



NYC Council Hearing  
Committee on Transportation  
June 19, 2012

**Oversight Committee: Keeping Up with the Boroughs - Addressing Public Transit Needs Outside Manhattan**

Good morning. My name is Veronica Vanterpool and I am the executive director of the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, a regional, non-profit organization that advocates for improved transit service and walkable, livable, sustainable communities throughout New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.

Some interesting trends have defined the outer boroughs lately: zoning changes and cheaper real estate are spurring more development in the Bronx and Brooklyn; job growth in the outer boroughs has outpaced job growth in Manhattan; and fewer people outside of Manhattan own cars and rely on buses, subways, and bikes to get around. One shared characteristic of these trends, however, has been the increased demand on the City's public transit system.

To accommodate this demand, the New York City Department of Transportation and the MTA have implemented several new transit initiatives. One of the most successful has been Select Bus Service. In partnership, the MTA and NYCDOT improved bus service for millions of annual bus riders along Fordham Road in the Bronx (the very first corridor and the 3<sup>rd</sup> busiest bus route in NYC) and 34<sup>th</sup> Street and 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenues in Manhattan. By creating exclusive bus lanes, off board fare collection, new signal technology, and better bus design, the commutes of daily bus riders along these corridors has gotten shorter, less frustrating, more modern, and more enjoyable. The numbers support this: each SBS route has seen ridership grow and travel time reduced. In the Bronx, ridership on the grew by 10% and travel time shrunk by 20%; 34<sup>th</sup> Street ridership grew 5% and travel time dropped by 17%; 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue SBS ridership grew by 10% and travel time was reduced 15-18%. The success of these routes is setting the stage for the next phase of SBS corridors in the outer boroughs. Nostrand Avenue, with 40,000 daily riders, is one of the busiest routes in Brooklyn. The Bronx might soon see its second SBS corridor along Webster Avenue where 52,000 daily passengers ride buses along the corridor. Staten Island is primed to see a modified version of SBS on the S79 route this fall.

Select Bus Service (SBS) is one of the easiest, most flexible and affordable ways to meet growing transit demand outside of Manhattan. And, it is one of the most practical ways to deliver better transit service to people of all ages and abilities. With very little in start up costs, transit service can be expediently transformed for thousands of people daily. Since 2008 when the first SBS service went into effect in the Bronx, the needs of bus riders have been better prioritized. The NYC Council must ensure that these types of projects continue. SBS is a coordinated effort between the MTA and NYCDOT that can only thrive with the support of local and state officials. Bus riders are relying on you to ensure the leadership

at the MTA and DOT receive the political support and critical capital and operating funds necessary to move the next round of projects forward expediently.

Beyond SBS, communities throughout the outer boroughs are especially eager to see better bus service. According to NYCT 2011 ridership statistics, bus ridership grew on seven Bronx and seven Queens bus routes. In Brooklyn, bus ridership increased on five routes with one route (B61) experiencing a 46% increase. Demand for buses is growing in the outer boroughs but to meet this demand, additional capital funds are needed to purchase modern, efficient buses and operating funds are needed to pay for increased service. Without this investment, expanded routes and improved frequency will be slow to materialize.

With regards to expanded rail service, there is significant potential in the Bronx. As part of the Penn Station Access Study, Metro North is studying building four new rail stations throughout the East Bronx: in Co-op City, Hunts Point, Morris Park, and Parkchester that would provide direct service to Penn Station. This idea is widely supported by community boards, residents, and elected officials.

Lastly, it must be noted that every transit user is a pedestrian and/or a bicyclist. Pedestrian and bike infrastructure, such as crosswalks, sidewalks, signage, signalization and bike lanes, bike racks, and bike shelters should accompany new bus stops, routes, or rail stations. With the pending launch of New York City's Bike Share program, the City has a unique opportunity to integrate this new public transportation option with existing bus, subway and rail service, bolstering ridership across transit options in the process. It should not be a missed opportunity.

Transit ridership nationwide grew five percent in the first quarter of 2012, according to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA). This was the fifth consecutive quarter of U.S. public transit ridership increase making it the highest rates of transit ridership since the 1950s. And, we've seen this growth in NYC's transit system too. In a city with 8.2 million residents, limited transit resources should be concentrated to deliver the best bang for the buck. Improved bus service in the outer boroughs, where new population growth is surging (especially in Brooklyn and Queens according to the 2010 Census) makes the most sense in a fiscally and geographically constrained transit landscape. And with additional investment, the construction of new Metro North rail stations in the Bronx can provide more options for Bronx residents.

We hope the next round of SBS projects are strongly supported by the NYC Council and the next administration. And, we hope NYC and NYS continue to support transit investment through innovative and new revenue streams. Thank you.