

Next issue
in 2 weeks –
Sat., May 6

The Main Street **WIRE**™

26th Year as Roosevelt Island's Independent Community Newspaper

Passengers Stranded in Tramway Failure



Late Tuesday, as midnight approached, the welded-steel rescue cage approached Tram cabin #1 to begin first evacuations. Below, 20 minutes earlier, rescuers on their way.



Hearings Planned

After an Emergency Spanning Eleven Hours, Questions About Readiness

by Dick Lutz

The Tramway captured international attention Tuesday night when an apparent electrical glitch froze both cabins in place within spitting distance of the middle tower, then a backup power system also failed after working only long enough to move the Island-bound cabin over the East River.

By the time it was all over, more than eleven hours had passed.

The incident began between 5:15 and 5:22 p.m., with 46 passengers and an operator in the Island-bound cabin, and 21 plus an operator in the one bound for Manhattan. Something electrical – possibly a power surge like the one that stopped the system in September, 2005 – blew out three 800-amp fuses in the system, disabling the powerful engine that normally reels in the haul cable, pulling the cabins.

Within minutes, the usual contingent of a half-dozen FDNY fire-emergency vehicles were speeding south on Main Street, sirens screaming – the advance guard

of firefighters who regularly train in the basket-rescue procedure set up as a last-resort method of evacuating stranded Tram cabins.

Sometime between 6:35 and 7:35, back-up power was engaged and began moving the Tram cabins, at a snail's pace, toward their destinations.

It was apparently at this point that the FDNY units and the rescue-trained personnel left, believing their help would not be required. This decision – *The WIRE* has not learned who was ultimately responsible for it – apparently was a factor that later led to a long delay before basket-rescue was mounted.

Then, another glitch: The back-up method of moving the cabins – the diesel emergency engine – failed after moving the cabins only about 70 to 90 feet. Now, cabin #1 was positioned over the East River and cabin #2 over First Avenue.

A first-choice approach, at this point, would normally be to focus energy on restoring the back-up
See **Tram**, page 6

First-Person Account

As Hours Pass, Some Residents Reach “A Controlled State of Panic and Anger”

by Gloria Herman

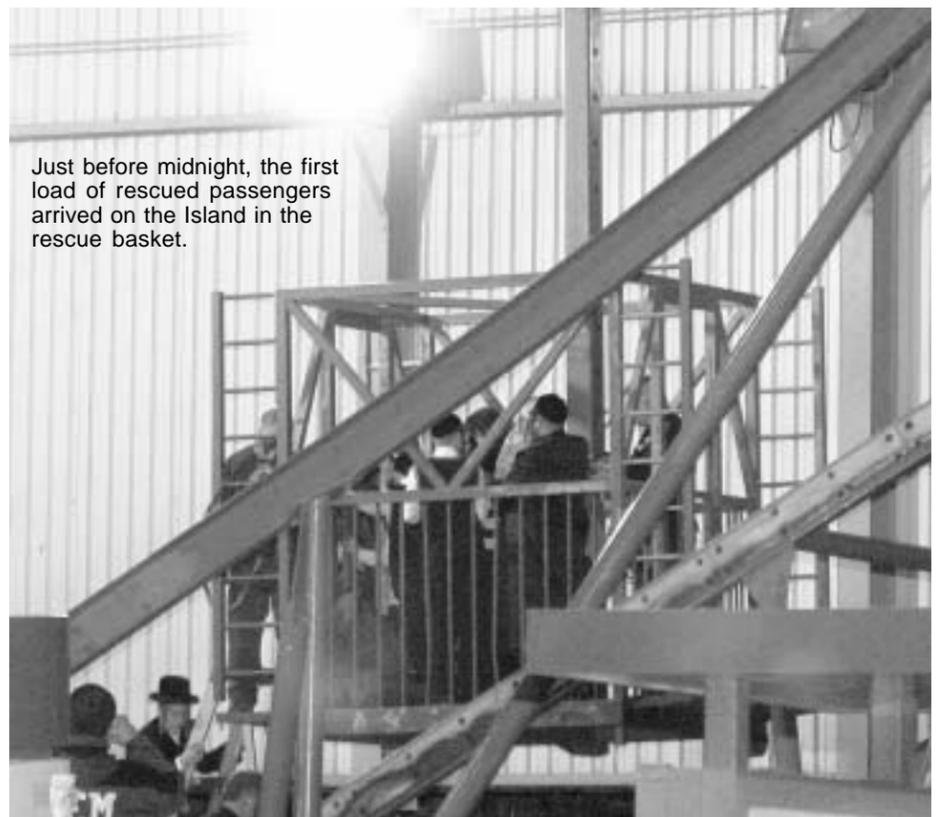
Tuesday was a beautiful day for a New York City outing, so friend and neighbor Christine Carter and I decided to visit the Dahesh Museum of Art at 56th and Madison, and then have a bite and coffee at Juan Valdez on 57th Street. We strolled around the five-block radius of the tram until it was time to head on home. The day was warm and bright so, though we were on Lexington near the F train we decided to take the Tram and continue to enjoy the sunshine.

When we arrived at the Tram Station, it was after 5:00. The Tram had just arrived from Roosevelt Island. It was on its normal rush-hour schedule, so we knew it was “perfect timing.” We boarded and shortly thereafter the doors closed. The operator didn't receive the “all clear” command so he was nice enough to reopen the doors and let latecomers onto the Tram. We received the OK and lifted off towards home.

About a third of the way along, the Tram seemed to hesitate and then abruptly stopped. I wasn't overly concerned because this has happened during the 29

years I've lived on the Island and taken the Tram. I assumed it would start to move in ten minutes or so. However, when the minutes lengthened into an hour, then another hour, then another hour, without substantive communication between the ground and us, we began to get into a controlled state of panic and anger. We were informed that the diesel generator was being put into place and that it would power us to the station and we should be moving in about 20 minutes. The main thing was to remain calm. Lo and behold, the Tram finally started moving. But in a minute or so all our hopes were dashed and the cabin simply stopped in place.

Many of us kept ourselves occupied by reading whatever we happened to have in our possession, watching the water traffic, chatting with each other – anything to keep questions at bay and imaginations quiet. You see, we couldn't picture being plucked from our dangling hang-out 200 feet above the East River. As soon as we tried to solve or make sense out
See **First-Person**, page 7



Just before midnight, the first load of rescued passengers arrived on the Island in the rescue basket.

Main Street WIRE photo coverage by Phyllis Thomas, Kurt Wittman, and Website NYC10044

The Editorial Page

Still No Plan. Why Is That?

What do we want Roosevelt Island to be? Do we know?

Have we asked ourselves enough questions to begin to know?

For that matter, does RIOC have a plan for Roosevelt Island? A design? A vision?

Under RIOC President Robert H. Ryan, the mantra was, "Make Roosevelt Island a *destination*" – a place other New Yorkers and tourists will want to visit. But years after Ryan put that idea out there, Roosevelt Island still doesn't have even the most rudimentary accoutrement of a *destination*, which would be signs at the Tram station to tell visitors there's a *here* here.

