

**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
TESTIMONY FOR HEARING BEFORE THE
CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
REGARDING IMPROVING BUS SERVICE IN NEW YORK CITY
OCTOBER 6, 2016**

Good morning Chairman Rodriguez and members of the Committee. I am Polly Trottenberg, Commissioner for New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) and a member of the MTA board and I am pleased to be testifying on behalf of Mayor de Blasio. I am joined by Eric Beaton, Director of Transit Development and Jeff Lynch, Assistant Commissioner for Intergovernmental and Community Affairs.

Thank you for bringing us together today to discuss improving bus service in New York City. I also want to thank the advocates at Transit Center, Riders Alliance, Straphangers, and Tri-State Transportation Campaign who recently released the compelling report, *Turnaround: Fixing New York City's Buses*. I will be talking about how we are working with MTA to improve the bus system in our City.

More people are choosing to live and work in New York than ever before. With a population of over 8.5 million and tourism booming with nearly 60 million visitors coming to the City last year, our subway system is bursting at the seams. Last year, we saw 1.76 billion rides on our subways, an increase of more than 150 million annual rides since 2010.

The MTA deserves great credit for accommodating this growth at a time when resources to support that growth have been very constrained. We all know that nothing moves people as quickly and efficiently as the subway, but unfortunately we are unlikely to see any major expansions beyond the Second Avenue subway in the near future. That is why we need to focus on improving bus service.

One of the biggest challenges bus riders are facing is that average bus speeds have been falling for years, reaching their lowest ever average of 7.5 miles per hour over the course of the day – over 10 percent slower than 25 years ago. While there are nearly 2.5 million bus trips a day, ridership has been following a downward trend for two decades, with a decline of nearly six percent over the past ten years mainly in the densest areas of Manhattan and Brooklyn. This decline has happened at a time when, as I said, population and job growth, tourist visits, subway ridership, and cycling have skyrocketed.

DOT and the City are focused on working with the MTA to reverse these trends for three critical reasons.

First, as our City continues to grow, we have a compelling need to achieve more efficient, as well as more sustainable, use of our limited street space. Therefore, we must continue to encourage the most efficient and sustainable modes: walking and cycling, and we must make the bus system work better.

Second, we have a duty to equitably serve the millions of New Yorkers who rely on buses. As our City's economy has surged, rising housing costs have pushed many New Yorkers to live further from the City's employment hubs and subway connections. To fulfill the promise of equal opportunity, the City must continue to improve access to jobs, education, and essential services for low- and moderate-income New Yorkers, seniors, and people with disabilities. I would like to emphasize the de Blasio Administration's commitment to enhancing transit choices for New Yorkers who are not well served by subways or need accessible transit options.

Finally, many people do not know this, but the City pays for a significant share of the MTA's bus operations. So we also have a financial incentive to see the MTA's buses operate

as efficiently as possible, as well as a duty to our City taxpayers to be sure their dollars are well spent.

Let me give a little more history on the City's investment in MTA bus operations. Over a decade ago, the MTA Bus Company was created to consolidate operations of seven private bus lines which at the time faced significant challenges from an aging bus fleet, poor customer service, complex labor agreements and overloaded buses.

The MTA Bus Company serves large portions of Queens, as well as express bus routes from the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens to Manhattan, while NYCT provides other bus services throughout the City. After the transfer of the private bus companies' routes to the MTA Bus Company, service improved as the bus fleet was updated and expanded, but operations and overhead – and funding – remained separate from NYCT. Despite recent efforts to integrate the MTA Bus Company and NYCT from a customer perspective, they remain separate agencies, each with their own employees, planning groups, depots, capital plans and overhead costs.

As part of this deal, the City pays all of the MTA Bus Company's net operating costs, a payment which has increased by 29 percent since 2011 to a total of \$367 million in 2015.

Now, I would like to turn to the jointly run and highly successful MTA and DOT Select Bus Service (SBS) program. Under Mayor Bill de Blasio, we have more than doubled our pace of rolling out new SBS routes, and now have 11 total routes. Since last summer, we have launched four new routes: 86th Street, the Bronx-Flushing-Jamaica, Utica Avenue, and most recently the Q70 LaGuardia Link. Together, the 11 SBS corridors now in place provide over 300,000 daily rides —about 12 percent of city bus trips.

Later this year, we will launch the 23rd Street SBS, and we expect to also break ground on construction for the Woodhaven Boulevard SBS, one of three potential routes for 2017.

Additionally, under Local Law 36 of 2015, championed by Council Member Lander, DOT will begin studying areas in need of better transit. Out of this we will develop our vision for our next set of SBS routes with the MTA, and also consider other longer term transit projects.

While we continue to aggressively pursue the expansion of SBS, we also recognize the need to improve local bus service citywide. I would like to lay out a number of tools that we have used effectively on SBS routes, some of which could also improve local bus service.

First, we need to install more dedicated bus lanes. When I started at DOT, our City had 73 miles of dedicated bus lanes. Under Mayor de Blasio, we have installed 24 miles of new dedicated bus lanes in some of the most congested corridors in the City. We plan to install 11 more miles by the end of 2017 bringing the total to 108 miles – up nearly 50 percent since the end of 2013.

When DOT installs dedicated bus lanes we use paint, signage and bus bulbs to improve operations and service, but also work hand in hand with elected officials, community boards, local merchants, and neighborhood institutions to balance traffic and parking concerns. DOT has continued to innovate on bus lane design by testing a bollard-protected bus lane on 23rd Street, median bus lanes are planned for Woodhaven Boulevard, and we hope to roll out some creative solutions in the South Bronx.

We also use bus lanes in more targeted ways to improve local bus service such as on Livingston Street in Brooklyn, or via short “queue jump” bus lanes that help speed buses through congested intersections, such as the one we implemented this summer on East 97th Street.

Second, we need to continue building out our bus lane camera enforcement program. We currently use camera enforcement on nine routes and plan to expand to 16 routes over the coming years as authorized by the State. Camera enforcement is a key component to ensure only

buses use our dedicated lanes during posted hours. This is especially important in New York where a fully separated bus lane is generally infeasible, so camera enforcement must serve as virtual separation.

We understand that NYPD resources are limited, so cameras provide consistent, certain enforcement for those who do not follow the rules. The result, as we have seen again and again, is that compliance is achieved and violations go down significantly after activation of bus lane cameras. In fact, after cameras are in place for a year, we have seen bus lane violations decline by 33 percent on certain corridors and up to 87 percent on others.

Third, we are rolling out transit signal priority—"TSP"—with MTA to keep buses moving. TSP is a technology on the bus that communicates with our traffic lights to shorten red lights or hold the green light when the bus is approaching. We have implemented TSP on seven corridors, including four in the past year, improving bus travel times by up to 15 percent. We are in the process of activating TSP on two more routes, the M60 SBS from 125th Street to LaGuardia and the Q44 SBS from the Bronx, through Flushing, to Jamaica, which should both go live next spring.

Activating TSP requires several steps from DOT and the MTA. The traffic signals must be equipped with the necessary hardware, which I am glad to say DOT has installed on all 12,900 of our signals. Next, DOT must perform engineering analysis on each specific corridor to assess feasibility. Last, the MTA must install and program equipment on their buses before TSP can be activated. Both this engineering analysis and equipment installation on buses continues to move forward, but I think both DOT and the MTA can do more here to expedite TSP's rollout.

Fourth, working with the MTA, we are continuing the critical work of making bus routes safer for riders, pedestrians and cyclists as part of the Mayor's Vision Zero initiative. As we all

know, we saw a fatal crash involving a bus just this week on the Lower East Side. We always grieve over the loss of life and we will continue to work to make our streets safer.

In the past few years we have worked with the MTA to identify high crash locations and re-route buses or redesign intersections to increase safety. One location that has received a lot of attention lately is the intersection of Myrtle Avenue and Wyckoff Avenue on border of Bushwick and Ridgewood, where we worked with the MTA to re-route buses to avoid more problematic turns, allowing us to redesign this dangerous intersection with fewer conflicts and more pedestrian space.

I would like to also walk you through another example of our bus route work to enhance safety, that also improves the experience for bus riders. Third Ave and 57th Street has been one of the highest crash locations in Manhattan with a heavy volume of right turns, including buses, to access the Queensboro Bridge. To improve safety here, we created a bus queue jump at 55th Street, added a bus stop, created a bus boarding island, and shortened the crosswalk to make bus boarding more accessible. We also improved the Third Avenue bus lane, including adding red paint and moving the bus lane away from the curb from 38th Street to 55th Street.

Next, I would like to share the City's view on steps the MTA could take to improve bus service. One of the biggest delays in bus service is in the time it takes for all riders to board and pay their fare especially in dense cities like New York.

As the MTA moves forward with the procurement and development of its next generation of fare payment media, I want to emphasize how important this is to our City and ask for the Council to be actively involved in this important discussion. This change will be as significant as the City's transition from the subway token to the Metrocard, impacting the commute of millions of New Yorkers for decades to come.

