

# FREEDOM TICKET

*Southeast Queens Proof of Concept*

December 2015





# NYCTRC

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RIDERS COUNCIL

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# Executive Summary

In its latest research report, *The Freedom Ticket: A Southeast Queens Proof of Concept*, the New York City Transit Riders Council (NYCTRC) seeks to find a solution to the lack of affordable and efficient transit access in outer boroughs as well as help the commuter railroads maximize their productivity. Currently the MTA offers a City Ticket, which allows Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) and Metro-North Railroad (MNR) riders to travel in the city zone for a lower fare on the weekends. Freedom Ticket would expand that premise and allow customers to use any MTA mode that meets their needs, be it bus, subway, or commuter rail, within a given zone, for a reduced rate. It would reduce city commuter rail fares at all times and provide a transfer between modes.

The NYCTRC identified Southeast Queens as an ideal location for the Proof of Concept because of the community's commuting difficulties and economic profile. There are many neighborhoods in SE Queens that can access Manhattan easily via LIRR, but the cost of the commuter ticket makes this option unaffordable to the working and service-providing residents. Because affordable transportation is a tenet of the de Blasio administration's agenda, the NYCTRC would like to see the City of New York and the MTA work together to fund and implement a Freedom Ticket Proof of Concept for these SE Queens neighborhoods.

The Council examined the number of empty seats on LIRR trains traveling through SE Queens neighborhoods during the AM and PM peaks in order to determine available capacity. The study identified thousands of empty seats during these time periods, which could provide affordable transit options for SE Queens residents as well as produce additional revenue for LIRR.

The NYCTRC has long been concerned with transit access in the neighborhoods of SE Queens as well as in other outer borough neighborhoods. This concern has been echoed recently by several other groups in New York, including the Regional Plan Association, Move New York, and the NYC Comptroller's Office. The NYCTRC therefore envisions this Proof of Concept as a starting point to improve outer borough mobility, and foresees the expansion of the program to the Bronx and Brooklyn once the East Side Access (ESA) project comes on line, increasing the capacity opportunities for both Metro-North Railroad and Long Island Rail Road.

## City Ticket to Freedom Ticket Timeline

- 2003** The Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC), the parent organization of the NYCTRC, proposes City Ticket concept to the MTA, calling for reduced weekend fares on the commuter railroads within city limits.
- 2004** MTA implements the City Ticket pilot program that operates today.
- 2007** PCAC produces a report called "A Long Day's Journey into Work", in which PCAC recommends Freedom Ticket to improve mobility for transit underserved neighborhoods such as SE Queens.
- 2015** NYCTRC proposes Freedom Ticket Proof of Concept

## Southeast Queens

SE Queens commuters endure some of the longest and most difficult commutes in New York City. Thirty-nine percent of SE Queens commuters travel 60 minutes or more to work each day. The most affordable commuting option requires commuters to travel via city buses or commuter (dollar) vans to Jamaica subway lines. The bus to the subway option is \$2.75, the dollar van to the subway option is \$4.75. Comparatively, the cost of a peak hour LIRR ticket is \$10. The LIRR fares, prohibitively expensive for most, create a financial barrier causing commuters to primarily use subways and buses, which take much longer. As an example, from the Rosedale neighborhood of SE Queens to Penn Station, a trip on NYCT can take 86 minutes, whereas a trip on LIRR can be less than 40. Another slightly more affordable option than LIRR is an express bus into Manhattan for \$6.50; however, travel times can be up to an hour and a half each way.

### *Travel Time: Rosedale LIRR Station to Penn Station (AM peak)*



## LIRR Capacity Findings

Freedom Ticket Proof of Concept implementation requires that there be capacity on LIRR during peak hours to accommodate additional riders. Therefore, LIRR peak hour 2014 ridership data was analyzed between SE Queens stations and Jamaica, Penn Station and Jamaica, and Atlantic Terminal and Jamaica.

### Trains between SE Queens and Jamaica

- AM Peak: 34% of seats are empty (21,984 out of 65,084 seats)
- PM Peak: 39% of seats are empty (23,136 out of 59,996 seats)

### Trains between Jamaica and Penn Station

- AM Peak: 23% of seats are empty (19,892 out of 87,224 seats)
- PM Peak: 26% of seats are empty (20,014 out of 76,564 seats)

### Trains between Jamaica and Atlantic Terminal

- AM Peak: 49% of seats are empty (9,372 out of 19,292 seats)
- PM Peak: 60% of seats are empty (11,104 out of 18,444 seats)

# The Benefits of Freedom Ticket

By expanding and improving City Ticket through this Proof of Concept, benefits can be realized immediately by riders, the City, and the MTA.

- Riders: Reduces travel times for thousands of SE Queens riders by up to 45%
- City: Provides fast, affordable access to outer borough neighborhoods
- MTA: Converts thousands of non-income producing seats into revenue-producing seats

## Recommendations

By funding Freedom Ticket in their localities, local governments have the opportunity to provide reduced fares and travel times for their commuters traveling from MTA railroad stations.

1. Establish a financial partnership between the MTA and the City of New York for the Implementation of the Freedom Ticket Proof of Concept in SE Queens by 2017
  - Offer reduced monthly fare of no more than \$215, and adjust the weekly and per ride fares accordingly from Long Island Rail Road SE Queens stations
  - Provide free transfers from LIRR to NYC Transit subways and buses
  - Establish metrics to measure the success of the Proof of Concept
2. Implement Freedom Ticket Phase 2 by 2019 to all MTA railroad stations that are .8 miles or more from a subway
3. Integrate Freedom Ticket into the East Side Access operational plan for an MTA-wide fare system





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# Introduction

“Public transit is a key component of the economic and social fabric of metropolitan areas...The effectiveness of transit depends upon its reach, frequency, and where it goes.”<sup>1</sup>

Many New York City commutes are difficult. While the City's core is serviced by numerous subway lines and buses, outer boroughs are less accessible. Multiple studies have shown that residents in the outer boroughs have some of the longest commutes in the nation. Most recently a brief produced by New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer found that of the 30 largest metropolitan areas in the United States, New York City is the only city where average weekly commutes exceed five hours; New Yorkers have an average weekly commute of 6 hours and 18 minutes. Combined with the average workday this means that “New York City full-time workers spend over 49 hours per week either working or commuting, giving them the longest combined workweeks in the nation.”<sup>2</sup> The difficulties faced by the average commuter are amplified in the outer reaches of the boroughs, especially during peak hours. More hours spent commuting means these residents have even fewer hours to spend at home than residents in other parts of the city, and far fewer than in any other city.<sup>3</sup>

Riders from Southeast Queens endure some of the longest commutes in New York City. In light of today's constrained budget and limited resources, to best serve areas like SE Queens, the MTA needs to get as much service as possible from existing assets and provide choices that enable commuters to match service to travel needs. Looking to optimize the use of existing resources to combat harrowing commutes, the New York City Transit Riders Council (NYCTRC) proposes that the MTA undertake a Proof of Concept, a new fare category, called Freedom Ticket. Freedom Ticket would allow customers to travel within New York City on commuter rail at a lower cost than current intra-city fares.

Freedom Ticket expands the concept of the MTA's City Ticket, which was introduced by the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC) in 2003 and offers a lower cost weekend fare for Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) and Metro-North Railroad (MNR) riders within the city boundaries. Subsequently, the MTA launched the City Ticket pilot program in 2004 and it continues to operate and perform successfully today.

## Freedom Ticket

In 2007, the PCAC, the umbrella organization for the Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council (LIRRCC), Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council (MNRCC), and NYCTRC, wrote a report entitled, *A Long Day's Journey into Work*, where the PCAC first called for the MTA and the City of New York to work together to improve fare affordability by creating the “Freedom Ticket.” Freedom Ticket as the name implies, gives customers the freedom to use any MTA mode that meets their needs, be it bus, subway, or commuter rail, within a given zone for one universal price.

1 Martha Ross and Nicole Prchal Svajlenka, *Connecting to Opportunity: Access to Jobs via Transit in the Washington D.C. Region*, Brookings Institute, (November 2012), 2, Date accessed: January 27, 2015, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2012/11/~media/D3589634EEC94C09B895AB17D126DC1F.ashx>.

2 Scott M. Stringer, NYC Economic Brief, Office of the New York City Comptroller, (March 2015), 2, Date accessed: March 19, 2015, [http://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/Longest\\_Work\\_Weeks\\_March\\_2015.pdf](http://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/Longest_Work_Weeks_March_2015.pdf).

3 Scott M. Stringer, NYC Economic Brief, Office of the New York City Comptroller, (March 2015), 6, Date accessed: March 19, 2015, [http://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/Longest\\_Work\\_Weeks\\_March\\_2015.pdf](http://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/Longest_Work_Weeks_March_2015.pdf).

Freedom Ticket expands the concept of the MTA's City Ticket to include the following:

Figure 1: City Ticket vs. Freedom Ticket

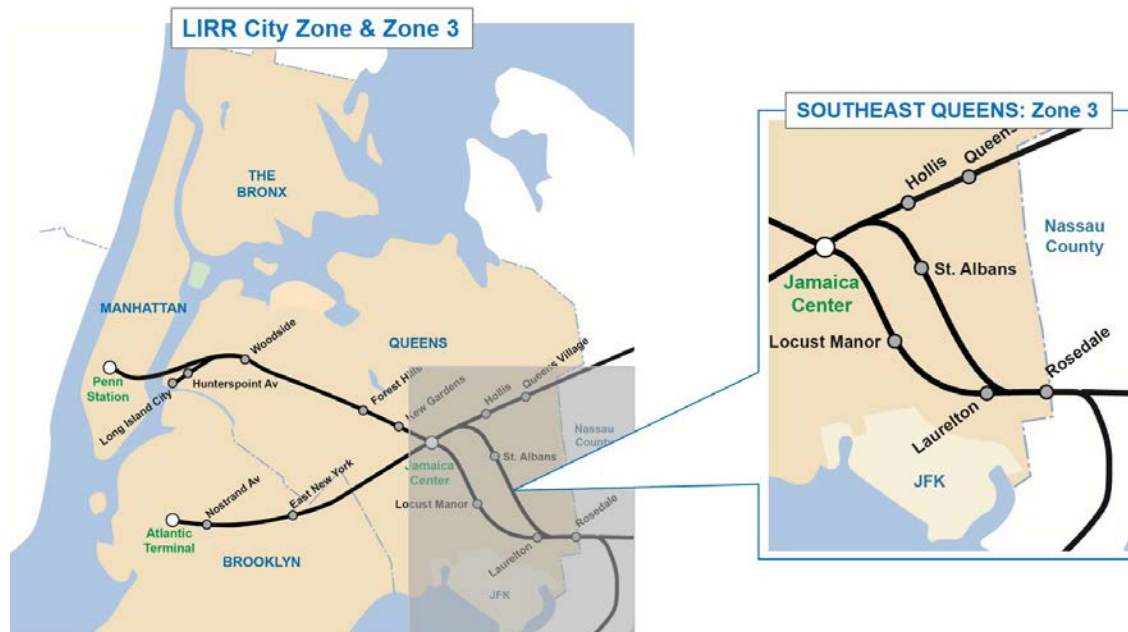
	Hours Accepted	Transfers	Multi-directional Travel
City Ticket	Weekends only	No free transfers	Not allowed
Freedom Ticket	All times	Free transfers	Allowed

The NYCTRC is proposing a Proof of Concept of Freedom Ticket by implementing it in the neighborhoods of SE Queens. SE Queens is an ideal starting place for the Freedom Ticket because it is served by both LIRR and NYC Transit buses but the high cost of LIRR, three and a half times that of NYC Transit, forces many to choose the more affordable yet time consuming transit option. Freedom Ticket would offer SE Queens commuters a faster and more affordable ride on LIRR, reducing commuting hours and improving their quality of life.

