NYPIRG STRAPHANGERS CAMPAIGN
TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES

NEWS RELEASE

Embargoed for Release:
Thursday, December 1, 2011, 10:30 a.m.

For More Information Contact:
Gene Russianoff (917) 575-9434
Paul Steely White (646) 247-6734

Pokey Award Goes to M50; Clocked at Dismal Speed of 3.5 MPH; "You Could Push a Lawnmower Faster Crosstown Than M50 Travels"

Schleppie Award Goes to M101/102/103, City's Least Reliable Bus; More Than a Quarter Arrive Bunched Together or With Major Gaps

Good News: "Select Bus Service" Providing Faster Service

New York, New York — The NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign and Transportation Alternatives today gave out two awards for poor bus service in New York City.

The first is the tenth-annual "Pokey" for slowest local bus route in New York City. The uncoveted Pokey award is a golden snail on a pedestal. It's based on the speed of rides taken by Straphangers Campaign staff and volunteers on 35 routes. Lines were selected because they: 1) had high ridership; or 2) were historically slow Manhattan crosstown routes. (See methodology.)

The "winner" of the 2011 Pokey is … **the M50**, which had the slowest bus speed at 3.5 miles per hour as clocked at 12 noon on a weekday.

"The M50 is slooooow," said Gene Russianoff, attorney for NYPIRG's Straphangers Campaign.

Russianoff added: "You can push a lawnmower faster crosstown than it takes the M50 to go from 1st to 12th Avenue," noting that a human-powered push mower could go 4 mph compared to 3.5 mph on the M50. (See: http://www.snapper.com/push-mowers/Pivot-N-Go/)

"This year's Pokey goes to yet another sad example of our underfunded transit system," said Paul Steely White, Executive Director of Transportation Alternatives. "The M50 might be slow but the bus system itself is racing toward catastrophe at full speed. New Yorkers deserve better."

White said he was troubled by official transit statistics showing that breakdowns had increased on city buses by 12% since last year. In addition, the percentage of city buses that were 12 years or older had more than doubled in the past year, from 16% of the bus fleet in 2010 to 35% in 2011. Nearly

–more, more, more–

$800 million is in the MTA's 2012 through 2014 capital plan for buying hundreds of new buses, but the funding for the program is uncertain.

In 2010, the M50 move 3,905 riders on an average weekday and ranks 151st in riders out of the 191 local bus routes. The M50 travels cross-town on 49th and 50th Streets between First and Twelfth Avenues.

According to the groups, the slowest bus routes in each borough are:

B41	6.5 mph	Between Kings Plaza and Downtown Brooklyn on Flatbush Avenue
Bx19	5.0 mph	Between Botanical Garden in the Bronx and Harlem
M50	3.5 mph	Crosstown on 49th and 50th Streets in Manhattan
Q58	7.2 mph	Between Ridgewood, Queens, and Flushing/Main Street
S48	8.8 mph	Between Richmond Terrace and St. George Ferry Terminal, Staten Island

The second award is the sixth-annual "Schleppie" for the city's least reliable buses and is based on official transit statistics, which measures how well buses keep to scheduled intervals. [1]

The Schleppie is comprised of golden lumbering elephants on a pedestal.

The "winner" of the 2011 Schleppie is … **the M101/102/103**. More than one out of four M101/02/03's arrived with big gaps in service or bunched together. The three buses share the same "trunk route" in Manhattan, traveling on 3rd and Lexington Avenues between the East Village and Washington Heights (M101), East Village and Harlem (M102) and City Hall and East Harlem (M103).

The three buses moved 63,538 riders on an average weekday in 2010. The M101 was ranked the 10th highest route in bus ridership in the city out of a total 191 local buses with 32,266 average weekday riders. The M102 was ranked 36th with 16,951 average weekday riders; the M103 was ranked 54th with 14,321 average weekday riders.