There are four interrelated components that need to be part of the new system. First, we need to have contactless fare payment where riders can just tap instead of dipping or swiping their card. Second, we need to have on-board fare collection installed on our buses so we rely less on the complicated installation of off-board fare collection machines on our sidewalks. Third, it is imperative that the new system support all-door boarding. And last, we need to have good enforcement to ensure appropriate fare compliance.

It is time for New York to join other leading cities around the world where bus riders have been benefiting from all-door boarding and contactless fare payment for years. San Francisco and London have been using all-door bus boarding since 2012 and this is quickly being established as best practice.

An analysis of San Francisco's experience with all-door boarding found a reduction in boarding time of 38 percent. All-door boarding also led to more consistent, less variable dwell times at stops. This is an important factor in reducing bunching and gaps in bus service, helping to make service more reliable and predictable.¹

I know that all-door boarding raises fare evasion concerns for the MTA, and we do not want to see the MTA's bottom line affected.

When SBS was first implemented, the MTA and DOT had a lot of concerns about fare evasion. Our MTA colleagues deserve credit for the use of Eagle Teams on SBS routes to reduce fare evasion from around 15 percent with traditional on-board payment to as low as three percent with off-board payment. And the Eagle Teams achieved the majority of their success through educating the public rather than issuing summonses.

¹ <https://www.sfmta.com/sites/default/files/agendaitems/2014/12-214%20Item%2014%20All%20Door%20Boarding%20Report.pdf>

This enforcement approach also allows the drivers to focus on the job of operating their vehicle safely and efficiently without distraction. We should leave fare payment compliance to MTA's Eagle Team inspectors, who are experienced enforcement professionals better equipped and able to focus on this task.

To improve bus service the *Turnaround* report calls on the MTA to redesign bus routes. The City supports the MTA taking a fresh look at bus routes. To that end, DOT is working together with the Department of City Planning and MTA to think about changing transit needs in the context of population growth and economic development.

I want to close by emphasizing that we need your help. Council partnership and support is essential to moving more bus projects forward. You know your districts and you represent thousands of constituents who are in need of better transit. But implementing these changes on the ground —such as dedicated bus lanes— can be slow and difficult. The cost of paint or concrete, or even engineering, is not the limiting factor for the pace of implementation. Rather, it is the time and difficulty involved in garnering political and community support for the necessary changes to our streets and to bus service.

Thank you again for inviting me to testify and I look forward to answering questions.

**Statement by Craig Cipriano, Executive Vice President
MTA New York City Transit
Before the New York City Council
Committee on Transportation
Oversight Hearing - Improving Bus Service in New York City
October 6, 2016 at 10:00 a.m.
Council Chambers**

Good Morning, Chairman Rodriguez and members of the City Council. My name is Craig Cipriano. I am the Executive Vice President for Buses at the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. Joining me today are Michael Ribosh, Vice President of Operations, and Sarah Wyss, Senior Director, Bus Service Planning.

I would like to start off by expressing our deepest condolences to the family of Anna Colon who was struck by one of our buses on Tuesday in Manhattan, near Houston Street and Avenue D. At the MTA, safety is our first priority and we firmly believe, in line with the City's Vision Zero initiative, that no fatality is inevitable. We remain committed to proactively addressing pedestrian safety, and later in my testimony, I will outline for you our safety initiatives.

By way of background, in 2004 the City and the MTA agreed to transfer responsibility for operating all routes franchised to seven private bus companies to the MTA, leading to the creation of the MTA Bus Company. Subsequently, many changes have been made to bring service levels up to MTA standards, resulting in 20 million additional annual riders (or a 23 percent improvement in ridership) and improved reliability and service quality.

Together, the MTA has the largest bus system in North America and represents the second largest transportation system in the United States surpassed only by our own subway system. Today the MTA operates a total of 5,725 fully accessible buses, providing service to 790 million annual customers out of 28 bus depots across the City, and employing over 18,000 people in our Bus Operations. With 237 local and limited routes, 74 express routes, and Select Bus Service (SBS) along 11 corridors, we carry 2.5 million passengers on an average weekday. To put that into perspective, that's close to the entire population of Chicago.

There are many challenges that come with providing reliable, quality bus service in one of the most vibrant, densely populated urban areas in the world. As the New York City Department of Transportation's (NYCDOT) *Strategic Plan 2016* says, with a record population of 8.5 million residents, 60 million annual tourists, and an economy with over 4 million jobs in the five boroughs (an increase of over 13 percent over the last five years), it's no wonder that New York's streets and roadways are extremely congested.

As a result of increased traffic and slower bus speeds, many riders are choosing the subway over buses in corridors served by both. It's important to note that although average weekday bus ridership has declined by 2.7 percent from 2011 to 2015, the decreases have been concentrated on routes that overlap the subway for most or part of the route. This is particularly true in Manhattan, where traffic congestion is heaviest. Weekday ridership on local bus routes with high or medium subway overlap decreased by 9.3 percent from 2011 to 2015, compared to an increase of 1.0 percent on local routes with low subway overlap. Conversely, weekday ridership on MTA Bus local service, which is comprised almost entirely of routes that have low overlap with subway routes in the outer boroughs, increased 4.1 percent from 2011 to 2015.

Importantly, the key to increasing bus speeds, which in turn leads to increased ridership, is our continued partnership with NYCDOT. Using a toolbox of best practices, including bus lanes, bus lane enforcement, bus bulbs, traffic signal priority (TSP), greater spacing between bus stops, real-time information, and off-board fare collection and all-door boarding on SBS routes, we can reverse the trend of declining ridership. In fact, together with NYCDOT, we have already successfully done so on certain routes, as I will address shortly.

For the benefit of those in the room who may not be familiar with the division of responsibilities between the MTA and NYCDOT, DOT maintains the roadways and road markings, sidewalks, and "street furniture" such as bus shelters, way-finding signs, new countdown clocks, and benches that are all part of the bus rider's experience.

The single best illustration of our partnership with NYCDOT is Select Bus Service, or SBS, which has increased bus speeds by 10 to 25 percent. One example is the Bx41 route, where average ridership increased by 28 percent after implementation of SBS. Buses on the Bx41 now travel at an average speed of 9.5 mph as compared to 7.8 mph beforehand, an improvement of 22 percent. Bus lanes and other traffic improvements utilized on SBS routes have also benefitted local bus routes along shared corridors, such as the eastbound Bx15 and M100 which share a corridor with the M60 SBS along 125th Street in Manhattan, which has shown travel time reductions of 7 to 20 percent since bus lanes were added to 125th Street.

Vital features of SBS include off-board fare collection, all-door boarding, camera-enforced bus lanes and distinctive branding. Customers purchase a paper ticket from an on-street fare machine and then board an SBS bus using all doors. Given the high ridership of most SBS routes, this approach greatly reduces dwell time, resulting in reduction in overall travel time. It's important to note that off-board fare collection and all-door boarding is most beneficial on routes with heavy ridership. However, these features come at a significant cost. The per route costs for SBS typically requires \$3 million in capital costs primarily for off-board fare machines, and \$2.3 million annually associated with enforcing fare payment, revenue collection, and maintenance of on-street fare machines.

With over 100 miles of prioritized bus lanes across the City, there is still ample opportunity to integrate bus priority initiatives into street redesign projects. As NYCDOT seeks to prioritize

mobility by allocating more street space to walking, biking, and buses, we embrace the opportunity extended by them to allocate a larger share of New York's congested streets to bus service.

In the last eight years, we have launched 12 SBS bus routes on 11 corridors with several routes in development. The most recent is the "LaGuardia Link" Q70 SBS, which began on September 25th and provides direct service between LaGuardia Airport and two regional transit hubs that connect to five subway lines, the Long Island Rail Road, and seven bus lines.

Expanding the use of TSP is another key element in our partnership with NYCDOT. As NYCDOT made their traffic signals capable of communicating with our buses, we rolled out the necessary on-board infrastructure on seven corridors, with two more launching soon. Our goal is to install TSP enhancements on the rest of the fleet beginning in 2018. Based on our experience with SBS, the combined use of bus lanes, TSP and off-board fare collection significantly improves bus speeds on high ridership routes.

As part of our effort to improve reliability, the MTA is constantly re-evaluating bus routes in order to serve areas where the demand is highest. To ensure adequate scheduled frequency and travel time on all bus routes, the MTA reviews express buses annually, whereas local, limited, and SBS weekday routes are reviewed every two years or as issues come to our attention through real-time data and feedback. We then adjust capacity and running time accordingly. We invest several million each year on route optimization to account for increased travel times, which are related to decreasing bus speeds.

We also look at available data from fare cards and other sources to identify travel and operational issues, as well as underserved and growing markets. Service has been enhanced or introduced to reach several growing markets and developing neighborhoods that provide important connections between new residential communities, commercial development areas and transportation hubs such as the Airports, the Williamsburg/ Greenpoint/ Long Island City waterfront (B32), the Gateway Center Mall (B84), the Hutchinson Metro Center (Bx24) and Manhattan's far west side (M12). Ridership has been steadily increasing on routes serving these locations and continued growth is expected as more development occurs along these corridors. And on routes serving LaGuardia Airport (M60, Q47, Q48, Q70 and Q72) weekday ridership increased 8.1 percent from 2011 to 2015.