Many of the things that would make Roosevelt Island a distinct *destination* would contribute to making it a better community in which to live. Two ideas, by way of example:

- A weekend-long Arts & Crafts Fair, Spring and Fall, spread out along the west promenade – free, at first, to attract the exhibitors, and perhaps even with awards. Ultimately, it might produce income for the Island by charging for booth space.

- A weekend-long portable Summer every-kind-of-music festival (perhaps with dance), spread out to every possible performance space on the Island – from Lighthouse Park to Southpoint Park and including Good Shepherd Plaza, Capobianco Field, the Eastwood amphitheatre – and perhaps a drum and bugle corps competition on Firefighter's Field (near the Tram station). Some events free, some with a charge.

But we have to ask ourselves, and think seriously about the answers: *Do we want these things in our community? Do we want to encourage tourism and accept the inconveniences that accompany periodic influxes of tourists?* Trellis would be jammed, of course, and traffic-control might be difficult. Hit the wrong weekend, and there might not be subway service, so the Tram would be jammed. On the other hand, coordination with the MTA should be possible, and traffic can be controlled and diverted to free-for-the-day Motorgate parking. Food can be served outdoors to expand capacity, and portajohns can handle that basic need for visiting crowds.

In short, we could make it work. *But is it what we want?*

If it is, it should influence other thinking. For example:

The New York Times reported two Wednesdays back that Nantucket – another Island in another place – has voted in an ordinance banning most franchises and chain stores from its downtown area. The reasoning, explained by the bookstore owner who proposed the ban: "If, when you get here, you find the same thing [you have] at home, it reduces the experience."

Makes sense, doesn't it? It makes sense that nobody's going to come to Roosevelt Island to buy Dunkin' Donuts, but they might come for a specialized antique shop or a rare-book event, or for a writers' conference. *Destination* means there must be something attracting people here – something to *discover* and enjoy – not the same routine stuff that visitors can find back home or in Manhattan.

And some would argue that the things that would make the Island a unique destination would also make it a better place to live... while others would prefer the quiet of a community rarely disrupted by visitors from the outside world. Call this the *Brigadoon* approach, or the *Fourth-of-July-is-enough-already* crowd.

Or perhaps a quiet and peaceful community can co-exist with location-specific tourist activity – localized, for example, to Southpoint Park, as has been the case on the Fourth of July.

Speaking of the Fourth, there's a question of whether an effort should be made to leverage the crowds who come here for the fireworks. In 2000 on Independence Day, *The WIRE* sponsored a big-band concert in Good Shepherd Plaza, the theory being that such events might help visitors make a day of it. There was a financial loss, but the real killer for any similar events was the difficulty working through the RIOC bureaucracy; simply parking musicians' cars became an issue, for example. Others, trying to capitalize on Roosevelt Island's potential as a performance venue, have experienced the same *can't-do* attitude and tangles of red tape.

But the purpose of these musings is not to bash RIOC yet again for the way its staff can make things difficult for residents who want to bring something special to the Island. The purpose, instead, is to ask the questions at the top:

What do we want Roosevelt Island to be? Do we know?

Have we asked ourselves enough questions to begin to know?

For that matter, does RIOC have a plan for Roosevelt Island? A design? A vision?

When Roosevelt Island was first conceived, the finest architects and community planners were brought in. Red tape was cut, and the concept for a community laid down, followed by a series of focused approaches to creating that community. It wasn't perfect, but it was a plan, and much of it made Roosevelt Island the marvelously mixed home that it is today: Mixed incomes, mixed physical abilities, mixed races and nationalities.

But...

But under the long reign of George Pataki, Roosevelt Island has had three RIOC presidents – four if you count the period under Acting President Pat Siconolfi – and none has taken the steps necessary to reconceive Roosevelt Island in the image of Century 21 – well, unless you mean the *real-estate* Century 21. That not what is meant here.

What is meant here is that sure, the ideas of the 1960's, especially the ones that didn't pan out, need some 21st Century revision.

But we've now had ten years of drift. That's a full decade in which the *plan* for Roosevelt Island has been abandoned and not replaced with something better, and a decade in which the Island has served as a grab-bag gimme gift box for Pataki contributors and hangers-on.

Putting it simply and bluntly, we've been used. *Used. Used badly.*

Change has come like a soft whirlwind: Apartments selling for over a million dollars, costly rental apartments, privatizations accomplished and in process. Chain stores and franchises signing up for space in Riverwalk and the Main Street retail strip. RFIPs and RFPs issued with little notice of intent and, alas, no apparent plan derived with the participation and consent of citizens.

All of it is happening, in short, without an overarching plan for the Island as a whole.

In November and January, there will be another whirlwind – this one, political change in Albany.

Our misfortune is that we are little noticed in the grand scheme of things called New York State, so if we residents want something better than another ten years of hodgepodge happenstance, we're going to have to speak loudly for it. We should, in fact, speak loudly for (yes, here it is again) an elected RIOC Board of Directors empowered to hire (and fire, if and when necessary) an experienced community manager who can look at our situation with clear apolitical eyes, ask the right questions, engage the community, and get Roosevelt Island out of the deck of political trading cards that get tossed around in Albany.

November will be an opportunity. Let's not miss it.

Letters

To the Editor:

I certainly hope there is going to be some effort to fix and keep our Tram running.

Rhonda Jennings

To the Editor:

This incident makes me wonder whether eliminating the console operator position was a great idea.

However, I did learn many things. Six months after the last time the Tram was stuck and almost five years after 9/11, both the City and the State have worked hard to formulate plans to handle any emergency quickly. I know that no matter what happens in the City, Mayor Bloomberg and his portable podium will get on TV. Herb Berman showed why Governor Pataki chose him to lead RIOC. *Bermie, you're doin' a heck of a job.*

R. Meltzer

To the Editor:

With all the serious problems in the Middle East, I was amazed to wake up in Jerusalem to the news on Israeli radio of over 60 tram passengers trapped for hours on end when all the generators failed. This was confirmed later by CNN International. So RIOC's mismanagement of our affairs is now an international disgrace!

We have been repeatedly assured by RIOC authorities, particularly after the last outage when only one person in the whole organization knew how to handle power problems, that passengers could never face such problems again, thanks to backup generators and manual cranking procedures.

More lies, more negligence, more incompetence. The welfare of residents continually takes a back seat to these Junior Achievers and their lovely plans to pave over the whole Island as a last-minute payoff to Pataki's cronies.

Let this be the last straw. Let's all get together and stop these bozos until an administration that cares gets control of Albany and Roosevelt Island.

Steve Marcus, President
Roosevelt Island Residents Association

Additional letters on the Tram situation appear on page 10

To the Editor:

While RIOC seems to be run by immature dreamers, not so the big-box companies, the "destination retailers" as Paul Mas of Jones, Lang LaSalle refers to them. Rather than shouting against a big box like Ikea, Wal-Mart, Target, K-Mart coming here, examine the situation from one of the big box's perspectives. Each of them has legions of marketing and logistic personnel who do nothing but scout out profitable locations for new stores. Why on earth any of these companies would even give a passing thought to putting a store here on tiny, isolated, congested Roosevelt Island is a foolish fantasy.

