

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23, 2008

Briefs

Charges dropped in 'corpse' cash checking

Two men accused of wheeling their buddy's corpse down the street and trying to cash his Social Security check are no longer charged in the caper. One reason: The prosecutor admits he can't prove beyond a reasonable doubt when the man died. Manhattan Criminal Court Judge Evelyn LaPorte agreed and dismissed the charges yesterday.

Court upholds ban on school cell phones

A ban on cell phones in the city's public school system was upheld yesterday by a state appeals court. The Department of Education passed rules in September 2005 barring students from having their phones in public schools. The state Supreme Court's Appellate Division said that nothing about the ban interferes with any of the rights claimed by the parents.

Ex-EPA chief off hook in WTC air case

Former EPA chief Christine Todd Whitman cannot be held liable for telling residents near the World Trade Center site that the air was safe to breathe after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, a federal appeals court said yesterday. The 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said Whitman's comments reassuring people about the safety around the site apparently were based on conflicting information and reassurances by the White House.

Diamond dealer accused of \$3.4M haul

A Manhattan diamond dealer has been indicted after business associates accused him of stealing about \$3.4 million worth of stones. Alfred Avi Taub said in a police complaint last June that a mugger with pepper spray stole more than \$1 million worth of diamonds from him. But 45 dealers who consigned jewels to him claim in a lawsuit that Taub is the culprit.

Mayor, Rockefeller to fund tree campaign

Mayor Bloomberg and his fellow philanthropist, David Rockefeller, have announced a \$10 million pledge to the MillionTreesNYC initiative. The joint pledge will be used to plant more than 18,000 trees in public spaces, including schools and New York Housing Authority developments. The donation also will launch an apprenticeship program that will provide jobs for young people and help maintain the new trees. (AP)

Text alert: Your train is here

By Matthew Sweeney
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Sometime in the next couple of years the MTA hopes to give Penn Station commuter rail riders sitting in their offices instantaneous information on what platform their train is at and what time it's leaving, an effort to reduce rush hour

crowds at the terminal, the agency's director of special projects, William Wheeler, said yesterday.

Following the disastrous rainstorm in August that shut down the subways, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority hired an outside company earlier this year to send subway and rail riders text-message service



advisories. That service has yet to arrive, but would be somewhat clunkier — with a time delay — than the real-time information Wheeler is hoping for.

"Is there something you

can do that might ... take a couple of years as opposed to many years for physically expanding the station," Wheeler said at an agency committee meeting discussing potential future improvements to the entire system.

Passengers currently stand and stare at departure boards for Long Island Rail

Road train information. When their platform assignment is announced, riders run to the platforms.

Jerry Shagam, a member of the Long Island Rail Road Commuters Council, said: "If you could sit in your office and find out there were heavy delays, you'd sit in your office. ... That's improvement."

Romance on the 'Love Train'

The L is tops for missed connections

By Erin O'Neill
Special to amNewYork

A world seethes beneath New York where love-seeking straphangers interact with stolen glances between jostling bodies.

Those who enter that world at the L train's Bedford Avenue stop in Brooklyn take to the Internet more often than riders on any other line to turn furtive eye contact into a tryst.

In romance fever's high-season — the two weeks before and after Valentine's Day — 421 men and women posted to the "missed connections" thread on craigslist.org hoping to connect with a stranger they chatted with or made eye contact with underground.

The Bedford Avenue stop sparked 16 of those postings — the most for any station servicing a single line.

Only Union Square, where the L and seven oth-



A survey of craigslist revealed that L train riders are going online to find their "missed connections," more than riders of other lines do. (Charles Eckert)

er lines meet, outnumbered the Williamsburg stop, notching 34 missed connections.

The Lorimer Street-Metropolitan Avenue stop on the L won second place for scoring 12 missed connections.

"Some people are just shy or want to talk but wait too long," said Sammy Howard, 25, of Brooklyn, while waiting for the Manhattan-bound L at Bedford Avenue. "I've met a few cool people on the subway

that I wanted to talk to longer, but I waited too long to ask for their number and then they were gone."

Missed connections provide an outlet for frustration like Howard's brewing in the underground sinews of New York. Craigslist created the missed connections thread in 2000. Each month 7,000 missed connections are generated inside the greater New York area.

Missed connections resemble the format of other

craigslist personal ads, with headlines providing general details: "L train to Bedford Ave., Thursday Eve. — m4w — 32."

"You were the supercute redhead with the brownish hood. I was the guy in the dark knit hat who didn't follow up on the significant eye contact because he wasn't in a chatty mood and who now deeply regrets his lack of initiative. Can the Internet save the day? Long odds, sure, but why not."

Subway riders save ga\$

As politicians around the country clamor for Americans to consume less oil, proof came yesterday that New York's straphangers save more than anyone, according to a report.

According to USPIRG and the NYPIRG Straphanger's Campaign, public transportation in the New York metropolitan area saved 1.8 billion gallons of oil in 2006, equaling \$4.6 billion in gas money. New York saves half of all the oil saved by transit nationwide, the report found.

"It pays to invest in transit," said Gene Russianoff of the Straphangers Campaign. "The more subway riders, the less dependence on foreign oil."

The subway led the way in New York. The 8.8 million weekday rides prevented the use of 1.2 billion gallons of oil.

And for those who accuse the city of being dirty, the reduction in oil consumption meant 11.8 metric tons of carbon dioxide pollution was kept out of the air.

(Matt Sweeney)

Anti-poverty goals in doubt

By Jarrett Murphy
Special to amNewYork

There's a huge equity issue.

Mark Greenberg, poverty task force director

It is unclear whether the Bloomberg administration's anti-poverty plans will lead to the promised "major reduction" in poverty by 2010, according to City Limits.

Among the anti-poverty initiatives are a few bold proposals, such as cash for low-income people who complete tasks like taking their kids to the doctor.

force on poverty at the Center for American Progress in Washington.

Bloomberg's allies say the mayor's effort is the best the city can do with its limited resources.

"We're not going to solve poverty on our own in New York City without broader forces helping," said Linda Gibbs, the deputy mayor for health and human services.

Jarrett Murphy is editor of City Limits Investigates. See CityLimits.org.

Union Square project halted amid protests

Area residents and activists have gotten an injunction to stop work at the pavilion in Union Square.

The city has hoped to put a new, high-end restaurant in the area that was previously a children's play area.

Residents fear that a restaurant could cut into space for the Union Square Greenmarket.

"The restaurant would take away the opportunity

to reclaim thousands of square feet of additional play space in a community with the lowest amount of playground space ... in the city," said Geoffrey Croft, president of NYC Park Advocates.

The suit alleges that if the city is going to take away parkland in order to give it to private interests, it must receive permission from the state legislature. (David Freedlander)