



Dear _____,

We are a coalition of everyday transit riders who elevate the voices of underserved and disadvantaged community members in our pursuit of true equity, accessibility, safety, and sustainability in New York’s public transit.

As you may know, the Queens Bus Network Redesign is an historic undertaking envisioned by former New York City Transit President Andy Byford to address a bus system that has become outdated. Thus far, three versions of the Queens Bus Network Redesign have been released. Every Queens City Council member objected to Version 1. The MTA delayed the release of Version 2 (the New Draft Plan), saying they wanted to “get it right this time.” After Version 3 (the Proposed Final Plan), the MTA promised that the thousands of public comments received would be incorporated into a new Final Plan that would be released in the future. Instead, the MTA has done a sudden 360, now proposing a public hearing on the Proposed Final Plan for July 24th, 2024. ***This hearing must be postponed until at least January 2025*** for the following reasons:

1. Many Queens residents are on vacation for the summer and/or are unable to attend this public hearing for other reasons.
2. None of the thousands of comments from the public received since the release of the Proposed Final Plan in December 2023 have been incorporated into a new plan.
3. The MTA has provided no evidence that its goals of “meeting customers’ priorities of more reliable service, faster travel, better connections, and ease of use” have been met. Although improved interborough connectivity was one of the goals, no new routes are being offered (e.g. between Sheepshead Bay, Astoria, Bayside and the Rockaways). Furthermore, under the latest plan, one of currently three Queens routes that serve Manhattan (the Q101) will no longer do so. Also, there has been a lack of coordination with Nassau Inter County Express bus routes.
4. The plan does not properly address communities in transit deserts (areas that lack adequate access to public transit). Many of these areas, including parts of Southeast and Northeast Queens, have historically been underserved and will continue to be. Some of them will even see reductions in bus service and coverage.

5. The plan does not accommodate the influx of riders into the transit system that congestion pricing is guaranteed to have, if implemented.
6. The plan ignores the fact that there are shortages of both buses and bus drivers. This means that many bus runs will not be filled if bus drivers call in sick, compromising service.
7. The MTA has not announced where additional free transfers will be provided due to route revisions. When the Bronx Bus Redesign was implemented, many riders continued to pay double fares and complained that additional transfers were needed. Furthermore, the additional transfers that were provided were never publicized meaning that future residents will not be aware of them and may use other routes unnecessarily requiring double fares.
8. The MTA has ignored the nearly 3,300 passengers who have signed a petition against the elimination of over 1,400 bus stops (a third of the stops in the whole borough). In cases where bus stops were returned, other stops were taken away. Bus stop spacing will increase from an average of 818 feet apart to an average of 1,151 feet apart, increasing walk distances for some to $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to the closest bus route. The MTA's 2010 guidelines call for a bus stop every 750 feet, which is already exceeded in Queens. Instead, the MTA has chosen to follow European standards instead of the domestic standard or the MTA's 2010 guidelines. This is being done only to save operating costs, not to help bus passengers. It will also disproportionately harm seniors and people with disabilities who are unable to or have difficulty walking farther to catch the bus (more on that in reason #10).
9. Despite promises to do so, the MTA has refused to publicize the existing and proposed revenue miles and hours to prove that the plan is an overall service addition instead of a reduction. The MTA has stated that the Proposed Final Plan will cost \$30 million more to operate. However, those funds do not necessarily mean additional passenger service, but rather could mean more inefficient service with more buses running "Not in Service."
10. Despite the MTA's claims that the plan will result in "greater transit equity," as MTA Chair and CEO Janno Lieber said when the Proposed Final Plan was released, equity was not properly incorporated. The MTA did not use adequate quantitative or qualitative data to determine changes to bus routes, bus stops, etc., nor were any studies conducted to determine how disadvantaged and vulnerable populations (not only lower income residents/people of color, but also seniors and people with disabilities) would be affected by these changes. Furthermore, a proper equity analysis was never done for the Queens Bus Network Redesign, nor were any metrics to evaluate equity established at all.

11. No quantitative data were provided regarding ridership on a stop-by-stop, route segment-by-route segment, or even full route-by-full route basis, to back up the MTA's decisions for the plan. The MTA included some of this data for the Bus Network Redesigns in the Bronx and Brooklyn, publishing statistics for all of its routes regarding ridership per revenue hour, ridership per revenue mile, farebox recovery ratio, speed, etc. However, for the Queens plan, only data for route corridors were provided, which provide a very limited understanding. The MTA typically provides detailed statistics for routine service changes regarding cost, the number of riders who have to make an extra transfer, walk further to a new route (or conversely, riders who have fewer transfers, shorter walks, etc). However, these statistics on a proposal-by-proposal basis were not presented as part of the Queens Bus Network Redesign process.
12. Public outreach for the plan has been insufficient. Only in recent months have the digital displays linked a website for further information, and no printed materials were posted on the buses. Attendance at meetings, open houses and pop-up events were very low, reaching under 1% of Queens 500,000 weekday bus riders. Also, the booklet for the plan was not provided at senior centers and hospitals, excluding those without access to computers and mobile devices from the process. In the Southeast Queens route profiles, the bus stop eliminations were not provided to the elected officials in the presentation given to them.

As an elected official, we are depending on you to advocate for the needs of your constituents who deserve better transportation options and proper representation by insisting that this public hearing be delayed. Holding the hearing on July 24th would be no different than giving the MTA a blank check to make whatever changes it desires. ***Rushing the Queens Bus Network Redesign without properly incorporating public input nor performing due diligence would be catastrophic for the riding public, and we must not let that happen.***

Thank you very much for listening.

Sincerely yours,
