

# **PLACES TO GO:**

*How Seniors Centers are Hurt by Poor Bus Service*

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# **LUGARES A DONDE IR:**

*Cómo los centros de adultos mayores sufren a causa de un servicio de autobuses deficiente*

RIDERS ALLIANCE AND EAST SIDE HOUSE SETTLEMENT



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RIDERS ALLIANCE & EAST SIDE HOUSE SETTLEMENT

MELROSE - MOTT HAVEN NEIGHBORHOOD SENIOR CENTER

## 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.*

## ACERCA DE RIDERS ALLIANCE

*Riders Alliances lucha por una transportación pública de primera categoría, confiable y asequible, para convertir a Nueva York en un lugar más justo y sustentable. Organizamos a la gente que viaja en metro y autobuses para desarrollar poder entre las bases a través de líneas raciales, económicas y geográficas. Juntos, hacemos a los funcionarios electos responsables, incluimos la participación del público y tomamos acción directa para garantizar que los pasajeros tengan una voz poderosa en las decisiones que nos afectan.*

## ABOUT EAST SIDE SETTLEMENT SENIOR CITIZENS' PROGRAM

*East Side House is a community-based organization in the South Bronx. We work with schools, community centers and other partners to bring quality education and resources to residents of the Bronx and Northern Manhattan. East Side House's Senior Citizens' program meets the needs of older adults by providing a variety of social, protective and supportive services in a non-medical care setting. The program improves the quality of life for seniors in the community by offering opportunities for personal achievement, social engagement and community participation.*

## ACERCA DEL PROGRAMA PARA ADULTOS MAYORES DE EAST SIDE SETTLEMENT

*East Side House es una organización de base comunitaria en el sur del Bronx. Trabajamos con escuelas, centros comunitarios y otros aliados para llevar una educación de calidad y recursos a quienes viven en el Bronx y el norte de Manhattan. El Programa para Adultos Mayores de East Side House cubre las necesidades de adultos mayores con una variedad de servicios sociales, protectores y de apoyo, a la vez que ofrece oportunidades de crecimiento personal y de participación social y comunitaria.*

## ABOUT THE BUS TURNAROUND CAMPAIGN

*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.*

## ACERCA DE LA CAMPAÑA DE BUS TURNAROUND

*Bus Turnaround Coalition es un grupo diverso de personas en Nueva York determinadas a dar un giro al deficiente servicio que plaga el sistema de autobuses de la ciudad y los 2,5 millones de viajes que se llevan a cabo cada día laboral. Estamos ganando más atención por parte de nuestros líderes y más recursos para un servicio de autobuses de alta calidad, rápido y confiable, para todos los barrios en la ciudad de Nueva York. Los miembros de Bus Turnaround Coalition incluyen a TransitCenter, Riders Alliance, la campaña de NYPIRG Straphangers y la campaña de Tri-State Transportation.*

## – INTRODUCTION –

Every single day, nearly 2.3 million New Yorkers depend on local bus service in New York City--and they are facing a crisis. New York's local bus service has become one of the slowest and most unreliable system of any big city in the country, and unfortunately, it's gradually getting worse.

According to NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer's report, "The Other Transit Crisis: How to Improve the NYC Bus System," New York City bus riders are 75% of people of color, 55% are foreign-born and 12% are seniors, who on average earn \$28,455 per year. As bus service continues to deteriorate, bus riders over 60 are the most impacted by the decline in reliable service. Bus service is most appealing to seniors because local bus service runs through every neighborhood, is 100% accessible for seniors with mobility issues, wheelchairs and walkers, and is an affordable option with their reduced-fare.

Today, there are approximately, 1.64 million seniors in New York City. By 2040 one in every five New Yorkers will be over 60 and older. To address the New York City's aging population, in 2007, New York City's Department for the Aging (DFTA) launched Age-Friendly NYC, an initia-

tive to assess the City's responsiveness to the needs of older New Yorkers and transition New York City as an age-friendly city. Projections from the Age Friendly NYC 2017 report indicate seniors will make up 20.6% of New York City's population by 2040.

Under the leadership of Mayor Bill de Blasio, the City has increased funding for aging services by more than 58 percent. This increased funding has benefited senior centers, case management services that help homebound seniors, home-delivered meals and Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs). These programs help older adults live independent and active quality of lives.

According to Age Friendly NYC 2017, 21% of seniors are facing poverty and a 2016 study found that neighborhood seniors center participants often had the lowest incomes, the fewest resources, the poorest health, the greatest social isolation, and the most need for services. The study also found participants reported improved physical and mental health, increased participation in health programs, frequent exercising, and positive behavior change in monitoring weight and keeping physically active.

