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## ***Chronicle of a Challenging Commute: 100 Days and 100 Nights***

*New NYC Transit Riders Council Report Details What's Getting Better – And What Still Needs to be Done*

March 14, 2019 – NY, NY: Train delays caused by signal malfunctions, slow speeds, overcrowding and track conditions have been a frustrating part of the daily commute for too long – but there's a light at the end of the tunnel. Real change is already underway on New York's subways and elevated trains thanks in large part to the Subway Action Plan (SAP) and Fast Forward, but so much more can and should be done.

The latest New York City Transit Riders Council (NYCTRC) report, *100 Days and 100 Nights: From Astoria to Lower Manhattan and Back*, chronicles a commuter's more than 200 rush hour trips to and from work, and highlights specific steps that could be taken to vastly improve the journey for tens of thousands of riders every day. Our rider starts his day on the N/W from the Broadway station in Astoria, transfers at the Lexington Av/59 St station to the 4/5 lines, and exits at lower Manhattan's Bowling Green station, with the reverse trip in the afternoon rush. This geographically diverse route includes riders from Queens, the Bronx, the Upper East Side, and Brooklyn.

Several factors affecting the trip were measured and analyzed, including: total trip durations; trip segment durations; track speeds; station dwell times; platform wait times; transfer times; station crowding; onboard crowding; and stairwell crowding. We found that any poor performance on the N/W and/or 4/5 lines created conditions that significantly affected route reliability and the rider experience, leading to overcrowding on trains, stairways and platforms, and triggering a ripple effect across lines and stations:

- Morning riders encountered overcrowding at the N/W Broadway station, onboard crowding at Queensboro Plaza, packed stairwells at the Lex/59 St station, and slow track speeds on the 4/5 lines. Our rider had to add nine minutes to the scheduled trip time, extending the trip from the scheduled 39 minutes to over 48 minutes.
- In the PM commute, the 4/5 from Bowling Green to Grand Central/42 St became so overcrowded by the Fulton St station that riders were unable to board the train at least 27% of the time. In addition, the Lex/59 St station's frequent overcrowding substantially slowed the transfer times with even a slight service delay.

Over the course of a year, we compared our rider's experience to NYC Transit's peak hour real-time General Transit Feed Specification data and schedule data to identify performance changes as a result of the SAP and the Save Safe Seconds campaign. Our analysis showed that after the first year of the SAP, major delays on the 4/5 line declined by 38%. Through Save Safe Seconds, more than two dozen locations system-wide have seen increased speed limits, with dozens more in the pipeline. Some of these speed improvements will directly improve our surveyed route by increasing 4/5 train speeds south of 14 St/Union Square and doubling N/W train speeds in and out of the Ditmars terminal in Astoria.

Andrew Albert, chair of the New York City Transit Riders Council said, "New Yorkers face challenging commutes every day, not knowing whether they'll get to work on time, or home for dinner. This report shines a light on a particularly bad route and transfer, but it's just one example across the system. We've started to see what a focused plan and dedicated funding can do, but it's just the first step of what's needed. The long-term health of the transit system requires sustainable and reliable funding and full implementation of the Fast Forward plan. Anything else is a disservice to riders." The report can be found at <http://www.pcac100daysandnights.org/>

## *Key Recommendations from 100 Days and 100 Nights*

The report makes a series of recommendations within the context of the Fast Forward plan including *upgrading critical infrastructure; reviewing potential route changes to reduce reliance on critical interlockings; revitalizing the station experience; accelerating accessibility; and giving buses greater priority in the face of traffic.*

The report can be found at <http://www.pcac100daysandnights.org/>

### Maximize N/R/W line capacity and reliability.

- Reconfigure the Astoria-Ditmars terminal tracks to increase AM peak Manhattan-bound train frequency and reliability, boosting potential capacity from 14 trains per hour (tph) to 19-24 tph.
- Reroute the N/R lines and de-interline (route-simplify) the Manhattan Broadway Line to increase train frequency and reliability, while reducing the Lex/59 St station crowding problem.

### Maximize 4/5-line capacity and reliability.

- Ensure 4/5/6 line Communication Based Train Control (CBTC) is installed within five years of implementation of Fast Forward to improve reliability, resiliency, track speeds, and crowding.
- Continue track speed and signal timer adjustments to improve train speed and throughput.
- Evaluate moving the southbound 4/5 platform at 14 St/Union Square station north to the straight track area, thus eliminating the need for the gap fillers and subsequent delays.
- Reroute the Brooklyn termini 2/3/4/5 lines to eliminate Nostrand Junction train conflicts that disrupt train spacing and interferes with the lines' reliability.

### Improve traffic flow and reduce crowding at Lex/59 St station.

- Conduct a detailed capacity study of the station, similar to the one conducted for Grand Central station to understand the short and long-term improvements that must be made to the station.
- Establish a Lex/59 St station crowd control mitigation plan staffed with additional platform controllers.
- Conduct regular table-top exercises to address Lex/59 St station crowding situations.
- Create station passenger-based crowding metrics to better inform NYC Transit of when to implement station-specific crowd-control measures.
- Implement and enforce a two-lane Lexington Avenue dedicated busway during Lexington Line CBTC installation, and apply Transit Signal Priority (TSP) as soon as possible to speed up buses.

*Created by the NY State Legislature in 1981, the New York City Transit Riders Council (NYCTRC) is one of three rider councils under the umbrella of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC). The NYCTRC advocates on behalf of over 5.5 million daily subway and bus users.*