

State Senator
Diane J. Savino's
2013

Staten Island Railway Rider Report



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Introduction

Since taking office in January of 2005, Senator Savino has often received suggestions and complaints regarding the Staten Island Railway service commonly known on Staten Island as the Staten Island Rapid Transit or SIRT. Since Senator Savino's Staten Island District Office is located directly across the street from the St. George Terminal, several staff members take the railway daily, as do constituents who come to see her for meetings or her staff to access services.

Key areas of complaints, include, the condition of the waiting rooms and platforms, lack of amenities, weather protection and security, as well as other quality of life concerns. Senator Savino normally addresses each concern on a case by case basis. However, in 2009 the Senator desired a more pro-active and comprehensive approach to transit complaints.

In June of 2009, Senator Savino's office reached out to ferry riders to ask them questions regarding quality of life issues on the boats and in the terminals via survey cards. The response was overwhelming; over 1000 survey cards were filled out by daily Island ferry commuters. In 2010, the Senator's office surveyed express bus riders in Staten Island and South Brooklyn and again recommend an overwhelming response. Then in 2011, the Senator's office conducted the survey by creating a "mobile district office" in the St. George/Staten Island Terminal, where we surveyed commuters. "Senator Savino's Mobile District Office" took place from June 29th through July 1st, 2011.

In the 2009 survey, Ferry riders expressed their desire for a greater retail options, better bus/ferry connections and the establishment of a "quiet deck." With the success of the 2009 & 2011 Ferry Rider Survey and Report, and the 2010 Express bus rider report Senator Diane Savino commissioned another such effort for Staten Island Rapid Transit Riders. This report details the findings of the 2013 Staten Island Rapid Transit Rider Survey.

Overview of the Staten Island Rapid Transit

Staten Island Rapid Transit or SIRT, now known as MTA Staten Island Railway (SIR) is a 14 Mile, 21 Station commuter rail line. The St. George terminal (one of the few remaining boat-train links in the US), has 12 tracks, 9 that are used for regular service. Tottenville Station at the southern terminus has a 3-track yard used for storage. There are shops for passenger equipment near Clifton Station, and for maintenance and other vehicles near Tompkinsville Station.

The first line of what is now the Staten Island Railway opened in 1860 connecting Tompkinsville (Vanderbilt Ferry landing) to Tottenville, the current southern terminus. The line was operated as a subsidiary company of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad from 1899 until 1971, when passenger service was taken over by the MTA.

A recently completed station lengthening project extended the length of 17 stations, Atlantic Station (1 car-length), and Nassau Station (4 car-lengths) will be replaced with a larger station of proper length and Richmond Valley Station (4 car-lengths short) still needs to be lengthened. A signal project has been funded to reverse-signal the line from Huguenot to St. George; the line currently has the original B&O color position-light signals. (www.mta.info)

Passenger trains are made up of 64 R-44 type cars, modified to FRA standards for passenger equipment running on a freight road. Cars are numbered 388-464, all single units with couplers (no permanent sets), with 454-464 even numbers only. 388-399 are transfers from the subway system. Work equipment includes two Alco locomotives, #844 and #407. An additional locomotive from the subway system is also on the property. 844 is ex-US Army, 407 is ex-MTA LIRR. There are some hoppers, flatcars, and a caboose (crew car) used as maintenance of rail way equipment.

The operation of the original Staten Island Railroad was from Cranford Junction, NJ to St. George, Staten Island via the North Shore line, and then on to Tottenville or South Beach. The passenger operation on the North Shore (Arlington-St. George) and South Beach lines (St. George-Wentworth Ave) were eliminated in 1953. All of the bridges over the North

Shore line remain. The South Beach line is abandoned. Several bridges where the line crossed streets were removed, and one section of the right-of-way has had houses built on it. The Verrazano Bridge toll plaza destroyed a large part of the right-of-way.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority purchased the North Shore line from the Arthur Kill Bridge to St. George for resumption of passenger and freight service. Freight travels over the AK lift bridge across the Arthur Kill, the longest vertical lift-span bridge in the world. The New York Container Terminal has been re-opened; a paper recycling plant has been located at the Travis end of the North Shore line. Additionally, with the closing of the Fresh Kills landfill, a garbage transfer station is now using that spur. All of these industries ship and receive by rail (<http://www.nycsubway.org/lines/sirt.html>).



STATION BY STATION

We begin our ride at St. George, station the northernmost of the active SIRT stations, which has 6 island platforms and 12 tracks. Nine of the tracks are active for service to Tottenville, and two served the abandoned North Shore line. (Track 10 is the tail leg of a way used for non-revenue moves, trash collection etc.) St. George is one of the only remaining ferry, bus, and railroad terminals in the U.S. and the only one in New York State. At the south end of the station the tracks enter a tunnel but the north end is open air with the ferry terminal above. The railway uses continuous welded rail and full tie and ballast construction.

In the past, the train fare was paid at St. George on boarding, and on the train at intermediate stations; with the advent of the MetroCard, fare is charged only for boarding or exiting at St. George (payable with MetroCard or bus transfer Metro card) and at the Tompkinsville station. There is a token booth that sells New York City Transit MetroCards and is staffed by NYCT employees. The present system allows for some free rides—you only pay at St. George, and one other station, Tompkinsville, which both have fare control systems to enter and exit. Tompkinsville station had a large number of

exiting passengers in the St. George direction—presumably to avoid fare payment, so fare collection was installed in 2007 for the sum of \$7 million and the southern Hanna Street exit was closed to passenger exiting.

All stations south of St. George have vapor lighting and canopies only near exits (which are generally at the south end of the stations). From the southern portal of the St. George tunnel, all the way to Tottenville, the line has two tracks. White on black enamel/metal signs identical to those used in the subway system are used at all but a handful of stations (Stapleton, Richmond Valley, Nassau and Atlantic are black paint stenciled on white plywood).

The newest station on SIRT, **Ball Park**, opened in 2001. This station is west of St. George and thus not on the "main Line" of SIRT. This station is about 150 yards west of St. George along what used to be the North Shore line. The station is served by a single track spur from St. George and operated on game days to serve the Staten Island Yankees ballpark. From 2001-2008 it was accessible by elevator; however since 2005, special train service to the ballpark on game nights has ceased due to budget cuts.

The first stop past the St. George tunnel on the "main" line is **Tompkinsville**. There are Maintenance of Way and Crew quarters just past the north end of the station. This station is on a concrete viaduct.

Stapleton is the next stop, an island platform also situated on a concrete viaduct. South of the station, yard tracks can be seen entering the line on the St. George-bound side. This is the connection to the Clifton shops, and where SIR's R44 cars are moved to and from the TA system by truck. This station has the most potential for improvement as it currently serves a location that has seen the Gerald Carter Community Center open in 2011. A new senior housing complex, "The Rail" a new low to moderate rental unit is coming on line this year directly adjacent to the station. In addition, the long dormant Navy Homeport will now be home to an Ironstate development of owner condominiums, which will one day be a large community of condo owners, parks retail, etc.



Clifton Station (www.mta.info)

Clifton is next and is located partly on a bridge and partly on embankment. An interesting feature is the old waiting shelter on the St. George-bound side, which is in need of some rehabilitation. The shelter had four windows, covered up on the southern side; the west side has evidence of windows existing in the past. The Tottenville side of the station formerly had an interlocking tower that controlled the link to the now defunct South Beach line. A close inspection of the Tottenville-bound platform reveals a stair to the trackway and former station exit, rendered useless due to platform extension in the early 1990's. Leaving this station, a look to the north will reveal the remnants of the South Beach cutoff, and a dismantled bridge. To the south, a spur on a pair of I-beams on concrete pillars is the location of an old coal, concrete, and lumber

industry. The line varies from embankment to open cut with the terrain between here and the next station. Here, the line turns southward to Tottenville, no longer running along the harbor front.

