



# BUS RIDER BLUES

TRUE STORIES FROM  
50 NEW YORKERS

 **RIDERS  
ALLIANCE**

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*Bus Rider Blues*

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*Real Stories from 50 New Yorkers*

## RIDERS ALLIANCE

— **WHO WE ARE** —

Riders Alliance fights for reliable, affordable, world-class public transit in order to build a more just and sustainable New York. We organize subway and bus riders to develop grassroots power across racial, economic, and neighborhood lines. Together, we hold our elected officials accountable, engage the public, and take direct action to guarantee that riders have a powerful voice in the decisions that affect us.

## RIDERS ALLIANCE

– **INTRODUCTION** –

Over the past several months, Riders Alliance members and leaders have been on the ground in neighborhoods throughout the five boroughs talking to riders about their experience with New York City’s notoriously slow buses. We heard stories from people who showed up late to work and picking their children up from childcare, about negative impacts on performance in school, and much more, all because of unreliable bus service.

The overwhelming majority of city bus riders are low-income New Yorkers of color. More than half are immigrants to the United States. More than one-third of bus riders are essential workers in sectors like healthcare, childcare, pharmacies and supermarkets. New York has the most riders and the slowest buses of any city in the country. Even despite recent efforts at improvement, the quality of our bus service remains unacceptable. Our leaders must do more to put riders first on busy streets. Only much better buses can remedy such long standing and severe inequity in transportation policy.

Fortunately, there are many effective tools for speeding up buses and providing faster trips for millions of riders. The MTA needs to finish redesigning outdated route networks and adopt all-door boarding on every bus route in the city. The governor and legislature must make sure that the MTA has the state investment it needs to increase bus service to meet riders’ needs.

The NYC Department of Transportation, under the leadership of the mayor and with the oversight and encouragement of the City Council, must implement the Streets Master Plan, rapidly increasing the quantity and quality of bus lanes and busways on city streets to slash the amount of time riders spend in traffic and stopped at lights. The City must also enact policies that reduce overall car traffic, incentivizing civil servants and other drivers to ride transit and free up scarce public space on our streets.

Meanwhile, our City’s bus network faces a crisis, and so do the two million people who ride the bus each day. They endure long wait times, overcrowding, congestion, inaccessibility, and other undignified hardships. Here are their stories.

## RIDERS ALLIANCE

— CHAPTER 1 —

## **WE ALL FEAR LOSING OUR JOBS**

*Lateness and other impacts on workers*

### **I SACRIFICE MY BREAK AT WORK TO CATCH THE BUS**

*by Alan G., Brooklyn*

I live in Crown Heights and I wake up at 5 a.m. to get on the bus by 7 a.m., so I can make sure I am never late since the bus is sometimes delayed. Back in 2019, I was going home at night after work and not only did I have to wait for the bus after standing at work for 8 hours, but I left at 11:30 p.m. and felt unsafe outside. After this, I began sacrificing my break so I could leave at 11 p.m.

### **MY SUSPICIOUS BOSS REQUIRES SCREENSHOTS**

*by Nianna R., Queens*

I live in Jamaica and I take the Q111, Q113, and the Q60. Pre-pandemic, I worked in Long Island City. Back then, the buses were unreliable and constantly delayed. It got so bad that my boss was suspicious I was late for other reasons and required me to send screenshots of the Transit app to prove that my bus was late. This also placed me on probation, and led to extra stress at work. I started leaving for work much earlier to avoid being late. This ate away at the time I get to sleep, time with family, and leisure time. Just thinking about it makes me angry and stressed.

### **WE ALL FEAR LOSING OUR JOB BECAUSE OF TRANSIT**

*by William L., Bronx*

I live in the Melrose section of the Bronx and commute every day to work at JFK Airport. Without a direct bus service from the Bronx to JFK, which all the other boroughs have, I am left with the choice of taking a five-bus commute,

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or paying for an expensive Airtrain pass on top of my monthly MetroCard. My commute takes me two hours via public transit to get to work—that's four hours every day on buses and trains. During the pandemic with the subway closed, it was even harder, as I had to start my commute at 4 a.m., and I couldn't take the train.

I like my job very much, I like my coworkers, I have been there for three years. I have seniority and benefits. Why should I give that up because of transit? In places like Queens and the Bronx, which have many service workers, the lack of fast and reliable and affordable transit is cutting off economic opportunity. We need a direct link to transportation and work centers like JFK and LaGuardia. For service workers like myself, getting to work on time is paramount, and we do not have extra money to take an Uber or a taxi when the bus doesn't come on time. We all fear losing our job over transit, which would be a travesty, as we all have bills we have to pay.



*A rider waits for the bus alone late at night.*

**LATE TO WORK MULTIPLE TIMES**

*by Syeda H., Queens*

I use the Q83, and I wish that the bus came more frequently. The bus currently runs every 12–15 minutes during the rush, and I wish that the bus would come every 5–7 minutes. The routes are overcrowded and the buses pass my stop because no one else can fit in. It has made me late for work multiple times. It is also concerning that my commute home takes 30 minutes longer than the morning commute due to longer wait times.