These companies require huge tracts of land for their stores and parking lots. Any of these "destination retailers" would require the entire southern part of the Island from Goldwater Hospital to the tip to be leveled and black topped. Also, some kind of improved transportation to handle the car traffic would have to be created, perhaps a road along the East River, similar to the one now in Manhattan (constructed for millions of dollars) that reroutes traffic on the East Side Highway.

No, no big box company would be so dim-witted as to build a store here. (Staten Island, which has lots more land than Roosevelt Island, has had its first Target open in March.) Why the possibility of a big box is even presented by the real-estate firm to RIOC reflects badly on its motives. If Jones, Lang LaSalle has any professional acumen, it must know that there is no likelihood of a big retailer coming here, or is it just playing a pompous, gullible RIOC management and board for what it can get for itself?

Ronald Gift Mullins

To the Editor:

Has anyone heard any further information regarding the reported shooting that occurred on Thursday, April 13, at sometime after 10 p.m. in the Southtown section of Roosevelt Island, along the road that leads to the train station (behind 455, 465, and 475 Main Street)? I spoke with Public Safety on the morning of April 14th. One of the officers with whom I spoke on the telephone told me that someone was, in fact, shot and that they were taken to the hospital and that no perpetrators were apprehended.

This stretch of roadway where the shooting occurred has notoriously had lighting problems after dark. Currently, many of the streetlights that serve this area are not working properly.

Last year, after a young female medical trainee was assaulted after dark in the same Southtown section, increased lighting and visible police presence were promised, but only temporarily delivered.

I realize that the Tram issue is on everyone's minds at present, however, with the increased subway traffic expected, isn't it time that we all take a stand for our safety after dark by having the lighting and police patrols (police with guns, as the perpetrators had guns) that we deserve? After all, if Public Safety can't handle the type of crime that we are experiencing, perhaps it's time to put full-time NYPD in place, especially one that sits outside the train station in the booth that was designed for that purpose.

Jason Leggio

Letters Policy

The WIRE welcomes letters to the editor, to the community, and to/from officials. *Name Withheld* publication will be considered, but the writer's name, address, and phone number must be provided for verification and for our records; *letters submitted anonymously will not be published.*

Preferred method of submission: E-mail to Letters@MainStreetWIRE.com (plaintext e-mail format preferred, or attach a file), or on a PC-standard 3.5" disk left at the desk at 531 Main Street, addressed to *The WIRE*. **Alternatives:** Typed copy left at 531 Main Street, but allow extra time before deadline for typesetting. 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, 300 words; longer letters will be considered if their content merits the required space.

**Letters deadline for May 6 issue:
Tuesday, May 2**

Letters received after deadline
considered on a space-available basis.

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COMING UP

— This Weekend —

Gallery RIVAA Reception to mark the gallery's fifth anniversary, **today (Sat., Apr. 22)**, 3:00-6:00 p.m., 527 Main Street. Wine, cheese, and entertainment. Public invited.

— The Coming Week —

CB8 Speaks TV show, **Tue., Apr. 25**, 7:00 p.m., TimeWarner Cable channel 34. Topic/guests to be announced.

Community Board 8 Housing Committee Forum on household emergency preparedness, **Wed., Apr. 26**, 6:30-9:00 p.m., Hunter College School of Social Work, 129 East 79th Street (Park/Lex), auditorium. Information: **212-758-4340**.

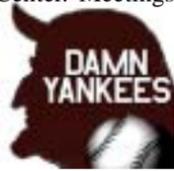
Parkinson's Unity Walk with a team of Roosevelt Island participants, **Sat., Apr. 29**, noon, gathering at the 72nd Street bandshell in Central Park. Information: www.unitywalk.org. To join a group of Islanders on the walk, call **212-355-2097**.

Exhibit Opening: Island Schools of Art, **Sat., Apr. 29**, 4:00 p.m., Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main Street, featuring artwork from the students of PS/IS 217, The Child School/Legacy High School, and the Roosevelt Island Day Nursery.

— Future Events —

Common Council of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association meets, **Wed., May 3**, 8:00 p.m., Good Shepherd Community Center. Meetings begin with an opportunity for members of the public to address the Council.

Damn Yankees, presented by the Main Street Children's Theatre, **Fri., May 5** through **Mon., May 8**, (Fri., 7:30; Sat., 2:00, 7:30; Sun., 2:00, 7:00; Mon., 7:00). Reservations, **212-371-4449**. (See ad, page 4, for cast listings.)



The Main Street WIRE – Next issue, **Sat., May 6**. (To receive e-mail bulletins between issues, send an *AddMe* message to Bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com.) **Advertising Deadline:** Ads in the paper, Thursday, Apr. 27; decision on circulars/inserts for *The Bag*, Mon., May 1; they are due Thur., May 4. **Future issues:** May 20, June 3 and 17, July 1, July 29, Aug. 26, Sept. 9 and 23, Oct. 7 and 21, Nov. 4 and 18, Dec. 2 and 16. **News phone, 212-826-9055**; urgent matters **917-617-0449**. **Phone** for display and classified advertising placement and information, **212-751-8214**. **To list your organization's Island-related event in this column**, e-mail information to ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com, or leave it, addressed to *The WIRE*, at the lobby desk at 531 Main Street; provide a telephone number for follow-up questions. There is no charge for such listings.

No weekend F-train service from Manhattan to Roosevelt Island from 12:01 a.m. Saturday, May 6, through 5:00 a.m. Monday, May 8. Service to Manhattan to run normally.

Senior Center

<p>Monday</p> <p>9:30, Yoga</p> <p>10:30-11:30, English as 2nd Language</p> <p>10:30, Blood Pressure Screening</p> <p>12:30, "Oldies" Movies</p> <p>1:00, Computers</p> <p>1:00, Tai Chi</p> <p>Tuesday</p> <p>9:30-1:00, Free Tax Help (last day: Tue., Apr. 11)</p> <p>10:00, Get Stronger Bones</p> <p>10:30, Shoppers' Bus</p> <p>2:00, Bingo</p> <p>2:00, Painting & Sculpting</p> <p>6:00, Ballroom Dancing</p> <p>7:30, Games (RISA)</p> <p>Wednesday</p> <p>9:15, Stay Well</p> <p>10:30, Computers</p>	<p>10:30, Shoppers' Bus</p> <p>7:00, Pokeno (RISA)</p> <p>Thursday</p> <p>10:00, Get Stronger Bones</p> <p>10:30, Creative Arts</p> <p>12:30, Movie</p> <p>7:00, Dance</p> <p>Friday</p> <p>9:30, Yoga</p> <p>10:30, Computers</p> <p>1:00, Bridge</p> <p>7:00, Games (RISA)</p> <p>Saturday</p> <p>7:30, Bingo (RISA)</p> <p>Special Events</p> <p>Mon., Apr. 24, Mohegan Sun trip (7:30 a.m.)</p> <p>Mon., May 8, 11:00, MetroCard Bus</p>
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Home-delivered meals: **212-744-5022**, ext. 1203



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The first thing to say is how grateful we all are that all 68 people who were stranded on the Roosevelt Island Tramway Tuesday afternoon were safely transported to safety after superb work by police and fire personnel, and our own Roosevelt Island staff. The emergency response plan worked as it was designed.

