

Next issue
in 2 weeks –
Sat., May 20

The Main Street WIRE™

26th Year as Roosevelt Island's Independent Community Newspaper



Residents Laurence Brodsky and David Keller described their April 18 Tram experience to the City Council's Transportation Committee last Thursday. Color coverage of the April 18-19 rescues, center spread.

Transit Jams Make Ferries an Attractive Commuter Alternative – Well... to the Riders, Anyway

by Lillian Picchione

With the Tram out of service and Monday's rush-hour disruption of F-line service, ferry service for Roosevelt Island seems more appealing than ever. During the April 18 Community Board 8 meeting on the Island, City Councilmember Jessica Lappin publicly affirmed her interest in ferries. Octagon developer Bruce Becker reports that he "would like to see New York Water Taxi come to the Island," and has submitted plans for a dock off the pier near the chapel near the Octagon complex.

But with all this talk, how viable is ferry service? Issues include dock space, cost effectiveness and boat availability.

The advantages of ferry service are clear. Successful service would decrease the pressure on existing transportation resources by offering a new commuting option. It would offer an additional evacuation option in case of an emergency. If service left from the T-shaped dock near the Octagon, ferries would provide a more convenient option for residents of the northern end of the Island than existing services at Tram Plaza and the subway. Service to an existing pier at 90th Street would offer fast transit to the Upper East Side, a destination that is tantalizingly close but involves an awkward subway transfer at 59th Street. And ferry service can offer time savings. The now-discontinued service from 90th Street to Wall Street took only 15 minutes.

Route

Although there is a precedent for ferry service on the Island – a Manhattan service was provided briefly over ten years ago and, in the Island's pre-residential days, there was ferry service to the Island's hospitals – routes are a function of available docks. Of the two private carriers currently providing ferry service in the area, New York Water Taxi already provides service on the East River. However, the Water Taxi uses front-loading boats that require particular docking facilities. Currently, compatible docks exist only at 90th Street and E. 34th Street on the East Side of Manhattan.

According to Becker, additional docks could become available at 60th and 75th Streets at the edge of Manhattan. The 75th Street site, with its access to a number of hospitals, is especially desirable. These docks require extensive capital work and so are longer-term projects. In order to maintain a reliable schedule, the docking area must be deep enough that low tide won't ground the boat. The dock building process involves a combination of approvals from New York Economic Development Corporation (NYEDC), City Council, the affected community boards, the Coast Guard and the Army Corps of Engineers.

Like those across the river, the southern pier on Roosevelt Island requires extensive renovations before it would be usable for ferry service. This location would alleviate transportation pressure from the growing population of Southtown. RIOC President Herb Berman reports meeting

See **Ferry**, page 7



Batter up! The Main Street Children's Theatre is presenting *Damn Yankees* through Monday evening. (See *ComingUp*, page 3.)

Tram Systems Show Same Faults in Tests, RIOC Tells City Council Panel

What went wrong on April 18, when the Roosevelt Island Tramway left 68 rush-hour passengers hanging above the City?

That should really be a two-part question: What went wrong with the main system? And what then went wrong with the backup system?

Another question: How did the rescue go?

Those questions are under investigation. According to the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC), the State Department of Labor is involved, along with RIOC's Tramway consultants, the Doppelmayr Corporation, which operates the Tramway under contract to RIOC.

The Main Drive

In the course of a dialog with Mark Bee, the Doppelmayr representative, City Council Transportation Committee Chair John Liu

established two facts – that there have been similar failures over the years, cured by using a reset button on the SCR (Silicon-Controlled Rectifier) drive – and that those failures were replicated during testing that followed in the days after the night-long crisis.

Liu: *Over the last few years, we have [had] half a dozen disruptions in the SCR drive, the primary drive system. Would you consider that normal – that there'd be half a dozen disruptions of the primary drive system in as many years?*

Bee: *Well, the SCR drive system is a complex device that has lots of circuits and lots of safety systems, and it's not unusual that they fault occasionally. If there's anything outside of normal parameters, those can cause a fault. So it's not unusual to cause occasional faults. For the most part they can be reset with a button and the system will continue to operate.*

At another point, Bee told Liu that a list of outages provided to his committee included only those where a service interruption had exceeded 15 minutes. Apparently, there had been other occasions to reset the SCR drive.

Liu: *And these faults, are they just a phenomenon to be accepted as a matter of reality, or are there measures that can be implemented to minimize these kinds of faults?*

Bee: *Right now, and maybe Herb can respond to this, they are in the middle of an engineering review of the entire Tram system that was started approximately six months or a year ago. They hired a consulting engineer to do a complete review of the system and make recommendations on what kind of upgrades should the Tram have for the next 30 years.*

Catherine Johnson (RIOC Vice President for Operations): *The directors of RIOC approved a \$3.9 million capital plan for the upgrade of the Tramway system. We elected to engage an engineer who would do a survey for us, of state-of-the-art equipment that's currently available, [and] provide us with a series of options for upgrading the Tram which would assure*

See **Main Drive**, page 14

The Backup System

Doppelmayr told members of the Transportation Committee that its investigation is also covering the question of why the diesel backup system failed to work. In the hearing, Mark Bee played back his understanding of what transpired between the failure of the main drive system and the decision to mount rescue cages.

Bee: *From looking at the log, the shift supervisor first attempted to engage the backup diesel system approximately 12 minutes after the original stop. He was ultimately not able to get it operating. The manager came on site; he was also not*

See **Backup**, page 14

The Rescue

Efforts to bring 68 strandeers back to earth on April 18 briefly centered on getting the system's main drive running, but soon turned to the emergency diesel system.

Another system – the old "motor-generator set" that served the Tramway as main power until 1994 – was not available because, as RIOC President Herb Berman explained it in testimony before the City Council Transportation Committee, "The old MG set system, which we had elected to retain as a redundant backup, was not operating. We had committed late last year to restoring the damaged motor-generator that powered its operations. The motor-generator today is being repaired in a Connecticut repair shop, where technicians are having to handcraft replacement parts for the 30-year-old machine. We expect it to be returned and put back into operation this

See **Rescue**, page 15



Catherine Johnson and Herb Berman of RIOC, and Mark Bee of the Doppelmayr Company, testified last Thursday.

Loving the Tram

In last week's City Council hearing, both David Keller and Laurence Marie Brodsky, who were rescued from the Island-bound cabin, made a point of telling City Council Transportation Committee members that the Tramway should be restored to service.

Keller: *The Roosevelt Island Tramway is not just a form of transportation or a tourist attraction. It is part of Roosevelt Island's identity*

See **Loving**, page 15

Positive Spin

Understandably, the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation is eager to have an emphasis placed on what went right in the April 18 crisis, rather than on the systems that failed or how prolonged the stranding was.

Since *The WIRE's* last issue (April 22), for example, a RIOC Board member has pointed out that RIOC President Herb Berman and three Board members – Islanders

See **Spin**, page 15

Briefly...

- **Roosevelt Island Day** is set for Saturday June 10. The Coasters will provide afternoon entertainment.
- City Councilmember Jessica Lappin has asked the **MTA to postpone weekend service work** on the F-train line for the duration of the Tram outage. (See letter, page 19.)

The Editorial Page

No Injuries, Many Lessons

Yes, we can be grateful for that. We'd have much more to lament if one of the passengers stuck on the Tram April 18 had a medical emergency. As City Councilmember G. Oliver Koppell suggested, and as RIRA Common Councilor Frank Farance confirmed, we were *lucky* – **very** lucky.

There's a good deal to be learned from what happened three Tuesdays ago.

For RIOC, there are stern lessons about oversight. When one company supplies the system, sells the parts, supplies the consultants, and does the inspections – and you later find that repeated “faults” in the Tramway drive system were passed over by punching a reset button and never thoroughly investigated (until now), you know you've screwed up.

RIOC can compound that screw-up by hiring close associates of Doppelmayr to do the more extensive inspection and checkup that the April 18 incident requires, but shouldn't. As Koppell advised, “I would recommend that you engage an independent engineer, not somebody who is, in any way, connected to the Doppelmayr Company or to the manufacturer of the system.” That's because not just RIOC's failures of oversight are in question, but the work of Doppelmayr itself.

There's another lesson for RIOC in *communications*. Those stranded aboard the Tram cabins complained that they got more information from media reports relayed by cell phone than those in charge provided. That was a microcosmic short-term and critical example of the sense of security that goes missing when officials clam up. The macrocosmic and long-term view is important, too, and RIOC should learn to *communicate and consult* when making decisions to turn stop-sign zones into potentially dangerous yield zones, or deciding on changes to the Red Bus schedule and routing. (We have new reports of bus-bunching, the inevitable result when departures are not tied to some other, regular, triggering event.)

For residents now worried that their beloved Tram may be next to forever coming back into service, there's a lesson as old as the Declaration of Independence: When you don't elect the folks who push the buttons, you can expect them to take care of their own interests – not yours. It's an old complaint, but it bears repeating: **The RIOC Board of Directors should be composed of residents elected by residents, and the Board should have to power to hire and fire the president of RIOC.** How do we get there? Well, certainly not by sitting on our political behinds with our political hands under them.

Jessica and Pete

Jessica Lappin was on-scene at the Tramway shortly after the April 18 situation became known, at first in Manhattan, then on the Island. She and the Island's elected politicians, save one, were on hand next day, too, promising a hearing (already held) and new action to protect the rights of Roosevelt Island residents.

Pete Grannis intends to hold the State government's feet to the fire on its responsibilities to Roosevelt Island, and we need to urge him on. Too much, for too long, has been neglected here. The Island must live with the results of too many bad decisions made during the reign of George Pataki.

It's time that gets reversed, and Pete's the guy to do it. Together, they're formidable, and we gladly cheer them on – both Pete and Jessica.

DL



Published by **The Main Street WIRE**™
©2006 Unisource2000™ Inc.
531 Main St. #413, NYC10044

News **212-826-9055**
Urgent news **917-617-0449**
Advertising **212-751-8214**
Circulation **212-935-7534**
e-mail **editor@MainStreetWIRE.com**
in association with
Website NYC10044 – nyc10044.com

Managing Editor – Dick Lutz
Reporters – Mary Camper-Titsingh, Selwa Habib, Elly Stanton
Albany Correspondent – Erik Kriss
Chief Proofreader – Linda Heimer
Proofreaders – Dick FitzPatrick, Mickey Karpeles Bauer
Advertising Sales – Ellen Levy, Stu Feit
Circulation Managers – Sherie Helstien, Matthew Katz, Teri Sheridan
Circulation Assistants – Dexter Benjamin, Ron Davidson

Legal Counsel – Lewis Perkiss
Human Resources – David Bauer
Website NYC10044 facilities – Frank Farance
NYC10044.com Webmaster – Elena Zarembo

Founding Publisher – Jack Resnick
Editor Emeritus – Jim Bowser

Judi Arond, Bubu Arya, Steve Bessenof, Phillip Bias, Lynn Chambers, Mark Chipman, Thibault Coderrens, Vivianne Coderrens, Malcolm Cohen, Asaah Coston, Julian Edelman, Arlise Ellis, Don Eremin, Willen Falcon, Dan Folla, Diana Folla, Teresa Hasing, Roberta Hershey, Ken Kaplan, Matthew Katz, Mike Kolba, Omari Mack, Imam Mandia, Iris Marcano, Clarissa McCraley, Ekua Musumba, Penina Musumba, Clinton Narine, Sandra Narine, Jenny Olivera-Del Mastro, Essie Owens, Joan Pape, Ilana Papernik, Ron Schuppert, Raye Schwartz, Beryl Seaforth, Muhammad Fahad Shakeel, the Shinozaki family, Alan Ullick, Nina Winteringham, students of Legacy High School, and Sean Suarez with fellow Scouts from the Island Scout Troop.

In the April 8 *WIRE*, RIOC President Herbert Berman states that “self-sufficiency is not an option, but a mandate.” He invokes those magic words to justify leasing deals that RIOC has made or is considering, including the one with Dunkin’ Donuts.

I know of no law, rule, regulation or court order that requires this Island to be “self-sufficient.” Indeed, this Island, like Governor’s Island (which will be developed without housing) incurs extraordinary costs

island observer

that make it difficult, if not impossible, to reach that goal. For example, unlike the rest of the City, the Island must maintain the Tram and repair the seawall; it has to also maintain Motorgate, the Chapel and Blackwell House; it also collects garbage via the AVAC system. There is only so much that it can charge residents to cover these costs; a lot must come from its lease payments for ground rent and PILOTs or equivalents to real estate taxes. The Island is not part of New York City’s budget, where costs can be spread over a much larger tax revenue base.

While RIOC officials like to claim they manage the Island efficiently, that is not what the recent State Senator Brodsky’s report found. It found mismanagement, cronyism, padded payrolls and bonuses, and a bureaucracy closer to Kafka than to Peter Drucker’s “Essential Principles of Management.”

Current RIOC officials also like to boast that the Island has become self-sufficient through their efforts, but this is based on counting “one-shot” revenue deals (such as leasing Southtown land for full up-front payment of all ground rents due under 62-year-long leases) and on deferring capital and maintenance needs.

In fact, it was understood from inception that the Island’s true costs would exceed its revenues and that it would take subsidies from taxpayers to maintain the Island infrastructure and attract many of its diverse residents, some disabled, subsidized, and seniors living on fixed incomes.

The idea that the Island must be self-sufficient is not a “mandate” as Mr. Berman asserts, but simply a “policy” goal. However, the implications of this “policy” are significant: it drives RIOC into deals that produce one-shot revenue boosts, not necessarily good for the long-term health of the Island. It may also result in fast-food chains like Dunkin’ Donuts, which can pay higher rents, being given leases despite their adverse impact on other vendors here and upon the general character of our Main Street. Thus, at risk is the long term value and attraction of this small-town community, which can easily be sacrificed by the focusing on the mantra of “self-sufficiency.”

Robert Chira
The contributor is an attorney practicing law in Manhattan.

Letters deadline for May 20 issue: Tuesday, May 16
Letters received after deadline considered on a space-available basis.

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*. If you e-mail a letter, expect a confirming response and, if you don't receive one, resend and call 212 826-9055 to alert us that it's been sent.
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

To WIRE Editor Dick Lutz:

I am quite surprised that you have not attempted to sound out myself and the other [RIOC] Board Members who were on site during the Tram incident. Each of us stayed at the Tram site until the last passenger was safely on the ground. My wife left around 2:00 a.m. and the rest of us including Albertine, David, Herb, Jim, Andre, and everyone else stayed up until dawn observing and coordinating the evacuation. We were in constant communication with Judy Calogero until the situation stabilized well after midnight. No one asked the Board members to come to the scene... each of us came out of our respect for our positions and the importance of the moment. I did not see anyone else there at that hour purporting to be an advocate on Island issues. As I have previously suggested to you, my view is that your publication seems purposely one-sided rather than journalistic in nature. This is a real-life example. Please explain your rationale for this oversight. Further, please treat this as a letter to the editor and print it in your next issue. Thank you.

John Mannix
Member, RIOC Board of Directors

Editor’s Reply to John Mannix:

It’s pretty simple:
• I only know and can only report what I see or I am told.
• I did not see you at the scene.
• You’re perfectly capable of informing me of what you want me to know and report, as you have now belatedly done.
• You are correct in perceiving that *The WIRE* serves its readers, not RIOC. Nonetheless, for some years (almost ten, in fact) I have been urging RIOC to be more forthcoming with information, including positive information. (To encourage that, *The WIRE* provides the RIOC President with a column that undergoes no censorship or editing here.) But for years, you and other Board members tolerated a non-performing “spokesman” who communicated *nothing* to *The WIRE*.

In this instance, in particular, if you deemed it useful to communicate to the public, through *The WIRE*, that you and others were at the scene that Tuesday night/Wednesday morning, why did you not push that information through the pipeline of the public relations people who have been hired to communicate RIOC’s viewpoint, rather than assuming that I saw you and chose, for reasons of bias, to ignore your presence? Yes, I’ll be happy to print your letter, along with this response.

Finally, I will note that *The WIRE* received several letters criticizing RIOC for having no representative at the scene. In each case, I communicated to the writer that Herb Berman (whom I did observe on the scene) was present, so that the letters could be cleansed of that inaccuracy. My greatest interest is in accuracy, not advocacy (except in editorials and commentaries, where you can expect a resident point of view rather than a RIOC point of view), but RIOC withholds far more information (positive, neutral, and negative) than it communicates, and that is a serious disservice both to RIOC and to the readers of *The WIRE* (a/k/a “residents”). And one more thought: How about sitting down for an interview (which I’ll be happy to print verbatim, up to four *WIRE* pages in length, because I want your point of view to be communicated as articulately and completely as possible)? No holds barred: You can slam *The WIRE* all you want. You can answer, in your own words with your own viewpoint, all the questions that have accumulated over your years of service on the RIOC Board.

Dick Lutz, Managing Editor
The Main Street WIRE

Editor’s note: In a subsequent e-mail, Mannix declined the request for an interview, writing, “I am very private and would leave that to others.”

To the Editor:

I was not on the Tram that day but I could easily have been. I feel outraged for the suffering of the people that were. Why did the power supply fail? Why did the backup generator not work? How often was the backup generator electrical supply tested? Where are the records of those tests? These are the first questions that should be asked.

Ultimately, this was a straightforward and gross example of negligence and incompetence. But will these questions be asked, and by whom? Who will be held accountable? Who will lose their jobs? Will RIOC condescend to answer these questions?

Richard Alderslade

To RIOC President Herb Berman:

Referring to Wednesday morning’s Tramway Advisory (April 19), please let me point out that by 4:21 a.m. on that day, everyone on the Island already knew the Tram was down. Too bad it was down for eleven hours before the advisory went out! What I’m wondering is, what about Red Bus service to and from Manhattan? Not this time? Oh, and please don’t listen to the Mayor, who rides subways but doesn’t have to try to get on an F train to Manhattan during the morning rush! His statements about the Tram were among the most ill-informed I’ve ever heard!

Claude Lestelle

Editor’s note: Subsequent to Lestelle’s letter, RIOC began providing a \$2.00 bus service to/from Manhattan.

To the Editor, *New York Times*:

First, thank you for the comprehensive reporting about last week’s Tramway incident. Regardless of the cause of the power outage and all the side stories that go with this, the fact remains that everyone was *safely* rescued by the efforts of the Tramway staff, FDNY and NYPD.

In yesterday’s *Week in Review* (April 23), on page 2, there is a photo and reference to our
See **Letters**, page 18

When F train service was disrupted during Monday morning's rush hour last week, we got a vivid example of the need for a menu of transportation alternatives available to residents on Roosevelt Island.

The Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation leaders quickly redeployed our Red Buses to add a lot more runs to carry commuters into Manhattan. The buses ran express in both directions, alleviating the problems faced by the commuters until the subway resumed service later that same morning.

The RIOC buses, which normally just run around the Island, had already been making regular runs into Manhattan to handle commuters who have been displaced from the Tram, which remains closed for investigation of the stoppage of April 18.

In my testimony to a recent meeting of the City Council Transportation Committee, I assured Councilwoman Jessica Lappin, who represents the Island, and her colleagues, that we remain committed to reopening the Tram as soon as investigations into the causes of the stoppage are completed and any necessary repairs and upgrades are made.

And I briefed them on the plan approved last fall by the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation Board of Directors for a \$3.9 million program to modernize and upgrade the Tram, which is now 30 years old.