While the studies show the benefits of senior

centers, rarely are seniors asked about their method of transportation to and from their neighborhood senior centers. Riders Alliance took time this summer to talk to participants at senior centers to learn about their daily bus experience and the impact it can have on their day to day experience and level of engagement at their senior center. Mayor de Blasio has made a commitment to make New York City the fairest big city in America, reduce social isolation, and make New York City age-friendly, but this can only be accomplished if New Yorkers can get to these programs. According to DFTA Senior Center Evaluation, 14.2% of seniors stopped participating at a center because it was too inconvenient to get there.

This report illustrates the impact poor bus service can have on one senior center's functioning. By interviewing individual seniors and discussing their transportation troubles we are able to see that the basic proposition a senior center offers—the ability to gather with others and build community—frays when participants cannot reliably attend. In an institution with a standard schedule of activities and events, if their participants cannot reliably arrive their chances of being successful is significantly lower.

This sort of transit-created deterioration of the social fabric is in direct opposition to the Administration's own goals with DFTA which we outline above. This is how, when the Administration does not prioritize buses on our streets, the Mayor limits his ability to truly make NYC a fairer place.

In addition, these stories highlight the critical role local bus service has in neighborhoods around the city. In a time where the public transit conversation is dominated by a discussion about commutes, which are usually longer distances, these stories highlight how local bus service helps neighborhoods function. Senior centers are institutions drawing from the areas directly around them, and these shorter trips should not be any less of a priority to the mayor than longer ones like ferries across the East River.

Seniors often struggle to be seen, heard and included. It seems that their preferred mode of transportation is as well.

In order for New York City to achieve its goal of becoming an age-friendly city and provide seniors access to independent lifestyles, Mayor de Blasio needs to prioritize improving bus service for our seniors. To improve our bus system, Mayor de Blasio, who controls our streets needs to:

- Install bus shelters and benches at every bus stop to keep seniors protected from rain, snow, wind, and scorching heat throughout the year.
- 100 miles of bus lanes in the next five years to help buses move faster, increase bus speeds, and avoid bunching to decrease the wait time for seniors at bus stops and overcrowding.
- NYPD enforcement of bus lanes and bus stop to avoid making seniors walk into the middle of a street to board their bus because a private car or delivery truck is blocking the bus stop or bus lane.
- Transit Signal Priority at 1,000 intersections to reduce the amount of time buses spend behind red lights and help seniors get to their destination quickly.

For our seniors to enjoy the most out of the senior centers, for Mayor de Blasio to reduce social isolation and make NYC the fairest big city in America, City Hall needs to prioritize the mobility of bus riders.

## – INTRODUCCIÓN –

Cada día, casi 2,3 millones de personas dependen del servicio local de autobuses en la ciudad de Nueva York—y ahora enfrentan una crisis. El servicio local de autobuses se ha convertido en uno de los sistemas más lentos y menos fiables entre todas las ciudades grandes del país y, desafortunadamente, está empeorando gradualmente.

Según el informe del auditor de NYC Scott Stringer, “The Other Transit Crisis: How to Improve the NYC Bus System”, los pasajeros de autobuses en la ciudad de Nueva York son 75% personas no blancas (o de color como se dice comúnmente en EE. UU.), 55% son extranjeros y 12% son adultos mayores que, en promedio, ganan \$28.455 al año. A medida que el servicio continúa deteriorándose, los pasajeros de autobuses mayores de 60 son los más impactados por el deterioro del servicio. Los adultos mayores están particularmente interesados en el servicio de autobuses porque el servicio local de autobuses pasa por todos los barrios, es 100% accesible para los adultos mayores con problemas de movilidad, sillas de ruedas y andadores, y es una opción asequible gracias a sus pasajes reducidos.

Actualmente, hay aproximadamente 1,64

millones de adultos mayores en la ciudad de Nueva York. Para 2040, uno de cada cinco habitantes de Nueva York tendrá más de 60 años. Para atender a la población envejeciente de la ciudad de Nueva York, en 2007, el Departamento para Personas Mayores de la Ciudad de Nueva York (DFTA, por sus siglas en inglés) lanzó Age-Friendly NYC, una iniciativa para evaluar la respuesta del Municipio a las necesidades de los adultos mayores en Nueva York y la transición de la ciudad de Nueva York como una ciudad consciente en cuanto a la edad de su gente. Las proyecciones del informe de Age-Friendly NYC de 2017 indican que los adultos mayores compondrán 20,6% de la población de la ciudad de Nueva York para el año 2040.

Bajo el liderazgo del alcalde Bill de Blasio, el Municipio ha aumentado los fondos dedicados a servicios para envejecientes por más de 58 por ciento. Este aumento en los fondos ha beneficiado a los centros para adultos mayores, los servicios de manejo de casos que ayudan a los adultos mayores rumbo a sus hogares, los alimentos entregados a domicilio y las comunidades de retiro que ocurren naturalmente. Estos programas ayudan a los adultos mayores a vivir de forma independiente y activa.