Grasmere is next. Here there is an original brick station house from the 1933 grade separation project over the Tottenville-bound track at the south end. The building is open only during the AM rush hour. The platform is located in an open cut and has glass block and concrete windscreens attached to the canopy supports; the only exit is at the west end of the station. This is a major transfer point to the S53 bus to Brooklyn, connecting with the "R" subway at 86th St & 4th Ave. Grasmere crossover, consisting of two manual switches, is located just past the Fingerboard Rd. overpass north of the station.

Old Town is next and has a metal canopy waiting area. The exits at the north end go to Old Town Road; an additional exit to a short alley is on the Tottenville-bound platform. Just past the south end of the station, there is a spur that formerly served the press building of the Staten Island Advance (the last 'borough daily' in the city) and is now used as storage spur for ballast cars.

Dongan Hills is an ADA-accessible station via overly-long ramps to the street at the east end. The stationhouse on the St. George-bound platform had a ticket booth and benches until 1987, and a token vending machine until July 1997. The station is bounded by Garretson Ave. and Seaview Ave. on overpasses, and North Railroad Ave. along the Tottenville-bound side.

Leaving Dongan Hills is a section of 3-track line, the third track (southern) now overgrown. This served a former coal distributor; grates between the rails led to chutes which now open into the backyards of homes that abut the embankment.

Jefferson Avenue is next, which has canopies over the only exit at the north end, to Jefferson Ave. This is the only station on the line named for the street it crosses. All other stations are named for the towns that were served. Jefferson Ave. crossover, two manual switches, is visible from the north end. This station begins the descent from the embankment to the open cut of the next few stations.

Grant City marks the beginning of the 1964 grade separation (from Grant City to Bay Terrace, open cut). There are metal canopies at the south end under the 1964 stationhouse (again, only benches; the ticket sales ended in 1985 and the token machine was removed in July 1997). Approximately 150' from the north end there is a pedestrian crossover. The exits lead to Lincoln Ave.

New Dorp has two side platforms, the north abutting the open cut, the southbound against a retaining wall. The 1964 stationhouse is over the tracks at the south end. Exits on the north end lead to New Dorp Lane and New Dorp Plaza (North and South Railroad Aves.) and on the south end to Rose Ave. and New Dorp Plaza.

Oakwood Heights, the last station to be grade separated (1965, open cut) has a stationhouse at the north end with and a pedestrian bridge at the south end. This station

serves Farrell High School, and can be a rowdy place at dismissal between 2:30 and 3:30 on school days. North end exits to North and South Railroad Aves. and south to Guyon Ave.

A nice station, which has recently been renovated is next, **Bay Terrace**, an island platform located on an embankment. The exits at both ends are well maintained, especially the north exit, which has a glass awning and brick sides. Both Bay Terrace and Jefferson Ave. are notable in that they have historically served residential areas, not business districts, as the other stations do. North exit to Bay Terrace, south exit to Justin Ave.



Great Kills Station (www.thortraines.net)

Next up is the only other ADA compliant station, **Great Kills**. This station has ramps on the north end and metal canopies over the exits at both ends; the south exit is to the 1933 stationhouse and Giffords Lane north exit has ADA ramps and a pedestrian bridge to Giffords Glen. The station is located in an open cut, and is one of the stations where trains are regularly terminated (Tottenville and St. George.) New crossovers were installed in 1997 north of the station. The remains of a spur are visible at the south end.

Eltingville is next with two side platforms on an embankment. Exits are at both ends of the northbound platform, but only at the south end of the southbound platform. The north exit leads to Eltingville Blvd., and the south exit to Richmond Ave., a major transfer point to the X1,4,5,6,9 buses to Manhattan, and the S59 and S79 buses to the Staten Island Mall, Hylan Blvd., and 86th St. Brooklyn, and the S89 Bus to the Hudson Bergen Light Rail. The canopy at the ends is concrete. The stationhouse here is on the street level at the Richmond Ave. exit, and at one time featured a signal lamp that alerted those waiting that a train was arriving. On the exterior of this stationhouse is a plaque noting the Great Kills to Huguenot grade separation project was done under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration.

Annadale is next, and has a stationhouse, built in 1939, at the south end. A footbridge over the north end of the station provides an exit to North Railroad St. and a park and ride lot on the northwest corner. There are steel and concrete canopies over both the south (Annadale Rd.) and north exits.

The next station, **Huguenot**, is practically a mirror image of Annadale, this time with the stationhouse at the north end. A steel and concrete canopy is over the platforms at the north end exit (Huguenot Ave.), and an additional canopy is located about halfway down the southbound platform; however, there is no footbridge or parking here. Some AM peak express trains originate here, a set of crossovers are provided for this service north of the station. A spur used for ballast trains is off the northbound track across Huguenot Ave. from the station entrance.

Prince's Bay (alternately known as Princess Bay and Princes Bay) is next and suffers from a name problem--the maps show the name without the apostrophe while station signs show the apostrophe. The historically correct (and official) name is on the station signs. There are two side platforms with a concrete canopy and exit to Seguin Ave. on the north end, and a steel/concrete canopy near the south end of the southbound platform. This station was the last all-timber platform on the line (and perhaps the city), and was replaced in the early 1990's.

Pleasant Plains is next, with steel/concrete canopies and exit down at the south end to Amboy Rd. North of the station is another set of crossovers, and the right-of-way of a spur that formerly served Mount Loretto. The B&O served the Mt. Loretto non-electrified branch until 1950, which had some industry and a passenger station. The track was removed in the 60s and 70s with some ties visible until the 80s

Next up is **Richmond Valley**, a flag stop nestled between Page Ave. and Richmond Valley Rd. exit from the Tottenville platform and end of the two wall platforms is up while the St. George platform exit is down. This station is in need of renovation. A grade crossing at Richmond Valley Road was removed in 1940. The Tottenville-bound track has a non-electrified spur that once ran all the way to the Arthur Kill. The spur was built in the mid-1920s and dubbed by the B&O as the West Shore Line. The B&O delivered building materials to the Outerbridge Crossing construction site near the Kill. There was also a small industry on the spur known as Roselli Bros. The track remains intact today all the way to Page Ave. The switch at the spur is well kept and working.

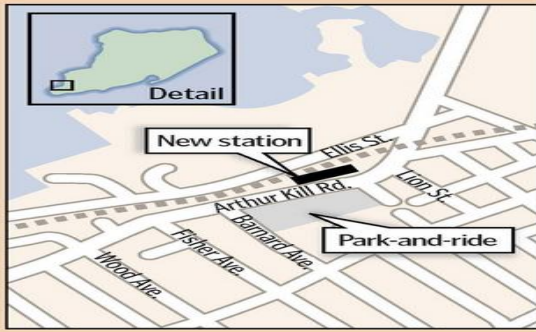
Nassau is next. An interesting feature is the old faded black on white wooden signs. There is a crossover and exit up at the south end. Behind this station is the the Lucent Technologies metal recovery center (formerly AT&T/Bell or Nassau Smelting), and another spur, disconnected from the line, is behind the northbound platform. This station mainly served that now shuttered factory.

http://www.silive.com/southshore/index.ssf/2012/09/its_official_new_staten_island.html

We should note that the Atlantic and Nassau stations will be combined into one station closer to Arthur Kill Road and Ellis Street. This is being done under the 2005 Transportation Bond Act funding.

Superstation

Work will start next year on a \$23 million Staten Island Railway station that will include a 150-spot Park-and-Ride adjacent to the station expected to be located on Arthur Kill Road, between Lion Street and Barnard Avenue.



STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE/ROXANNE RICKER

(silive.com)

Arthur Kill is a planned future station that will replace the Atlantic and Nassau stations. It will be accessible to disabled persons and include a 150 car park and ride owned by the SIRT. It is expected to be completed in 2014.