I also spoke about the need for discussions to commence among residents, elected officials, and RIOC with the goal of increasing the transportation alternatives for Island residents, including the possibility of adding ferry or water taxi service to Manhattan.

The F train stoppage underscored the need for expanded transportation alternatives since this is an Island.

Today, about 5,000 passengers enter the F train sta-

tion on Roosevelt Island daily, and many more use express bus service to Queens Plaza. About 4,000 passenger-trips a day are recorded on the tram.

But the Tram proved its value beyond its regular ridership during December's transit workers' strike, when commuters from Queens were able to drive onto the Island and take the Tram to Manhattan. Ridership on the Tram tripled on the peak day of the transit strike, demonstrating once again the value of transportation alternatives.

As for the status of the Tram, we are currently awaiting completion of investigations by the State Department of Labor and by our own engineers. After they are completed, we will have to make certain that any problems in the software or hardware are corrected in order to ensure safe operation. We remain proud of the work done by RIOC staffers along with police and fire personnel on the night of April 18 that resulted in all 68 passengers and crew safely evacuated from the stranded cars.

It is sometimes frustrating to preach patience in the wake of the Tram stoppage, especially since we remain committed to its reopening as soon as we are assured it can be safely operated. But as Mayor Bloomberg stressed the night of April 18, safety is the first priority.

There can be no compromise on that commitment.



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

west side of Main Street past the subway station. I've heard some positive reports, because this allows the bus to stop right in front of the station with the door opening on the subway side of the street. I've also heard some negative reports because it injects a delay by increasing the length of the ride. The change was made with no input from the residents and there were no notices posted on the kiosks to inform the public. Whether it was a good change or a bad change is debatable, but including the residents in the decision prior to implementation would have permitted both issues to be examined and probably would have garnered more support for whatever was eventually decided. I'll just never understand why excluding the residents from these decisions ever makes sense.

You may also have noticed the new red trash cans. Admittedly, I'm no expert when it comes to trash removal. But \$2,000 per can, for a total of \$80,000, by any standard, is absurd. I still don't know what was



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

work against the replacement cost and, had we purchased cans for about \$500 apiece, I probably would have splurged and gotten new ones. But given that the cost was \$2,000 per can, there's just no way to justify it.

Last, I'm putting in one more plug for RIRA membership. It was encouraging at the Tram hearing to meet a resident of Southtown. RIRA wants to include our new neighbors in its meetings. I'm urging any Southtown and Octagon residents reading this to think about running for the RIRA Common Council this year. But, in the meantime, just drop by one of our meetings. We've got seats open for your buildings and you can join mid-session to get a feel for what we do. But, be sure to come to the meeting on June 7 because we take a summer hiatus and won't be back again until the fall.

COMING UP

— This Weekend —

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.

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**. >

Candidates' Night with candidates for Governor Spitzer and Suozzi, Lt. Gov. candidate Paterson, State Comptroller candidate Hevesi, and State Attorney General candidates Brodsky, Cuomo, Green, King, Maloney, and O'Donnell, **Sun., May 7**, 4:30 p.m., NYU Medical Center, 550 First Avenue (at 31st/32nd St.); presented by various Democratic clubs.

<**Island Schools of Art** exhibit continues at Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main Street. Gallery hours: **Sat.-Sun., 11-5; Wed. & Fri., 6-9**.

— The Coming Week —

Spoon River Anthology, presented by the Main Street Teen Theatre, **Fri.-Sat.-Sun., May 12-14** at 7:30 p.m., matinee **Sun., May 14** at 2:00. Evening, \$15 (Seniors \$10); matinee, \$12 (Seniors \$8); Main Street Theatre, 548 Main Street; enter at the red awning behind the video store. Reservations and information: **212-371-4449**.

— Future Events —

RIOC Board of Directors meets, **Thur., May 18**, 4:30 p.m., Good Shepherd Community Center. Afternoon/evening meetings normally end with an opportunity for members of the public to address the Board.

Book Discussion Group, **Thur., May 18**, 6:30 p.m., at the Library. *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini.

The Main Street WIRE – Next issue, **Sat., May 20**. (To receive e-mail bulletins between issues, send an *AddMe* message to Bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com.) **Advertising Deadline:** Ads in the paper, Thursday, May 11; decision on circulars/inserts for *The Bag*, Mon., May 15; they are due Thur., May 18. **Future issues:** 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 20, through 5:00 a.m. Monday, May 22. Service to Manhattan to run normally.

Town Hall Meeting on Comprehensive Care Management, sponsored by the Eastwood Building Committee, **Tue., May 23**, 7:00 p.m., Good Shepherd Community Center. Refreshments.

No weekend F-train service from Manhattan to Roosevelt Island from 12:01 a.m. Saturday, May 27, through 5:00 a.m. Monday, May 29. Service to Manhattan to run normally.

Urinetown, presented by The Main Street Teen Theatre, **Sat., June 3** at 7:30 p.m., **Sun., June 4** at 2:00 and 7:00 p.m., **Mon., June 5** at 7:00 p.m. Evening shows \$15 (Seniors, \$10), matinee \$12 (Seniors \$8). At the Main Street Theatre, 548 Main Street (enter at the red awning behind the video store). Reservations and information: **212 371-4449**.

PS/IS 217 Career Day, **Fri., June 9**, 8:00-12:00. Speakers needed.

Roosevelt Island Day, **Sat., June 10**, all day. Afternoon entertainment: The Coasters.

Dance Concert presented by The Main Street Theatre & Dance Alliance, **Sun., June 11**. Times to be announced. Reservations: **212-371-4449**.

Book Discussion Group, **Thur., June 22**, 6:30 p.m., at the Library. *Disgrace* by J. M. Coetzee.

There is no charge to list Island events here. E-mail information to ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com or leave information at the lobby desk at 531 Main Street, addressed to *The WIRE*. Please provide a phone number for possible follow-up.

New Giant-Size Tram Postcards now available – see page 10

Steve Marcus is still out of the country so once again I'm filling this space in his stead. However, even though he's in Israel he heard about the Tram stoppage and if you read the last *WIRE*, you probably saw his letter. We're making international news, unfortunately.

The New York City Council's Transportation Committee held a hearing last Thursday to ask RIOC and Doppelmayr (the company that manages the Tram for RIOC) questions about what happened on Tuesday, April 18. They also questioned Con Edison, and they listened to testimony from some residents. At this

point we don't seem to have any answers. One thing is clear – Con Edison did not have a power surge that night, so the problem seems to be home-grown. The New York State Labor Department is conducting an

investigation, but there's no word yet as to when the Tram will be back in operation.

We owe a great deal of thanks to our City Councilmember, Jessica Lappin, for coordinating this hearing and for her testimony that day. Jessica, along with Assemblyman Pete Grannis, did an outstanding job representing our interests at a press conference prior to the hearing and at the hearing itself. Borough President Scott Stringer and Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney sent representatives to the meeting and also submitted statements to the Committee.

Of course, everyone's first concern is safety. With that in mind, it was very encouraging to hear the comments of the committee members, all of whom were very supportive of getting the Tram back in operation as soon it's determined to be safe.

The really disheartening thing, in my opinion, was to watch the RIOC contingent walk out of the hearing before the residents spoke. I can't say I was surprised but, to me, at least, it spoke volumes about their lack of interest in the concerns of the people living on the Island.

By now you've probably noticed that the Red Bus is running into Manhattan. Some of you may remember that RIRA has been debating this issue with RIOC for several years now, since the blackout of 2003. Whatever supposed issues there were with sending the buses off-Island during an emergency have evidently been resolved. It's a relief to know that we've got an alternate means off the Island and, presumably, if circumstances arise where we need to use these vehicles more frequently, we'll be able to do so.

Speaking of buses, those of you who ride the Red Bus on the Island have taken the new route which goes down the east side of Main Street when it comes to the fork in the road at Blackwell House, then turns west and passes the Tram, then goes north along the

The RIRA Column

Senior Center

Monday

9:30, **Yoga**
10:30-11:30, **English as 2nd Language**
10:30, **Blood Pressure Screening**
12:30, **"Oldies" Movies**
1:00, **Computers**
1:00, **Tai Chi**

Tuesday

10:00, **Get Stronger Bones**
10:30, **Shoppers' Bus**
2:00, **Bingo**
2:00, **Painting & Sculpting**
6:00, **Ballroom Dancing**
7:30, **Games (RISA)**

Wednesday

9:15, **Stay Well**
10:30, **Computers**
10:30, **Shoppers' Bus**
7:00, **Pokeno (RISA)**

Thursday

10:00, **Get Stronger Bones**
10:30, **Creative Arts**
12:30, **Movie**
7:00, **Dance**

Friday

9:30, **Yoga**
10:30, **Computers**
1:00, **Bridge**
7:00, **Games (RISA)**

Saturday

7:30, **Bingo (RISA)**

Special Events

Mon., May 8, 11:00, MetroCard Bus
Wed., May 10, Age in Action Trip (time TBA)
Wed., May 17, Atlantic City trip
Sun., May 21, Senior Day
Mon., May 22, Montauk trip, 8:30 a.m.
Wed., May 24, Protect-Yourself Lecture on crime, 10:15 a.m.

Home-delivered meals:
212-744-5022, ext. 1203



Purveyors of fine blooms



Refreshingly unique
arrangements
for all occasions

30-08 36th Street
Astoria 11103
718-204-7230
www.GrandAveFloralCo.com

serving
Roosevelt Island

Roosevelt Island Day Nursery



Open House

4 River Road

Monday, May 8 & Wednesday, May 10 • 9:15-10:15am

- Please come meet the director and parents, and see our classrooms in action
- For more information or to schedule an alternate time to visit, call 212-593-0750

Accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and licensed by the NYC Department of Health

Mark your calendar...



We Are One
Boutique and Gifts

Mothers Day Special:
Petite through Plus Sizes, 20% off
selected items through Mothers Day.

599 Main Street
Monday through Saturday, 10 to 8
212-702-0767
Major credit cards accepted

**ATTORNEY ON
ROOSEVELT ISLAND**

Long-time Roosevelt Island resident

Free consultation for Island residents
Evening and weekend appointments available • Home visits

- Divorce & Family Law
- Personal Injury Law
- Criminal Law

- Wills, Trusts, & Estates
- Real Estate: Closings
- Business Law

PHILIP GRONER, ESQ.
67 Wall Street, 22nd Floor, #8028
New York, New York 10005-3111

Office 212-709-8028 • Cell 917-539-6415

Color us affordable.



The 39¢ color copy sale* at The UPS Store.

The UPS Store®



Save now on color copies. Plus, use our professional document services for the quality and accuracy you expect and deserve.

- Full-color or black-and-white digital printing and copying
- Binding, laminating, collating and shrink-wrapping
- Ship your documents anywhere in the world
- Paper and office supplies
- Business cards, letterhead, labels, envelopes and stationery
- Fax services
- And more

We have thousands of locations including one near you.
So stop in and ask us for details!

1173A Second Ave
Between 61st & 62nd
New York, NY 10021
Ph: 212 832 1390

1275 First Ave
Between 68th & 69th
New York, NY 10021
Ph: 212 535 3325

*At participating locations.
©2006 Mail Boxes Etc., Inc.

CHINA 1 KITCHEN

Delicious Chinese Health Food
Order for Delivery or Take-Out
Szechuan, Cantonese & Mandarin Cuisine

Call 212-588-0806 / 0663

Our vegetables are farm-fresh daily, and cooked only with pure vegetable oil. We serve brown rice. All dishes can be altered to your liking. Catering for all occasions.

帆
風
順

Sunday-Thursday 11 a.m.-11 p.m.
Friday-Saturday 11 a.m.-midnight
FAST Free Delivery (min. \$6)
609 Main Street • Roosevelt Island

本
萬
利

Accountable Financial Management Corp.

You have financial questions???
We have financial answers!!!

- **Financial Planning** – Retirement, College Funding, etc.
- **Insurance** – Apartment, Health, Auto, Long-Term Care
- **Investments** – Securities offered thru CJM Planning, Member NASD/SIPC
- **Mortgages** – Registered mortgage broker – NYS Banking Department loans arranged through third-party providers – We represent over 40 banks
- **Real Estate** – Purchase, rentals, sales
- **Tax Preparation** – Tax reduction planning

212-644-8231
Webpage: **Accountfin.com**
E-mail: **generalinfo@accountfin.com**
599 Main Street • Roosevelt Island

OLYMPIC

LUXURY CAR SERVICE, INC.

1-718-626-8000

1-718-728-3030

Serving Roosevelt Island for Over Ten Years

- Door-to-door service •
- Long distance and local calls •
- Service to all area airports •
- **Call us about your return trip from the airport •**

Olympic has the most experienced dispatchers, and the most reliable drivers with the newest late-model Lincoln Town Cars, and our most courteous phone operators, to provide residents of Roosevelt Island with the best possible service.

We at Olympic provide the safest and most reliable car service. All our cars are fully insured and registered with the Taxi and Limousine Commission.

For ten years, your response has been great. Every year around this time, we have sent discount coupons to our customers. ***This year, we're providing something even better.***

Enclosed with this issue of *The Main Street WIRE*, you'll find your very own **PERSONAL DISCOUNT CARD**, which can be used for great savings every time you call Olympic.

Our special discount rates are printed on the card. Use it whenever you need the best car service available. In addition, for your guests and visitors, cut out the coupon below.

When you need the best, call us. We are proud to serve Roosevelt Island. ***When it really counts, you can count on us.***

Thank you,
John Agosta
President

When it really counts, count on Olympic!

Look for your personal discount card, enclosed in this issue of *The WIRE*.

And clip the one-time coupon to the right for a guest to use.

PS: If your special discount card has fallen out of your copy of *The WIRE*, or you need a copy for another family member, we'll be happy to send one out. Just give us a call.

Special discounts are included in these low airport fares:

JFK \$30

LGA \$15

Newark \$62 + tolls

• Call us about your return trip from the airport •

Discount on all other fares:

\$1 off any fare under \$20

\$2 off any fare over \$20

Clip & Save this Guest Coupon



“This beautifully written, meticulously researched work is a ‘must-read’ ... for all readers who are interested in learning about the challenges and joys of the trans-Atlantic crossing made by millions of European immigrants in the late nineteenth century.

“Richard and Aloysius Lutz have written a compelling tale about the hardships encountered by a group of poor Polish immigrants, viewed through the eyes of newlyweds Paul and Jadwiga Adamik. Readers are introduced to Poles and Polish folklore from several regions of then-partitioned Poland, as well as the tensions that existed between Poles and the three nations that occupied Poland in the nineteenth century: Prussia, Russia, and Austria.

“This work of historical fiction will resonate with readers whose ancestors, three or four generations ago, made the same difficult decision to uproot their families from their familiar surroundings in Europe in order to secure a better life in America. Their stories about their emigration from the Old World, often carefully passed down from generation to generation, have been woven into the fabric of *Jadwiga’s Crossing*.

“For many Americans today, the story of Paul and Jadwiga Adamik’s crossing offers a fresh look at the courage of, and sacrifices made by, their grandparents and great-grandparents over 140 years ago. *Jadwiga’s Crossing* offers masterful storytelling – a riveting journey into the past.”

—Dr. Deborah Anders Silverman
Author, *Polish-American Folklore*

Jadwiga’s Crossing, the novel.
By the father-and-son team,
Aloysius A. Lutz and Richard J. Lutz.

Trade paperback
\$19.95
Available now at JadwigasCrossing.com
or call 212 826-9055 to order

Also available from BarnesAndNoble.com,
Amazon.com, and iUniverse.com

Cover:
Charles Frederic Ulrich, (1858-1908), *In the Land of Promise, Castle Garden, 1884*, oil on wood panel, 28 3/8 x 35 3/4 in.
Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington DC, Museum Purchase, Gallery Fund 00.2. © The Corcoran Gallery of Art/CORBIS

8th Annual

NYU Medical Center

RUSK INSTITUTE
of Rehabilitation Medicine

WELLNESS DAY

Free



Free

Raffles

LIVING WITH DIABETES

Monday, May 22nd, 2006

NYU Medical Center, 550 First Avenue
Farkas Auditorium (31st Street)
Low Cost Lunch Available

Diabetes

Medical Overview of Diabetes
10:00 - 10:45 a.m.

Treating Type II Diabetes
10:45 - 11:30 a.m.

The Role of Nutrition in the
Prevention and Management
11:30 - 12:15 p.m.

Cultural Sensitivity to
Living with Diabetes
1:00 - 2:15 p.m.

Exercise and Blood Sugar Control
2:15 - 3:00 p.m.

Coping with Diabetes Management
3:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Health Fair

Raffle
4:15 pm

Workshops

Call (212) 263-5018 or visit us at: [www. Ruskinstitute.org](http://www.Ruskinstitute.org)

Stipend-Paying Volunteer Opportunities for Older Adults

ReServe, a new nonprofit, is now receiving applications from New Yorkers interested in challenging, skills-based work for nonprofit agencies. The professionals sought are retired or soon-to-be-retired journalists, teachers, lawyers, accountants, artists, social workers, consultants, advertising, ad sales and public relations specialists, librarians, paralegals, human resources specialists, administrators and anyone with skills and experience to share.

Our pilot programs are conducted at a number of established social and cultural institutions in the greater metropolitan area. Each institution will pay participants a stipend for approximately 15 hours of work each week. For more information, please contact us at:
info@ReServeInc.org
or **718-923-1400**, extension 247.

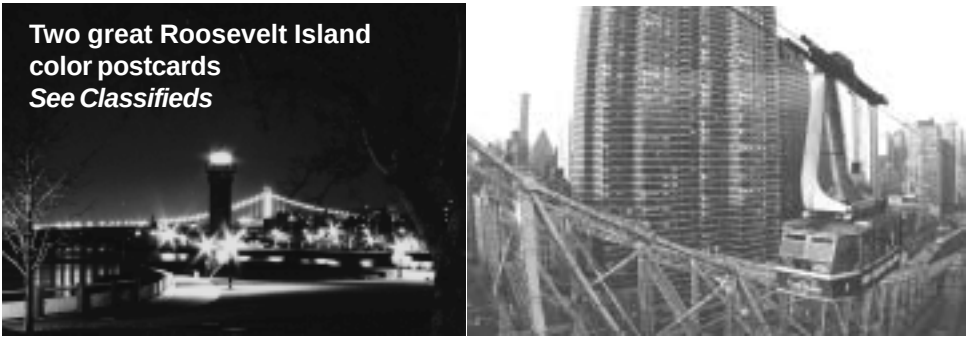
ReServe
Next Steps for Older Adults

856

That’s the number of current subscribers to *The WIRE’s* e-mail bulletin service. To keep abreast of important Island news between issues, send an *AddMe* message to editor@MainStreetWIRE.com. **Obsolete addresses have recently been purged; if you did not receive a bulletin Monday of this week (subway outage), please renew with your current e-mail address.**

It’s free.

Two great Roosevelt Island
color postcards
See Classifieds



Ferry from page 1

with other government officials and describes the efforts so far as “the start of a discussion.”

Roosevelt Island’s Chapel dock involves more minor adjustments. Becker and Becker designed a simple dock addition and submitted it for permitting last winter. Although the permits have not yet been granted, Bruce Becker retains his goal “to have Water Taxi in service by the end of summer.”

Becker believes that capital costs of the dock modifications will be covered by a federal grant set aside for ferry projects in New York. This is key, because according to Pat Smith of New York Waterway, the docks can cost a half million dollars to install. While he is likely referring to extensive dock renovations, any capital expenditures are unlikely to be recouped, given the high cost of simply running service.