Freedom Ticket can counter many current issues facing the MTA. Subway ridership has reached record proportions, and large projects that will ease congestion like East Side Access (ESA), Second Avenue Subway (SAS), and Communication Based Train Control (CBTC) are not yet complete. Freedom Ticket will provide more affordable fares, relieve crowded subway lines, require minimal capital expenditures, and fill empty seats. Additionally, it is feasible to implement the Proof of Concept by the fourth quarter of 2016, well before ESA is finished.

Fortunately, the MTA has multiple transit and commuter rail resources to address areas lacking convenient service. The Freedom Ticket Proof of Concept will demonstrate the MTA's ability to partner financially with the City of New York to make commuter rail travel more affordable within City limits.

# Southeast Queens Background



The communities of SE Queens, sandwiched between Jamaica, JFK International Airport and Nassau County, Long Island, are representative of the transportation issues that face the outer-boroughs. They are characterized by a suburban landscape and density - modest single family homes with postage stamp lawns, small gardens and attached garages. Unlike the outer-reaches of the Bronx and Brooklyn, which have readily available subway access, the outer-reaches of SE Queens lack these connections.

In SE Queens the median household income is \$72,592, and nearly a third of the work force is employed in service occupations.<sup>4</sup> These kinds of jobs frequently require off-peak travel when less transit is available. The New York City Comptroller's recent economic brief summarizes the dilemma saying that New Yorkers in service occupations such as waiters, security guards, housekeepers, and care providers typically have the longest commutes.<sup>5</sup>

SE Queens has six LIRR stations (Hollis, Queens Village, St. Albans, Locust Manor, Laurelton, and Rosedale), yet many commuters travel up to five miles to Jamaica (E,J,Z) subway lines. The cost of a peak hour LIRR monthly ticket is \$218, compared to \$116.50 for subway or local bus, making it prohibitively expensive for most.<sup>6</sup> Most travelers take a bus to Jamaica (36 minutes from Laurelton for example) to ride the overburdened E subway line. A second option more affordable than LIRR is the \$6.50 express bus to Manhattan.

4 American Fact Finder: 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, *Commuting Characteristics by sex*, United States Census Bureau, Date accessed: November 18, 2014, <http://factfinder.census.gov>.

5 Scott M. Stringer, NYC Economic Brief, Office of the New York City Comptroller, (March 2015), 4, Date accessed: March 19, 2015, [http://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/Longest\\_Work\\_Weeks\\_March\\_2015.pdf](http://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/Longest_Work_Weeks_March_2015.pdf).

6 SE Queens LIRR stations are within city limits, however pay Zone 3 fare of \$10 rather than the City Zone fare of \$8.25.

Commuters living in SE Queens have very different travel patterns than commuters in the rest of the city. Fifty-three percent of SE Queens commuters drive to work, compared with 27 percent of commuters in New York City overall, as can be seen in Figure 2. Only 40 percent use public transit compared with 56 percent in the city. As a result, the mean commute time in SE Queens is almost 50 minutes, ten minutes longer than the mean commute time of New York City. Over 38 percent of SE Queens commuters travel 60 minutes or more to work each day. The high rate of car use and the lower rate of public transit use, in spite of having six LIRR stations, indicates people in this community are choosing longer commutes over higher transit costs.<sup>7</sup>

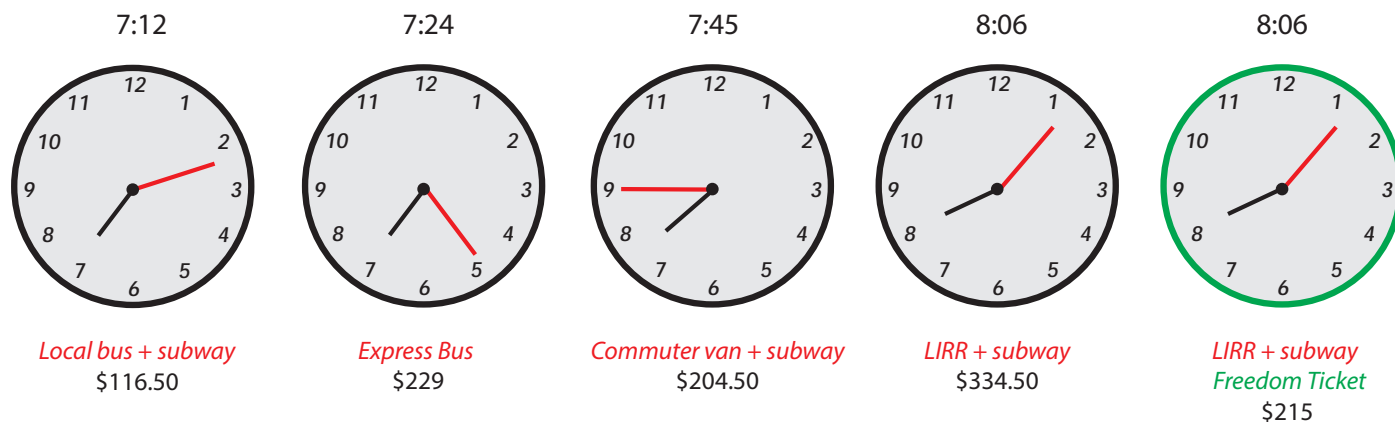
**Figure 2: New York City vs. Southeast Queens Commuter Comparisons**

	Mean Commute Time	Percentage Drive	Percentage Public Transit
New York City	39 min.	27%	56%
Southeast Queens	49 min.	53%	40%

An additional alternative for connecting to Jamaica is privately owned commuter vans, frequently called dollar vans.<sup>8,9</sup> Depending on local traffic conditions, these commuter vans typically take 15-18 minutes to travel between Jamaica and SE Queens LIRR stations.<sup>10</sup> Advantages of commuter vans are they can use many different routes to reduce travel time, unlike fixed route buses, and their two-dollar fare is less than a transit ride. On the down side, regulation of the commuter van industry is difficult and hundreds of vans operate illegally without permits or insurance, subjecting riders to severe risks in the event of an accident.<sup>11</sup> Also, there is no transfer to the MTA subways or buses so commuters still need to pay the \$2.75 transit fare to complete their trips.

**Figure 3: Travel Mode Comparisons from Rosedale, Queens**

Required departure times from Rosedale, Queens to arrive at Grand Central Terminal by 9:00 AM



7 American Fact Finder: 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, *Commuting Characteristics by sex*, United States Census Bureau, Date accessed: November 18, 2014, <http://factfinder.census.gov>.

8 Between July 2013 and June 2014, NYPD seized over 637 unauthorized dollar vans (Elizabeth Hagen and Rebecca Harshbarger, *New city program aims to expose illegal van operators*, NY Post, August 7, 2014, Date accessed: March 30, 2015, <http://nypost.com/2014/08/07/new-city-program-aims-to-expose-illegal-van-operators/>).

9 On August 7, 2014 the NYC Taxi & Limousine Commission (TLC) began a pilot program, licensing qualified commuter vans (NYC Taxi and Limousine Commission, Date accessed: March 30, 2015, <http://www.nyc.gov/html/tlc/html/industry/vans.shtml>).

10 Google Maps, Date accessed: March 27, 2015, <https://www.google.com/maps>.

11 Santos, Fernanda, *Licensed and Illegal Van Fight It Out*, NY Times, (June 2010), Date accessed: May 26, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/10/nyregion/10vans.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/10/nyregion/10vans.html?_r=0).

# Findings

NYCTRC studied LIRR ridership data to better understand commuting conditions from SE Queens. We analyzed primary direction peak hour ridership between SE Queens LIRR stations and Jamaica, Penn Station and Jamaica, and Atlantic Terminal and Jamaica.

All ridership data for the following sections were obtained from the *MTA – Long Island Rail Road 2014 Ridership Book*. For additional and supporting data see Appendices A, B, and C.

We looked at the branches that serve and pass through SE Queens. The Montauk, Ronkonkoma, Port Jefferson, Oyster Bay, and Huntington branches were excluded between SE Queens and Jamaica because these branches travel the farthest on Long Island. Riders who take these branches already endure longer travel times, and we did not want to prolong their travel times by increasing the number of stops at city stations. Also, the Port Washington branch does not make connections at Jamaica and does not serve riders from SE Queens, therefore in this report Port Washington branch data are not included.

## Peak Hours

Peak hours are defined as the periods of time that trains arrive at Penn Station and Atlantic Terminal in the morning: between 6-10 AM, and leave from Penn Station and Atlantic Terminal in the evening: between 4-8 PM.



# Trains between Southeast Queens and Jamaica

Babylon, Long Beach, Far Rockaway, Hempstead, and West Hempstead trains serve and run through SE Queens and can accommodate additional riders.

## AM Peak: SE Queens to Jamaica

**Finding 1:** 34% of seats are empty (21,984 out of 65,084 seats)

**Finding 2:** 65% of trains can accommodate additional riders (44 out of 67 trains)

**Finding 3:** 24 trains that have capacity run past SE Queens stations without stopping

Figure 4: AM Peak, SE Queens to Jamaica Area Map



## PM Peak: Jamaica to SE Queens

**Finding 4:** 39% of seats are empty (23,136 out of 59,996 seats)

**Finding 5:** 78% of trains can accommodate additional riders (49 out of 63 trains)

**Finding 6:** 27 trains that have capacity run past SE Queens stations without stopping

Figure 5: PM Peak, Jamaica to SE Queens Area Map





In the AM peak, SE Queens riders may transfer at Jamaica to other LIRR branches serving Penn Station or Atlantic Terminal. In the PM peak, SE Queens riders may board any LIRR train to Jamaica and transfer to a branch that serves SE Queens.

## Trains between Jamaica and Penn Station

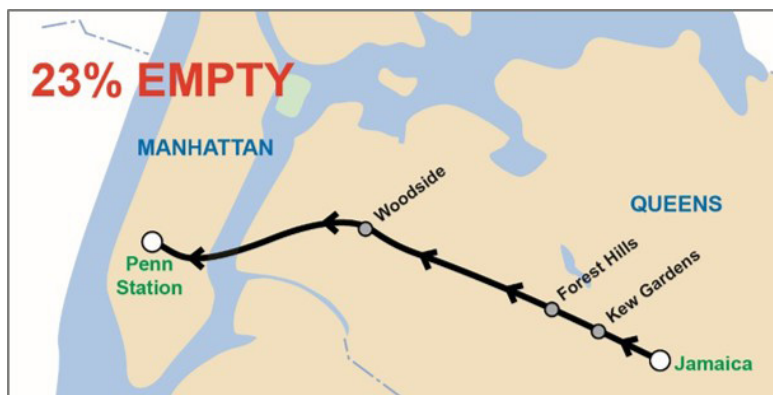
Data for trains traveling between Jamaica and Penn Station were analyzed to determine the number of empty seats during peak hours. The peak of the rush hour was also examined to better understand Penn Station train capacity issues.

### AM Peak: Jamaica to Penn Station

**Finding 7:** 23% of seats are empty (19,892 out of 87,224 seats)

**Finding 8:** In the peak of the rush hour (8-9 AM) only 19% of trains can accommodate additional riders, despite more trains operating during this time

Figure 6: AM Peak, Jamaica to Penn Station Area Map

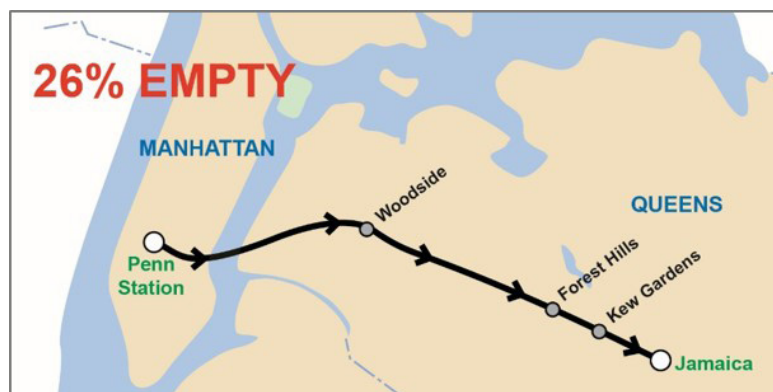


### PM Peak: Penn Station to Jamaica

**Finding 9:** 26% of seats are empty (20,014 out of 76,564 seats)

**Finding 10:** In the peak of the rush hour (6-7 PM) only 24% of trains can accommodate additional riders

Figure 7: PM Peak, Penn Station to Jamaica Area Map



# Trains between Jamaica and Atlantic Terminal

Trains have considerable capacity in both AM and PM peaks between Atlantic Terminal and Jamaica. Implementing Freedom Ticket would increase access and travel options for riders in Brooklyn and SE Queens and increase ridership in this corridor.

