



New York City Comptroller
Scott M. Stringer

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PR15-04-042

April 23, 2015

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COMPTROLLER STRINGER AUDIT REVEALS NEARLY ONE THIRD OF MTA EXPRESS BUSES NOT ON TIME

*Brooklyn & Staten Island buses least reliable;
nearly 40% of complaints about delays*

(New York, NY) - Express buses run by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) missed their scheduled departure times more than 30 percent of the time according to an [audit](#) released today by New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer. The audit also found that the MTA did not, until recently, even have the ability to track on-time performance of express buses on a regular, consistent basis and still has not set publically reported on-time performance targets.

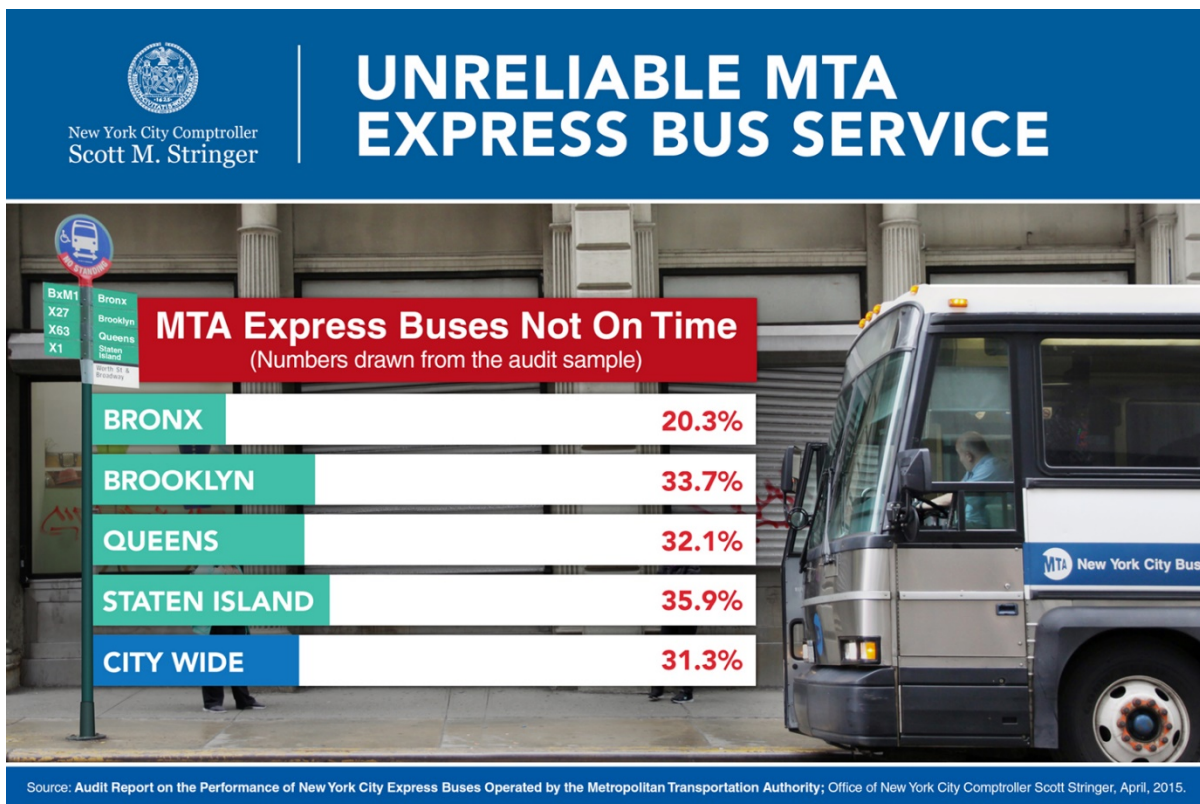
“We live in the greatest City in the world and we need a mass transit system that reflects that,” Comptroller Stringer said. “Millions of New Yorkers rely on express buses each year. When one out of every three buses is not on time, it impacts every borough and hits at our City’s economic competitiveness. New York City already has the longest workday in the country – our express buses should be a part of the solution, not the problem.”