Once the dock addition receives approval, Becker would like to see a route similar to the discontinued service from 90th Street to 34th Street to Wall Street. If docks are made available at 75th and/or 60th, those stops could be included.

If demand warrants, separate service could be considered. Worth looking into would be weekend ser-

vice from Roosevelt Island to the Upper East Side. Since much of Water Taxi’s service is for commuters, there may be boats available on the weekends that could be pressed into service for this shopping route.

Cost-effectiveness

Cost effectiveness is an issue because both New York Water Taxi and New York Waterway are for-profit companies. Ferries will only run if the money returned in ticket sales or subsidies matches the cost of providing service.

Some services recently introduced have not held up after trial. New York Waterway ran an Upper East River service from 90th Street to 34th Street to Wall Street’s Pier 11, but discontinued it due to low ridership. After taking over the service, New York Water Taxi then discontinued the route as well. New York Water Taxi now runs a Queens/Brooklyn East River service but eliminated it over the winter. Service was reintroduced May 1 but with some route changes.

For public transit to be effective, it must be reliable. If residents move to Roosevelt Island expecting to be able to commute to the Upper East Side by ferry, a sudden decision to revoke service would cause disruption.



According to Stacey Sherman, who represents New York Water Taxi, fixed expenses include the boat, fuel and staff for a given trip pair. While she did not offer the cost of a typical run, small Water

Taxis seat 75 people and tickets run about \$5.00 per ride. Assuming no subsidies, costs would be covered for something less than \$375 per ride – likely significantly less, because full morning ferries must cover the costs for the lightly used mid-day runs.

If fares do not cover these expenses, local government or developers who value the service can step in with a subsidy. In the same way that ground rents help pay for Tram operation, developers and management companies might subsidize ferry service. In the case of Roosevelt Island, Becker says he expects the service to be self-sustaining – he points out that the 1,000 new residents of the Octagon would be a significant source of ridership. But he also indicated that he is prepared to offer a small subsidy should it be necessary for start-up.

How viable would our service be long-term? Stable ferry service has a few key characteristics. According to Pat Smith, a spokesperson for NY Waterway, a key ingredient is that the dock be sited at a safe location “that is easily accessible on the land side.” Riders should be able to easily access the ferry terminal.

On Roosevelt Island, the Chapel dock is convenient to the Octagon and within five minutes of Manhattan Park, but would be less attractive to residents of the “WIRE” buildings (Westview, Island House, Rivercross, Eastwood) or Southtown. The dock is accessible via a road along the west side of The Octagon, although any parking or drop-off might disrupt parking for Dayspring Church, which uses the chapel there.

Because many Manhattan-bound commuters will still need a MetroCard, riders must feel that the added cost of a ferry trip is worth

the additional expense. Ferries that succeed are usually faster than other modes. They often include amenities such as weather-protected lower decks, comfortable seats, and food and beverage sales. As an example, NY Waterway cites its service from Bellford, in Monmouth County, NJ. A trip to Wall Street that would take two hours by train and PATH takes only forty minutes by ferry. The monthly cost, \$500, buys a passenger 50-plus hours in saved commuting time.

The Roosevelt Island service would not have the same advantages. The trip to Manhattan is only minutes long, decreasing the value of amenities like food and beverage service. The ferry would drop customers on the Eastern edges of Manhattan, whereas the Tram and subways allow for more convenient mid-town arrival. Admittedly, this is less of an issue if service includes a stop at Wall Street’s Pier 11, which is a short walk to job centers.

Frequency is another key component. A reliable schedule and frequent departures factor into a rider’s choice to use a ferry.

Boat Availability

A final factor in ferry service is the availability of boats, the decision to run service to Roosevelt Island may involve changing existing routes to meet the demand. As always, these are decisions to be made by the ferry operator.

Even with a compatible dock and local support, any decision to provide new service first requires a study of cost effectiveness by the ferry company. Any decision about providing ferry service will require the operator to first take a hard look at census data and surveys about where Roosevelt Islanders work and want to travel. Ultimately, it’s a business matter.



Raymond A. Werchen

Eastwood resident Raymond A. Werchen, one of the original residents of the building, passed away Friday, April 7, at age 97.

During his working life, he was a well-known and respected attorney, writer, and tennis umpire.

He was married for 65 years and lived in New York City all his life.



A New York Sun Columnist Calls Tramway “Redundant,” Drawing a Firm and Immediate Response From Islanders – Roughly, “Get Lost”

To Davidson Goldin:

The Roosevelt Island Tramway is an icon that ranks alongside places to see and things to do in New York with the Empire State Building, the Statue of Liberty, Central Park, Rockefeller Center, Macy’s, St. Patrick’s Cathedral, The Metropolitan Museum, The Museum of Modern Art, the Brooklyn Bridge, and the 59th Street Bridge, to name a scant few. From the moment the Tram opened, it was no mere conveyance to and from. It was an immediate hit. It was an addition to the quality of life in our City. A City with no lack of cultural and intellectual offerings. Think of it.

Look at it...an aerial Tramway in the heart of New York City. What a ride. The views, the exhilaration of being able to watch the City in action while traveling across the East River to an experiment in City living that has made Roosevelt Island one of the most desirable places to live and raise a family that I know of. I have listened to and participated in more conversations that have been started by total strangers riding on the Tram than I can count – sometimes when it was not even my native language.

Imagine New York City without the Tram. Let there be no doubt about it. We have to make sure that what happened last week never, ever happens again. It can be done. The engineering fundamentals are already in place that ensure safe, reliable transportation for residents, Island workers and visitors. What is sorely needed now is a dependable backup system that works and the trained personnel available on-site, to run the back-up should it ever again become necessary.

David Enock

To Davidson Goldin:

Why is it that people who don’t live on Roosevelt Island always want to run our lives? With all due respect, you should mind your own business when it comes to our mode of transportation. If you’d done your homework, you would have discovered that the Tram is a very convenient and very safe means of transportation. Those people who don’t feel comfortable taking it don’t.

The F train is overcrowded in the morning rush-hour commute, which results in wait time, sometimes up to three trains in order to get on. And again, homework: the Tram is regularly maintained. On weekends the F train is often not running into Manhattan; the Tram is both a pleasure and a convenience. And 1 in 30 years is not a bad rating. I do agree that RIOC needs to do a lot more to reassure the public that the Tram is safe; maybe getting the backup generator fixed would be a good beginning. They too, don’t live here. I think that if they did, they would be more apt to take better care of their customers.

Alexis Villafane

To Davidson Goldin:

Comments on your recent column: *Roosevelt Island’s Tram is outdated...* Oh? I recently rode the glittering one in Singapore. It had an advantage over ours: They make money selling souvenirs celebrating it, which fly out of the huge gift shop there. *...and unreliable.* Compared to what? It’s been far more reliable than the subway. Twice this week I couldn’t get directly home on the F train – had to go way out to Roosevelt Avenue in Queens and come all the way back. *It became redundant when the MTA opened a subway station on the Island two decades ago.* So which other duplicated system shall we eliminate, the bus or the train that go over so many of the same routes? Redundancy is your only hope in a high tech world. It’s good city planning. During the rush hours, you can’t get on the first packed train or two that comes. The Tram relieves that. May I invite you over for a cup of tea? When you take the Tram in the morning, you will look back on Manhattan, a pink City made rosy by the morning sun. When you come in the evening, you will see each of New York’s signature skyscrapers amid all the others, lights twinkling, a magical City. It lifts your heart. The subway can’t. May I ask you to put on your reporter’s hat and dig into the story of why all the backup, fail-safe systems failed? A Boy Scout earning a merit badge would have gotten it right.

Ethel Grodzins Romm

To Davidson Goldin:

You don’t live on Roosevelt Island, so you don’t know that the Tram is our lifeline. We have lived here for 30 years, and the banks, schools, stores, and hospitals we use are in the vicinity of Second Avenue. A great many of us work at the U.N., and the Tram makes living here pleasant. If we had to use the F train, we would have to walk from 63rd and Lexington to 42nd and First Avenue and back each day. From the Tram, it is a short and enjoyable walk down Second Avenue. The convenience of the Tram is the main reason why we moved here. The buildings are converting to co-ops. Who do you think will buy these apartments if the only way of getting off the Island is the F Train? Think again, before you meddle into something that you don’t understand and which is not really your business.

Gwendolyn Johnson Acsadi

Shortly after the April 18 Tram stranding, *The New York Sun* published a column by Davidson Goldin, calling the Tramway a “money-losing tourist attraction, operated by a state authority,” and called it “obsolete and unsafe,” “outdated and unreliable,” further asserting, “It became redundant when the MTA opened a subway station on the Island two decades ago. Those shiny red gondolas are long overdue for a museum. Or a trash heap.” Islanders responded with a blizzard of e-mail and letters, some of which were shared with *The WIRE*. Here, we reprint a few. All the letters will be available in the future with this issue of *The WIRE* on Website NYC10044 at nyc10044.com.

To Davidson Goldin:

The only thing that should be shut down because it is outdated and does not work properly is you. Journalists should report the news based on fact and you obviously don’t know them regarding the Roosevelt Island Tram.

- The subway platform is dangerously overcrowded at rush hour(s) every day, with a high proportion of the riders being young children.
- The population continues to grow as new buildings are erected each year.
- The Tram draws tourists to the Island which helps its economy.
- Major films include the Tram almost every year.
- The safety of the Tram is certified periodically by qualified engineers.
- No one has ever incurred an injury due to the operation of the Tram.
- The subway elevators are usually not operational, which leaves the Tram as the only method of transportation for residents and hospital patients who use wheelchairs.

You need to be in another line of work where responsibility is not a requirement.

Bruce Barniker

To The New York Sun:

Who the *hell* is *he* to make this outrageous statement! If Davidson Goldin feels so strongly about the subway he should ride it every morning and every night. The Tram is actually more reliable and faster than the subway. You’ve heard very little about Tram accidents because there have been so few. Most of the Tram’s problems have been related to lack of maintenance, not reliability. What is unreliable is the present administration of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation and its inability or interest in implementing proper maintenance, upgrades and emergency preparedness. As for redundancy, there is nothing redundant about people in wheelchairs getting stuck on a subway platform ten stories below the ground at the Roosevelt Island subway station because the MTA won’t maintain or upgrade their elevators and escalators. Next thing we know, Mr. Goldin will call for Roosevelt Island’s disabled community to add their walkers and wheelchairs to the trash heap or send them to a museum. Obviously he will find them redundant, too!

Raye Schwartz

To the Editor, The New York Sun:

Davidson Goldin, in calling for the permanent shutdown of the Roosevelt Island Tram, shows his lack of understanding of the Tram’s purpose. It is far more than the “money-losing tourist attraction” that he describes, and was not made “redundant” when subway service was introduced. The Tram is a vital transportation service for the Island’s 10,000 residents. Mr. Goldin should visit the subway station on a weekday morning during rush hour, when Island commuters often must wait for several packed F trains to go by before they can squeeze onto one. Or he could stop by on one of the many weekends over the past few months when there has been no subway service because the MTA is doing track work. And the overcrowding on the subway will only get worse as thousands more come to live on the Island in the new housing that is being built or is planned. Since neither the State nor the City made plans for better subway service to the Island to accommodate the population increase, the Tram is a necessary alternative. Mr. Goldin undoubtedly has other options if the subway service in his neighborhood is unavailable. He can probably walk a short distance to another subway line, or take a nearby bus. Lacking the Tram, Roosevelt Islanders’ only option is a bus to Long Island City to connect to another subway line, resulting in an enormous increase in travel time. Roosevelt Island also is home to many people with disabilities, who have a terrible time trying to navigate the subways. The Tram is far more accessible for people who use wheelchairs or who have difficulty walking. As for the Tram being a money-losing proposition, what transportation service isn’t? The deficit for the Tram is nothing compared to the MTA’s various operations, and the City even runs the Staten Island Ferry for free. The Tram is far more than something for “tram fanatics” to

To The New York Sun:

Even if Davidson Goldin doesn’t care for the commuters of Roosevelt Island and the fact that, even prior to the Tram’s suspension, it was almost impossible to squeeze on the subway during the morning commute, he might spare a thought for the developers who’ve sunk hundreds of millions of dollars into new developments on the Island. Specifically, Hudson-Related and Becker and Becker are in the process of building, selling, and leasing hundreds of new condo/apartment units here, based on the accessibility to all the City has to offer. They must be recoiling in horror at the possibility that anyone in authority might heed his call to end Tram service to the Island. There’s nothing quaint or touristy about the Tram. Thousands of regular commuters use it every day, and it’s an increasingly essential element in our City’s mass transit. The F line subway is already massively over capacity and without the gondolas “in the air,” the current residents of Roosevelt Island, let alone the thousands of new ones, will lose one of the key reasons to live here: reliable and fast access to Manhattan. We need to get it fixed and running as soon as possible. I invite Mr. Goldin to visit Roosevelt Island to see for himself why ending Tram service would be such a disastrous idea.

Graham Cannon, Vice-Chair
Island House Tenants Association

Dear Mr. Goldin:

You obviously are not a resident of Roosevelt Island and have no idea how strongly we feel about our Tram. Although we do have a subway, are you aware of how often the elevators and escalators are out of order? Why that is so important to us is that there are many disabled and elderly who live on the Island, and the elevators cannot be relied on. You figure out how someone in a wheelchair can get down to the train without an elevator. How about getting off the train and then finding out you can’t get up to the street level? I’ve seen it happen, and neighbors have to carry them up the stairs or escalators. Not only that, our train platform and trains are not flush, so that someone in a powered wheelchair cannot easily get onto the train. Have you been at our train station during rush hour? On most mornings most of us have to wait for three trains to go by before we can board. The Tram at least alleviates some of the heavy train usage. Are you aware that our population is almost doubling within the next few years? Of all the things to write about. Where have you been? Are you aware that we do not vote for the people who run our Island? The people who run this Island are appointed by the Governor. Are you aware of how badly this Island has been maintained through the years? Are you aware that our landmarks are crumbling before one’s eyes? Are you aware that our buildings are being forced out of the Mitchell-Lama program and that this community will no longer be affordable? Why not write about something that can help the residents? Don’t even think about taking away our Tram. You’ve gotten your issues confused.

Vicki Feinmel

To Davidson Goldin:

Do you live on Roosevelt Island? Have you ever taken the Tram? Where did you get the absurd idea that the Tram needs to be shut down? First of all, it is of great necessity to the residents; secondly, do you really believe that everything over 35 years old is obsolete? I grew up in Italy and we used Trams like this to go up the mountains every winter. As a matter of fact, we still do. Some of them are even older, but we maintain them properly and bless them for they are of great use to us, as is the Roosevelt Island Tram. Maybe the technicians should undergo a more rigorous training, and more funds should be allocated to a mode of transportation that makes us Islanders proud – and has taken us to work safely for years. Should older skyscrapers be destroyed because they undergo sporadic black-outs? Should subway trains be tossed out because they need good and careful maintenance? Should a journalist over 35 be retired because he comes up with insane and completely shortsighted ideas?

Silvia Kramar

“gawk at”. Certainly there are such people, but they may be as ignorant as Mr. Goldin appears to be of the Tram’s important function. He correctly describes all the things that could have gone wrong that night that could have resulted in injuries or worse. But that means there should be better maintenance and better staff training, not an abandonment of the system. If Mr. Goldin were a doctor, he might prescribe cutting off his patient’s head to cure a cold. The modern power supply and modern rescue plan that he predicts for the proposed Tram to Governor’s Island is the answer for the Roosevelt Island Tram as well.

Julian Stein

More letters to The Sun on page 20

The Staten Island Advance Editorializes that Tram Is Just a Tax-Funded “Theme Park Ride” (*Wrong!*) and Residents Shoot Back.

To the Editor, *Staten Island Advance*:

I’m a resident of Roosevelt Island and was especially offended by the careless article published in your paper on April 21. Below is my response.

The article, written with all the conviction of the uninformed, was astoundingly inaccurate and just plain mean-spirited.

You say the Roosevelt Island Tram is not like the Staten Island Ferry. That’s one of the few correct statements in your article. A 2002 financial analysis showed that in addition to the one-time costs of \$120 million for ferries and \$191 million spent on terminals, the Staten Island Ferry costs taxpayers \$48 million per year.

The Roosevelt Island Tram costs the taxpayers \$0, nada, nothing. We pay fares on the Tram to cover the cost of our commute, just like every other New Yorker, except your crowd on Staten Island who ride the ferry for free! We have a small (\$300,000) deficit which we make up with our own funds generated right here on the Island. We receive no subsidies from the City, State or Federal government, unlike every other form of public transportation.

Without comparing past safety records, suffice to say, people in glass houses...

Roosevelt Island’s population has increased dramatically over the last few years and the population will almost double in the next 5-10 years. Our already overcrowded F train simply cannot handle that volume. Residents depend on the tram to get back and forth to work every day. Even if the subway could accommodate the numbers, we’re an Island and we need a redundant transportation system. But most important of all, Roosevelt Island has a large senior and disabled population. The tram has become their one safe and relatively easy access to Manhattan. We simply cannot deprive them of this access.

I agree with one point in your article – we need to eliminate the State agency that runs the Island. That’s where the redundancies are. The Island residents have been trying, for years, to do just that. We need a local layer of government to run this Island, not people in patronage jobs managing at arm’s length from Albany in their spare time. If you want to cut costs, that’s the place to start looking. Meanwhile, leave the Tram alone.

Margie Smith, Vice President
Roosevelt Island Residents Association

To the Editor, *Staten Island Advance*:

I am responding to your paper’s April 21 editorial.

Let me ask you, are you a resident of Roosevelt Island? If you were, you probably wouldn’t have written such a moronic piece. I have been a resident of Roosevelt Island for 27 years this June. I grew up here. I took the Tram to Manhattan for years to go to school and then to work before there was ever a subway stop here. The Tram has actually been amazingly reliable – much more so than the subway ever was. It has functioned with more regularity (every 15 minutes, like clockwork) than the subways and/or buses ever have, particularly serving this Island. It also *ran during both transit strikes*.

Obviously, you don’t live here, so let me explain something to you. The subway (F Train) is unbearably crowded during rush hours, particularly in the morning headed toward Manhattan. Many people have to wait for more than one train to go by because they can’t get on in the mornings. The MTA also schedules many service interruptions to the F line, which further curtails service to Roosevelt Island. Many weekends there has been no service. The Tram provides welcome relief from these situations.

It’s also a relied-upon source of transportation for many elderly and handicapped people who may find the stairs (12 stories below ground) daunting when the Subway escalators are broken at the Island station – an all-too-often occurrence.

The problem that occurred last week falls squarely on Roosevelt Island’s patronage appointee from Governor Pataki, President Herb Berman of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation, who lives in *Brooklyn*. He wasn’t voted into office by anyone, doesn’t live here, and knows about as much as you do when it comes to Roosevelt Island and the Tram. It is *his* responsibility – which was last tested about a year ago when the Tram last lost power – to insure the safety and functionality of Roosevelt Island services, including the Tram, for its over 10,000 (and *growing*) residents, plus tourists. Unfortunately, he’s about as good at his job as you are at yours. He didn’t take necessary precautions or make foreseeable contingency plans in the case of another power outage at the Tram. If you want a *real* story, do a little investigative reporting on Roosevelt Island and what State Assemblymember Brodsky called its “non-democratic” political structure.