The Regional Plan Association (RPA), recently released a report entitled *Overlooked Boroughs*, advocating for better use of LIRR branches to Atlantic Terminal when ESA is finished by stating, “It could be operated as a subway, with more frequent service and a transit fare level, making the line much more useful for residents of Jamaica and central Brooklyn.”<sup>12</sup>

## AM Peak: Jamaica to Atlantic Terminal

**Finding 11:** 49% of seats are empty  
(9,372 out of 19,292 seats)

**Finding 12:** 10 of the 26 trains are operating  
50% or more empty

Figure 8: AM Peak, Jamaica to Atlantic Terminal Area Map

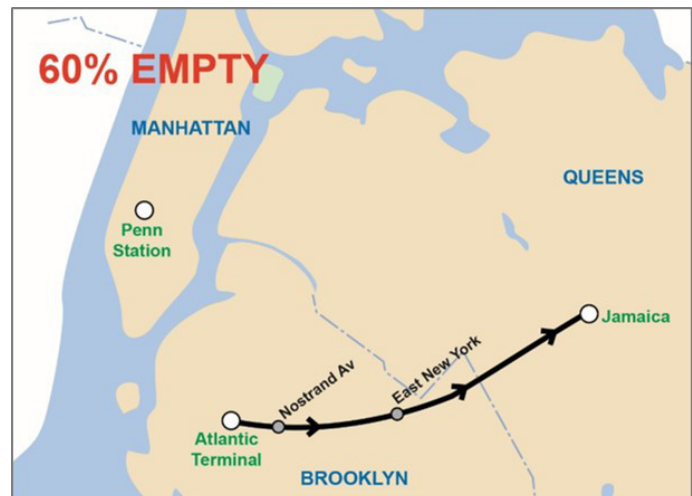


Figure 9: PM Peak, Atlantic Terminal to Jamaica Area Map

## PM Peak: Atlantic Terminal to Jamaica

**Finding 13:** 60% of seats are empty  
(11,104 out of 18,444 seats)

**Finding 14:** 21 of the 26 trains are operating  
50% or more empty



<sup>12</sup> Regional Plan Association (RPA), *Overlooked Boroughs: Where New York City's Transit Falls Short and How to Fix It*, (February 2015), 47, Date accessed: May 27, 2015, <http://library.rpa.org/pdf/RPA-Overlooked-Boroughs-Technical-Report.pdf>.

# Fare Options

Because the MTA system does not offer free transfers between its commuter rail lines (LIRR or MNR) and its buses and subways (NYC Transit), many commuters must buy two separate sets of tickets. If a commuter is traveling from SE Queens to lower Manhattan, for example, and they want to use a monthly pass to minimize costs, they would have to purchase both a LIRR monthly pass for \$218.00 and a monthly Metrocard for \$116.50, bringing their monthly commuting costs to \$334.50. With Freedom Ticket, though, a free transfer between these modes is offered, significantly reducing monthly costs. As can be seen in Figure 10, a commuter would save 36% in their commuting expenses if they used Freedom Ticket instead of both a monthly commuter rail pass and a monthly Metrocard.<sup>13</sup>

Figure 10: Fare Comparisons

	Express Bus with transfer	Local Bus + Subway	Dollar Van + Subway	LIRR + NYCT	Freedom Ticket with transfer	Amount saved using F.T. vs. LIRR + NYCT
One-Way	\$6.50	\$2.75	\$4.75	\$12.75	\$6.50	49%
Weekly	\$57.25	\$31.00	\$51.00	\$100.75	\$57.25	43%
Monthly	\$229.00	\$116.50	\$204.50	\$334.50	\$215.00	36%

<sup>13</sup> Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), *New fares in effect as of March 22, 2015*, Date accessed: March 16, 2015, <http://web.mta.info/mta/news/hearings/2015FareTolls/>.

# Conclusion

New York City, a critical economic center of the country, is growing quickly and now must contend with how to move its increasing population around. Average weekly commutes are now over an hour longer than any other major US city. Innovative solutions are crucial during this time of record-breaking ridership and capacity constraints. Freedom Ticket is one of those solutions. It requires minimal expenditures, substantially reduces travel times and creates a more equitable railroad fare for riders from many NYC neighborhoods that are isolated from the subway system. It also allows the MTA to maximize the use of all its assets by making the railroads a more affordable option within New York City. SE Queens has a ridership that would greatly benefit from increased transit options and is therefore the ideal place to start.

The model for Freedom Ticket already exists in City Ticket. By enhancing the concept of City Ticket through this Proof of Concept, benefits can be realized immediately for both riders and the MTA, and important lessons can be learned for its expansion to other neighborhoods.

## The Benefits of the Proof of Concept

- Provides needed affordable transit where subway access is non-existent
- Reduces travel times for thousands of SE Queens riders by up to 45%
- Improves the quality of life for SE Queens riders, by freeing up an hour or more of non-commuting time each day
- Expands network capacity as subways become increasingly crowded
- Increases system revenue by filling empty seats
- Requires minimal MTA capital expenditures
- Takes cars off the roads

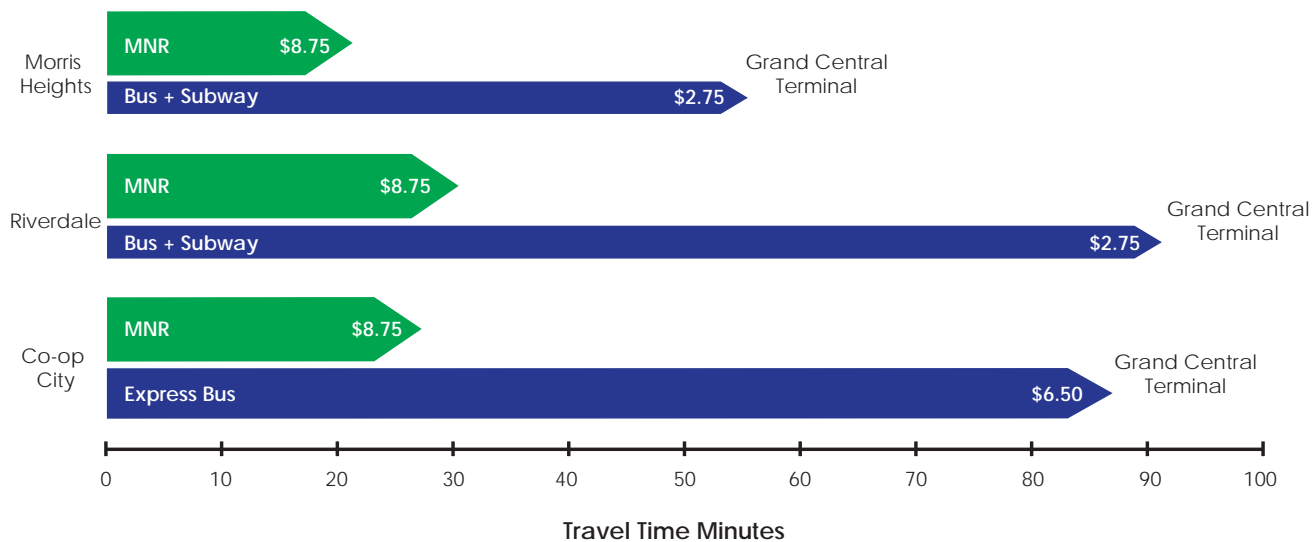
# Beyond the Proof of Concept

In addition to SE Queens, Freedom Ticket can address substantive travel issues in the boroughs that the LIRR and MNR travel through. Following the Proof of Concept, a Phase 2 should expand the Freedom Ticket program to the NYC commuter rail stations that are isolated from the NYC Transit subway system, and where travel times can be well over an hour.

Like SE Queens, there are parts of the Bronx where riders have extremely long commutes due to distant subway service, but are served by commuter rail. Like the residents of SE Queens, commuters in these parts of the Bronx must choose between an expensive yet shorter ride on commuter rail and a more affordable, longer trip on NYC Transit and would benefit greatly from the implementation of Freedom Ticket.

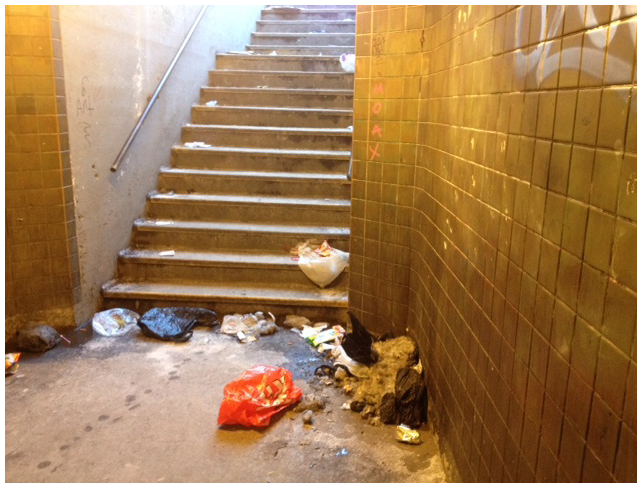
Morris Heights and Riverdale, for example, are isolated from the subway system. In order to get to Grand Central Terminal in mid-town, these riders must choose between a 30 minute ride costing a hefty \$8.75 on Metro-North Railroad and the substantially longer 90 minute ride on NYC Transit costing only \$2.75. Likewise, as can be seen in the chart below, riders from Co-op City have an 85 minute ride via Express bus to mid-town Manhattan. Right now the best commuting option for Co-op City residents is the 85 minute Express bus traveling to mid-town Manhattan. Offering Freedom Ticket from the MTA's planned Co-op City Metro-North station supports the goals of this 15,000 unit, Mitchell Lama development.

Figure 11: Bronx Underserved Neighborhoods Travel Times & Fare Comparisons





In Brooklyn, Freedom Ticket presents another opportunity to support neighborhood growth and development in East New York, a community previously identified by the City of New York as an area with economic development potential because of its rich transit access. The Urban Land Institute also recommended subsidizing LIRR fares from East New York to Atlantic Terminal in its 2014 Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) for the East New York Broadway Junction area.<sup>14</sup> It takes only ten minutes on LIRR to travel from the East New York station to Atlantic Terminal, however a peak hour ticket is \$8.25. On the other hand, it takes 26 minutes via subway from Broadway Junction to Atlantic Terminal, but the ticket is only \$2.75.<sup>15</sup> In its most recent study of the East New York station, the LIRR found that merely ten riders get on in the AM peak-westbound and eight riders get off in the PM peak-eastbound, an indication that riders are choosing the more affordable subway option even though it takes more than twice as long.<sup>16</sup> Freedom Ticket would help the LIRR better utilize its East New York station.



Source: Staff Photos

<sup>14</sup> Urban Land Institute (ULI), *Technical Assistance Panels (TAPS): Broadway Junction*, (June 25-26, 2014), 20, Date accessed: March 5, 2015, [http://newyork.uli.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/35/2014/03/Broadway-Junction-TAP\\_FINAL.pdf](http://newyork.uli.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/35/2014/03/Broadway-Junction-TAP_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), *TripPlanner*, Date accessed: March 17, 2015, [www.mta.info](http://www.mta.info).

<sup>16</sup> MTA, *Long Island Rail Road Origin & Destination Study Station-Based Passenger Counts*, (Spring 2006), 51-52.

