

Bus Turnaround Coalition Calls for Systemwide All-Door Boarding on MTA Buses by February

August 31, 2020 - The MTA is reinstating fare collection on local bus routes today, with protective shields installed around operator compartments on every bus. Riders are again paying one by one at the front door, a slow process that costs significant time. For the sake of bus riders and the MTA's own bottom line, **the Bus Turnaround Coalition calls for the MTA to implement all-door boarding on its bus fleet as soon as possible and no later than February 2021.**

All-door boarding will be faster and safer for riders, improving service for hundreds of thousands of essential workers in neighborhoods that rely on buses. The performance improvements it generates will relieve fiscal pressure on the MTA by drawing more fare-paying riders to the system. The introduction of all-door boarding is also an opportunity to overhaul fare inspection on buses in a way that prevents racial discrimination and the criminalization of Black and brown riders.

Single-file fare payment is a drag on bus service. Typically, NYC buses spend more than 20 percent of the duration of their routes standing still at stops (known as "dwell time"). On Select Bus Service routes, the MTA has reduced dwell time 40 percent or more by adopting all-door boarding. Extending all-door boarding throughout the bus network will immediately improve service for riders in all five boroughs.

By reducing touch points and enabling riders to disperse on board more easily, all-door boarding will also reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. The public health benefits add extra urgency to the push to roll out this major service enhancement.

The MTA has previously committed to systemwide all-door boarding, and officials have said it could go live by February 2021. OMNY fare program director Al Putre recently said the transition to all-door boarding remains in progress but did not specify a timetable. The Bus Turnaround Coalition calls for a firm deadline no later than February 2021 to implement systemwide all-door boarding, with the ability for riders to pay via OMNY readers at rear doors.

The Coalition also calls for changes to fare inspection protocol on buses. Currently, fare inspections on SBS routes delay service and feel like an extension of law enforcement, with the potential for excessive fines and penalties. The bus fare inspection process should be less confrontational, punitive, and inconvenient for riders, including the following reforms:

- Fare inspections should be conducted while the bus is in motion, without holding up riders.
- Bus riders who board without paying should be given the opportunity to pay a small surcharge, like riders on LIRR and Metro-North, instead of a large fine. The MTA should also work with local DAs to decriminalize fare evasion and keep cases out of the courts.
- Fare inspection should be conducted by smaller teams of no more than two personnel at a time. Like conductors on LIRR and Metro-North, teams should also perform customer service duties, answering questions and assisting riders if needed.

- To prevent discrimination and bias, inspectors should proceed through the bus in a predetermined sequence, never singling out riders by deviating from the protocol.

Systemwide all-door bus boarding is the rare service improvement that will make a difference for every rider in the city. It is a powerful tool to give riders more value for their fare, providing exactly the type of performance boost the MTA will need to draw riders back on board. Swiftly adopting this practice, in tandem with reforms to fare inspection, will make bus service faster, safer, and fairer for millions of New Yorkers.

“A return to fare collection must be coupled with service improvements that meet the needs of riders at this time,” said **TransitCenter Senior Associate Ashley Pryce**. “By keeping its commitment to implement all-door boarding by February the MTA can go the extra mile to make boarding faster and to make buses safer for riders and operators. All-door boarding also presents the opportunity to address the negative impacts of current fare collection practices on Black, brown and low-income New Yorkers by ushering in a process that is fairer, more efficient, and rider-centered. Bus riders can’t afford to wait any longer for the service improvements that will make them safer and improve their lives.”

“If riders have to pay again, the MTA should make buses faster and fairer,” said **Riders Alliance Organizing Manager Stephanie Burgos-Veras**. “All-door boarding will help speed up some of the slowest buses in the nation. Fare inspection that matches what the LIRR and Metro-North do (and similar to what happens to drivers without EZ-Pass) will help stop criminalizing poverty. Bus riders carried New York through COVID. The MTA should honor riders’ commitment to the survival of the city with real improvements to the public transit we all depend on.”

“All-door boarding doesn’t just speed up buses; it makes them safer for riders as well,” said **Tri-State Transportation Campaign Executive Director Nick Sifuentes**. “By reducing touchpoints and preventing passengers from queueing at the front of the bus, it allows riders to physically distance more easily, and it protects drivers by reducing interactions between them and the riding public. All-door boarding will increase safety and speed on our buses, and it’s time the MTA meet its commitment to deploy it systemwide.”

“Equipping buses with all-door boarding on all MTA routes is a no-brainer,” said **Straphangers Campaign Director Jaqi Cohen**. “Not only can it help reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, but it will help speed up bus service and make trips more reliable, saving bus riders valuable time each day. Over a million New Yorkers continue to depend on buses, and with the threat of car traffic worsening on our streets it is vital that the MTA must use every tool available to ensure buses can travel safely and reliably throughout the five boroughs.”

Since 2016, the Bus Turnaround Coalition, comprised of the Riders Alliance, Straphangers Campaign, TransitCenter and Tri-State Transportation Campaign, has worked to improve local bus service throughout the five boroughs. More information is at busturnaround.nyc.

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