Según Age-Friendly NYC 2017, 21% de los adultos mayores viven en la pobreza y un estudio de 2016 halló que los participantes de los centros comunitarios para adultos mayores a menudo tienen los ingresos más bajos, la menor cantidad de recursos, la salud más pobre, el mayor aislamiento social y la mayor necesidad de servicios. El estudio también halló que los participantes reportaron una mejor salud física y mental, una mayor participación en programas de salud, ejercicio físico frecuente y un cambio positivo de conducta en cuanto a monitorear su peso y mantenerse activos físicamente.

Aunque los estudios muestran los beneficios de los centros para adultos mayores, rara vez a los adultos mayores se les preguntó sobre su método de transportación a y de los centros para adultos mayores en sus barrios. Riders Alliance sacó tiempo este verano para hablar con participantes en los centros para adultos mayores y aprender sobre sus experiencias diarias con los autobuses y el impacto que estos pueden tener en su diario vivir y en el nivel de participación en su centro para adultos mayores. El alcalde de Blasio ha hecho un compromiso con convertir a la ciudad de Nueva York en la gran ciudad más justa de América, reducir el aislamiento social y con-

vertir a Nueva York en un lugar consciente de la diversidad en las experiencias por edad, pero esto solamente se puede lograr si las personas en Nueva York pueden llegar a estos programas. Según la Evaluación de Centros para Adultos Mayores del DFTA, 14,2% de los adultos mayores dejaron de participar en un centro porque llegar a él era demasiado inconveniente.

Este informe ilustra el impacto que un servicio de autobuses deficiente puede tener en el funcionamiento de un centro para adultos mayores. Después de entrevistar a los adultos mayores y discutir sus problemas de transportación, podemos ver que la proposición básica que ofrece un centro para adultos mayores – la capacidad para reunirte con otras personas y crear una comunidad – sufre cuando los participantes no pueden asistir regularmente. En una institución con un horario estándar de actividades y eventos, si sus participantes no pueden llegar consistentemente, la probabilidad de que tengan éxito es considerablemente más baja.

Este tipo de deterioro del tejido social, creado por el tránsito, está en oposición directa de las metas de la Administración en cuanto al DFTA que identificamos anteriormente. Así es cómo, cuando la Administración no prioriza los

autobuses en nuestras calles, al alcalde limita su capacidad para realmente hacer que NYC sea un lugar más justo.

Además, estas historias resaltan el importante rol del servicio local de autobuses en todos los barrios de la ciudad. En un momento en el que la conversación sobre el transporte público está dominada por una discusión sobre los viajes al trabajo que normalmente son de distancias más largas, estas historias resaltan cómo el servicio local de autobuses ayuda a que los barrios funcionen. Los centros para adultos mayores son instituciones que dependen de las áreas que los rodean directamente, y estos viajes más cortos no deben tener menos prioridad para el alcalde que los más largos, como los ferris del East River.

Los adultos mayores a menudo enfrentan serios obstáculos para que los vean, escuchen e incluyan. Tal parece que lo mismo sucede con su modo preferido de transportación.

Para que la ciudad de Nueva York logre su meta de convertirse en una ciudad consciente de las diversas necesidades por edad y provea a los adultos mayores con acceso a estilos de vida independientes, el alcalde de Blasio necesita adjudicarle prioridad a mejorar el servicio de autobuses para nuestros adultos mayores. Para mejorar

nuestro sistema de autobuses, el alcalde de Blasio, que es quien controla nuestras calles, necesita:

- Instalar cobijo techado y asientos en todas las paradas de autobús para que los adultos mayores se puedan proteger de la lluvia, la nieve y el calor en el transcurso del año.
- 100 millas de carriles de autobuses en los próximos cinco años para ayudar a que los autobuses se muevan más rápidamente, aumentar la velocidad de los autobuses y evitar la acumulación de gente para disminuir el tiempo de espera para los adultos mayores en las paradas de autobús y el hacinamiento.
- La supervisión por parte de NYPD de los carriles y las paradas de autobús para evitar que los adultos mayores caminen en el medio de la calle para abordar su autobús porque un carro privado o un camión de entrega está bloqueando la parada o el carril de autobuses.
- Señales de tránsito de prioridad en 1.000 intersecciones para reducir la cantidad de tiempo que los autobuses pasan detenidos en semáforos rojos y ayudar a los adultos mayores a llegar a sus destinos rápidamente.

Para que nuestros adultos mayores disfruten al máximo los centros para adultos mayores, para que el alcalde de Blasio reduzca el aislamiento social y convierta a NYC en la gran ciudad más justa en América, la Alcaldía necesita priorizar la movilidad de los pasajeros de autobús.

