

Mike Bloomberg's Plan to Reform Mass Transit

Service and Performance Improvements

RAIL

1. *Expand and Improve Service in Underserved Neighborhoods Via the Commuter Railroads-* The MTA's capital plan includes a number of important projects to expand subway service for the first time in several generations. Nevertheless, there are a number of communities, particularly in Queens and the Bronx, which will remain without adequate access to rail, despite the fact that commuter line tracks run through their neighborhoods.
 - *Expand CityTicket-* CityTicket, which the MTA introduced in 2004 at the City's urging, allows riders within the City to travel on Long Island Rail Road or Metro-North at a discount. However, this discount, which cuts commuter rail fares approximately in half, only applies to travel on weekends. In order to encourage mass transit, this program should be expanded, with the goal of serving all stations at all times. The MTA should conduct rider surveys to determine how much this would cost and work with the City and within its own plan to assess the feasibility of funding. Expanding CityTicket would benefit tens of thousands of Bronx and Queens riders, including Queens residents living in **Long Island City, Far Rockaway, and Hunters Point**, which the mayor is working to transform into a new middle class neighborhood, whose stations are currently not covered by the program, as well as residents of **Eastern Queens** and the **Northern Bronx** that lack adequate transit options and face lengthy commutes every day.¹
 - *Reopen Existing LIRR Stations in Queens-* A series of Long Island Rail Road stations in Queens have been closed, despite the fact that the trains continue to run along the adjoining track, thereby depriving New York City residents of an additional mass transportation option in areas that are underserved. The MTA should reopen stations in **Glendale, Richmond Hill** and **Elmhurst** to serve Queens residents via the expanded CityTicket program. The MTA should also work with community leaders to reduce noise coming from these stations so as not to unduly disturb local residents and businesses.

¹ Expanding CityTicket to weekdays will also directly benefit the following currently-served neighborhoods: Woodside, Corona, Flushing, Murray Hill, Auburndale, Bayside, Douglaston, Little Neck, Forest Hills, Kew Gardens, Jamaica, Hollis, Queens Village, St. Albans, Locust Manor, Laurelton, and Rosedale in Queens; East New York, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Prospect Heights, and Boerum Hill in Brooklyn; Morris Heights, University Heights, Marble Hill, Spuyten-Duyvil, Riverdale, Melrose, Tremont, Fordham, Bedford Park, Williamsbridge, Woodlawn, and Wakefield in the Bronx. Many of these neighborhoods currently lack subway access or sufficient bus service.

2. *Fix Stations More Efficiently and Cost Effectively to Ensure Existing Stations Are in State of Good Repair* – Though expanding the city’s mass transportation network is important, it is critical for the existing infrastructure to be kept in a state of good repair. The MTA has repeatedly included comprehensive top-to-bottom station renovations in its capital plan, only to cut these renovations when the agency inevitably runs out of capital funding. Through responsible capital budgeting (see below) and expanding and accelerating the agency’s component program, in which the agency hires an outside contractor to fix specific parts of a large group of stations, while downsizing the number of top-to-bottom renovations, the system could save \$630 million over 7 years while providing riders with better stations where problems are fixed more quickly.
3. *Reinstitute F Line Express Service*- A set of express tracks currently lies unused on the F line, while the V line terminates at 2nd Avenue in Manhattan. As a result, V trains are underutilized, while F trains are overcrowded. After completing repairs to the Culver Viaduct, the MTA should restore express service on the F line and extend the V line out to Brooklyn, where it should make local stops along the F line. This will have the combined benefits of shorter commute times and less crowded trains for Brooklyn commuters. The MTA should also work with community leaders in Kensington and Windsor Terrace to ensure that this new service does not cause significant track vibration that unduly disturbs local residents and businesses.
4. *Reopen the Staten Island North Shore Alignment*- Staten Island, which remains the city’s fastest growing borough with increasingly traffic-choked streets, remains unconnected to the subway system and has only a single above ground rail line. Along the North Shore, a 5.1 mile abandoned rail line linking directly to the St. George Ferry Terminal has remained unused for over 50 years. Leveraging federal dollars, the MTA should either reopen this rail line or use this infrastructure to provide other transit service to Staten Islanders in the growing neighborhoods of **New Brighton, West Brighton, Randall Manor, Port Richmond, Elm Park and Mariners Harbor**.
5. *Pilot Light Rail or Street Car Service in Brooklyn and Western Queens Waterfront Neighborhoods*- Many neighborhoods throughout the city – and particularly along the waterfront – have existing, dormant trolley tracks running throughout their streets. The City’s Department of Transportation is exploring creating new streetcar service in **Red Hook** and will consider opportunities for creating new light rail or streetcar service in other Brooklyn waterfront and western Queens communities.
6. *Provide Subway Riders with Time Notifications* -- Transportation systems in cities around the world, like London and Washington D.C., include countdown clocks in their stations to give riders better information about their commute every day. Currently, only L Train passengers are notified about how long it will take the next subway to arrive at their station. Other lines have countdown clocks, but due to problems with the contractor and technology, they remain wrapped in plastic and cardboard. The MTA should quickly move to get these existing countdown clocks up and running within a year and explore the use of mesh network technology for other subway lines, which could provide cost-effective tracking technology.

