



New York City Comptroller
Scott M. Stringer

NEWS

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COMPTROLLER STRINGER AUDIT FINDS POOR MAINTENANCE, SHODDY OVERSIGHT OF THE CITI BIKE PROGRAM

New York City Bike Share failed to complete inspections, performed substandard maintenance and had excessive delays in response to cleanliness complaints

New York City – New York City Bike Share (NYCBS), the operator of the Citi Bike program, failed to both adequately inspect Citi Bike equipment and ensure stations were fully functional according to an [audit of NYCBS’s compliance with its contract with the New York City Department of Transportation \(DOT\)](#) released today by New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer.

“New York City Bike Share’s management of Citi Bike left too many New Yorkers in the lurch,” Comptroller Stringer said. “While Citi Bike has become part of our urban landscape, auditors found that the bike sharing program’s spotty maintenance, poorly-cleaned bikes and substandard docking stations inconvenienced riders and discouraged growth in the system. Moving forward, I hope that these findings will provide a road map for ways to improve safety and performance for this critical component of our transportation network.”

The Comptroller’s audit examined maintenance of Citi Bike equipment by NYCBS during the period of May 2013 through May 2014. The Citi Bike program has a fleet of approximately 6,000 bikes and 330 stations throughout the City. Bikeshare Holdings LLC recently announced an agreement to purchase Alta Bicycle Share—the parent company of NYCBS. With a promised infusion of additional capital, Bikeshare Holdings has announced plans to improve maintenance and double the size and geographic reach of the Citi Bike system by 2017.

According to NYCBS's own maintenance data, 28 percent of bikes system-wide were inspected in November 2013, 34 percent in December 2013 and 38 percent in January 2014, despite contract requirements that 100 percent of bikes undergo a complete maintenance check at least once per month. NYCBS cited the layoff of 16 on-street bike checkers during the winter months as a reason behind the decline in maintenance checks. By March 2014, following the re-hiring of inspectors, inspections rose to 54 percent of the fleet and to 73 percent by April. However, a sample of the maintenance records of 25 bikes from July 2013 through December 2013 found that NYCBS completed only 60 percent (84 of 141) of required monthly maintenance checks.

“With every missed maintenance check, the safety risk of undisclosed bike defects increases,” Stringer said. “New York City Bike Share needs to ensure that every Citi Bike cyclist is using a safe bike. The company’s decision to lay off inspection staff highlights DOT’s responsibility to make sure it covers all the bases when it enters into public-private partnerships such as this one.”

The audit also found:

- NYCBS failed to complete station inspections and poor documentation: Of the 29 stations sampled in February 2014, only 11 stations were inspected as required and the remaining 18 were inspected less than twice a week or not at all. Additionally, NYCBS’s failure to use required bike check forms when performing on-street maintenance checks resulted in missing inspection information.
- Cleanliness complaints not addressed promptly: While the contract with DOT required NYCBS to respond to cleanliness complaints within 48 hours for stations, and 96 hours for bikes, the audit found only 60 percent of the sampled complaints for stations were completed within the required time frame. Of the sampled bike cleanliness complaints, 83 percent remained open for an average of 79 days.
- Stations disconnected from credit card & communications systems: NYCBS’s contract requires communications and payment systems at stations to be online and connected to the main database at least 98 percent of the time. The audit found that in seven of ten sampled months, stations failed to reach that standard.
- Citi Bike mobile application accurate but not fully reliable: Because NYCBS’s central database can’t remotely detect defective bikes and nonfunctioning docks, the data feed to the Citi Bike app was faulty. Of 60 stations observed, the app was only 83 percent accurate with respect to working, available docks and 73 percent accurate with respect to available and working bikes.

“To develop transportation infrastructure for the 21st century, we also need information technology that guarantees maximum performance and safety for users,” Stringer said. “With NYCBS’s new owner, DOT has the opportunity to take

additional steps to ensure the reliability and sustainability of the bike share program in the coming years.”

The Comptroller’s office recommended that NYCBS:

- Hire staff to ensure required maintenance checks are completed in accordance with contract provisions;
- Ensure stations are inspected and equipment is maintained properly;
- Review operating practices and respond more promptly to complaints;
- Develop a strategy for making sure stations are online and connected to their central database as required; and
- Develop a procedure to ensure accurate data is available in the Citi Bike mobile application.

NYCBS generally agreed with six of the audit’s eight main findings. Separately, DOT agreed to implement the one recommendation that was directed to the agency about enhanced oversight.

To read the complete audit, please [click here](#).

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