What if your Governor suddenly declared that *Staten Island* had to be fiscally “self-sufficient”? That means generate all your revenue and not receive any from New York State. That’s what Pataki did to Roosevelt Island as soon as he took office in the 90’s. You’d probably create a movement to secede from the City again.

What we need here is representation for our taxation, not reduction of basic services, and – while we’re at it – a new governor.

Next time I suggest you do a little homework before you stick your foot in your mouth.

Damon LaScot

To *The Staten Island Advance*, the Tram is “a tradition” maintained “at taxpayer expense,” the latter an error since developer ground rents paid to RIOC are the Tram’s only source of subsidy. The Tram “is now essentially a 30-year-old exotic theme park ride” that has outlived its necessity.

The editorialist got an earful from irate Islanders. Here are some of the letters that were shared with *The WIRE*.

To the Editor, *Staten Island Advance*:

In reference to your April 21 editorial: Did we close the Ferry when a captain was incapacitated and killed 11 passengers a few years ago? Did we close the ferry service when the Verrazano Bridge opened?

We could easily tell all Staten Islanders to drive to the City and therefore cut down the bloated staff of the NYC Department of Transportation and donate the ferries to a museum.

As fellow residents of an island, we have the same logistical problems as you and would have expected sympathy from another island.

The Tram is a vital transportation link to our over 10,000 residents, workers and visitors.

Judith Berdy

To the Editor, *Staten Island Advance*:

Your editorialist should check the facts! The Tram does not operate on tax dollars. Although Roosevelt Islanders are taxpaying citizens, and transportation throughout the U.S. is supported by tax dollars, Governor Pataki cut Roosevelt Island from the State budget over eight years ago.

Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) Directors are appointed by Governor Pataki, not elected. They autonomously administer, with zero accountability to the community from which all their revenues are derived. Anywhere else, this practice would constitute “taxation without representation” and be deemed unconstitutional.

RIOC has failed to attract or retain needed services for the community such as those that abound in Staten Island. We are captive to mainland Manhattan for items as common as a slice of pizza or an ice cream cone.

Approximately 75% of our young children attend school in Manhattan. Due to the impossibility of routing their school bus trips through Queens (our only vehicular access to Manhattan) during rush hour, school buses pick up children at the Manhattan side of the Tram, not on Roosevelt Island.

The Tram connects passengers to mainland Manhattan in 3.5 minutes and runs regularly, while the F train requires a ten-story underground descent and riders consistently encounter overcrowded trains with no room for boarding. Imagine the problem for a person seeking medical attention, particularly since neither of the two Island hospitals provide emergency service. Roosevelt Island was designed to house considerable elderly and disabled, who are unable to navigate by train.

The Tram fiasco has brought to the world’s attention basic facts that Roosevelt Islanders have been jumping up and down about for years! RIOC’s sole mission has been patronage, and to pass sweetheart construction deals to developers. RIOC has little or no regard for the welfare of the community.

It is folly to think RIOC will disband as a result of eliminating the Tramway, whose maintenance is simply and obviously a thorn in RIOC’s side. Living on Roosevelt Island without a Tram will, however, become impractical for 10,000 (and rapidly increasing) Island residents.

Joyce Mincheff

To the Editor, *Staten Island Advance*:

How right you are when you say, *The Roosevelt Island Tramway is managed by the Roosevelt Island Operating Authority, yet another of those 583 State-authorized authorities that grow like sores on the body politic in the Empire State*.

Indeed we are a ‘sore’ – badly mismanaged, under-funded, understaffed, and exploited, and used as a political payoff by our esteemed Governor. However, this does *not* give you the right to demand that our Tram – Our lifeline to the mainland – be abolished.

Have you lived on this multifaceted Island, this dream of our esteemed past Governor Rockefeller and Mayor Lindsey, that works? The Roosevelt Island Tram is more than a sightseeing trip; it is a very workable, convenient means of transportation for disabled, seniors, wheelchair users, walkers, baby carriages, schoolchildren, hospital personnel, besides being an Icon of NYC much visited by tourists and study groups from all over the world that come to visit and learn how we work so well – with mixed usage, mixed cultures, mixed incomes .

The F train has not been here that long. It is also 300 feet below ground. It *also* does not run very well (extremely overcrowded). It has had more shutdowns of the escalators and elevators in its short history than the Tram ever had in its long history.

Before you criticize further, I invite you to visit and see personally how our little Island works – how our Tram is a viable part of our well-being. I would be pleased to show you around.

Naomi Gale Silverman

To the Editors:

If you had done any research at all, you would have found these facts about Roosevelt Island helpful before forming your opinion.

Staten Island is a self-contained community. One never has to leave for food, entertainment or any vital services. Roosevelt Island is a community of apartment buildings. We have a supermarket, diner, and a couple of other basics like a dry cleaner. We must go to Manhattan for shopping, doctors, restaurants, entertainment – basically everything. Many of the children on Roosevelt Island go to school in Manhattan.

We have a very large senior and handicapped population (we also have two rehabilitation hospitals on the Island). Our subway is ten stories below ground. The elevators and escalators in our subway station are very often out of service. I can’t tell you how often I have had to walk up all those stairs after a long day and carrying heavy packages. Can you imagine what that would be like for an elderly person or someone in a wheelchair? I can, I see it happen all the time.

The MTA has been doing track and tunnel work for years. We regularly have no service to (or from) Manhattan on weekends.

If a senior, young teen, or handicapped person is out late in the evening, it is inadvisable for safety reasons to travel back to Roosevelt Island by subway. The only safe way is by Tram. Taxi fares are not an option for most people in our mixed-income community.

Most of the public and private school buses drop children at the Tram because they will not come to Roosevelt Island. In all other communities, children get door-to-door service. I would never have let my young children travel home by subway alone. The Tram was a safe, reliable, and friendly alternative once my children were about ten years old.

By the way, the F train is one of the most crowded in the system. At peak rush hour in the morning, it is not unusual for all the passengers at the Roosevelt Island station to wait for 2 or 3 trains before they can squeeze onto a train. The bus is for those traveling to Queens. It takes two buses to get to Manhattan – about an hour. The Tram takes five minutes.

Did you know that Roosevelt Island has new buildings opening that will greatly increase our population?

All of New York’s transportation is subsidized and run on deficits. Why can’t we?

The Tram has never had an emergency evacuation, in all its 30 years, until now. No one was hurt. Can you say the same for the subway, buses, commuter trains, or the ferry? I think not.

The Tram needs to be repaired and updated and better managed, something residents have been fighting for for a long time.

I hope you will consider writing another editorial with more accurate information.

Considering we both live on an Island, I am surprised by your comments.

Marianne Russem

To the Editor, *Staten Island Advance*:

I wish to extend to you an invitation to be my guest on Roosevelt Island for a day and to spend it in a wheelchair. We can take the F train, if the elevator is working or hop on the Q102 bus if the handicap ramp is working and you don’t mind spending over a hour and a half to get to Manhattan. Or we can wheel over our Roosevelt Island Bridge through Queens to the Queensboro bridge and wheel over it for our Manhattan trip. If this is your choice, may I suggest you bring along enough drinking water in case of dehydration, because we will be on a 5-7 hour journey, depending where in Manhattan we want to go. If it’s the doctor, I’m sure they will understand your lateness and see you immediately. You will only have enough time for a brief visit because you also want to do a little shopping and get home for supper by 6:00 p.m. Yes, without the Tram and the time it saves us, we people with disabilities will have limited time to do any of the little things like window-shop or maybe stop for a refreshment before we head back home. Now if we took the Tram, we would have at least 2-3 extra hours to do all the things we wanted to do on our journey to Manhattan.

And I would like to invite my friend Jim Whalen to join us.

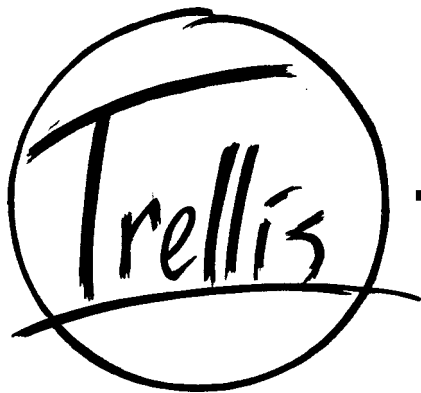
Jim Bates

To the Editor, *Staten Island Advance*:

I lived on Staten Island for years, and traveled back and forth on the Ferry and also over the Veranzano. Now I live on Roosevelt Island without a car. The F Train is often diverted from Roosevelt Island and commuters have to go backwards to Queens to get a connection to Manhattan. We have a large population of wheelchair bound residents on the Island for whom that route is impossible. The Tram provides a more direct and accessible alternative and is essential as a backup when the F is not running or diverted. For drivers, the Veranzano during rush hour is a breeze compared to the Queensboro.

Your energy would be better spent lobbying for a subway to Staten Island. You might save some gas.

Bill Sinclair



We miss it, too.



See you at Trellis. Bring a neighbor.

212-752-1517

At the heart of the community,
next to the Good Shepherd Community Center

Trellis: 6:00 a.m. to midnight,
7 days every week. We also deliver.

The Main Street Teen Theatre
presents

SPOON RIVER ANTHOLOGY



FRIDAY, MAY 12th at 7:30 p.m.
SATURDAY, MAY 13th at 7:30 p.m.
SUNDAY, MAY 14th at 2:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

featuring
Kaitlyn Abdul Tyler Cannon Morgan Callender
Tychell Dickerson Alexis Franco Joshua Gurwitz
Jena Hirji Lily LiPuma Nishihira Arta Perezic
Emily Schuman Samantha Stone

Evening Shows \$15 (Seniors \$10)
Sunday Matinee \$12 (Seniors \$8)



RESERVATIONS: 212-371-4449
548 MAIN ST., ENTER BEHIND THE VIDEO STORE

MST&DA programs are supported, in part, by the New York City
Department of Cultural Affairs



A Timely New OVERSIZE COLOR POSTCARD from *The WIRE*
Actual size! 5.5 x 8.5 • Order now for immediate delivery



Reverse side, in color,
shown below. Plenty of
room for address and
message.



Each of the two cabins of the Roosevelt Island Tramway transport up to 125 passengers at a time some 3,100 feet between a station on Roosevelt Island and one in Manhattan at 2nd Avenue and 59th Street. It's a four-minute trip at 16 mph, rising to 250 feet above the East River. The cable-car line was built in 1976 as a temporary commuting solution for the new residential community being built on Roosevelt Island. By the time subway service arrived, the Tramway had become a movie star, the symbol of Roosevelt Island, and a City icon.

Photos Copyright 2004, 2005
The Main Street WIRE
Roosevelt Island's Community Newspaper

20 cards, \$15. Proceeds support *The WIRE*. To order, send check or money order (payable to *The WIRE*) to: The WIRE, 531 Main Street #413, NYC10044. Include your name, address, phone, and e-mail address for notice of delivery. Specify "large Tram cards." Delivery free to doorstation buildings; for mail order, add \$1.00 for any quantity 20 & up. Sorry, no phone or credit-card orders. Quantities very limited; order early and avoid a wait for reprinting.

HealthSource Pharmacy

235 East 57th Street, between 2nd & 3rd
Just two blocks south of the Tram
Phone 212-310-0111 • Fax 212-310-0144



Free
Delivery to
Roosevelt
Island

YOUR NEW PRESCRIPTION & HEALTH HEADQUARTERS

- All insurance plans welcome •
- We will match or beat Costco's online Rx prices •
- Full line of vitamins & supplements at NYC's best prices •
- Full line of medical/surgical supplies •

Coupon

\$2 Off

\$5 off

any Purchase

any Purchase

of \$10 or More

of \$30 or More

• Some exclusions apply. Sale and discounted items are not included. Limit – one per customer. Expires 5/31/06.

Coupon

\$10 Off any

New or Transferred

Prescription

• Limit – 5 prescriptions per family. Valid only for new customers. Expires 5/31/06.

Also at 1302 2nd Avenue (at 68th) & 120 E. 34th Street (Lex/Park)

LOCKSMITH

24-Hour Emergency Service
Cylinder Change
Multilock
Medeco
Segal

Keys Made
24-Hour Service

Visa
MasterCard

ASTORIA
LOCK & SAFE
32-10 Broadway
718-278-0056
877-NYC-KEYS



COMMERCIAL • RESIDENTIAL • AUTOMOTIVE



INSPIRATION

230 East 60th Street
New York, NY
www.allsaintsnyc.org

Sunday:	9am 11am	Spoken Holy Eucharist Choral Holy Eucharist
Wednesday:	6:30pm	Holy Eucharist in Chapel
Weekdays:	8am	Morning Prayer in Chapel

ALL SAINTS EPISCOPAL CHURCH WELCOMES YOU

Costa Rica 10 Day Tour

\$995

Rainforests, Volcanoes, Beaches
Fully Escorted and All Inclusive



See our other Affordable \$995 Tours

- Mexico's Copper Canyon Train
- Canadian Rockies and Glacier Park
- Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island

...and more, call or visit our website

Free Brochure 1-800-Caravan

Caravan.com
Fully Escorted Tours for over 50 Years

As Night Wore on Toward Morning, the Rescue Cage Reached Cabin



Photos 1-5 show the rescue effort for Cabin 1

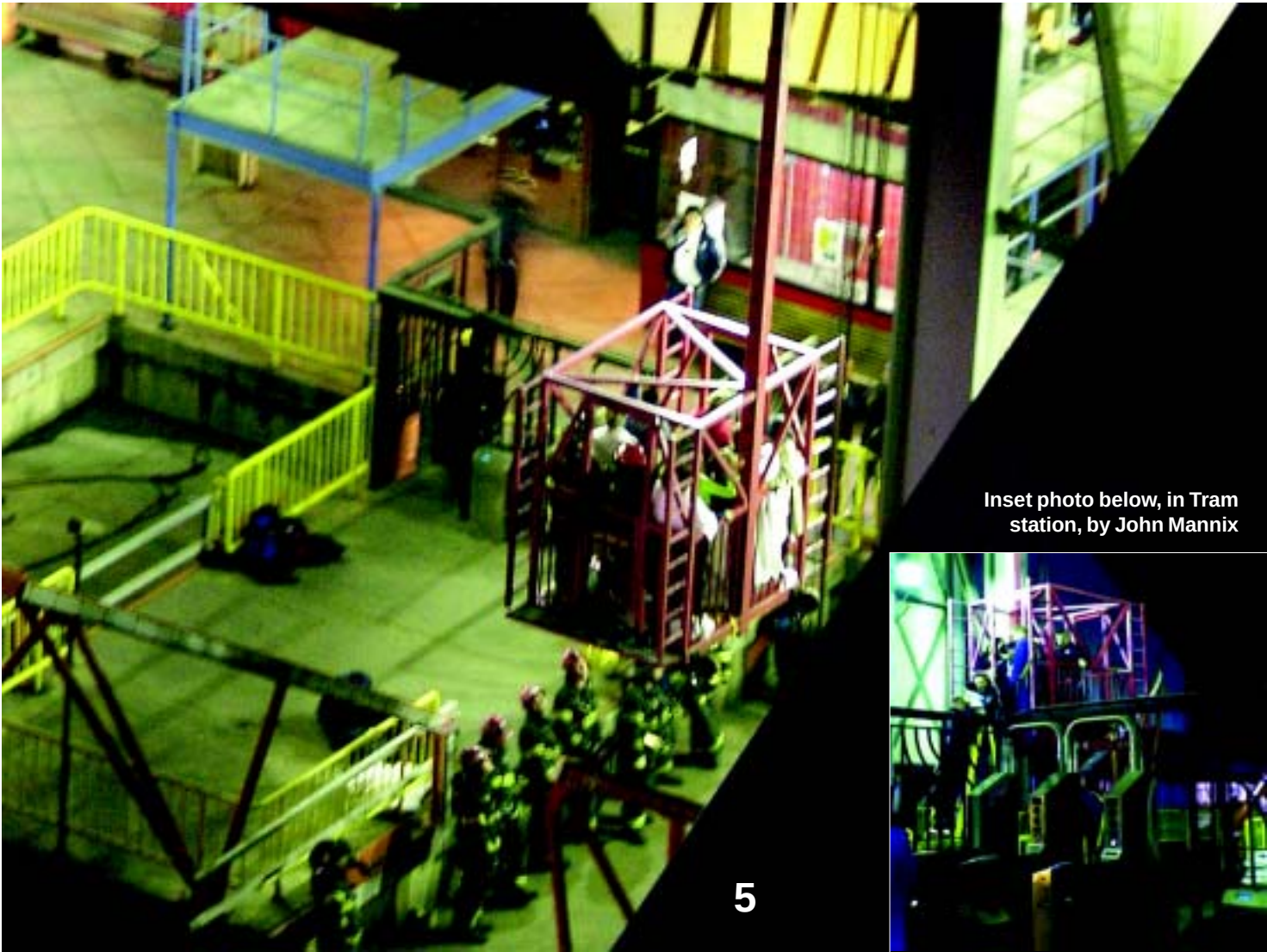


Much Later, on the Manhattan Side, Traffic Was Stopped on First Avenue as a Crane Lifted a Platform to Off-Load Cabin 2



bin 1 and Began Loading Passengers...

Photo coverage by Itsi Atkins,
NYSegwayTours.com



Inset photo below, in Tram
station, by John Mannix



Main Drive from page 1
its continued reliability and safety. We have actually a meeting scheduled for the 17th of May to discuss with him some of his initial findings and recommendations for the corporation. There's no decision been made yet about how the upgrade will take place; we're looking at all the options to ensure that we have the best information and the best practices out there as we embark on upgrading the Tram.

Liu: In recent years, there have been other instances where the fuses were blown, or there was a fault that disrupted the service. In December of 2003, the fuses were blown, and I don't know if maybe that was seen as a fluke... In your earlier statements, these faults occur on almost a regular basis. You implied it was just something that a Tram system has to deal with. On the other hand, we're finding out that the equipment exists to pro-

tect against these kind of faults. Johnson assured Liu that such equipment would be part of any Tramway upgrade.

Liu: In the last incident, in September of 2005, can you describe what happened there?

Bee: Yes. There was an SCR fault in the afternoon, and... the electronic circuit shut itself down. We don't necessarily know why... The on-duty shift supervisor was not able to figure out how to solve the problem. He froze at the controls and was not able to reset it, so the manager came in and was able to simply reset the SCR by pushing a button and bring the Tram cars in. We replaced that supervisor... We don't know why the system faulted, but it's a very complicated electronic device that has lots of protections built in. When it senses any anomaly, it shuts itself off. Most of the time, it can be reset by pushing a button.

Liu: OK. So, when the system shuts itself off, there's no need to find out why it shut itself off? You just push the reset button and let the Tram continue?

Bee: If it becomes frequent, we should certainly check it. What happened in this incident is that we thought we had a problem with one component that provides a speed input reference to the drive. That component was changed. At the time we thought that was what caused the problem.

Liu: All right, but to this day, which is about eight months from that disruption in September of 2005, you still don't know what happened that caused the system to shut itself down.

Bee: We're still making a complete investigation of the entire SCR drive system.

Liu: And yet, it was OK to, in these eight months, in the intervening eight months, to continue to

run the Tram? Now, based on the incident last week, it is not OK to run the Tram. What's different about what happened last week and what happened in September, 2005? In both instances, the Tram ground to a halt. The SCR system, the drive system, shut itself down.