And our apologies and deep respect go to those who were stranded, some for almost 12 hours, for their remarkable patience and forbearance.

We are already working with investigators from the State Department of Labor and other agencies looking into the cause of the power outage that stranded the Trams, and will continue to do so. Our initial assessment is that the outage followed an unexpected power surge that disabled the electrical system that operates the tram, but that will all be clarified as time goes on.

But the basic facts of what happened are as follows:
• On Tuesday, April 18, at approximately 5:18 p.m., operators of both of the Roosevelt Island Tramway cars reported a mechanical failure, believed to have been caused by a power surge, to the ground crew and the Island's Public Safety Office.

• When members of the Public Safety Office were notified of this failure, a well-established protocol was put into action which dictated, among other measures, the immediate notification of the problem to the NYPD Office of Emergency Management.

• Once this notification took place and it was determined that a rescue operation was called for, I, along with members of the Executive Board of RIOCC and my staff, began cooperating with members of the NYPD and the FDNY and lending them all manner of technical and logistical support to effectuate a successful rescue of the 71 stranded passengers. By 5:28 p.m., EMS was on the scene and a well-coordinated opera-

The RIOCC Column

tion between the State and the City was under way.

The emergency response plan is one that has been developed with the appropriate first-responding agencies, and one which has been practiced many times. That practice allowed the smooth, if lengthy, rescue operation with a deeply appreciated lack of injuries to anyone involved.

This was the first time in the 30-year history of the Tram that a mid-air rescue has had to be attempted. We hope it is the last, but we draw solace from the fact the training proved to be effective when the responders had to put it into play.

The Tram will be closed for an unspecified period of time while the investigations are concluded to ensure they can be operated safely for passengers and crew.

The Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation remains committed to the Tram's continued operation. RIOCC currently underwrites about \$300,000 of the tram's \$3.1 million annual budget and has approved a plan to fully overhaul and replace all components over the next several years. We will be doing the overhaul in stages to minimize disruption.

We expect to come out with a state-of-the-art system that will continue as one of the most visible symbols of this special Island in the middle of the East River that is home to more than 9,000 people.



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

**Roosevelt Island developments on the fly –
Sign up for E-mail Bulletins (they've replaced "extra" editions)
– Send an *AddMe* e-mail to editor@MainStreetWIRE.com**

Steve Marcus, RIRA President, is out of town for a couple of weeks so I'm writing the column in his place.

I hope everyone's holiday was happy and healthy. As we all look toward summer, many of us are anxious to know when our new barbeques will be here. We're awaiting word from RIOCC about them and as soon as we hear we'll be sure to let everyone know where they'll be situated. In the meantime, please don't hesitate to send Herb Berman an email at HBerman@rioc.com asking when we'll have the new barbeques and where they're going to be placed.

With relatives visiting this past week, I used some of the parking amenities on the Island and thought I'd remind residents about them (since I almost forgot myself). When the new Sunday parking laws went into effect, parking on Main Street became free on Sundays, but it's usually impossible to find an open space. However, parking passes are available through your building office for *free* parking in Motorgate on Sundays between the hours of 11:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. Ask your building manager or doorkeeper for information on how to use this service. Also, if you don't use Motorgate often, you may not be aware that you can buy prepaid, discounted parking tickets for six-hour and 24-hour intervals. These come in handy when you have guests visiting. You can get the tickets by calling Central Parking Services at 212-321-7500. They'll send you a form to fill out and return with your payment.

With the summer coming up, it's also time for each resident to start thinking about next year's RIRA elections. Come November, you'll be asked to vote for someone to represent you or, maybe, you'll decide to run for the seat yourself. For those of you who may be new to the Island, let me tell you a little about the organization. Every resident of the Island, 18 years or older, is a member of RIRA. They are represented by an elected group called the RIRA Common Council. The Council is made up of representatives from each building. The number of representatives depends on the size of the building. The organization has multiple goals. We try to act as a liaison between the community and the politicians who represent us. We also organize community-wide events and help individual buildings or residents to solve problems when they're in need of neighborhood support. To the degree that we can, we try to insure adherence to the Island's General Development Plan. As you can see from some of the new development on the Island, we haven't

been very successful in that effort lately, but we'll continue to try.

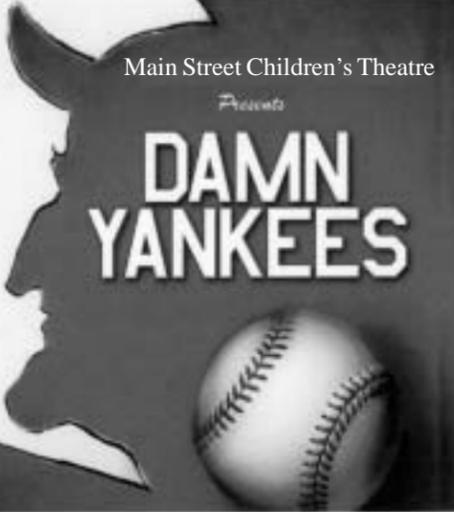
If you want to see the Council in action, please come and sit in on one of our monthly meetings. They're held at the Good Shepherd Community Center (the church) on the first Wednesday of every month at 8:00 p.m. If you want to get involved in community affairs and donate some of your time to community activities, RIRA might be just the organization for you. The elections aren't until November, but it's never too early to start thinking about joining. As a matter of fact, there are some seats that need to be filled right now in some of the buildings so why not come finish out this year's term and if you like it, run for election in the Fall. It's your community; the more involved you're able to become, the better off we'll all be.

Following up on Steve Marcus's last column about the possibility that the Art Gallery would be replaced with a Dunkin' Donuts / Baskin Robbins, the most current information we have is that RIOCC is looking for alternate space for Dunkin' Donuts. I personally hope that shopping mall look, and I believe that chain stores have that effect. However, I would love to see the vacant storefronts filled with merchants supplying needed services to the community. When I go to Astoria, and other parts of Manhattan, Queens, etc., if I see a store that I'd like to have on the Island, I ask to speak with the manager and see if there's a possibility that they'd consider relocating or opening up a second location over here. I've actually had some luck with this approach and I urge each of you to do the same. When you find a merchant willing to come to the Island, have him/her get in touch with Paul Mas at Jones Lang LaSalle on **212-812-5700** and let Steve Marcus know you've done it so we can follow up on the progress. Steve's e-mail address is Steve@RIRA@verizon.net.

Until next time, enjoy the warm weather. Roosevelt Island is an especially great place to be when Spring arrives and the trees are in bloom.



Margie Smith, Vice President
Roosevelt Island Residents Assn.
e-mail: MSmith@quintennium.com



Main Street Children's Theatre
Presents
**DAMN
YANKEES**

**PLAYING AT
MAIN
STREET
THEATRE
MAY
5-6-7-8!**

Friday 7:30 p.m. Saturday 2:00 p.m. Sunday 7:00 p.m.	Saturday 7:30 p.m. Sunday 2:00 p.m. Monday 7:00 p.m.				
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Tramway Emergency: Everybody Safe. Next: An Investigation.

