



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 1316

By Council Members Freed, Eisland, Marshall, Nelson and Stabile; also Council Members Cruz, Foster, Harrison, Michels and Quinn

Resolution calling upon the appropriate committee of the City Council to hold an oversight hearing on the failure of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and its contractors to implement a satellite tracking system.

Whereas, Buses on heavily traveled New York City routes are notorious for failing to stay on schedule; and
Whereas, All too often the buses bunch causing some patrons to have long waits while others watch in dismay as two or three buses arrive simultaneously; and
Whereas, A satellite tracking system could allow New York City Transit Authority (NYCTA) management to track the location of buses at the Transit Command Center in Brooklyn; and
Whereas, A satellite tracking system depends on an unimpeded or "line of sight" connection with satellites, and a dead reckoning system that calculates the location of the bus based on certain assumptions when contact with the satellites is broken; and
Whereas, A satellite tracking system integrated with other bus systems including the speedometer, farebox, and maintenance records, could provide NYCTA with invaluable information about the length of time a bus dwells at a stop before moving and the passenger traffic at each stop; and
Whereas, This information would help the agency tailor bus routes and schedules to customer needs; and
Whereas, If NYCTA knew the location of its buses, it could install electronic signs to flash a message telling patrons when the next bus will arrive, and announce the next stop to passengers; and
Whereas, Baltimore has started its satellite tracking system, and about 50% of its buses are connected to the system
Whereas, The Metropolitan Atlanta Region Transportation Authority (MARTA) installed system in time for 1996 Olympic Games that were held in Atlanta; and
Whereas, MARTA has about one-third of its buses using the system with limited results because the dead reckoning system which calculates the distance and time a bus has traveled when contact with a satellite is broken performed poorly; and
Whereas, The tracking system was not integrated with the other electrical systems on its buses, nor were adequate provisions made for the maintenance of the system in the bus depots, and additional difficulties developed because of unanticipated problems from the burden placed on the radio system by the large amounts of information being constantly transmitted; and
Whereas, If NYCTA knew the location of its buses, management could take steps to coordinate the sequence of bus arrivals, avoid bunching and use the internet to tell patrons when the next bus would arrive at their stop; and
Whereas, The "Automated Vehicle Location System" contract with the Orbital Sciences Corporation is attempting to keep track of buses on some Manhattan routes using a combination of satellites and dead reckoning; and
Whereas, The New York Times on March 15, 2000 reported that buses must receive signals from at least three satellites in order for its position to be fixed, and skyscrapers either prevent the signals from reaching the bus or skew the reading by bouncing the signal; and
Whereas, The article, "Satellites Become Blind Eyes in the Sky Trying to Spot and Track Buses" by Randy Kennedy added that frequent traffic jams and detours for construction or emergency conditions conflict with the assumptions programmed into the alternative dead reckoning system that predicts bus movements; and
Whereas, While the global position system uses satellites and can pinpoint a bus location within 30 feet, according to The Times, the dead reckoning system has not been accurate within 120 feet as required by the contract; and
Whereas, Transit advocates have asked why Manhattan was chosen for a test of this system when the other boroughs don't present the same urban canyon effect problems; now, therefore, be it
Resolved that the appropriate committee of the City Council hold an oversight hearing on the failure of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and its contractors to implement a satellite tracking system.

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