In 2010, we undertook a comprehensive redrawing of local bus service in Co-op City in the Bronx, including the re-organization of routes in order to provide simpler, more direct service. Specifically, we rerouted the Bx26 to use Bartow Avenue, we split the Bx28 into two routes, we rerouted the Bx30 out of Asch Loop, and we reorganized the QBx1 into the Bx23 and the Q50 Limited. In response to feedback from the community, a neighborhood study was undertaken in the fall of 2013 to assess and propose any revisions to bus service in Co-op City. The study

recommended minor changes to what we had already implemented and found that overall the more direct routes better serve our customers.

Following this, we undertook a study of bus service in Northeast Queens. We are now undertaking an ambitious study looking at both express and local bus service on Staten Island. Based on our experiences, we are open to redrawing the bus map to better serve current markets.

One goal will be to concentrate service so that we have higher frequency routes on major streets, rather than a multitude of lower frequency variations.

We are also striving to increase reliability by splitting up long routes. In January 2017, we plan to split the M5 route (one of our longest and worst performing routes in Manhattan) into two shorter routes that would help mitigate the effects of delays and provide more reliable service. We are considering other routes as well, particularly as part of the Staten Island Study.

Other methods we employ to improve route running times include reducing the number of stops on the route by increasing the spacing between them and making minor route changes to straighten our routes by reducing the number of turns where feasible (such as on the B36 in Sheepshead Bay). While we realize that doing so may cause inconvenience to some customers, these are proven ways to improve bus speed and reliability.

One recently implemented and successful new route is the X21. Launched in September of 2014 as a 'Super Express' service, the X21 maximizes the time spent on the freeway, uses greater bus stop spacing, and minimizes mileage on congested Manhattan streets and the number of on-street turns. It is a peak-hour-only service that has grown nearly 80 percent since its creation and has yet to show any sign of tapering off.

Our implementation of real-time bus location data has transformed the way we do business while enhancing our customers' experience.

MTA Bus Time is the live bus-tracking service that gives customers the location of their bus via their choice of smart phone, web or text message by using an enhanced global positioning device mounted inside each bus. That information is transmitted wirelessly to a server using onboard cellular equipment. The server integrates bus location data with bus route information, schedules and map files to create useful information for our customers.

In June 2015, we augmented the mobile website for MTA Bus Time with a downloadable 'app' for Apple and the Android mobile phone platforms. We worked closely with our customers to solicit feedback on the MTA Bus Time app, its user interface and functionality. One of the most frequent requests we have received was to provide the expected time of arrival of the bus at the stop, in addition to already available "Bus is X stops away" information. We were happy to introduce time-based predictions both in our app and on the website for Bronx customers in the first quarter of 2015 followed by a full citywide rollout of this great feature by fall 2015. The

usage averages more than 4.5 million SMS texts per month, and year-to-date about 49 million page loads of the bus time website across 6 million unique visitors.

Beyond MTA Bus Time, we offer MTA Trip Planner, The Weekender, myMTAalerts.com, and the twitter handle @NYCTBus to help our customers plan their trips.

An example of the proactive approach we have taken to service management is the in-house development of a web-based tool referred to as “Bus Trek.” This allows our dispatchers, route managers and schedulers to have the reports they need to monitor and adjust service in real time. Building on the success of MTA Bus Time, Bus Trek manages to intelligently re-package the vehicle location data generated by MTA Bus Time in a format that enables street level dispatchers and managers to make critical real-time decisions needed to better manage service. With Bus Trek, dispatchers can readily see which buses are on-schedule, behind, ahead or not in service. Dispatchers can also identify when buses have a potential to bunch and can take appropriate actions to reduce or eliminate bunching scenarios. We have recently completed the deployment of a mobile version of Bus Trek, to our ‘on-street Service Line Dispatchers’ via iPads in all the boroughs.

Modernizing our fare payment system can improve the efficiency of our bus operations, as well as the convenience of fare payment for our customers. In the 20 years since we introduced the MetroCard, transit agencies across the globe have subscribed to tap-and-go electronic payment systems that allow customers to use their own devices by waving a smartphone, a bank card, or another payment device over contactless readers to pay their fares.

In April of this year, we issued a New Fare Payment System (NFPS) RFP for the solicitation of design-build, open-architecture, open-payment proposals. We want to make sure that what we procure is built on open technologies and standards and offers enough flexibility to serve our customers for the long term.

As mentioned earlier, we have been successful to date with the implementation of all-door boarding on SBS routes using an off-board fare collection system and paper receipts. Transitioning to the use of all-door boarding using the NFPS, however, presents a number of technical and practical challenges, primarily whether electronic payment verification in an open payment system is feasible or cost effective. This is why we are initially exploring emerging technological approaches to on-board fare collection and electronic payment validation only on our SBS routes.

This pilot effort is a critical first step that will facilitate an assessment of the proposed approach to all-door boarding to ensure proper functionality, efficiency of on-board fare collection and utility of the system in the demanding NYC Transit bus service environment. While we clearly recognize the appeal of all-door boarding on a selective basis, we must exercise diligence in considering all the operational and cost implications, in addition to the benefits, in evaluating a possible future decision to expand beyond SBS routes. One specific concern with respect to all-

door boarding on regular bus service is fare evasion. In this regard, it must be noted that the MTA does not have primary enforcing authority for fare evasion on our subways and buses. This responsibility lies with another of our key partners, the NYPD.

The NYPD also enforces the rules of the road, including bus lane regulations, which are critical to improving bus speeds in the City. We attend the NYPD's Traffic Stat meetings held quarterly at One Police Plaza, coordinate detours for major events, and attend planning meetings at local police precincts. An example of a recent joint initiative includes partnering with the local police department to conduct parking and regulation enforcement in and around the Ridgewood terminal in Brooklyn.

We are also working to improve our customers' on-board experience. In March 2016, Governor Cuomo announced that the MTA would add new customer-facing amenities to its fleet, including USB charging ports, free customer Wi-Fi, digital information screens and a new look. This is a vital part of the state's efforts to significantly transform and modernize the MTA, its infrastructure, and its fleet to meet the growing demands of the 21st century.

The new high-quality LCD information screens will provide our customers with information on upcoming stops, available transfers, weather, and other service related information in an audible and a visual format on screens mounted inside buses. USB charging ports will be located overhead on all express buses. On local service buses, the charging ports will be conveniently located throughout the bus, typically behind forward facing passenger seats. Onboard Wi-Fi hotspots will be provided to customers utilizing the latest LTE based cellular technology.

Through our Capital Program, the MTA continues to invest in its facilities and new buses. In January 2015 we reopened our Mother Clara Hale Depot in Harlem. This new depot is one of the most environmentally friendly facilities of its kind. Last October we broke ground for a new 39,000 square foot state-of-the-art Bus Command Center. The green facility will come with technology advances and improvements to bus communications and coordination. Importantly, it will house the necessary infrastructure to operate the new digital bus radio system, which will replace our outdated analog radio equipment and improve communications. With new buses in the fleet, our mean distance between failures (the primary metric we use to measure maintenance reliability) is amongst the highest ever recorded and we will receive an additional 2,042 newly designed buses between now and 2020.

No discussion about the MTA would be complete without highlighting the subject of safety, which remains our highest priority. With the proliferation of pedestrians, bicyclists and growing traffic congestion, our overall safety strategy reflects our commitment to improve our safety performance. The following three-pronged approach has been implemented:

- Vision Zero training to engage our bus operators on safety issues and identify and address behaviors that indicate a potential risk;

- Implementation of safety technologies and traffic engineering/street-scaping strategies in collaboration with NYCDOT; and
- Public outreach to educate pedestrians and bicyclists about safe behavior, particularly when engaging with MTA buses.

Vision Zero training emphasizes the current challenges of managing distracted pedestrians and cyclists. The training curriculum uses on-board bus cameras to show real situations and features videos from “Families for Safer Streets” and the NYPD. Since August 2016, over 8,500 bus operators have attended our Vision Zero training and all bus operators will be trained by April 2017. While we acknowledge that there is still work to do, we are encouraged by the fact that incidents involving pedestrians and buses decreased by 26 percent between 2013 and 2015.

Importantly, MTA managers continually engage bus operators on safety and security issues on the road and at the depot to promote safety and get constructive feedback. Currently almost 50 percent of our bus fleet is equipped with cameras, which are intended to create a deterrent against criminal activity, and also provide a critical record for use in accident investigations. All new buses will be delivered with cameras.

By the end of this year, we will begin piloting both a Pedestrian Turn Warning System and a collision avoidance system. The Pedestrian Turn Warning system is automatically triggered when the bus makes a right or a left hand turn, activating an external audio warning that alerts pedestrians and bicyclists that the bus is turning. External speakers are installed in an area that does not block the bus operator’s view, and the speaker volume takes into consideration the ambient sound level in the vicinity of the bus.

The collision avoidance system uses front- and side-facing cameras to provide an audible and visual alert to the bus operator when the system detects the possibility of an imminent collision. This scope of detection is limited to the forward and forward-facing sides of the bus. The system is in pre-production trials now, but does have the potential to be an early warning system that could assist operators in advance of an untoward event.