Tram from page 1

system. After all, emergency basket-rescue had never been used in the 30-year history of the Tramway. While rehearsed regularly with Tram personnel and the FDNY rescue contingent, basket rescue is a last resort – asking passengers to transfer from the relative security of an enclosed Tram cabin, through open air, into the welded-steel baskets that are pulled by an emergency cable always in place above the main haul and track cables.

But back-up power capable of moving the main haul cable and pulling the Trams could not be restored – officials would later explain that they have not yet determined why, and that a second back-up power system has been out for repair since January.

By now, Mayor Mike Bloomberg and Police Commissioner Ray Kelly were headed to the scene and the rescue responsibility was firmly in their hands. For reasons undetermined – possibly the FDNY units had been dispatched to help with a massive brush fire in Brooklyn – the larger contingent of trained FDNY rescuers were not called back to Roosevelt Island. A Police Department emergency response unit, which had never practiced basket rescue, was in charge.

But basket rescue was the only remaining option at that point. A small number of FDNY rescuers were called back to the Island-side Tram station to help. The baskets – really steel cages – were crane-mounted on the track ropes (actually, they are steel cables) and winched up to the stranded cabins.

Not until 10:52 was the rescue basket on the way to the near cabin to begin off-loading passengers, about a dozen at a time. By then, the passengers had been waiting some five and a half hours, somewhat longer than ever before in the Tramway's history – and now they were waiting for basket rescue – only rehearsed in the past, and never used in an actual emergency.

Fortunately, conditions were good: There was only a light breeze, temperatures had been nearly balmy most of the day, and the cabins were not jammed with the 125 passengers they can normally carry.

Basket rescue involves repeated trips in the welded-steel cages, which have a rescuee capacity of ten to twelve persons. This meant that four or five trips, each nearly an hour, would be required to evacuate cabin #1. Ultimately, a decision was made to evacuate cabin #2 using a crane rather than the basket-rescue method.

The last passengers to be rescued got their feet onto solid ground around 4:30 a.m.

Official Statements

RIOC President Herb Berman, who was on the scene shortly after the start of the incident, turned responsibility over to City rescue forces. Mayor Bloomberg, with Commissioner Kelly behind him, held an on-scene press conference as the crisis bubbled along: “We’re going to make sure it doesn’t go again until we take a careful review and make sure that the State agency that runs this has really looked to see why something like this could happen,” he said.

As basket-rescue got under way, Berman guided a driver as he positioned a Red Bus to receive evacuees.

A growing forest of TV remote-truck antennas rose in the field behind the Red Bus turnaround area, and television reporters got out their cliché books. Phrases like “terrifying night,” “high drama” (nudge, nudge), “high anxiety” (*Good Morning America*; nudge again), “high-wire act” (Katie Couric on *Today*) were all over the tube. But video coverage was outstanding, especially on Channel 7, which captured the moment when first transfers from the leading window of cabin 1 had passengers stepping into space on their way to the welded-steel rescue “basket.”

The incident became a star turn on *Good Morning America* for 12-year-old Dax Maier, who had earlier described the experience, his parents and nanny at his side, once his feet were on the ground on the Island side. He spoke of fellow passengers dancing to a variety of cell-phone ring tones. His father, Brian Maier, told how he first heard of the problem in a cell-phone call from his son and, when the incident wasn’t over within a few minutes, “we got in the SUV and drove to Roosevelt Island.” The Maier boy was headed to the Island for an after-school tennis lesson; his family does not live here. On Channel 4, Vivian Lee reported that Dax’s mother “is saying, ‘No more tennis lessons on that Island...’” On *GMA*, the Tram story got first position Wednesday morning, ahead of developments in the Duke University rape charges and the intended (and now apparently accomplished) “silent birth” of Tom Cruise’s daughter.



At dusk, a powered trip to stations still seemed possible as cabins hung near the middle tower.

Reports on the incident and the long wait for rescue appeared in England, Ireland, Australia, Israel, and Canada. By mid-morning Wednesday, Google had nearly 600 links to TV, newspaper, radio, and web stories.

Aftermath

On Wednesday afternoon, Berman held a press conference, assisted by Operations Vice President Catherine Johnson and Tram Supervisor Armando Cordova; Cordova’s immediate boss, Red Blomer, who arrived on the Island the morning after the incident, stood by. Berman spent little time on the question of why the complete rescue operation took nearly twelve hours, but explained in a prepared statement:

“Our secondary power source in an emergency situation is a diesel hydrostatic drive... However, it also became inoperable. We are investigating why. The third phase of our emergency procedure is an additional hydrostatic drive that operates the rescue car [the basket]. This was in place and operational and successfully deployed.”

Berman also explained, “In addition to our emergency response procedures, Roosevelt Island has a redundant electrical drive. However, this drive, while not part of our emergency procedure, is currently being repaired. Had this been in place it may have helped, but it may have been compromised by whatever caused the primary loss of power.”

Berman and his Vice President for Operations, Catherine Johnson, emphasized several times that the stranded passengers all were ultimately rescued without injury, saying “the system worked.”

Asked repeatedly, Berman would not speculate on when the Tram might be back in service. But he spoke warmly of the Tram’s role as a Roosevelt Island icon and as a vital commuter link, perhaps to bely worries being expressed by residents that RIOC might attempt to use the incident as an excuse to take the Tramway out of service permanently. Indeed, by Wednesday afternoon, reporters could be heard asking residents and politicians, “So you think the Tram should *continue to operate*?”

Hearings

City Councilmember Jessica Lappin, not fully satisfied that the State will investigate its own agency’s management of Tram operations and handling of this incident, announced that the City Council will hold hearings, probably in May, probably off-Island.

Lappin and the four other Democratic politicians who represent Roosevelt Island showed up here on Wednesday (Lappin had been here Tuesday night, as well) to talk with homeward-bound residents at the subway station, passing

out a letter to the Governor:

“Last night’s dramatic events on the Roosevelt Island Tram, with over 70 people, including young children, stranded for as long as twelve hours, highlights the dearth of emergency preparedness by the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation. We know that you share our relief that no one was injured during this ordeal. The fact that this happened was bad enough, but the failure of the backup power supply and the manual retrieval system is inexcusable, and people should be held accountable for these mishaps.”

“As you must know, this was the second major breakdown to hit this vital transportation link in the past seven months. While the causes of the power failure that led to this incident must be investigated and rectified as soon as possible, the threat of an indefinite shutdown of the Tram highlights the consequences of your administration’s elimination of capital and operating support for RIOC. This, and inept or inattentive management installed by your administration, have compounded the consequences of RIOC’s failure over the past decade to institute a multi-year capital plan, including maintenance and upkeep of the Tram, and identify revenues to carry it out.

“Yesterday’s accident might well have been avoided had proper attention and resources been focused on insuring the safety and reliability of the Tram’s power supply and back-up system. Yet, repeated offers to assist RIOC in securing funds for needed capital projects have been met with silence. If nothing else, last night’s near-disaster has exposed the myth of the mandate of self-sufficiency imposed by your administration on the agency responsible for operating and protecting the Island community.