Atlantic, another flag stop, is next. There is a crossover between the two side platforms, and the exit is down stairs to street level. The platforms here are only long enough for a single R44 car, and the conductor opens a single door manually at this station for those few people wishing to enter or exit the train.

Finally, we arrive at **Tottenville** and are treated to a view of the water to the west and south of the station. A crew room is located in the old stationhouse/tower at this station. The old slip for the ferry to Perth Amboy still stands nearby at the end of Bentley St. On a clear day, if you look hard, you can see the restored Perth Amboy slip on the New Jersey side of the Arthur Kill. There are three yard tracks on the east side of the center platform. Minor renovation is underway and exit is via a ramp at the southeast end (Main St.) and a pedestrian walkway and bridge allow exit at the north end. This is the southernmost rail station in New York State.

www.nycsubway.org



http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/thumb/0/01/SIRT_map.jpg/250px-SIRT_map.jpg

A 1950 map of the Staten Island Rapid Transit Railway Company shows the South Beach Branch in Northeast Staten Island and the North Shore Rail Line extending into Cranford N.J.

FARE COLLECTION AND RIDERSHIP

There is a reason that only the St. George station was gated for fare collection at both entry and exit. St. George and nearby Tompkinsville are the only station like that in the MTA system. Tompkinsville Station was gated for the sum of \$7 million in 2005 to prevent those terminating their commute in St. George from riding the SIRT for free. These fares are not collected at 20 of the 22 SIRT stations. A SIRT commuter can ride 15 of the railwaysv 17 mile track for free. Many do, especially high school students (who would use their free MetroCard to commute to and from school.) For instance, Farrell High School students ride the SIRT in great numbers due to the fact that the school is located right next to the Oakwood Station as do students from Staten Island Technical High School which is located less than a quarter mile from the New Dorp Station. New Dorp High School students ride the SIRT as their school is located a mile from the New Dorp Station; McKee Vocational and Curtis High Schools are located a half mile from St. George Station, yet as stated, fares are collected there. Many workers for the Staten Island Advance located right by the Grasmere Station ride the SIRT to and from work. Staten Island University Hospital North, located a mile and a half from the Dongan Hills Station, and the Staten Island University Hospital South, located right by the Pleasant Plains Station workers ride the SIRT. So fares are collected and ridership counted at the St. George and Tompkinsville Stations.

None of the SIRT riders from Stapleton to Tottenville or any of the other 18 stations in between have fares collected at them nor are numbers on daily ridership at other stations collected. According to MTA statistics, weekday ridership on the SIRT is approximately 15,000 commuters per day. Ridership on the SIRT was down in 2012 more than 100,000 trips than previous years, due in part to Hurricane Sandy's impact according to the MTA. Even with a 3% drop the SIRT still provided 4.4 million rides in 2012. We suspect ridership is in fact much higher than even those numbers.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The Survey was distributed and collected in the 5 most northern SIRT stations: St. George, Tompkinsville, Stapleton, Clifton, and Grasmere and the most passed through stations in the Mid-Island and on the South Shore, the New Dorp and Great Kills Stations. St. George Station is by far the most utilized station by the vast majority of SIRT trips according to the MTA's 2009 ridership numbers. The methodology for "State Senator Diane Savino's Staten Island Rapid Transit Report Card" is as follows: 5000 cards were dispersed during rush hours of 7:00 am to 9:00 am and 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm to workday commuters on the following dates: Tuesday April 16, 2013, Wednesday April 17, 2013, and Thursday April 18, 2013. These six time frames represent the highest level of ridership, according to a 2003 study conducted by the New York City Council Transportation Committee and the New York City Department of Transportation Ferry Division.



Lashawna Silva gets Staten Island Railway report cards from resident of the "Rail" a residential building right off the SIRT Stapleton Station. Senator Savino's intern Shenuque Tissera surveys SIRT riders at the Clifton Station. Shannon Watkins of Senator Savino's staff collects survey report cards at Stapleton Station.

SUMMARY FOR 2013 SURVEY

Survey respondents were asked to evaluate their Staten Island Rapid Transit service. Survey respondents filled out report cards either in the St. George Terminal or at Stapleton, Clifton, Grasmere, New Dorp or Great Kills Stations. Those cards were then collected by staff members. Survey respondents also had the option of mailing in the survey themselves. 74 commuters took the cards to work or home with them and mailed in the survey. The office also received 574 submissions online through the Senator's website <http://www.nysenate.gov/senator/diane-j-savino>

All told, the Senator's office received 1241 responses, or 24% of the cards handed out. This would be considered a high response rate from any survey. The high return rate is an excellent indicator that commuters were enthusiastic about being given the opportunity to evaluate and comment on their ferry service. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority has a commuter rail rider survey; offered on the Metro North and Long Island Rail Road networks, yet none on the State Island Railway that may be obtained.

Respondents were asked to evaluate three specific areas: "Trains," "Stations" and "SIRT" the first two of these three areas were ranked for "Cleanliness," "Services from Personnel," "Frequency of Service," and "Security." The final area three questions were asked: 1) How would you rate your St. George/Ferry connection 2) How would you rate your connection to your local buses and 3) How would you rate the station closest to home that you use most often. All of these sections and questions were afforded the answer check boxes of Unsatisfactory, Poor, Fair, Good, Excellent and Does Not Apply.



Senator Savino and the NYPIRG Straphanger's Campaign start handing out surveys to SIRT riders as Nicholas Zvegintzov, Chairman of the Staten Island Ferry Rider's Committee hands out SIRT surveys in the St. George Terminal; Michael Arvanites ,Senator Savino's Deputy Chief of Staff , hands out surveys to afternoon commuters in the Whitehall Terminal.

Two additional sections were asked of riders: 1) What SIRT station do you use the most often besides St. George and 2) How do you get to that SIRT station? With the following check options were offered: SIRT," "Bus," "Bike," "Walk," "park on street," "park and ride."

By far the highest number of respondents indicated that the bus was their preferred method of travel to their SIRT Station. 766 respondents, or 61%, commute via bus to the station they use most often. According to the 2010 census, a mere 1% of Americans walk to work, yet 292 commuters, almost 23% walk to the station nearest their home. 16 respondents or 0.01% are dropped off by car, 41 commuters utilize a park and ride before boarding a SIRT train commuters only 0.03% ; 110 commuters who responded park on the streets surrounding their stations, or 0.08%. Only 39 (0.03%) respondents are SIRT riders that bike to their train station.