In sum, from ‘optimizing bus routes’ to ‘intelligent signal priority’ to ‘real-time service management’ to ‘off-board fare collection,’ the list of initiatives and enhancements to improve bus service continually grows. As an organization, Buses is working towards the most efficient strategies and procurement sourcing mechanisms to ensure we remain as nimble as possible in the future. Yet these advancements can only offer so much in terms of bus speed and travel times. The economic impact of traffic congestion on the City and the region is significant. Traffic moving throughout the City is expected to grow over the foreseeable future. The future of the City and the region depends on us pushing forward initiatives that provide a combination of transit service enhancements and relief from road congestion. This includes the increased prioritization of buses on roads through bus lanes and lane enforcement. All of us here in this room have the same goals –to improve bus speeds, service reliability and travel times. The MTA

looks forward to our continued work with NYCDOT, NYPD and the City Council to achieve these objectives together.

Chairman Rodriguez and members of the Council, I thank you for the opportunity to speak about our joint goal to improve bus service.



TRANSPORTATION
ALTERNATIVES

Committee on Transportation

Oversight – Improving Bus Service in New York City

Testimony by Julia Kite, Policy and Research Manager, Transportation Alternatives

Thursday, October 6th, 2016

Thank you for convening this hearing. I am Julia Kite, Policy and Research Manager of Transportation Alternatives. We are a 43-year old non-profit with more than 150,000 New Yorkers in our network, dedicated to biking, walking, and public transportation as city-friendly alternatives to private automobile use in New York City. We advocate on behalf of all of New York City's pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users for safer and more livable streets.

New York City's streets are its largest and most valuable public space, and there is no more equitable, practical, or innovative use of this public space than the provision of world-class public transportation. Unfortunately, compared to other major American and world cities, New York City's bus service is slow, inefficient, and leaves riders feeling like second-class citizens. In parts of the City, average bus speeds are barely quicker than walking, and so it is no wonder that bus ridership has declined by 16% since 2002 despite growth in population.¹ Improving service is also a matter of equity: riders tend to be older and have lower incomes than the city average. We all know that New York City cannot build endless new subway lines, and so as the demands on our transit network grow along with the city, we must invest in bus service that is more efficient, fair, and appealing. Today we present to you some of our priorities for improvement, which we view as essential steps to ensure better service. We also would like to express support for the testimony of The Riders Alliance.

In summary, we support:

- **Dedicated bus lanes**
- **Bus traffic signal priority**
- **Major new investments to arterial streets**
- **Bus bulbs, neckdowns, and other street engineering enhancements**
- **A bus rapid transit-focused "PeopleWay" on 14th Street**
- **Expansion of Bike-and-Ride (bike racks on MTA buses)**
- **Improvements to bus design for safety**

The Arterial Street Redesign Challenge

Improvements to bus service go hand-in-hand with improvements to New York City's arterial streets. One cannot be made better without the other. For the past two fiscal years, Transportation Alternatives and this Council have urged the City to drastically **increase funding for the redesign of arterial streets**, recognizing that in order to be both safe and at optimum functionality, they will require a \$2.4 billion investment over the course of a decade. **Unfortunately, capital funding allocations remain only a fraction of what is necessary to maintain a state of good repair.**

¹ TransitCenter (2016). "Turnaround: Fixing New York City's Buses." http://transitcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Turnaround_Fixing-NYCs-Buses-20July2016.pdf



Dedicated bus lanes are the most vital improvement necessary for better service on arterial streets. New York City's buses are among the slowest in the nation in large part due to the amount of weaving in and out of traffic and dodging of double-parked vehicles that drivers must do as they travel along routes with closely-spaced stops, on streets without dedicated infrastructure. Select Bus Service has created, in parts, exclusive bus lanes that help to reduce travel time. For example, on the B44, which travels along Brooklyn's third-busiest bus corridor, buses used to spend approximately 20 minutes stopped in traffic on each run. After conversion to SBS, that number dropped to 12.5 minutes. The DOT wrote in its evaluation, "The B44 SBS spends less time stopped in traffic or at red lights because of bus lanes that keep the bus separate from general traffic queues, and signal changes that increase the amount of green time available to the bus and improve the coordination between intersections."² Bus lanes were also created for a portion of the nearby B49 bus route, which had no service changes; travel times in the bus lane section decreased by 7% in the AM peak and 11% in the PM peak. The evidence is clear: dedicated bus lanes improve service, even when a route is not SBS. **The city does not need to go through the long process of planning and consulting that precedes designation of SBS routes in order to improve bus service - all it needs is a modest investment in red asphalt, signage, and camera enforcement.**

Creating more dedicated bus lanes is a relatively inexpensive but highly beneficial intervention. Even better, **when bus lanes are added as part of a "complete street" redesign, an arterial road can become much safer for all road users, not just bus riders.** For example, bus bulbs or neckdowns - areas where a sidewalk is widened by reclaiming a traffic lane as space for people waiting to get on or off the bus - shorten the crossing distance for pedestrians. Where they were implemented along Nostrand Avenue as part of the B44 SBS, traffic injuries fell by 37%. These sidewalk enhancements also allow for public amenities and improvements to the public realm, while narrowing the street has a traffic calming effect - a win all around. This autumn, Transportation Alternatives will be releasing the Vision Zero Street Design Standard, a guide for how to redesign arterial streets for safety and public transit enhancement.

A PeopleWay for 14th Street

We agree with Commissioner Trottenberg in that the upcoming L train shutdown is a crisis not to waste. In fact, we think **the shutdown could present the City with an opportunity to prove that true bus rapid transit is an effective, economical, achievable transportation option that will enhance mobility in New York City.** To keep the City moving during the shutdown, Transportation Alternatives proposes the creation of a "PeopleWay" on 14th Street, which would involve **closing the street to private automobile traffic and creating a true bus rapid transit service alongside bike lanes and expanded sidewalks.** Using Brooklyn's Fulton Mall as a model for how a commercial district can thrive with bus- and pedestrian-oriented streets, we envision the PeopleWay as benefitting commuters, local residents, and tourists alike.

The PeopleWay is a chance to prove to New Yorkers that bus rapid transit can work here just as well as it has worked in other major cities. We do not have to settle for a status quo of congested streets and slow service that leaves bus riders feeling neglected.

² New York City Department of Transportation and MTA New York City Transit. "B44 SBS on Nostrand Avenue Progress Report." <http://www.nyc.gov/html/brt/downloads/pdf/brt-nostrand-progress-report-june2016.pdf>



TRANSPORTATION
ALTERNATIVES

Bus Service Improvements

We hope to see an **expansion of the Bike and Ride program** that has been trialled on the S53 and S93 services over the Verrazzano Bridge. All buses in Los Angeles, Chicago, Seattle, Portland, Minneapolis, Vancouver, and Washington, D.C. are equipped with bike racks. It is time for New York City to embrace multi-modal transportation and join them.

We also believe that **better bus design** can improve service, accessibility, and safety. Lower-floor buses ease boarding and enhance accessibility. Wider doors help to reduce time spent at bus stops. There are a variety of innovative windshield designs that eliminate visual obstructions, which would help to prevent pedestrian crashes. Finally, we encourage the council to pass Resolution 621-2015, introduced by Council Member Reynoso, which calls upon the MTA to install rear wheel guards on all buses. This Tuesday, 73-year-old Anna Colon was killed crossing Houston Street, crushed by the rear wheels of an MTA bus. The type of guards that this legislation would require could have potentially saved her life.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

111 John Street, Ste 260 New York, NY 10038

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www.transalt.org

Attn: Hon. Yannis Rodriguez, Chair

9/18/14

FOR THE RECORD

Dear Mr. Prendigast , President MTA;

It is my understanding that past spring you as President of MTA announced that since the agency had a substantial surplus it would consider restoring many service cuts it implemented in June of 2010. However, we don't know if any of such restoration included the unjustified and unconscionable cuts of BX26 and BX28 bus routes. While Bx26 and Bx28 were not eliminated their routes the cuts included bypass servicing some 30,000 Co-op City residents—including workers in the borough, patients or visitors at Kingsbridge Veterans Hospital or Montefiore Hospital, students attending Columbus High School or Lehman College, visitors to Bronx Botanical Garden, Fordham Road shoppers—bus travel has become a nightmare. Since the unreasonable service cuts imposed more than 4 years ago, many riders must now change buses and sometimes run into a double fare.

Even though Co-op City is crisscrossed by seven bus lines, none are as convenient as the Bx26, and Bx28, were before the service cuts were enacted.

New York City promised Co-op City's sponsors, when the community was being constructed, that the city would provide Bx26 and Bx28 bus services—but that the promise was broken when MTA reduced those services.

In 2010, MTA claimed that financial difficulties, required cutting bus services in Co-op City as well as throughout the city. Yet, in 2013, MTA reported a \$1.4 surplus and received an additional \$47 million from the state. In other parts of the city some service cuts were restored and others expanded in Co-op City, we got a "survey."

I respectfully request that MTA restore cuts to those bus routes which has been a demand by the entire Co-op City community as expressed in the 8,000 signatures on petitions and letters submitted to the MTA Board calling for the restoration of those service reductions.