7. *Expand Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Select Bus Service (SBS)*- New York City has the largest bus fleet and network in the nation. It also has the slowest riding times. Partnering with the MTA, the City has spearheaded the introduction of Select Bus Service along **Fordham Road** in the Bronx. The initiative has been successful. Ridership is up and travel time is down. BRT/SBS could be implemented along 5 routes by 2013, including along traffic clogged and underserved corridors in all five boroughs, such as **1st and 2nd Avenues** in Manhattan, providing East Side residents with faster transportation service long before the Second Avenue Subway makes its first run.
8. *Provide Commuter Van Service to Neighborhoods Where Transit Service Fails to Meet the Community's Needs*- New Yorkers in many neighborhoods, particularly carless New Yorkers, may wish to use mass transportation but find it difficult to do so. This particularly impacts residents from areas where current transit links to mass transit are limited, areas where new transit demands do not match available transit options (i.e. traveling between two boroughs without going through Manhattan) and places where recent development has led to overcrowding on the existing transit system. While adding new MTA bus lines or additional buses may not be a cost-effective solution, commuter vans or for-hire livery vehicles can provide effective affordable alternatives. To help residents of these neighborhoods, the City will enter into agreements with private sector operators to provide specific services along defined routes. The City will pilot this system in **Co-op City** and **Bayside**.
9. *Use Smaller Buses to Service Existing Routes During Less Crowded Periods*- The MTA has wisely utilized accordion buses to provide service on extremely popular routes. The Authority is also exploring the use of double-deckers buses as a way to accommodate even more passengers. The MTA should accelerate the consideration of larger buses, as well as the inverse of this option: smaller and more fuel-efficient vehicles, which could be used at night, when there are fewer riders. Such vehicles would allow the Authority to realize savings that could be re-allocated towards providing more frequent service, so that riders will not have to wait alone for long periods at bus stops at night.
10. *Provide Free Crosstown Buses on Select Routes*- A primary reason why the MTA's bus service is so slow is due to the time it takes for riders to board the bus and pay their fare. This problem is particularly acute for Manhattan crosstown buses, which also have to navigate extraordinarily congested streets. However, the overwhelming majority of the riders on many of the City's crosstown buses, such as the M34, M42 and the M50, have or will take the subway or another bus, meaning the MTA does not gain any additional revenue from these riders, as the system provides free transfers. The MTA should eliminate fare collection on some of these crosstown buses, starting with the M50. Any loss in revenue will likely be offset by the gain in travel times, which may reduce operating costs by allowing the Authority to run fewer buses. Should such a program prove successful, the Authority should expand it to other appropriate crosstown routes, along with routes in **Jamaica**, where a similar dynamic occurs.
11. *Provide 50% of City Bus Routes with Tracking Technology by 2013*- Partnering with the MTA, the City's Department of Transportation is piloting the use of this technology as part of the various improvements they are making to service along 34th Street. Buses

along this road will use mesh network technology, similar to that used to track military vehicles in Iraq and Afghanistan. This inexpensive technology should be implemented on half of the MTA's bus routes by 2013.

12. *Provide Cheaper, Safer, Better Transportation for ParaTransit Riders-* The MTA provides ParaTransit services via its Access-A-Ride program. On average, each ride now costs approximately \$60 and 80% of these riders are not in wheelchairs. By contrast, equivalent taxi or livery cab rides cost approximately \$20. If approximately 50% of ParaTransit riders were shifted to taxis or livery cabs, there could be a cost savings of approximately \$50 million per year, while at the same time providing ParaTransit riders with a more personalized, more efficient and more responsive service. The City will work with the MTA to utilize taxis and livery cabs more efficiently to provide better service to seniors.

In addition, the City has released a Request for Expression of Interest regarding designs of green fully wheelchair accessible taxis so that more physically handicapped riders can utilize yellow taxi services. The City will continue to spearhead the development of these taxis.

