* had inadequate advertising support to expand from 8 pages to 12. For this reason, certain news and feature coverage has been delayed. In addition, several letters received in time for this issue will be held for the March 20 issue, and several have been shortened; all appear in full, however, with this issue of *The WIRE* on *Website NYC10044*, at nyc10044.com/wire/2412/lett2412.html. *The WIRE* seeks to fill an advertising sales position focused on Queens and Manhattan, and on corporate institutional advertising. Call 212-826-9055.

To RIOC President Herb Berman:

As a new kid on the block (or Island), I didn't really want to get involved in the controversies. But this e-mail has been in the composition stage for a while, and if your response is dependent on hearing from those affected, I decided to finally get it down and off to you.

The Red Bus seems to go from the sublime to the ridiculous. Why would anyone who lives less than a block away wait even a minute for the bus? Unless there's a heavy load or a disability, or maybe in severely inclement weather, why would they pay a quarter or waste up to 10-15 minutes to go a minute or two? And why would they want to go around the loop to the subway when they can cut through and get there quickly with slightly less hassle? The fresh air and exercise would be welcome.

Why doesn't everyone admit a short-sightedness in the design and go ahead and build pathways to the Tram and subway? It's the only thing that makes sense and would certainly service those residents as well as everyone else so much better.

I'm usually happy walking, even though I have the farthest to go. But in January, I was working long hours, and getting to the Island sometime between 9 and 10:30 p.m. On what had to be the coldest night yet, I was exhausted and cold, and I decided to treat myself to a bus, even if it meant waiting a few minutes. I got to the top of the escalators, and there had to be 30 or 40 people waiting. Great, I thought, the bus should come soon. I waited and waited and waited, and finally a southbound bus dropped passengers, and a few minutes later the Tram was coming! My anticipation of the bus was dashed when it never came. After another 20 minutes or so, I decided to walk, leaving behind at least 50 people waiting. In the bitter cold, I trudged home, and the first bus I saw in either direction arrived at my stop just as I was getting to it. That was yet another ten minutes!

The next night, I happened to be riding the Tram at about the same time. Three passengers took the bus, routed the new way. Seventy-five cents! Hardly enough to pay the gas for the trip up Main Street. No one got off at SouthTown. All I could think of was all those 50 or so people waiting for the bus at the subway. Just to satisfy an inappropriate commitment.

One plus for me – I love having the buses more frequently. I find I use them more. But I do see them bunched up together – 3 and 4 in a row – a lot more frequently than before. However, you know the saying, "If it ain't broke don't fix it?" It didn't need to be fixed. I would recommend going back to the old route!

Thanks for hearing me out!

Name Withheld

To the Editor:

It was below freezing and nearly 1:00 a.m. when I arrived home alone Sunday night [February 21] after a three-and-a-half-hour drive with a car full of belongings to unload. There was plenty of space to park at that hour, but the meter machine for parking tickets was broken, as usual. There was no one from Public Safety in sight, so I parked in front of 531 and ran in to get a cart from the doorkeeper. I unloaded the car, pushed the cart into the building, picked up my mail to read on my way back from the garage, and went right back out to the car. I was not gone more than four minutes.

What should be awaiting me but two Public Safety Officers, one teaching the other how to write parking tickets for unsuspecting lone, cold, single-parent drivers with sleeping child upstairs unable to help them unload the car. I said I was a resident and was told it was too late. My indignation was met with indifference. The concept of sympathy or apologies for inconveniencing and even causing financial distress to a resident is inconceivable to "Public Safety." Even common courtesy is beyond them.

I actually pay a portion of my maintenance for my apartment, as we all do, to be abused by these imitations of police officers who in my 24 years of residence on Roosevelt Island have never added anything but annoyance and expense to my life, not safety. Some years ago, I remember a Mother's Day evening when I had bought a ticket, but had to put my small children to bed before parking the car. I came back downstairs 7 minutes after the ticket had expired to find that the car had actually been towed to Astoria, despite the presence of plenty of parking spaces on Main Street. That was without a doubt my very worst Mother's Day.

