

Just another reason that leaves the typical taxpayer to look at the MTA as a cash cow for favored folks.

How many other small but still costly programs might the necessary forensic accounting now required of the MTA disclose? At least one MTA board member gets it.

http://www.nypost.com/seven/07012009/news/regionalnews/ailing_mta_splurges_on_exec_med_exams_176961.htm



AILING MTA SPLURGES ON EXEC MED EXAMS

Last updated: 1:13 pm
July 1, 2009
Posted: 2:42 am
July 1, 2009

The MTA is blowing nearly \$600,000 over five years on medical-exam perks for its top officials -- a move critics say is a waste of the cash-strapped agency's money.

Only 78 of 700 managers last year making more than \$80,500 used the rider-funded program that provides the physical exams, the agency said.

If employees take full advantage of all the benefits -- which aren't covered by their state health insurance -- the total contract tally could be \$1,500 per person per year.

The doctor's visits cost \$320, with other tests, like cardiac stress tests, electrocardiograms, and X-rays, costing from \$70 to \$1,600 each."

The visits are supposed to catch life-threatening illnesses and diseases, according to agency contracts.

With the MTA cutting hundreds of station agents and cleaners in the next several years, some board members believe that the execs should just pay for the exams themselves.

"In the face of the dire economic circumstances the MTA was and is facing, we should be looking at precisely these types of compensation programs to save money," said board member John Banks.

He added that it was important for executives to get the physicals, but said, "It's not a lot of people who participate in the program. They should get it from another source."

Executives at New York City Transit, MTA Bus Co. and MTA Bridges and Tunnels get the service because the preventative physical exams aren't covered by their state health insurance, but managers in other divisions of the agency pay for the service themselves.

"It seems like a lot of money, obviously," said Bill Henderson of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee.

"There's certainly a question of whether it's worth doing because it seems like there's a difference of opinion," he added.

The checkups are supposed to detect "potentially disabling or life-threatening diseases," the contract with city-based Affiliated Physicians says.

The group claims the physicals reduce health-care costs to the agency in the long run.

The physicals include ear, nose, and throat checks, blood tests for protein levels, and exams to determine if an employee could suffer from a heart attack or stroke, said NYCT spokesman Paul Fleuranges.

"A regular physical will not uncover underlying medical conditions that may exist," he added. "This is about getting the best out of our top managers by making sure they are healthy."

The service has worked in the past, Fleuranges said, "resulting in early detection of life-threatening conditions for a number of managers."

Under the contract, employees can order cardiac stress tests, colonoscopies and electrocardiograms.

The board approved the contract at its meeting last week.

tom.namako@nypost.com