ROAD

13. *Install Open Road/Gateless Tolling at the MTA Bridges and Tunnels That Currently Impose Tolls-* The entry points to the various MTA bridges and tunnels are often marked by large traffic back-ups that waste drivers' time and pollute the air of the nearby waterfront neighborhoods in **Western and Northeast Queens, South and East Bronx, North Brooklyn, Northern Manhattan** and the **East Shore of Staten Island**. By instituting open road or gate less tolling, as the Garden State Parkway and Port Authority have already done at numerous locations, these traffic problems could be alleviated, cutting travel times and limiting local air pollution.
14. *Create an HOV Lane on Westbound Gowanus Expressway-* Express buses traveling into Manhattan on the Gowanus Expressway use an HOV lane, which dramatically reduces travel time. Unfortunately, there is no westbound HOV lane. As a result, travel time for Staten Island and South Brooklyn residents on commutes home often last far longer. To alleviate this congestion and speed commutes for buses and carpoolers, the City will work with the State Department of Transportation, which runs the Gowanus, to create an HOV lane. This would significantly cut travel times for commuters from **Staten Island, Bay Ridge, Bath Beach, Bensonhurst, Sea Gate and Coney Island**.

FERRY

15. *Expand Ferry Network and Link to Transit System-* The City will create robust inter-boro ferry service along the East River. Service will launch to improved piers at Wall Street and 34th Street from existing facilities in **Long Island City** and **South Williamsburg**. Service will also be provided from new piers being constructed in **Greenpoint** and **North Williamsburg**. The City will also work with the MTA and private ferry companies to enable ferry passengers to use their MetroCards for ferries and newly connecting bus service, which will enable direct from ferry-bus connections.

In addition, the City will continue to explore, in collaboration with community groups and local elected officials, creating fast ferry service for the **South Shore of Staten Island**. The Mayor's Staten Island Transportation Task Force has studied the issue and identified a number of challenges – including the significant cost of the service for ferry riders and difficulties in finding a suitable location. The City will continue to work to overcome these obstacles, while at the same time spearheading a number of efforts designed to speed express bus commutes.

Safety, Security and Quality of Life Improvements

1. *Improve Safety and Security*- The MTA has not taken all of the steps necessary to ensure that the city's mass transportation network is as safe and secure as possible. Whether it is the Authority's failed partnership with Lockheed Martin to install security cameras or its cursory disbanding of an emergency response team, the Authority has made mistakes that have left the city transit system vulnerable. The MTA should give the NYPD full responsibility over securing the entire transit system, including communications and surveillance technology.
2. *Crack Down on Quality of Life Nuisances in Subways*- The NYPD is in charge of policing the mass transit system. Over the last eight years, the City has made important gains in keeping subways safe, with crime dropping by 42% since Fiscal Year 2001. Nevertheless, on its own, the MTA should do more to crack down on quality of life nuisances in the subway system. The MTA should apply the models of the City's myriad quality of life programs, such as Operation Scorecard and SCOUT, to the transit system to maintain cleanliness and eliminate quality of life crimes and nuisances in the system. Information regarding these new initiatives should be posted online so that transit riders can access it.
3. *Utilize Public-Private Partnerships to Maintain Station Cleanliness*- The City's Business Improvement District program, in which neighborhood commercial districts play a greater role in promoting business development and improving quality of life, has been successful in improving neighborhoods throughout the city. New York and other states across the nation have created Adopt-A-Highway programs. In a limited number of cases where subway station entrances are located within or directly below a private building, the private sector is required to help clean and maintain the entrance. However, no such program exists for all of the other locations, despite the fact that the MTA's own Rider's Council has called for the creation of such a program.ⁱ The MTA should create public-private partnerships or expand existing partnerships with local businesses around subway stations to improve the cleanliness in and around subway stations.

Cost Cutting and Management Reforms

1. *Merge Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North Administrative Functions*- The duplication in functions between these two functionally similar entities, particularly in the

administrative labor force, should be eliminated. Both Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North currently have over 750 administrators. By merging these two railroads and eliminating approximately 75% of the functional overlap between the two bureaucracies, the MTA could save approximately \$50 million per year.

