

THE WOES ON THE BUS

*Frustration and Suffering,
All Through the Town*

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RIDERS ALLIANCE

– ABOUT THE RIDERS ALLIANCE –

The Riders Alliance fights for reliable, affordable, world-class public transit in order to build a more just and sustainable New York. We organize subway and bus riders to develop grassroots power across racial, economic and neighborhood lines. Together, we hold our elected officials accountable, engage the public, and take direct action to guarantee that riders have a powerful voice in the decisions that affect us.

– ABOUT THE BUS TURNAROUND COALITION –

The Bus Turnaround Coalition is a diverse group of New Yorkers determined to turn around the poor service that plagues the city's bus system and the 2.5 million rides taken on it every weekday. We are winning increased attention from our leaders and greater resources for high quality, fast and reliable bus service for all neighborhoods in New York City. Members of the Bus Turnaround Coalition include TransitCenter, Riders Alliance, NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign and Tri-State Transportation Campaign.

– AUTHOR’S NOTE –

We all know it—buses in New York City are slow, infrequent, and unreliable. Much has been written about poor bus service from a technical perspective. The data indicate that buses are becoming slower and less reliable—and losing riders, despite growth in the city’s population and employment.

Less discussed is the human cost of poor quality bus service. 2.5 million riders rely on New York City buses to connect with jobs, school, and the life of the community. These are their stories.

Over the course of a year, Riders Alliance organizers spoke to riders at bus stops in all five boroughs and put a call for riders to share their experiences through our website.

We received nearly 1,000 contributions from bus riders expressing their frustrations with a bus system that continues to let them down. We heard from riders who use more than 100 routes in all five boroughs.

We selected the most vivid and most representative stories to create this compilation that we call: *The Woes on the Bus*.

We will share these bus riders’ woes with MTA and New York City DOT leaders, with the Governor and the Mayor, with lawmakers and reporters, and with the transit-riding public. By highlighting the real-life consequences of poor bus service as reported by bus riders in their own words, we hope to add urgency to the effort to win faster, more reliable buses—and to save New Yorkers time, money and aggravation, leading to a fairer and more inclusive city that works for everyone.

Stories have been edited for clarity and length, sometimes excerpted from a longer description. Every story is true as reported to us by riders, collected through our web site or live at bus stops throughout the five boroughs.

The Woes on the Bus

I LEFT TWO HOURS EARLY

by Taylor R, Bronx

I stood outside in a rainstorm for two hours just to get on an express bus in order to get to work. I have a lot of problems with the BxM7, so I left two hours early from my house to make sure I got to work on time. When the bus finally arrived, there was a lot of traffic, taking me even longer to get to work. This bus has been so bad, I have almost gotten me fired from my job due to tardiness.

THEY TAKE THE MONEY OUT OF MY PAYCHECK

by Chris B, Brooklyn

The B67 is NEVER on time. I've waited over 45 minutes for the bus, and unfortunately, this has happened several times. My boss is starting to lose his patience, I am often late to work because of bus delays. I'm not allowed to make up missed time, so they take the money out of my paycheck.

**I JUST HAVE TO SIT IN THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE AND
HOPE SOMEONE CANCELS**

by Spells O, Staten Island

The B25 is the worst bus in New York. It's always crowded and late and I can never find a seat. Sometimes a bunch of B25 buses will come at once after I've been waiting for over half an hour. I've missed so many doctor's appointments because of this bus. In order to waste a trip, I have to sit in the doctor's office and hopes someone else cancels.

I DON'T SCHEDULE MEETINGS BEFORE 9AM

by Rebecca H, Bronx

I am a librarian and I am part of the faculty at SUNY Maritime College, which is in a relatively remote part of the eastern Bronx and served only by the Bx40 bus. I am one of many employees of the college that rely on public transit to get to the campus, to speak nothing of the commuter students that also frequent the bus and the residential students who take the bus to get off-campus. The Bx40's frequency and timeliness are major issues. I have at times waited upwards of 40 minutes for a bus to come to take me only a few stops to the campus. While my workday officially starts at 8:30 I know not to schedule any meetings or appointments before 9:00 to allow myself ample time should the bus not show up until 8:30 or later. On those days where the wait is 30-40 minutes I am late for work. Even if I leave my apartment almost an hour before I need to be at work, I may still walk in the door 10-15 minutes late because I was waiting for the bus.