## **BRONX SENIORS BUS RIDERS**

Nearly 15% of Bronxites are over the age of 60 (DFTA), and thanks to increased funding to senior centers, according to Bronx Borough President Bronx Senior Resource Guide, there are nearly 72 senior centers throughout the Bronx. During the summer of 2018, Riders Alliance interviewed over 30 seniors and employees at **East Side Settlement Melrose Senior Center in Mott Haven**, Bronx to learn more about how bus service impacts their day to day, but most importantly, how it impacts their participation and engagement at their senior center.

## **ADULTOS MAYORES QUE SON PASAJEROS EN EL BRONX**

Casi 15% de quienes viven en el Bronx tienen más de 60 años de edad (DFTA), y gracias a un aumento en los fondos destinados a los centros para adultos mayores, conforme a la Guía de Recursos para Adultos Mayores en el Bronx del presidente del boro del Bronx, ahora hay casi 72 centros para adultos mayores en todo el Bronx. Durante el verano de 2018, Riders Alliance entrevistó a más de 30 adultos mayores y empleados en el centro de adultos mayores de **East**

**Side Settlement Melrose Senior Center en Mott Haven, Bronx** para más información sobre cómo el servicio de autobuses impacta su diario vivir y, más importante aún, cómo impacta su participación en y compromiso con el centro para adultos mayores.

### **EAST SIDE HOUSE SETTLEMENT SENIOR CITIZEN'S PROGRAMING**

The senior citizen's program at East Side Settlement operate three centers in the South Bronx, one at Mitchell Houses, Mott Haven-Melrose Senior Homes and Patterson Houses. All three centers combined serves nearly 300 seniors daily and provide a wide-variety of programs in both Spanish and English. Programming for seniors include nutrition education, meal programs, counseling, educational activities, monthly trips and transportation and benefits assistance. The center creates programming, facilitate workshops and classes and ensure the well-being of the seniors.

### **LA PROGRAMACIÓN PARA ADULTOS MAYORES DE EAST SIDE HOUSE SETTLEMENT**

El programa para adultos mayores de East Side Settlement opera tres centros en el sur del Bronx, uno en Mitchell Houses, Mott Haven-Melrose Senior Homes y Patterson Houses. Todos estos tres centros combinados sirven a casi 300 adultos mayores cada día y brindan una amplia variedad de programas tanto en español como en inglés. La programación para adultos mayores incluye educación nutricional, programas alimentarios, consejería, actividades educativas, viajes mensuales y ayuda con la transportación y los beneficios. El centro crea programación, facilita talleres y clases, y asegura el bienestar de los adultos mayores.

### **DEMOGRAPHICS OF MOTT HAVEN AND HUNTS POINT BRONX SENIORS (DFTA)**

- 12 % of the seniors living in the Bronx reside within Mott Haven and Hunts Point
- 76% are foreign born
- 71% of seniors over the age of 60 live 200% the

federal poverty line compared to the citywide average of 2.52%

The demographics of Mott Haven and Hunts Points share similar characteristics of the seniors who are most likely to attend and benefit from the services provided at their neighborhood senior center. In order for Mott Haven to provide the best for its seniors, the staff and seniors need to get there, but when delays and problems arise on the bus, both seniors and staff alike miss out on important programming. Below are the stories of how a senior center loved by its members, can't fulfill its mission when bus service makes it hard for the seniors and staff to attend.

### **LAS CARACTERÍSTICAS DEMOGRÁFICAS DE LOS ADULTOS MAYORES EN MOTT HAVEN Y HUNTS POINT EN EL BRONX (DFTA)**

- 12% de los adultos mayores del Bronx viven en Mott Haven y Hunts Point.
- 76% son extranjeros.
- 71% de los adultos mayores con más de 60 años viven 200% en el umbral de la pobreza en com-

paración con el promedio de 2,52% en la ciudad.

Las características demográficas de Mott Haven y Hunts Point comparten características similares con los adultos mayores más propensos a asistir y beneficiarse de los servicios provistos en el centro para adultos mayores en su barrio. Para que Mott Haven provea lo mejor para sus adultos mayores, tanto los adultos mayores como el personal necesitan poder llegar, pero cuando hay atrasos y problemas con el servicio de autobuses, tanto los adultos mayores como el personal se pierden programación importante. A continuación, presentamos historias de cómo un centro para adultos mayores, muy querido por sus miembros, no puede cumplir su misión porque el servicio de autobuses dificulta que los adultos mayores y el personal puedan llegar.

## THE ACCESSIBILITY OF BUSES

Many of the seniors' expressed accessibility as the underlying reason they rely on local buses to get around. Seniors with limited mobility find it challenging to go up and down flights of stairs on the subways. Currently, only 23% of subway stations have elevators which are not always operational.