# Recommendations

By funding Freedom Ticket in their localities, local governments have the opportunity to provide reduced fares and travel times for their commuters traveling from MTA railroad stations.

1. Establish a financial partnership between the MTA and the City of New York for the Implementation of the Freedom Ticket Proof of Concept in SE Queens by 2017
  - Offer reduced monthly fare of no more than \$215, and adjust the weekly and per ride fares accordingly from Long Island Rail Road SE Queens stations
  - Provide free transfers from LIRR to NYC Transit subways and buses
  - Establish metrics to measure the success of the Proof of Concept
2. Implement Freedom Ticket Phase 2 by 2019 to all MTA railroad stations that are .8 miles or more from a subway
3. Integrate Freedom Ticket into the East Side Access operational plan for an MTA-wide fare system





# *Appendices*

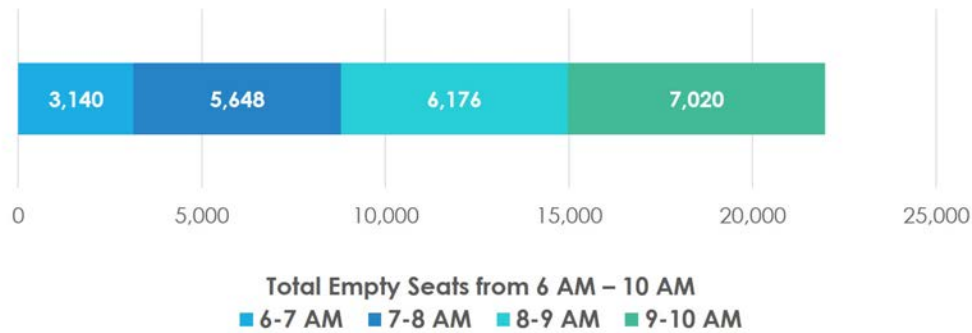
Additional and Supporting Data



# Appendix A: Peak Hour Empty Seats

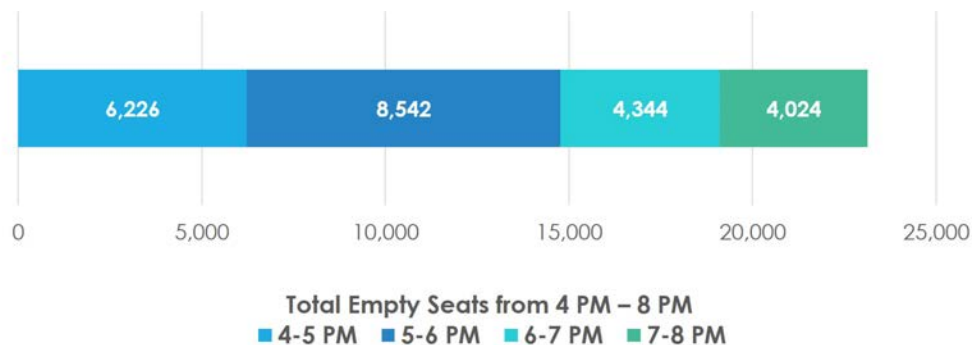
## Trains between SE Queens and Jamaica

### AM Peak: SE Queens to Jamaica Empty Seats



- The most available seats are between 9-10 AM (7,020 empty seats)
- The fewest available seats are between 6-7 AM (3,140 empty seats)

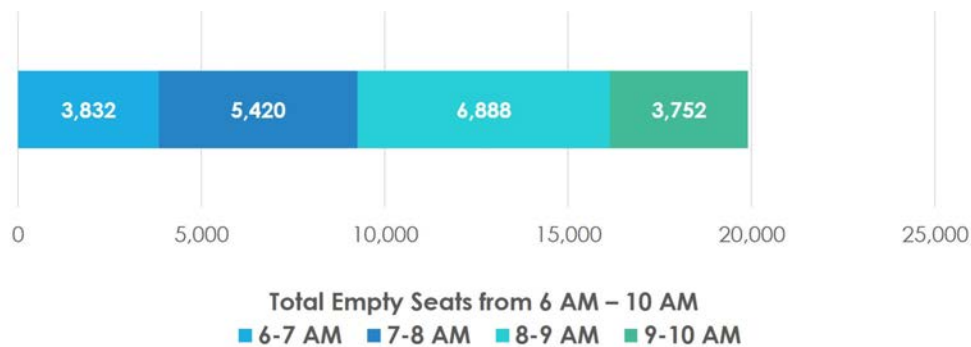
### PM Peak: Jamaica to SE Queens Empty Seats



- The most available seats are between 5-6 PM (8,542 empty seats)
- The fewest available seats are between 7-8 PM (4,024 empty seats)

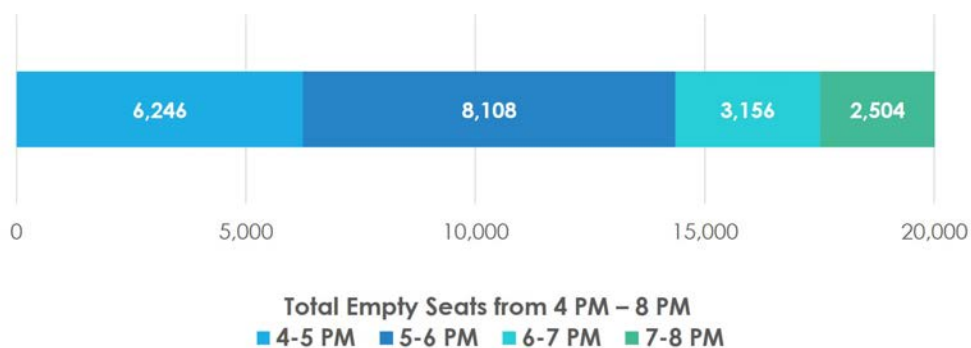
# Trains between Jamaica and Penn Station

## AM Peak: Jamaica to Penn Station Empty Seats



- The most available seats are between 8-9 AM (6,888 empty seats)
- The fewest available seats are between 9-10 AM (3,752 empty seats)

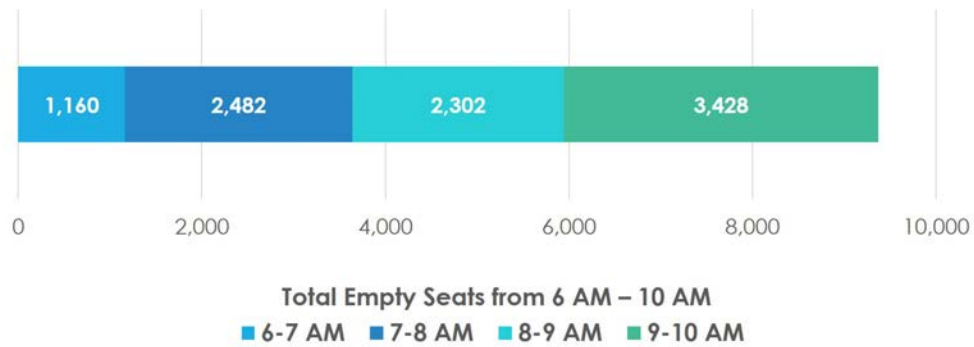
## PM Peak: Penn Station to Jamaica Empty Seats



- The most available seats are between 5-6 PM (8,108 empty seats)
- The fewest available seats are between 7-8 PM (2,504 empty seats)

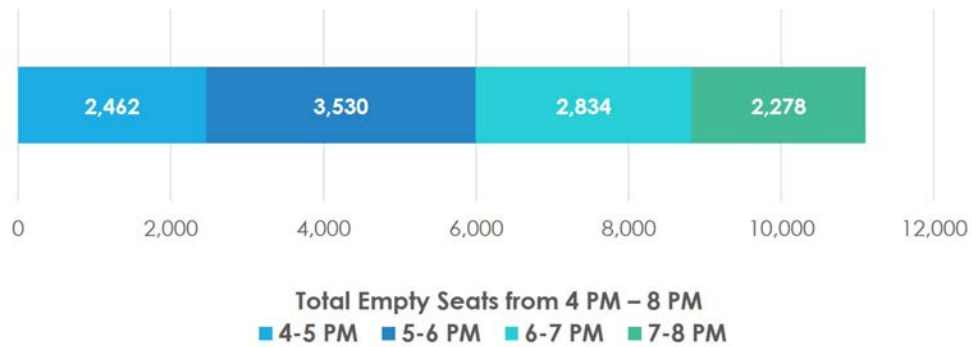
# Trains between Jamaica and Atlantic Terminal

## AM Peak: Jamaica to Atlantic Terminal Empty Seats



- The most available seats are between 9-10 AM (3,428 empty seats)
- The fewest available seats are between 6-7 AM (1,160 empty seats)

## PM Peak: Atlantic Terminal to Jamaica Empty Seats



- The most available seats are between 5-6 PM (3,530 empty seats)
- The fewest available seats are between 7-8 PM (2,278 empty seats)



## Appendix B: LIRR Empty Seats by Branch

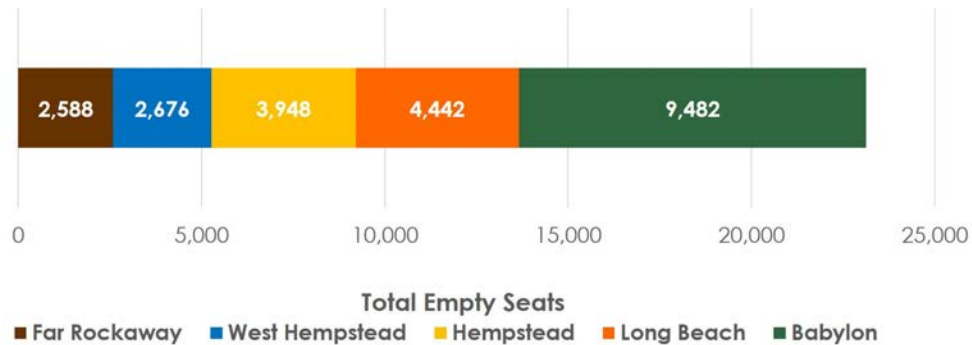
### Trains between SE Queens and Jamaica

#### AM Peak: SE Queens to Jamaica Empty Seats



- The Babylon branch has 9,416 empty seats
- On the other branches empty seats range from 1,396 to 4,300

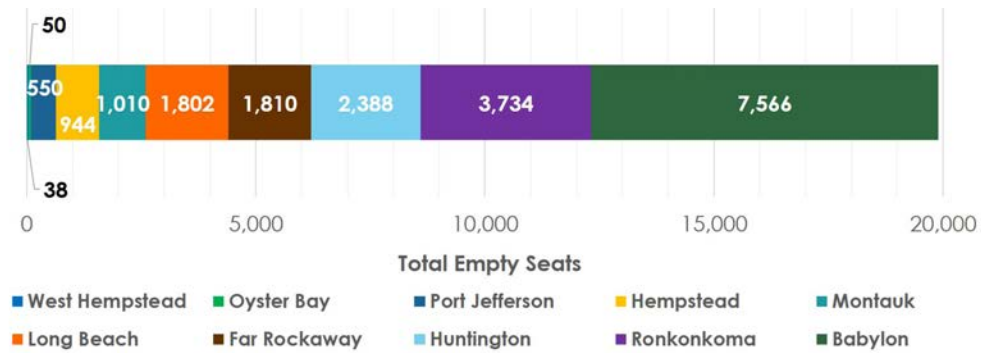
#### PM Peak: Jamaica to SE Queens Empty Seats



- The Babylon branch has 9,482 empty seats
- On the other branches empty seats range from 2,588 to 4,442

