NYPIRG STRAPHANGERS CAMPAIGN
TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES

News Release

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

A Tie!
Pokey Award Goes to M66 and M42;
Both Clocked at Dismal Speed of 3.9 MPH;

Slower Than an Amusement Park Bumper Car
– and a Lot Less Fun!

Schleppie Award Goes to M4, City's Least Reliable Bus;
Nearly 30% 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 eleventh-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 34 routes. Lines were selected because they: 1) had high ridership; or 2) were historically slow Manhattan crosstown routes. (See methodology.)

The "winner" of the 2012 Pokey is ... a tie! The M66 and M42 which both had the slowest bus speed at 3.9 miles per hour as clocked at 12 noon on a weekday.

"The M66 and M42 are excruciatingly slow," said Gene Russianoff, attorney for NYPIRG's Straphangers Campaign.

Russianoff added: "The M66 and M42 would lose a race to an amusement park bumper car – and be a lot less fun! A bumper car can go 4.3 miles per hour compared to the 3.9 miles of the Pokey Award winning buses." That's according to the Modern Amusement company website at http://www.zz-modern.com/bumper-car-bct02z01.html.

— more, more, more —

"The M66 and M42 are falling behind their peers because they're children of neglect. It's high time the City and State invested in making every bus the high achievers New Yorkers deserve," said Paul Steely White, Executive Director of Transportation Alternatives. Nearly $800 million is in the MTA's 2012 through 2014 capital plan for buying hundreds of new buses.

In 2011, the M66 moved 12,764 riders on an average weekday and ranked 61st in riders out of the 177 local bus routes. The M66 travels cross-town on 65th and 66th Streets between York and West End Avenues.

In 2011, the M42 moved 14,996 riders on an average weekday and ranked 49th in riders out of the 177 local bus routes. The M42 travels cross-town on 42nd Street between First and Twelfth Avenues. According to the groups, the slowest bus routes in each borough are:

B35 LTD	5.6 mph	Between Sunset Park and Brownsville, Brooklyn
Bx19	4.9 mph	Between NY Botanical Garden in the Bronx and Harlem
M42	3.9 mph	Crosstown on 42nd Street in Manhattan
M66	3.9 mph	Crosstown on 65th and 66th Streets in Manhattan
Q58	7.0 mph	Between Ridgewood, Queens, and Flushing/Main Street
S48	8.1 mph	Between Mariners Harbor and St. George Ferry Terminal, Staten Island

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

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

The "winner" of the 2012 Schleppie is ... the M4. Nearly thirty percent of M4's arrived with big gaps in service or bunched together. The M4 goes from Fort Tryon Park in Upper Manhattan to Penn Station on 5th and Madison Avenues and Broadway.

The M4 moved 20,352 riders on an average weekday in 2011. The M4 was ranked the 24th highest route in bus ridership in the city out of a total 177 local buses.

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

B15	20.1% unreliable btwn Bedford-Stuyvesant and JFK Airport on New Lots and Marcus Garvey Aves
Bx41	21.8% unreliable btwn Williamsbridge and the Hub on Webster Avenue
M4	28.3% unreliable btwn Fort Tryon Park and Penn Station on 5th and Madison Aves and Broadway
S78	25.8% unreliable btwn St. George Ferry and 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 substantially implemented two "Select Bus Service" (SBS) routes. 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).

SBS employs a number of strategies to provide faster service, such as collecting fares before boarding buses; buses with three doors and low floors to speed up boarding; and reconfiguring bus stops and bus lanes to reduce conflicts with other traffic.

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

In our survey of bus speeds for 2012, SBS on the Bx12 increased bus speeds by more than 19.6 percent over the Bx12 local. The Bx12 local was clocked by our surveyors at 6.6 mph. But the Bx12 SBS traveled at 7.9 mph — 19.6 percent faster than the Bx12 local.

SBS on the M15 increased bus speeds by nearly 50 percent over the M15 local. The M15 local was clocked by our surveyors at 5.2 mph. But the M15 SBS traveled at 7.8 mph, more than 50 percent faster than the M15 local.

Additional SBS routes are being planned or completed for 34th Street in Manhattan (M34 and M34A), Nostrand Avenue in Brooklyn (B44); Hylan Boulevard on Staten Island (S79); and Webster Avenue in the Bronx (Bx41).

Among bus speed improvement strategies on the Bx12 SBS and 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.

By 2013, 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, the M42 in 2009 and 2010, and the M50 in 2011.

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.)

The criterion 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 the 2011 survey, the number of routes surveyed increased from 29 to 35. In the 2012 survey, the number of routes surveyed dropped from 35 to 34.