**I'M LATE FOR WORK WHEN THE BUS DRIVER SKIPS MY STOP**

*by Vinnie S., Queens*

I am a home attendant that lives in Southwest Queens. The bus is consistently late and unreliable and I often have to wait 20 minutes and there is a lot of bus bunching. When the 8:37 a.m. bus does not show up, I have to wait for the next bus at 8:46 a.m. but it is often too crowded to board. Recently I was waiting for the Q12 and the bus driver skipped my stop so I had to wait for 60 minutes for the next bus. Being late for work is upsetting and impacts my professional life.

**I MISS MY CHILDREN'S PICKUP TIME**

*by Antonia P., Queens*

I live in Springfield Gardens, and as an essential worker I take the Q22, Q77, Q85, and Q114 buses. They are some of the most unreliable buses I have ever used, with wait times as long as 30 minutes. For my commute, I need to take either the Q77 or the Q85 to downtown, then take a Q114 to a Q22, taking about 1 hour and 15 minutes. The long journey and wait time results in me missing my children's pickup time from school, and regular lateness to work. One particular incident included a bus that never showed up. The missing bus meant that the journey took around 45 minutes longer, and thus I showed up to work late. The city should put more focus on improving buses in Southeast Queens.

**THE GOVERNMENT DIDN'T DO ANYTHING FOR US**

*by Celine P., Queens*

I work as an occupational therapist at the Jamaica hospital and live in Jamaica, Queens. The buses I use the most are the Q65, Q56, Q5. I live on top of a hill. Walking up the hill is especially difficult in the winter and summer heat. The limited bus doesn't take me to the top of the hill where my home is. Instead I have to get off at the bottom of the hill and walk or stay on the bus for six

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stops, cross the street, and wait for the bus going back towards my home to avoid walking up the hill. This adds 30–45 minutes to my commute. Spacing of the bus stops are really bad.

There are so many cars parked in front of the bus stops that drivers don't recognize you standing there and miss you. Unless you risk your life to flag the bus down in the street they are likely to miss you. This is happening more so now than ever before. Even in the bus lanes there are cars there.

My commute is mentally draining. I think besides just putting up signs that said you are heroes the government didn't do anything for essential workers. The biggest perk was getting free bus rides. The patients needed us. They couldn't have any visitors. Sometimes we sit with them and just talk. I got satisfaction and appreciation there.

— CHAPTER 2 —

## **SOMETIMES I PAY TWICE THE FARE**

*The hidden cost of unreliable buses*

### **ESSENTIAL WORKER GETS A \$100 FINE**

*by Esworth H., Queens*

I live in Jamaica, and currently work in East New York as a health aid. Currently, my journey is two hours using the Q85, J, L, and B82 SBS bus. On my first day of using the Select Bus Service, I got a \$100 fine for not prepaying my fare even though I have an unlimited card. I was very angry because I didn't know I had to prepay my fare, and the cost is significant. I strongly urge NYCT to make unlimited card passes, which would not be fined for SBS routes. Besides that, I wish there were better journeys to help fix the weakest link in NYC transport networks.

### **DINNER OR METRO CARD?**

*by Morina K., Queens*

I live in Richmond Hill and commute to Rosedale as a housekeeper. I take the Q56, Q111, Q24, and Q10 buses. My commute costs way too much, and I don't have enough money to pay a lot of the time. My current monthly expense budget is \$500 dollars, and that is really hard to live on in NYC, with spiraling housing costs, high transportation costs, and putting food on the table. The buses have definitely gotten worse over the years. Bus bunching has become a much bigger problem. The congestion that causes it needs some bus lanes and busways to help speed buses up and end bus bunching.

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### **MTA STAFF SHORTAGES MEANS PAYING EXTRA FOR CHILDCARE**

*by Asma H., Queens*

I am an office worker in Bayside, and I live in Jamaica. I currently take the Q31 bus, and the bus driver staff shortage has been horrible for my commute. My journey usually takes about an hour, but the wait times have progressively increased. The 1:35 p.m. bus has been pulled due to staffing shortages, and this results in an additional 15 minute wait to get on the bus. This is very hard on me financially, because I either show up late or have to pay more for additional child care. I wish that DOT will install more countdown clocks to determine where buses are and improve bus stops to stop cars parking in them.

### **THE Q24 COSTS ME A CAB**

*by Fermina H., Queens*

I ride the bus every day from my home in Ozone Park to the hospital in Jamaica Hills, where I work. The travel time is about an hour when there aren't any issues. My biggest challenge is how unreliable the Q24 is. The bus needs to be much more frequent, better than every 16 minutes. The bus gets very crowded due to the amount of people waiting to get on. The other day I waited for 40 minutes for the bus, and because of that, it was crammed. Sometimes, the unreliability results in a taxi ride, which is too big of a cost to do it often.

### **DON'T LET YOUR PHONE DIE**

*by Mitchell W., Brooklyn*

I was coming home from JFK a few months ago and took the A to Nostrand Ave to transfer to the B44-SBS. The countdown clock wasn't working and my phone was dead so I waited at the stop thinking the next bus would come in at least the next 10 minutes. I ended up waiting at the bus stop for 45 minutes. By the time the bus arrived, I wasn't even able to make a free transfer because too much time had passed. I didn't have any money left on my MetroCard, so I couldn't even pay my fare when I got on.