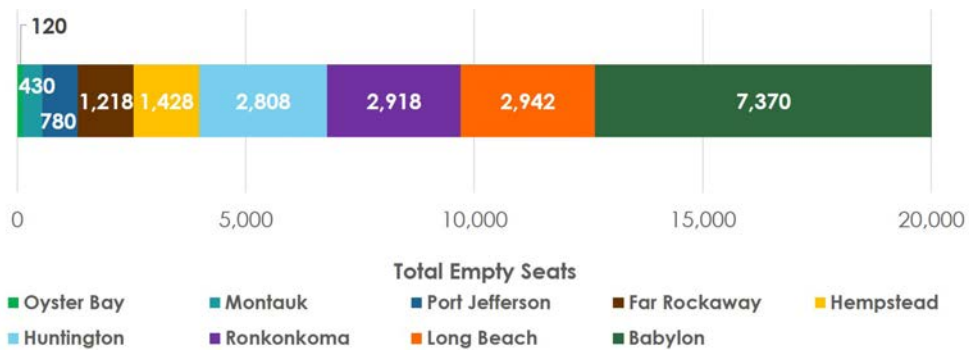
# Trains between Jamaica and Penn Station

## AM Peak: Jamaica to Penn Station Empty Seats



- The Babylon branch has 7,566 empty seats
- On the other branches empty seats range from 38 to 3,734

## PM Peak: Penn Station to Jamaica Empty Seats

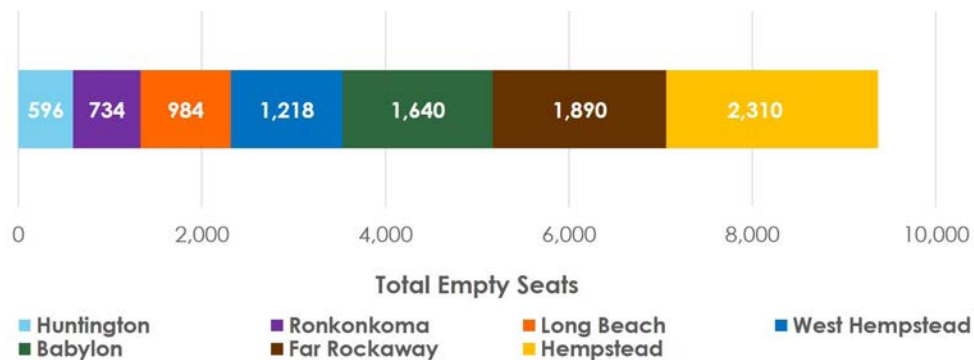


- The Babylon branch has 7,370 empty seats
- On the other branches empty seats range from 120 to 2,942



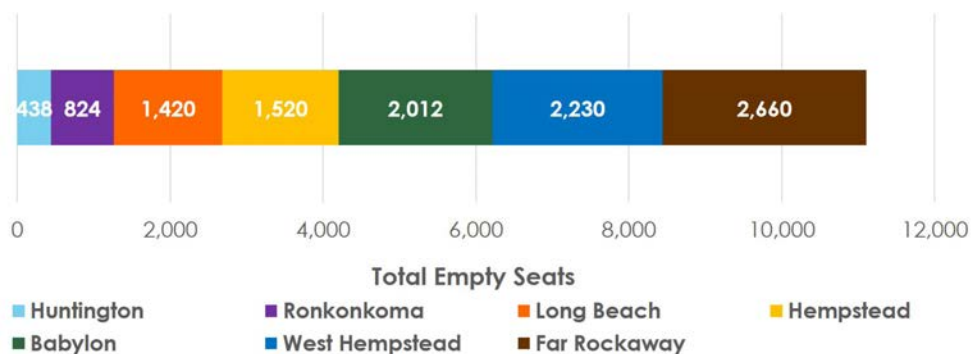
# Trains between Jamaica and Atlantic Terminal

## AM Peak: Jamaica to Atlantic Terminal Empty Seats



- The Hempstead branch has 2,310 empty seats
- On the other branches empty seats range from 734 to 1,890

## PM Peak: Atlantic Terminal to Jamaica Empty Seats



- The Far Rockaway branch has 2,660 empty seats
- On the other branches empty seats range from 438 to 2,230

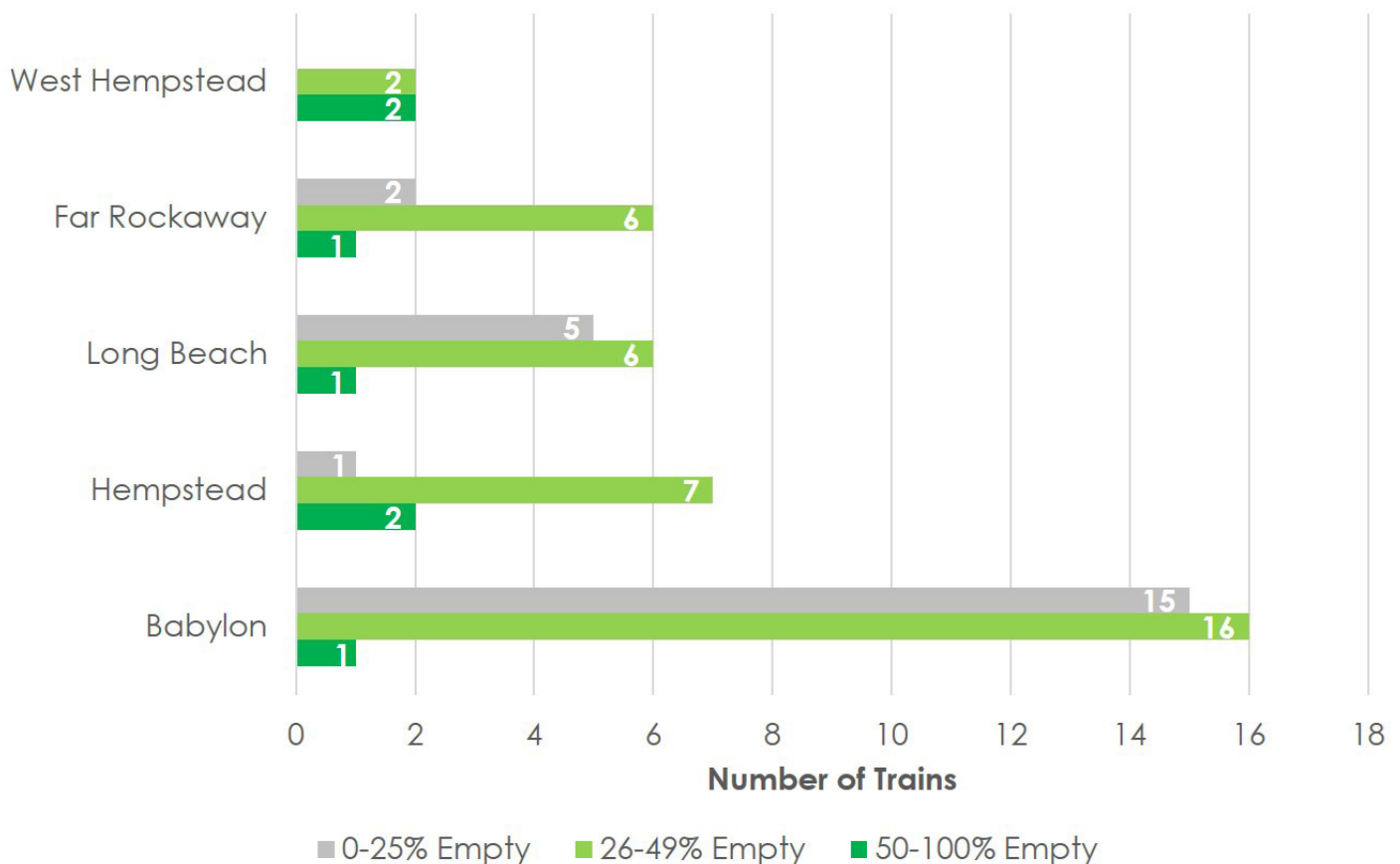


## Appendix C: Understanding Train Capacity

- Currently, 51 trains that have capacity run past SE Queens without stopping during the AM and PM peaks
- In the AM and PM peaks many trains between Penn Station and Jamaica are at capacity compared to low capacity conditions for trains between Atlantic Terminal and Jamaica
  - AM peak: 51 Penn Station trains are at capacity
  - PM Peak: 37 Penn Station trains are at capacity
- Currently for Penn Station trains, Freedom Ticket can be readily implemented in the shoulder of the peaks. Also, in the shoulder of the peak it could be possible to add more trains.

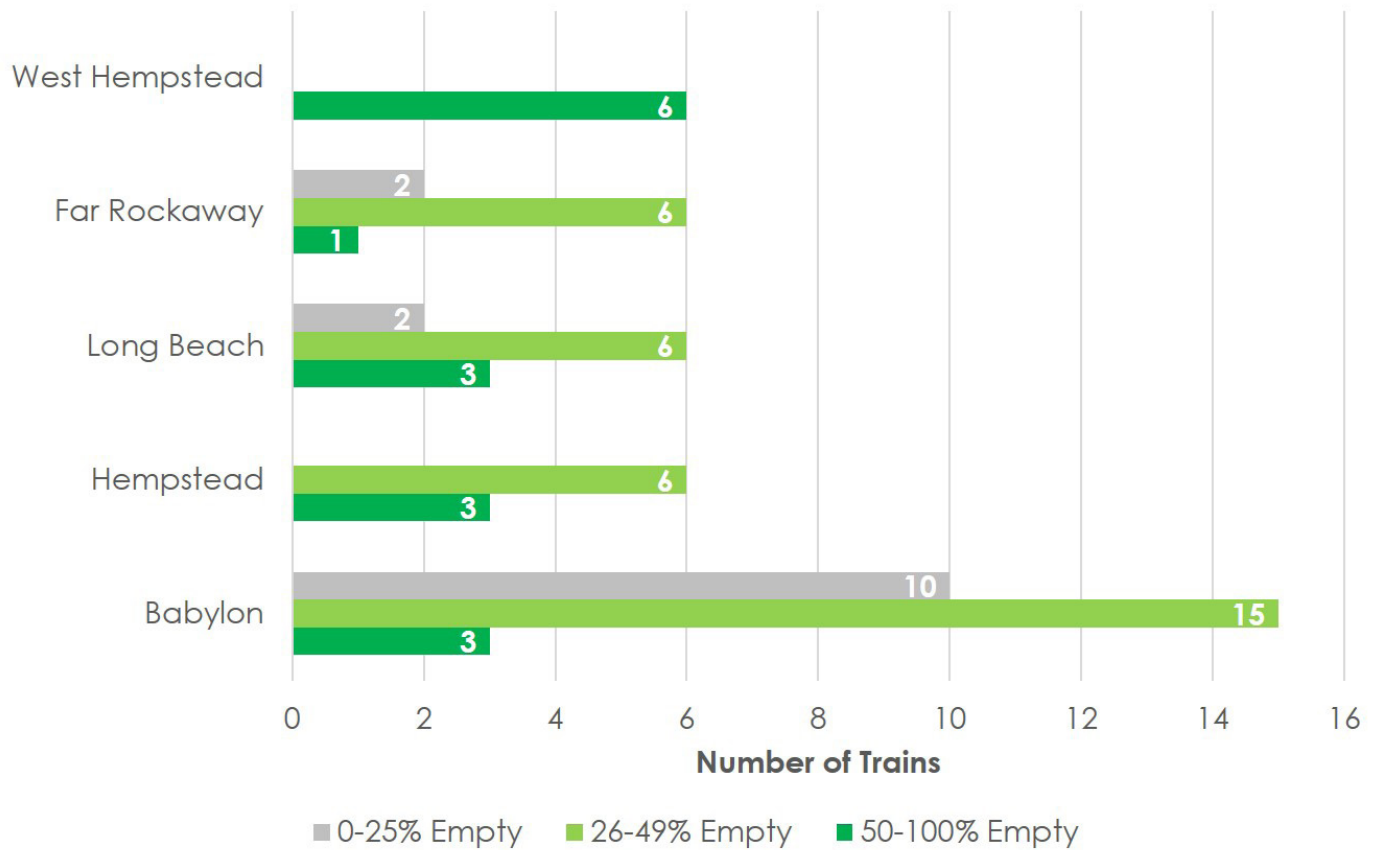
### Trains between SE Queens and Jamaica

