

MTA should cut waste, not core bus & subway service

The Queens Civic Congress strongly recommends that the Metropolitan Transportation Authority maintain bus and subway service rather than impose cuts to these core services, as the board voted Dec. 16 to put on the table for consideration following public hearings next year.

Instead, our coalition of more than 110 civic, community, cooperative, tenant and other Queens organizations insists that the transit agency look at other parts of its budget.

While the MTA proposes cuts to central salaries to be implemented in the spring, when new revenue estimates could obviate that one set of reductions, the congress looks to the MTA to do more than take symbolic action. Indeed, the public demands more of the MTA.

The agency must seize this opportunity to review how it contracts out, including for professional services.

The Queens Civic Congress has received information that indicates the MTA handles its legal services in an unnecessarily costly manner.

Similar wasteful practices may exist elsewhere in the MTA and its subsidiaries.

The MTA must also rethink the mega-projects in the capital program before imposing any cuts to existing bus and



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Corey Bearak

subway service. This includes adopting the City Council's proposal to apply \$90 million in unused federal stimulus monies to cover operations.

In addition, it makes sense, as the Council also recommended, to apply some \$50 million in funds currently allocated to pay-as-you-go capital to avert service cuts. It should drop any consideration of any form of congestion pricing, which is inefficient, unsound, unfair and a sham revenue scheme that nets negligible if any funds for transit.

Many pundits and commentators often have glossed over how transit was shortchanged, if not outright robbed, by the city and state over the years.

Times remain tough, but better times, when they come, ought to include new commitments from the city and state. The Queens Civic Congress has previously noted the minuscule aid New York City provides (barely 4% of NYC Transit's operating budget).

Innovative ways exist to give the state

and city the resources to provide stable annual contributions to transit, empowering the MTA to keep fares reasonable, even to reduce them.

We need that approach — reduced fares and service increases — to induce more people to eschew reliance on cars, something that's very hard to do while living in Queens.

Service increases should include extending the Q79 bus line to the Floral Park Long Island Rail Road station; increasing north-south bus service in Queens; adding Sunday service on such lines as the Q79, Q77 and Q76, and ceasing the practice of running Sunday and holiday schedules on weekdays and Saturdays with little or no notice.

The Queens Civic Congress also urges the MTA, state and city to seek and obtain more federal stimulus and other funding for transit. U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood made clear in a recent television appearance that the White House recognizes the need to increase support for mass transit.

For more than two years, the civic congress has promoted specific revenue measures to provide additional support for mass transit, but ridership increases without a concomitant investment by government at all levels.

This also has to change. No service cuts; cut waste.

Corey Bearak is Queens Civic Congress president. Visit the congress' Web site at www.queensciviccongress.org.

A text version of the op-ed follows on the next page. For more information view the links below available at <http://queensciviccongress.org/Media>

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[2009-12-15 Queens Civic Congress Questions MTA's Proposed Service Cuts](#)

[2009-06-22 Bus Rapid Transit - A good idea that City and MTA seek to implement badly](#)

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BE OUR GUEST by Corey Bearak

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The agency must seize the opportunity to review its service contracts. - Corey Bearak

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The MTA must also re-think the megaprojects in the capital program before imposing any cuts to existing bus and subway service. This includes adopting the City Council's proposal to apply \$90 million in unused federal stimulus monies to cover operations. I

In addition, it makes sense, as the Council also recommended, to apply some \$50 million in funds currently allocated to pay-as-you-go capital to avert service cuts. It should any further consideration of any form of congestion pricing which is inefficient, unsound, unfair and a sham revenue scheme that nets negligible if any funds for transit.

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Corey Bearak is Queens Civic Congress President. View the Queens Civic Congress 's Web site at www.queensciviccongress.org