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How Bad Is Your Bus? Now Riders Can Find Out: Bus Turnaround Coalition Releases Online Bus Report Cards

New York, NY – Today the Bus Turnaround coalition released a new, interactive online district-level bus report card tool that allows bus riders and elected officials to see, at a glance, the quality of bus service in their districts. That tool, which users can access at busturnaround.nyc/district, shows users detailed and easy-to-understand information about bus speeds, reliability and ridership in their neighborhoods. Unsurprisingly, the data reveal that most districts have significant problems with slow speeds and bus bunching, leading to delays and poor service quality for 2.5 million daily bus riders.

“These report cards help illustrate how bad service really is. I always thought my bus service seemed pretty bad, but these report cards prove bus service is bad everywhere,” said Austin Lomax, Riders Alliance member. “The good thing is that now I can actually show my representatives how bad bus service has gotten in our neighborhood and why it’s so important to fight for better service.”

The new district-level bus report card displays bus speeds, reliability and ridership patterns for every State Senate, Assembly, New York City Council, and Community Board district in the five boroughs. Bus riders are now able to compare the comprehensive-wide statistics to their everyday experiences. Transit advocates can use this new tool to engage elected officials about the declining quality of bus service constituents frequently call to complain about.

“Our analysis shows that unreliable, slow bus service is a problem in neighborhoods throughout the city. On routes serving Harlem, the West Village, Flatbush, and Canarsie 1 out of every 7 buses arrives bunched. If you’re a regular bus rider in those places, a bunched bus and an unexpectedly long wait is something you encounter every week. When service becomes this unpredictable, it’s hard for New Yorkers to put their faith in the bus, and it’s no wonder that bus ridership has been dwindling,” said Tabitha Decker, NYC Program Director at TransitCenter.

The bus report cards also make it easy to spot the districts where buses are slowest and most bunched.

In the State Senate, the most-bunched bus awards go to:

1. Former Senator Bill Perkins (15% bunched)
2. Senator Kevin Parker (14% bunched)
3. Senator Roxanne Persaud (14% bunched)

In the State Assembly, the most-bunched buses are in the following districts:

1. Assembly Member Nick Perry (16% bunched)

2. Assembly Member Inez Dickens (15% bunched)
3. Assembly Member Rodneyse Bichotte (15% bunched)

In the City Council, the most-bunched buses are in the following districts:

1. Councilmember Mark Levine (15% bunched)
2. Councilmember Bill Perkins (15% bunched)
3. Council Member Jumaane Williams (15% bunched)

In the State Senate, the slowest bus awards go to:

1. Senator Brad Hoylman (4.7 mph)
2. Senator Liz Krueger (4.8mph)
3. Former Senator Bill Perkins (5.1mph).

In the State Assembly, the slowest buses are in the following districts:

1. Assembly Member Linda Rosenthal (4.5mph)
2. Assembly Member Brian Kavanagh (4.7mph)
3. Assembly Member Dick Gottfried (4.7mph)

In the City Council, the slowest buses are in the following districts:

1. Councilmember Corey Johnson (4.8mph)
2. Councilmember Helen Rosenthal (4.8mph)
3. Councilmember Dan Garodnick (4.8mph)

Citywide, buses average 7.4 miles per hour. The impacts of service declines are apparent in ridership data: from 2002 to 2015, bus ridership fell 16%, despite citywide population growth and record subway ridership.

In July, the Bus Turnaround coalition released its report, "Turnaround: Fixing New York City's Buses." The report highlights cities like London and Seoul that have managed to transform their bus networks, leading to increased ridership system-wide, and identifies key steps to fix our city's bus network:

- More frequent service on routes with high ridership or high ridership potential
- Redesign of routes with obsolete or indirect routing
- Use the post-Metrocard fare payment system to allow all-door bus boarding
- Overhaul bus dispatching and on-street control
- Create more bus lanes and widespread traffic signal priority for buses
- Report bus performance in ways riders can easily understand and institute a comprehensive open data policy

The New York City Department of Transportation has signaled its support for many of the recommendations of the Bus Turnaround campaign, most notably at last year's City Council Transportation hearing on bus service. More recently, at March's MTA Board meeting, the MTA acknowledged bus ridership and performance decline and noted that Bus Turnaround strategies including

bus only lanes, transit signal priority, route and network redesign, and speeding up the boarding process can improve local buses.

The Bus Turnaround Coalition is urging the MTA to deploy a robust transit signal priority network by 2018 and ensure all-door boarding is a prominent part of its plans for the implementation of the MetroCard replacement payment system. The MTA and NYCDOT should work together to plan and expedite the creation of bus lanes, including improving the design of dedicated lanes to make them more effective.