Following are stories from seniors who have mobility issues, but rely on buses to get around in their neighborhood but are met with unreliable services and lack of shelters and benches at their bus stop.



*Alba Quinn, 59*

I'm a member of Melrose Senior Center and an education specialist for all the three seniors centers. I'm in charge of decorating our our bulletin boards where we announce all the upcoming birthdays of the seniors in the center.

Before retiring, I worked at JFK airport for over a decade. My commute was challenging then and continues to be even more challenging now as I've gotten older. For 10 years, I've traveled from the Bronx to JFK and spent 3 to 4 hours each way to get to and from work. I would leave my house at 5:00am to arrive at work at 8:00am. Coming back, my commute time

would double. I wish there were a better way for Bronx residents to commute outside of the Bronx to major work centers like JFK airport. It was a good paying job, but I had to sacrifice a lot. I sacrificed my family, sleep and my well being. But I had no other option, I needed the job so I could meet my obligations, pay my bills and provide for my family. And then, I got into an accident while on the job and hurt my back. This accident forced me to go on disability and affected my mobility. I was forced to use a walker and depend on Access-a-Ride to move around the city.

During the next few years, I attended therapy to help regain my mobility and be able to walk without a walker. Today, thankfully, I no longer need a walker, but I'm still very fragile and any injury can be detrimental to my mobility. If I thought commuting to work was a challenge, as a senior with an invisible disability using public transportation has become more difficult for me. I cannot use the trains because not all stops have elevators or escalators and train cars often too crowded for me.

A few years ago, after regaining my mobility, I was on a packed 2 train and I had a panic attack on the platform because I almost fell from the

crowded conditions. As I tried to catch my balance, my body froze and I couldn't move. A simple fall can be devastating and I can very easily go back to being disabled and having to depend on a walker or even worse a wheelchair.

Ever since that day, bus service has become my method of transportation, I feel safer, but bus service is extremely unreliable. I prefer to use buses because it gives me more freedom and the ability to come to the senior center, see my family, and run errands. But the inconsistencies in the scheduling make it hard for me to plan my day because I often rely on multiple buses to get me to my

Buses are often late and when they arrive, they are crowded and I can't find a seat, making me feel unsafe. For longer trips that are planned in advanced, I depend on Access-a-Ride to assure that I will have a seat. As winter is approaching, I ask of Mayor de Blasio and the elected officials that visit our center during election season to prioritize bus riders on our street and provide amenities like shelters and benches at all bus stops.



*Genaro Guerrero, 67*

I suffered a life changing car accident years ago. I was changing the oil on my car. A car was trying to get into a parking spot that was in directly in front of my car and while parking ran into my car while I was behind the hood. The accident was devastating and I had to get a knee prosthesis. Ever since the accident, I've had to undergo five 5 knee surgeries. In other words, I can't do many stairs or stand for long periods of time. I no longer drive and rely on the bus to get around because it doesn't require any stairs. But

although I don't have flights of stairs to go up and down, I have to stand at the bus stops when waiting for the bus.

On my way to the senior center, I have waited up to 45 minutes for a bus to arrive just to have three buses to arrive. This is infuriating because those buses could have been spread apart. These delays make me late to the early programming at the senior center. I like to get at least an hour before lunch to catch up with other seniors, play billiards and then enjoy lunch, but unreliable bus service make that difficult. Whenever I see a bus, I try my best to run for it because I have no idea how long the next bus will take. I have a knee prosthesis, so I can't really run very fast, so I wave my hands and yell in hopes that the bus driver will kindly wait for me, but often they take off and I'm left to wait outside without any protection during the changing seasons.

Of course, when the buses do arrive, they are crowded. There are no seats left for seniors. I have knee problems so I can't stand, and I also have arthritis in my wrists and holding on when I can't get a seat is challenging. I wish MTA could enforce seating so seniors like myself don't have to stand on the bus after waiting so long for a bus to arrive. To avoid so much overcrowding,

having more buses run during rush hour could ease the overcrowding.

I am from Ecuador and in South American countries they have better bus service than NYC. I find this unbelievable, New York City is supposed to be the best in the world, but yet we don't have a world class bus system? In South America, buses have their own dedicated lanes that have a physical barrier, so nothing but buses can use them. Here in New York City, bus lanes are jokes, they are just paint on the floor. We need better bus service, especially for seniors like me. Mayor de Blasio needs to prioritize the lives of bus riders and get New York City up to speed with other countries.



*Justino Pedroza, 67*

I'm member at Melrose Senior Center, every there knows me as the "Candyman." I love bringing happiness to the people I meet and the way I do this is by providing everyone I see with a mint or ginger candy. I was born in Panama and I arrived to New York City during the 1980's.