When will "Public Safety" learn that the reason for issuing parking tickets on Main Street is to ensure that residents can park and load/unload their cars. It is not to provide a game of "trap the residents" for "Public Safety Officers" who are bored late at night. When the meter machines are not working and there is plenty of space to park on a cold night, there is no justification for capriciously issuing tickets, even as an exercise to teach new officers how to harass the residents – I mean write tickets, of course, but it is actually harassment, especially since it is done so arbitrarily and unpredictably.

This time, at least it was not Mother's Day, and they did not tow the car.

Mary Eliza Kimball

Letters deadline for Mar. 20 issue: Mar. 18

After deadline, letters are considered on a space-available basis.

The **Public Safety Blotter** for February 16-29 is now available on *Website NYC10044* at nyc10044.com/wire/2412/blot2412.html.

The WIRE

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e-mail editor@MainStreetWIRE.com
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Managing Editor – Dick Lutz
Reporters – Mary Camper-Titsingh,
Linda Humphrey, Anusha Shrivastava
Albany Correspondent – Erik Kriss
Chief Proofreader – Kay Thompson
Proofreaders – Linda Heimer, Frances Salten
Photographer – Vicki Feinmel
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COMING UP

– This Weekend –

RIRA Sock Hop, tonight (Sat., Mar. 6), 8:00 p.m., Manhattan Park Theater Club. Tickets in advance, \$10; at the door, \$15.

Photographic Exhibition, *Questions for a Fetus*, by J. Wayne Olson, on display at the Library.

– The Coming Week –

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, Mon., Mar. 8, 8:00 p.m. Visitors welcome. Information: 212-751-9577 / 212-935-1254.

Free Tax Clinic for seniors and low-income taxpayers, **Tue., Mar. 9** and every Tuesday through Apr. 13, 10:00-1:30, offered by Eviction Intervention Services, at EIS offices, 150 East 62nd St. (between Lexington and Third) in Lexington United Methodist Church. No appointment required. Additional information: 212-308-2210, ext. 207, or eisny@aol.com.

Forum on Women and Housing Discrimination, presented by Community Board 8 Housing Committee, **Thur., Mar. 11, 7:00 p.m.,** Einhorn Auditorium, Lenox Hill Hospital, 131 East 76th Street; with State Senator Liz Krueger and representatives from the City Commission on Human Rights, the American Civil Liberties Union, and Lenox Hill Neighborhood House.

River Music presents Irish Night, Fri., Mar. 12, 8:00 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Traditional music, traditional instruments, and traditional dance performances.

– Future Events –

Roosevelt Island Bridge all-agency meeting on rehabilitation, Department of Transportation Division of Bridges, **Wed., Mar. 17, 10:00 a.m.,** 2 Rector Street.

Book Discussion – *The Queen of Harlem* by B.K. Jackson, **Thur., Mar. 18, 6:30 p.m.,** Library. Free. Books available at the Library.

The Main Street WIRE – next issue **Sat., Mar. 20.** (To receive e-mail bulletins in the meantime, send an “Add Me” message to Bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com.) **Deadlines:** Advertising in the paper, Fri., Mar. 12; decision on fliers for *The Bag*, Mon., Mar. 15; fliers due Thur., Mar. 18. **Future issues:** Apr. 3, 17; May 1, 15, 29; June 12; July 3 (Fourth of July issue), 31; Aug. 28; Sept. 11, 25; Oct. 16, 30 (pre-election issue); Nov. 6 (post-election issue), 20 (Thanksgiving issue); Dec. 4, 18 (two December holiday issues), then twice a month starting in January, 2005. (Schedule subject to adjustment.) **Phone/fax** for news, 212-826-9055/755-2540; urgent matters 917-617-0449. **phone/fax** for display and classified advertising placement and information, 212-751-8214/755-2540. **To list your organization’s Island event in this column,** e-mail information to ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com, or leave it, addressed to *The WIRE*, at the desk at 531 Main Street; provide a telephone number for follow-up questions; there is no charge.