**IT TOOK ME THREE HOURS TO GET FROM
GREENPOINT TO WILLIAMSBURG**

by Maria Z, Brooklyn

I would prefer to take the bus instead of the train because there is a bus stop right in front of my house. Unfortunately, the B43 and B62 are too unreliable so I walk 12 blocks to catch the train. One cold evening, it took me 3 hours just to get from Greenpoint to Williams-

burg because of late buses. While I was waiting, 7 buses passed me in the opposite direction. Another time, the bus completely passed me by so I was forced to walk all the way to my final destination.



THE FIRST THREE BUSES WERE FULL

by Dion M, Bronx

Although the Bx6 stops right outside my house, I still I need to leave 45 minutes early to get to work. Buses are so overcrowded, I have had to wait for three buses to pass until I could finally board.

I LOST MY LAST JOB BECAUSE OF THE BUS

by Sade G, Queens

I often have to deal with the consequences of the bus arriving late. I lost my last job because my bus always arrived late. I have to pick up my son after school and I can't be late for that, but sometimes I am because of the bus.

I MISSED AN APPOINTMENT WITH A CLIENT*by Arleen R, Bronx*

I am a social worker and travel long distances from Pelham Bay, where I live, to meet clients for work. A couple of weeks ago, I missed an appointment with a client because the Bx21 was stuck in heavy traffic. I was stuck in traffic for 45 minutes.

**I USE AN ELECTRIC SCOOTER AND I AM UTTERLY DEPENDENT ON THE BUS***by Amy L, Manhattan*

I am one of tens of thousands of New Yorkers who use a wheelchair or electric scooter to get around the city. And like the others, I am utterly dependent on the bus service, given that most subway stations are not accessible. In the almost ten years since I have used a motorized scooter, bus service has deteriorated dramatically. I increasingly find myself waiting for 30 minutes or more for a bus to arrive, especially on the north-south routes. This service, on which the increasing number of disabled people are made to depend, is appalling in its apparent disregard for its (paying) customers.

THE SCHOOL CHARGES WHEN YOU'RE LATE FOR PICK-UP*by Florinda R, Manhattan*

When you're late to pick up kids at school, the school charges you. I can't afford after-school care. I was 30 minutes late to pick up my grandkids at school because of the bus, and then my family suffered financially.

WE WAITED AN HOUR AND A HALF FOR A BUS*by Essie B, Manhattan*

My partner, who uses a walker, and I were trying to take the M5 from 14th Street to Spring Street. The nearest bus was at Columbus Circle but we decided to wait. Just as the bus pulled in, 45 minutes later, it went out of service! Everyone got off and there was a huge crowd. Again it said the next bus was at Columbus Circle. We decided to spend money on a cab despite our limited incomes. But there were no cabs. So finally we ended up on the M5. All in all, we waited 1.5 hours for a bus.

THEY DEDUCTED MONEY FROM MY PAYCHECK*by Carmen V, Bronx*

As I waited for the Bx6 to go to work, three or four buses skipped my stop because they were full. By the time I actually got on a bus, I had been waiting for over an hour. I got in trouble with my boss because I was late and they deducted money from my paycheck. I'm late at least two or three times a week because the bus is so crowded. Even when I try to leave early, I am still late because I just watch bus go by.

SOMETIMES THREE BUSES ARE RIGHT BEHIND IT*by Chinwee S, Brooklyn*

I frequently use the B25. I have waited close to an hour for this bus to come and when it finally does sometimes 3 buses are right behind it. Everyone gets on the first bus which causes overcrowding due to the long wait. Customers are easily agitated, causing the atmosphere to be tense.

I WAS LATE TO A JOB INTERVIEW*by Edith D, Queens*

I was on my way to a job interview at 9:00AM. I left my house at 7:00AM to make sure I had enough time to get there. I had to take a bus as part of the trip, and the bus was so late that it didn't even arrive until after my interview was supposed to start.

I'VE GOTTEN TO MY FINAL WARNING, ABOUT TO GET FIRED*by Shannon Reid, Brooklyn*

I work at Gateway Mall and I take the Q8. I think it's the worst bus line I've ever taken. I've gotten my final warning, about to get fired, waiting for this bus. I have an unlimited MetroCard and I still end up spending money on cabs to get to work. It has gotten worse over the years.