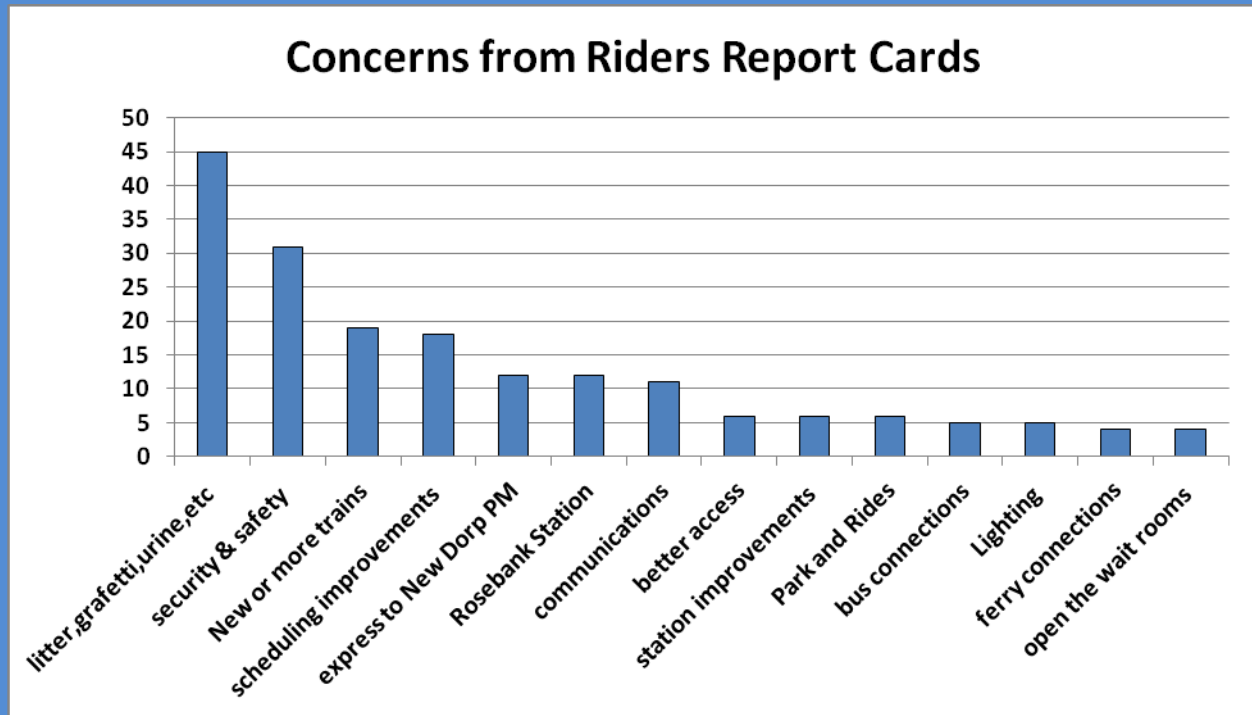
The evaluations were assigned numbers as follows: Unsatisfactory" was a "0", "Poor" was a "1", "Fair" a "2", and so forth. Grades were assigned for the fourteen specific categories. Utilizing a 4.0 grading system, the rankings were averaged for a letter grade, i.e., 4.0=A, 3.0=B, 2.0=C, etc.

The fourteen separate categories had rating boxes of "Unsatisfactory," "Poor," "Fair," "Good," or "Excellent." A comments section was included as well.

Many of the comments reflected the poorest grades in the evaluation section. This process was then repeated in determining which category each column would fall in throughout the sheet. Included in each category is a brief synopsis of the views of the constituents.

The next section used in analyzing the data was a chart (see page 19) computing the number of Unsatisfactory, Poores, Fairs, Goods, and Excellants received on the Staten Island Rapid Transit Survey. The process was calculated using the Excel Program.

Out of the 1241 respondents, 651 added their own comments on how to improve rail service. A breakdown of those comments is available below. It is telling that 52% of respondents chose to take additional time to make a comment.



Some Quotes from Riders

“I would like to see more police cameras in stations with no police” – Anonymous

“Security is critical, newsstand helps increase/prevent potential troublemakers” - Annadale

“We need a North Shore Railroad built! Not a bus lines – but trains! There are more and more people coming to the ferry – but buses are slow and unreliable. It takes us 2 hours each way to get to work in the city” -

“We need North Shore Rail and Light Rail over the Bayonne Bridge and subway R train to Staten Island” – Anonymous

“Start trains from Tottenville 5 min earlier to assure ferry connect” – Eltingville

“My train used to always connect to the SI ferry with no delays. Now the train misses the boat like almost 2 to 3 times a week and most of the time there are no announcements as to why” – Great Kills

“Why aren’t Metro Card machines available at stations? I am originally from Brooklyn and you are able to purchase metro cards at all stations. It is convenient to have machines available to the public so they can purchase Metro Cards at anytime and use them for buses as well as the train. Sometimes stores are closed and you can’t purchase a metro card” – Grant City

“There is no stroller or wheelchair access” – Annadale

“It would be great if the trains came every 15 minutes all day. People do travel to other parts of the island, not just the ferry” – Bay Terrace

“Frequency of 15 minutes during rush hour. SIRT needs better connection to Bus service” – Anonymous

“Update posted train schedule whenever changes are made to overall schedule” – Oakwood

The trains are over 40 years old They need new cars. They also need a public address system at each station so riders can be told of delays/problems on the line.” – Grant City

“As a Staten Island resident who does not live near/use the SIRT, I would like to see more stations and lines extending to centralized parts of Staten Island like the North Shore. This will encourage more public transportation and dispel traffic.”

“When one thing does wrong the whole system seems to collapse like a house of cards and better, adjustable connections with the ferry are needed” – Bay Terrace

“Entrance road to the parking lot and parking ground needs to be repaved. Also an entrance and exit needs to be opened through the west side of the parking lot (via) Buffington Ave. Albee Ave.” – Annadale

“Connections from train to ferry in mornings weren’t consistently reliable. Train side has passes between stops to wait for a passing Train. Why? Don’t they ride on their own rails? As they met enough electricity” – Eltingville

“LED Lighting – bright and less energy no toxics” – Great Kills

“Stations should be longer – that they be accessible at, more than one point. I also wish there were more Express Trains – from St. George to New Dorp as in the morning” – New Dorp

“Better communication especially after storms and during bad weather. Better Facebook updates especially with schedule changes. Better on board communication – let us simply know what is happening because lateness is a major issue.” – Old Town

“SIRT trains should coordinate with SI Ferry arrivals and departures. If a boat is late – the train should wait.” – Grant City

EVALUATIONS

| Trains | | |
|-------------------------|------|---|
| Cleanliness of Trains | 0.87 | F |
| Services from Personnel | 0.95 | F |
| Frequency of Service | 1 | D |

| Stations | | |
|---------------------------------|------|---|
| Security | 0.72 | F |
| Cleanliness of Stations | 0.79 | F |
| Services from Personnel | 0.71 | F |
| Frequency of service, transfers | 0.87 | F |

| SIRT | | |
|---|-------------|----------|
| Security | 0.63 | F |
| How would you rate your St. George/Ferry connection? | 1.02 | D |
| How would you rate your connection to local buses? | 0.64 | F |
| How would you rate your station closest to home that you use most? | 0.88 | F |

| Overall Grade | |
|----------------------|----------|
| 0.83 | F |

Averages and Grades

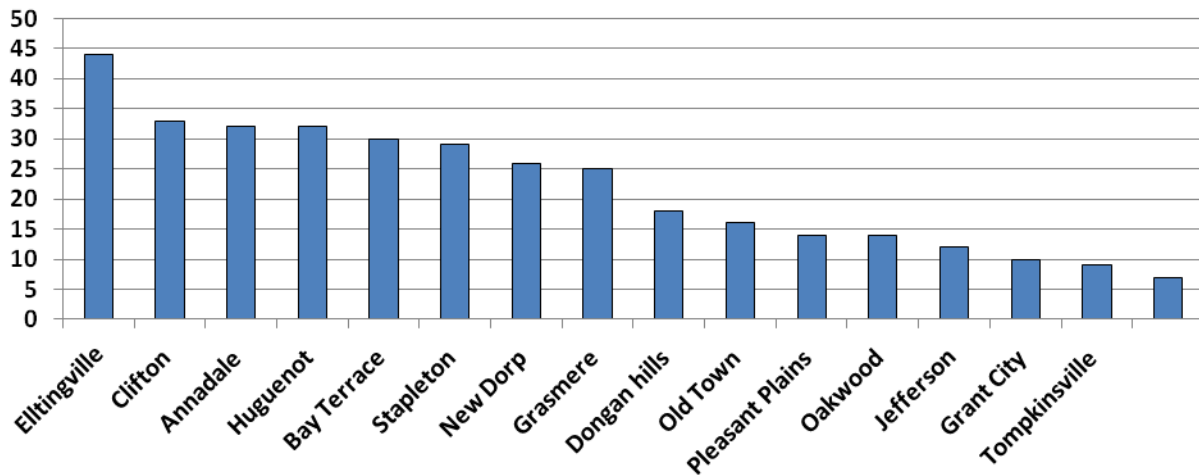
The overall grade of "F" in contrast to Senator Savino's aforementioned Ferry Riders Report of 2009 in which the overall Grade was a C+ and the Ferry Rider Report of 2011 in which the overall grade was a B- stands in stark contrast to this abysmal grade. Please keep in mind many of these riders utilize the SIRT and the Ferry combined in their daily commute. They are willing to give average to good marks for good mass transit.