Bee: Well, what's different is we were able to reset the September fault by pushing a button. We changed the fuses and, a day after the incident, a technician from Europe arrived, a specialist on the system, that next day we were able to duplicate the same problem; a couple of days later, we were again able to duplicate the same fault, so we now have a pattern there.

Liu: You were able to duplicate the fault in September?

Bee: No, no, we were able to duplicate the one that occurred last week. We've had it happen twice more since we've been testing it this last week, and we're still trying to find what the cause is.

Liu: It just seems that... I don't know if that difference is enough for us to understand why, after the September shutdown, it continued and why, after last week's shutdown, it has been discontinued, at least temporarily, we hope. So, in both cases, it was the SCR primary drive system that failed, and the only thing that was different last week was that the backup system was not able to engage, as well... But the main problem, it seems, is not with the backup system – of course, we have to find out why the backup system failed – but the main problem is why the primary system failed. In fact, according to this chart, the failure of the primary drive on April 18, 2006... September, 2005, a fault in the SCR drive; December, 2004, a fault in the SCR drive; September 20, 2002, a fault in the SCR drive; December 30, 1999, a fault in the SCR drive. I think something's wrong with the SCR drive. [Laughter, applause, from the audience] Maybe there's something fundamentally wrong with that SCR system.

Johnson: Certainly we'd be looking at the primary power drive system. But I also want to state that when you look at it in isolation of the Tram system... We transport a million people a year on the Tram, and a huge number – I can't think of the number off the top of my head – daily and annually that that Tram runs. What we're looking at here is no different than when my furnace goes and the electrical controls in my furnace trip, and I go down and I hit the reset button. It's an electrical system. So a fault in an SCR drive doesn't mean that there's a problem with the SCR drive. It's doing what it should do in order to protect the safety of the passengers in those Tram cars. The Tram, by and large, has an outstanding safety record over its 30 years. We've had one instance where we had to engage the rescue cabins, and I think that we'd all be hard-pressed to find one other major form of transportation in this country that can claim the same high safety record as the Tramway on Roosevelt Island.

Liu: I appreciate that [but] I don't think that most people taking the Tram, particularly those 68 people who were stuck above the Manhattan skyline that day, would appreciate a comparison to the furnace breaking down. I understand what you're saying – that it's just resetting – but the consequences are far different than the furnace breaking down in someone's house.

Berman: You're absolutely right, that's precisely the reason why there has to be an extensive inquiry as to what went wrong and what we have to do to repair it,

and that's precisely what's going on now.

Liu then turned the questioning over to Councilmember Jessica Lappin, who represents Roosevelt Island, who took Bee back to something he'd said earlier:

Lappin: You discussed faults that happened over the last week... Were those created by you or did they happen spontaneously while you were testing.

Bee: They happened during testing that we have been performing, and we're getting the identical fault indications that we had last week.

Lappin: So you weren't artificially creating that situation. It arose two more times.

Bee: That's correct.

Lappin: And were there surges? I mean, how were those being duplicated?

Bee: Well, we were running at the same basic point on the line when the motor switches from being a motor to being a generator is where we had these faults, so we were at one point taking current from the line and, [at] another point putting current into the line, and the electronics are very complicated to do all this... A power surge is one thing that can affect an SCR, but the SCR by itself can cause its own problem. If something misfires, it can blow fuses, even if there's no disturbance on the power grid. So the SCR itself can cause a fault that blow fuses regardless of what's happening on the Con Edison supply.

Lappin: It sounds like something apart from Con Ed. You mentioned this before. The power that you get from the grid, there's [also] power that you generate internally. And you just said the Tram goes from being a motor to being a generator, so are you saying that the Tram generates its own power?

Bee: Well, that's how it decelerates. When it wants to slow down and the motor that's driving it turns into a generator and it's making electricity now – it's putting electricity back into the power grid, and that's how you slow the Tram down. There's three levels of braking – mechanical braking systems beyond that, but the primary way is the electric motor to slow the Tram down, much like if you have a hybrid car, you're using an electric motor to slow the car down. It's the same principle.

Lappin: Is it possible that the Tram itself is generating the power that's causing these surges?

Bee: Yes.

Here, Lappin may have hit pay dirt. Both in September and on April 18, the SCR drive “faulted” just after the eastbound cabin cleared tower #2, the highest point. Regular riders are familiar with the point where the cabins pass, just west of tower #2. When, moments later, the eastbound cabin clears tower #2, each cabin is going “downhill.” Gravity gets involved, and the motor driving the Tram switches from being a motor, using power, to a generator, feeding electricity back into the grid. It appears at least possible that testing will reveal the SCR control system is having trouble making that transition under certain load conditions. (The eastbound cabin is more heavily loaded at home-bound rush hour. On April 18, there were 47 passengers on the way to Roosevelt Island, and 21 headed toward Manhattan.)

Lappin: Is it possible that the Tram itself is generating the power that's causing these surges?

Bee: Yes.

Lappin: And that would be something that we would fix how?

Bee: Well, once we know the exact cause, we will replace the faulty components. And we're still investigating that.



City Councilmember Jessica Lappin directs a question to Doppelmayr Vice President Mark Bee. Councilmember John Liu, left, chairs the Transportation Committee, and chaired last week's hearing.

Backup from page 1

able to get that system to operate. They tried to go back to the electrical system and they [still] couldn't get that system to operate. By that time the decision was to put the rescue Tramway into service. So the backup diesel that's intended to pull the cars in – we never got that working that night. After everyone was off the cars, the next morning, about an hour and a half later, we got the backup diesel system to bring the cars in.

Liu: I guess it's a little unclear. What was stated in the prepared testimony [given by Herb Berman] was that the backup drive system couldn't actually drive the Tram cars because the emergency brakes could not be released.

Bee: Within 30 minutes of the stop we had the backup system running, but were unable to get the brakes to lift.

Liu: But what was it? What was wrong? Was it the auxiliary drive was not working? Was it that the auxiliary drive was working but the brakes wouldn't release?

Bee: The diesel engine itself did start... The drive system itself was fully operational. But there was a problem within the controls for that system that failed to close the relay that was necessary to open the brakes before the Tram cars could actually move.

Liu: The Tram cars did move for a little bit...

Bee: What the operator had done at that time was – there's a way to manually open the brakes. And when he manually opened the brakes, just because of gravity and

where the cabins were, the cabins moved about 30 meters on the line. But he wasn't able to manually hold the brakes open and at the same time run the diesel standby unit. Because of the safety systems built into the system, it wouldn't allow you to manually open the brake while at the same time engaging the standby. So it's correct that the cars did move a little bit, but they moved only because we were able to manually lift the brakes without the diesel system connected, and the cars coasted to the, basically to the low part of the line.

Liu: So gravity moved them...

Bee: Gravity moved them, yes.

Liu: ...the Tram cars. And then after the – what – couldn't you just get another person to hold the emergency brakes open while the first engineer operated the drive system?

Bee: Well, that would be relatively safe while the cabins are between the spans, where it's not steep. [But] once they cross towers 1 and 3, it becomes very steep, and you would not want to rely on a manually held-open brake and an operator who's down in the basement in the machine room, who cannot really see the cabins.

I think Armando, who was on-site at the time, made an excellent decision to stop trying to bypass safeties and go to a safer mode to get the people off, which was to allow the Fire and the Police and the rescue Tramway to operate to pull people off. There's all kinds of things that could've been tried, some may have been safe, some may

not have been safe, but we're stuck with the existing protocol, which says that, if we don't have the system working properly, we don't start putting jumpers on...

Liu: What kind of routine inspections are made of that backup system? What kinds of tests are run on that system to make sure that it is operational?

Bee: We test the system on a monthly basis. It was last tested on March 31st, and we test and log it every month. On March 31st, the system worked perfectly.

Liu: And so that's the big mystery right now – that in the 18 days, we're not sure what happened, where on the 31st of March the backup drive system was operational, and then on the 18th, it wasn't working properly.

Bee: That's correct, and that's what we're planning to investigate.

Bee was not actually present during the April 18 Tramway crisis. His descriptions of operators' efforts to get the backup system operating were second-hand. The City Council Transportation Committee did not ask for – and RIOC apparently didn't offer – testimony from either Armando Cordova, Doppelmayr's man in charge here, nor from Red Blomer, the Doppelmayr representative who has overall responsibility for the Roosevelt Island Tramway and visits the Island from time to time. (Blomer, for example, was involved in the short-cutting of the Tramway cable several years ago, during a cable-replacement exercise.)

Loving from page 1
and our history. My first day on Roosevelt Island, I rode the Tramway, and for those four years, it began my day and ended my day. Growing up on Roosevelt Island, when you want to see a movie with your friends, or head into Manhattan, everyone agreed on a time to meet at the Tram. It was our family car.

The Tram’s importance should not be underestimated. While there is a subway on Roosevelt Island, it is not appropriate for all residents. Children and adolescents who may have trouble navigating the subway without parents, can use the Tramway safely and with ease. Many people on Roosevelt Island are elderly or disabled. They reside in special housing set aside for them, or in long-term-care facilities. For them, being able to take the Tramway to Manhattan or with their friends, allows them to lead an active life. Without the Tram, many would be trapped on Roosevelt Island. Furthermore, new housing construction on Roosevelt Island is increasing the population from about 8 or 9,000 to maybe 16,000, within a few years. The F train is already inadequate to deal with the rush-hour population, which, if you’ve ever waited for the F train on Roosevelt Island, you

have to wait several trains before you can actually get on. The burden of additional riders without the Tram to take them to the hospitals and other locations on the East Side will make the F train intolerable.

Being stuck in the Tram for almost eleven hours was inconvenient, but I never trusted the need for the Tram. I’d like to tell the Governor, Mayor Bloomberg, and the City Council, I want to ride the Tram again. Governor Pataki should see that the Tram is restored and that the Tramway receives the appropriate funding to run safely and reliably.

Brodsky: You have to understand – I love the Tram, it should be absolutely forever on Roosevelt Island and Manhattan.

Keller said that, as much as he feels the Tram should return, he now has doubts about RIOC: “The breakdown of the Tram led me to question the management and leadership of RIOC. Many months ago, a similar problem existed, and this was not thoroughly and properly examined and fixed. My confidence in the leadership of RIOC is shaken. An in-depth examination of RIOC is long overdue. Fix RIOC, fix the Tramway. We need both running at maximum efficiency.”

Spin from page 1
David Kraut, Alberteen Anderson, and John Mannix – were on the scene at the Tram station until all the passengers had been removed from the stuck cabins.
In prepared testimony he read before the City Council Transportation Committee last week, Berman gave the positive spin this way:
“The most important thing to report is that the safety systems installed on the Tram, and the extensive training RIOC employees receive to handle emergencies, together with the Fire Department and the police, worked well. The proof

is in the safe removal of the 68 passengers stranded on the Trams over the East River and First Avenue.
“Of course, we share the frustration of those stranded on the Trams over how long the rescue took, but as Mayor Bloomberg said so eloquently, safety was more important than speed. The lack of injuries is a testament to the skill and bravery of police officers, firefighters and our own RIOC Tram staff, Tram team, who worked through the night.”
Berman then went into a lengthy discourse about the Island’s history before returning to the happenings of April 18.

“While we are not yet sure what went wrong, it is worth noting what went right.
“RIOC personnel train every six months on that rescue Tram system, which has never had to be used before in the 30-year history of the Tram. I cannot say enough about the skill and the dedication that our employees brought to the emergency rescue cage operation, which had never, which I also indicated, been put in operation in the history of the Tram. RIOC workers attached arms to the emergency cage, which is permanently stationed below the Tram’s main ar-



As Lappin listened, Berman explained.

Rescue from page 1
summer.”
Berman said, “The problem came when the independent controls for the backup diesel system failed to release the emergency brake, leaving the Trams stranded mid-trip unable to return to the station.”
Within a half-hour of the stoppage, a half-dozen Fire Department emergency units had arrived on the scene, their sirens screaming as they streamed south on Main Street. But Police Department representatives also arrived and, when the diesel system was initially engaged, it appears the NYPD coordinator told the FDNY personnel they would no longer be needed. The Fire Department vehicles and personnel then left the Island in a less noisy and less speedy parade north on Main Street.
According to an observer on the scene who spoke with *The WIRE* on condition his identity would not be revealed, as the emergency situation entered its third hour and Tramway employees considered turning their attention back to resetting the main drive, the NYPD representative in charge vetoed further repair efforts, declaring, in effect, “This is now a rescue operation. We’re now taking charge.”
From another source, *The WIRE* has learned that media reports and

official statements suggesting there was close cooperation between the NYPD and FDNY in this rescue may have been exaggerated. The source, who also asked to remain unnamed, said that the two departments “buted heads” well before Police Commissioner Ray Kelly arrived on the scene and Mayor Mike Bloomberg held a press conference. He said the major concern was the question of “who gets the front page.”
As Mark Bee, vice president of Doppelmayer related events to the City Council Transportation Committee, when the diesel system could not be made to operate properly, “They tried to go back to the electrical system and they [again] couldn’t get that system to operate.” Without giving details of how the decision was made, Bee continued, “By that time the decision was to put the rescue Tramway into service.”
At that point – probably about 7:00 p.m. – efforts turned to mounting the rescue cages, the welded-steel open-air “baskets” that are towed along the track cables by a separate emergency haul cable.
In response to a question, Bee later explained that it had not been possible to begin a parallel effort to mount a rescue cage while efforts were being made to operate the system on the main SCR drive

or the diesel backup system, because “as soon as you put the rescue cage onto the track, then you cannot move the [cabins] any more. So you don’t want to stick the rescue cage on the track until you’ve given up the option of bringing the cars in... You have to go down one path and when you decide you can’t bring the cars back into the station, then you stop, you leave all the brakes set, you have a safe condition, now you put the rescue Tram into operation. And it’s a long process. In testing, it’s typically two, two and half hours, and I believe Armando had the rescue cages on in about an hour and forty minutes. So they worked as quickly as they could.”
By about 8:30, a rescue cage had been mounted on the south track ropes, on which the Island-bound cabin rested, over the East River, holding the larger number of strandeers. After a test run up to the first tower and back, rescue personnel proceeded to the cabin to begin removing passengers from the Tram cabin.
At last week’s hearing, two residents, David Keller and Laurence Marie Brodsky, described the rescue process from the vantage point of those waiting to be rescued:
Keller: There were two NYPD guys that came up on the first load. The caribined themselves to the



At the back of the hearing room, Assemblymember Pete Grannis (right) listened with his aide, Tony Morenzi. At a press conference that preceded the hearing, Grannis renewed criticism of the Pataki administration’s management of Roosevelt Island: “Unique among the entire City community, this Island is in the hands of the State government. The State is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the Island. What happened last week is a direct result of years of neglect of operating support from the State. This isn’t meant to be a partisan attack, but the Pataki administration came in and cut off operating aid and cut off capital support aid, maintenance aid for this Island. At the end, this is what happens. If you don’t take care of things, they break down. Going forward, these problems [should be] avoided. I’ll be working with the council members again to force the State – not this administration but the next – to take care of the Roosevelt Island community as it should have for the last decade.

rival station, and then operated the winch to lift it onto the cable. Working closely with the heroic police officers and the heroic firefighters, the cage was tested and then was sent up the cable to safely remove 47 people from the car stranded over the East River. Twenty-one people stranded over First Avenue were safely removed after City officials brought in a crane to carry out that rescue. And again, I can’t say enough about the remarkable poise, resilience, and equanimity of the people who spent all those hours stranded on the Tram. They demonstrated the best qualities that make all of us proud to be New Yorkers.
“At RIOC, we are committed to providing a safe environment to all of our residents, whether on the Island or on the Tram. We stand ready to work closely with you and others, especially including residents, to examine the future of the Tram as well as transportation alternatives, such as ferry service, as development and growth continues on the Island.
“I might say that, once the Tram

went down, we instituted an express service from Roosevelt Island to Manhattan for the residents so they will be able to have access to the Manhattan side of the Tram. And the children who go to school there have the same privileges that they had on the Tram. Having said that, I thank you for the time. We stand here ready to answer whatever questions we can. I can assure you that upon receipt of the information from the investigatory services looking into this incident, we will supply you with those results. But I want to again emphasize that we are committed to the restoration of the Tram to service. That will happen when all of the investigations are completed, when everything is corrected that has to be corrected, all protocols are examined, and we are confident that everybody else is confident that the Tram can safely and properly go back into operations.”
As *The WIRE* goes to press (late Thursday, May 4), there has been no announcement of when Tramway service is likely to resume.

Tram.
City Councilmember G. Oliver Koppel: They did what?
Keller: Caribiners, you know, the mountain-climber gear? So they had these big caribiners and they caribined themselves to the side of the Tram, and then they had attached certain equipment to the basket, and then they attached that to the Tram, and then they took some straps and tried to get as close as they could because there was like a 45-degree angle and then a four-foot gap or so. There really [weren’t] any harnesses except for the guys who were holding your arm on your left and the guys who were supposed to grab your arm on the right.
Koppel: But you had to go up [to make the transfer]?
Keller: You had to go up.
Koppel: Was there a stairway that you climbed?
Keller: You stepped on a little stepstool, then you had to step on the window, so you kind of were stepping on the window...
Koppel: So there was actually an open space below you.
Keller: Yes, there was, quite a bit of open space... I’m not sure how you would have even gotten people strapped in to make that transfer. I mean, you think about it, if it’s a downward slope or even directly across from you, you might

be able to harness people in, but if you’re going up 45 degrees, it’s a nightmare...
Committee Chair John Liu: I think the point really also [is] that it would not have taken that much more effort or time to add a harness to the people being rescued before they were transferred over that gap.
Keller: I don’t think it would have taken any more than five to ten minutes a person, but I’m not an expert on that. [To Koppel:] I will agree with you, Councilmember, and say there was a lot of luck involved. Whether or not the plans worked, and I know they like to say the plans worked, it was lucky.
Brodsky: When we were on the Tram, I said, “I’m going to camp... I don’t like that cage.” It’s very heavy and cumbersome. They could have devised a better system already, and the Swiss manufacturer should be questioned on that. There is a space. There was no harness, there was no net.
Rescue operations were completed around 4:30 a.m. on Wednesday, April 19 – just short of 12 hours after the cabins stopped in mid-trip. The final group of passengers were evacuated from the westbound cabin, over First Avenue, using a construction crane and a personnel platform.

Attack My Tram, You’re Attacking Me

At the City Council Transportation Committee hearing last week, several residents signed up to testify; each had up to two minutes to say his or her piece.

Prof. Thomas Templeton of Weill Medical College told Councilmembers, “The quality of life of the post-doc is one

The full transcript of the City Council Transportation Committee hearing is available on *Website NYC10044*, with this issue of *The WIRE*, at nyc10044.com. There are additional resident letters on line, as well.

of the greatest concerns that New York City faces in having our biomedical community on a par with other cities such as Boston, San Diego, Seattle, Washington DC, and the Tram is essential to that vibrancy, and the Tram is absolutely essential not only as a component of multiple transportation options to and from the Island, but also as an essential component of

the quality of life... Without it, the Island is claustrophobic; the East River becomes a much greater barrier...”

Arline Jacoby, who was injured recently when unrepaired paving blocks here caused her to fall, pointed out, “Roosevelt Island is run by the State. I beg you to investigate everything because there are so many things that need your attention.”



Jacqueline Barnes: “The use of a ruler with Doppelmayr would have stopped the haul rope from being eight feet short, which was one of our shutdowns. The radio communication has been terrible...”



