

STATEMENT OF ZAK ACCUARDI
PROGRAM ANALYST, TRANSITCENTER
MTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 1/25/2017

Good morning, my name is Zak Accuardi and I am here from TransitCenter, a national foundation whose mission is to improve public transportation. I'm here to respond to a debate that the board and staff have been having about service quality indicators and performance reporting. I've brought a recent article that expands on my remarks.

I bring you two specific solutions to resolve this debate, which will strengthen the MTA operationally, improve the board's ability to manage, and increase public awareness about service quality. First, we recommend that the MTA replace Wait Assessment with a performance metric called Excess Journey Time. This best practice metric comes from the International Bus Benchmarking Group, of which MTA is a member, and it is already implemented in peer agencies in London and Singapore. Second, we recommend that the MTA develop an automatically updated website for bus and subway performance metrics, to replace today's burdensome board book reporting system.

According to Wait Assessment, a rush-hour delay on the Lexington Avenue lines at Grand Central Terminal affecting tens of thousands of passengers is equivalent to a 3am delay on the Franklin Avenue Shuttle affecting ten—both are failures, but they should not be treated equally. Wait Assessment uses an arbitrary pass/fail threshold to tell the public and MTA staff at all levels that as long as trains are doing at least 75 percent as well as they could be, then that's good enough for New Yorkers. Excess Journey Time, on the other hand, measures what riders and the agency actually care about: how much delay do passengers experience, both on the platform and aboard the vehicle. It also spotlights delays that are longer and that affect the greatest number of passengers. The MTA can easily calculate this performance metric, and it would help the board and the MTA better understand where service improvements should be prioritized.

Excess Journey Time and other performance metrics should be reported automatically and publicly on the MTA's website, not in a 300-page pdf. Instead of monthly or biannually, the MTA could follow Boston's MBTA, enabling riders to select routes of interest and see performance trends over time, updated daily. Thank you for your time and leadership on this important issue.