One route out of the 35 was dropped because of construction during the survey period. Two more routes out of the 35 were dropped because they are slated for significant upgrades as part of the Select Bus Service program. Two new routes were added, based on ridership. We rated the S79 before Select Bus Service roadwork began. We did not rate the S79 SBS as Hylan Blvd was under construction at the close of the survey period. As of the end of 2011, there were a total of 177 New York City Transit local bus routes and two Select Bus Service routes.
(See: http://www.mta.info/nyct/facts/ridership/ridership_bus.htm.)

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, the Bx41 in 2010 and the M101/102/103 in 2011. Transit's methodology for calculating this measure was changed in 2008.

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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 34* Selected New York City Transit Local Bus Routes,
June 1 – September 11, 2012

Route	Average MPH, beginning at 12:00 Noon
M66	3.9
M42	3.9
M23	4.0
M14A	4.1
M50	4.2
M57	4.2
M21	4.2
M116	4.5
M96	4.8
Bx19	4.9
M14D	4.9
M86	4.9
M101	5.0
Bx36	5.2
M15	5.2
M106	5.3
Bx2 LTD	5.4
B35 LTD	5.6
M79	5.7
M72	5.9
M8	6.0
Bx1 LTD	6.3
Bx12	6.6
B41 LTD	6.6
Q58	7.0
B46 LTD	7.2
M15 SBS	7.8
Bx12 SBS	7.9
B6 LTD	7.9
S48	8.1
Q44 LTD	9.5
Q27	9.9
S53	10.0
S79	11.1

*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 2012

Route	% Unreliable	From/To
M4	28.3%	Fort Tryon Park to Penn Station on 5th/Madison Avenues and Broadway
M101/2/3	27.1%	Upper to Lower Manhattan on 3rd/Lexington/Lenox/Amsterdam Avenues
S78	25.8%	St. George Ferry Terminal to Bricktown Mall on Hylan Boulevard
S74	23.5%	St. George Ferry Terminal to Bricktown Mall on Richmond and Arthur Kill Roads
M3	23.3%	Fort George to East Village on 5th/Madison/St. Nicholas Avenues
M2	22.8%	Washington Heights to East Village on 5th/Madison Avenues and AC Powell Blvd
M1	22.3%	Harlem to East Village on 5th and Madison Avenues
M15	21.8%	East Harlem to Lower Manhattan on 1st and 2nd Avenues
Bx41	21.8%	Williamsbridge to the Hub on Webster Avenue
Bx55	21.3%	Williamsbridge to the Hub on 3rd and Webster Avenues
B15	20.1%	Bedford-Stuyvesant to JFK on New Lots and Marcus Garvey Avenues

*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:
2012 Pokey and Schleppie Awards

I. **Pokey Awards**

This report is a follow-up to the NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign ten previous *Pokey Award* reports issued annually from 2002 to 2011. 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-four 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 cross-town bus routes in Manhattan. Because of significant differences between route patterns of the Manhattan M14A and M14D, these routes were measured separately. On seven routes — the B6, B35, B41, B46, Bx1, Bx2, 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.

The Bx12 local and Bx12 SBS routes, as well as the M15 and M15 SBS routes, were also measured separately. We did not include the M34 SBS, 34A SBS, and the S79 SBS, because some substantial select bus service features had not been completed at the time of the survey.

Bus Speed Measurement

Surveys were conducted by two Straphangers Campaign staff member and seventeen volunteers between June 1 and September 11, 2012. 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 July 3, 2012. Surveyors boarded an eastbound M86 which pulled out of its terminus at West 86th Street and Broadway. This trip began at 12:16:10 PM and concluded at 12:44:40 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 28 minutes, 30 seconds.

Immediately following their eastbound measurement, surveyors boarded the next westbound M86 at its eastern terminus at 12:50:08 PM. The bus came to a stop at its western terminus — West 87th Street and West End Avenue — at 1:17:53 PM. This trip represents a distance of 2.26 miles, which was covered in

27 minutes, 45 seconds.

In total then, the two M86 trips covered a distance of 4.59 miles in 56 minutes, 15 seconds. This represents an average speed of 4.9 miles per hour.

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II. **Schleppie Award**

This report is also a follow-up to the NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign's six previous *Schleppie Awards* issued annually from 2006 to 2011.

In awarding the Schleppie, the campaign uses official "wait assessment" data released in September 2012 by MTA New York City Transit for bus service during the first half of 2012, 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, that 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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[1] Wait assessment data can be found at pages 97-100 of the September 2012 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%.