

New York City Transit Riders Council

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Testimony of the New York City Transit Riders Council to the Board of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority on Proposed Service Reductions Sheraton LaGuardia , Flushing, N.Y. March 2, 2010

My name is Michael Sinansky and I am the Vice-Chair of the New York City Transit Riders Council (NYCTRC) and the Queens Borough President Helen Marshall's representative to the Transit Riders Council.

The proposed bus and subway service reductions pose a serious threat to both the safety and reliability of the system and the individual riders that depend upon their availability. As a case in point, the MTA is proposing to discontinue all service on the following Queens bus routes:

- Q-14 between Flushing and Whitestone.
- Q-42 between Jamaica and Addesleigh Park.
- Q-74 between Kew Gardens and Queens College.
- Q-75 between Jamaica and Oakland Gardens.
- Q-79 between Little Neck and Floral Park.

It is alarming to note that four (4) of these Queens bus routes slated for elimination of all service are located either in southeastern or northeastern Queens, where alternative subway service does not exist. Subway service in Queens terminates at Jamaica and Flushing. So much for alternative methods of public transportation.

Regarding the proposed cuts to essential subway service, the #7 Line riders have experienced years of overcrowding and inconvenience, as a result of ongoing construction delays, viaduct rebuilding and switching problems. Now, the MTA proposes to subject #7 Line riders to increases in the maximum loading guidelines to 125% seated load in all off peak hours. Actual crowding would probably be substantially worse at times, as the guidelines assume that all goes according to schedule. Anyone who uses the subways in Queens knows that is often not the case. Further, the MTA acknowledges in this proposal that this increase in #7 train passenger loading would also lead to reduced train frequencies, as well as overcrowding.

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I would also like to indicate our objections to two actions that will have a severe impact on our residents. Residents of Broad Channel and the Rockaway Peninsula share a common police precinct, the same school board district and same community board. In recognition of these and other community ties and the fact that the Cross Bay Bridge is the only intraborough crossing in the entire City of New York that has a toll, a resident toll rebate program was instituted several years ago. Now, the MTA proposes that these same working families spend additional hundreds of dollars per year, so that they can access vital governmental services. This proposal is viewed by some affected residents as simply vindictive.

With regard to school transportation, the proposal to eliminate student bus and subway passes is likewise shameful. We agree that the State and City, who are rightfully responsible for these costs should bear them, but this does not justify imposing this unwarranted burden on families with school age children.

Finally, we are distressed that for all of the pain that these proposed service cuts inflict, they make such a small dent in the MTA's budget deficit. The total savings of subway service reductions is less than \$18 million, while bus service reductions improve the MTA financial position by only \$60 million. The elimination of the Cross Bay Bridge toll rebate program will bring in only \$4 million. These sums are overwhelmed by \$143 million in State funding cuts in the Governor's Deficit Reduction Program and shortfalls of \$229 million and \$378 million in 2009 and 2010 tax receipts. The MTA's financial crisis is not the product of running too much service. These bus and subway service reductions being proposed are simply inconsistent with a city that operates 24/7.