

## MAYOR'S COLUMN

Last Wednesday, representatives of the Village met with Metro North officials to discuss track noise and vibration issues as our first step toward improving conditions along the rail corridor.

The following is a synopsis of the meeting which was held at the train station so operations and train traffic could be observed.

Whistle Blowing – Metro North agreed that whistles are not supposed to be blown between 10PM and 6AM by trains on the outside two tracks unless someone is standing on the platform. Also, documentation on construction of the third track indicated that there would be less whistle blowing because trains on the middle track are not supposed to blow their whistles at all. We were able to present documentation with dates and times of whistles blown during the “quiet” period and a train on the third track blew its whistle during the visit. The representatives agreed to review the patterns and procedures.

Flat Wheels – We questioned whether the maintenance on the wheels was vigilant enough knowing of the relationship of flat wheels to increased noise and vibration. Metro North explained that flat wheels are more of a fall phenomenon because leaves cause a “greasing” of the tracks which results in train wheels sliding instead of turning and thus developing flat spots. We noted that our vibration study was conducted in May when there should have been less of a problem. They also related that the new M-7 train cars have a braking system that caused increased sliding of wheels but that the issue has been recently addressed and improved. We reiterated the need for “re-rounding” of the wheels on a regular schedule.

Diesel Trains – Representatives were not certain of the number of diesel trains passing through the Village currently, but agreed to get data vs. past years traffic. They would also research whether trains are running at increased speeds and the relative contribution to the noise/vibration issue.

All agreed that there are definitely more trains passing through the Village than ever before and ridership continues to increase. The newer diesel engines are larger because they now must pull ten cars vs. smaller numbers of cars in the past.

Ballast Mats – Metro North confirmed that all mats promised as a mitigation measure were installed and they have photographs and documentation of the construction which they will forward to the Village. However, we asked them to research whether the mats have a limited life of effectiveness.

Concrete Ties – Metro North agreed with the Village consultant that the replacement of wood ties with concrete ties results in 1dB difference in vibration. The change from wood ties was implemented system wide due to the increased longevity of the concrete ties.

Sound Barriers – There are no sound barriers in the Metro North system with the exception of a very limited system as trains enter the Park Avenue viaduct. Metro North

representatives agreed to research the low and unobtrusive ones currently in use in different areas to determine effectiveness, understanding the Village was not interested in the “Berlin Wall” type structures one sees along some tracks and highways.

Potential Noise From Rattling Train Carriages – Most trains passing through Bronxville are the new M-7 type with new and tighter carriages. However, Metro North will report back on whether rattling is an issue system-wide as well as whether the maintenance schedule employed to mitigate the problem is adequate.

Track Welds – All agreed that “bad welds” can contribute to additional noise and vibration. Metro North will have the tracks checked as soon as possible to determine any bad welds in need of repair.

Monitoring – The Village requested any post construction monitoring information, if indeed any was undertaken.

In what was a very productive and collegial meeting, Metro North officials committed to work with the Village to improve conditions. We are sending them a tape of the public meeting where long-time residents voiced the dramatic changes in noise level and vibration in the past few years. We also agreed to make our consultants available to discuss their findings directly with Metro North representatives and Metro North may hire additional consultants. They also will reach out to Village residents to discuss the issues first hand.

After listening to the concerns and comments of our residents, the Trustees and I are more committed than ever to improving the conditions for the many Village residents living along the length of the rail corridor. We will keep you informed as to our progress as we continue our discussions with Metro North. Our strategy is to begin by working with Metro North as good neighbor to good neighbor. We will reach out to our elected officials, State and national, if necessary. And finally, use our legal remedies as a last resort. We are confident improvements will be made.