

Joseph Lhota
Chair
Metropolitan Transportation Authority
2 Broadway
New York, NY 10004

August 14, 2017

Re: Subway Station Accessibility

Dear Chairman Lhota:

We write to strongly urge you to include subway station elevator performance problems in both your short term plan to address subway operational problems, and in your top-to-bottom review of the MTA and NYC Transit organizations. We also urge you to address the fact that MTA and NYCT have no identified strategy for increasing the number of accessible subway stations in the future. This needs to be clearly and forthrightly remedied in ongoing Capital Needs Assessments and the 2020 MTA capital program.

We appreciate that you mentioned the problem of out-of-service elevators in last week's presentation of your short term plan to fix the subways. We'd like to learn more about your plan in this regard, and request a brief meeting between you and our organizations. As you may know, the recent audit by Comptroller Stringer -- which found numerous lapses and cases of poor management regarding elevator maintenance -- is only the latest in two decades of audits giving the MTA low marks in this area. There are clearly deep-seated problems in NYCT's Elevator and Escalator Division in terms of management and performance accountability. We support a drastic overhaul of the department, or MTA contracting for these services. After all, we live and work in a city where most property owners are able to provide functioning, reliable elevator service as matter of course in life and business.

As you may be aware, the MTA/NYCT has no strategy for accessibility after the agency finishes making the last of the 100 "key stations" accessible in 2020. The set of key stations were agreed to in 1994, but the concept, like most things from the mid-90s, is no longer relevant to today's New York. More importantly, 27 years after passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, there is no visible path to a subway system that is fully accessible and can offer the same impressive array of city-wide trip-making opportunities that 472 subway stations provide to people who can navigate stairs. The transit systems of Boston and Chicago, both of similar age to the oldest parts of the NYC subway, have far surpassed New York in the shares of stations that are fully accessible. How? First by setting ambitious goals, then by providing the leadership to find the resources, overcome hurdles, and maintain accessibility programs' practical momentum.

We're looking to you to provide these ambitious goals and leadership for what should be the country's and the world's best transit system.

Sincerely,



David Bragdon, Executive Director, TransitCenter



Jaqi Cohen, Campaign Coordinator, Straphangers Campaign



James Weisman, President & CEO, United Spinal Association



Christopher R. Widelo, Associate State Director, AARP New York

CC:

Ali Chaudhry, Deputy Secretary for Transportation to Governor Andrew M. Cuomo
Assembly Speaker Carl E. Heastie
Assemblymember Jeffrey Dinowitz
New York State Senator Martin J. Golden
Patrick Foye, President, MTA
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