The audit examined timeliness, wheelchair functionality, and customer satisfaction of express buses run by two agencies within the MTA: MTA Bus Company and New York City Transit (NYCT). The two agencies carried more than 9 million and 11.5

million commuters on express buses, respectively, in 2013 and each operates a fleet of over 500 express buses. Auditors observed 12 different express bus routes at the first and last stop of each line in the originating borough during the morning and/or afternoon rush hours from October 2013 through December 2013, and measured whether buses left before, on time, or later than scheduled.

The audit found that, overall, sampled express buses were not on time more than 30 percent of the time and commuters waited anywhere from 6 to 28 minutes after a scheduled departure time for the next available bus.

- Staten Island’s X1 and X17 buses displayed the worst performance, leaving either too late or too early an average of 35.9 percent of the time.
- In Brooklyn, the BM1, X27 and X28 bus routes were not on time an average of 33.7 percent of the time.
- On average, Queens and Bronx express bus routes were not on time 32.1 percent and 20.3 percent of the time, respectively.



Based on our observations, the vast majority of late departures occurred during the afternoon rush, with Brooklyn routes ranking highest with 36 late departures from Manhattan. Queens had the highest number of late departures during the morning rush with 24. Brooklyn also had the highest number of early departures in the

morning, with 19 of the 30 buses that we found left too early during our citywide observations.

“Living in Rosedale, New Dorp, Bay Ridge or Co-Op City shouldn’t mean you get less reliable and efficient mass transit. There’s a real human cost when long commutes separate people from their jobs and families and it’s one our City can’t afford,” Stringer said.

Significant findings of the audit include:

- **Delayed and late buses make up nearly 40 percent of all express bus customer complaints:** The MTA received 660 complaints related to express bus service from May-September 2014. Nearly 40 percent of those complaints were about late or delayed buses and 13 percent involved buses bypassing stops. Until April 2014, the MTA used an Excel spreadsheet to track complaints, though the system lacked the ability to categorize complaints by type or priority. Its new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system allows greater functionality and effectiveness in responding to complaints.
- **MTA has failed to establish on-time performance targets for express buses:** Until recently, the MTA did not even track on-time performance for express buses on a regular or consistent basis and so has been hindered in its ability to develop realistic time schedules. While the MTA publicly reports the percentage of bus trips completed and mean distance between failures, auditors found that it does not have on-time performance targets for its express buses. The MTA recently launched Bus Trek, a GPS platform that tracks buses along their scheduled routes, but the Authority hasn’t disclosed how it will use this data to improve performance.
- **MTA has failed to develop standard procedures for checking wheelchair lifts:** Although MTA personnel are required to inspect wheelchair lifts each week, without current, consistent standards to guide them, auditors found inconsistent inspection practices across bus depots. Without standardized procedures, wheelchair lifts may not function, prohibiting disabled riders from using particular buses and delaying riders.

The Comptroller’s office recommended that the MTA:

- Continue to use Bus Trek to modify and improve express bus schedules so that they are more reliable;
- Develop on-time performance and other performance targets for its express buses and publicly report progress toward meeting those targets;
- Update its procedures for inspecting wheelchair lifts and ensure that information is communicated effectively; and

- Continue to utilize CRM in tracking express bus complaints so it can more effectively determine trends and patterns that need to be addressed.

“We need to bring all parties to the table to discuss ways to improve service, including our hard-working drivers who know these neighborhoods and roadways better than anyone. Express bus riders pay a premium for their commutes, but management hasn’t done enough to ensure these buses are worth the cost. MTA management must take immediate steps to improve performance across the board and be more transparent about how they’ve met their own standards,” Stringer said.

"Express buses serve the people who need reliable public transit the most: residents of the boroughs, far from the city's core, who have few other options for how to get to work. Thank you to Scott Stringer for delving into the details to show where express bus service can improve for the 75,000 New Yorkers who rely on it every day," said John Raskin, Executive Director of the Riders Alliance.

"Express bus riders are paying much higher fares but aren't getting reliable service in return. Comptroller Stringer's audit shows that they just aren't getting their monies worth," said Gene Russianoff, staff attorney for the Straphangers Campaign, a transit riders group.

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

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