Town Hall Meeting on Medicare, prescription drug costs, Social Security, and other interests of concern to seniors, **Mon., Mar. 22, 11:00 a.m.,** Lenox Hill Senior Center, 343 East 70th St., between 1st and 2nd Avenues; sponsored by Rep. Carolyn Maloney.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, Mon., Mar. 22, 8:00 p.m. Visitors welcome. Information: 212-751-9577 / 212-935-1254.

Gallery RIVAA Opening Reception for *Vernissage III*, third anniversary exhibit, **Sat., Mar. 27, 6-9 p.m.**

Residents Association Common Council meeting, Wed., Apr. 7, 8:00 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Public access near beginning of session.

Senior Center

Monday

10-11, **Latchhook Class**
10-11:30, **English as 2nd Lang.**
10:30, **Blood Pressure Screen**
12:30, **“Oldies” Movies**
1:00, **Tai Chi**
7:00, **Dance Class**
(Beginners)

Tuesday

9-1, **Tax Help for Seniors**
10:00, **Computers**
10-11, **Dance & Relax**
1:00, **Bingo**
6:00, **Yoga Class**
7:30, **Games (RISA)**

Wednesday

9:15, **Stay Well**
10:00, **Spanish Class**
10:30, **Shoppers’ Bus**

12:30, Sculpting

7:00, **Pokeno (RISA)**

Thursday

10:00, **Tai Chi**
10:30, **Creative Arts**
12:30, **Movie**
7:00, **Dance**

Friday

6:00, **Dance & Relax**
9:30, **Yoga Stretch (RISA)**
7:00, **Games (RISA)**

Saturday

7:30, **Bingo (RISA)**

Special Events

Tue., Mar. 9, 7:00, RISA General Meeting
Wed., Mar. 17, Atlantic City trip
Sat., Mar. 20, 6:00, St. Patrick’s Day Celebration
Fri., Mar. 26, 12:30, Birthday Party

Home-delivered meals available:
212-744-5022, ext. 1203

Letters Policy

The WIRE welcomes letters to the editor, to the community, and to/from officials. Publication on a *Name Withheld* basis will be considered, but the writer’s name, address, and phone number must be provided for verification and for our records; *anonymous letters are not considered for publication.* Preferred methods of submission: E-mail to Letters@MainStreetWIRE.com (E-mail format preferred, or use any wordprocessing software) to put a file on a PC-standard 3.5” floppy disk left at 531 Main Street addressed to *The WIRE.* Alternatives: Typed copy left at 531 Main Street or faxed to 212-755-2540 (call ahead to 212-826-9055). Clearly-handwritten letters will be considered if brief, but we are not able to take telephone dictation of letters. All letters are subject to acceptance, and to editing for length and clarity. Recommended maximum length, 200 words; longer letters will be considered if their content merits the required space.

Monday was a very good day. The sun shone, the air was dry and in the 60s, and the MetroCard system came to the Roosevelt Island Tram.

In my February 23, 2002 WIRE column, I mentioned our unsuccessful 1999 efforts to convince E. Virgil Conway, then MTA Chair, that incorporating the Tram into the MetroCard system was already five years overdue. I then described my visit that week to the Transit Riders Council, 2002 President’s Forum where I received NYCTA (New York City Transit Authority) President Larry Reuter’s enthusiastic endorsement of the project. That very evening, I brought a report of Mr. Reuter’s support to the RIOC Board of Directors, where “Board member Leo Kayser suggested that yours truly set up a meeting to include myself and the presidents of RIOC and NYCTA.”

Well, in fact, there were many meetings, between Presidents Ryan and Reuter and between working groups from both camps. Slowly, the thrust of the meetings changed from, “can we do this difficult thing?” to “how can we do this difficult thing?” The sticking points between these two public-benefit corporations were essentially twofold: who would pay for the installation, and who would get the benefit of each fare through a revenue-sharing scenario. My role was to convene, to offer comment from the residents’ perspective, and to worry and obsess.

