

# Methodology: 2010 Pokey and Schleppe Awards

## I. Pokey Awards

This report is a follow-up to the NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign eight previous *Pokey Award* reports issued in 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009. The methodology used by the campaign in this report is similar to the ones used in earlier reports.

### *Selection of Routes*

The Straphangers campaign chose to measure speeds on a sample of twenty-nine bus routes. The sample frame was selected to provide a 'snapshot' of the most-used routes in the system and in each borough, as well as traditionally slow-moving crosstown bus routes in Manhattan. Because of significant differences between route patterns of the Manhattan M14A and M14D, these routes were measured separately. Similarly, the Bx12 local and Bx12 SBS routes were also measured separately. On three routes — B44, B46 and Q44 — regular local bus service did not run terminal to terminal on weekdays at 12:00 noon, and therefore limited bus service speeds were measured on these routes. Due to construction on First and Second Avenues, the system's most used local bus — the M15 — was not included in the sample.

### *Bus Speed Measurement*

Surveys were conducted by two Straphangers Campaign staff members and seven volunteers, between June 30 and August 19, 2010. Each route was measured with an actual trip in both directions, beginning with the first bus departing from a terminus after 12:00 noon. The return trip was made from the second terminus back to the first on the next bus available.

During each trip, surveyors recorded to the second the amount of time taken from terminus to terminus in each direction. Timing began as each bus pulled out of the first stop and concluded immediately after stopping at the last. In our analysis, times were converted to a fraction of an hour. Distances covered were measured to the nearest 1/100<sup>th</sup> mile using GIS software.

Bus speeds were calculated by dividing the total number of miles per run by the fraction of the hour taken to cover the total distance. Below is an example of how this methodology was applied to a sample route, Manhattan's M86.

### *Sample Calculation — M86*

Bus speeds on the M86 were measured on August 5, 2010. Surveyors boarded an eastbound M86 which pulled out of its terminus at West 86<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway at 12:06:28 PM. The bus came to a stop at its eastern terminus — East 92<sup>nd</sup> Street near First Avenue — at 12:32:04 PM. This trip represents a distance of 2.45 miles, which was covered in 25 minutes, 36 seconds.

Immediately following their eastbound measurement, surveyors boarded the next westbound M86 at its eastern terminus at East 92<sup>nd</sup> Street and York Avenue. This trip began at 1:01:40 PM

and concluded at 1:32:30 PM at the western terminus, West 87<sup>th</sup> Street and West End Avenue. The eastbound trip represents a distance of 2.26 miles, which was covered in 30 minutes, 50 seconds.

In total then, the two M86 trips covered a distance of 4.71 miles in 56 minutes, 26 seconds. This represents an average speed of 5.0 miles per hour.

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## II. **Schleppie Award**

This report is also a follow-up to the NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign's four previous *Schleppie Awards* issued in 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009.

In awarding the Schleppie, the campaign uses official “wait assessment” data released in September 2010 by MTA New York City Transit for bus service during the first half of 2010, the most recent period available. The measure is reported for 42 high-volume routes.<sup>1</sup>

“Wait assessment” is defined as follows by transit officials:

“Wait Assessment is measured weekdays between 7:00 a.m. and midnight. It is defined as the percentage of observed service intervals that are no more than the scheduled interval plus 3 minutes during peak (7 a.m. – 9 a.m., 4 p.m. – 7 p.m.) and plus 5 during off-peak (9 a.m. – 4 p.m., 7 p.m. – 12 a.m.).”<sup>2</sup>

The campaign believes that this is the best measure made by transit officials which shows how closely buses are sticking to their scheduled intervals. As such, it reflects the degree to which buses bunch together, or arrive with big gaps, a gauge of what riders experience.

To be eligible for a Schleppie, a route must have at least 20% of its buses arriving bunched or with big gaps in service. No route in Queens had 20% of its buses performing this poorly, and as a result, no Queens route received a Schleppie Award.

Since 2008, transit officials significantly changed this measure. In the past, the agency reported a different measure for evening service. It used to compare how closely service arrived according to printed schedules at night. Now the agency reports only wait assessment for the entire day. As a result, historical comparisons of Schleppie Awards before 2008 are not meaningful.

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<sup>1</sup>Wait assessment data can be found at pages 108-111 of the September 2010 MTA New York City Transit Bus Operations Committee agenda.

<sup>2</sup> Since September 2010, transit officials have measured wait assessment differently for the subways. It is reported on a monthly basis and is measured on weekdays between 9 a.m. and midnight. It is defined as the percent of actual intervals between trains that are no more than the scheduled interval plus 25%.