“We call on you now to immediately convene a task force, including members nominated by the Island community, and assure the funding necessary to undertake an expedited, in-depth investigation of the causes of last night’s breakdown,

its swift return to service, and the status of RIOC’s preparedness to deal with emergency situations affecting Island residents.

“This review must be an open process that includes public hearings. At the same time, your administration must act now to identify and address any and all problems associated with the Island’s aging infrastructure to assure that another accident does not end in tragedy.

“We request a meeting with you as soon as your schedule permits to discuss the steps needed to implement these reviews. We look forward to a prompt reply.”

Questions

While it’s likely the Democrats’ letter to Pataki will be seen as political posturing among Republicans in the governor’s administration – and perhaps by Pataki’s Island appointees at RIOC, as well – the latest incident does raise questions about RIOC operations that many Islanders consider worthy of public hearings in addition to a behind-the-scenes investigation:

- What was learned – or not learned – by the last major shutdown of the Tramway in September, 2005, that might have prevented this most recent parallel, incident?

- Why did the first line of defense, the diesel drive, fail?

- Are key personnel from Doppelmayr, RIOC’s contract operator of the Tramway, on scene in a supervisory role, often enough?

- Why did basket-rescue-trained FDNY personnel leave the crisis scene before diesel power, which failed, had completed the return of cabins to their berths? Were they dismissed by Island personnel, or did they make their own decision to leave? (At least one FDNY official later told *The New York Times* that the back-up system had worked on earlier occasions, making FDNY involvement unnecessary.)

- Why were those FDNY rescuers not called back to the scene immediately, to begin basket rescue, when it quickly became likely such an effort would have to be mounted?

- To what extent was the dismissal of FDNY personnel responsible for the five-hour delay in mounting a basket rescue?

- Why are there no emergency telephones in Tram cabins to allow communication with outside rescue forces?

- Would the presence of a trained console operator in the booth have mitigated this crisis? (Console operators were eliminated early in the first Pataki administration, under RIOC President Jerome Blue, as he sought ways to fulfill Pataki’s declaration that Roosevelt Island must become self-supporting and the accompanying removal of State subsidies contracted for in the City-State lease under which the State manages Roosevelt Island.)

First-Person: "An Unforgettable Experience."

(from page 1)

of how we would be rescued, our anxiety levels increased. It was best to not dwell on any of it and just sit in one place and remain quiet, trying not to think too much of what might be our "shining chariot" to earth.

We all seemed to have our little quirks. The passengers consisted of about 12 children, 14 and under, and the rest adults in varying stages of life, including an 84-year-old woman with a walker, a couple of first-time riders, and visitors on holiday excursions. The children actually fared the best. They were the most-well-behaved kids I've seen in a long time. Four little boys actually fell asleep, one in his stroller, one in his Dad's arms, and two in a corner on the floor of the Tram. Some of the adults engaged the other kids in normal everyday ordinary conversation.

All the cell phones were engaged constantly with calls coming in from the NYPD on the Queensboro Bridge and elsewhere, and from TV and radio stations. A team effort read the fingers of a newsmen on the bridge and copied his phone number down. I called him and he gave my number to the officer who stayed in touch with me throughout with words of support and, "How is everyone holding up?"

That's about all he was able to do. Various passengers would relay information they received from family and friends on the ground. We were just thankful that every one of us was relatively under control. Even if we were tense and angry or nervous on the inside, we pretty much hid it. That was a great help because if anyone started to panic or show great anxiety surely it would be contagious. I'm quite experienced in reading others' moods, as I've worked with the public as a professional Flight Attendant for 36 years. Being on a Tram is not unlike the feeling of helplessness that some experience when traveling on an airplane where everything

is out of their control. We have to count on others to look after us and get us safely to our destination.

Even with the constant shared information, we weren't getting any concrete solutions to our dilemma. It now was past sunset, we didn't have any real food or water; irritability was starting to mount as moods were swinging from hopeful to downright despair. Questions were constantly being asked amongst the passengers without any answers being provided.

It was well after midnight when a call came in to our cabin saying that the emergency "basket" was to be sent up the cable to us with NYPD and FDNY rescue workers that would be able to evacuate 12 or so passengers at a time. It would be a slow process, as it would take approximately 15 minutes to reach the cabin, time to dock, hook up, and then board the

was on its way.

As the basket approached the cabin, there was some bumping and vibrating as it inched closer and closer so as to make boarding as easy as possible. The "angels" (NYPD and FDNY) jumped through the cleared opening and came bearing water, food, and blankets. First were words of concern for our welfare. They asked that the children with parents and caretakers and the elderly prepare themselves to board the basket and proceed to the open end of the Tram.

The rescuers first had to secure the basket to the Tram with straps that they wound through the window sill of the Tram and then through bars on the basket, back and forth a few times to create a makeshift ladder that would bridge the gap between the Tram and the boarding floor of the basket. This was our only way back to solid ground. The crew preparations, instructions and commands were firm yet kind and encouraging, designed to get us to safety as quickly and efficiently as possible.

The first group to leave was the family consisting of 7 children with their father and some of the older passengers. When they finally were boarded, it seemed like ages before they were grounded, but there was no mistaking when that actually happened. Off in the distance, we heard the applause and cheering and couldn't help think that would be us later on in the night. But we remained tense, thinking about traveling in that open-air basket well above the dark river below.

Chris and I stayed in the back of the crowd as others more vulnerable than us boarded the basket when it came back for the second trip. Finally it was our turn.

We boarded on the fourth trip back to the Island. The little bench that rests beside the Tram operator was put on the Tram bench seat. We were told to step on that bench, then step on the window sill, then put a foot into part of the strapping, then place our knee up on the platform of the basket. Our belongings were taken and boarded first and, when we got up into the basket, we were instructed to face forward with our back up against the sides so we weren't looking out toward the water. It was almost akin to a ferris wheel ride, except much, much slower. We were not allowed to take pictures or hold anything except each other or the railings of the basket.

When we were let down to the station, the little door of the basket was unlatched and we were now put on a 12-foot ladder where a rescue worker actually attached himself to us as we walked down the ladder one step at a time to safe ground. As soon as we set foot on the ground we were personally escorted to a triage area, asked how we were doing as our vital signs were checked, and wrapped in a blanket. Then we were asked the most important question of all – whether we needed the bathroom. Family members, who were in their own special waiting area, were brought over to us and Public Safety drove us directly to our door.

It was now 2:30 a.m. What a day, an unforgettable experience to be sure. Thank you one and all for your support, for me, my husband, Mark and our children, Briana, Jillian, and Neal.

I now understand from personal experience why our police are described as "New York's Finest" and our Fire Department "New York's Bravest." *Bravo!*



Gloria Herman

"We were told to step on that bench, then step on the window sill, then put a foot into part of the strapping, then place our knee up on the platform of the basket..."

basket, climbing over the gap over the water between the basket and the window sill of the cabin. As complicated as this sounded, a light seemed to be at the end of the tunnel!

The Tram operator proceeded to prepare the cabin for the arrival of the basket that would swoop us to safety. With the help of some of the passengers, he pulled off the safety grates over the windows then pulled out the entire windows (picture pushing the windshield out of your car). He placed all of this on the floor of the Tram, at which time many passengers crowded in front to search for this so-called basket. At the same time the NYPD was setting up search-light trucks on the 59th Street Bridge that would light up our Tram cabin #1. We were on display and ready to get out of the cabin.

