

Subject: An installment in the series "Misery loves company"

Date: Mon, 22 Dec 2003 18:23:15 +0000 (GMT)

From: Elizabeth James <cagebc@yahoo.com>

To: "Clr. Alan Nixon" <anixon@dnv.org>, "Clr. Victor Durman" <vdurman@westvancouver.ca>, "Clr. Craig Keating" <CKeating@cnv.org>, "Clr. D. Mussatto" <DMussatto@cnv.org>

CC: fonvca@fonvca.org

22 December 2003

FORWARDED BY MALCOLM JOHNSTON OF THE LIGHT RAIL COMMITTEE - HIS COMMENTS APPEAR IN RED.

[My only remark is to ask: When will TransLink finally admit that it is Bombardier's SkyTrain which is being planned for RAV? EJ]

It is interesting that, despite the hype and hoopla of the RAV line, no one at TransLink, or in our local mainstream media, mentions the SkyTrain Line (ART) in New York.

From the following New York Times article, it sounds as if the 'less than stellar' opening of the Airtrain in New York, largely describes day to day operation of our own SkyTrain, where 5 to 10 minute shutdowns of the system are routine. Also, Airtrain stations have 'platform doors for added safety.' In Europe they are mandatory on driverless systems! It's easy to see why our SkyTrain has a higher suicide rate. Do the planners at TransLink or RAVco even care?

**Malcolm Johnston
Light Rail Committee**

New York Times
December 19, 2003

Faulty Doors at Airport Mar Start of AirTrain

By MICHAEL LUO

Just hours after its high-profile debut, the AirTrain system had to be shut down by the Port Authority for two hours Wednesday night because platform doors (*automated transit systems must have platform doors to prevent egress into the kinetic envelope. Our driverless SkyTrain system should have platform doors, to bring it up to international standards, but it doesn't; the result? A 'world class' suicide rate! MJ*) failed to open and trapped passengers in their trains.

This came after an earlier mishap, more embarrassing than alarming, when the new train's steel doors closed suddenly on Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg as he stepped off at the opening ceremony on Wednesday, causing him to stumble while cameras rolled. Coupled with some complaints that the trains were slower than billed, it was an inauspicious opening for the \$1.9 billion service linking Kennedy International Airport to local trains and subways in Howard Beach and Jamaica, Queens. (*Sound like our good old SkyTrain? MJ*).

The AirTrain seemed to be running smoothly yesterday, and no additional problems were reported. "These are in essence some growing pains," said Pasquale DiFulco, a spokesman for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. "It's a brand new rail system that was built from scratch."

At 9:30 p.m. Wednesday, officials shut down the entire system because problems were being reported with the platform doors in several terminals. They were not opening, even as the trains stopped and opened their doors. AirTrain employees had to open the platform doors manually to let the passengers out.

Engineers worked for two hours to understand the problem, Mr. DiFulco said. The system was restarted sporadically, but did not resume for good until 11:30 p.m.

Paul Sheehan, a Manhattan lawyer, arrived in the middle of it all. At 10:20 p.m., he flew into Terminal 6 on a JetBlue flight from Fort Myers, Fla. After being told the shuttle bus to Howard Beach and the A-train no longer existed, he made his way to the AirTrain platform. (*A good example of 'pushing' people onto the system. MJ*)

With about 30 others, he waited inside a train for 25 minutes, he said yesterday, as an electronic announcement repeated in a drone that the train would be leaving "momentarily." An AirTrain employee on the train suggested that someone might have accidentally pressed an emergency strip on the train that forces it into the next station to await police officers, Mr. Sheehan said.

Finally, at 10:55 p.m., the train left the platform, only to move about 20 feet and stop again for another 20 minutes between terminals.

As a woman fussed unsuccessfully with an intercom system to try to reach someone, Mr. Sheehan wondered what to do. No announcements were coming over the public address system.

Suddenly, the train started moving again, pulling into the next terminal at 11:20 p.m., and the passengers got off there. Unsure of what to do next, Mr. Sheehan wandered over to a talkback system on the platform and pushed an information button. No one picked up. Then he pushed the emergency button. After several minutes, an operator answered.

"I explained we were in Terminal 7," Mr. Sheehan said. "We were trying to get to Howard Beach. He said, 'I don't know what's going on.' "

Was another train coming?

"I don't know."

Are the shuttle buses running?

"I don't know."

(Wow! Did they hire SkyTrain staff? Jane Bird? MJ)

After a few airport employees flagged down cabs for themselves, Mr. Sheehan and some tourists trooped onto a Q10 bus and rode it to Terminal 3, the end of its route. There, they got off and got on another Q10 bus to Kew Gardens, where he caught the E train to 50th Street and Eighth Avenue in Manhattan. He took a taxi home to the Upper West Side.

The time was 1:40 a.m., 3 hours and 20 minutes after he landed.

Mr. DiFulco said in an interview that the Port Authority apologizes to Mr. Sheehan and others who were inconvenienced. When the system was first shut down, passengers were taken off the trains and put on shuttle buses, he said. The problems reported by Mr. Sheehan and others are still being studied. "At a minimum, the information button should have connected Mr. Sheehan immediately to a 24-hour operations center," he said.

Sheehan said that what happened to him was more exasperating than anything else. When they finally pulled into Terminal 7 and were told to get off the train, he said most of the exasperated riders just started laughing.

[Yahoo! Messenger](#) - Communicate instantly..."Ping" your friends today! [Download Messenger Now](#)