State Senator Tony Avella said, "It comes as no surprise that buses are slow, unreliable, and somehow only getting worse. What always comes as a surprise, however, is the amount of officials who continue to deny this and who take actions that only serve to undermine public transportation in New York City. I applaud the Bus Turnaround campaign for launching these online report cards. It is my hope that this data, which proves what New Yorkers have been complaining about for years, forces the MTA and NYCT into finally acting to improve service. As the Senator of a transit desert district in Northeast Queens, I understand the importance and necessity of timely, reliable bus service. The current state of bus service in the City is a disgrace and disrespectful to the residents of our great city. It's time for a change."

State Senator Jesse Hamilton said, "Thanks to the Bus Turnaround Coalition for adding this important insight at the local level so New Yorkers know, neighborhood by neighborhood, how their bus service is performing. This report helps all of us, local leaders and community residents alike, pursue better performance. Ultimately, we need to deliver the quality transit system New Yorkers deserve and buses serve as a key part of that equation."

State Senator Liz Kruger said "For many people in my district, particularly seniors, buses are the primary mode of transportation and a vital lifeline. But long waits and increasingly unreliable service are creating more and more frustration and uncertainty around this essential service. These new report cards will help riders and those of us who advocate for them to push for the improvements we need across the bus system. I thank Riders Alliance and their partners in the Bus Turnaround campaign for continuing to push for the kind of world-class public transit system New Yorkers deserve."

State Senator Gustavo Rivera said, "The Bus Turnaround Campaign's district report cards will give our constituents further insights to the issues facing bus transportation in their own neighborhood, while giving New Yorkers an additional tool in helping combat the frustrating lack of efficiency and reliability plaguing our City's bus system. I commend the efforts of the Bus Turnaround Campaign's partners for launching this campaign and for continuing to advocate for common sense measures that will undoubtedly improve the service our City's public transportation system offers New Yorkers."

State Senator James Sanders said: "Sunlight is the best disinfectant and today we are taking a step towards cleaning our city's transit system by shining a light on the flaws that need to be corrected. As someone who used to take public transportation regularly, I appreciate the hard work of the Bus Turnaround campaign for compiling this valuable information. Now we can move forward in making changes that can improve the lives of all New Yorkers who rely on bus travel."

State Senator Daniel Squadron said, "Better buses mean better transit and better transit means a better city. There's a lot more that can be done to improve bus service, and I look forward to partnering with the state, city, and advocates to make improvements that matter to riders. Thank you to the Bus Turnaround

Campaign, Riders Alliance, NYPIRG's Straphangers Campaign, TransitCenter and the Tri-State Transportation Campaign."

State Senator Toby Ann Stavisky said, "With so much focus on improving the city's subway system, we often forget the importance our public bus transportation, particularly for those living in the outer boroughs where subway access can be scarce. In fact, many people in my district and in Queens need to ride a bus to the train in order to get work each day, but are forced to wait on long lines for buses with inconsistent arrival times. The Bus Turnaround campaign's new online report cards will allow constituents and elected officials to track how their neighborhood bus route's progress and figure out where we can improve. I would like to thank the Riders Alliance, the Straphangers Campaign, TransitCenter and Tri-State Transportation Campaign for introducing this valuable resource to the public."

Assembly Member Felix Ortiz, Assistant Speaker, said, "The Bus Turnaround campaign's new district-level bus report demonstrates the need for the MTA to quickly adopt the recommendations we are suggesting as soon as possible. With cutbacks on several Brooklyn subway lines this year due to construction, transit riders need more efficient and quicker ways to travel. Too many bus riders in Sunset Park and Red Hook have problems boarding buses due to overcrowding."

Assembly Member Rodneyse Bichotte said, "I applaud the Riders Alliance, the Transit Center, NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign and all others engaged in this campaign to fix our city buses. Millions of New Yorkers including our seniors and people with disabilities, rely on our city's buses as their only method of transportation. We need our buses to operate reliably, effectively and efficiently without extreme delays. The MTA and the DOT must continue to work towards the improvement of our city's transit with urgency."

Assembly Member Robert Carroll said, "Buses are critical to the transportation infrastructure of the 44th Assembly District and throughout Brooklyn. I applaud the Bus Turnaround Campaign and the Riders Alliance for their incredible research and use of data to paint a clear picture of the issues that we face to improve bus service for all New Yorkers. I hope the MTA takes a hard look at this report card and makes an effort to improve their grade. I would especially like to see the MTA focus on the B35 which has the highest ridership in my district and is the third slowest bus and the second most likely to experience bunching along the route. Unfortunately, the B35 is not unique, but is a clear example of the problem facing our buses all over Brooklyn: they are too slow, too crowded and prone to bunching. I would like to see the MTA focus on improving bus service throughout Brooklyn - especially in those areas that are undeserved by subways or are main arteries between neighborhoods and shopping and business districts."

