

New York City Transit Riders Council

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SURVEY SHOWS MORE THAN HALF OF NEW BUS STOP SIGNPOSTS ARE NOT USEFUL TO RIDERS

The New York City Transit Riders Council (TRC) today released "Destination: Unknown", the results of a survey of new bus stop signage, which shows that NYC Transit's and NYCDOT's newly redesigned bus stop signs are frequently unhelpful or inaccurate.

The Council checked 286 randomly selected signposts across the five boroughs, and found problems at 59% of them. Signposts in Brooklyn fared the worst, with 22% of destination panels missing and 18% of location panels missing. In Manhattan, 14% of Limited route panels were incorrectly color-coded, and widespread inaccuracies were found in the destination information listed for many Manhattan routes. Across the city, 40% of signposts contained inaccurate Guide-A-Rides or were missing them entirely. Several signposts were also found installed in wrong locations, including blocking street signs, emergency information signs, and traffic signals, and too close to trees.

The Council also discovered that the policies used by NYC Transit to decide what information goes on the signpost panels are inadequate and unhelpful to riders. Destinations are only listed as neighborhoods on the signpost panels, instead of as street intersections, so riders cannot tell exactly where a bus is going without the aid of a map. The signposts also do not tell riders the Hours of Operation for Limited and Express routes, which is very confusing because such routes operate only during specific times and sometimes make different stops at different times of day.

The idea for the new signposts came about in 1994, when NYC Transit and NYCDOT received Federal grants to redesign New York City's bus stop signage. Over the past 2 years, these new signs--taller with more information on them--have appeared at more than 2,500 bus stops throughout the city, including all bus stops in Manhattan. NYC Transit is responsible for the information which goes on the signs. NYCDOT is responsible for installation. Since the new signposts were installed, the TRC has identified many errors and inadequacies on them, and has received numerous complaints from the public about them. Therefore, the Council decided to perform the survey which it is releasing today. While the Council thinks the new signposts were a good idea, its findings show that NYC Transit and NYCDOT can do much better.

The Council held its press conference at the bus stop located at 18th Street and Avenue of the Americas in Manhattan, which is a prime example of inadequate signage. The

signpost at the stop is incorrectly located almost half a block away from the bus shelter where riders actually board, and is almost invisible from the shelter. The destination panels on the signpost list only neighborhoods, so riders cannot tell exactly where the buses which serve the stop are going to end up. There is also no way to tell from the sign panels that the M5 route only serves this stop evenings and weekends.

Transit Riders Council Chair Andrew Albert called on NYC Transit and NYCDOT to work towards making the signposts more useful to riders. "New York City's new bus stop signs are a classic case of missed opportunities. While the design is better than the old signs, the lack of adequate and correct information is often bewildering to New Yorkers, much less to tourists. We call on NYC Transit to consult with riders advocacy groups as well as the average rider to learn what information is vital to users of the system, and to immediately correct the errors which we list in our survey. We further call on NYCDOT to ensure that in the future it installs signposts in their correct locations without obstructing other street signage."

Copies of the full report are available upon request.

The TRC was created in 1981 by the New York State Legislature to represent the interests of subway and bus riders. The 15 volunteer members are appointed by the Governor upon the recommendation of the Mayor (5) the Public Advocate (5), and the Borough Presidents (1 each).