#### AM Peak: SE Queens to Jamaica Number of Trains with Capacity



- 44 out of 67 trains (65%) can accommodate additional riders

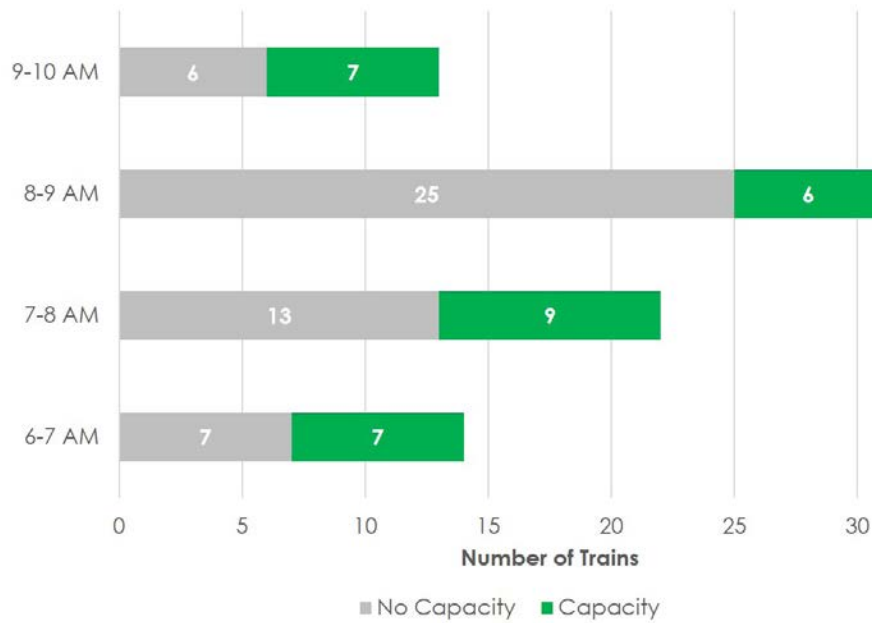
## PM Peak: Jamiaca Center to SE Queens Number of Trains with Capacity



- 49 out of 63 trains (78%) can accommodate additional riders

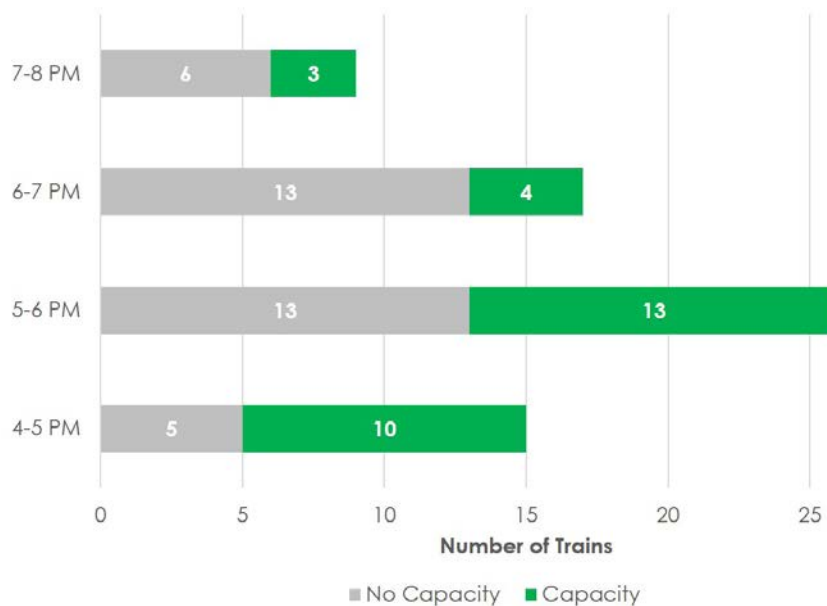
# Trains between Jamaica Center and Penn Station

## AM Peak: Jamaica Center to Penn Station Number of Trains with Capacity



- Between 8-9 AM only 19% of trains can accommodate additional passengers, despite more trains operating during this time

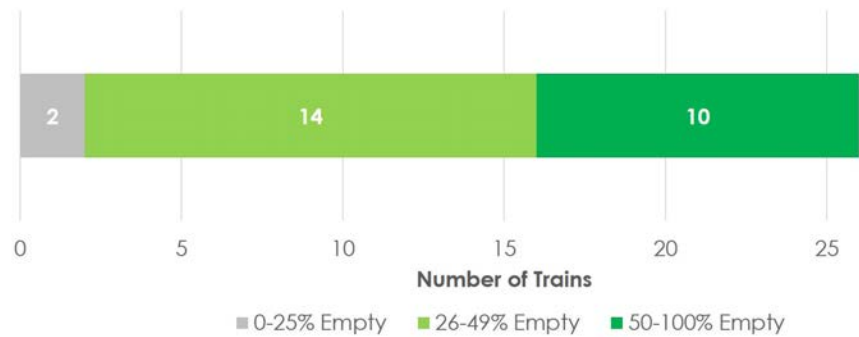
## PM Peak: Penn Station to Jamaica Center Number of Trains with Capacity



- Between 6-7 PM only 24% of trains can accommodate additional passengers

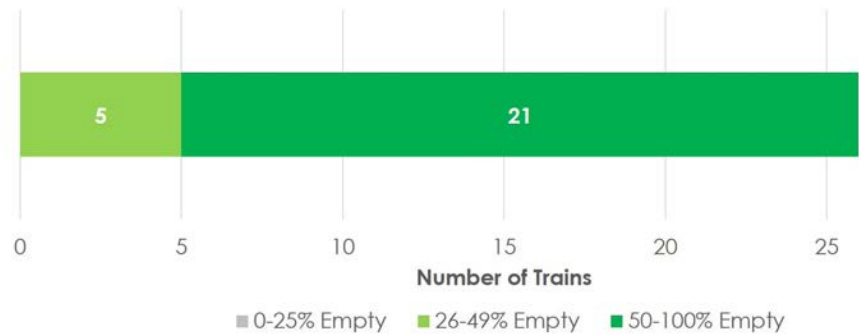
# Trains between Jamaica Center and Atlantic Terminal

AM Peak: Jamaica Center to Atlantic Terminal Number of Trains with Capacity



- 10 of the 26 trains are operating 50% or more empty

PM Peak: Atlantic Terminal to Jamaica Center Number of Trains with Capacity



- 21 of the 26 trains are operating 50% or more empty

## Appendix D: Methodology

Implementation of Freedom Ticket is only practical where there is excess capacity on the commuter railroads. To determine current capacity conditions for LIRR, PCAC used the MTA's *Long Island Rail Road 2014 Ridership Book*. In addition, the MTA's TripPlanner, Google Maps, and the U.S. Census Bureau's 2009-2013 5-Year Estimates were used to develop neighborhood profiles. Collected data was divided geographically in order to understand the current ridership trends for specific corridors and locations:

1. Total AM and PM peak empty seats between SE Queens stations and Jamaica
2. Total AM and PM peak empty seats between Penn Station and Jamaica
3. Total AM and PM peak empty seats between Atlantic Terminal and Jamaica

### SE Queens demographic research included:

- Population
- Median age
- Median household income
- Occupations
- Percentage of commuting mode choices
- Travel times to work via different transit modes

### Supporting financial research included:

- Fares on:
  - NYC Transit (subways and buses)
  - Express bus
  - LIRR / MNR
- Mail & Ride: Riders can purchase an unlimited MetroCard and receive two percent off their commuter rail fare
- Uniticket: Combination LIRR ticket and bus fares for certain LIRR stations and city bus routes
- City Ticket: Reduced weekend commuter rail fare within New York City boundaries
- The report includes data for both AM and PM peak periods. Of particular interest is the PM peak when both Freedom Ticket and Long Island commuters will be originating at Penn Station or Atlantic Terminal. Because these two sets of commuters will now be competing for seats, it is important that capacity exists during the PM peak to accommodate all commuters. It is important that LIRR commuters, who are paying more and traveling farther than Freedom Ticket riders, are not required to give up their seats.

# Appendix E: Existing Discounted Ticket Options

## Mail & Ride

In order to save money, riders can purchase an unlimited MetroCard and receive 2% off their LIRR fare by using Mail & Ride on the MTA's website. For SE Queens riders, this savings amounts to \$4.36.<sup>17</sup>

## Uniticket

Unitickets can only be purchased with LIRR and MNR monthly or weekly tickets. This ticket option reduces the weekly bus fare from \$31.00 to \$11.00 and the monthly from \$116.50 to \$41.25. SE Queens commuters can only use Uniticket at the Rosedale station when connecting to the Q5 or Q85 bus routes.<sup>18, 19</sup>

## City Ticket

Currently, City Ticket is available for weekends on LIRR and MNR within city boundaries. Riders can purchase City Ticket for \$4.25 when traveling from one city commuter station to another on the same line. Tickets can be purchased per ride at ticket windows and machines, for one-directional travel within New York City, and with no transfers to other LIRR and MNR branches, city subways or buses.<sup>20</sup>

Other advocates have expressed the need to expand City Ticket to weekday and peak travel times. Sam Schwartz Engineering's MoveNY Plan advocates for filling transit gaps and suggests, "extending City Ticket to 7 days per week and dropping the price to \$6: Metro North and the Long Island Rail Road would thus become an affordable 24/7 express service for riders picking up commuter rail at intracity stations."<sup>21</sup> RPA also advocates for the expansion of City Ticket into weekday travel explaining that "All trips in the city on the two rail systems for trips at all times wholly within New York City would be set at the City Ticket half price level."<sup>22</sup>

## Fare Options Abroad

In 2014, London introduced flexible fares benefiting the part-time work force and counteracting fare increases. Riders traveling between zones one and five save £4.90 (\$7.29) per day due to a reduced daily cap of £10.90 (\$16.22). This savings benefits the part-time work force who do not purchase weekly passes.<sup>23</sup> Riders use the Oyster card or a contactless payment card to pay for transit fares, permitting transfers between transit modes. Unlike on the MTA system, passengers have the ability to transfer from their subway system (The Underground) to the suburban commuter railroad (The Overground), with one fare based on a zone structure.

17 MTA, *Mail & Ride on the Web*, Date accessed: November 6, 2014, <http://goo.gl/9v0CgY>

18 MTA, *Fares & Ticket Information*, Date accessed: February 2, 2015, <http://web.mta.info/lirr/about/TicketInfo/#Multiple>.