The most unreliable bus routes in each of four boroughs with over 20% of buses bunched together or big gaps in service are:

B44	25.7% unreliable btw Sheepshead Bay and Williamsburg Bridge on Nostrand Avenue
Bx41	23.5% unreliable btw Williamsbridge and the Hub on White Plains Rd/Webster Ave
M101/2/3	27.3% unreliable btw Upper and Lower Manhattan on 3rd and Lexington Avenues
S78	24.0% unreliable btw SI Ferry and Tottenville/Bricktown Mall on Hylan Boulevard

Full tables of bus speeds and buses with unreliable service are attached.

–more, more, more–

Both the City and MTA New York City Transit have implemented two "Select Bus Service" routes. SBS employs a number of strategies to provide faster service, such as collecting fares before boarding buses and buses with three doors and low floors to speed up boarding.

The SBS routes are on the M15 (First and Second Avenues between lower Manhattan and Harlem) and on the Bx12 (Pelham Parkway and Fordham Road between Pelham Bay Park in the Bronx and upper Manhattan).

The groups found that the two SBS routes are living up to their promise.

In our survey of bus speeds for 2011, SBS on the Bx12 increased bus speeds by more than 51 percent over the Bx12 local. The Bx12 local was clocked by our surveyors at 7.2 mph. But the Bx12 SBS traveled at 10.9 mph – 51 percent faster than the Bx12 local.

SBS on the M15 increased bus speeds by nearly 43 percent over the M15 local. The M15 local was clocked by our surveyors at 4.9 mph. But the M15 SBS traveled at 7.1 mph, more than 43 percent faster than the M15 local.

Additional SBS routes are planned for the 34th Street Crosstown (M34), Nostrand Avenue (B44) and the Hylan Boulevard corridor on Staten Island.

Among bus speed improvement strategies on the M15 SBS are: exclusive bus lanes painted in terra cotta to discourage cars from entering; payment of fare before boarding the bus; buses with three doors and low floors to speed up boarding; distinctive branding and flashing blue lights to heighten rider recognition; wider subway-style spacing between stops; and enforcement of the bus lane by camera to keep the lane moving.

In 2012, features to be added to M15 SBS are: traffic signal priority for buses; and sidewalk extensions at certain bus stops to increase passenger waiting area and allow easier access to the curb for buses.

In the 2002 Pokey Awards, the groups found that the city's slowest bus route was the M96. In 2003, the groups awarded the Pokey to the M23, in 2004 and 2005 to the M34, in 2006 to the M14A, in 2007 to the M23, the M96 in 2008 and the M42 in 2009 and 2010.

The groups cautioned that comparisons with past findings were difficult due to changes in methodology and bus routes over the years. In addition, changes in bus speeds since 2004 have generally been too small to demonstrate significant trends. (See methodology.)

–more, more, more–

The criteria for selecting buses to be evaluated for speed is largely the same as our 2010 survey. Between 2005 and 2009, bus routes to be surveyed were selected based on New York City Transit data. Specifically, we surveyed the ten slowest routes (all in Manhattan), as determined by Transit in bus profiles compiled in 2000. We also surveyed the three slowest routes in the other boroughs.

In this survey, the number of routes surveyed increased from 29 to 35. Two routes out of the 29 were dropped, while one new route was added, based on ridership. All of the crosstown routes between Houston Street and 116th Street were surveyed, adding five new routes to the survey. We also surveyed the M15 local and M15 SBS service for the first time since SBS launched in October 2010.

As of the end of 2010, there were a total of 191 New York City Transit local bus routes and two Select Bus Service routes. (See: http://www.mta.info/nyct/facts/ridership/index.htm#atGlance_b)

Schleppies went to any route with an average "wait assessment" greater than 20%. This determination is based on official "wait assessments" for "42 high-volume routes," chosen by Transit. Wait assessment measures how closely a line sticks to scheduled intervals for arrival. Wait assessment becomes poorer the more buses arrive in bunches or with major gaps in service.

The Schleppie went to the M1 in both 2006 and 2007, to the M101/102/103 in 2008, the B44 in 2009 and the Bx41 in 2010. Transit's methodology for calculating this measure was changed in 2008.