Assemblyman Marcos A. Crespo said "The Bus Turnaround campaign is an important initiative in our ongoing efforts to expand our advocacy on behalf of our constituents in order to improve bus service around the City. The Bronx in particular depends greatly on our bus system for travel within the borough, so grading the various lines will allow us to focus efforts where needed and make life better for all Bronx residents."

Assemblywoman Carmen De La Rosa said, "Our communities have experienced a steady decline in service, on buses and trains. The issues are only compounded by the lack of accessibility to stations whether it is elevators constantly out of service, delays, overcrowding or service changes without advanced notification. We need to come together to find solutions that would make transportation efficient and service reliable. We thank Riders Alliance for sharing the report and for creating awareness

on the lack of quality service in our mass transit especially on buses. With the constant burden of a fare hikes, commuters can no longer afford to pay more for less service.”

Assemblyman Michael DenDekker said, “I would like to thank the Riders Alliance and all those behind the Bus Turnaround campaign for launching these online report cards for bus routes throughout the city of New York. I look forward to seeing the data they provide, and using that to pinpoint where exactly bus service needs to be improved. My district in Queens is heavily reliant on bus routes, and this information will be extremely helpful in identifying improvements needed to ensure that my constituents have reliable public transit options.”

Assembly Member Dinowitz said, “Bus service is an essential mode of transportation for so many people in my district. There is low hanging fruit that the MTA and NYCT could implement which would drastically improve service quality, including cashless fare payments at all doors and implementing GPS technology to reduce bus bunching. Improved service not only helps existing riders, but also creates a more appealing transit option that will begin to grow the user base again and in turn increase revenue.”

Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried said, “Dozens of MTA bus lines go through my district in Manhattan, and not one had increased ridership last year. Bus service is getting slower and more irregular. The MTA needs to work with the City for better planning, improved technology and traffic management that can improve bus service and get more New Yorkers on the bus.”

Assembly Member Pamela Harris said, “For Brooklyn residents, reliable, efficient bus service is nothing more than a far-off dream, but it’s about time this change. Our buses should be getting commuters to work on time, students to school before the first bell rings and seniors to the doctor’s appointments they depend on. These new district bus report cards will not only be an invaluable tool in keeping residents informed, but will also make sure the MTA and DOT are held accountable and actually work on improving bus service throughout the city.”

Assembly Member Andrew Hevesi said, “I commend the work of the Bus Turnaround Campaign in creating these ‘bus-report cards’ in an effort to hold our public transportation system accountable and help improve bus service throughout the City which so many New Yorkers rely on daily.”

Assemblywoman Alicia Hyndman said, “Our community is a two fare zone, in which buses are a necessity for commuters in the 29th Assembly district. Residents have expressed their frustrations about bus service and as a member of the Transportation Committee, these reports will allow me to hold the MTA accountable for the service they provide our community.”

Assembly Member Ron Kim said, “The Bus Turnaround campaign represents the voice of New Yorkers everywhere who are frustrated with bus services in our city. As one of the largest and most iconic metropolitan areas in the world, New York deserves a fast and efficient bus system focused on meeting the needs of its commuters. Though our neighborhoods grow larger and larger with each passing year, the current system’s ridership has continued to decline. The problems and frustrations highlighted today are seen in many districts, including my own. When the bus dispatcher position for our area’s busiest line was removed, I immediately called on the MTA to restore the position - as our transit advocates have made clear, empowering dispatchers and drivers is one of the best ways to ensure reliability and consistency of service. I stand with my colleagues today in supporting any improvements needed to lift up our public bus system.

Assembly Member Walter T. Mosley said, "I commend the Riders Alliance, The NYPIRG's Straphangers Campaign, the TransitCenter, and the Tri-State Transportation Campaign's initiative in the Bus Turnaround Campaign to provide new district-level report cards on bus service quality. Bus riders are too familiar with the unreliable, slow service of many of our city's buses. This program will offer people data on bus service quality in their own neighborhoods, while providing riders with a powerful tool to hold the MTA and DOT accountable on bus service city-wide. In an effort to improve our city's transportation, the Bus Turnaround Campaign offers our citizens an empowering reporting tool in the hopes of improving their quality of life."

Assembly Member Dan Quart said, "A thriving public bus system can strengthen communities and significantly improve the quality of life for New Yorkers. It is clear that our current system does not meet the needs of those who depend on it and we must do more to ensure a safe, reliable and accessible service. I applaud the Bus Turnaround campaign for proposing solutions to the long waits, inefficient routes, outdated technology, and overcrowding that plague our city's buses. Let's work together to make a better bus system a reality."