Note that F failing grade below 1.0 was seen in several categories. Station security, cleanliness of trains, cleanliness of stations, frequency of service, services from personnel, all received an "F"; furthermore the three questions we put to riders concerning the connections between the SIRT and the Ferry and the SIRT and local buses both received an "F" as did their station closest to home.

Stations, Other than St. George Terminal, Noted by Respondents

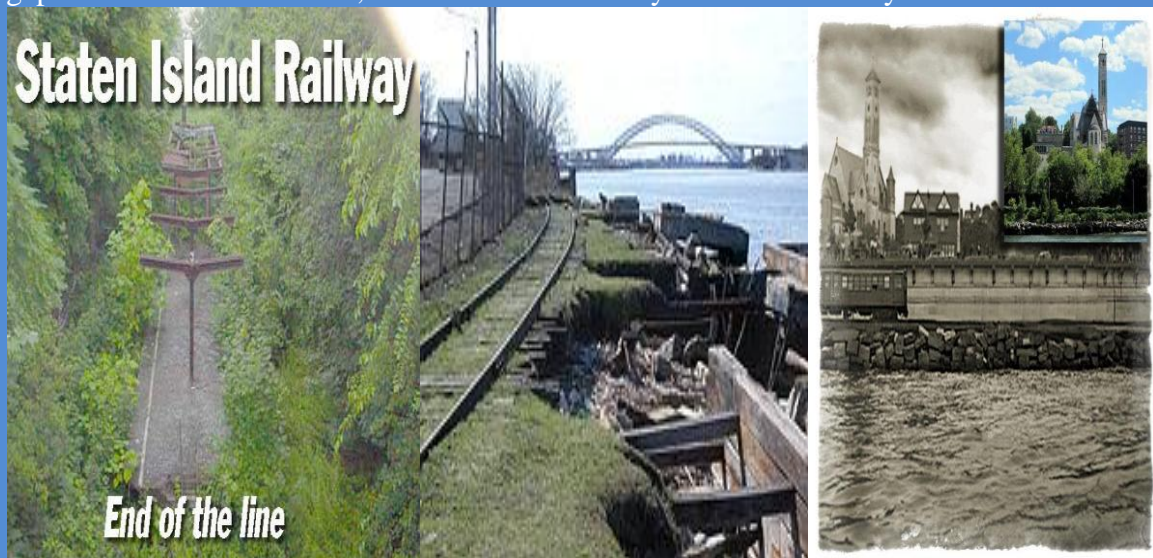
431 Survey respondents, a full 34%, noted which train station, other than St. George Terminal, they most used; their "home" station. Of the 21 available "home" stations, 18 different ones were noted, left out were Atlantic and Nassau as mentioned above they are being combined into a single station that will be closer to homes and a major commercial strip on Page Avenue. In addition, we had no survey respondents from Richmond Valley, another underutilized station on the line. Responses were as follows: Great Kills 59, Eltingville 44, Clifton 33, Annadale 32, Huguenot 32, Bay Terrace 30, Stapleton 29, New Dorp 26, Grasmere 25, Dongan Hills 18, Old Town 16, Pleasant Plains 16, Oakwood 14, Tottenville 12, Jefferson 12, Oakwood Heights 7, Grant City 10, and Tompkinsville 9. Please take this as a note of how evenly a sample we were able to get from riders, the unanimity of their displeasure with cleanliness, security and scheduling improvements and newer cars.

Stations that respondents identified as their station closest to home



Suggestions

The Baltimore and Ohio trackage in New Jersey consisted of a 5.5 mile segment, which ran from Cranford Jct. on the Central Railroad of New Jersey to Arthur Kill and on to Staten Island, NY. B&O trains reached this isolated property by trackage rights over the Reading Co. from Philadelphia, PA, to Bound Brook, NJ, then CNJ to Cranford Jct. The Lehigh Valley RR also maintained an interchange with SIRT at Cranford. Though strictly a freight operation in New Jersey, SIRT ran an urban style passenger rapid transit system on the Arlington to St. George portion until 1953. Staten Island, the infrastructure exists today under New York City's MTA.



(credit Michael Arvanites)

www.facebook.com/#1/secretsi

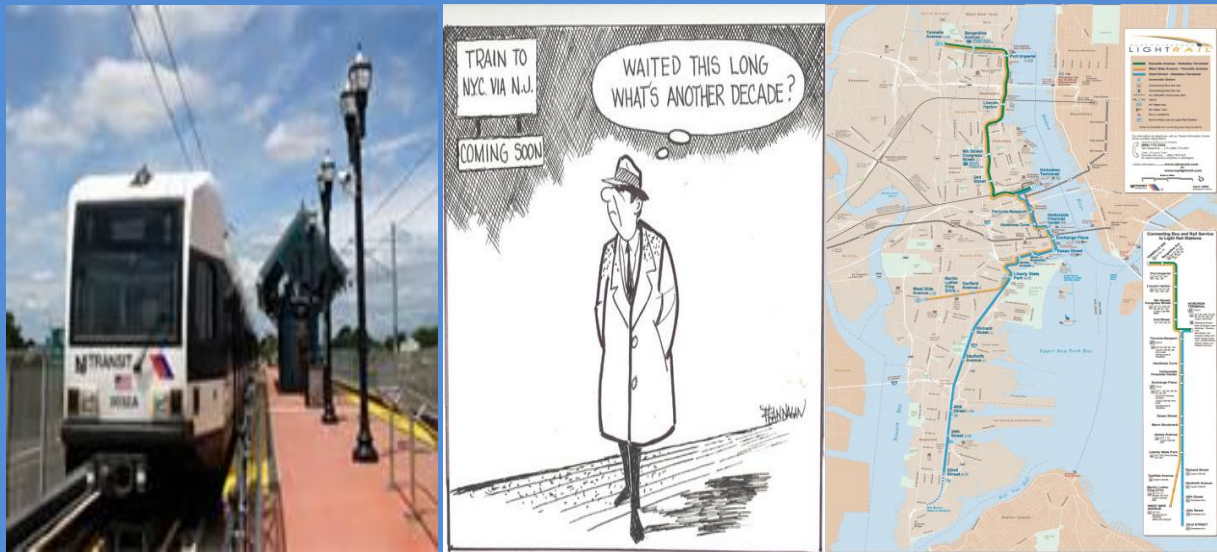
The old North Shore Elm Park Station is completely overgrown with brush, right of way just west of Bard Avenue falling into the Kill Van Kull waterway and a side by side of the North Shore Rail passing St. Peter's church in 1953 and in the recent past from the Kill Van Kull Side.

NORTH SHORE BRANCH

The **North Shore Branch** closed to passenger service at midnight on March 31, 1953. A small western portion is used for freight service, and a smaller eastern portion provided seasonal service to the RCB Ballpark (where the Staten Island Yankees play) passenger station from 2001 to 2009. Restoration is being discussed along this mostly abandoned 6.1-mile (9.8 km) line as part of the Staten Island light rail plan.^[15] St. George (0.0), New Brighton (0.7), Sailors' Snug Harbor (1.2), Livingston (1.8), West Brighton (2.4), Port Richmond (3.0), Tower Hill (3.4), Elm Park (3.9), Lake Avenue (4.3), Mariners Harbor (4.6), Harbor Road (4.9), Arlington (5.2), Port Ivory (6.1)

Old North Shore branch of the SIRT passes St. Peter's Church in 1933, insert today's right of way.

