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IMMEDIATE

MTA Launches Sustainability Initiative

Sustainability Commission to Outline Blueprint by Earth Day

NEW YORK - The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) today announced the formation of a Sustainability Commission charged with outlining a sustainability master plan for the agency by Earth Day 2008. The master plan will quantify the MTA's ecological footprint and identify recommendations to reduce it.

"The MTA's public transportation network makes the entire New York region sustainable, but in the era of climate change we have a responsibility to go even further," said Elliot G. Sander, MTA Executive Director and CEO. "The commission will build on the exciting green initiatives we've already completed to make sustainability a permanent part of the MTA's DNA."

The Sustainability Commission will develop a master set of recommendations that will help reduce the ecological footprint of MTA operations and capital programs and minimize the impact of the MTA on ecosystems in the MTA region and Northeast Corridor. The commission will cast a wide net, looking at everything from energy use and waste management to transit-oriented development and green, high-performance buildings.

Part of the commission's mission will be to identify sustainability initiatives that have both environmental benefits and financial benefits. These financial benefits can take a number of forms, including cost savings from the use of new technologies or revenue from an agency's green venture.

The commission, which will hold its first meeting on Wednesday, will have 18 commissioners from across the MTA's service region. The commission will be chaired by green planner and housing developer Jonathan F. P. Rose, who is an innovator in bringing together solutions to planning, community development, finance, culture and land preservation. Mr. Rose is a thought leader in the Smart Growth and green building movements, and a frequent speaker on the subjects.

"The transit network is essential to the region's environmental and economic sustainability," said Rose, chair of the commission and President of Jonathan Rose Companies LLC. "Our goal will be to develop a plan to both make the transit system itself more sustainable, and to expand the capacity of the system to support the region's sustainability."

Commission members include: Jonathan F. P. Rose (chair), Jonathan Rose Companies, LLC; Rohit Aggarwala, NYC Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability; Julie Belaga, CT League of Conservation; Marcia Bystryn, NY League of Conservation Voters; Peter Cannito, MTA Metro-North Railroad; Cecil Corbin-Mark, WE ACT for Environmental Justice; Jonathan Drapkin, Mid-Hudson Pattern for Progress; Robert Fox, Cook + Fox Architects; Emil Frankel, independent consultant; Ashok Gupta, Natural Resources Defense Council; Sarah Lansdale, Sustainable Long Island; Kevin Law, Suffolk County; Emily Lloyd, NYC Dept. of Environmental Protection; Alex Mathiessen, Riverkeeper; Janette Sadik-Khan, NYC Dept. of Transportation; Ned Sullivan, Scenic Hudson; Michael White, Long Island Regional Planning Board; Robert Yaro, Regional Plan Association.

The Commission will attempt to answer a number of questions about the MTA and sustainability, including:

- What targets and goals should be set for reducing the MTA's ecological footprint - CO2, other greenhouse gas emissions, water, waste, consumption of materials?
 - What strategies should be employed to achieve these goals?
- As the nation and world experiment with carbon trading or carbon taxes, what role should the MTA play and how can it capitalize on the massive carbon savings the MTA produces by operating its public transportation network?
- What role can the MTA play in promoting smart-growth strategies and transit-oriented development?
- How does the MTA work with its state and local partners to harmonize its sustainability agenda with the sustainability goals of the municipalities in and around its 5,000-square-mile service territory?

While the new initiative aims to develop a blueprint of initiatives and strategies the MTA can implement, the MTA family of agencies has already made enormous strides toward a greener way of doing business. Accomplishments include a growing fleet of cleaner-fuel buses, energy-efficiency projects, recycling, the purchase of wind power, the use of light-duty alternative vehicles for non-revenue service, and a growing number of green facilities, including the Gun Hill Bus Depot and Corona Yard.

"This is a unique moment both globally and here in New York, with more and more people focused on sustainability and living greener lives," said Sander. "As we advocate for a sustainable future based on increased transit usage, the MTA is doing its part to make sure our transportation network operates as sustainably as possible."