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Subject: RIOC Statement Regarding the 2019 Cherry Blossom Festival
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RIOC Statement Regarding the 2019 Cherry Blossom Festival

ROOSEVELT ISLAND – (April 16, 2019) –On Saturday, April 13th, the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA) presented their annual Cherry Blossom Festival, partnering with the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) and FDR Four Freedoms State Park. While the event was highly successful, with great weather, fabulous entertainment, Japanese culture, and of course the beautiful cherry blossom trees, the island experienced overcrowding in its transportation hubs, at the Tramway, Subway, and Ferry. In addition, the Roosevelt Island Bridge had an influx of both vehicular and pedestrian traffic, causing intermittent delays and, at times, complete shutdowns to vehicular access were necessary as a safety precaution.

Historically, the typical crowd size for this event has been approximately 2,000 – 3,000 people, until 2018 when approximately 10,000 guests attended. As a result of this increase, RIOC anticipated an even larger crowd size in 2019 and, focusing its attention on safety, re-evaluated the event layout, travel restrictions, staffing, and security plan preceding this year's event.

The RIOC Public Safety Department (PSD) partnered with the New York Police Department (NYPD) and NYCEM to provide additional on-island support. In addition, PSD was in contact with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) to ensure there were no interruptions in subway service to Roosevelt Island. There were roughly 60 dedicated security personnel, which were comprised of RIOC Public Safety, NYPD officers, and outside security officers, on hand at the Festival. The NYPD provided an additional 16 officers, a lieutenant, and a sergeant who were on standby in case they were needed to manage the larger crowds.

This year the Cherry Blossom Festival had a record number of approximately 30,000 people attend. The Festival activities took place between 11 AM – 5 PM, however crowds continued to arrive on Roosevelt Island late in the day, reaching peak capacity between 4 – 4:30 PM. After closely monitoring the overcrowding at the Tram and subway, the following occurred:

- The NYPD shut down the escalators at the Roosevelt Island subway stop at approximately 4:20 PM, allowing access in and out of the station from both directions.
- At 4:45 PM the MTA stopped incoming trains to Roosevelt Island. RIOC also stopped Tram service from Manhattan so that both Tram cabins could be utilized to more quickly reduce crowd size on the island.
- Bridge traffic onto the island was halted as a safety precaution.
- Additional service (R Train) was added to the F line subway at Roosevelt Island.
- MTA resumed incoming service at the Roosevelt Island subway at 4:54 PM.
- At 6:15 PM, PSD reported trains were operating in both directions to the island and the Roosevelt Island Bridge was open to regular vehicular and pedestrian traffic.
- Regular Tram service resumed at 7:05 PM.

Overall, there were no incidents or injuries reported at the Festival. “Future Cherry Blossom Festivals, and other potential events of this scale, will be the subject of upcoming discussions among RIOC, its Board members, and RIRA now that greater NYC has discovered our island.” stated Susan Rosenthal, President/CEO of RIOC. “Roosevelt Island may no longer be the best kept secret in the city.” Rosenthal added.

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