19 MTA, *Fare and Toll Change Materials*, (January 22, 2015), 3.

20 MTA, *City Ticket*, Date accessed: November 6, 2014, <http://web.mta.info/mta/cityticket.htm>.

21 Sam Schwartz Engineering, *MoveNY*, Date accessed: February 2, 2015, <http://goo.gl/VjkG0Z>

22 Regional Plan Association (RPA), *Overlooked Boroughs: Where New York City's Transit Falls Short and How to Fix It*, (February 2015), 49, Date accessed: May 27, 2015, <http://goo.gl/irxL0x>

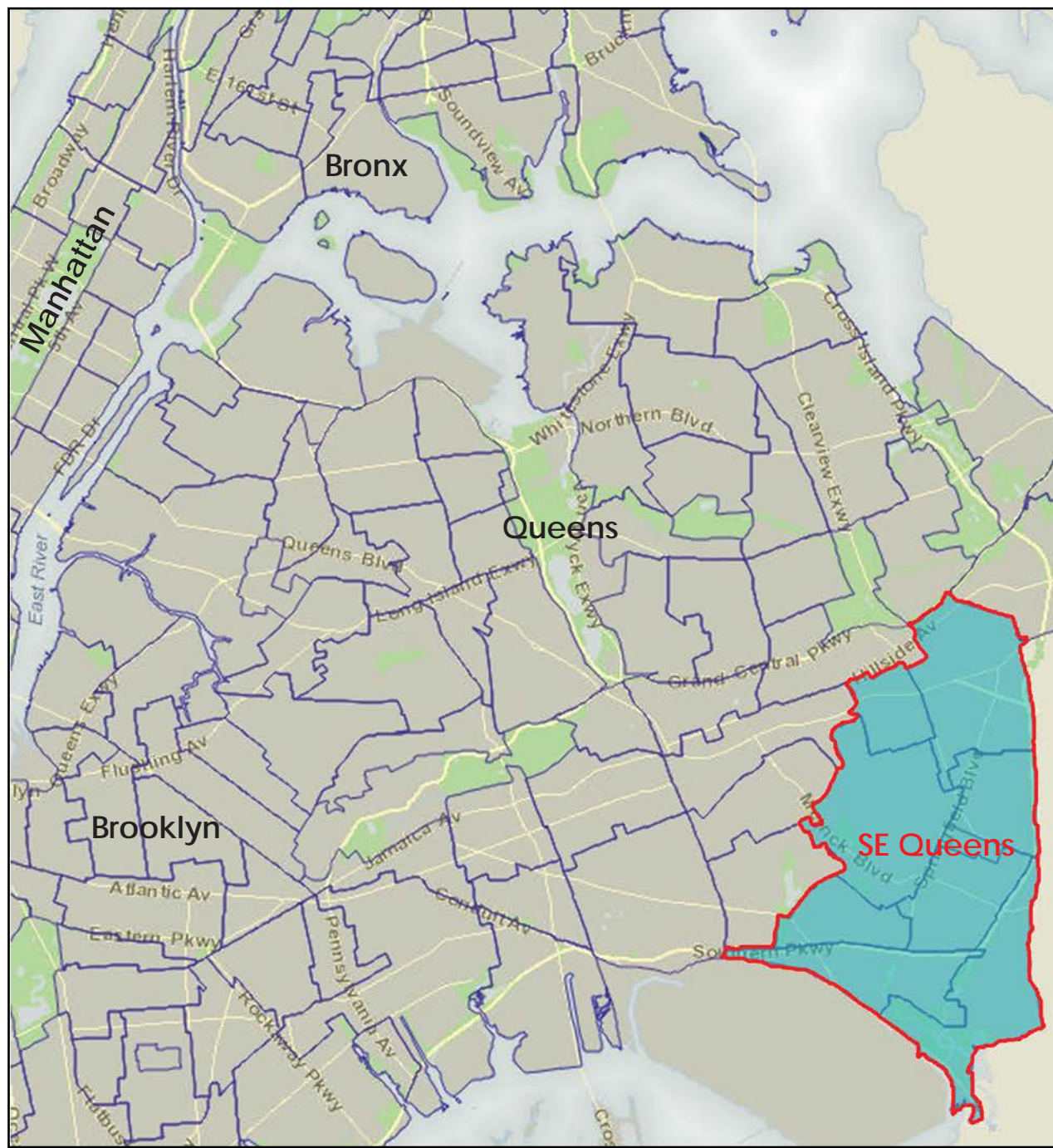
23 Matthew Beard, *London Evening Standard*, *London Underground fares shake-up: part-time workers to save hundreds of pounds under new Tube and bus fares system*, (November 2014), Date accessed: 03/27/2015, <http://goo.gl/vQ2IRd>



## Appendix F: Southeast Queens Neighborhood Profiles

The following neighborhood profiles were compiled using New York City Census FactFinder, American FactFinder, MTA TripPlanner, MTA fare information, and Google Maps.

### Southeast Queens



- Population 27,915
- Median Age 34
- Median Household Income \$86,613
- Occupations
  - 32% Management, business, science, and arts
  - 27% Sales and office
  - 25% Service occupations

Mode of Transportation	Percentage
Car, truck, van - drove alone	52%
Car, truck, van - carpooled	8%
Walked	2%
Worked at home	3%
Bicycled	1%

### Travel time to work

- 60 minutes or more: 34% (largest category)
- Mean travel time to work: 47 minutes
- 60% worked outside county of residence

## 96 min

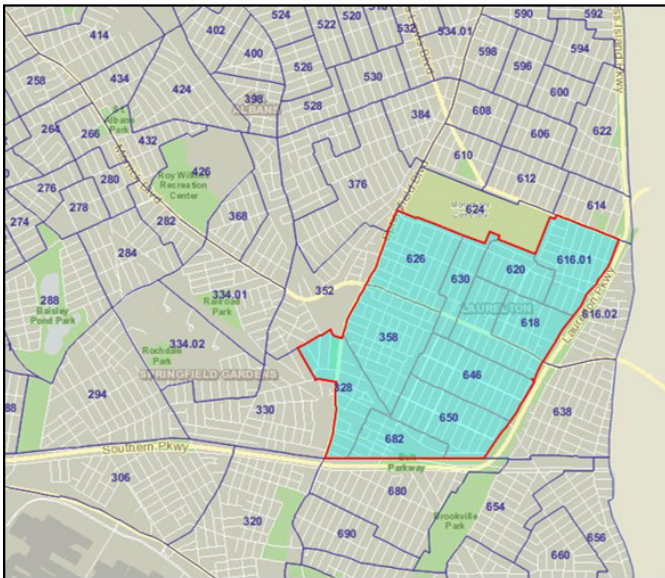
86 min

65 min

37 min



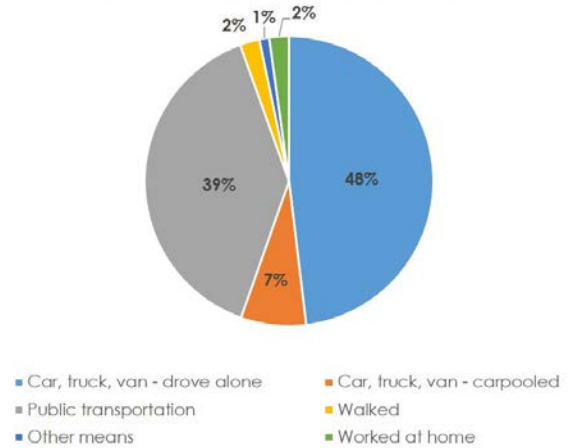
## Laurelton, Queens



### Demographics

- Population: 26,070
- Median age: 41
- Median household income: \$78,850
- Occupations
  - 32% Management, business, science, and arts
  - 27% Service occupations
  - 26% Sales and office

### Means of Transportation to Work



### Transit Options

- LIRR: Laurelton Station – Far Rockaway branch
- NYCT: Local bus routes to/from Jamaica for **E J Z** subway lines
- Commuter vans (Dollar vans)

### Travel time to work

- 60 minutes or more: 41% (largest category)
- Mean travel time to work: 48 minutes
- 61% worked outside county of residence

## Travel Time: Laurelton LIRR Station to Penn Station (AM peak)

Q85 to **E** Fare \$2.75

81 min

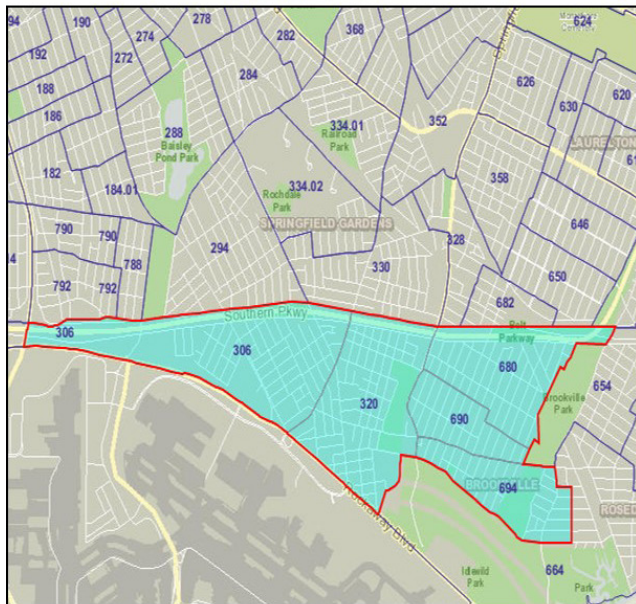
Dollar Van to **E** Fare \$4.75

59 min

LIRR Train Fare \$10

34 min

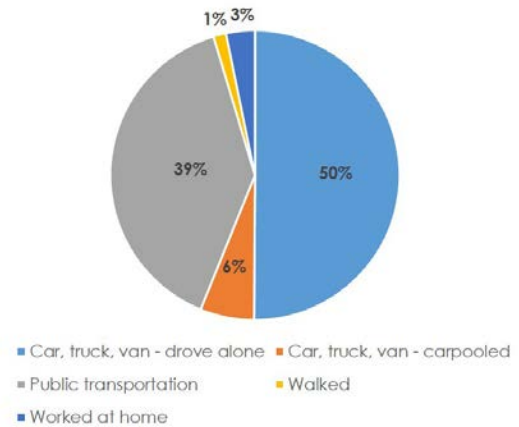
## Springfield Gardens South-Brookville, Queens



### Demographics

- Population 20,077
- Median age 34
- Median household income \$78,156
- Occupations
  - 32% Management, business, science, and arts
  - 28% Service occupations
  - 24% Sales and office

### Means of Transportation to Work



### Transit Options

- LIRR: Laurelton Station – Far Rockaway branch
- NYCT: Local bus routes to/from Jamaica for **E J Z** subway lines
- Commuter vans (Dollar vans)

### Travel time to work

- 60 minutes or more: 37% (largest category)
- Mean travel time to work: 49 minutes
- 59% worked outside county of residence

## Travel Time: Laurelton LIRR Station to Penn Station (AM peak)

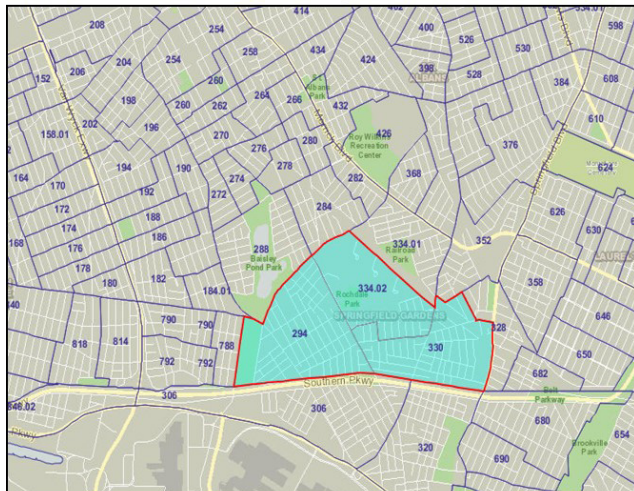
Q85 to **E** Fare \$2.75 81 min

Dollar Van to **E** Fare \$4.75 59 min

LIRR Train Fare \$10 34 min



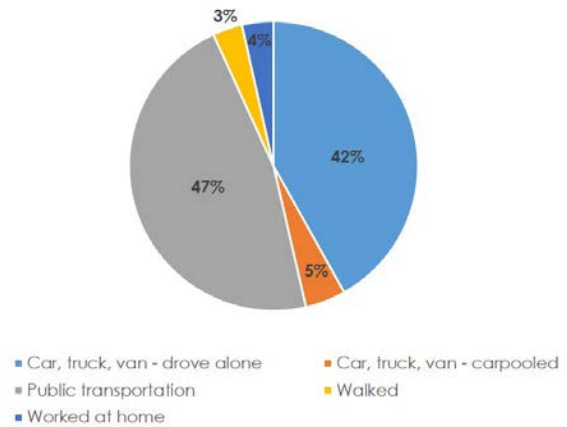
## Springfield Gardens North – Rochdale Village, Queens



### Demographics

- Population: 26,525
- Median age: 39
- Median household income: \$50,346
- Occupation
  - 30% Management, business, science, and arts
  - 30% Sales and office
  - 25% Service occupations

### Means of Transportation to Work



### Transit Options

- LIRR: Locust Manor Station – Far Rockaway branch
- NYCT: Local bus routes to/from Jamaica for **E** **J** **Z** subway lines, and QM21 express bus
- Commuter vans (Dollar vans)

