

New York City Transit Riders Council
Chair's Report
February 27, 2014

As the MTA announced this week, the BusTime system will go live for Brooklyn and Queens routes starting March 9, which will mean that information on all NYC Transit and MTA Bus routes will be available to riders for the first time. This information is available in real time on smart phones, on the web, and by text message. BusTime is also the basis of an internal bus tracking system that will be used by NYC Transit to improve bus performance and will eventually lead to bus service being managed from a central command center, similar to transit's rail control center. Unfortunately, to use BusTime a rider has to have a text or internet capable mobile phone or other internet access. A bus countdown clock that informs riders the location of the next bus in number of stops away is currently being pilot tested in two locations on Staten Island.

You may have noticed the newly installed On the Go touchscreen displays that are rolling out on subway platforms and in stations. Eventually, these displays will replace the large system maps that have graced subway station platforms for many years. The rollout of the new equipment was expected to occur about six months ago, but experience with prototype units caused the Control Group, which is installing 90 units in this pilot phase, to redesign the hardware and user interface to meet the challenges of making this equipment work in the subway environment. For example, the original touch screen that was used is affected by vibration, which of course is common in the subways as trains enter and depart stations.

There are a number of units installed in Grand Central, both near the Shuttle and on the Lexington Line platforms. Please take a few minutes to try out the displays so that we can provide input on these pilot phase units before On the Go rolls out systemwide. Please keep in mind as you try out the display units that they must be usable by a very wide range of riders, as they are planned to replace system maps and be a primary source of information in the subway system.

NYC Transit has made some changes to the newly established B44 SBS and the parallel B44 local route in response to the comments of elected officials and Brooklyn Bus riders. This spring, SBS stops will be added at Avenue L and Gates Avenue. The exact date for these additions will depend on weather and the ability of the NYC Department of Transportation to install necessary infrastructure at these new stops.

Also, in response to reports of overcrowding on the B44 local bus following the launch of the SBS service, effective February 3 NYC Transit added two local bus trips per hour in the morning peak hours and one trip per hour from the end of the morning peak through the midday period. On February 10, Chris Greif attended a press event with Council Member Jumaane Williams celebrating the additional stops and service and informing the community about the coming changes. In April, NYC Transit will make changes to its schedules so that at most times during the day riders will be able to travel the entire B44 route from the Williamsburg Bridge Plaza to Sheepshead Bay without making a transfer.

MTA Capital Construction has announced completion times for two major projects. On Tuesday MTA Capital Construction Company President Michael Horodniceanu said that the Fulton Center will open in June and that the 7 train extension is scheduled to be completed in October. While there have been delays, eliminations of important features, and cost increases associated with these projects, they have progressed smoothly when compared to East Side Access, which appears headed for a completion date in the 2020's and a cost of more than twice its original estimate.

Please mark your calendars for the quarterly PCAC meeting, which will be held on Thursday, March 6th. MTA Chairman and CEO Tom Prendergast will be our guest speaker. In the business portion of our meeting we can discuss issues that we want to raise with Mr. Prendergast.