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IMMEDIATE

MTA Names Blue Ribbon Panel To Study Rail Safety

Transportation Experts Will Review Recent Derailments and Recommend Improvements

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) today announced that it has created a Blue Ribbon Panel of six distinguished railroad and transportation experts to examine the circumstances behind recent safety-related incidents at MTA Metro-North Railroad, MTA Long Island Rail Road and MTA New York City Transit. The experts will study the causes behind those incidents, examine the agencies' maintenance and inspection programs, and ensure they promote a culture of safety within the MTA.

"These six experts are widely respected in their field and uniquely qualified to review maintenance and workplace practices, protocols and strategies that may have a relation to these recent incidents," said MTA Chairman and CEO Thomas F. Prendergast. "We want to learn lessons so these particular problems never happen again, but also we also want to make sure the MTA has a rigorous safety culture that ensures every employee works to prevent unforeseen problems in the future. These panelists are some of the best in the business, and we want their scrutiny to make us better as well."

The six members of the panel are:

- Louis T. Cerny, former executive director of the American Railway Engineering Association (AREA, now known as AREMA), executive director of the Association of American Railroads Engineering Division.
- Mortimer L. Downey, former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Transportation and former MTA Executive Director and Chief Financial Officer.
- Jack Quinn, former member of the U.S. House of Representatives from New York who served on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.
- Conrad Ruppert, Jr., senior research engineer at the University of Illinois and 35-year veteran of Amtrak.
- Rodney Slater, former director of the Federal Highway Administration and U.S. Secretary of Transportation in the Clinton Administration.
- William Van Trump, former Senior Assistant Vice President of Engineering at the Union Pacific Railroad and director and past president of AREMA.

Metro-North, LIRR and New York City Transit have each experienced derailments in the last several months, with track-related defects identified as either a potential cause or a contributing factor. In addition, an employee fatality on a section of Metro-North track that had been closed to train traffic has pointed to a need to review safety procedures and the overall safety culture. The Blue Ribbon Panel will pay particular attention to track maintenance practices, and will determine whether any system-wide improvements to agency track and infrastructure programs would prevent future occurrences.