Dr. Joel Pardee (Associate Dean, Weill-Cornell Medical Center): “...the Tramway serves as an almost indispensable link between our residence buildings on the Island and the medical center... Our faculty and post-doctoral fellows find the Tram far more convenient and faster and personally safer than the subway...”



Margie Smith (Vice President, RIRA): “...the disease is RIOC. If they had asked those questions you asked today a year ago when we got a couple of clues about outages, we wouldn’t be here today...”



Brian Baker (Manhattan Park Apartments): “...45% of our residents are employed by the United Nations, and the Tram is their mode of transportation...”



Sherie Helstien (Secretary, RIRA Common Council): “...I’m here to ask the City Council to pass a resolution urging RIOC to impose a moratorium on all new residential construction on Roosevelt Island until a positive resolution to transportation problems occurs...”



Matthew Katz (former President, RIRA): “...the incident was a failure of oversight, not of equipment... It’s remarkable how this essential component of New York’s transportation web is the only component of the system not subsidized by government – possibly in the entire United States.



Frank Farance (RIRA Communications Chair): “Why doesn’t the Tram have a procedure or checklist to use in their operations and in their emergency operation? ... This was luck. This was under ideal conditions... We were incredibly lucky.”



Jennifer Fitzgerald: “I can’t tell you the community that the Tram builds... Moving here, I think New York can be an impersonal big City, and the Tram really has provided the situation where it’s built a small community...”



Sharon Bermon: “I made the decision to participate in my first multi-day bike ride... deciding that I would ride my bike several days a week... it’s almost impossible to do it without the Tram...”



Martin Atkins: “I was here to listen to Mr. Berman. Where is Mr. Berman now to listen to myself and everybody else who spoke? They always turn deaf ears...”

The *Daily News* Weighs In

The Main Street WIRE requested permission to reprint editorials and an opinion column on the April 18 Tram mishap that appeared in *The New York Sun*, *The Staten Island Advance*, and the *Daily News*. Only the *Daily News* granted permission, and that editorial is reprinted here. The *Sun* opinion column, to which Islanders react on Page 8, can be read on line at <http://www.nysun.com/article/31391>. The *Advance* editorial is at www.silive.com/search/index.ssf?/base/news/114562621785340.xml&coll=1 or by searching on the newspaper’s website at NYSun.com.

TOONERVILLE TRAM’S BOZO BRIGADE

New York State officials are assuring all and sundry that no way, no how, will the Roosevelt Island Tram be allowed back in service until an investigation is completed. Let’s do better than that. Let’s keep the gondolas in their little garages until that patronage gang called the Roosevelt Island Operating Corp. comes up with a credible plan to keep the Trams running under all conditions short of an earthquake. And puts forth a system for completing rescues in, say, 11 minutes rather than 11 hours.



Listening to the RICO – oops, sorry, RIOC – culprits in the aftermath of this week’s Tramway drama was to ingest bilge more polluted than the East River. The crew of cronies led by Herb Berman, a former Brooklyn Democratic councilman who got his current job by kissing up to Gov. Pataki, is actually trying to sell the idea that it runs a top-notch professional show.

The bomfogger is hilarious. Said one: “Putting the Tram online is not contingent upon us having that auxiliary system [a spare electric generator] in place. We already have a redundant backup system that operates the Tram currently.” Yup. Except that the unnecessary spare was out for repairs Tuesday because the gang discovered it was a heap of slag when they tried to use it in a little-noticed Tram breakdown a while back. And except that no one could figure out how to make that “redundant backup system” work. And except that Berman’s band wasn’t quite drilled in the proper procedures in using that dangling rescue basket that finally got folks down. And that sloooooo-moving basket is a monster issue in itself. Had the Tram cars been filled to capacity, people would still be up there.

The last time the Tram broke, in September, Berman’s chief engineer had to be helicoptered in from his Westchester home. Seems he was the only person who knew how to make a fix, which tells you all you need to know about these bunglers.

Copyright Daily News, L.P., April 27, 2006

It used to happen regularly. Somewhere – often in a rural area that never made news – a kid would fall into a well. Maybe his father had left it uncovered, or he was playing around at a construction site, or he chased his pet [fill in name of animal] down a hole.

And he got stuck. Somebody sounded the alarm, and son-of-a-gun if that didn’t bring out the radio reporters, and in a later day, TV-news cameras, and the media breathlessly followed rescue efforts, playing the drama for what it was worth. Meanwhile, editors and news directors hoped it wouldn’t go on so long that the kid would die down there – *that’s a downer of a story* – or so long that the audience would lose interest.

By the time the newsreel cameras showed up, there was the hope for that golden moment when some brave fireman or country sheriff or state police officer would deliver the shivering child into his mother’s arms, and there would be the crying, the hugging, and the usual hug with gratitude written all over Mom’s face.

Mind you, while he was down there, the kid was in real danger. The walls of the uncompleted well might collapse. Or he could suffer shock. There might be a rainstorm and an infusion of water. The drama was real.

So – Was the Tram stranding Roosevelt Island’s boy-caught-in-the-well story?

There seemed little question that local

media wanted to play it that way. *The WIRE* recorded and reviewed a good deal of the television coverage, and it seemed the reporters were reluctant to include, in their back-and-forths, the simple fact that there was no danger of either cabin falling. Information coming via cell phone made it clear no passenger was in any imminent medical

danger. And to those familiar with the rescue rehearsals carried out by FDNY and Island personnel, there was no question that everyone up there would survive this incident.

We would not want to minimize the discomfort, nor the distress. Passengers reported that they were information-starved and got most of their information about their situation from relatives watching TV and

passing the word via cell phone. But there was no corollary to the child trapped in a well here.

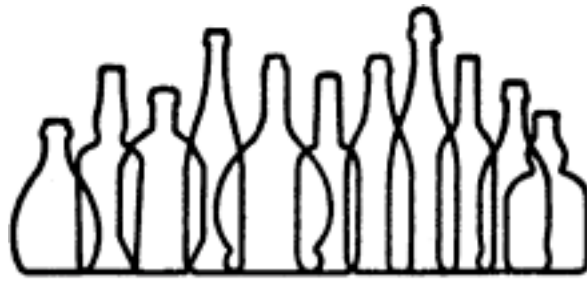
It just made a better story if there were the illusion of genuine jeopardy, and a story that could end with heroes coming to the rescue.

We’re grateful for the attention. But we have to wish modern media (TV in particular) would pay more attention to the long-term nature of Roosevelt Island’s problems. At the hearing, some residents said it: The Tram situation was a symptom of something much bigger worth media attention. Alas, there’s no kid in dramatic danger, and perverse politics doesn’t play well on the tube.

DL

Was This Our Boy-Caught-in-the-Well Moment?

island
observer



GRAND

WINE AND LIQUOR

30-05 31st St. (30th Avenue), Astoria

718-728-2520

Fax 718-956-0294

Free Delivery Friday & Saturday

“Ethnic bottles not seen elsewhere,” including labels from Greece, the Czech Republic, Georgia, and Poland, are part of the “excellent,” “diverse” selection at this “big” wine store in Astoria, conveniently located next to the Grand Street stop on the N subway line; imbibers also raise a toast to the “nicest staff,” “great specials,” and all-around “low prices.” -Zagat

Monday through Thursday, 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Friday and Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to midnight

Sunday, 12 noon to 6:00 p.m.

The Roosevelt Island Senior Association

presents

Our 27th Annual Senior Day Open House

Sunday, May 21, 2006

starting at 1:00 p.m. – through 6:00 p.m.

At the Senior Center

546 Main Street

**Guest Speakers
Great Entertainment
Refreshments Served
Music and Dancing**

**Roosevelt Island Seniors – We live our lives to the fullest
*Come join us***

Letters from page 2

“quaint relic,” indicating that the Tramway became that with the opening of the subway some 16 years ago. Nothing could be further from the truth to the several thousand riders for whom the Tramway is the barrier-free, completely accessible form of public transit that the subway is not. In fact, despite some low ridership in the past, since the Tramway started accepting the MetroCard, along with the fact that anyone who tries to use the subway after 7:30 in the morning and for most of the morning rush to Manhattan has to let 3 or 4 fully packed F trains go by, the Tram remains the most direct access to Manhattan for hundreds of workers, students of all ages, hospital employees, and others who are totally frustrated in trying to use the Manhattan-bound subway.

It is no “quaint relic” when the MTA is working on the subway nearly every weekend and cannot provide direct access to Manhattan or to Queens, and riders on the Island jam the Tramway, which can bring them in. The Q102 bus to Long Island City, which stops by the two buses that go to Manhattan, and the trains which are inaccessible to people who cannot climb stairs at Queens Plaza, just do not cut it.

It is no “quaint relic” to the developers who have already built (and plan to build) new rental and condominium housing on the Island and who are counting on both the subway *and the Tram* to lure potential market-rate renters and buyers to the Island. It is no “quaint relic” to those of us who had operating public transportation to and from Manhattan during the recent illegal transit strike because the Tram was actually running – and in fact attracted many commuters from Queens and Long Island who shuttled to the Island to use the Tram because their public transit was on strike.

It is no “quaint relic” to the several thousand people who come to the Island each Fourth of July for some of the best fireworks viewing in the City and add several thousand dollars to the Island’s coffers, which, thanks to the fact that Governor Pataki thinks the Island requires no subsidies while subsidizing every other form of public transit, can use the extra dollars.

So let’s direct the attention to getting our “quaint relic” Tramway up and running safely, putting the pressure on the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation to find and spend the dollars to make sure the Tramway is properly staffed at all times, every generator and backup is working properly, and restoring service to this imperfect yet glorious gem as soon as possible. Our Tramway and Island have been under attack recently by columnists in another New York newspaper. Let’s stop picking on the Island and its Tramway and get back to work.

Nina Lublin

To the Editor:

I feel things are getting out of hand, with more and more outsiders getting into the act, and quality of life on Roosevelt Island is in danger of further deteriorating. I hope to send a letter to our elected representatives but, in the meantime, I would like to set down the following perspective:

Riders on the F train – all but Roosevelt Island residents – live in neighborhoods with restaurants (plural), coffee shops, book stores, movie theatres, photo shops, shoemakers, opticians, boutiques, health food stores, and more. The prospect of having to descend deep into the underground for an F train – 40 times more crowded than the Q-train, which formerly served Roosevelt Island – to get to one of these amenities is a horrible one – enough to result in a mass exodus of Island residents, for those who are able, and misery for many others.

Neglecting to repair the back-up power system for the Tram was a monumental example of incompetence.

It is time the quality of life of Island residents is factored into plans for maintaining and developing Roosevelt Island.

Sandra Zwerling

To the Editor, The New York Times:

The New York news summary titled *Ancient Infrastructure (Week in Review, April 23)* accuses the Roosevelt Island Tram of being an “ancient relic” because it broke down after 30 years of service. By that reasoning, the 100-year-old New York subway system should be relegated to a museum. Instead, every effort is made to update this essential people carrier, and the same criteria should be applied to the Tram.

Roosevelt Island’s F-train stop is already overburdened during the morning commute, with riders forced to let three and four full trains pass them by, and the continuing development of the Island promises increased congestion on our one subway line. The Tram now operates at capacity during rush hours, and has done so since it was incorporated into the MetroCard system two years ago.

Further, Roosevelt Island is a planned community incorporating a large senior and disabled population. Until the subway can safely and reliably accommodate motorized and manual wheelchairs and provide elevator service at all destinations for citizens using walkers and canes, the Tram remains a critical component of Roosevelt Island’s commuter web. That the Tram has become an international icon of New York City is simply icing on the cake.

The answer lies in better maintenance, government subsidy of the system as is standard with every other mode of public transportation, and more competent oversight from the State Department of Labor and especially, the State public-benefit corporation, the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC), which runs Roosevelt Island like a private fiefdom.

Matthew M. Katz

To the Editor:

I was one of the lucky ones to be on the train that broke down [Monday morning]. I had to let two trains go by, and was overhearing people on the platform complain that they had let five or six go by. We felt trapped.

Not only that, but the Red Buses seem to have gotten even more frustrating than they had been before. I don’t need to recount the absurdities in the way they operate, but now, with virtually no traffic on Main Street during rush hour, why are they still running three or four in tandem northbound, while there are 20 or more people waiting at Manhattan Park, and again at Gristede’s, to go south? Why have they added length and time to the Red Bus route, but not adjusted the number of buses running?

And to respond to the issues currently facing us, can they *please* consider some alternatives:

- The Red Bus schedule needs to be revamped. Bring in a transportation expert (like those who help the car rentals put together their bus schedules at the airports).
- The white bus: They really need to add stops. How about one in front of 40 River Road in both directions, as well as one at the Tram?
- How about a pedestrian/bicycle/rollerblade/wheelchair access to the 59th Street Bridge? In light of the latest problem, it is obvious that we need a self-propelled alternative – at least a ramp. Also, some sort of a lift – perhaps steam-powered by the steam plant?
- Listen to those of us who experience the transportation difficulties first-hand, and are trying to offer practical solutions. I’d be willing to serve on some sort of think-tank.

Thanks for letting me vent. I’ve been meaning to write these suggestions for months, and today’s experience finally pushed me to do it!

Laura Fels

To the Editor, Main Street WIRE:

If you continue to disfuse the issue by your continued and boring attacks on RIOC and the Governor and now the “right” *Sun* and ...what next? Iraq? CIA? The religious right? The DaVinci Code?

I’m against the Tram and with your help, I’ll win.

James Whalen

Editor’s note: James Whalen is a member of the Residents Association Common Council. He represents 2 River Road.

To the Editor:

We need the Tram back. Maybe we need to do a protest on Main Street. Whatever it takes. In the meantime, RIOC would need to provide more buses to and from manhattan out of courtesy. They don’t do a good job in keeping up the Tram; they should pay for their mistakes, not us. We also need to tell the MTA not to cut services on weekends. Let’s put our voices together so that we can be heard!

Maureen Leong

To the Editor:

This is an open letter for anybody remotely in charge of Roosevelt Island’s development and who obviously does not live on the Island.

Following the Tram incident and recurring problems linked to transportation, here is some breaking news for RIOC:

- The Tram was not designed to be and cannot be a means of mass transportation.

Have you ever wondered why Roosevelt Island is the only place in the world using an aerial tram for mass transportation? Hint: because that’s a bad idea. With approximately 5,000 people commuting daily to Manhattan, and a third using the Tram, how can you rely on a means of transportation so precarious? Every time there’s some wind, some standard repairs, not even mentioning recurring serious incidents, residents are stuck on one side or the other.

If we want to keep the Tram, as I believe most of us want to, let’s keep it for what it is: a nice and folkloric complement to other means of transportation.

- In case of evacuation (by foot), we have no choice – a small pink bridge to Queens. How come the basic rule of having a second emergency exit, which applies in all public places, does not apply to our Island?

Why can’t we simply get access to the Queensboro Bridge, hence to Manhattan? At one time, the bridge was accessible by elevators. How complicated would it be to open access to this bridge – stairways at a minimum, and/or a nice elevator for residents who need the extra help?

Most commuters from Roosevelt Island using the Tram actually seek access to East 59th Street, either to reach the U.N. or the close-by hospitals. That would also serve the contingency plans.

- The F line is unusable 7:30-8:30 a.m. I pity every parent with a stroller, trying to board and having to wait one or two trains before finding a spot to get in. When they have 3-6 year old kids, their kids’ faces are in people’s butts. I won’t mention the subway being out of service, working only one way, etc. What about restoring the Q line?

The Island is in mutation, bound to adapt to growing population and other drastic changes. The latest incident shows how much we are enduring, while the slogan on the RIOC website is quality of life. *Who are we kidding?*

At least, I hope all that counter-publicity will serve one positive purpose for Island House, Westview, and the new buildings: it should be cheap to buy a place to live here.

Jerome Coullare

To the Editor:

I was one of the more than two dozen Islanders who attended the City Council hearing regarding the Tram on April 27.

It was interesting to witness RIOC president Herb Berman and vice president Catherine Johnson pat themselves on the back for what a great job they do managing the Island and the Tram, how everything worked as planned during the emergency and how no one was injured.

The credit, of course, should go the NYPD, FDNY, OEM and Tramway staff for their skillful and caring evacuation of trapped passengers and to the patience and cooperation of those passengers in a situation that didn’t need to happen if RIOC had truly done their job.

There was much discussion at the hearing about “faults” (power surges) and how “things happen” with mechanical/electrical equipment. This is true and why a backup system should be in good working order and at the ready at all times. Why, then, has the secondary backup been out of repair since 2004, as discovered by an ABC investigation, “when an engineering consultant had urged the Tram operators ‘to either repair or replace the backup generator?’” The investigation also pointed out that in 2004 and in 2005, “routine maintenance was not being completed on all items” and why the consultant strongly recommended that “at least one additional mechanic” be hired, something that did not happen until a few months ago. (See 7Online.com: Mechanic shortage on Tram).

If the company that runs the Tram, Doppelmayr, was slow in determining what went wrong in the September, 2005 Tram stoppage (they still have not figured it out), why didn’t RIOC push them more or hire a separate investigator? And why didn’t RIOC push those repairing the backup system to complete their work in less than the 1½ years, minimum, that it has taken so far? They are, after all, dealing with people’s lives here!

At Thursday’s hearing, credit must go to City Council Transportation Chair John Liu who persisted in getting answers when the Doppelmayr representative and the RIOC president and vice president tried to do a not surprising tap dancing act of illusiveness and constantly took cover under the phrase, “It’s still under investigation.” Credit also goes to Assemblymember Pete Grannis, who spoke on our behalf at a prior press conference that morning, and of course to our Councilmember, Jessica Lappin, who called for the hearing and is always there for us, asking the tough questions. I must say, my favorite quote of the day came from Councilmember G. Oliver Koppell who, when referring to the dangerous rescue situation and alluding to RIOC’s self-congratulatory claim that no one got hurt, said “You had *luck!*”

As a member of the Maple Tree Group that has fought for self-governance since 1997, I say we don’t want to depend on “luck.” We want a RIOC that is competent, has the safety and well being of residents as a top priority, and is *elected* by those residents whose very lives RIOC has in their hands. Do you hear us yet, Governor?

Linda Heimer

To the Editor:

I like the bright new garbage cans but I am astounded to learn that each one cost \$2000. And once again, I see there is no oversight by RIOC. I noticed several where the paint was badly chipped. I wonder how many more are in this condition. No one seemed to think that these defective cans should be returned to the manufacturer. How many of the RIOC Board would order something personally for \$2000 each (\$80,000 total for the 40 receptacles) and not check on the condition of merchandise when it arrived?

Doris Chernik

To the Editor (The WIRE):

I rode the same Tram for nine days in Snowbird, Utah, about seven times a day; same company, same equipment; but better maintained and backed up. No stopages occur in that ski resort.

Thus, the age of the Tram is irrelevant so long as the parts are replaced and the maintenance performed, plus having the right backup for the unexpected.

What would Roosevelt Island be like without the Tram? First, those not living here have little idea of how inadequate the alternatives are: you essentially will not be able to get to work on the F train once a few more buildings are constructed here; as it is, you have a real jam from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. most weekday mornings. Wait until the word goes forth that the Island is a great place to live and rest, but not a place from which one can ever get to work in the morning!

What about the children, seniors, and disabled who find the Tram more user friendly?

What about when the subway is down or the one Bridge to the mainland (due to undergo a major repair) is stuck?

