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WILLIAM C. THOMPSON, JR.
COMPTROLLER

September 22, 2009

Mr. Jay H. Walder
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Metropolitan Transportation Authority
347 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10017

Mr. Howard H. Roberts Jr.
President, MTA New York City Transit
2 Broadway
New York, New York 10004

Dear Mr. Walder and Mr. Roberts:

Collecting and disclosing accurate information regarding the performance of our City's subways and buses is a key responsibility of MTA NYC Transit. City residents have both a critical need and a right to know how well their system is performing and how effectively their fares and tax dollars are being spent. Unfortunately, and as the attached report by my office illustrates, New York City Transit's service measurements continue to obscure or defeat efforts to track the inner workings of our City's transit system.

Particularly with the recent increase in fares, this situation is simply unacceptable and must be addressed.

Despite some recent improvements such as the revision of on-time performance measurements and the recent release of line-by-line subway-car breakdown statistics, many measures distort reality, rather than inform NYC Transit's ridership. At best, current indicators are incomplete or poorly presented.

Basic information such as the amount of crowding and the severity of service gaps, among others, are typically not released publicly. Little data is released on a subway line-by-line or bus route-by-route basis, and no information is released for individual stations. Information regarding the subway "passenger environment" is collected but it is reported only for large transit districts, which are not defined, and not posted publicly.

For example, if riders on the A-line want to find out how crowded their route becomes during rush hour, they cannot. Information regarding overcrowding is particularly important since subway ridership has soared in the last decade. Bus riders have similar difficulty finding out the level of crowding on their bus routes.

Customers also are unable to discover whether NYC Transit rates their subway station as clean or dirty; how many times a week, month or year their subway line encounters major gaps in service; how many trips an hour their subway or bus makes; how the performance of their line, route or station stacks up against others; and how their line, route or station has performed over time.

Because of the overall lack of useful data, riders, advocates and elected officials must rely on anecdotal reports or outside analyses by groups such as NYPIRG's Straphangers Campaign. The lack of meaningful data makes it hard to define what must be improved and prevents NYC Transit from taking credit for service improvements.

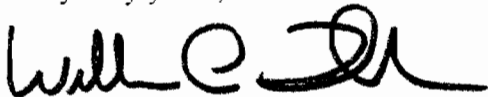
In the attached review of service indicators, I propose several recommendations that would improve the quality of, and increase access to, transit performance measurements.

Establishing a valid benchmark for current performance will make us better able to gauge the impact of tight budgets on service now and in the future.

As we experienced in the 1970s, the quality of New York City's transit service deeply affects our economy and our overall quality of life. An unreliable and unappealing mass transit system drives away both riders and employers. My intent – and I am sure yours as well – is to help position our transit system so that it receives its fair share of public financial support.

With the right information, we can all make this case in a more compelling way.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William C. Thompson, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

William C. Thompson, Jr.