—30 —

[1] The measure is known as "wait assessment." It "is measured weekdays between 7 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 the peak (7 a.m. to 9 a.m., 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.) and plus 5 during off-peak (9 a.m. to 4 p.m., 7 p.m. to 12 p.m.) The results are presented for a sample of 42 high-volume routes (plus eight associated limited stop services and two select bus service routes)."

Table One:

THE POKEY AWARD

SLOWEST TO FASTEST

Average Noontime Speeds, Both Directions,
of 35 Selected* New York City Transit Local Bus Routes,
May 31 – September 2, 2011

Route	Average MPH, beginning at 12:00 noon
M50	3.5
M23	3.7
M42	3.7
M34	3.9
M8	4.3
M79	4.4
M14A	4.4
M14D	4.6
M16	4.6
M101	4.6
M66	4.9
M57	4.9
M15	4.9
M106	4.9
Bx19	5.0
M96	5.1
Bx 36	5.2
M86	5.3
M72	5.4
M116	5.5
Bx2	5.6
B41	6.5
B46	6.8
Bx1	7.0
M15 SBS	7.1
Q58	7.2
Bx12	7.2
M21	7.6
B44 LTD	8.0
S48	8.8
Q44 LTD	9.1
Q27	9.7
Bx12 SBS	10.9
S53	11.2
S79	11.6

*See "selection of routes" in report methodology.

Table Two:
THE SCHLEPPIE AWARD
WORST TO BEST
More Than One in Five Buses On Route Arrived with Major Gaps (or Bunched Together) or Left Significantly Off Schedule*
First Half 2011

Route	% Unreliable	From/To
M101/2/3	27.3	Upper to Lower Manhattan on 3rd/Lexington/Lenox/Amsterdam Avenues
B44	25.7	Sheepshead Bay to Williamsburg Bridge Plaza on Nostrand Avenue
B41	24.3	Kings Plaza to Downtown Brooklyn on Flatbush Avenue
M15	24.3	East Harlem to Lower Manhattan on 1st and 2nd Avenues
S78	24.0	St. George Ferry Terminal to Bricktown Mall on Hylan Boulevard
Bx41	23.5	Williamsbridge to the Hub on Webster Avenue and White Plains Road
M2	23.5	Washington Heights to East Village on 5th/Madison Avenues and AC Powell Blvd
B15	22.4	Bedford-Stuyvestant to JFK on New Lots and Marcus Garvey Avenues
M3/18	22.3	Fort George to East Village on 5th/Madison/St Nicholas Avenues
S74	22.1	St. George Ferry Terminal to Bricktown Mall on Arthur Kill Road
M4	21.4	The Cloisters/Fort Tryon to Penn Station on 5th/Madison Avenues and Broadway
Bx55	21.1	Williamsbridge to the Hub on 3rd and Webster Avenues
Bx19	20.5	Botanical Garden to Harlem on Southern Blvd and E 149 and W 145 Sts
M7	20.3	Harlem to Chelsea on 6th/7th/Amsterdam/Columbus Avenues and Malcolm X Blvd
Bx36	20.2	Soundview to Washington Heights on E 174/E 180 Streets and Tremont Avenue
S44	20.1	St. George Ferry Terminal to New Springville on Richmond Avenue

*Schleppie Awards are based on the percentages of buses departing significantly off scheduled interval, based on MTA New York City Transit data. A Schleppie is awarded to any route with an average unreliability greater than 20%.

Methodology:
2011 Pokey and Schleppie 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.

The Straphangers Campaign wishes to thank staff and volunteers who assisted in the survey: Angela Acevedo, Natalie Bramble, Jason Chin-Fatt, Cate Contino, Michael Haris, Jhovaé Irving, Zephaniarh Jacob, Roshumba LLewllyn, Josh Lowell, Evan Mancini, Alessandra Newton, Ruthie Their and Luis Velasquez.

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.

---

[1] Wait 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%.