South Beach Branch **closed at midnight Tuesday March 31, 1953. It was abandoned and demolished except for remaining stanchion on St. John's Avenue and trestle on Robin Road.**^{[29][30]} **This 4.1-mile (6.6 km) line left the Main Line south of the Clifton station and lay to the east of the Main Line.** Bachmann (2.0), Rosebank (2.1), Belair Road (2.5), Fort Wadsworth (2.7), Arrochar (3.2), Cedar Avenue (3.5), South Beach (3.9), Wentworth Avenue (4.1)
www.raildata.railfan.net



THE HUDSON BERGEN LIGHT RAIL, A “NORTHWEST PASSAGE” TO MANHATTAN

Presently the Hudson Bergen Light Rail Terminate just after the 8th Street station a mere 500 feet from the Bayonne Bridge. We have the ability to create a northwest passage to Manhattan for Staten Island commuters; by extending the Hudson Bergen Light Rail over the Bayonne Bridge (which was built with trestles to support rail.) A Light Rail stop connected to the Walker Street overpass in Elm Park could be a multi-modal transit hub coupled with a North Shore Rail Station at Bridge Street in Elm Park; at most 100 feet exist between the two. This would create a true passenger rail network on Staten Island, extend that network into Hudson and Bergen county, New Jersey, where according to the 2010 US census, 15,000 Islanders work daily; more over that network could come to Manhattan via the PATH passenger train.



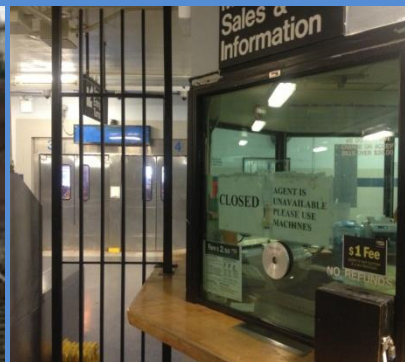
(credit Michael Arvanites)

(mta.info)

Hannah Street Entrance/Exit remains closed when a simple turn gate could have been installed during reconstruction of the Station in 2009.

IMPROVEMENTS, ACCESS AND EXPANSION

The Grasmere Station, as you can see below, ends 500 feet from West Fingerboard Road. It seems a rather simple addition could make this station not only handicap accessible but open a public transportation access to the Staten Island Advance building, as well as the Grand Plaza catering hall. Since Grasmere is currently undergoing renovation, it seems an ideal time to make the SIRT more accessible for passengers with disabilities, and eliminate the one entrance/exit approach at many stations that seems to lend itself to a security hazard for riders.



(credit Michael Arvanites)

The only handicap accessible stations are Great Kills and St. George in addition to the Bentley Street exit at Tottenville, only about three of twenty-two stations. Although Renovations are underway at Grant City and Grasmere, no additional accessibility will be added into the system expect at the new Atlantic/Nassau Station. Staten Island has an unusually high disabled and elderly population, making the Staten Island Railway more accessible will improve ridership, providing more than one entrance/exit, would also help improve security.

A ROSEBANK STATION

A glaring gap exists in the current Staten Island Railway (SIR) route; the longest ride on the route is between the Clifton and Grasmere stations, with stops that are about four to five minutes apart. Other stops on the rail line are about a minute or two apart and are spaced with the goal of allowing users to get to the trains by walking. A study of census data illustrates that

15,633 people live within a half-mile of a would-be Rosebank station.

A Rosebank station had existed, prior to 1953, as part of the Staten Island Rapid Transit (SIRT) spur that continued to South Beach. That station has long since disappeared, but potential future sites, including the former DeJong paper factory on Tompkins Avenue, are worth considering. In the world of transit, it's a very easy improvement that could be done at minimal expense, no additional track is necessary; it is just a matter of adding a stop.

A New York City Transit spokesman said the MTA would comment on the feasibility of a Rosebank Station after the authors of this study present them with their proposal. The Senator gets requests for a new station from constituents every year. Examples of past requests and media coverage include:

“Many of us would like to see the Old Rosebank Station reopened. It creates a gap in service for all of us living between Clifton and Grasmere. How about the fact that it could alleviate reliance on the notoriously unreliable S78 bus (the longest bus route in Staten Island) to reach the ferry connection at the terminal in St. George—thanks for your kind attention. Donald Burell resident of Rosebank.”

“New York State's \$2.9 billion Transportation Bond Act, which voters approved in 2005, includes \$81 million in funding for rail expansion projects”



A Gap in Service exists in the Rosebank/
Park Hill Area.

Notice the sizeable gap in service between Grasmere and Clifton Stations, as compared to the other stations, a Rosebank Station at Tompkins Avenue would serve the community well. Available land exists near the Tompkins Avenue overpass of the existing SIRT right of Way that could serve the communities of Park Hill and Rosebank while provided upland rail yards out of the current Clifton yard flood prone area.

State Gives CDTA \$4.2M for Schenectady Rail Station Project

September 28, 2010 at 5:30 pm by [Eric Anderson](#) in the Albany Times Union.

The Capital District Transportation Authority recently received \$4.2 million in state transportation bond act money and other state funds toward a \$13 million project to rebuild the downtown Schenectady rail station. The work includes demolition of a portion of the station and platform and reconstruction of the rail bed, platform, elevator and passenger and baggage areas. The station is in downtown Schenectady.

The Albany Port Railroad will receive \$737,550 for an \$819,500 project for track and grade crossing improvements in Albany County.

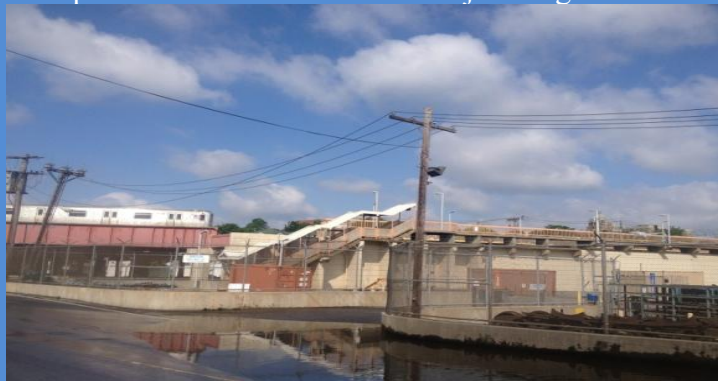
The money comes from the 2005 Rebuild and Renew New York Transportation Bond Act and from the Governor's Passenger and Freight Rail Assistance Program. Albany Times Union September 28th 2010

There is no reason the MTA cannot access the same pool of funds for a Rosebank station. A Clifton Station passenger wrote in the comments section, "There is a serious service gap, walk 20 minute walk to Clifton."

EXPRESS TRAIN SERVICE FROM NEW DORP

Every other train in the morning rush, runs express direct from New Dorp Station to St. George; it's a good use of empty track space behind the previous train making local stops. Yet, in the afternoon rush, the express train's first stop is Great Kills. This discrepancy provides express train service in the morning for three of the SIRT's most used stops: New Dorp, Oakwood Heights, and Bay Terrace. Rush hour express trains should run in the PM with their first stop at New Dorp, just as in the morning.

One rider commented, "Bay Terrace in the morning 10 minute express to St. George, evening its local for some reason no can explain to me so it takes 30 minutes? It's just strange."



(credit Michael Arvanites)

The Clifton Yard is dangerously close to the lower New York Bay; as you can see it is flood prone on a sunny day.