### **RIDERS ARE GETTING SHORTCHANGED**

*by Althea T., Queens*

I live in Jamaica and my commute taking the Merrick buses and the Q23 bus is pretty good. However, the bus is becoming very expensive. Many in Southeast Queens cannot afford the trips taken by bus. Many of us would benefit greatly from a 2-hour pass for \$2.75 instead of one transfer. My husband and

I had to take three buses to work, and that costs \$5.50 for each of us. That is frankly ridiculous, because why should the riders get shortchanged like that.



*The bus lane is blocked by illegally parked cars.*

**SOMETIMES I HAVE TO PAY TWICE THE FARE**

*by Kenneth B., Queens*

I travel between the Bronx, Manhattan, and Queens so I use my MetroCard multiple times a day. The price is too expensive and it only goes up. Some folks get on the bus and pay their fare only to get kicked off because the bus is too crowded. They have to pay twice the fare to get on the next bus. Even if you arrive on time the bus might be so crowded you have to wait for another bus and that might be 15, 20, or 30 minutes later. I am also a car owner but it's

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more convenient to take public transportation since the highway can have so much traffic and there are additional expenses. Still, public transportation has its ups and downs. I just have to overestimate how long any commute is so I can make sure I am on time. It always takes extra time out of your day.

### I SPEND \$50 A WEEK FOR TRANSPORTATION AND DON'T HAVE A JOB

*by Alexander J., Queens*

I have epilepsy and have to go to the doctor in Manhattan regularly. My commute is 1.5–2 hours to go to Manhattan. I spend about 20 minutes on the bus to take it to the train station. So I am averaging \$50 a week for transportation, which is a large financial burden right now as I don't have a job due to health reasons. My doctor had to call a medical taxi as I wasn't ready to go by train, but then it was so expensive to pay for it after I was in the hospital for three weeks.

### I HAD TO COUGH UP MONEY FOR UBERS

*by Raymond M., Bronx*

I take the bus daily in Co-op City. The Bx12, Bx28 and Bx38 suffer from horrible traffic on Fordham Road and Gun Hill Road, and sometimes it can take a very long time to reach Co-op City from the other side of the Bronx. In the case of the Bx28/38, it causes delays of a half hour for each branch of Gun Hill Road service. I usually avoid the Bx28/38 for that reason. I've had to cough up money for Ubers which is extremely unsustainable.

### NEW YORKERS ARE SICK OF IT!

*by Debra W., Brooklyn*

I take multiple buses throughout Brooklyn and Queens. I take the B12, B25, and B45, and they are very infrequent and late. The B45 has a big issue with frequency, increasing my commute by 30 minutes if I just missed one. This affects my routine, and I consistently arrive at my destination behind schedule. Frankly, New Yorkers are sick of it, and we are upset! Fares keep going up, and New Yorkers cannot pay it with increased hardship from the pandemic, and we don't see any improvement from it. We want to have a respectable journey that is not consistently delayed.

**CHAPTER 3**

**SENIORS DESERVE BETTER  
THAN THIS**

*Safety and accessibility issues on the bus*

**MY FINGERTIPS STARTED TURNING PURPLE AND BLACK**

*by Khadedrah S., Queens*

I have lupus so I am sometimes disabled and use a cane. I have to leave at a certain time to catch the bus so I can anticipate walking slower due to the pain. I am currently taking time off because of my health, but I take the Q3 for doctors appointments and that bus only runs every half hour. I have to use the bus timer website not just the Transit app because it's not always accurate, which is very frustrating.

I'd like to see more buses, particularly in certain areas, and more updated schedules. Generally, there should be better bus service. Since I live far away from the train, it is very inconvenient and hard to get a MetroCard. I would have to go to a check cashing place or use OMNY, which doesn't always work.

One time I was waiting outside in the cold for so long. The schedule said five minutes, and half an hour later the bus came. I lost feeling in my fingertips and they started to turn purple and black. I thought I could have died. Extreme weather conditions really affect me because of the lupus. At this point, I have no choice but to get my drivers license because I can't depend on public transportation.

**MOST BUSES DON'T HAVE A PLACE FOR ME TO SIT DOWN**

*by Jeanne M., Queens*

I grew up in St. Albans and currently live in downtown Jamaica. I am an active 73 year old woman and am very involved in my community. Growing up I



*A rider using a cane struggles to board the bus due to a snowbank.*

only had to take the bus to get to school. After most of my family died and we lost our home, I became homeless and had to learn the bus system to survive. I still rely on city buses daily to get around. I mostly take the Q4, Q5, Q85, Q84, Q20, Q44, and Q60. The medication I take makes me unsteady so I use a cane and most buses don't have seats for me to sit down. The front of the bus is so crowded I have to push my way through to the back. I am always afraid I will fall and hurt myself. I want more buses on routes and more reliability so that buses aren't as crowded.

The DOT and MTA need to be on the ground, talking to the people who are really taking the bus. They need to go to the depots and talk to the drivers and ask what their routes are like. They need to actually take bus rides, even if it's only a couple stops. This is the only way they'll really know what's going on.