I'VE MADE A BAD IMPRESSION ON MY PROFESSORS*by George H, Queens*

I wait too long for the bus. The Q110 is regularly thirty minutes late. I have made a bad impression with my professors because the bus does not get me to class on time. There needs to be more frequent buses during the earlier hours of the day.

IT MEANS I'M 30 MINUTES LATE TO WORK*by John D, Manhattan*

The M35 is a very tough bus to ride. The hours are sporadic and often I am late to work. During rush hour, if I just miss the bus by a few minutes, I need to wait 30 minutes for another bus to come. This means I am 30 minutes late to work. That is an unacceptable amount of time to wait during peak hours.

I'M TIRED OF WASTING MONEY ON CABS*by Tonya B, Queens*

The Q112 always lets me down. It's never on time!! I depend on the Q112 because it travels up and down Liberty Ave, but it does not run frequent enough. I work early morning shifts, but the bus doesn't start running until 6:30 AM. Even though I live close to a bus stop, in the

mornings I have to walk further to catch a train because the Q112 isn't available. Then the Q112 shuts down around midnight so it's easy to get stranded. I'm tired of wasting money on cabs to just get home.

**EVERYONE WAS PUSHING***by Marqis R, Queens*

I left home at a reasonable hour to get to work on time, and I had to take the Q27. I waited a half an hour until the bus finally arrived. Then when it did show up, it was very crowded because it was so late. I was in a bad mood because everyone was pushing to get on and off. I hope there will be more Q27 buses that are on time to prevent overcrowding and pushing.

I BOUGHT A CAR*by Nat P, Bronx*

I took the 6 train and then I connected to the Bx6. But it was slow and delayed. The bus in particular, you could never tell when it was going to come and then it was too full. I bought a car and now I either drive or walk whenever I want to go somewhere.



MY KIDS GOT LUNCH DETENTION FOR BEING TARDY

by Kemisha W, Queens

As a parent, I depend heavily on the Q3 to get my kids to and from school. Multiple times the bus has not stopped. My kids have no other choice but to wait for the next bus and be late to school. Even though the Q3 is out of our control, my kids still have been punished with lunch detention for being tardy to class. I'm a college student myself and I started taking night classes. I can't leave until all my kids have safely made it home. I have missed classes waiting on them to get home on the bus.

MY BOSS KNOWS THE BUS IS UNRELIABLE

by Anthony R, Brooklyn

I like that I can take the B62 with the app, but it doesn't follow the schedule. My boss knows the bus is unreliable and has to give me some leeway for showing up to work. It's hard to keep my son busy when we take the bus out on the weekends while we wait for a late bus.

I LEAVE MY WALKER AT HOME

by Wanda Q, Bronx

I use a walker every day, but when I take the bus I have to leave it at home because the bus is so crowded that there's no space for the walker. I use a cane instead because it doesn't take up as much room, but it's not as safe as the walker.

I GET OFF WORK AT MIDNIGHT

by Francine D, Brooklyn

I work from 4PM to midnight, and when I get off the train, buses are no longer running. There are so many maintenance workers, hospital staff and city workers that get off work at night. We NEED to get home after work.

I WAITED AN HOUR IN THE SNOW

by Amrila, Queens

I use the Q112 or the Q9 to get to my classes at York College. There were several times when I waited over an hour in the snow. After waiting for an hour two buses show up at the same time. There has been a few times where I have given up, and walked home instead of waiting on the bus.

NEEDLESS TO SAY, I DIDN'T GET THE JOB

by Sarah S, Bronx

I was on my way to a job interview and I left early, but three buses passed by because they were either too crowded or out of service. Needless to say, I didn't get the job. They should turn the Bx19 into an SBS.

BUS DRIVERS DON'T EVEN BOTHER MAKING A STOP

by Ryan C, Queens

I take the Q38 bus from Ridgewood to Long Island City every day. This is the only bus route that leads from my neighborhood to Long Island City without taking a long roundabout route. During the peak morning hour, every single Q39 bus is packed with students and employees going to LaGuardia College and Aviation High School.

Each bus that passes you is filled from front to back, so bus drivers don't even bother making a stop. If you compare the bus schedule to the actual number of buses, you will find that service is cut, and buses come in a bunch, sometimes three arriving at a time.



I AM REQUIRED TO STAY LATE

by Douglas H, Queens

When the buses do not run on time, I am late to work. Not only does being late for work upsets my boss, I am required to stay late to make up the missed time. It's also frustrating when you have several out of service buses pass by while you are waiting for a late bus. The current system is not helping us, but creating more headaches.