Before retiring, I was a security guard for different banks. This meant I worked long shifts, up to 16 hours standing all day. Today, I am suffering the consequences. I suffer from arthritis in my knees and my back and have mobility

issues when my ankles swell up. I use a cane for assistance and it's very challenging to go up and down stairs with it. I rely on local bus service because I feel safer getting on and off the bus but most importantly, it lets me travel around my neighborhood. I use the bus to get to the senior center, the pharmacy, doctor appointments, and my favorite local candy store to stock up on my candy supply. My favorite candy store is located on 138th and Willis, they give me a good deal on candy, right now I get 20 pieces of ginger candy for a dollar.

But despite local bus being the better option for my knees and getting my around locally, the quality of bus service has steadily declined. I've waited over 45 minutes for a bus to arrive just for it to skip my stop because it's too full. I either wait for the next bus, or walk to another route that can leave me close to my destination. When I'm on my way to an appointment and have limited time, I'm forced to spend money on cabs. I don't like to spend money on cabs--it can cost up to 13 dollars rather than the \$1.35 bus fare. I rather use that money on buying candy to give to my friends at the senior center, not on a taxi because the bus is late.

I look forward to attending the senior center,

they provide us with a lot of different programming, great food, and monthly parties to dance. They bring a DJ and they turn the dining hall into a dance floor. When I dance, I don't feel pain in my joints. It heals me and it would hurt me to miss our parties. During the winter attending the center become more challenging because long wait times at bus stops during cold weather.

*Maria (Julie) Montanez, 74*

I'm a member at Melrose Senior Center and use buses to get to the center and doctor appointments. In March of 2016, I got a knee replacement on my right knee. A year later in November of 2017 so did my left knee. Knee replacement was supposed reduce my pain and help me walk better, but despite the surgeries, I still struggle walking. I am scheduled to visit my knee doctor at Jacobi Hospital multiple times a year and rely on the bus to get there. Unfortunately, there isn't a bus that takes riders into the hospital, riders coming from the Bx21 have to wait for a hospital shuttle to get them inside.

Although, I live and visit a doctor in the Bronx, my commute can be as long as an hour and half. If I am on my way to a doctor's appointment and

the bus is taking long to arrive, I get very anxious and my blood pressure goes up. Rescheduling appointments with the knee specialist can take up months, which why it's so important for me to arrive on time. When the bus is running late, I suffer and so do other members at the senior center that have shared their experience with me. Mayor de Blasio need to understand how important bus service is to seniors. I need to get to my appointments, I don't understand why our leadership doesn't care about improving buses

*Eva Gary, 74*

I just started using a wheelchair and riding the bus has become more difficult than ever before. Buses are always so crowded, there is no space for me to get on. The Bx15 is extremely infrequent and often I am turned away because there is no room for me to get on the bus, it's embarrassing. This automatically adds an additional 30 minutes to my commute until the next bus arrives. I am tired of waiting in the cold for a bus without a shelter to protect me, it makes me anxious and often late to my appointments and the senior center.

When I need to travel, I have to add an additional hour to my commute. I shouldn't have to

spend my time waiting for a bus on the street, I should be able to spend my extra time with my family and my community at the center. Our elected officials don't understand what seniors and people with disabilities are experiencing. Seniors need frequent service and shelters at bus stops, we don't have resources to spend on cabs. Just because I'm a senior in a wheelchair that doesn't mean I don't have places to go.

## STAFF IMPACT

Slow buses affect seniors trying to get the center on time for their classes, but in the same light unreliable bus service impacts staff members that lead these programs. Most staff member don't live locally and travel from different parts of the Bronx. Doors at Melrose Senior Center open bright and early, you'll find seniors trickling in by 8:00am.



*Alicia Gomez, 34*

I'm the Director for East Side Settlement Senior Citizen's Program. I oversee the programming for the three centers in the South Bronx. I've had this role for five years, but have been working with seniors for over 16 years.

As a director, I see and experience how poor bus service affects seniors and workers alike. We provide a variety of classes, events, trips, and workshops to our seniors. Our mission is to not just provide services, but build community and help seniors live healthy and independent lifestyles. The seniors are my extended family and the growth and well-being of the seniors is very important me.

The success of our senior center is because of the wonderful staff members who lead our classes and workshops. Staff members come from all different parts of the Bronx and mostly rely on buses to get to work. By 8:00am our doors are open for our seniors and it's crucial for staff members to arrive on time so we can stay on schedule and make sure seniors can enjoy the different activities that we offer. When staff members are running late, I need to assume their roles and responsibilities.