**SENIORS DESERVE BETTER THAN THIS**

*by Beth C., Manhattan*

I am from Midtown East and retired. There's a lack of accurate information on bus schedules, which is a huge challenge. The three buses I take most regularly are the M15 local, the Q32 in Manhattan, and the M57. Supposedly one can go on the MTA's app to plan a trip and figure out the approximate time the bus will arrive. It will tell you the bus is 3 stops/7 min away. It becomes a problem when after 15 minutes it still says the same thing. I have waited 40 minutes for a bus—the app just says “layover.” You go back to the days where you just stand there and wait for something to eventually show up...it's not right. I'm 81 years old. I've had a hip replacement, knee replacement, and a bad ankle. I can't stand for hours and hours. Once my bus wasn't showing up so I walked all the way to the subway only to find out the elevator was broken and my ankle was too sore to use the stairs.

If the MTA wants people to believe they are doing the best thing with our tax money and keep hiking fares, there needs to be something that riders are getting back. It's a terrible problem for commuters and people that are retired. They're dropping the ball. They're in a state of chaos. They cut service during off peak hours when retired people are going to the grocery store, appointments, etc. The older riders tend to rely on buses because there are so few accessible train stations. Seniors deserve better than that. All riders deserve better than that.

**I SLIPPED AND FELL**

*by Samantha P., Bronx*

I live in Riverdale and mostly rely on express buses, the Bx10, Bx20, BxM1, and BxM2. My experiences with NYC buses is very stressful. The amount of time and energy and the mental toll it takes to deal with transit has a huge impact on my quality of life and wellbeing. Once I had groceries in hand and I saw my bus pull up to the stop ahead of me. Knowing I would have to wait at least 20 minutes for the next bus, I started running to catch it. It was winter and icy and I slipped and fell. My groceries went everywhere. People came to help me.

Waiting in extreme heat is terrible. Riverdale has a high elderly population, there's a lot of nursing homes here. I've been afraid people will pass out waiting for the bus. Sometimes I'll take a 5-minute Uber ride rather than wait 20 minutes for the bus. It's frustrating when I've already paid for a monthly pass. I have refused to pay for the express bus when I've been waiting over an hour in the cold. Outer boroughs get ignored the most. This needs to get sorted out better.

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### **MY BUS CAN'T REACH THE CURB**

*by Martin B., Bronx*

I live in Co-Op City and I take the Bx2, Bx12, and Bx23. The journey takes up to two hours to get to work. I recently had to wait 40–45 minutes to get a Bx12 bus, and today I waited for over 30 minutes for a Bx23 bus. Yet the MTA still wants to cut service in Co-Op City in their draft redesign plan. This does not even bring up the issue of accessibility for me and my wife. Many buses cannot reach the curb for people with wheelchairs and walkers because of blocked cars, and this makes it much harder to access the bus.

### **MY CANCELED BUS MEANS AN HOUR WAIT**

*by George B., Brooklyn*

I live in Canarsie and the biggest issue with buses is accessibility. Buses need to reliably pull up to the curb to allow the mobility impaired to use the buses. I have issues climbing up steps, and buses not meeting the curb is a huge problem. Also during the pandemic, buses were supposed to allow the elderly and disabled to use the front, yet drivers were not allowing it. Back when I worked, I was more concerned about frequency since I used it late at night, and a canceled bus would mean an hour wait. I think what is needed is bus lanes and enforcement.

### **THE APP IS TOTALLY OBLIVIOUS TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

*by Miriam E., Manhattan*

I ride the bus in Chelsea. The subway stations around me are not accessible, but I also avoid the bus because they are so slow and get stuck in traffic. I took the bus last summer when they were free for medical appointments. I have a bad back which is an invisible disability. I have trouble standing and waiting and bus shelters are far and few between. A lot of them don't have awnings, which is terrible in bad weather. The 23rd St and Second Ave bus stop only has one small bench and no awning. I've worked for the International Center for the Disabled for twenty years. With the outpatient rehab, a lot use Access-A-Ride, making them late and not picking them up on time. Many people with disabilities don't have a voice and many changes have to come through lawsuits. There is now a new app that lets you know if the bus is full and if you should wait for the next one. It is very hard to wait for the next bus, so it is not helpful. The app was not a solution for people who it would be hard to wait for. The app is totally oblivious to people with disabilities. Knowing a bus will arrive in 20 minutes is not helpful when you have to stand in the hot

sun. What we really need if buses are crowded is more frequency, not an app! Nobody asks seniors or people with disabilities what they need.



*A rider with a cane must climb a large step in order to board the bus.*

### **I FLEW OUT OF MY SEAT!**

*by Chezurleyah A., Queens*

I'm an entertainer and I perform all over the city, so I take the bus to work and to see family. My daily commute is about 1.5–2 hours each way, and this is especially bad on the weekends. I take the Q4, Q83, B12 or B41. There needs to be more drivers and better service. I see depots with many buses just not in use. There is very limited service in the evening, and with the pandemic, there are not many cabs either. One time I fell backwards on the bus because the

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bus driver was driving really fast. I flew out of my seat! I've been riding the bus for decades, since I was in elementary school, and not much has changed since I was a kid. I still deal with the same difficulties. I have traveled across the country, and NYC buses are definitely disappointing.