I MISSED THE DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT ENTIRELY

by Rodney P, Bronx

I take the bus about three times a week. I have issues with the timeliness and crowding. There have been many instances where I haven't been able to board because the bus was too full. Once I

missed a doctor's appointment entirely because I was waiting on the M7 and I had to reschedule.



I WAS AN HOUR LATE, SO SHE WAS AN HOUR LATE

by Tiffany P, Brooklyn

I waited an hour to get to work last Sunday. One bus was early and then the next one was very late. I work in health care, the person I was supposed to relieve was an hour late getting home because I was an hour late getting to her.

I ALMOST GOT INTO A FIGHT ON THE B61

by Melinda M, Brooklyn

I almost got into a fight on the B61. It was so crowded that some man told me I needed to fold up my walker. I couldn't fold it up because I had something inside. He started yelling and saying he was going to hit me.

I COMPLETELY MISSED THE CONCERT*by Ryan A, Queens*

I would love to get home in a reasonable amount of time after a long day, but that's impossible with the Q110. At night, the bus is late and the service isn't as frequent. The posted schedule is always wrong. I end up having to text the MTA to get an accurate wait time. It's also hard to make plans with friends because the bus is never on time. Once the bus was so late, I completely missed a concert I had purchased tickets to go to.

I JUST HAD TO WAIT IN THE RAIN*by Cutwright, Brooklyn*

The service on the B25 and the B12 is terrible. The B25 just doesn't run enough. One rainy evening, there was about 50 people waiting on a late B12 on Alabama Avenue. The worst part is this stop is located near the bus depot. I wasn't able to walk home so I just had to wait in the rain for the bus. I spent more time waiting for the B12 than my actual commute home.

SOMETIMES I HAVE TO WAIT AT THE HOSPITAL ALL DAY*by Agustin G, Bronx*

I take the Bx2 and the Bx19 to go medical appointments at Lincoln Hospital. I've missed appointments because the bus was delayed. I'm still able to see the doctor on those days, but sometimes I have to wait at the hospital all day for the next available time slot.

I ALMOST MISSED MY SHELTER CURFEW*by Vernon D, Brooklyn*

On Saturday, I waited for the B74 for an hour in the rain. I was completely drenched and it was terrible. I live in a shelter and I almost missed curfew. Thankfully, I made it two minutes before curfew. It was really stressful. If I hadn't made curfew, I would have lost my bed for the night. I would have had to remove all my belongings from my locker and there is no guarantee I would be able to get placed at another shelter.

MY KIDS GET UPSET WHEN I'M LATE*by Eva E, Brooklyn*

All the buses I ride are late! My employer gets upset at me. I have to stay late to make up the missed time. My kids get upset when I'm late picking them up from school long after school has been dismissed. It's just overall a very frustrating ordeal.

**IT MAKES ME LATE FOR WORK ON THE REGULAR***by Devin C, Queens*

There's lots and lots of clumping. I'm talking about three buses going uptown and nine going downtown in the same 4-block radius. That leads to ridiculous waits as well as dangerously crowded buses. It makes me late for work on the regular and makes it difficult to plan.

I WAIT HOURS FOR THE NEXT APPOINTMENT

by Jeff B, Bronx

I take the crosstown bus to get to the Veteran Affairs hospital. I've missed appointments waiting for the bus, and then I wait hours before I can be seen. I need the low buses because I have mobility issues. Sometimes I'll wait for one of those to come. Once I got so frustrated that I just took a cab.



I WAS NEARLY FIRED

by James S, Brooklyn

I take the B57 every day, either for work or for something personal. It's rarely on schedule, so I arrive 10 or 15 minutes early to the bus stop. Even with this, I'm still sometimes late to work and once I was nearly fired for it.

I HAD TO TAKE A CAB TO WORK

by Veronica C, Manhattan

I waited for the Bx41 for so long that I was going to be late to work, so I took a cab instead. I can't afford that. Sometimes when I'm waiting for the Bx19 on my way home, the bus is so unreliable that I just decide to walk 20 or 30 minutes to Manhattan instead of waiting for the bus.

I AM LATE TO EVERYTHING

by Pam, Brooklyn

The Q15 is consistently late. It's irritating because then four buses will show up at once. It disrupts my day and makes me late to EVERYTHING. I'm late to work. I'm late to get home. I'm late to take care of my errands. Being late for work is the worst because the missed time comes out of my pay.