2. *Further Streamline Procurement to Cut Costs-* The MTA has made some efforts to streamline procurement through its Business Service Center. However, the agency does not expect to yield any savings from this effort until 2012, when it expects to save \$29 million. The MTA should further accelerate this streamlining of procurement, as it should not take years to achieve modest savings in a bureaucracy the size of the MTA.
3. *Right-size the MTA's Capital Divisions to Eliminate Redundancies-* Formed in 2003 as a part of a reorganization of the Authority, the MTA Capital Construction Company, which is in charge of spearheading construction of the MTA's major projects, has dramatically grown in size. Meanwhile, the individual agencies within the MTA still maintain their own capital divisions, creating unnecessary duplication. This duplication has not led to better results: each of the major MTA-funded projectsⁱⁱ, East Side Access, Second Avenue Subway and Fulton Street Station have been marred by repeated delays, exorbitant cost overruns and myriad mistakes. Eliminating these duplications and streamlining the MTA's overall capital bureaucracy could save \$50 million in the 5-year capital plan.
4. *Reduce the Number of MTA Properties by Terminating Unnecessary Leases-* The MTA owns or leases approximately 5000 properties in the city. One of these properties in particular is grossly underutilized. 370 Jay Street in Downtown Brooklyn, which the City leases to the MTA at a discount, has sat largely empty for years. At the same time, the MTA pays market rate for rents in other office buildings. This ineffective use of real estate both costs the MTA money and negatively impacts certain neighborhoods. The MTA should set a target to reduce leasing costs by 10% of the \$44 million lease budget, saving the transit system nearly \$5 million per year. 370 Jay Street should be returned to the City and sold for private development in **Downtown Brooklyn**. The sale could yield as much as \$50 million at sale and additional annual tax revenue.
5. *Reform Capital Budget Process by Setting up a Separate Fund for Debt Service and Instituting Rolling 5-year Capital Budget Plans-* The MTA "bailout" that was agreed to in May failed to adequately provide for the MTA's capital plan. Yet the problem does not start or end with the bailout's lack of adequate capital funds. The MTA's budget process and structure creates incentives to spend all of the capital money immediately. Not only does this lead to the capital plan being essentially defunct by the third or fourth year, but it also creates further stress on the operating budget. By setting up a separate fund for debt service and instituting rolling 5-year capital plans, the MTA would be able to budget more appropriately and prioritize capital spending. Most importantly, reforming the MTA's budget process would help restore the public's trust in the Authority.
6. *Combine MTA Bus and NYC Transit Bus Operations-* The MTA Bus Company was created in September 2004 to assume the operations of seven bus companies that operated under franchises granted by the City's Department of Transportation. NYC Transit also includes both subway and bus operations. The President of MTA Bus, who has worked to begin combining the two entities, runs the bus operation of NYC Transit. The MTA

should continue to fully integrate MTA Bus within NYC Transit, including by focusing on labor work rules and pension requirements that, if reformed, would create operational savings and synergies.ⁱⁱⁱ

7. *Establish a Chief Technology Officer*- Much of the MTA's subway infrastructure was built 75 years ago and upgrading the technology, even under the best of circumstances, is an enormous task. Unfortunately, the MTA lacks a single office that is exclusively dedicated to this task. As a result, the Authority constantly lags in adopting technologies that have been in other systems for years; those technology upgrades and improvements it does attempt to make are consistently scuttled by poor planning, cost overruns, bidding problems, and other failures. The MTA should create an Information Technology department and appoint a Chief Technology Officer responsible for overseeing and upgrading the technology for the entire system. The CTO should be responsible for developing and implementing a technology plan.
8. *Alter Track Worker Schedules to Achieve Cost Savings and Fix Tracks More Efficiently*- New York City's 24/7 subway system creates significant challenges for scheduling needed repairs to active subway tracks. As a result of union work rules, MTA safety rules, and operating time schedules, track workers often cannot perform their work during their scheduled shifts. Thus, the MTA ends up paying workers during periods when they cannot work, and then also paying expensive overtime to get necessary track repairs completed. The MTA has recently conducted a pilot program to schedule workers more efficiently. The MTA should expand this pilot program and adopt a track worker schedule that will allow for more efficient, timely track repairs. One transit expert estimates that this reform could save the system tens of millions of dollars per year.^{iv} At the very least, it should allow the MTA to save approximately \$12 million in overtime.
9. *Enforce Labor Agreements to Require Workers to Contribute to Health Care Costs*- Following the illegal 2005 transit strike, the MTA and the union agreed to a deal whereby union workers would pay a small – less than 2%--portion of their salary for health benefits. The *Daily News* has recently uncovered the fact that the MTA failed to seek the full contractually agreed upon increase.^v The MTA auditor general estimates the lost revenue was \$1 million last year and could rise to about \$4 million by the end of this year.^{vi} The MTA should immediately seek the maximum health care contribution allowed under the existing labor agreements. Moreover, the MTA should work with labor unions to reduce health care costs, similar to the manner in which the City has negotiated with the Municipal Labor Committee to achieve a deal that will save the City \$200 million this fiscal year.
10. *Create TransitSTAT*- While it does publish a great deal of financial information in one location and releases performance data on a monthly basis to members of the Board and to the limited amount of people who attend meetings, the MTA posts little to no consolidated information in an accessible manner to the general public regarding how well it performs its essential purpose: moving riders throughout the City and region. Though New York City Transit has taken steps towards surveying the public through its Rider Report Card, and each agency produces monthly indicators, much more can be done. The MTA should create a dynamic and easily accessible regularly updated website, similar to the City's Citywide Performance Reports, where the public can view

information regarding critical indices, including on-time performance and ridership levels.