What about those emergencies that block access to hospitals?

Try selling or renting market priced apartments on this Island without the Tram.

If developers do not already have it in their subleases, smart ones will insist on the Tram as a condition of their entering into development agreements.

Those living elsewhere can write about closing down the Tram. Those who live here know it is about the worst idea imaginable.

Bob Chira

More Letters, next page

Letters from page 18

To The Editor:

The Roosevelt Island Tram has come to symbolize the inability of the State government to manage an efficient form of transportation that is utilized world-wide. In Austria, France, Germany, and Switzerland, trams have been running in excess of three miles up and down the mountainsides. Many are 75 years old. They run 12 months a year under far more adverse weather conditions and with greater stresses on the mechanical equipment than that experienced by the Island Tram. Why do we never hear from the Europeans that their trams are chronologically old and need to be replaced? Perhaps the answer is that “Old Europe” does not have a Madison Avenue spin manager on the job. These countries simply replace worn items in accordance with the manufacturer’s maintenance schedule.

The Island Tram problems began approximately 20 years ago when RIOC took over its daily operation under the guise that their management would be more cost-effective. They terminated the contract of the Von Roll Corporation, which designed and operated the Tram for seven years without a major incident.

Within a year, the Tram experienced daily mechanical and electrical problems and had to be shut down for several months. The Residents Association formed a Tram panel, of which I was a member, to investigate and report back to RIRA and RIOC. We reported that RIOC spent over one million dollars on outside consultants to study the electrical and mechanical systems.

The Tram panel took exception to additional costly studies because this information was already available.

Soon after RIOC took over, we needed to replace the haul cable. RIOC contracted the job to a midwestern rigging company that was low bidder. After the company dropped the cable in the East River, stopping traffic on First and Second Avenues, we were shut down for three months.

After that fiasco, you might think that RIOC would have been enlightened regarding the necessity of hiring a company with previous experience, but such was not the case. Several years later following the cable replacement, the new rigging company cut and spliced the connecting cable ends ten feet too short. This time we were shut down for three months waiting for a replacement cable.

The purpose of this letter is not to vilify RIOC but to raise the awareness of all residents that RIOC relies on outside technical companies who wish to sell their services and products. For example, RIOC presently has a proposal to purchase two new tram cabins for over one million dollars. The specious argument is that the old cabins have been subjected to fatigue stresses and need to be replaced. There are many tests that can be performed to assure safety, including stress strain gauges, radiographic x-rays, etc. There has been zero proof to substantiate the purchase of new cabins. Yet the consultant and many members of RIOC continue to push for new cabins based upon the bogus presumption that the cabins have been subjected to excess fatigue stresses.

My fellow residents – If you follow the dollars, you will follow the politics! Who is monitoring the Roosevelt Island cash register and who has the *technical* expertise to understand appropriate purchases and maintenance?

As a licensed professional engineer, I suggest that the MTA take over the daily operation and maintenance of the tram. My reasons are as follows:

- The M.T.A. is in the business of mass transportation.
- The M.T.A. is self insured.
- The M.T.A. has mechanical and electrical engineers on staff who can oversee contracts with companies who have previous expertise.
- The M.T.A. would also ensure oversight of the daily maintenance operations.

Robert Liss, P.E.

The WIRE seeks:

- a weekend photographer
- feature writers
- reporters

Call Managing Editor Dick Lutz at 212-826-9055

Lappin Asks MTA to Postpone Track Work

The MTA has scheduled service interruptions for several weekends, including this one. See *ComingUp*, page 3.

Mr. Lawrence Reuter, President
New York City Transit
370 Jay Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201-3814

Dear Mr. Reuter:

It has come to my attention that the MTA is planning to do service work on Queens bound F trains beginning on Saturday May 6 to Monday May 8. Work is also planned for May 20-22 and May 27-30.

Since the Roosevelt Island Tram is currently out of service, any shutdown of the F train poses a major inconvenience to transit riders on Roosevelt Island. In light of this major inconvenience, I formally request that the MTA postpone all unnecessary service work on the F train until the Tram is up and running again.

According to the MTA, in March of 2006, 128,267 people used the Roosevelt Island Tram. While it is not managed by the MTA, it is a vital part of the city’s public transportation infrastructure. Commuters who normally depend on the Tram, visitors to the Island’s public hospitals, and the Island’s sizable senior and disabled populations are now at the mercy of the F train.

I understand that regular service work is needed to make the transit system more reliant and dependable. But due to the Tram stoppage, I strongly urge the MTA to consider postponement of any unnecessary work.

If you have any questions, or if my office can be of any assistance in working to resolve this problem, please do not hesitate to contact my Legislative Director, Amos Buhai at 212-535-5554.

Sincerely,
Jessica S. Lappin

To Mayor Michael Bloomberg:

As a resident of Roosevelt Island and the elected Secretary of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA), I’d like to thank you for driving to Roosevelt Island during a very trying time for many of our stranded residents and those who were visiting our community for the first time and who got “stuck” on the Tram. Roosevelt Islanders are a plucky bunch and that is one of the reasons there was little or no panic in either car.

I am writing because I am very troubled by comments I heard you make on NPR last week regarding the Tram, and now are being parroted by different media, to wit:

- That there are many other ways to get to Roosevelt Island, and
- That the Tram may be outdated.

I am extremely concerned about what would/could prompt you to make such uninformed comments. Past Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) President/CEO Rob Ryan was quoted making this very statement several years ago to the media. We thought we’d heard the last of that comment when he left his post here, but apparently not. Mr. Bloomberg, just what are the “many other ways” for us to leave or access this Island community, especially during commuting hours?

Subway: For the record and your education, Mayor Bloomberg, Roosevelt Island has only *one subway line available to our community* into Manhattan. At weekday morning rush hours, our riders frequently find themselves waiting for 3-4 F trains to pass by before finally being able to board one. The trains are just too full, having filled up at stops in Queens.

Tram: Contrary to your comment, the Tram is not outdated. At 30 years of age, it is quite a bit younger than the subway system. The Tram, since its inception, has always been a secondary commuting tool and, with the population growth we are currently experiencing, it is now running at capacity and about to break even financially. The Tram has been an important buffer for our residents, especially with the subway work that has recently been going on diverting us first into Queens and then back to Manhattan. It is especially important when there are subway shutdowns, which we’ve experienced frequently over the past several years. The Tram is a direct link to Manhattan and, as proven below, is essential to our large disabled population, at least until the subway becomes fully ADA-compliant. It is also a safe transit method for our larger than average elderly population. Many will only ride the Tram.

Bus: We do have a Q102 bus that does not run into Manhattan but takes riders into Queens. An experiment was done several years ago by our local newspaper with a resident in her wheelchair. It took her three hours roundtrip to get to Manhattan using the Q102 into Queens and then waiting for another bus to Manhattan. This was obviously not the most efficient way to get to the “main” Island, and I doubt you’d put up with this inconvenient transportation mode if you were in a similar position. Hence, it is an absolute requirement for our Tram to remain as a viable transportation method for a major portion of our Island population.

Boat: We have no dock and none is on the horizon, except that there is some talk about possibly putting one in at the new Octagon apartments mainly for those residents since that is quite a bit farther north of the main residential part of this community.

The reason for much of the F-train platform congestion is due to the sudden and unplanned-for population growth. I hate to mention it, Mr. Bloomberg, but you played a role in this problem. You signed an amendment to our only zoning, the General Development Plan (GDP), with RIOC, on behalf of the developers, Becker & Becker. You may recall that we

do not fall under the City zoning laws. This amendment to the GDP allowed for Octagon Apartments to be built without a proper EIS study that would have shown that greater population growth in this Island community would probably add more stress to our one subway link to Manhattan. And so it has. We continue to look at additional population growth as Southtown comes on line. We are at 10,000 residents now and there will be a doubling of population with the planned (and possible other unplanned) development. This growth will most assuredly bring the Tram into the financial black.

Mayor Bloomberg, your statement that the Tram is outdated is a red herring. If that is the case, what about the New York subway system? What about the LIRR? What about the Staten Island Ferry? With subway trains crashing into tunnel walls and killing and badly injuring riders (14th Street), subway relay components found to be severely outdated, LIRR trains derailling, or The Staten Island Ferry accident that killed and injured many commuters, there were no calls for these transportation systems to be shut down, especially because of their age, or being outdated. There was talk of updating the relay systems – has that happened? Has it even begun to happen? Cleanup and thorough investigations were held for each accident. Upgrading and correcting systems is what is required with the Tram. Any and every transportation system is liable to have an accident. The Tram rescue mission actually worked according to the way it has been practiced. How about that? Failures of systems do not indicate that a shutdown for good of that system is the correct answer. Every time this idea has come up with regard to the Tram, it has failed abysmally. The community that relies on the Tram will just not allow it to happen.

There is no disagreement that it is time to bring the Tram into the 21st Century and the City should help to do this. Mayor Bloomberg, why don’t you work with our Federal representatives to help Roosevelt Island get the kind of Federal funding that other major transit entities throughout the country receive, so that we can have the Tram system modernized and the oversight that the Tram requires? That would be a much more useful and proactive use of your bully pulpit.

Furthermore, Mr. Mayor, this Tram is not only here for Roosevelt Island residents. As a tourist attraction, it appears in the NYC&Co brochure and Michelin Green Guide. The Tram is an icon of New York City now. Sylvester Stallone (*Night Hawks*), *Spider-Man* and several television programs have made it so. This usage has a financial component for our “self-sufficient” community, as well as just plain advertising for the City and Roosevelt Island. So where is the City’s support of this symbol that it should have?

The last time you rode the Tram, during your first run for Mayor, and, by the way, the last time you ever came to Roosevelt Island (until Tuesday, April 18), you commented to Matthew Katz, then Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA) President, who organized your Town Meeting here, that you were shocked that you had to pay a second fare because we did not have access to the MTA’s “One City, One Fare” program via the Metrocard. Mayor Bloomberg, we do now, thanks to Matthew’s very diligent, steady, and hard work starting with a conversation he had with Larry Reuter, who ultimately joined forces with Gifford Miller to get us what, as New York City/State taxpaying citizens, we by all rights should have had from the get-go. We are now two years into being a part of this program.

Please explain to our residents, citizens of New York City, how you justify your comments and why you would want to cut us off from our secondary transit system.

Sherie Helstien, Secretary
Roosevelt Island Residents Association

More Letters to
The New York Sun

(starts on page 8)

To Davidson Goldin:

The Roosevelt Island Tram has been and continues to be unique and necessary for the people of Roosevelt Island. There are many people in wheelchairs here who can use the Tram to get to Manhattan. You rarely see people in wheelchairs taking the subway. Often, the elevator is broken and the escalators are not working for people who have difficulty with stairs. Shutting down access to the Tram would be a great disservice to people with disabilities and the elderly who rely on the Tram for greater independence and mobility as well as access to local hospitals, doctors, museums, restaurants and cultural events. Furthermore, have you ever taken in the City sights from a ride on the Tram at dusk? Tourists from all countries often ride the Tram for the viewing of the City. Before making a statement about the Tram, I suggest that the larger issues be considered.

Danielle Freudenheim

To Davidson Goldin:

Who exactly are you to wax enthusiastic about shutting down the Roosevelt Island Tram?

Do you live on Roosevelt Island to talk about transportation options here? Do you or your family have to miss two or three overcrowded subway trains every morning before you can get on one with barely enough room to breathe? If your answer to these questions is no, please go find another ridiculous cause to embrace and keep your misinformed opinions to yourself. Save the ink and the cheap sarcasm; you'll do your paper a favor!

R. Miskin

To Davidson Goldin:

Thanks for sharing your opinion on the Roosevelt Island Tramway in your newspaper. Not only is there such a thing as "Clueless in Seattle" there is now "Clueless in the New York Sun newspaper". You definitely have similar traits to the Scarecrow in the Wizard of Oz. You're just another reason to not read *The New York Sun*.

Keep up the good work. We need people like you to constantly remind us that there are still people like you around, i.e., those who walk around with their head placed where the New York sun doesn't shine.

Harry Small

To Davidson Goldin:

I was sorry to read your comments about shutting down the Roosevelt Island Tram. Aside from the great emotional attachment Roosevelt Islanders – even the newest arrivals – have to that unwieldy mode of travel, and the easing the Tram provides for increasingly overcrowded Island transportation as new residential buildings sprout up in this small community, the Tram is a lifeline to the many disabled, wheelchair-bound residents of the Island and its two hospitals who wish to live as independently as possible. They cannot count on destination subway stations to be as disabled-accessible as the F train stop on Roosevelt Island.

The Tram has also made life immensely easier for families and the elderly, since children can travel safely on it to and from school and fearful elderly feel about the tram as many in the City proper feel about buses, which the Tram is comparable to. Come for a ride and visit when the Tram is back up. You might even enjoy yourself.

Jennifer Dunning

To Davidson Goldin:

Who are you to make a recommendation to close down the Tram? You do not live here and you obviously don't have a clue as to the needs of our residents. Do you know that we have a large population in wheelchairs who depend on the Tram as their means of transportation? Do you know about all the development that is going on here? Do you know how difficult it is to get on the train during rush hours? Do you know that on some weekends the train is not available at certain times? The Tram is a vital part of Roosevelt Island. Why don't you wait until the investigation is complete before you blow your horn?

When the Tram is up and running again, I will be among the first to ride it. My recommendation is that they fix whatever is wrong and give us back our beloved Tram.

Louise Maniloff

To Davidson Goldin:

Your column today in the Sun states: *Roosevelt Island's Tram is outdated and unreliable. It became redundant when the MTA opened a subway station on the Island two decades ago. Those shiny red gondolas are long overdue for a museum. Or a trash heap. Anywhere but in the air.*

If the Tram is scrapped, how do you propose Roosevelt Island residents get into Manhattan during subway stoppages due to track work? Over these two weekends, F service to or from the Island has been disrupted. Without the Tram, we would have been left with no options.

Currently, Roosevelt Island is going through an apartment base expansion. If you remove the Tram you will be further adding to overcrowded F trains that are already filled to capacity when they get to the Island. There are currently building projects on the Island to add about 5000 residents with plans for more, yet the transportation we have (Tram

Ex-Mayor David Dinkins, Frequent Tram
Rider, “Disturbed by Calls for Abandoning
the Tram, Appeals For Its Survival



Accompanied by Islander Joyce Mincheff, former Mayor David Dinkins appeared before the City Council Transportation Committee last week to make the case for the future of the Tramway.

"I was particularly concerned when the suggestion of some [hint: He's referring to the current mayor] was that perhaps we didn't need a Tram anymore. Well, you've got about 9,000 residents on the Island; they hope to have ultimately about 16,000, and among those residents there are

children, and I'm told that about half of the student population goes to school off the Island, most of them in Manhattan."

Dinkins went on to talk about the Tram's value for tourism: "There are lots of folks – I see them coming every day – bunches of them – and those tourists help to support some of the industry that otherwise would not be on that Island..." When *The Times* quoted Dinkins, it inspired the reaction below from a new Island resident.

Island Hopping

by Jami Bernard

From *The New York Times*, April 28, 2006: *Former Mayor David N. Dinkins, who frequently rides the Tram to play tennis on the Island, testified that the Tramway not only served the Island's residents, but also helped promote tourism in that part of the City. "There are bunches of them that come," he said. "And those tourists help to support some of the industry that otherwise would not be on that Island."*

It looks like the end of the line for Roosevelt Island's world-famous tourist attractions. RIOC officials announced this week that closures would occur in the wake of the Tram stoppage, because the once robust infusion of

and F) is overcrowded already.

It's nice to call for scrapping something you don't live with but, until you beg in our shoes, you have no right to abolish something which, yes – per design – was supposed to be temporary, but now is a necessity.

Eric Schwartzman

To Davidson Goldin:

How dare you call for the trashing of our beloved Tram? In addition to being our icon, the Tram also provides a very necessary service for our elderly, families with children, and the handicapped. Please research your subject before making such rash statements.

Irene Clark

New supersize postcards now available from *The WIRE... a perfect excuse for a short note instead of a letter. See ad, page 10.*

tourists who have kept the Island's wallets stuffed has dwindled to a few stragglers who exited the F train by mistake, thinking this was the fastest way to Bloomingdale's.

A RIOC official confirmed that several popular tourist destinations, like the Hellgate Dunk 'n' Dive attraction at the northern tip of the Island near the Lighthouse, would be shuttered. Gone too will be the Spookhouse Ride at the Blackwell Farm, where screams of delight were routinely heard as tourists crashed through rotting floorboards.

The official, who cloaked himself in anonymity for fear of retribution by his superiors, met this reporter in the parking garage. Fears for his safety proved unfounded when the reason he was so late turned out to be that the elevator was out of service for repairs. Again.

"Everyone knows that tourism is the lifeblood of this Island," whispered the official hoarsely from beneath a fedora, trenchcoat and sunglasses. "The longer the Tram stays down, those millions just dry up."

Does this mean the little Red Bus will no longer be loaded to groaning with happy tourists, snapping away with their cameras at the construction crews of Southtown? Is it the end of the pitter-patter of children's feet amid the ruins of the smallpox hospital?

"It's worse than that," confided the RIOC official. "The Island's fine dining establishments will be affected. No more pizza parties are scheduled."

He declined to specify whether this unfortunate development was due to the tourist dropoff or the fact that the pizza place had already lost its lease.

While the Tram is being fixed – or "fixed," as RIOC bulletins will now re-

mind us – production has halted on the popular Nellie Bly action figures that were selling so well on Main Street. Manny Smith, a street vendor who in better days made enough change off the tourist trade to rent a plot in the community gardens, said he had to stop stocking his once-trendy "Grant Me Asylum" T-shirts due to lack of demand.

Smith misses the tourists. "Like Dinkins said, there were bunches of them," he said mournfully. "I can just make them out across the river, milling about by the Tram on Second Avenue, confused about the closing and wondering what's left to do in New York now that the Octagon squaredances have been called off."

Indeed, the weekly *Name That Island* quizfest drew few players last weekend. No one cheered when the names Hog Island, Blackwell's Island or Welfare Island came up. Nurse's aides were on hand to treat the few despondent tourists who did show up. "They're in shock," said one nurse. "Not to be able to ride the Main Street flume anymore, it's like they've lost a dear friend."

At least one plucky tourist was undeterred by the Tram closing and said she would not stop her yearly pilgrimage here from the Russian steppes. "I'm here to support the industry that would otherwise not be on the Island," she said, looking around anxiously for a bakery or a sports bar. "Tram or no Tram, Roosevelt Island is a tourist paradise, and I wouldn't miss this trip for the world. Next time, I'll bring my countrymen. Bunches of them."

Jami Bernard is a film critic for the *New York Daily News* and a proud new resident of Roosevelt Island.

You Don't Have To Go Off The Island To Find A
Great Little Church!

Welcome to The Church of the Good Shepherd!

We are a Mission of the Episcopal Church,
Rooted In And Open To Many Traditions.

Please Come and Try Out Our
Friendly, Caring Community!

Worship is at 10:00 AM;
Coffee and Goodies Right After.
Pentecost Picnic on the Plaza – June 4th!