### LUCKILY WALKING WAS UNCOMFORTABLE BUT DOABLE FOR ME

*by Elizabeth P., Brooklyn*

When I lived in Bed-Stuy, I would often get off the subway in downtown Brooklyn and take the B38 to get home because the G train was pretty unreliable. One night the bus made it about a mile from the subway stop where I had gotten on, and then told everyone to get off, that the bus was going out of service. They didn't tell us whether another bus was coming or if they were all stopping short. They didn't let us ride the bus back towards the subway. At that point, I could either walk a mile back to the subway or walk the 1.5 miles home, so I walked 1.5 miles home with a huge backpack in midsummer heat. Luckily walking was uncomfortable but doable for me. For a lot of New Yorkers it isn't. I don't know what caused that bus to go out of service, but I wish they had either told us when we got on that it wasn't going the whole way, or that they had left us with better options and not stranded far from all other transit.

**CHAPTER 4**

**I DON'T HAVE  
ENERGY FOR HOMEWORK**

*Impact on students*

**I DON'T HAVE ENERGY FOR HOMEWORK**

*by Brandy M., Queens*

I'm a high school student and I have taken the Q112 for 3–4 years now. It's always packed, or late, or it is dirty. I remember one time my friend tested to see if the buses were clean. She went around the bus at 8 a.m. and went back at 5 p.m. and the trash from the morning was still there. I felt so disgusted but it's not like I can avoid taking the bus. In NYC, people rely on public transportation. Riding a car is not an option because they are so expensive. My commute starts at around 8:40 a.m.. I get on the Q112 and the ride is 30–40 minutes depending on how many people are on the bus. I arrive usually around 9:40 a.m.. But the ride home is a completely different story. The first bus is usually packed or it's late. When I get out of school the bus app says it's supposed to come at 3:30 p.m. and then it comes at 4 p.m. Some kids have jobs or have to take care of family, and it puts everyone's schedule behind. I get off at the last stop and I see how long it takes everyone to get to school. I get home from school and I don't have the energy to do homework anymore

I haven't received my student MetroCard this summer, and I spent nearly \$200 on it. It adds up to a lot of money. Lower fares are a must. I heard they were going to raise it more, and when I'm not in high school anymore, what am I going to do without student MetroCard?

## **RIDERS ALLIANCE**

### **LONG COMMUTES IMPACT MY PERFORMANCE IN SCHOOL**

*by Lisa L., Queens*

I live in St Albans and I am a student at Brooklyn Tech and use many bus routes. The extreme weather affects commutes and I end up being late for class when delayed. My morning commutes are much more reliable than evening commutes. Long commutes result in less sleep and impacts my concentration and performance in school. I don't get home till 7 or 8 p.m. to start my homework. I appreciate it when I have Wi-Fi on the commute though.

### **THE BUSWAY AT MAIN ST MAKES SERVICE MUCH FASTER**

*by Nadia S., Bronx*

I live in Soundview and take the bus to study at Queensborough Community College. Currently, my commute requires three buses and two hours of travel time in each direction. I have to contend with slow and unreliable buses in the Bronx, with wait times that exceed 90 minutes during bad weather. The bus to QCC is also consistently overcrowded and slow. I urge the MTA to explore a limited service to QCC and Cardozo to help move people to where they need to go. However, the Q44 SBS is a good example of what to do to prioritize bus service. The bus lanes and busway at Main St. makes the service much faster. However, journeys are overall stressful and overwhelming, and as someone of lower income it can be a burden with the fares.

### **THEY STILL HAVE THE AUDACITY TO INCREASE FARES**

*by Maria E., Brooklyn*

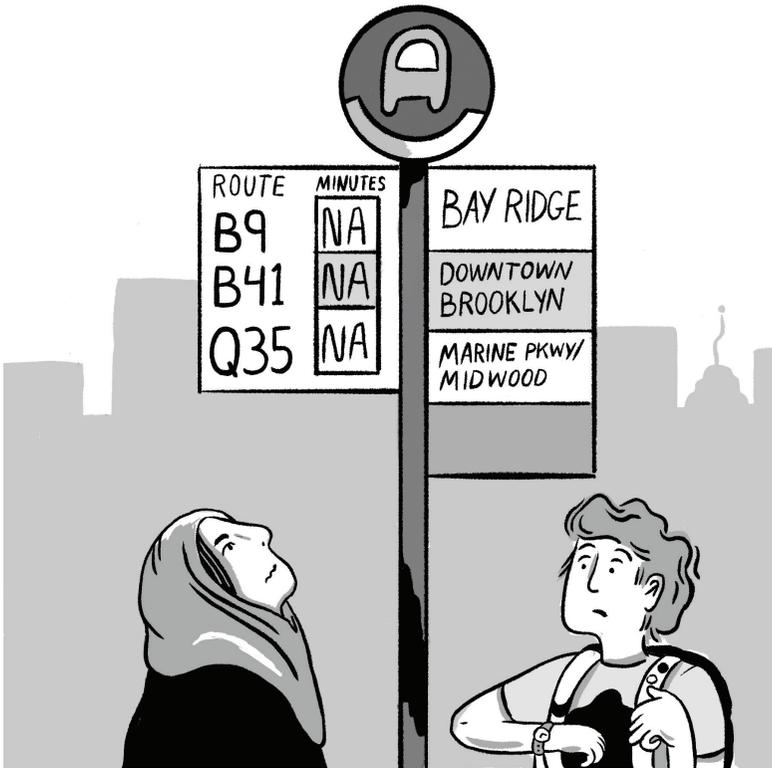
I live in Brooklyn, and take the B6, B26, and B46 to go to school. These buses are always late and unreliable. The B26 especially was rough, because of narrow roads and high traffic volumes, while the B6 and B46 suffered from overcrowding. Many of these routes also suffer from congestion and accessibility issues. Accessibility is a massive issue when cars park in the bus stops, yet they still have the audacity to increase fares. The MTA should focus on frequency improvements to help alleviate overcrowding.