And then, the meetings stopped. As I reported in these pages, the question had been kicked to a higher level. And the result, these many months later, is the retirement of

the New York City transit token and the inclusion of the Roosevelt Island Tram into the Big Apple commuter-transit net and the twenty-first century.

First, I want to thank Lawrence Reuter and Leo Kayser for kick-starting the process. Kudos to the RIOC presidents, culminating with Herb Berman, on whose watches the work was done, for moving the process forward. I want to thank Pat Siconolfi and Tom Savage for crunching the numbers. I want to thank Dan Quart and the Community Board 8 Transportation Committee for supporting our efforts with a unanimously passed resolution. I want to thank all the elected officials and others who quietly worked behind the scenes to make New York City, New York State, and two public-benefit corporations all move in the same direction at the same time. And finally, I want to thank City Council Speaker Gifford Miller, who produced the solutions and scarce dollars that sweetened the pot and put over the deal.

Two years and fourteen days ago (but who’s counting?) I suggested to Larry Reuter that this was “an idea whose time had come.” In my heart of hearts I truly thought that getting the MetroCard was a low-probability project, worth pursuing but unlikely of success. At Monday’s press conference at the Manhattan-side Tram station, Mr. Reuter, clearly an optimist at heart, got to tell me “I told you so.” I don’t remember ever being so grateful to be wrong. Monday was a very good day.

The RIRA Column



Matthew Katz, President
Roosevelt Island Residents Assn.
e-mail: matthewkatz@rcn.com

I am thrilled to report that the Tram now accepts MetroCard, which has been long awaited by residents and visitors. I urge everyone to take advantage of this wonderful addition to the Tram experience. I congratulate everyone who worked so hard for this, including Governor Pataki’s office, the MTA, the Mayor’s office, City Council Speaker Gifford Miller, the TA, RIOC, and RIRA under Matt Katz.

The RIOC Column

When the plans are completed and accepted, it should become a place where people can enjoy the unparalleled views and any amenities that may be added. Several members of the community have already been contacted by the Trust for Public Lands, and more will be contacted in the future.

Within the past two weeks this office met with members of the NYPD, FDNY, and the Governor’s and Mayor’s offices of emergency management as part of our continuing efforts to update safety procedures after the Blackout. Among the items discussed were the emergency call boxes on the Island, the possibility of an evacuation plan should it become necessary, and future meetings that may be held with the community. I look forward to further meetings with emergency services personnel and will keep you updated on any future developments.

This has been a good few weeks for dealing with outstanding issues such as the MetroCard and emer-

gency planning. We have also taken steps to maintain two Island landmarks, the Renwick ruin and Blackwell House. We have received a preliminary photogrammetry report on Renwick, and the photos are absolutely fascinating. They will play a large role in any future stabilization of that structure. We also expect to receive a condition survey on Blackwell House within the next few weeks. It is anticipated that the recommendations will include roof work and drainage work before full restoration can begin.

As the weather warms up, I am also aware that not only do our historic buildings need to be reconditioned, but so do our fields. Please be assured that we are working to improve their condition and provide the best possible playing areas. Look for some improvements coming soon, and long-range improvements over the course of the coming months.

We will also be improving the bus schedule within the next few weeks. We have received many suggestions, and hope to have a solution that is best for everyone soon. I appreciate the fact that so many of you have been so supportive of the change and are so willing to give it a chance. It has been great to get all of your suggestions.



Herbert E. Berman, President
Roosevelt Island Operating Corp.
e-mail: hberman@rioc.com

Basketball The results after the fifth week of the season had Orange, coached by Jim Armenakis, remaining undefeated (5-0) by pulling out a victory against Tony Simmons’s Green team (1-4).