Finally, after squinting and following the overhead cable down towards the ground, an orange contraption appeared like a star in the nighttime sky, and with "angels" on board to assist in a safe evacuation. Relief was in sight – our chariot

All five politicians representing the Island were here Wednesday. At right, Assemblymember Pete Grannis talks with a *New York Times* reporter. Member of Congress Carolyn Maloney (left), State Senator Jose Serrano (back to camera), and City Councilmember Jessica Lappin (right) also sought to reassure residents that they'll fight for the Tram's continued existence as a vital transportation link for residents. Borough President Scott Stringer (inset) appeared later at a Community Board 8 meeting, which happened to be scheduled for Good Shepherd Community Center Wednesday evening.



Twelve-year-old Dax Maier became a media star after holding a press conference once on solid ground Tuesday night. Nudged by his mother after describing his experience, he added, "It was great to see how many nice people there are in New York." Behind him is his companion, variously described as "nanny" or "babysitter."

Main Street Traffic Flow Picks Up As RIOC Turns Stops to Yields and Shunts School Buses to Promenade

by Lillian Picchione

Main Street traffic is suddenly a whole lot smoother. Two changes in vehicle patterns were implemented in the past weeks. School bus drop-offs at the Child School have been rerouted to the Seawall Access Roads, taking the loading and unloading of buses off Main Street. In addition, crosswalks have changed. Attention-getting signs have been put in, the crosswalks have been repainted for increased visibility, and four of the stop signs have been replaced by yield signs.

RIOC president Herb Berman reports that the changes are a response to the volume of complaints received over the years. He explains that RIOC has made earlier attempts to work with the school bus operator to improve traffic. Berman blames the company's "persistent refusal to cooperate with earlier plans" for why traffic changes weren't made earlier. Bus operators are under an obligation to drop children from special-needs schools within a short distance from their destination.

The change appears to have had an immediate impact on the speed of traffic on Main Street. A round trip that earlier took 25 minutes included delays for school bus drop offs, such as a 2.5 minute delay experienced during a test ride in the February 11, 2006 WIRE. Such delays cause following buses to catch up, a situation called "bus bunching."

Since implementing the changes, life during Rush Hour is much improved. There are fewer honks and beeps. Cars move regularly through the intersections rather than stacking up at the Motorgate ramp and Deli. Less congestion results in less bus bunching among the Q102 and Red Buses.

Rush Hour on Roosevelt Island (typically 7:30-8:30 a.m. and 3:00-4:30 p.m.) is a bit different than other parts of the City because the combination of deliveries, school buses and hospital shift changes add more vehicles to the Island than does the Manhattan commute, which is heavily transit-based.

The school-bus rerouting means that between 7:15 and 8:30, school buses enter the access road between 2/4 River Road and PS 217, head south along the Western seawall, and drop off passengers before exiting near the Meditation Steps. Between 1:00 and 3:30 pm, buses enter the access road between 580 Main Street and Capobianco Field, head north along the seawall, and pick up students before exiting on the access road between the field and Motorgate Ramp.

There are some adverse affects to the school-bus rerouting. One of the pleasures of Roosevelt Island is a peaceful morning walk along the western seawall, watching the boats and the Manhattan skyline on the walk to work. Pedestrians now have to be more careful, because buses approach pedestrians from behind. While the eastern path has a lower pedestrian pathway not used by vehicles, the bumpy surface is not conducive to bicycles, scooters or wheelchairs. In addition, several RIRA councilmembers discussing the changes at their April 5 meeting expressed concern that they have observed schoolchildren emerging from side buildings without looking out for traffic.

Redesigned Crosswalks

The second change in traffic is the conversion of four Main Street stop signs to yield signs. The new crosswalks have signs in the center of the road that warn motorists that State law gives pedestrians the right of way.

The most visible change is that the intersection at the turn to the Motorgate ramp is no longer a three-way stop. At the ramp intersection, Island traffic now yields only to pedestrians, not exiting motorists. This means that vehicles exiting the ramp must now wait until all Island traffic clears the intersection. The change is particularly helpful to Red Bus traffic, which had four stops in quick succession between Capobianco Field and Gristedes. Now, the bus can roll past the ramp exit, allowing a smoother, faster ride.

The combination of the school-bus rerouting and the yield signs appear to have markedly increased traffic speeds on Main Street. Morning Red Bus commuters have a smoother, faster ride. Vehicles from the FDNY Special Operations Command building face less congestion at the Motorgate ramp. Vehicle commuters to Coler-Goldwater hospital have a speedier ride.

Claude Ritman, Executive Director of Coler-Goldwater Hospitals, expressed pleasure. "Overall, there has been an improvement," he says. Mr. Ritman used to urge his employees to be patient with the traffic, pointing out that due to its location, the hospital has some of the least traffic of any City hospital. But combined with the new Red Bus stop at Coler hospital, Mr. Ritman sees the improvements as "a step in the right direction." While he has not received feedback from staff on the bus drop-off changes (the change had only been in effect briefly before The Child School's spring break), he sees the changes as "all for the better."

There is an additional benefit. In the past, service vehicles, Public Safety patrols, and property-management vehicles were observed using the Seawall. With the faster flow on Main Street, these vehicles may no longer be tempted to take the access road, which occurred at unpredictable times.

Like any silver lining, there is an attached cloud. By defi-

nition, increased vehicle speeds decrease pedestrian safety. Faster vehicles mean that in the event of a car crash, those involved are more likely to get hurt. In addition, a faster trip is an incentive to drive. It will be interesting to see if a larger number of Coler-Goldwater employees choose to commute by car now that the last minutes of the trip are faster.

But while increased traffic speed may decrease pedestrian safety, measures appear to have been taken to counteract that problem. The single most important way to improve safety is to make the traffic rules clear and easy to follow. To that end, the new crosswalks are more visible and emphasize pedestrian priority in a way that the old stop signs did not. Rasheed White, a new Red Bus driver, expressed happiness with the changes. Drivers just have to exercise "common sense," he says. He notes that even with the new signs, many drivers continue to stop at all the signs. "Force of habit."



Once a **STOP**, now a **YIELD**: RIOC has turned stop signs at three crosswalks into yield signs. This one is at the north end of Westview. Others are at the ramp, between Eastwood 580 and Rivercross, and at about the halfway mark in the Main Street retail strip.



This pedestrian safety fence is one of the changes planned for the Roosevelt Island Bridge during the course of three years of renovations slated to start in December.

Bridge Renovations to Start in December

The City Department of Transportation (DOT) is getting ready to renovate the Roosevelt Island Bridge, starting in December.

At an informational meeting Wednesday night, the Project Manager, Ray G. Girgis, said the project is expected to take three years and cost \$53 million. It involves replacing the mechanical and electrical systems, each of which had been responsible for some incidents in which the bridge, raised for a test or east-channel boat traffic, would not descend. The bridge will also be painted a deeper red than the original color of the paint now fading on the steelwork.