### Travel time to work

- 60 minutes or more: 42% (largest category)
- Mean travel time to work: 50 minutes
- 54% worked outside county of residence

### Travel Time: Locust Manor LIRR Station to Penn Station (AM peak)

Express Bus QM21 to **E** Fare \$6.50

109 min

Q85 to **E** Fare \$2.75

71 min

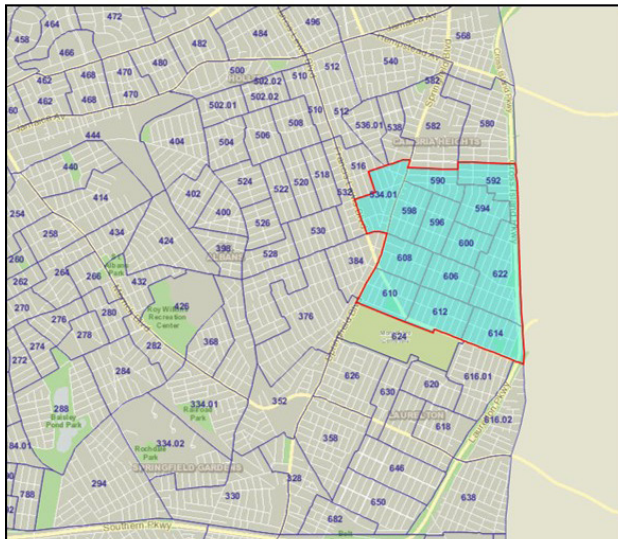
Dollar Van to **E** Fare \$4.75

53 min

LIRR Train Fare \$10

32 min

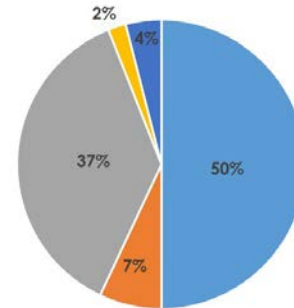
## Cambria Heights, Queens



### Demographics

- Population: 19,614
- Median age: 44
- Median household income: \$80,787
- Occupations
  - 35% Management, business, science, and art occupations
  - 27% Sales and office occupations
  - 22% Service occupations

### Means of Transportation to Work



- Car, truck, van - drove alone
- Car, truck, van - carpooled
- Public transportation
- Walked
- Worked at home

### Transit Options

- LIRR: Queens Village Station – Hempstead branch
- NYCT: Local bus routes to/from Jamaica 179 St for **F** subway line, Jamaica for **E J Z** subway lines, and X64 express bus
- Cambria Heights is also served by the St. Albans LIRR station, dependent on which branch is closer for passengers
- Commuter vans (Dollar vans)

### Travel time to work

- 60 minutes or more: 35% (largest category)
- Mean travel time to work: 49 minutes
- 54% worked outside county of residence

## Travel Time: Queens Village LIRR Station to Penn Station (AM peak)

**Express Bus X64 to M34+ Fare \$6.50**

**83 min**

**Q36 to **E** Fare \$2.75**

**70 min**

**Dollar Van to **E** Fare \$4.75**

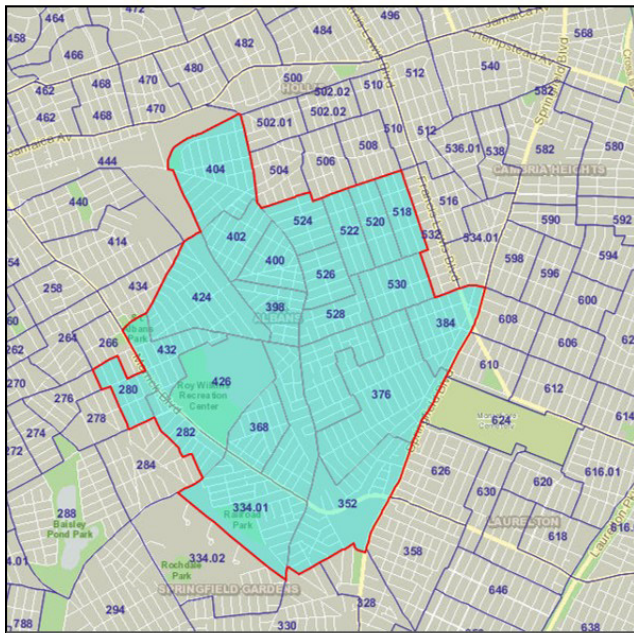
**54 min**

**LIRR Train Fare \$10**

**34 min**



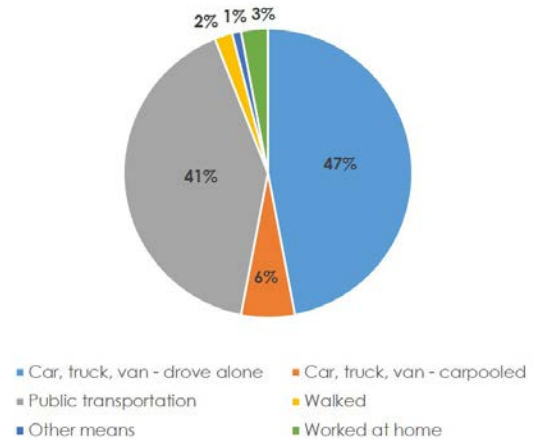
## St. Albans, Queens



### Demographics

- Population: 52,999
- Median age: 38
- Median household income: \$71,596
- Occupations
  - 29%- Service occupations
  - 25% - Sales and office occupations
  - 25%- Management, business, science, and art occupations

### Means of Transportation to Work



### Transit Options

- LIRR: St. Albans Station – West Hempstead branch
- NYCT: Local bus routes to/from Jamaica for **E** **J** **Z** subway lines, and X64 express bus
- Commuter vans (Dollar vans)

### Travel time to work

- 60 minutes or more: 40% (largest category)
- Mean travel time to work: 49 minutes
- 55% worked outside county of residence

## Travel Time: St. Albans LIRR Station to Penn Station (AM peak)

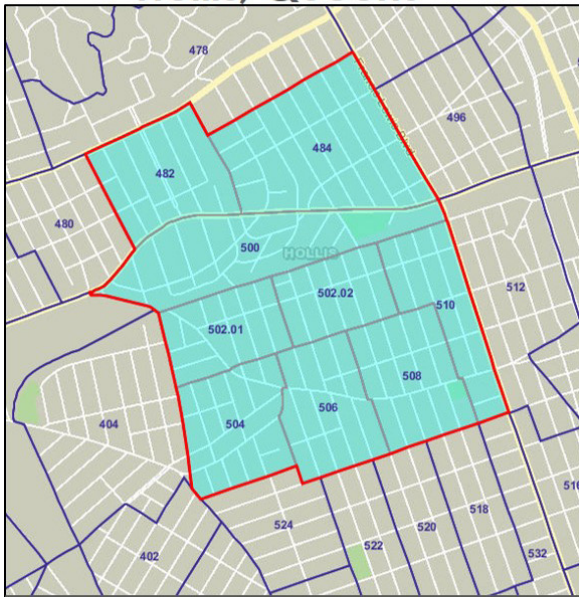
**Express Bus X64 to M34+ Fare \$6.50 70 min**

**Q4 to **E** Fare \$2.75 63 min**

**Dollar Van to **E** Fare \$4.75 52 min**

**LIRR Train Fare \$10 37 min**

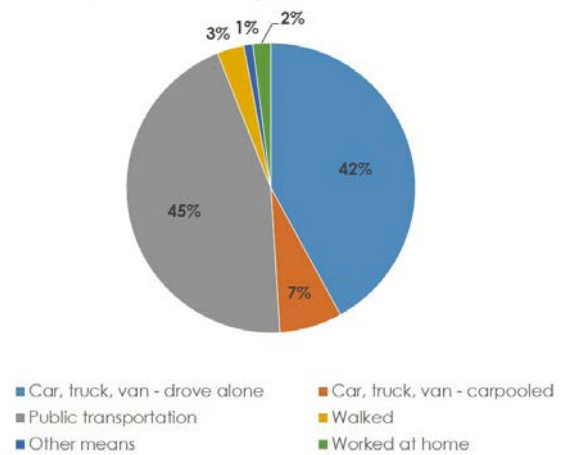
## Hollis, Queens



### Demographics

- Population: 20,479
- Median age: 39
- Median household income: \$58,345
- Occupations
  - 30%- Service occupations
  - 27% - Sales and office occupations
  - 26%- Management, business, science, and art occupations

### Means of Transportation to Work



### Transit Options

- LIRR: Hollis Station – Hempstead branch
- NYCT: Local bus routes to/from Jamaica 179 St for **F** subway line, Jamaica for **E J Z** subway lines
- Commuter vans (Dollar vans)

### Travel time to work

- 60 minutes or more: 39% (largest category)
- Mean travel time to work: 48 minutes
- 52% worked outside county of residence

## Travel Time: Hollis LIRR Station to Penn Station (AM peak)

Q2 to **E** Fare \$2.75

67 min

Dollar Van to **E** Fare \$4.75

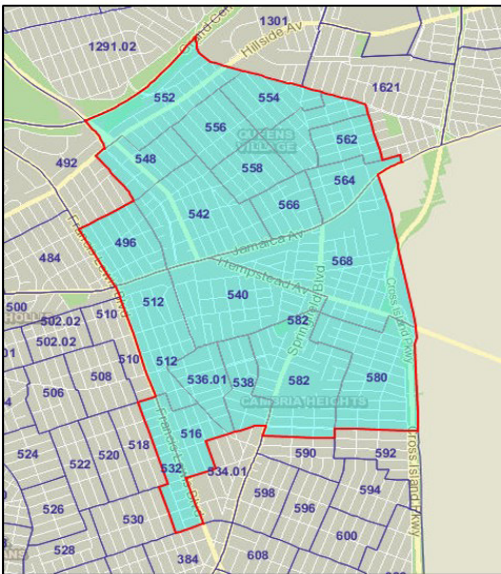
47 min

LIRR Train Fare \$10

33 min



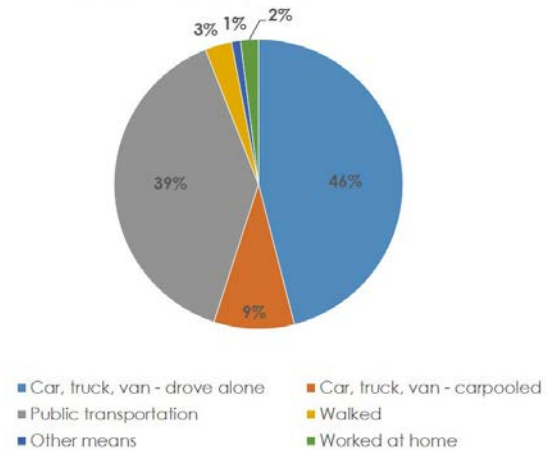
## Queens Village, Queens



### Demographics

- Population: 57,958
- Median age: 39
- Median household income: \$71,282
- Occupations
  - 29% - Sales and office occupations
  - 27% - Management, business, science, and art occupations
  - 24% - Service occupations

### Means of Transportation to Work



### Transit Options

- LIRR: Queens Village Station – Hempstead branch
- NYCT: Local bus routes to/from Jamaica 179 St for **F** subway line, Jamaica for **E J Z** subway lines
- Commuter vans (Dollar vans)

### Travel time to work

- 60 minutes or more: 34% (largest category)
- Mean travel time to work: 46 minutes
- 54% worked outside county of residence

## Travel Time: Queens Village LIRR Station to Penn Station (AM peak)

Q36 to **E** Fare \$2.75

70 min

Dollar Van to **E** Fare \$4.75

54 min

LIRR Train Fare \$10

34 min

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Freedom Ticket would allow customers to use any MTA mode that meets their needs, be it bus, subway, or commuter rail, within a given zone for a reduced rate.



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