The final score was 67 to 54. But the game was much closer, with no more than an eight-point difference at any time. Indeed, going into the closing minutes, there was a one-point margin between the teams. The game was highlighted with more defensive play than scoring, and the game ultimately was decided on the foul line. Green, which played very physical under the boards, committed 26 fouls, while Orange had 14. Orange was able to hit 23 foul shots while Green had only 8 points on the foul line. At

the same time, Orange hit four 3-pointers (Chris Chatman, 2, Remy Armenakis, 1, and Sika Franco, 1) in the stretch. Chris Chatman again led all scorers with 25 points, Sika Franco hit 8 foul shots and scored 16 points. Quincy Leon (15) was strong under the boards, Fabian Williams (6) led the attack, and Remy Armenakis (5). Dax Armenakis did not score but contributed two rebounds and four steals in the final minutes. Green was led by Tony Simmons (14) and John McNeil (12). Other scoring: Mirza Avdovic (6), Fode Bah (4), Steve Morgan, who dominated the boards (4), Darren Ray (6), Andrew Rousseau (3), Isaiah Lee (3), Anthony Pompeii (2).

The results of the earlier game between Blue (coached by Steve Marcus, Arnold Swaby, and Kevin Brown) and Red (Harold Burrows) were Blue 94 to Red 75. The big Red machine with a two-out-of-three record, which had routinely produced 100-point games, was finally held in check. The go-to guys, Lamar Burrows and José Marte, were held to 5 and 11 points. The slack was picked up by Shirome Dixon (22), who always comes to play, Melvin Gager (13), Matthew Brodsky (2), and Dan Moraru (2).

The Blue team was led by Paul Brown (26), Deshawn Pearson (21), Anthony Santiago (19), Tyrell Anderson (16), Felix Ceballos (4), and Hussani White (2). Once again, the game was decided on the foul line. Blue hit 15 in the second half while Red managed only one.

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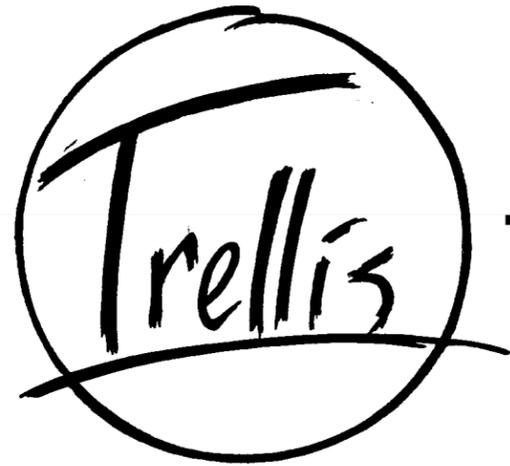
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Westview/Island House Buyer Promises to Work with Tenants

Editor's note: The Sheldrake Corporation has emerged as a likely investor in Island House and Westview. *The WIRE* interviewed its principal, J. Christopher Daly Tuesday, February 24. For space reasons, a shortened version appears here; the full transcript of the interview is available on *Website NYC10044* at nyc10044.com/wire/2412/daly.html.

The WIRE: Do you feel like you're in trouble on political contributions [reported in the February 21 *WIRE*] or is that a routine matter?

Daly: I think it's very routine. When we became aware of it in December, we immediately sent notices to the people that we had given contributions to, and requested refunds. So as far as we're concerned we're in full compliance with the law.

WIRE: There's a strong feeling that political contributions are the lubricant that grease the skids for development.

Daly: I think what greases the skids for us is our record. We have a 15-year track record of doing good things all throughout the State, and the State asking other municipalities and other owners to deal with us, because they like our record. We're constantly rated in the highest category for DHCR, which we do our majority of work with. Our work speaks for itself.



WIRE: Do you have a deal?

Daly: We have an understanding with Mr. [Charles] Lucido [current Managing Partner]. We've put money down as a deposit, and we're still doing what's known as due diligence. We have to know what we're buying if we go ahead with the deal. It's going to be a few more weeks, maybe a month or so, until we figure out where we're going to be.

WIRE: But your feeling is that this is going to work out.

Daly: I think so. There are still major issues that I can't go into right now, but we'd like to be on the Island.

WIRE: Have you talked with Charles Lucido about commitments he's made to residents with regard to resident ownership?

Daly: Well, I'm not aware... We have never been told by Mr. Lucido of any promises he made to the tenants, nor do we know of any.