### **LIRR IS NOT CONDUCTIVE FOR LOWER AND MID INCOME**

*by Violet A., Queens*

I live in Laurelton, and any journey has always been long. Currently, I take the Q5 or the N4 to the subway to make it to work on Roosevelt Island, but my usual commute during the college semester is to go all the way to Harlem. This summer, the Q5 has been unreliable, especially during the morning

rush, forcing me to use the N4 sometimes. The N4 has been more consistent throughout the day, even if it means walking an extra 15 minutes to cross the border to Nassau County to ride it. The most reliable option is the LIRR; however, its high cost is not conducive to use by lower and mid income riders, unless you can take advantage of deals like CityTicket or Atlantic Ticket. A regional rail network with fare parity and frequency increases with the subway would do a lot to help me travel throughout the city.



*Two riders wait at a bus stop wondering when their bus will arrive.*

CHAPTER 5

## WEALTHIER NEIGHBORHOODS GET BETTER SERVICE

*Building a more equitable city through transit*

### YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TO KNOW THE SCHEDULE OFF THE TOP OF YOUR HEAD

*Steven M., Bronx*

I work at a nonprofit that supports family and childcare providers. I am near Pelham Parkway in the Bronx. The bus lane on Pelham Parkway is in complete disrepair. For a 12-minute trip I have to plan for 45 minutes in advance. You shouldn't have to know the schedule off the top of your head. You should know that when you show up at a stop there will be another bus in 5–10 minutes even if you just missed it. Then, there are the buses up Gun Hill Road, which is another area that is dysfunctional. I've walked two miles from the hospital to where I live because it is not even worth it to take the bus.

We also need shelters and adequate seating. At Pelham Bay station, a transportation hub, there's only three seats when there's 20–30 people waiting for the bus. In the rain people are waiting in a nasty area underneath the subway. It's rather disgusting and inhabited by pigeons, and people have to cram underneath.

I think we need to have real bus lanes that are complete so buses don't have to sit in the same personal vehicle traffic. Everything flows from there and at that point you can have more reliable and frequent service. I want more people taking the bus, for every person that's opting to take a car instead it's damaging the environment. This is what I want to see for the city.

**WE WAIT HOURS FOR BUSES THAT NEVER COME**

*by Ryan H., Brooklyn*

I live in Flatbush where there are a lot of people who are dependent on the buses, and frankly the bus does not meet the community's expectations. We have waited hours for buses that never come, extreme overcrowding that results in assaults and discrimination, and yet, the fares keep on increasing. I want to see an increase in the investment of the transport links within the neighborhood, with more frequent buses, new bus routes to serve new locations by the MTA, while NYCDOT fixes the root issues of congestion and unreliability of the bus, and to create a better experience waiting for the bus.

**THE BUS NETWORK IS RACIST**

*by Abraham M., Queens*

The bus is rooted in many of the racist policies done by the state. Buses in Queens don't have the same resources as those in Manhattan. There has not been money put into the area, with old buses, lack of mask dispensaries and other amenities that other parts of the city gets.

**WEALTHIER NEIGHBORHOODS GET BETTER SERVICE**

*by David B., Queens*

I take the bus every week and find the Q56 doesn't run as much as Q84, Q20, and other buses on the Jamaica Avenue line. It is so infrequent and I always have to wait for it. Sometimes you are waiting up to half an hour for a bus which is very inconvenient. When it finally comes, it stops for almost ten minutes at Broadway Junction because that's when the bus driver takes their break and at the depot they switch drivers. That is procedure but the infrequency is very frustrating. In Bayside Queens, where I used to live, the bus drivers had to be very alert, aware, and on time because it was a wealthier area where people would leave many complaints, but now where I live people don't leave as many complaints. There should be a complaint system available in lower socio-economic areas, maybe then it would improve. It just feels like Broadway Junction, because its Black and Brown people, the MTA doesn't seem to be concerned.

**NAVIGATING THE BUS NETWORK IS TRYING ON MY MENTAL HEALTH**

*by Infinitae S., Bronx*

I am an Organizing Director in the Bronx. The Bx4 was the bus I took most frequently, along with the Bx21 and Bx36. My commute was long and dreadful. The Bx36 was always late and would always come at the same time.

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Literally four at the same time. The Bx21 is always crowded. The bus is very emotionally draining and trying on my mental health overall. As a mother, if I'm there with my children it's a stressful situation. Buses are so crowded that sometimes I skip the bus and walk instead. My kids get tired, especially when it's so hot. When you notice that commutes are calmer in other communities it makes you analyze your own environment and ask why the Bronx has worse buses than any other borough I've been in. I think buses should be much cleaner. The MTA bus schedule doesn't work, it's getting late, I have to get my kids home to do their homework, and I just want the ability to rely on the MTA to let you know when the bus will be there.