But poor bus service affects more than paid staff members. It affects our seniors. We serve seniors who live in the area and also seniors who travel far because there are no centers near their homes. Our lunch program is what makes us very popular. We provide home-cooked, popular Caribbean style meals. We have a very strict schedule and lunch is served from 12:00 to 1:00pm. Because of the bus being delayed in traffic, many of our seniors are late. For Many participating seniors, attending the center is all they have to look forward to. Many don't have a family and live on fixed incomes. Arriving late to the center can mean not eating lunch for the day or emotional stress from not participating in their preferred activities.

Our seniors always share their dissatisfaction about bus service with me and other staff members. The themes seniors share are their wish for more shelters, feeling unsafe when they can't find a seat on a bus and the anxiety that face when they miss important events at the center or doctor appointments and the stress of having to reschedule. But what is worse is when seniors feel humiliated or disrespected when they want to get on the bus and can't get on because there is not enough space for seniors to get on with walkers and wheelchairs.

Seniors want to be independent and enjoy their retirement. The city should make sure that it gives their seniors, which is a fast and growing population the tools, like reliable bus service to live independent and healthy lifestyles. Elected officials should not care about them only during election time but all of time and provide resources for our baby boomers. We create programming for seniors but we also advocate on all issues that affect their quality of life. We replace important roles like work, motherhood and fatherhood and give retired older adults responsibilities that work hard to remove the stigma that older adults are no longer needed or can contribute to today's society.



*Carol Puerto, 33*

I am the Program Coordinator at Melrose Senior Center and depend on buses to get around. As the coordinator, I focus on the day to day at the center, specially running lunch time! For this reason, it's important for me to get here early so things can be up and running by the time the seniors start to arrive. But my day starts before I get to work. First, I drop off my two kids at school by 8:00 AM in Fordham. I then have 30 minutes to get down from Fordham to the South Bronx to start my work day. If there are any delays in getting my kids to school, it has a domino effect on the rest of my schedule and the chances of me arriving late to work become

higher. When I arrive late, I need to scramble to get ready for lunch. I then need to stay late to make up the time missed which then makes me arrive late home. A morning delay can really push my whole day back.

Although trains always have delays, at least I know they will arrive, unlike with buses. I have waited over 30 minutes for a bus during rush hour to learn it was rerouted and was picking up riders at another location. Despite how unreliable buses are, it's my only option there are no trains where I live. Everyday it's a new journey on our buses. Buses are rerouted, terminated early, running behind schedule, stuck in traffic, you name it--it has happened to me and many other bus riders. When these changes happen there is never any communication so I have to play a guessing game and try to figure out how I'm going to get to work on time. When things get really bad, I have to pay for cabs riders, which isn't the most affordable. The service we receive is an injustice, we are customers and we pay into the service every single day, the least we should be getting in return is reliable bus service.

If this experience is frustrating for me, for our seniors, it's worse. Our older adults don't have extra resources for cabs and can't stand for long

periods of time. **During the winter, we see a significant drop of the amount of seniors that come to our center.** They can't endure long periods of time in the freezing cold. It's not fair to them or any one else. Mayor de Blasio should represent the needs of his voters and do his part to make the city better by improving bus service



*Angela Burgos, 62t*

I am the exercise instructor at Melrose Senior Center in the Bronx. I retired a few years ago and thankfully have been given the opportunity to teach seniors how to stay healthy and active through movement. I find joy helping people and making sure seniors have the tools to live their best and most active lifestyles. This position

provides me with additional income and every little bit helps me go a long way.

The Melrose Senior Center provides an array of scheduled activities and events for seniors to participate in. My class is scheduled in the morning before lunch. If I am not ready to start by the time I've been scheduled, I cannot teach because my class will conflict with the other scheduled events. When I don't teach, it means I can't help the seniors who I care for, but most importantly, it means I will not get paid for that hour. If I don't make money, I cannot eat and then have to turn to city services to help me.

I've been late to teach my exercise class and have lost wages because of the bus, the famous Bx19. What should be a 25 minute ride has now become an hour bus ride and what's worse is out of that hour most of it spent outside waiting for the bus to arrive. At my bus stop, there is no shelter or bench for me to sit or protect me from the rain while I am waiting.

After I wait for the bus for long periods of time, when the bus finally arrives, it is often packed and skips my stop. When this happens, I get anxious and desperate because I have no idea when they next bus will come or when I'll get to work. I have to give myself an hour and half

to get to work because I can't afford to be late and lose pay.

Spending so much time commuting does not give me the opportunity to run other errands before going to work. It pains me because it's obvious that bus service is worse for seniors, people with disabilities, and in communities of color where there is a lot of poverty. We need our elected leaders, especially Mayor de Blasio, to make bus service a priority. We need shelters at every stop and shorter wait times. When buses are working, the whole city thrives.