Assembly Member Robert J. Rodriguez said, "For many years New Yorker's have raised concerns over our City's buses. Many have reported delays and slow buses, with many opting to use other forms of transportation. I applaud the Bus Turnaround Campaign for launching an online tool that will give straphangers insight into the bus service quality at a new district-level,"

Assembly Member Linda B. Rosenthal said, "This report comes as no surprise to my constituents who have been forced to bear the burden of years of transit divestment. I am so pleased that Riders Alliance, NYPIRG's Straphangers Campaign, TransitCenter, and Tri-State Transportation Campaign have done such a detailed job in documenting the poor performance of bus lines citywide, providing a clear roadmap for improvements."

Assemblywoman Nily Rozic said, "Representing a district without subway or train stations, I know firsthand how many people depend on bus service. The Bus Turnaround campaign has empowered bus riders to be vocal about how important it is to make quality investments that can improve service based on neighborhood needs. I look forward to the launch of online report cards and using them as a source of advocacy for solutions addressing inefficiencies that bus riders have dealt with for far too long."

Assembly Member Seawright said, "In Albany, we fought to secure \$65 million for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Capital Plan to accommodate more passengers and improve efficiency of our transportation system. It is critical that we see the results of our budgetary efforts at home in our districts to ensure accessibility and reliability of public transit. Now more than ever, we must continue to build on the progress that has been made and kick off the bus turnaround campaign with Riders Alliance, NYPIRG's Straphangers Campaign, TransitCenter, and Tri-State Transportation Campaign."

Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, Chair of the Transportation Committee, said, "The MTA recently acknowledged it had a problem with buses earlier this year, a good first step in the effort to improve service millions of New Yorkers rely upon. The Bus Turnaround Campaign has put forward several common-sense solutions to speed up bus speeds and they don't take billions of dollars and years of construction. We can make these improvements rapidly and see major transformations to get people around the city faster. There is no reason we cannot match the bus service of cities around the world, all it takes is some effort and attention. That's why I'm proud to lend my voice to this effort and thank the many advocates who have advanced this conversation so far."

Council Member Margaret S. Chin said, “With this latest online report card, our communities have an up-to-date tool to demand a bus system that works for all. For too long, we have seen bus service decline to the point where, along many lines, it is almost impossible to judge how long it will take to get to work, home, or the doctor’s office. Today, we are standing up with a clear voice to demand that the MTA and DOT address the issues slowing down and rerouting buses that everyday New Yorkers rely on.”

Council Member Dan Garodnick said, "One look at the Bus Turnaround campaign's online report cards proves what my East Side neighbors have known for years: our bus service simply does not make the grade. New Yorkers deserve better, and the MTA must move forward with effective fixes for this vital piece of our city's transit infrastructure."

Council Member Ben Kallos said, “Having reliable and efficient bus service is just plain smart public policy; it eases traffic, helps the environment and our City’s economy. Now that the Bus Turnaround Campaign has analyzed bus performance down to the Council District and issued a report card, the DOT, the MTA, and elected officials have concrete steps to take in order to improve service in each of our communities.”

Council Member Mark Levine said, “MTA Bus service is a critical piece of New York’s infrastructure, and yet countless New Yorkers, predominantly in low income communities, are still underserved by limited transit options, plaguing them with long commutes. We must do everything we can to reverse the trend of inadequate bus service in our neighborhoods. I applaud the Riders Alliance for their invaluable leadership on this issue, and I join them in calling for these cost-effective improvements that would dramatically improve service for New Yorkers.

Council Member Helen Rosenthal said, “Bus ridership has fallen across New York City and the reason why is no mystery—service is poor and, in many neighborhoods, continues to get worse. This new bus quality report card will help empower New Yorkers to hold the MTA and DOT accountable and allow policymakers to be more effective as we look for solutions. I want to thank the Bus Turnaround campaign for their advocacy on this critical issue.”

About the Bus Turnaround Coalition:

The Bus Turnaround Coalition is a group of diverse New Yorkers working to turning around the poor bus service that's plaguing NYC's bus system and the 2.5 million rides that are taken on it daily. We're promoting practical strategies that can be implemented quickly to make bus trips faster and more reliable. See our recommended solutions here: http://transitcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Turnaround_Fixing-NYCs-Buses-20July2016.pdf

Bus Turnaround Coalition Members:

TransitCenter (www.transitcenter.org) is a foundation committed to improving urban mobility through research, advocacy, and grantmaking that empowers communities, policymakers, and riders.

The Riders Alliance (www.ridersny.org) is a grassroots organization of subway and bus riders, pushing for better service at affordable fares and a stronger public investment in mass transit.

The Straphangers Campaign (www.straphangers.org) a project of the New York Public Interest Research Group, has advocated for New York’s public transit system since 1979.

Tri-State Transportation Campaign (www.tstc.org) is a nonprofit advocacy organization working toward a more balanced, transit-friendly and equitable transportation network in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

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