IT TAKES ME AN HOUR TO GO TWO MILES

by Melodie, Brooklyn

I usually have to wait twenty to thirty minutes for the B41 bus, and then 6 buses will show up at once. Even though I only work 2 miles from home, it takes me an hour to get to work. I usually can't take the bus because it's so unreliable and have to walk for a long time to the Q train instead.

MY BOSS SAID NO ONE SHOULD TAKE THE BUS

by Lee, Brooklyn

I was 45 minutes late to work last week. My boss said that late buses can get you fired, and that no employee should take the bus, but it's my only option.

**I WOULD NEVER TAKE THE BUS
TO SOMETHING WITH A DEADLINE**

by Sunny S, Brooklyn

The B67 has serious issues. The schedule is unreliable and I end up waiting 45–60 minutes. Even when I get on, it moves slowly. I usually have to take the train instead. I would never take the bus to something with a deadline. I wish the schedules were accurate. The buses are also too expensive and inaccessible. The city needs to shovel the snow that piles up on the sidewalks because otherwise people in wheelchairs have no way of getting on the bus.



I MISSED MY DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT

by Lydia C, Manhattan

The M102 is often be late. One time I was on my way to the doctor and the bus was so late I ended up missing my appointment. They were able to see me later that day, but I shouldn't have missed the appointment.

MY BOSS FIRED ME THAT SAME DAY

by Josmarie F, Bronx

I was working at the Whole Foods on the Upper East Side. I took the 1 train to the M86 crosstown bus. One day in February, the bus was delayed for 30 minutes. My boss fired me that same day. I didn't mind leaving the job, but it was for reasons outside my control and now that has to follow me around.

SOMETIMES MY CO-WORKERS AND I SHARE A CAR SERVICE

by Davidson F, Bronx

I take the M60 to work at LaGuardia Airport 6 times a week. Sometimes the bus is so crowded that I can't even get on, and when it's that crowded people can get unruly. When I'm trying to get the bus at 3 or 4 in the morning for my early shift, buses are very infrequent. I need to share car service with co-workers to arrive on time, adding an additional expense.

**I COULD HAVE DONE BACKGROUND VOCALS
FOR JOHN LEGEND**

by Faith L, Brooklyn

The bus is never on time and I feel like it gets rerouted a lot. I'm forced to leave an hour in advance. My boss thinks I'm taking advantage, but it's the bus. Once I missed an audition to do background vocals for John Legend.

– ACKNOWLEDGMENTS –

The Riders Alliance would like to thank nearly the 1,000 bus riders who shared their “woes on the bus” with our organizers in the field and those who submitted them online.

We’d like to thank Lindsay Barnett for designing this book, Scott Shaw for his photos and most importantly we’d like to thank our grassroots activists and leaders.

Thank you to the Bus Turnaround Campaign leadership team for helping sort through hundreds of stories to select the very best for this compilation. And lastly, to our member Samantha P. for taking photos of bus riders to incorporate in the book.

We want to thank our elected leaders at the city and state level who are standing up for public transit and taking leadership to support better bus service for 2.5 million bus riders, as well as dedicated staff at the MTA and NYC DOT, some of whom are dedicating years of their lives to improving bus service for New Yorkers.

**BUS TURNAROUND CAMPAIGN KEY TOOLS FOR
FIXING NEW YORK CITY’S BUSES**

Redesign the bus network and routes for more frequent and efficient service

- *Determine how and where the network is failing and redesign as needed*
- *Redesign indirect routes*
- *Break up routes that are too long*
- *Right size the distance between bus stops*

Transform how we get on and off the bus

- *Implement tap-and-go onboard fare collection and all-door boarding*

Adopt better methods to keep buses on schedule

- *Ensure that buses begins their runs on time*
- *Intervene early when buses get off track*
- *Institute headway-based control for frequent buses*

Design streets to prioritize buses

- *Create dedicated lanes*
- *Install bus bulbs and boarding islands*
- *Optimize traffic signals*
- *Introduce queue-jump lanes for buses*

Make using the bus easy and intuitive

- *Provide real time information at bus stops and on buses*

Increase transparency about bus performance

- *Report on performance in a way that riders can easily understand*
- *Institute a comprehensive open data policy.*

To learn more about the Bus Turnaround Campaign and how you can get involved please visit:

busturnaround.nyc.