Bernard Cylich

AA: Hon Yolande Rodriguez, Chair

#96

Director's Viewpoint: Bernard Cyllich

for Co-op City Times 2/1/14

FOR THE RECORD

CO-OP CITY GETS SURVEYED, OTHERS GET SERVICES RESTORED

As we learned in last week's *Co-op City Times* (1/25), MTA released its six-month survey, begun in July 2013, of bus service to Co-op City. It appears our community was given VIP treatment by MTA, and for this we should be grateful. No other community, even those neighborhoods whose bus and/or subway services were restored, had been similarly "surveyed."

Before reviewing MTA findings and drafted recommendations, I would like to examine what the survey was – and was not.

Did the study recognize that, even though Co-op City is crisscrossed by seven bus lines, none are as convenient as the Bx26, Bx28, and Access-A-Ride were before the service cuts were enacted?

Did the surveyors take into account that for some 30,000 Co-op City residents—including workers in the borough, patients or visitors at Kingsbridge Veterans Hospital or Montefiore Hospital, students attending Columbus High School or Lehman College, visitors to Bronx Botanical Garden, Fordham Road shoppers—bus travel has become a nightmare? Since the unreasonable service cuts imposed more than 3 years ago, many riders must now change buses and sometimes run into a double fare.

Did the study take into account the fact that cooperators are united in their opposition to those cuts?

Did the surveyors note that New York City promised Co-op City's sponsors, when the community was being constructed, that the city would provide Bx26 and Bx28 bus services—but that the promise was broken when MTA reduced those services?

Did they acknowledge the thousands who participated, both before and after the cuts were instituted, in June 2010—in rallies, picketing, demonstrations, phone calls, and other protests?

Did they consider the 8,000 signatures on petitions and letters calling for the restoration of those service reductions?

Did they take into account the political support by all elected officials, including candidates who were later elected to citywide office?

The answer to these questions, of course, is NO.

In 2010, MTA claimed that financial difficulties, required cutting bus services in Co-op City as well as throughout the city. Yet, in 2013, MTA reported a \$1.4 surplus and received an additional \$47 million

Att: Hon Ydine Rodriguez, Chm

from the state. In other parts of the city some service cuts were restored and others expanded in Co-op City, we got a "survey."

When MTA announced that survey, the leadership of the Co-op City Coalition Against the MTA Cuts characterized it as a self-serving gimmick to justify cuts and predicted that the results would amount to a whitewash. How can MTA be trusted to conduct an impartial investigation, the leaders asked, when the agency had, at one time, admitted to keeping two sets of financial books?

MTA THUMPS ITS NOSE AT CO-OP CITY

What, in fact, does the MTA recommend after its survey? Does its proposals include restoring the service cuts to the Bx26, the Bx28, and Access-A-Ride? The one-word answer is: No!

Instead, MTA proposes to end the irrational multi-service pattern of Bx23 from Pelham Bay station to all of Co-op City, and institute one uniform route; add a new bus stop at Asch Loop and Adler Pace; reroute the Bx28 in both directions through Asch Loop; and provide a new stop for Q50 at Co-op City Boulevard and Dreiser Loop. All of that falls short of what had been recommended by the Coalition Against the MTA Cuts. The Coalition had asked MTA to replicate Q50 stops and routes of their express bus service throughout Co-op City.

The MTA post survey recommendations are an insult to Co-op City ridership. They are thumping their nose at our community. Perhaps because the President of the MTA Board and two-thirds of its members are appointed by the Governor and the other third are appointed by the NYC Mayor. MTA Board members display more accountability to them than to either the riders or to the city in general.

It warrants a loud Bronx cheer, but that isn't enough. We have to organize. We have to petition, to demonstrate, to lobby the governor for restoration of all bus services now!

**Bus Turnaround Coalition Testimony
New York City Council
October 6, 2016**

Panelists

Tabitha Decker, TransitCenter
Gene Russianoff, Straphangers Campaign
Vincent Pellechia, TriState Transportation Campaign
Jaqi Cohen, Straphangers Campaign
Nick Sifuentes, Riders Alliance

Good Morning, Chairman Rodriguez, Members of the Committee, and Council Members. My name is Tabitha Decker and I am Director of the New York City Program at TransitCenter. With me today are Gene Russianoff of the Straphangers Campaign, Vincent Pellechia of TriState Transportation Campaign, Jaqi Cohen of Straphangers Campaign, and Nick Sifuentes of Riders Alliance.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our analysis of the state of New York City's buses and the practical strategies we are advocating for to improve them. Our organizations have formed the Bus Turnaround Coalition because we are determined to reverse declining service quality and get New Yorkers back on the bus.

New York City's public transit system is in a state of slow-motion crisis. With over half a million jobs added since 2010, our city is in the midst of a population boom, and our public transit system is struggling to keep up. The plight of our bus network has gone largely unnoticed, even as ridership numbers on buses plummet year after year. Our look at MTA data found a nearly 20% decline in riders from 2002 to 2015. The MTA's response to the release of our Turnaround report in July attempted to frame the issue as limited to Manhattan—but Brooklyn has seen a 9% drop in bus ridership in just the past five years.

Despite the decline in ridership, our system still has 2.5 million daily riders, many of them low-income; for large swathes of the city, buses are the only available public transit option. As our city continues to grow much more quickly than we can build new subway stations, these riders, and millions more, need better buses. Reform is needed urgently to create the high quality service that will get New Yorkers back on the bus.

Our organizations and a group of elected leaders have launched a new coalition, Bus Turnaround, to focus the attention of MTA and New York City leaders on the erosion of NYC bus service and its ridership. We launched this effort because the city's bus system is ailing—and failing riders.

Clearly the failure of our bus network is a citywide issue, and it's one we can—and must—solve.

Fortunately, data from city agencies can shine a light on the problems in our bus network. Primary among those: bus speeds are barely faster than walking in Midtown Manhattan, Downtown Brooklyn and Jamaica, Queens—and bus speeds are declining citywide. MTA data also show that buses' reliability relative to published schedules is worsening in all boroughs. This correlates with user experiences: in our work surveying thousands of bus riders, many have identified long waits at uncomfortable bus stops, slow buses, and "bus bunching" (when multiple buses arrive at a stop at the same time after passengers have waited for delayed buses) as key problems that cause frustration during commutes—or, worse yet, cause them to abandon using the bus entirely. Additionally, a lack of bus-only lanes forces buses to compete with mixed traffic, and inefficient routes and stops (often holdovers from decades when commuting patterns were significantly different) add to the problems we see across our bus network.

There are some bright spots, though they are few: the joint MTA/NYCDOT Select Bus Service program has bucked these trends, but only on 10 out of 245 routes. Ironically, Select Bus may be allowing the MTA and city government to demonstrate some attention to bus issues while ignoring or avoiding the broad, systemic problems causing the erosion of bus service across the city.

At a time when traffic congestion and subway overcrowding continue to worsen, New York should be making maximum use of all of its transportation resources. Other leading metropolises with large subway systems are in fact increasing bus usage through pro-active policy measures. In order for New York to follow suit, we must identify why ridership is on the decline so that we can address the primary shortcomings of our bus network.

It doesn't have to be this way. In our report, we identify key steps to fix our city's bus network:

- Redesign our bus network and routes for more frequent & efficient service.
 - One of the key things we can do to turnaround the decline in ridership on NYC buses is to determine how and where the network is failing and redesign it as needed!
 - Add more frequent service on routes with high ridership or high ridership potential
 - Break up routes that are too long! the longer a route is, the more unreliable it tends to be. We commend the MTA for breaking up the M5, a route that currently takes almost two hours - as scheduled not counting frequent delays - to travel from end to end and is among the least reliable routes in Manhattan.
 - Right-size the distance between stops - stops currently average about 750 feet but many cities have gone to or are considering doubling this. In Europe, some places are looking to almost triple this spacing
 - Redesign indirect routes
- Design streets to prioritize buses
 - Create more bus lanes and widespread traffic signal priority for buses
 - Install bus bulbs and boarding islands
 - Introduce queue jumps
- Transform how we get on and off the bus.
 - The City should use a post-MetroCard fare payment system to allow all-door bus boarding through implementing tap-and-go onboard fare collection. The MTA has already outlined plans to phase out the MetroCard in favor of modern fare payment technology within the next few years, and we encourage the agency to take full advantage of this new technology by ensuring its use will be extended to all local buses. By reducing boarding time, dwell time at each bus stop can be reduced significantly, ultimately reducing overall trip time.
- Adopt better methods to keep buses on schedule.
 - Despite having access to better bus time data than ever before, buses are still arriving in bunches, creating uneven gaps in service that makes it difficult to anticipate when a scheduled bus will actually arrive or depart. When buses get off track, dispatchers and drivers should take early preventative action to ensure that buses stay evenly spaced. Less "bunched" buses means more reliable service, and would allow riders to determine an accurate departure time ahead of their trip.
 - We also need to ensure that buses begin their runs on time. Analysis of bus time data has revealed that all too often buses experience a delay in departure. Using

- Increase transparency about bus performance.
 - Data about bus performance needs to be presented in a way that riders can easily understand. Providing data for purposes of app development and data analysis is important, but it is critical that the riding public be able to comprehend the city's current state of bus service in order to hold our transit agencies accountable for better bus service.
 - Instituting a comprehensive open data policy where data is reported on a frequent and regular bases will enable groups like ours, developers, bus riders, and even the agencies themselves to identify and solve problems related to bus service.