HURRICANE SANDY/THE CLIFTON MAINTENANCE YARD

Placing valuable equipment this close to the water's edge in this day and age especially after Hurricane Sandy must be reevaluated. It is not like there are many permanent structures at the Clifton Yard. The sheet metal building is accompanied by a series of mobile trailers, spread out along valuable developable land with stunning views of New York Harbor, which house the SIRT's human resources, maintenance and operations divisions



(credit Michael Arvanites)

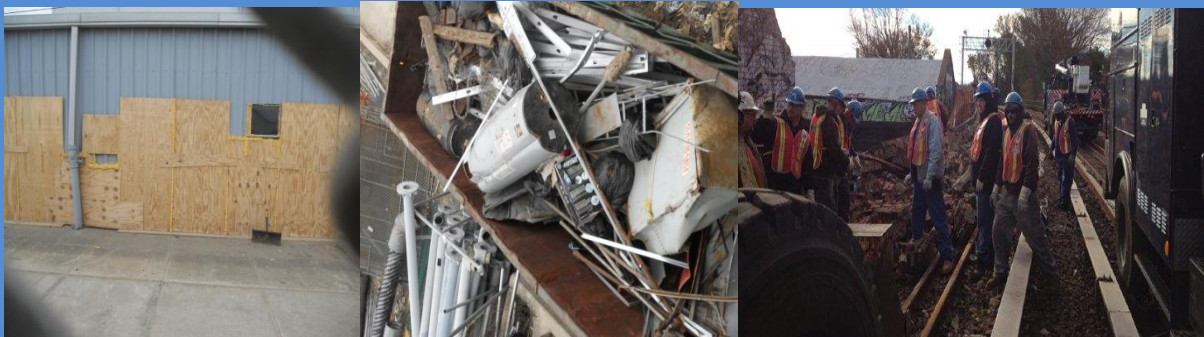
Trailers and flood-prone sheet metal buildings, which could be easily moved, use the Clifton Rail Yard. All maintenance operations are conducted for the SIRT here.

http://www.silive.com/news/index.ssf/2012/05/some_service_on_staten_island.html
http://www.silive.com/news/index.ssf/2012/11/report_hundreds_of_parts_need.html

Heavy repair work will also be needed at the Railway's Clifton Maintenance Shop, which suffered severe storm-related damage, in the wake of Sandy. It is located in a flood prone area; in fact it is located adjacent to the waterfront where a tanker was pushed ashore by Sandy's force.



Aerial views of the Tanker Caddell that came ashore dangerously close to the all important Clifton Maintenance yard of the Staten Island Rapid transit (credit [Staten Island Advance](#)).



The Clifton main maintenance SIRT building sustained major damage from Hurricane Sandy, many important systems were thrown out and debris covered the tracks at the facilities main yard.

http://www.silive.com/news/index.ssf/2012/11/mta_to_restore_some_staten_isl.html

Limited service did not return for five days after the storm, express service took another week.

http://www.silive.com/news/index.ssf/2012/11/staten_island_railway_resumes.html



Main Clifton maintenance building post Sandy. Flooding on the tracks in St. George (credit [Staten Island Advance](#))

STORM SURGE PROTECTION

The SIRT may serve as a last line of defense for upland communities against future storms like Sandy. As in West Orange, NJ the train itself has become a topographical obstacle to flood waters. Open cut tracks, like the stretch from Grant City till Oakwood Heights could prevent water from inundate homes with sea water. Or with the elevated section from Tompkinsville to Dongan Hills Stations and then again from Oakwood Heights till great Kills were it is at grade or in an open cut again. Tottenville High School, right off the Huguenot Station of the SIRT, served as the only city run storm shelter in the South Shore during Hurricane Sandy, thousands of Islanders sought refuge there via the SIRT. The MTA should incorporate the SIRT into its evacuation plans with New York City. Curtis HS was another shelter up the hill from St. George Terminal.



The obviously Photoshopped photo above demonstrates how the SIRT's open cut trenches and embankments could be enhanced as the Eastern Shore's last line of defense against future storm surge.

DARKNESS AND SECURITY

The entrances, exits, and platforms are disturbingly dark. Without new lighting and security cameras, unacceptable levels of crime along the street will continue to be a problem.

http://www.silive.com/news/index.ssf/2013/05/with_no_cameras_watching_state.html

As reported May 2 in the Staten Island Advance the morning of July 20, 2012 a man pushed Jennifer Giangrande up against the banister of Huguenot Station of the Staten Island Railway and threatened to sexually assault her unless she gave up her cell phone and purse. She did, and the suspect fled. Because the station does not have a functioning emergency call box she ran into a nearby deli to report the crime. Since there is still no camera installed, the perpetrator remains at large.

Security cameras for all 22 stations were paid for by the late Senator John Marchi in 2006 and supplemented in 2008 by a \$1.72 million grant for cameras at each station on the SIRT line, from Councilman James Oddo. To date Cameras have only been installed at the Old Town Station. The MTA needs to make the installation of these cameras a priority, today.

In addition, more efficient and brighter, LED lighting should replace the vapor lighting. Lighting should be increased at all

underpasses especially at Stapleton Station. One rider commented, “Security, never saw any, I ride every day, Stapleton is a lawsuit waiting to happen, people fall down the dark dark steps all the time, it’s so dark under the bridge (overpass).”



You are literally feeling your way around when you pass under the Water Street or Prospect Street overpass and entrance to the Stapleton Station. Old Town Station remains the lone platform with security cameras even though the funding has been in place for years. A women walks into the dark at Jefferson Avenue Station.(credit [Staten Island Advance](#))

So called, “Apple-picking” when usually younger assailants steal smart phones (Apple iphones are a common target hence the name) is so rampant on the SIRT and other transportation modes that it has now received a nickname.

http://www.silive.com/news/index.ssf/2013/06/police_respond_to_possible_iph.html#incart_river

NEW CARS

Frequent brake and signal problems have caused delays and failures to stop along the SIRT as you can see by the linked news report below. According to the MTA, SIRT is not supposed to replenish its current stock of rail cars until 2016 at which time SIRT will receive “new” R46 car that were actually built in 1975 and retrofitted.

http://www.silive.com/news/index.ssf/2013/04/early-morning_mechanical_delay.html#incart_river

http://www.silive.com/news/index.ssf/2013/04/no_staten_island_railway_servi_1.html

Passenger trains are made up of 64 R-44 type cars, modified to FRA standards for passenger equipment running on a freight road. Cars are transfers from the subway system. Complaints about the trains numbered third, especially leak making seats and passengers wet. They seem to be cold in the winter and hot in the summer air conditioning or heating is broken or non-existent.

SMART DEVELOPMENT ALONG EXISTING RAIL LINE

Historically, St. George was one of Staten Island’s main commercial hubs and became the borough’s civic center with the opening of Borough Hall in 1907, followed by the St. George Public Library and the Richmond County Courthouse. It is the most densely developed neighborhood in Staten Island, with a mix of single-family homes and a large number of rental and owner-occupied apartment buildings. The neighborhood’s easy access to Manhattan, via ferry, has made it a more attractive, lower-cost alternative for many commuters. However, as other parts of Staten Island have experienced commercial and residential growth of over the past several decades, investment in St. George and its neighboring communities on the North Shore have not kept pace, resulting in vacant office buildings throughout the area. Recently, the area has witnessed encouraging signs of reinvestment in new retail establishments and pockets of development underway or completed on Bay Street, Central Avenue and along Richmond Terrace.

The entire civic/commercial area of St. George is zoned C4-2, a commercial district which also allows residential and community facility uses. In 2005, in response to inappropriate townhouse development in commercial districts throughout the borough, the Mayor's Growth Management Task Force recommended zoning text amendments that included interim rules for St. George and a commitment to review the area and propose appropriate long-term solutions. These interim rules were adopted by the city in December 2005 and mandated that any new buildings with residential uses must be constructed pursuant to the Quality Housing Program. The text amendment also prohibited residential uses on the ground floor and limited residential buildings heights to 70 feet. No building heights were set for commercial or community facility buildings. The C4-2 district covers the entire civic/commercial area of St. George and the ground-floor commercial/retail requirement may not be appropriate for all streets and may result in additional community facilities. These interim regulations have limited appropriate reinvestment in St. George.

EXISTING LAND USE

St. George serves as commercial and bus corridor providing access to North Shore communities from Mariner's Harbor and Port Richmond to Stapleton and Rosebank. St. George is also the main transportation hub of Staten Island providing easy access to Manhattan via the Staten Island Ferry. St. George is a walkable commercial and civic hub, Staten Island's downtown.

