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Res. No. 1213

Resolution calling upon the Metropolitan Transportation Authority to adopt a Subway Riders Bill of Rights.

By Council Members de Blasio, Liu, Felder, Brewer, Fidler, Gennaro, Gentile, Gonzalez, James, Sanders Jr., Seabrook, Stewart, White Jr., Gerson and Mendez

Whereas, The subway system is a critical part of New York City's infrastructure, economy, and quality of life that maintains the City's place as a world center of finance, commerce, culture and entertainment; and

Whereas, New Yorkers rely on the subway system to make approximately 4.2 million trips per day, according to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority ("MTA"); and

Whereas, Rider fares generate approximately 68.3% of subway system operating revenues, compared to a national average of 40% of operating revenues from such sources in other large transit systems, according to the New York Public Interest Research Group's Straphangers Campaign ("Straphangers Campaign"); and

Whereas, A subway system that relies so heavily on rider fees should be held more accountable for meeting the expectations of its riders; and

Whereas, The subway system exhibits numerous problems posing serious safety and quality of life implications for millions of New Yorkers, including deficient communication systems and inadequate levels and dependability of service; and

Whereas, The storm that struck New York City on August 8, 2007, caused numerous service disruptions that revealed failures in planning and response, as highlighted in a September 20, 2007 report issued by the MTA task force commissioned by Governor Eliot Spitzer (the “Storm Task Force”); and

Whereas, There exist significant deficiencies in the ability of subway officials to communicate with riders, including, according to The New York Times, the fact that 92 of the 468 subway stations lack a public address system, station agents are often expected to rely on primitive means of communication such as dry-erase boards and bullhorns to convey service advisories to passengers and are not always able to provide riders with information on alternative means of transportation during service interruptions, and subway system e-mail alerts can take up to 1.5 hours to be transmitted to recipients; and

Whereas, A February 2007 report released by the Straphangers Campaign found that approximately one in four payphones in New York City Transit stations do not fully work and Verizon’s current contract with the MTA does not require any minimum number of payphones be kept in working order; and

Whereas, Installation of cell phone service in all subway stations is expected to still be at least six years away, which combined with non-functional payphones in stations results in a diminished capacity for riders to remain in contact with the outside world; and

Whereas, Subway riders have voiced their service priorities and expectations as well as their dissatisfaction with the levels at which several of these expectations are being met in the annual subway system report cards assembled by MTA New York City Transit and the Straphangers Campaign; and

Whereas, Of the 22 rider report card results released by the MTA, riders gave four of the subway lines D-plus ratings and gave the remaining 18 lines grades of C or

C-minus, and indicated that top priorities for improvement included reasonable wait times for trains,

minimal delays during trips, adequate room on board, and improved clarity of station and train announcements; and

Whereas, The MTA has indicated its commitment to improving service and responding proactively to the recommendations of the Storm Task Force and subway riders, but lacks an overarching framework defining the common priorities of subway riders by which the MTA can be held accountable and its efforts assessed; and

Whereas, Subway riders deserve a bill of rights that will guarantee the right to fares that are affordable and attract riders to use mass transit; regular, on-time subway service; immediate and real-time notification of service changes and advisories available to passengers on platforms, in train cars, and via internet and text message with accurate information; accurate and user-friendly assistance for riders to find alternative means of transportation in situations where service is interrupted; trains and platforms that are kept clean; and working and understandable public address system on all platforms and in all trains, with in-car announcements alerting passengers to upcoming train stops and platform notifications telling riders how far away trains are; and

Whereas, A subway riders bill of rights should also guarantee well-trained, helpful station and train personnel to provide information and directions, as well as maintain a human presence in the subways; working payphones in all stations and access to cellular phone service while on platforms; an MTA website that is user-friendly and can support heavy traffic such as that which may be experienced during an emergency; and an environment as safe and secure as possible from crime and terrorism, with such features as a strong presence of uniformed police officers and bright lighting; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the Metropolitan Transportation Authority to adopt a Subway Riders Bill of Rights.

PH
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