Thank you to Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, the Transportation Committee, and everyone here today for coming together to discuss how to fix our ailing bus system.

We've heard from the DOT and MTA. I'd like to--commend the agencies for what they've committed to here today--and challenge them to go further faster.

You've heard about the broad goals and objectives of the Bus Turnaround campaign. Many of them are significant tasks that will take some time to realize. But to be clear, we think there are a number of concrete steps the MTA and DOT can take now to improve bus service in the near term for riders--and demonstrate their support for comprehensive bus reform.

What we want is to hear MTA and DOT commit to a comprehensive plan to re-envision our bus network to make buses faster, more reliable, and more efficient.

Right now we've got a ways to go to meet that goal. But here's what the MTA and DOT can do now to make bus service work better for riders in 2017 and beyond:

Develop a list of possible changes to bus routes that could speed service, including straighter routes and breaking very long routes into shorter routes, like they did with the M5.

Develop a set of service adjustments that would shift resources to increase service frequencies on the city's busiest, most underserved routes.

Accelerate the pace of transit-signal-priority-related software procurement and installation, with the goal of 25 total routes/corridors employing transit signal priority by end of 2017.

Develop a list of top bus delay hot-spots to improve in 2017.

And design new operational dispatch and management strategies to implement when NYC Transit's new bus control center comes on-line in 2020.

Turning around NYC's buses should be in the best interest of both the Governor and the Mayor. Quick, relatively inexpensive wins on bus service would provide a strong complement to the Governor's numerous long-range infrastructure initiatives. Improving access and reducing travel times for New Yorkers who do not live a quick walk to the subway and who cannot afford taxis would certainly constitute a major accomplishment for Mayor deBlasio's agenda to improve social equity and access to opportunity.

With over 2.5 million daily rides, our buses—for all their faults—still remain a vital mode of transportation for New Yorkers. It's imperative that the MTA, DOT, and elected officials at multiple levels take up the challenge of improving this oft-neglected element of our public transit system, and it is far more likely they will take action if elected officials and New Yorkers in general speak out.

Community Board 2 Manhattan Testimony for City Council re: Bus Service

Good morning Councilmembers, I am Terri Cude, First Vice Chair of Community Board 2 Manhattan. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

In 2010, MTA/NYC Transit curtailed a set of convenient, easily accessible bus routes that fully served users in mid-Greenwich Village, SoHo, parts of NoHo, Little Italy and Chinatown. They shortened and diverted the M1, lengthened and relocated the M5 and eliminated the M6. CB2 Manhattan has written several resolutions protesting this loss of bus service in our area and providing suggestions for relief. Countless constituents -- including seniors, those with young children, and people with disabilities -- have been asking us to help get them better bus service since these changes occurred.

- The removal of the M1 route north from Lafayette and Centre Sts. has deprived many of direct access to major hubs such as Union Sq. and the upper east side. The Bowery is too far away for many, especially mobility challenged persons.
- A bus no longer goes south on Broadway from 14th St. This denies people buying lower-priced food on 14th St. of an inexpensive means to get home with their packages.
- The M5 route is now the longest in Manhattan, with backups, bunching, and long waits. Compounding this, the M5 often runs Express until 8th Street, making access difficult for many.
- Elimination of the M5 turning west on Houston St. and back up 6th Ave has not only removed a compact, more efficient route, but also has dispossessed elderly and infirm locals.
- The M1 and M6 both previously traveled to and from the Financial District and Civic Center. Although the CB2 population working downtown has increased considerably and many need buses to come here, there's now only the crowded M5 to transport them.

Recently, MTA NYCT proposed splitting the M5 into two uneven routes at 37th St, a largely deserted location presenting security concerns and lengthy transfers, opposed by virtually all the communities along the route.

For the M1, MTA NYCT offered to have the bus turn south on Broadway from 8th Street, still eliminating the needed 14th Street to 8th Street on Broadway trip, and terminating on Worth Street instead of further down at South Ferry as before.

Ideally, the original pre-2010 routes, still needed, should be restored to the degree possible. At the very least, since the M1, 2, 3 and 5 all currently travel down 5th Avenue, CB2 Manhattan urges that one of these should take the fork at approximately 24th Street to travel down Broadway to the Union Square area. We also request that additional buses such as the M1 continue down Broadway to South St. or at least Worth Street, and travel uptown via Centre to Lafayette to fill an enormous gap in service. Last, we hope to see MTA have the M5 become local south of 14th Street and turn west at Houston St. and end near 6th Avenue at least twice an hour before starting uptown on 6th Ave., with the bus shelter returned to Houston St.

In addition to these recommendations, one way to enhance public bus service is to reduce the amount of sightseeing tour buses clogging Broadway, often taking up bus lanes, bus stops *and* the remaining travel lane to pick up and discharge passengers and fight their way around each other, and using their presence as advertising vehicles.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I hope you can help us get these suggestions implemented as soon as possible.

**Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Advocate Bus Service Improvements
Testimony to City Council Committee on Transportation**

by

**Mark Henry, President and Business Agent, ATU Local 1056 and
Chair, ATU Legislative Conference Board**

&

Bennie Caughman, President and Business Agent, ATU Local 1179

October 6, 2016

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the need to improve public transit bus service in the City of New York. I am **Mark Henry**, President and Business Agent for Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local No. 1056; and Chair, ATU Legislative Conference Board. Local 1056 represents drivers and mechanics who work for MTA New York City Transit's Queens Bus Division. And I am **Bennie Caughman**, President/ Business Agent, Amalgamated Transit Union Local No. 1179.

As mass transit professionals, ATU offers unique and valuable insights. ATU 1056 and ATU 1179 members – bus operators and mechanics – work respectively for MTA New York City Transit's Queens Bus and the MTA Bus division; we serve the riding public.

At almost every opportunity discussing public transit, the ATU emphasizes that smartly investing in public transit keys growth in the economy and job creation.

For many New Yorkers public transit serves as their lifeline to shop, go to the doctor, attend worship services, visit family members, and do many of the things that enrich their lives.

Working Families need safe, equitable and efficient transportation.

More often than not, including in Queens, that means buses.

When discussing how best to improve public transit, policymakers and advocates talk up ferries, more rail and subways, light rail and, most recently, a trolley. They often give short thrift to resources to expand bus service – which offer the quickest, most cost effective and flexible means to get more people out of cars and help protect our environment.

Buses offer a quick means to address a dearth of service or improving what exists throughout the city and especially in Queens, where ATU members serve its residents, visitors, workers and students.

Building in smarter public transit options using buses also assists many residents who currently rely on personal vehicles.

Buses connect neighborhoods. City Hall's plans to develop more affordable housing units and housing with less or no parking requirements needs adequate public transit options in place, and not just to funnel commuters to subway and rail; the city needs buses in place to take residents to school, work, recreation and family within boroughs such as Queens.

Indeed, many communities that require transit or more of it clamor for better options.

We need leadership from transit and transportation planners.

City Hall and the City Council should support advocacy by ATU and others for more buses that the MTA needs to maintain and expand service; this includes a focus on better use of MTA bus lines to serve intra-borough and inter-borough needs rather than just using most bus routes to funnel riders to subways and rail. A holistic approach to bus service will help remedy “transportation deserts” that elected officials such as Council Member I. Daneek Miller clearly identify.

Let's look at some existing bus service and identify a few examples for improvement.

New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) and MTA transit planners need to re-think their focus on Select Bus Service (SBS) – their version of what is more commonly known as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) – which involve no significant service upgrades.

Studying the SBS metrics makes clear the need to look at the larger picture. ATU favors BRT and SBS approaches as part of any plan to improve bus service system wide. Unfortunately the deployment of substantial human and money resources to date diverts attention from the needed holistic approach to public transit in places – including Queens – that need more, better and the introduction of bus service. In ATU's experience, especially in Queens, SBS hurts communities; since its inception SBS reduced overall service to communities; the implementation of SBS basically replaces Limited (bus stop) service.

Extending SBS features to other local and express routes offer real opportunities to enhance service. Off-board fare payment reduces time to get on and overall travel times. This would work particularly well at subway and other terminals.

Issues involving delays and longer than expected waits often relate to management decisions that take buses and bus operators out of service.

Often, MTA's bus divisions opt not to replace a driver out sick and or a disabled bus.

When MTA managers allow longer than appropriate bus inspection schedules, unsafe equipment often leaves a route short on buses; this only puts drivers and riders at risk in buses that may break down, often unsafely.

The above scenarios means buses out of service either lacking a driver or unable to operate, runs on routes going uncovered and longer wait times for riders, often at the worst times. When fewer buses run blowing published schedules, it impacts passengers facing the summer heat, blustery rain and as the weather becomes colder and more frequently inclement.

Change these MTA policies that allows management decisions that take buses and bus operators out of service.