### **SERVICE TO NEW LOCATIONS WOULD BE A GODSEND**

*by James J., Queens*

I live in Fresh Meadow, where bus journeys to the subway take a long time. I want to see more bus shelters and more frequent buses to improve bus service. Also expanding bus service to new locations would also be a godsend to underserved areas in Eastern Queens.

### **I WISH I COULD TAKE THE BUS**

*by Jean P., Queens*

I live in Jamaica and work on Classon Ave in Brooklyn. I currently drive to work due to the long journey times by public transportation. A 45-minute drive becomes a two-hour public transit ride. However, frankly I hate driving. It is so expensive, and I hate trying to find parking. I wish I could use public transit more. I would consider using the public transit network if a truly integrated network effectively moved people, bringing the LIRR to the same price as the subway. I'm upset that the transit system isn't as good as it can be and wish I could ditch my stressful journey for something better.

### **THE MTA DOESN'T WANT TO WORK FOR US ANYMORE**

*by Joyce A., Bronx*

I live in Soundview and take several of the buses in the area. The Bx4, Bx5, and Bx27 buses are not frequent, and have gotten significantly worse over time. Due to bus delays, a one-hour drive can end up being over a 2-hour bus journey, with wait times of 30–45 minutes, which is miserable after a long day at work. Sometimes, I am forced to take a taxi or drive because the travel time is so much higher than taking the bus. All of the cost of using taxis is extremely taxing on our lives, and it seems like the MTA really doesn't care.

I always tell my daughter, the MTA doesn't want to work for us any more. I wish the MTA and DOT would work together to improve bus service. There needs to be a comprehensive program to install bus shelters or benches at all bus stops, fix the staff shortage, and reduce the fare.



*A bus waits in standstill traffic.*

**IF IT WERE WINTER IT WOULD HAVE BEEN UNBEARABLE**

*by Tonicia H., Queens*

I often deal with a very slow bus and long wait times. The longest was from 8:25 p.m. to 10:55 p.m. one Wednesday night. Had it been in the winter, it would have been unbearable. I need to be careful of time so I am not standing for a long time because it is very difficult.

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Where I live, off of 101st Avenue, a lot of people drive big trucks that are parked near the bus stop. It's very hard to make sure a bus driver sees me because it's just a pole, not a bus stand. It happened to me twice where the bus driver didn't see me because of the parked cars. In some areas the wait time is very short and buses come by often, but for this area it's not good.

**CHAPTER 6**

**BUS LANES ARE CRITICAL  
AND NEED ENFORCEMENT**

*The case for bus lanes, busways, and all-door boarding*

**THE BX12 IS THE BIGGEST NIGHTMARE ON EARTH**

*by Elaine B., Bronx*

I am originally from the Bronx and currently live in Bedford Park. Buses are more crowded now. I don't remember it being like a sardine can. The Bx12 is the biggest nightmare on earth and Fordham R.d. is a monster area. There are mobs of people waiting for the bus. Everything gets backed up, people are driving in the bus lanes, and the bus can't get up to the traffic light. A lot of times the first bus is too crowded to get on, so you wait for the second and sometimes the third. The buses won't come for thirty minutes or more and then they all show up at once.

**FLUSHING BUSWAY IMPROVED LIVES OF WORKERS**

*by John C., Queens*

I live in Flushing, and buses are a lifeline for residents and businesses in the area. Before the busway was installed, it would take nearly 30 minutes to traverse 3–4 stops in Downtown Flushing. It clearly was not the best use of public space in the area, and resulted in extreme congestion. Since the busway was introduced, there has been a great improvement in bus service, improving the lives of workers that rely on the buses. The busway also helped improve the experience for alternative transport, making it much safer to cycle on Main St. The biggest issue with the busway was the lack of outreach about this program. I wish the DOT would conduct a thorough analysis of busways around the city, like it did

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with the 14th St. busway in Manhattan. A thorough analysis would help dispel the anecdotal evidence that motorists use in opposition to projects.

### BUSWAY ON FORDHAM ROAD, PLEASE!

*by Steph, Bronx*

I live in the Bronx, and take the Bx12. My bus is consistently busy and crammed full. The other day, three consecutive buses had to go out of service. This dumped hundreds of riders each time it happened, causing riders to force their way onto the next bus, which was already packed. This made my 20-minute journey 1 hour long. These journeys show how necessary maintenance and reliability is, and the importance of improving bus speeds. I would strongly recommend a busway on Fordham Road to support the large number of buses and riders that use this corridor.



*Riders must wait to board the bus, unable to enter through the back door.*

**THE BUS LANE ON 149TH STREET HAS BEEN  
A GREAT ADDITION**

*by Karen S., Bronx*

I live in Melrose and take the Bx19 bus. I want to see buses that are more reliable and faster to combat overcrowding. The bus lanes on 149th St. have been a great addition to the network, yet more needs to be done to alleviate congestion, especially cars that enter the bus lane.