WIRE: Do any of your properties involve the ultimate possibility or the current possibility of resident ownership?

Daly: In some of the privatizations we've done, yes, we've given the tenants the right to come in at some point in time and buy us out, and it's in the contracts. We would like to have a meeting with the tenants when we're finalized and we know what we can say, and what we're going to offer.

WIRE: Within the Roosevelt Island situation the conventional wisdom has been that, without an extension of the ground lease, you can't really make a viable deal because you don't know what your costs are going to be. Where do you stand on that?

Daly: We don't know.

WIRE: Is that an impediment to the deal?

Daly: I wouldn't say it's an impediment, but it's something that we need to know about before we go forward. The ground lease is important to us, obviously, because we need to know where we stand. The ground lease expires in 2028, so it just leaves a question as to how we go forward. I wouldn't say that it's a deal-breaker, per se, but it's a big question mark.

WIRE: What about the tax question for 2007?

Daly: The taxes increasing? Another big issue for us that we have to come to grips with. It's an enormous hit on the tenants.

WIRE: What happens to rent levels in buildings when you take them over? Do they go up? Do they stay the same?

Daly: It depends. In the privatization deals we've done, the rent has remained the same, other than a yearly CPI (consumer price index) increase. We've gotten government subsidies to give us the gap that we need to put the money into the deal. So if someone was paying \$250 a month, we would increase their rent by the CPI, every year. I'm not going to say we're going to do the same here, but in the past we've gone to government and we've gotten some kind of Section 8 or some other kind of assistance that would bridge the gap to a more market-rate subsidized rent. [But] I have not said we're going to privatize. We don't know what we're going to do yet, because we're still going through that whole process. It may be the best thing is to stay in Mitchell-Lama. We don't know yet. Privatization in these other deals was a little different. We were physically buying the buildings from a government.

WIRE: Is this an outright purchase?

Daly: No, we think Mr. Lucido has a world of knowledge. He's been around a long time. I think he's respected by the people in the community, and we'd like to see him continue with us to some extent going forward, and certainly that's his wish, and that certainly is our wish.

WIRE: Any interest in Eastwood?

Daly: We really don't know that much about Eastwood. We haven't really been exposed to it. We just don't know that much about it.

WIRE: So you haven't explored that at all.

Daly: No. Neither has it been broached to us.

WIRE: I'd like to go back to the whole question of resident ownership. For many years now – more than ten that I know of – there has been an Island House Ownership Committee, and I know there is similar interest in Westview, in the residents ultimately becoming the owners, through a cooperative arrangement or a condo arrangement, of their apartments, or of the building as a whole, and I know that among our readers in those buildings, that is going to be the question that they're going to be interested in, from this interview. So let me ask you to discourse on that a bit if you would, starting perhaps with the question of just what the possibilities might be for resident ownership through a cooperative or a condo, in terms of the way Sheldrake does business in this market.

Daly: Well, I think the entire question is somewhat premature right now, because we need to have the deal in place. I think once we go through the rest of the due diligence and we see how this deal works, going forward, then I think we determine, do we keep it a Mitchell-Lama, do we keep it as a rental, do we do condo or cooperative ownership, and that's some kind of process that we're just getting into now, and we don't know fully. But we will have meetings with the residents and we do want to talk to them about these issues, and if there's a strong groundswell for ownership, I think that's something that we'd like to discuss with them. We've not ruled anything out.

If we do go forward, the residents will be kept informed of what we're going to do, and we'll ask them for their input, as we've done everywhere else. We will not do this without their knowledge. I will certainly make a commitment right now, on the record, that I will keep them informed as we go along. There is no corporate philosophy here of keeping people in the dark.

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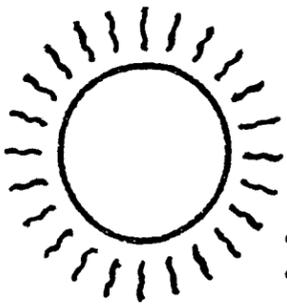
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