NYCT Committee Testimony

Bus Rapid Transit for the Boroughs

Hello everyone, my name is Henry Mei, Research and Advocacy Intern at the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC). Like many New Yorkers, I depend on subways and buses – the latter of which I want to focus on today.

So many people rely on the humble bus to get to where they need to go, especially in subway deserts. Yet the average speed of MTA buses in 2024, excluding express routes, was 7.8 mph. Select Bus Service averaged only slightly better at 9.2 mph.

Some recent proposals are on the table, including a 34th Street busway—which we strongly support—and a redesigned Fifth Avenue, which unfortunately does not go far enough to meaningfully speed up buses.

Although the MTA’s fleet is fully ADA-compliant on paper, in practice, bus riders with mobility needs face challenges due to bus stops being blocked and the absence of level boarding.

In contrast, other cities have implemented effective bus rapid transit systems which take into account their urban environment and larger mass transit network. It’s time for New York City to do the same.

PCAC will soon release a report which lays out how a network of high-quality Bus Rapid Transit can increase connectivity, while decreasing commute times and car dependency across the boroughs.

New Yorkers need BRT that is fast, frequent, reliable, accessible, and easy to use. We are calling on the MTA and City DOT to work closely on:

* Installing protected center-running bus lanes, a standard design for international BRT systems
* Increasing transit signal priority installation
* Building accessible BRT stations with level boarding
* A cohesive wayfinding design for BRT
* Piloting a fleet with lefthand doors to increase the flexibility of BRT implementation. We need look no farther than Cleveland’s RTA for their BRT.
* Enabling all-door boarding on all MTA buses, while piloting the installation of fare gates and platform screen doors for BRT stations to reduce fare evasion.

Improving coordination between the MTA and DOT will allow BRT to be done right for the over 2 million riders who rely on buses every day.

Thank you.