

# Proposed Bill To Bar Reductions In Train Crews

By GINGER ADAMS OTIS

Transportation Committee Chair John Liu urged the City Council to support a State Assembly bill that would guarantee minimum staffing on certain types of subway trains.

At a March 1 hearing of the Transportation Committee, Mr. Liu said New York City Transit will be outfitting the subway system over the next 30 to 40 years with new technology that will allow trains to be tracked, driven, and targeted for repair by computers. One element of this, Communications-Based Train Control (CBTC), is expected to begin on the L line to Canarsie as early as July.

## Toussaint Pleased

In light of the agency's plans to upgrade, Mr. Liu felt it incumbent upon the City Council to take steps ensuring public safety. Transport Workers Union Local 100 President Roger Toussaint was present at the committee hearing and said he was "gratified" that the Council was addressing a question that concerned millions of riders.

Resolution 796-A, which Mr. Liu crafted, calls upon the State Legislature to amend the Public Authorities Law to provide for a minimum staffing level of one Conductor and one Train Operator on trains operated in passenger service on lines in the city transit system that travel through tunnels under a body of water, or over a bridge; or during instances when trains in passenger service are composed of more than four cars, or are greater than 360 feet in length, or are able to carry a passenger load of more than 750 persons.

NYC Transit officials said the implementation of CBTC trains won't cost workers their jobs, but Conductors on

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## Staffing on Trains

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those trains will be phased out. Staff with seniority can choose to work on other lines and the rest will fill in for workers taking sick days and vacation time, according to officials.

Train Operators, who stand in the lead car, will remain on board, but instead of running the trains, they'll be opening and closing the doors and communicating with passengers—all the functions a conductor usually performs. In most cases they will maintain some control over the train—most

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## Train Staffing

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CBTC's operate in mixed mode—meaning certain tasks must be performed manually by an operator.

NYC Transit has already announced that in June the Canarsie line will move to One Person Train Operation (OPTO), actually preceding the scheduled rollout of CBTC by one month.

Paul Fleuranges, spokesperson for the agency, said OPTO has been used safely and efficiently for several years without any problems.

The Franklin Ave. and Far Rockaway shuttles, he said, are OPTO-operated 365 days a year. Several other shuttles are OPTO-run on weekends and holidays. The Canarsie line will be the first full-length train run under the system. "We've equipped all the platforms with videos to monitor platforms and done all the things we can to ensure the train works safely," Mr. Fleuranges stated.

## Resisting Job Cuts

Speaking at the March 1 hearing, Mr. Toussaint said NYC Transit's planned upgrades weren't a problem for the union, but any downsizing of the human presence in the subway system was.

"The Transit agency pushed to take Train Conductors out of the system in the 1990s, and a process of arbitration resulted in a set of rules specifying which trains can be run without them," he contended. "The Authority now hopes to unilaterally brush those rules aside on the grounds that new technology on the Canarsie line renders them passé.

"Once this subterfuge succeeds on the Canarsie line," Mr. Toussaint continued, "we will witness attempts to remove Train Conductors from other lines years before the implementation of new technology, and then with no reference to the new technology. The new technology is a red herring, a new excuse for an old ambition, as irresponsible today as it was in the past."