

MAYOR'S COLUMN

On the heels of our “sit down” with Con Edison, we convened a meeting with officials from the MTA to air our concerns with their services vis-à-vis our Village.

Our concerns encompassed three areas:

- The overall upkeep and maintenance of MTA property
- The increased noise and vibration levels along the corridor
- The response time and follow-up on repair requests

In a nutshell, we believe the Metro North property is one of the worst kept sites in the Village. Officials at the meeting advised us that the property is cleaned daily with extensive cleaning done on a 45 day cycle. Garbage is also removed twice daily. Accepting this as fact, we believe attention must be directed to removing the mounds of trash under the tracks, in the grates near the platform and all along the rail corridor in the Village. The accumulated trash contributes to a rodent problem existing near the station area in particular. The MTA did agree to have their outside exterminator bait traps on a regular basis. I have asked for a written maintenance schedule so we can monitor compliance. In addition, the “windbreak” shelter is badly vandalized and the platform itself is extremely dirty. There is also tree debris the length of the rail corridor. As a gateway to our community and a daily stop for a majority of our residents, we can no longer sit back and accept the condition of the station and its environs as up to standard. The appearance of the station does not enhance our property values and detracts from the overall aesthetics of our Village.

We also asked that a system be put in place to not only make repairs expeditiously but relay the information as to date and time of repair to Village Hall. By way of illustration, a resident alerted us to the presence of a broken tie back in October. Not only does the malfunction create additional noise, but it presents a potentially dangerous condition. Despite repeated attempts to ascertain the status of the repair, I am still uncertain if the repair was ever made.

The overarching issue continues to be the unacceptable levels of noise and vibration experienced by our residents in recent years. Things have changed appreciably. This is not a case of buying near a railroad and then complaining about the noise. Twenty year residents are experiencing an unprecedented level of noise and vibration that directly affects their quality

of life. Our community is unique among other towns along the rail corridor in that we have so many residential buildings in close proximity to the rail tracks for the entire length of our Village from Midland Gardens to the townhomes on Kensington Road. As a result of our meeting, MTA executives have pledged to research mitigation measures and their attendant costs, though given the current financial situation at the MTA, capital funds are non-existent. However, we believe if we had information detailing a “sliding scale” of mitigation measures and costs, we could partner with our elected officials and seek Federal monies or grants.

The substantial increase in fares coupled with the levying of the “mobility tax” as an unfunded mandate have not translated into improved MTA services for Bronxville.

Particularly ironic was the fact that even though we projected correctly that a new tax was in the offing and budgeted accordingly, we were not prepared for a law that charged municipalities an additional three month retroactive payroll tax.

We believe we have an action to compel the reopening of the agreement guaranteeing certain noise and vibration levels developed at the time of the construction of the third track. Our independent vibration study documented readings well above the MTA projections as well as above Federal standards at three of the four locations monitored in both studies. We will give the MTA the opportunity to follow through on their promise to research mitigation measures before considering the initiation of legal action.

Even though the economic climate is not advantageous, at some point we have to say “enough”. The station is a blight. Rail lines all over Europe manage to offer excellent service while co-existing peacefully and responsibly with their neighboring communities.

I ask residents who live along the rail corridor to e-mail or send me any information about train activity that is disruptive or unacceptable – be it unnecessary whistle blowing, trains that are particularly noisy or issues relating to station upkeep or debris along the rails. Your personal “diary” of times and dates will help provide us with the data necessary to put forward a responsible case for mitigation and maintenance improvement.