**WHERE IS OUR BUS CHAMPION?**

*by Pete T., Brooklyn*

I live close to Sunset Park, and buses in the area always get delayed when they are in mixed traffic. As a transit-dependent person, it becomes hard to plan your day because of the unreliable bus system. We need bus lanes and more frequent service to create the network New Yorkers will be proud of. It just needs the political will to do it, and a champion in the mayoral seat will do wonders.

**BUS LANES ARE A MUCH BETTER USE OF SPACE**

*by Alex C., Queens*

I take the Q5, Q44, Q60, and Q65. Buses are usually fast, without traffic, but bus lanes are a much better use of space. Flushing and Jamaica have very similar situations, with large amounts of bus movements throughout the neighborhood with subway access, as well as an increase in luxury housing in these neighborhoods. The busway on Main St. has sped up the buses around Flushing, and it can be used around Jamaica on Jamaica and Archer Avenues. Coupled with increased frequency will be amazing for the region.

**PRECIOUS MINUTES STUCK IN LINE**

*by Samuel S., Queens*

The current boarding method slows buses down. OMNY readers are already installed on every door of every single bus, even the oldest ones. As a long-time bus rider, all-door boarding would help me out a lot. I live in southeast Queens, which means I get on the bus at the first stop in Jamaica along with hundreds of others. Every bus line is the same: precious minutes stuck in line, or sitting in the bus not moving if you're first until everyone gets on.

**ALL-DOOR BOARDING WILL HELP**

*by Henry A., Bronx*

I live in Soundview, and I use the Bx27 and Bx39 bus to run errands. The biggest issue is how boarding and getting off is a massive hassle because

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individuals walk to the front from the back to get off. Ultimately, all-door boarding will help, and I strongly believe it to be a good thing.

### A BUSWAY WOULD FIX THESE ISSUES

*by Veronica J., Queens*

I live in Richmond Hill, and I take the Q56 and other buses on Jamaica Ave. I think taking transit is very nice. I have an unlimited card, which means I have unlimited trips throughout the city, and have the flexibility to take the train or bus. However, there is one major issue. Currently the journey is very slow throughout Downtown Jamaica because of congestion and intrusions into the bus lanes by cars. The busway would fix these issues, and I urge elected officials to be serious about this issue.

### PEOPLE ARE DISSUADED FROM USING PUBLIC TRANSIT AT ALL

*by Joanne S., Brooklyn*

I live in Park Slope and usually take the bus several times a week. I experience so much bus bunching and service gaps, especially on the B69 corridor. It's a chronic problem that countdown clocks do not reflect reality, and they are never accurate. A lot of stops don't have any route information so there's no way to get a schedule. The tap to pay system doesn't always work great.

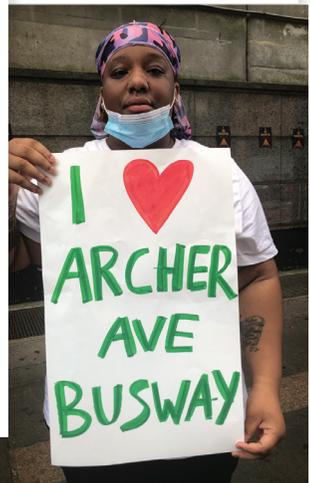
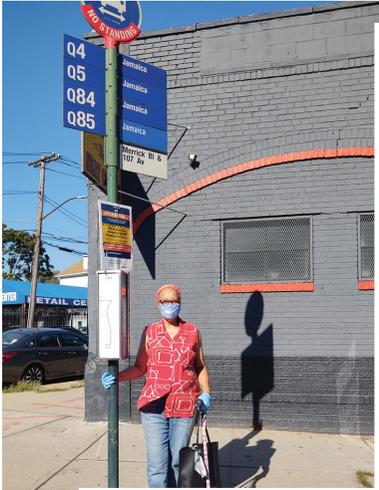
Public transit is much more cost efficient, and better from an environmental justice point of view. NYC could be doing so much more to create exclusive space for buses, the lanes are an abuse of that space that's supposed to be being used to move people more efficiently. There's not enough incentive to get people to not park there. The NYPD is not doing their job of traffic enforcement. More enforcement cameras are a step in the right direction.

When can we all get all-door boarding? The SBS routes have it, all buses should have it. When my kids were younger, MTA policy says that you have to fold strollers, this is untenable for most caregivers, it's holding everything you need for the day and a child. Other countries and cities have created transit options that accommodate this. When I was a young mom there were times I couldn't even take the bus because of this. There are often cars and delivery trucks blocking stops so buses couldn't bring the platform to me. Half the time there's something blocking the curb. This is a huge issue for people with mobility issues! Ultimately, I invite NYCDOT and MTA to CB6 to talk more about ways to improve transit in our communities



RIDERS ALLIANCE





## **RIDERS ALLIANCE**

### **— JOIN RIDERS ALLIANCE —**

Help us build better buses for all New Yorkers. Check out Riders Alliance at [www.ridersalliance.org](http://www.ridersalliance.org) and follow us on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram @RidersAlliance.

*Bus Rider Blues*

The logo for Riders Alliance features a stylized graphic of four horizontal lines in blue, orange, green, and purple, positioned to the left of the text. The text "RIDERS" is on the top line and "ALLIANCE" is on the bottom line, both in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

**RIDERS  
ALLIANCE**