Buses, new and existing, require fully-functioning depots, and in many cases terminals to facilitate commuter transfer between transit modes. The City needs to make sure progress continues on the MTA's Jamaica bus depot. The City really need to look at identifying a site for a full-scale bus terminal serving downtown Flushing before development makes it impractical. Flushing continues to have an ever increasing ridership as development increases there. Member of Congress Grace Meng proposed it in 2012. It may not be too late to incorporate it in the plans for the Flushing municipal lot, which may present the best location.

The recent focus by the so-called advocates, including the Riders Alliance, on buses helps change a conversation that gave greater priority to ferries, more rail and subways, light rail and, recently, a trolley; buses still offer the quickest, most cost effective and flexible means to get more people out of cars and help protect our environment.

The so-called NYC Bus Coalition report on improving bus service basically adopted recommendations advanced by MTA bus unions including in testimony and commentary.

The MTA, the city, the state and advocates need to look at funding for more new buses to support bus service changes, expansions, and enhancement. This goes beyond current schedules to replace existing buses.

ATU recommends a strategic look at public bus transit. City, Transit and elected officials need to come together with business and community leaders to explore greater use of buses.

This planning approach, whether it include borough task forces and/or DOT/MTA driven planning group(s), can bring the aforementioned players, the bus operator unions, the riding public, community groups and our elected leaders together and press for the fixes, and more importantly, improvements.

ATU's strategic approach includes some basic needs and options which make sense:

- *restore remaining bus service cuts from 2010.
- *expand (all) bus service to operate 24 hours.
- *introduce express bus service in Southeast Queens at the level that exists in Northeast Queens.
- *acquire more buses to deploy on existing, revised and new routes – a key component of any improvement plan.
- *identify any need for new bus terminals – downtown Flushing plagued by congestion and related issues – remains a prime candidate.
- *identify bus depots which need repair or replacement and schedule such.
- *address congestion on local bus lines particularly during rush hours.

Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Advocate Bus Service Improvements; Testimony to City Council Committee on Transportation, Thursday, October 6, 2016, page four

*deploy more buses to meet service needs during rush hours; this includes starting some buses further along a route to allow more riders get a timely ride.

*institute off-bus fare collection not just for SBS.

*looking at dedicated bus lanes for local and limited bus routes such as enjoyed in one borough, with proper enforcement.

*implement free transfers between commuter rail and bus public transit, as currently exist between buses and subways and local and express buses..]

*charge the entity looking at BQX – “the rail to nowhere” – to also review linking the waterfront neighborhoods via buses, which can occur almost instantaneously.

A city which puts a premium not only on planning but engaging the community ought to embrace this holistic approach to ensuring improved bus service.

Bottom line, improving bus service offers a quick, simple and strategic path to effectively upgrading public transit infrastructure, including in Queens.

If this hearing can help direct attention to better use of buses, providing more buses and service, greater progress on depots and identifying needed bus terminal sites, it helps the cause and benefits so many New Yorkers including those who live in those transportation deserts.

Thank you.



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*Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1179, 214-53 Jamaica Avenue, Queens Village NY 11428 * (718) 736-1179*

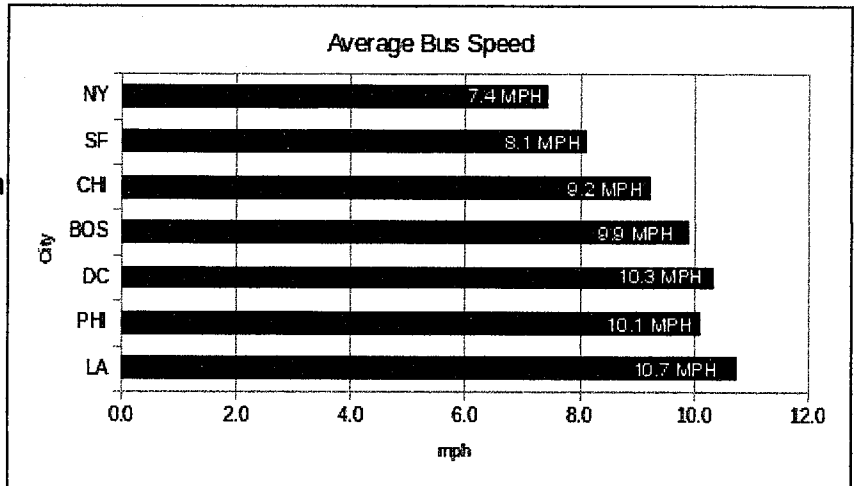
For more information: Corey Bearak, ATU 1056 & 1179 Policy & Political Director, (718) 343-6779/ (516) 343-6207

NYC Bus Service Is Better Than Advertised

by Stephen Bauman, sbauman@abt.net

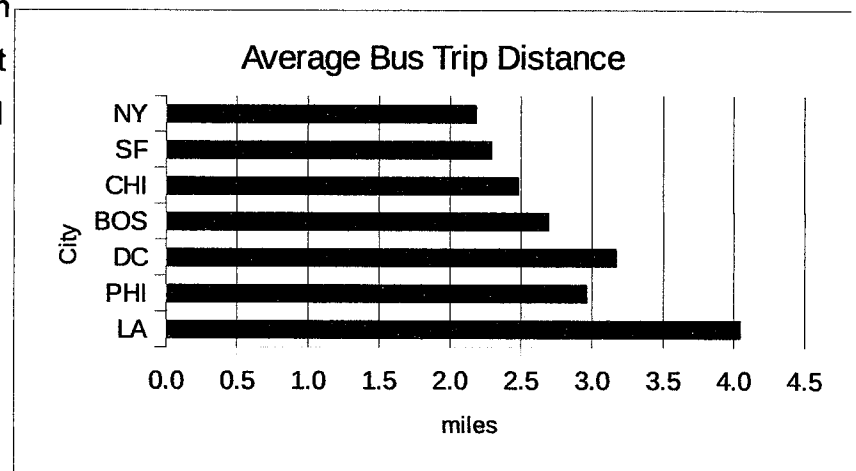
Bus service in New York City is better than advertised. Its critics are basing their assessment and their "improvements" on a single parameter – average bus speed. Emphasizing this single parameter, ignores how New Yorkers use buses. Some of the recommendations would result in longer average trips.

The conventional analysis starts with determining average bus speeds in 7 cities from data in the National Transit Database (NTD). The results are shown at the right. The NTD does not directly list average vehicle speed. It's derived by dividing the yearly total vehicle scheduled miles by the yearly total vehicle scheduled hours. It's a valid computation to derive average speed.

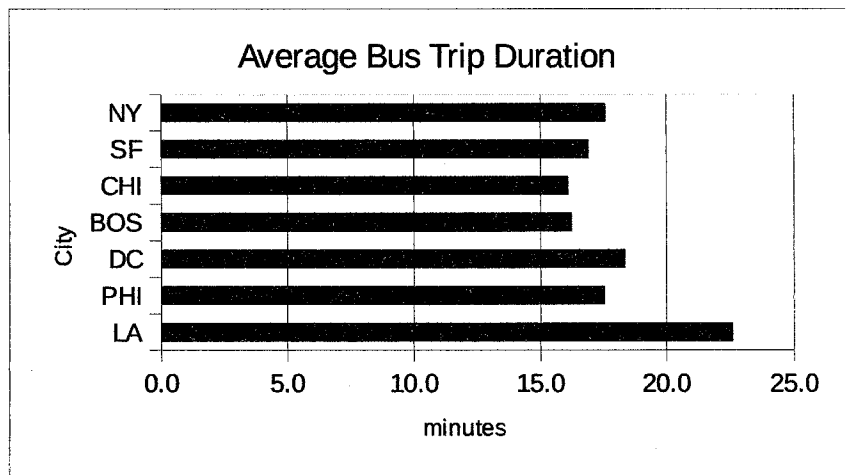


The obvious result is that NYC buses fall dead last at 7.4 mph vs. 10.7, 10.1, 10.3, 9.9, 9.2 and 8.1 for Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Washington, Boston, Chicago and San Francisco, respectively.

New York City has a vast subway system that these other cities lack. Longer bus trips taken in these other cities would be taken by subway in New York City. The NTD confirms this. It lists the number of passenger miles and the number of passenger trips. Dividing the former by the latter results in the average length for each bus trip in miles. The results for these cities is shown on the right. Not surprisingly, NYC bus trips average only 2.2 miles vs. 4.0 for Los Angeles.



The average New Yorker isn't interested in how fast or how far a bus trip is. He is interested in how long the trip will take. The average trip duration can be calculated by dividing the average trip length by the average trip speed. The results are shown on the right. The average trip duration lies between 18.4 minutes for Washington to 16.1 minutes for Chicago. Los Angeles is the outlier with an average bus trip taking 22.6 minutes. NYC comes in at 17.6 minutes.



These results aren't as dire as the overhaul proponents proclaim.

Improving the average trip time by only 1.5 New York minutes (90 seconds) is what's required to make an average trip shorter than Chicago's.

Two factors have not been considered. These are how far a person must walk to/from the bus stop and how long one must wait for the bus. The NTD does not provide this data. These missing trip duration components will probably swamp the 90 second trip duration reduction.