11. *Increase Oversight of Contracting Process*- The MTA must reform its contracting process. Too often, MTA contracts lead to litigation (e.g., Lockheed Martin contract) or allegations of fraud and criminality (e.g., 2 Broadway), rather than better results for riders. The MTA should adopt a system similar to the City's "Vendex" system, which requires all contractors and subcontractors on public contracts to undergo thorough vetting before being awarded a job, including by an outside entity. Moreover, the City offers a website that provides detailed information about vendors that do business with the City of New York and their principals. The MTA should create a similar site.

Planning Improvements

1. *Link Economic Development, Urban Planning, and Mass Transit* - Consistent with the fundamental purpose of PlaNYC, the City's transit system and economic development proposals should work in tandem with a clear set agenda. New development should focus around building key neighborhood resources – supermarkets, schools, community centers and other critical facilities – around key subway and bus stops. Many of the development projects the mayor has spearheaded where increasing scale has been a priority, such as Downtown Brooklyn or Coney Island, have been centered around existing transit hubs. The MTA should continue to work with City economic development officials to use transit-oriented development principles more effectively.

For example, in **Flushing**, the City will leverage federal funding to convert an underutilized municipal lot near several bus line stops and the Main Street stops of the LIRR's Port Washington branch and the #7 subway line into a transit-oriented development. The new development will feature 400 units of affordable housing, including 150 units of senior housing, along with commercial and retail space, and parking.

Innovations and Savings for Customers

1. *Create Integrated New York Transit Card*- In 1997, Hong Kong unveiled the Octopus card, a rechargeable contact-less stored value smart card used to transfer electronic payments in online or offline systems in Hong Kong. It has since grown into the payment system for all public transit in Hong Kong, as well as convenience stores, supermarkets, fast-food restaurants, parking meters and other locations. London's Oyster Card – the creation of which Jay Walder spearheaded – operates in a similar fashion. New York has lagged in this technology; a limited version of it will not be in use until, at best, 2011. A new Chief Technology Officer should expedite this process, as this technology has the potential to enable the MTA to cut costs significantly and potentially raise new revenue if the cards were used for non-transit purchases.

2. *Expand Use of Pre-Tax Commuter Benefit Programs-* TransitChek and the premium MetroCard Programs can save riders up to hundreds of dollars per year. Unfortunately, too few workers and too few employers currently sign up for them. A comprehensive awareness campaign should be undertaken with public, private and nonprofit sector employers and freelancers to encourage riders to sign up for the programs.
3. *Make 311 City Mass Transit Hotline-* 311 has transformed City government and provided New Yorkers with more access to information than ever before. The MTA, by contrast, has more than 20 phone numbers for subway, bus and MetroCard related inquiries and the MTA's website lists more than 60 "Useful Phone Numbers", each for specific inquiry types and with varying hours of operation. In addition, the caller experience when using the MTA's customer service line is frequently marred by long wait times, problems with the Interactive Voice Response technology, and inadvertent disconnections. 311, which already fields nearly 400,000 MTA-related inquiries per year, should become the sole phone number for New York City mass transit riders seeking information.

ⁱ Sewell Chan, "MTA Study Confirms that Stations are Dirty", THE NEW YORK TIMES, Aug. 7, 2008.

ⁱⁱ The construction of the #7 Line extension is also overseen by this agency, though funded by the City.

ⁱⁱⁱ In 2005, one transit expert estimated that a full integration of the three bus operations within the MTA – NYCT's bus service, MTA Bus, and Long Island Bus – would yield \$210 million in savings. See Nicole Gelinias, "How to Save the Subways – Before It's Too Late," CITY JOURNAL, Spring 2005.

^{iv} See Nicole Gelinias, "Transit for Tomorrow," CITY JOURNAL, 2009 Special Issue.

^v Pete Donohue, "MTA workers get health care break worth about \$1 million" NEW YORK DAILY NEWS, July 21, 2009.

^{vi} Pete Donohue, "Ex-boss Peter Kalikow rips MTA freeze on health care premiums" NEW YORK DAILY NEWS, July 22, 2009.