The special district generally coincides with an existing C4-2 district in St. George. The C4-2 zoning district allows a variety of uses including commercial, community facility and residential.

According to the Department of City Planning, C4 districts are mapped in regional commercial centers and serve a larger area than neighborhood shopping areas. Most residential and commercial districts in Staten Island were designated a Lower Density Growth Management Area (LDGMA) in August 2004 and specific LDGMA rules for commercial areas were adopted in December 2005 to prohibit inappropriate townhouse development in commercially zoned areas.. **COPYRIGHT © 2013 NYC Department of City Planning. All Rights Reserved.**

These special zoning districts are necessary in order to smart develop the along the existing rail infrastructure from St. George to at least Clifton and then areas such as Old Town, Grant city, New Dorp, Bay Terrace, Great Kills, Eltingville, Huguenot, Pleasant Plains, Prince's Bay, and Tottenville.

There are areas on Staten Island where up zoning and mixed use development should occur. There are a few towns where it already does occur on a small scale like New Dorp. For instance, creating walkable town centers based on commercial strips by the SIRT stations would fundamentally open up housing options for a new Staten Island urban pioneer. Couples without children, seniors leaving their larger homes due to their lack of desire to maintain a home that use to house 3-6 individuals should have the option to move into a community with a walkable town center and viable transit options like in and around SIRT Stations.

The Staten Island chapter of the American Institute of Architects makes the case for attractively designed, denser neighborhoods surrounding SIRT stations on commercial strips, which would offer an alternative to driving everywhere on Staten Island.



Hundreds of homes destroyed by Hurricane Sandy will not be rebuilt due to the buyout program (or the victim's unwillingness to keep fighting Mother Nature.) The housing stock on Staten Island should reflect a smarter development plan that allows people to stay on Staten Island as they retire. The top consumers of compact, auto-independent housing-empty nesters, childless couples and singles-will make up the majority of American households in the foreseeable future. They also are considered "urban pioneers" people who find new and exciting neighborhoods to live in.

http://www.silive.com/homegarden/index.ssf/2012/08/property_planned_dense_communi.html

GRADE STATIONS AND CONDUCT SURVEYS

Recently, with too much fanfare, New York City has started grading restaurants and schools. There have been suggestions to grade hot food trucks as well. Riders would like to see the SIRT stations graded and frequent surveys from the MTA. Grading stations could lead to a more informed prioritization of litter and graffiti removal. SIRT riders seemed grateful that our office had conducted this survey and one even pointed out that NYC Transit, Long Island Railroad and Metro North Railroad all have online surveys available for their riders.

OPEN WAITING ROOMS

Stations like Great Kills have waiting rooms, newly renovated with air conditioning in the summer and heat in the winter, but they are never open. Placing a newsstand concession inside these waiting rooms will provide greater access to Metro Cards, security, and most importantly revenue for the MTA to make further improvements.

“Why are the waiting rooms closed? You could put MetroCard machines in them; they could provide shelter from weather, a substation for MTA police and personnel, no brainer.”



(Credit Michael Arvanites)

The New Dorp Station, like most others, has a lovely brick waiting room with windows on the bus stop and train tracks sides, restrooms and a place where a Metro Card vending could be installed as well as a newsstand, creating revenue for the MTA. Sadly New Dorp and every other waiting room on the SIRT for reasons unknown are always closed.

METROCARD MACHINES

There are three locations where you can obtain a metro card at an MTA machine without buying one in a deli on Staten Island. The Eltingville Transit Center, St. George Station and Tompkinsville Station. Half a million people can only buy a metro card when the deli is closed at 3 locations. The MTA has attempted to rectify this situation with the MetroCard van, to little success. Every SIRT station should eventually have a MetroCard machine. All are located to bus routes and can serve as a MetroCard service for the local and express bus system as well as the train itself. Many riders complain about missing the ferry due to the fact they had to purchase a MetroCard at St. George Station in order to exit. That is unacceptable.

SIRT APP

DOITT spent time effort and money getting www.nyc.gov as an exclusive address yet the ferry remains a non-wifi area, the apps with ferry scheduling and updates are non city owned or operated. The MTA has made great strides with technology through bus time and scan tech. Staten Islanders have according to the 2010 census the largest percentage of both home and personal digital and smart devices at their disposal. We also hold the highest per capita instances of higher education and technological degrees outside of Manhattan. There should be a Staten Island railway app contest or add a SIRT function to the existing ferry apps.

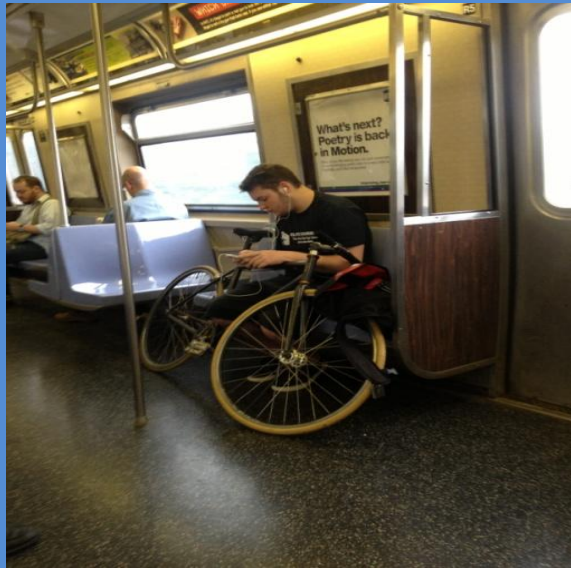
One comment said, “SIRT APP???!!??? Its 2013, Facebook page or email notifications?”

MAKE THE SIRT CYCLIST FRIENDLY

The City has made a concerted effort to establish and promote bike lanes and cycling. Many Islanders locked into their cars by a lack of mass transit option, resent the exponential increase in bike lanes at the expense of traffic and parking lanes. The City recently spent \$60,000 installing bike racks along Hylan Blvd., a heavily traffic congested main thoroughfare with no bike lane.

None of these new bike racks are being used, there are, however, bike lanes along the service road both north and south of the SIRT the road lends itself and is wide enough from Jefferson Avenue Station till Oakwood Heights Station yet no bike racks exist at these stations. Hundreds of Islanders cycle to the Ferry everyday; it is healthier for them and removes cars from the roads. Providing bike racks at SIRT stations, or making them Bike share locations where possible will encourage more islanders to use a bike as part of their commute.

“Can I please get a bike rack at Grant City, I’m tired of locking it to the gate come home it’s scrapped up from fence.” One respondent noted.



(credit Michael Arvanites)

A common site on the SIRT as no stations have bike racks, even though a significant portion of the service roads have bike lanes.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Move the Clifton Rail Yard from flood prone waterfront, and then safely develop the waterfront property.
- 2) Up zone areas around certain SIRT stations for smart mixed use development.
- 3) Send SIRT new trains, these are hand me downs from NYC Transit.
- 4) MTA should grade stations like the NYC Health Department grades eateries.
- 5) Tech upgrades, bus time for SIR, a contest for a SIR app or a SIR function added to the private Ferry apps.
- 6) Better and more coordinated Bus/Train/Ferry connections and scheduling.
- 7) Better weather protection at the stations.
- 8) Newsstand concessions at high traffic stations and those with waiting rooms perhaps in the waiting rooms.
- 9) More accessible stations (Grasmere, Grant City and new Nassau/Atlantic Stations are currently undergoing renovations and could be easily be made accessible).
- 10) Install the security cameras that have been already appropriated, replace vapor lighting with brighter more efficient LED lighting.
- 11) A Rosebank Station at Tompkins Avenue, serves gap in stations and the populations of Rosebank and Park Hill.
- 12) More Metrocards machines at least at the high volume stations and those that have waiting rooms.

Contributions and Special Thanks

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