

Methodology:

2011 Pokey and Schleppe Awards

I. Pokey Awards

This report is a follow-up to the NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign nine previous *Pokey Award* reports issued annually from 2002 to 2010. 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 thirty-five 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, as well as the M15 and M15 SBS routes, were also measured separately. On two routes — the B44 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.

Bus Speed Measurement

Surveys were conducted by one Straphangers Campaign staff member and eleven volunteers, between May 31 and September 2, 2011. 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 1/100th 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 June 27, 2011. Surveyors boarded a westbound M86 which pulled out of its terminus at East 92nd Street and York Avenue at 12:01:27 PM. The bus came to a stop at its western terminus — West 87th Street and West End Avenue — at 12:28:18 PM. This trip represents a distance of 2.26 miles, which was covered in 26 minutes, 51 seconds.

Immediately following their westbound measurement, surveyors boarded the next eastbound M86 at its western terminus at West 86th Street and Broadway. This trip began at 12:49:19 PM and concluded at 1:14:15 PM at the eastern terminus, East 92nd Street and York Avenue. The eastbound trip represents a distance of 2.33 miles, which was covered in 24 minutes, 56 seconds.

In total then, the two M86 trips covered a distance of 4.59 miles in 51 minutes, 47 seconds. This represents an average speed of 5.3 miles per hour.

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II. **Schleppie Award**

This report is also a follow-up to the NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign's five previous *Schleppie Awards* issued annually from 2006 to 2010.

In awarding the Schleppie, the campaign uses official “wait assessment” data released in September 2011 by MTA New York City Transit for bus service during the first half of 2011, the most recent period available. The measure is reported for 42 high-volume routes.¹

“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.).”²

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.

¹Wait assessment data can be found at pages 96-99 of the September 2011 MTA Bus Operations Committee Agenda.

² 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%.