The bridge will acquire a pedestrian safety fence but, otherwise, look much the same as it does today. The towers, once slated for removal before 9/11 made east-channel navigation a necessity for United Nations security, will remain in place. Lead paint will go away and the roadway will be

replaced. The fenders that protect the bridge piers from river debris will also be replaced.

The project had been slated for 2012 until former Residents Association President Matthew Katz arranged for a Community Board 8 resolution urging that the work be moved up because of the importance of the bridge to Roosevelt Islanders, who depend on it for all vehicular access, including emergency equipment.

Key provisions of the contract for the work will prohibit roadway work during rush-hour periods (6:00-10:00 a.m. and 3:00-8:00 p.m.), and keep delays to a maximum of five minutes. One lane of the bridge will always be open, said Girgis, with flag signalers controlling the direction of traffic. During the work, parking in the roadway area below the ramp will be eliminated on the side of the roadway closest to the bridge.

Calogero Urges Extension of a Deadline to Give Island House More Time to Buy

The Chair of the Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC), Judith Calogero, has urged Charles Lucido to extend an April 30 deadline for completion of negotiations over the sale of Island House to the building's Tenant Association (IHTA).

In an April 18 letter that responds to a letter from IHTA President Dorothy Davis in which Davis expressed frustration over the lack of progress in parallel negotiations with RIOC over extension of the ground lease for the building, Calogero writes, "Let me say clearly that we strongly urge - let me repeat - strongly urge - Mr. Lucido to extend the April 30 deadline he has set for negotiations over sale of Island House to the Tenants Association. We believe his deadline is unreasonably short, and one which is inconsistent with the amount of time he has set aside in past negotiations and it undermines his ability to come to acceptable terms with IHTA and RIOC."

The letter continues, "Additional time is needed to consider the complexities involved both in leaving the Mitchell-Lama program and in converting the building to cooperative ownership. Issues such as tax equivalency payments (TEPs) require patient negotiation..."

"Mr. Lucido should demonstrate his good faith by extending the artificial April 30 deadline and allow the negotiations

to continue. That is the only way that the IHTA can proceed to obtain needed financing. It will also allow RIOC to carry out discussions with both seller and/or buyer for a renegotiated ground lease. We anticipate that a ground lease extension can be ultimately negotiated."

On one point of complaint in Davis's letter - that RIOC wants to charge tenants in advance (through Lucido) for meetings between lawyers - Calogero writes, "It is clear that, going forward, parties to the sale will be expected to cover the legal expenses incurred by RIOC for its third-party role in these negotiations. RIOC will seek to recover past legal expenses from appropriate parties that resulted from the potential sale [to the Sheldrake Organization] that did not go through to fruition."

The last sentence effectively concedes an important point. RIOC had been attempting to collect over \$30,000 in legal expense incurred during negotiations with Sheldrake, as well as \$50,000 as an advance against future legal expenses. By shifting the lesser burden to a recovery effort with Sheldrake, RIOC removes it as a road block that might have held up further discussions with tenants. Whether RIOC will still seek the \$50,000 advance was not dealt with directly, though resident RIOC Board member David Kraut had sought to have such expenses collected after a deal was complete.

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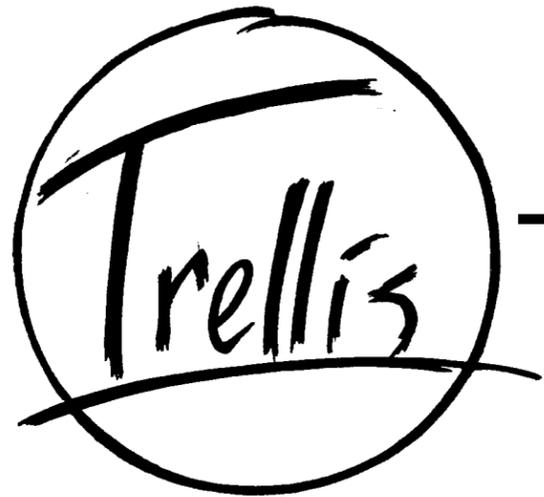
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Letters from page 2

To the Editor:

I was one of the persons inside the Tram heading towards Roosevelt Island last Tuesday.

The details about the long ten hours inside the cabin have already been extensively explained by my fellow riders in testimonies given to the press.

We were 48 people – ordinary people trying our best to remain calm by using our surprisingly strong patience. We human beings, New Yorkers especially, have the mental preparation to deal with unexpected events. The situation among us was always of companionship and mutual care.

What made us a little nervous was not to be able to know in detail what was going on. We had to rely on our families, watching the news at home and reporting the news to us via cellular phones.

Finally, the police on the site were able to find out one of the phone numbers and from there we were “connected.” Still, the information was not clear. From the ground, we were told over and over that it would be solved soon but, from families, we had reports from news media that it could take hours (the media were right).

When I got to the Island around 1:30 a.m., I was asked by the press about what thoughts I had during these long hours. My answer was that mostly, my thoughts were about my family, the situation and possibilities of getting out, and finally I thought a lot about the lack of planning by RIOC. This last thought kept me busy for a long period of time. I was very upset about it, because the problem of a lack of infrastructure, especially insufficient transport, has been discussed

To the Editor:

A thank you to all our Tram staff, who did a great job the other evening during the shut-down.

They are our unsung heroes who spent hours in the cabins, installing, testing and operating the rescue cage. They are great professionals who are dedicated to our tram and our Island.

The NYPD, FDNY, EMS, OEM and other agencies all deserve our special thanks, too. Without the team effort, a safe outcome would have been more difficult.

Also, thanks to Trellis for sending over refreshments and all the coffee urns they had.

Judith Berdy

in numerous meetings and among neighbors.

We have seen new buildings being built, hundreds of new resident-families in need of sharing the already precarious transport facilities. We have seen the Tram not being able to meet the five-minute period between rides during rush hours (forced to run almost without interruptions). We have seen the F train sign on week-ends indicating that there is no service, which forced all of us to take the Tram.

Excuses of electrical failure or mechanical problem do not convince me; the Tram was out of order last September and, also, last week on Thursday afternoon.

We can not abuse a system that is not built for being over-used. We all knew this was coming – at least the members of my family did!

Carlos Gutierrez

Classified

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**Deadline for May 6 issue: Tuesday, May 2
Deadline for May 20 issue: Tuesday, May 16**

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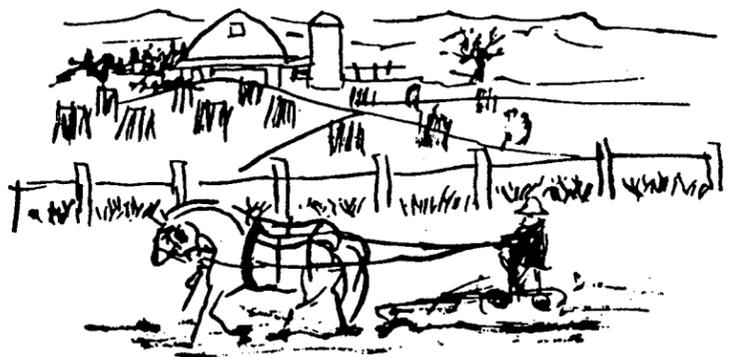
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