One "solution" to making bus trips quicker is to reduce the number of stops. There's a problem because it takes 1 minute to walk each extra block added to/from the bus stop. This problem can be documented by the table on the right. This data was derived from the GTFS schedule for a typical Wednesday, September 21, 2016. It shows the number of stops per mile and average

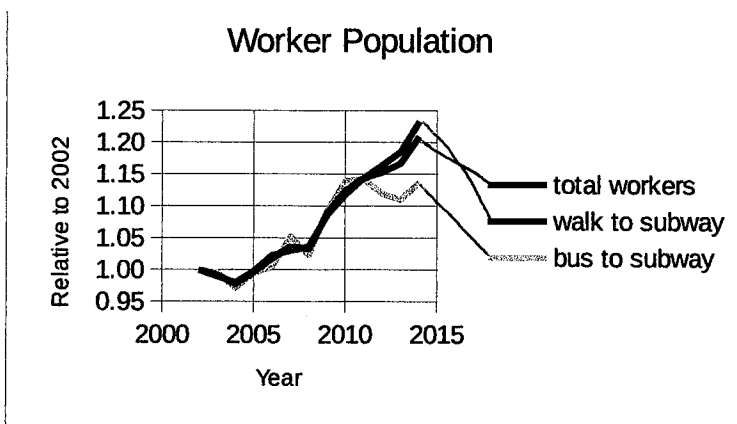
	Stops	Trips	Distance	Duration (hrs)	Average Speed (MPH)	Average Stops per Mile	Avg miles per stop	Average Trip Duration	Avg Walk To/From Stop	Trip Time
LOC	1,505,244	35,858	219,565.6	28,631.2	7.7	6.7	0.15	17.2	3.0	20.2
LTD	95,799	2,904	23,080.2	2,960.8	7.8	4.0	0.25	16.9	5.0	21.9
SBS	59,803	3,307	24,681.7	2,540.4	9.7	2.3	0.44	13.6	8.7	22.3

scheduled speed for 3 local bus types: locals; limiteds and SBS. The average time to walk at 3 mph to/from the bus stop is calculated as well as the running time for the average 2.2 mile trip. The surprising result is that the local bus provides the shortest to/from journey, excluding waiting time.

One anomaly since 2002 is that bus patronage has decreased 16% while population and subway use have increased by 5.7 and 24.7%, respectively. There should be no mystery. Population (and job growth) has not been uniform throughout the City. The favored neighborhoods have been those that are within walking distance to subways. This is difficult to directly show because census data is

available at 10 year intervals and the yearly Census American Community Survey (ACS) data is not broken down to census blocks.

There is an indirect way to estimate population yearly changes down to the census block level. The Census Longitudinal Employment-Household Dynamics (LEHD) data shows household and employment census blocks jobs on a yearly basis. This data is not without problems in locating the employment address. However, the inference is there should be a strong correlation between the number of workers in a census block and the number of people living within it. The author has arbitrarily classified that worker living within ½ mile of a subway station is likely to walk to it. Those living further from a subway station are more likely to take a bus. The figure on the right shows the number of workers in these two categories between 2002 and 2014.



The data is normalized to 2002. It shows that total workers, those that walked to the subway and those that took a bus to the subway tracked from 2002 to 2011. After 2011, the total number of workers and those who lived within walking distance of a subway continued to increase at the same rate. However, the number of workers who had to take a bus to the subway declined in the 2011 to 2014 period. To the extent that the LEHD data reflects bus travel demand, the recent decline in bus ridership is due to population shifts.

The transportation model proposed in Bloomberg's PlaNYC froze subway expansion and proposed to make the existing terminal areas job hubs. Workers living beyond walking distance to these job hubs would take buses. The problem with this approach is that the streets are already clogged with buses around

Rank	Subway Stop Id	Stop Name	# Of Bus Trips
1	G05	Jamaica Center - Parsons/Archer	9,195
2	F03	Parsons Blvd	9,050
3	G06	Sutphin Blvd - Archer Av - JFK Airport	7,320
4	233	Hoyt St	7,265
5	A42	Hoyt - Schermerhorn Sts	7,245
6	R30	DeKalb Av	7,230
7	R29	Jay St - MetroTech	7,189
8	A41	Jay St - MetroTech	7,189
9	232	Borough Hall	7,138
10	234	Nevins St	7,086

the subway terminals. The daily number of buses within ½ mile of some subway stations exceeds 7000 per day. That's half the number of buses that daily use the Port Authority Bus Terminal. The table at the right shows the number of buses that were scheduled to stop within ½ mile of the top 10

busiest subway stops. Not a single stop is in Manhattan. Jamaica is the busiest area with approximately 9000 buses per day stopping near Jamaica Center and Parsons/Hillside stops.

These areas are maxed out insofar as bus traffic is concerned. The "walking pace" bus speeds in these areas is primarily due to excessive bus density.

The short average bus trip suggests that mobility would be best solved by finding alternate transportation modes rather than increasing existing bus service. According to Citibike trip data, bicycling is the fastest transportation mode for distances up to 2 miles. Approximately, 19% or 1.5 million residents live between 0.5 and 2 miles from a subway stop. Most of these people live outside the current or planned bike share areas.

Another 6% or ½ million people live more than 2 miles from a subway stop. The terminals are already clogged with feeder buses. Their only alternative is to expand the subway towards them. If subway expansion is directed towards areas that are more than 2 miles distant, two things will be accomplished. First, those living less than 2 miles from a subway will find themselves within walking distance. Second, even if the subway expansion does not reach everyone, many now more than 2 miles from a stop will find themselves within bicycling distance.

The little subway expansion since World War II has concentrated on improving service to already served areas. This is true of the new Fulton St and South Ferry stations. Both projects were expensive and provided no additional service. The current and future Second Avenue Subway phases also fall into this category. Nobody in Manhattan currently lives further than 2 miles from a subway stop. 97% already live within ½ mile of a subway stop. The 1929 and 1939 Second Avenue Subway plans were a misnomer. Most of the track miles were in the outer boroughs and served areas beyond the existing (and current) limit of subway service. It was really a Brooklyn and Queens subway expansion.

New York City is now paying the piper for not following through on plans to place a subway stop within walking distance for every city resident. There have been diversions of funds and energy towards other projects. Trying to plug the mobility gap with so-called enhanced bus service is another such example.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 10-06-16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MICHAEL RIBOSH

Address: MTA

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Craig Cifsiaro

Address: _____

I represent: MTA

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sarah Wyss

Address: MTA

I represent: _____

Address: _____

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: KEVIN BRADY

Address: 752 HARRISON ST W. Hempstead NY 11552

I represent: ATU Local 1056

Address: 133-33 Brookville Blvd #112B
Rosedale, NY 11422

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☒ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: STEPHEN BAUMAN

Address: 13810 FRANKLIN AV FLUSHING

I represent: SELF

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 10/6/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JULIA KITE

Address: _____

I represent: Transportation Alternatives

Address: 111 John St., NY, NY 10038

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☒ in opposition

Date: 10/6/2016

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Terri Cude

Address: _____

I represent: Community Board 2 Manhattan

Address: 3 Washington Square Village

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☒ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ERIC Beaton

Address: Pir DOT Transit Development

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Polly Trottenborg

Address: Commissioner

I represent: DOT

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jeff Lynch

Address: Ass. Comm. Gov. + Comm Aff.

I represent: DOT Transit Develop

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 10/6/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Natasha Saunders

Address: 113-07 199th Street

I represent: Riders Alliance

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Shelba Kittara

Address: _____

I represent: Transportation Alternatives

Address: _____

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2

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Stephanie Veras

Address: _____

I represent: Riders Alliance

Address: _____

2

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Julia Martin

Address: _____

I represent: Riders Alliance Alternatives

Address: _____

2

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Stephanie Veras

Address: 93 61st Ave Bx 17 NYC NY

I represent: Riders Alliance

Address: 1212 1st Ave NYC NY 10031

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

1

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)
Name: Vincent Pellecchia

Address: Tri-State Transportation Campaign

I represent: Transit Center

Address: _____

1

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)
Name: Gene Rissignoff

Address: Center

I represent: Straphangers Campaign

Address: _____

1

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)
Name: Vincent Pellecchia

Address: _____

I represent: Tri-State Transportation Campaign

Address: _____

1

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jag Cohen

Address: 1234 5th Ave

I represent: Strophangers Campaign

Address: _____

1

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Wick Silfuentes

Address: 1234 5th Ave

I represent: Rodriguez Arkenheim Campaign

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Bernard Glick

Address: 1234 5th Ave

I represent: Riverside Council District

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Andrea Leslie

Address: 100 Banchley Place

I represent: Rumby Rd. J. D.

Address: 2049 Barton Rd.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Cory Beach

Address: _____

I represent: Amalgamated Transit Union

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kevin Brady

Address: _____

I represent: Amalgamated Transit Union

Address: Amalgamated Transit Union

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 10-5-16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kathleen TREAT

Address: 400 W 43 NYC 10036

I represent: Hell's Kitchen Neighborhood Ass'n

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

Name: Cory Bearak (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: ATU 1056 & 1179

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

sitting with
me: Kevin
Brady