*Melissa Perez, 24*

I work at the senior center and travel from Co-Op City to the South Bronx everyday. This trip should be less than an hour, but because of bad route design and late buses, it can take me an hour and half even two hours to get to work. This is unacceptable, I'm traveling within the same borough! My commute would be twice as long if it weren't for Select Bus Service. I start my commute with the Bx12 SBS and then transfer to the Bx41 SBS. All-door boarding, less stops and dedicated bus lanes are supposed to improve buses, and when it was first installed, I felt the difference.

But unfortunately, there are always parked cars and trucks in the bus lanes, defeating the purpose of having it. Bus lanes need to be enforced and kept clear so buses can move faster and not hold back so many riders. Riders are stuck in traffic, buses are always late and the fares continue to go up. These buses always have me running late to work. Mayor de Blasio should do more to keep bus lanes clear and give us riders more access to economic opportunities!

## SCHEDULING MALFUNCTIONS

Buses are always running late because they are stuck in traffic, are blocked off by trucks and private vehicles and bus lanes are not enforced. These delays cause bus riders to wait long amount of times at bus stops, often without shelters and arrive late to important meetings and spend valuable time.



*Ines Morales, 69*

There are two things that make bus service bad: it is always late and it makes to many stops. The bus stops at every single corner, it takes forever to get from point A to point to point B. Routes are not effective and they can't get people where they need to get to. In order to travel within the Bronx, I have to make more than 2 transfers! The inefficiencies in the routes cost me money, because I only get one free transfer. If I am strapped for cash, I have to take a longer, inconvenient commute to stay within my transfer limit.

Bus routes are long, and they are often late and behind schedule. Just a few weeks ago, there was a very important reunion taking place at

the senior center. I left my house at 6:00 AM to ensure that I would be here bright and early. Despite my plans, I had to wait 40 minutes for the bus to arrive and of course when it arrived, it was full. Despite building an extra hour into my commute, I arrived late, it's embarrassing. Mayor de Blasio needs to improve bus service and help communities that depend on buses.



*Armando Roman, 76*

At times I feel powerless when I stand at my bus stop to see bus after bus pass and not stop because it's too crowded. I've waited nearly an hour for the the BX15 and Bx19 to arrive to come to the Senior Center. Just when I saw a bus approaching, I would get my hopes up to realize it was not in service. We need our buses to come

more frequent to meet the demand of bus riders, there are always huge crowds of people waiting, we need our buses to arrive come faster. Waiting long periods of time for bus that don't make stops makes traveling such an inconvenience. We need our buses to come more frequently.



*Santa Santana, 65*

I often wait up to 25 minutes for a bus just for it to arrive crowded. When the bus arrives, I need to make a decision, choose to be uncomfortable and unsafe or wait for unknown amount of time for the next bus. I always make the decision of squeezing into the bus rather than waiting for another 30 minutes for a bus. It's unbelievable,

that a simple transfer between buses can take up to an hour. This always make me late to the senior center and when I'm running errands. Bus service can be extremely unreliable and unpredictable. But of course, despite the terrible quality of service, the fares continue to go up, while service gets worse. Riders should no longer continue to pay more for unreliable bus service. We need the Mayor to prioritize bus riders our on streets so seniors who are limited incomes, like myself, can get our money's worth.



*Ricarda Zayla, 73*

I often take the bus to the senior center and to my eye doctor appointments in Manhattan. I've waited nearly 40 minutes for a bus to arrive and

a stop without a shelter. I often use the Bx15 to get me into Manhattan and the Bx41 to get around the Bronx. It's frustrating, because after waiting for so long, I can barely make onto the bus and have to stand for most of the way. Taking the bus leaves me feeling frustrated, tired, and angry, but I have no other choice. I never know what to expect. Schedules aren't accurate, there is too much traffic and no enforcement of bus lanes. Bus riders need to need to say we've had enough! Mayor De Blasio should do his part to improve buses so riders don't have to experience so much stress for trying to get around.



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**HOW MAYOR DE BLASIO CAN  
MAKE NEW YORK THE FAIREST  
BIGGEST CITY IN AMERICA FOR  
NEW YORK CITY SENIORS**

- Add 100 miles of bus lanes in the next five years
- Enforce bus lanes by ticketing unauthorized vehicles
- Expand transit signal priority to all intersections appropriate by the end of 2020
- Provide shelters and real time information at all bus stops by 2020

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:  
MTA FAST FORWARD  
COMMITMENTS TO DATE**

- Redesign the bus network in every borough by 2021
- All-door boarding on every bus with new-fare payment system
- TSP-enabling software on all buses by 2020
- Bus Command Center operational in 2020

To learn more about the  
Bus Turnaround Campaign and how you can get  
involved please visit: [busturnaround.nyc](http://busturnaround.nyc).