Call 212-588-0532. Lew Johnson, Vicar

MINERVA Est. 1969 CLEANERS & TAILORS

Proudly Serving Roosevelt Island for Over 12 Years
Twice Daily Monday to Friday plus Saturday morning

- Exceptional Quality Dry Cleaning
- Shirts Laundered
- Expert European Tailoring
- Suede, Leathers, and Furs Cleaned
- Storage Available
- Draperies and All Household Items
- Free Pick-up and Delivery
- Concierge or to Your Door
- Storage Available
- Complimentary Laundry Bag
- Convenient Monthly Billing
- Corporate Accounts Welcome

37-22 34th Street • Long Island City • NY • 11101
TEL: 718-729-4566 • FAX: 718-729-4344

THE GROG SHOP

605 Main Street, Roosevelt Island



We
specialize
in
wines
from
all
nations



Free Delivery (minimum \$15)
212-838-5822

Open Mon. + Wed.-Thur.-Fri.-Sat., 10:30-1:30 & 4:30-8:00; Sun., noon-3:00
Closed Mon.-Sat., 1:30-4:30; closed Tuesdays

TWINS PIZZA

The Best
Damn
Pizza in
Town!

**FRIDAY NITE
SPECIAL**

\$15⁹⁹

LARGE PIE and
6 Buffalo Wings
or 6 Mozzarella Sticks
or 6 Garlic Knots
plus 2 Liter SODA

FREE

2 Liter SODA
w/2 PIE ORDER

28-15 36th Ave.
Long Island City
FREE DELIVERY
718-784-4607

Meli Melo

BAR AND RESTAURANT

*Featuring Northern Italian and Southern French
Innovative cuisine... artfully presented*

Unique Spot for Gourmet Dining

Meli Melo turns out some of the city's most creative fare. Spectacular
array of fresh seafood and pasta dishes.

We offer the best Black Angus steaks and chops for the carnivores.
Featuring tantalizing appetizer and main courses, prepared in a
traditional French style mixed with Northern Italian.

Dessert is not to be missed.
www.MeliMeloRestaurant.com

212 686-5551 Fax: 212-683-3729

110 Madison Avenue (29-30 Streets)

From the Tram, take the M32 on 60th Street (down 5th Avenue to 30th)

United Collision

Metali Enterprises

Auto Repairs, Air Condition, Diagnostics, Body Work

AUTO SALES

8-16 36 Ave., Long Island City, NY 11106 (Entrance of Roosevelt Island)

Eugen Zafiu (Gelu) Tel: (718) 729-2309 / (917) 208-5505

E-mail: mulmeamu@nyc.rr.com

Valentin Pavlovici Tel: (917) 882-0300

E-mail: valentin_tania@msn.com

KATHERINE'S Laundromat

- Pick-up & Drop-off
 - Same-Day Service
 - Dry Cleaner
- \$.80 per pound
FREE DELIVERY



23-04 36th Av., LIC • 718-937-8796
Mon.-Sat. 7am-10pm, Sun. 7am-6pm

Help Wanted

The Child School/Legacy High School is looking for a Driver with clean Commercial Driver’s License.

Job Description: Pick up the school van from the garage, drive students and coaches to track meets and other events from Westview. Wait there until it ends and drive back to Westview.

Hours: 2:30-5:30 p.m. (Approximately 10 events)

If you’re interested, please call Victor at **212-223-5482**.

Classified

50¢/word • 212-751-8214
Deadline for May 20 issue: Tuesday, May 16
Deadline for June 3 issue: Tuesday, May 30

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZER, Handyman, and Painter. Island resident who does it all! Fully insured. Visit www.1steporganizing.com for information and to see pictures. Contact Steve through website or call **212- 486-0627**.

COME TO TEA-TASTING and presentation of Ampalaya (Bitter Melon): Nature's Remedy for Diabetes I & II – May 13, Saturday, Island House Community Room, 3:00-5:00 p.m.. RSVP **212-223-4239, 212-758-7686** or e-mail micharantea@att.net.

LICENSED MASSAGE THERAPIST / Certified Reflexologist – Island resident Diana Brill. Gift certificates available. **212-759-9042**.

MAIN STREET THEATRE & DANCE ALLIANCE – Ongoing registration for dance and theater classes. **212-371-4449**. Unique or period clothing & furniture gladly accepted.

RIVERWALK PLACE – 1 bedroom, 1.5 baths, den. High floor. River & City views. Spacious 880sf (approx). Huge walk-in closet. \$685,000. CC \$588. Tax abatement. Relocating. Must sell. **718-357-9267**.

NOTARY PUBLIC – Roosevelt Island Day Nursery, 4 River Road, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. school days. **212-593-0750**.

HEBREW SCHOOL on Roosevelt Island! First semester began January, 2006. K-4th grade. For more information, and to register, e-mail eserf0123@yahoo.com.

AVON! FULLER BRUSH / Stanley Products. Buy or sell. www.clickandshopusa.com, clickandshopusa@hotmail.com.

WWW.MEGASHOPPINGMALLS.NET – The cheap, savvy, and smart shopper bookmarks and logs on for fast delivery and rock bottom prices. Log on today!

CLEANING SERVICE – Residential and professional. Proprietor of 17 years is RI resident. Bonded & insured. Same personnel each visit. Call **212-688-6712**.

MATH TUTORING by lady living on the Island. Any level. Call **212-829-1406**.

EXPERT PIANO REPAIRS & TUNING – Prompt service. **212-935-7510**. Beeper **917-483-1020**.

PIANO TUNING – \$95. Formerly with Steinway Concert Department. Good old pianos for sale. Ben Treuhaft, **212-505-3173** / BLT@igc.org.

MASSAGE THERAPIST, licensed. Muscles/joint injury assessment. Prevention and rehab. Deep Tissue Therapeutic Massage. 20 River Road. Erin Brandt. **917-806-9192**.

PROFESSIONAL SKIN CARE on Roosevelt Island by experienced licensed aesthetician in new modern premises. **212-371-2971**.

FRENCH TUTORING by expert teacher, individual or group. Call **212-355-3848**.

NOTARY PUBLIC – **212-935-7534**.

ROOSEVELT ISLAND POSTCARDS (standard size) – Rich color Views of Tram by day & Lighthouse Park at night; sets of 20 (10 each) for \$8, or two sets, \$15. Check payable to *The WIRE* to 531 Main Street #413, NYC10044 with address, phone, e-mail address. Questions: **212-826-9055**. Sorry, no phone or credit card orders. Proceeds benefit *The Main Street WIRE*.

EXPERIENCED PAINTER/CONTRACTOR – Excellent Island references, fully insured. Free estimate. **212-751-8214**.

CAT-SITTER – VACATION IN PEACE – Will feed and play with your cat, water your plants, pick up your mail, etc. **212-751-8214**.

Bike Heaven

Repairs • Rentals • Accessories

348 E 62 (between 1st & 2nd Av.)

M-F 10-7 • S-S 9-5 • MC/Visa

212-230-1919 e-mail mybikeheaven@yahoo.com

10% off any single purchase of accessories with this coupon

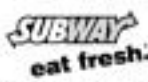




TRIPLE DEAL

Get three Footlong subs for \$11.99

Offer expires 7/31/2006



Offer good only at the following location:
900 Main Street (COLER HOSPITAL)
Roosevelt Island, NY 10044
212-848-5530

Valid after 3PM only.
No cash value. Not for sale. One request per customer per visit. Double meat and add-ons extra.
Not good with any other offer. For a limited time only at participating SUBWAY® restaurant.
©2006 Doctor's Associates Inc. SUBWAY® is a registered trademark of Doctor's Associates Inc.

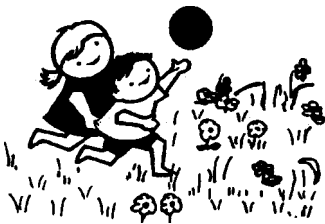
900 Main Street (COLER HOSPITAL)
Roosevelt Island, NY 10044
212-848-5530

DELIVERY HOURS
MON-FRI: 1:30PM to 9PM
SAT & SUN: 11AM to 9PM

FREE DELIVERY
Minimum: \$8.99

© 2006 Doctor's Associates Inc. SUBWAY® is a registered trademark of Doctor's Associates Inc.

Renanim



Preschool & Summer Camp
336 East 61st Street
212-750-2266

A unique year-round program for children ages 2 to 6 years
Small classes by age group
Open 8:30-6:00

With 40 years of experience we have a lot to offer:

- Warm, nurturing environment
- Certified, experienced teachers
- Arts & Crafts
- Music & Movement
- Gymnastics & Dancing Classes
- Computer, Science & Cooking
- Emergent Literacy Program
- Instruction in Hebrew Language
- Ongoing Monthly Programs
- Safe & Secure Outdoor Playground/Pool
- Field Trips
- Spacious and air-conditioned
- Certified Kosher Food served

Now accepting applications for Summer Camp and Fall 2006
Accredited and licensed by NYC Department of Health • For further information call Renanim Manhattan
212-750-2266

Give your apartment a lift

HOME SHOPPING SERVICE

Consultations Available – Use What You Have

*Furniture
Upholstery, Slipcovers
Wallpaper & Fabric
Carpet & Area Rugs
All Window Treatments
Floor & Terrace Tiles
Lighting
Carpentry
Kitchen Renovation
Paint & Faux Finishes
All Accessories
Closet Design*



Ellen Levy

Interior Decorator
531 Main Street
212-751-8214
No job too small

Two great Roosevelt Island color postcards
See Classifieds





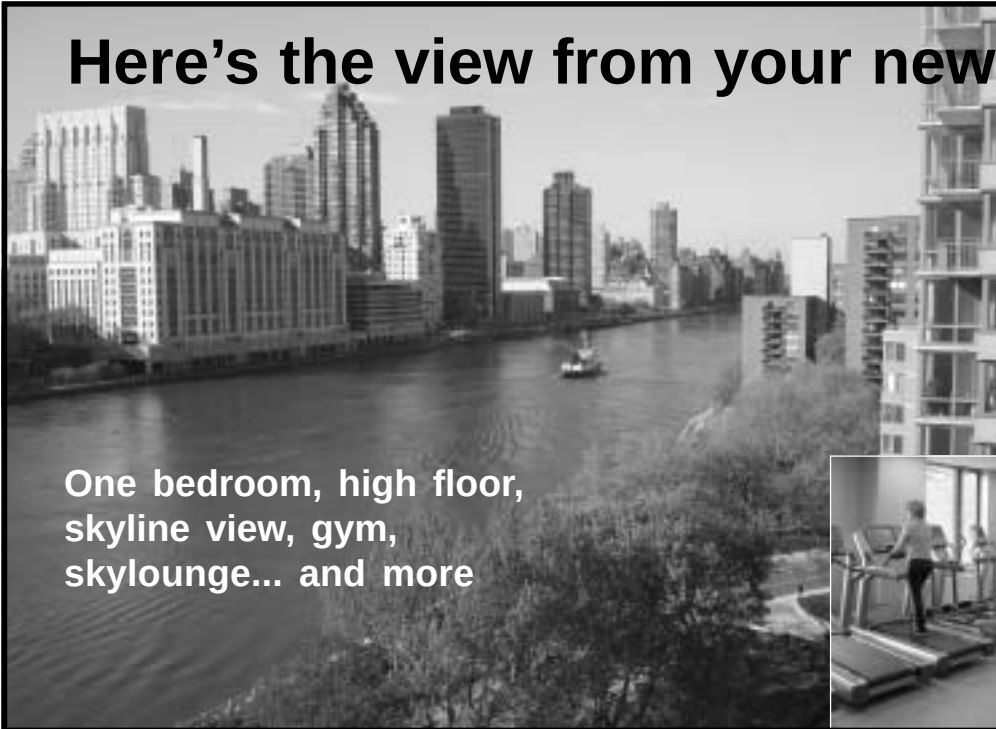
GENERAL CONTRACTOR

FULLY INSURED

Painting, plastering, skimcoating • Wallpapering
Expert carpentry • Kitchen & bathroom renovation • Tile work

Rivercross References
212 751-8214

Here's the view from your new Riverwalk home (condo for rent)



One bedroom, high floor, skyline view, gym, skylounge... and more



Call for information and appointment:
212-764-8500



Medicare D Deadline to sign up without penalty is May 15

A major flaw in the system has just been fixed. Companies must now provide people the drugs they had in their formulary when the beneficiary enrolled. There are plans that don't cost much.

Call 1-800-Medicare if you have questions.

For a free phone consultation, call Ellen Polivy MSW, LCSW at **212-362-2076**

A Family Assistance Network, Geriatric Care Manager on Roosevelt Island
www.familyassistance.net

Sales & Service
Est. 1961

CHRIS TV

License #730671
Credit Cards Accepted

Repair Service Center

TV-VCR-STEREO-CD-PROJECTION TV-CAMCORDERS and more...

Free Estimates in Shop.
Pickup & Delivery
In-Home Service
All Work Guaranteed

718-392-7444

Mon.-Fri. 9-7
Sat. 9-6
21-16 36th Av.
LIC, NY 11106

Katherine Teets Grimm, M.D.

Board Certified Pediatrician
501 Main Street • Roosevelt Island • 212-753-5505

Don't wait until the last minute. Schedule your child's camp/school physical today.

Office Hours
Monday & Thursday • 9 a.m. -12 noon
Tuesday • 12:30 - 4:30 p.m.
Wednesday & Friday • 1:30 - 5:30 p.m.

Coverage provided at all times, when office is closed, by Dr. Grimm or by her group, Uptown Pediatrics.
We provide comprehensive health care to children and adolescents.
Dr. Grimm is also qualified to evaluate and treat allergy and asthma in adults.

Roosevelt Island Family & Cosmetic Dentistry

Our philosophy: *Our office offers adults and children a Quality Dental Service with gentleness, compassion, thoroughness, and respect for their time at a moderate dental cost. Services include Bonding, Veneers, ZOOM! In-Office Bleaching, Implants.*

Met Life in-network participant
Delta Dental in-network participant
DHA/First Fortis in-network participant

Some of the **Dental Plans** we accept toward payment:
21st Century, Cigna, Aetna, Prudential, USHealthCare, Guardian, etc.



Daytime Hours: Mon., Fri. 9-6; Tue., Wed. 12-5; Thur. 3-7
Evening Hours: Tue., Wed. 6-9

Lawrence Itskowitch, DDS, PC
Treating residents 27 years
501 Main Street • 212-752-8722

Jack Resnick, M.D.

Board-Certified Internist, FACP
Specialist in Adult Medicine

Health Plans Accepted
Aetna/USHealthcare
Empire Blue Cross
CIGNA GHI HIP
Multiplan
Oxford
United Healthcare
Medicare

212-832-2310

House Calls
For the frail elderly and the homebound

501 Main Street
Roosevelt Island, N.Y. 10044

FOOT PAIN?

PARK EAST PODIATRY

MEDICINE AND SURGERY OF THE FOOT & ANKLE

✓ Heel Pain
✓ Bunions
✓ Hammertoes
✓ Nail & Skin Problems
✓ Diabetic Footcare & Shoes

Dr. Neil Zwiebel

Office Hours by Appointment

MOST INSURANCES ACCEPTED
MEDICARE ACCEPTED
HOUSE CALLS UPON REQUEST & NEED

212-207-4360

105 EAST 63RD STREET
Between Park and Lexington Ave.
Train to Lexington Ave./63rd St. Station in Manhattan



CAT SITTER



We will feed and lovingly care for your cat while you are away. We will make sure your pet is safe and happy in his or her own home. Will also help with mail, plants, etc. Excellent references. Call us at 212-751-8214.



“Where Thai food stays Thai”

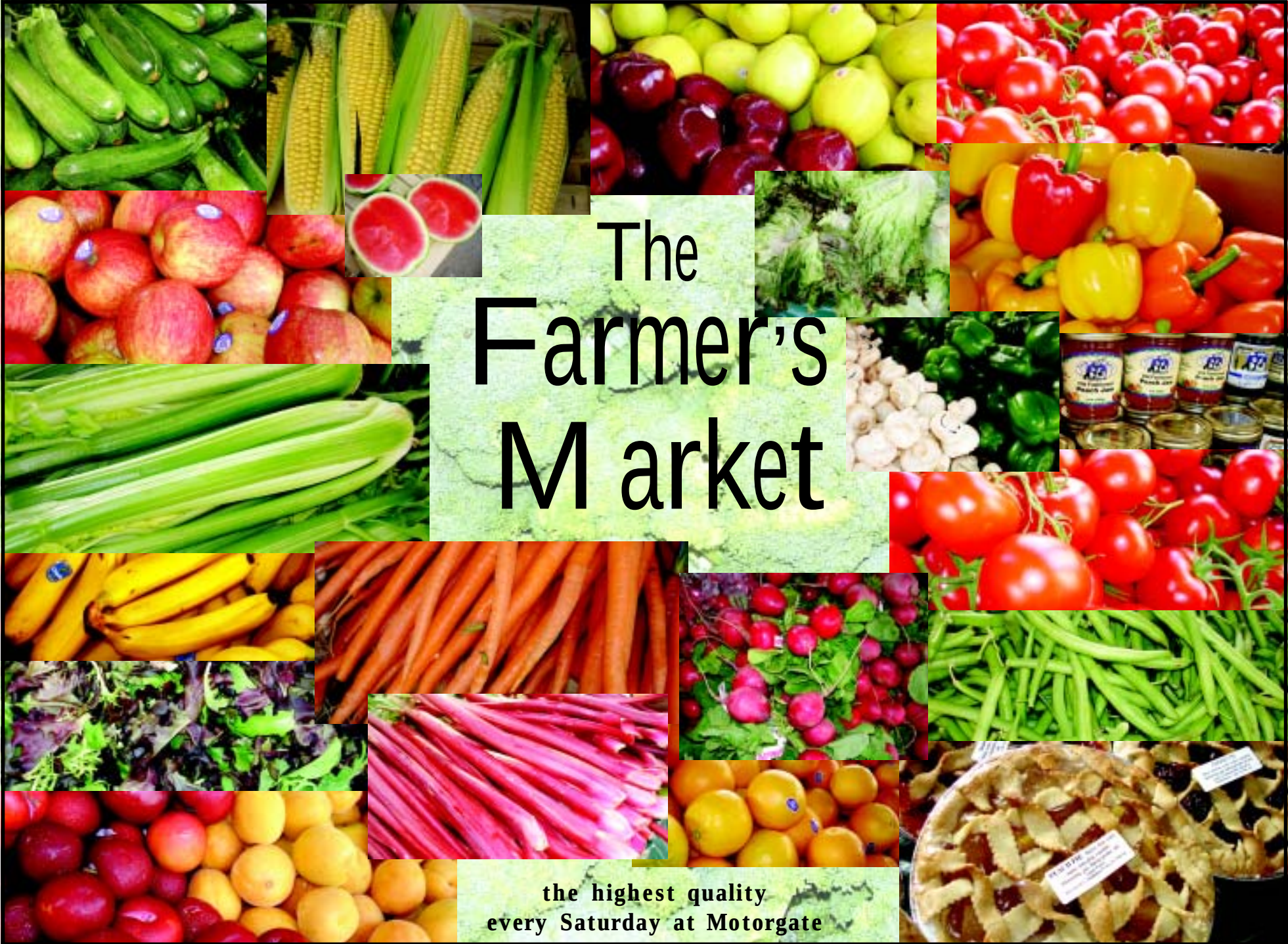
“...the kitchen serves up authentic and inspired Thai recipes worthy of a trip to Queens”
-New York Magazine

Ubol's Kitchen
2442 Steinway St.
Astoria, NY 11103

Tel: (718) 545-2874
Fax: (718) 545-0743

Free Delivery to
Roosevelt Island





The Farmer's Market

the highest quality
every Saturday at Motorgate