



**Four Outta Five's Pretty Bad:  
Signal Problems Delayed Trains During 78% of  
Morning Rush Hours in 2019**



## **Introduction**

While the subway is improving, riders are still suffering through unreliable commutes. The governor's Subway Action Plan moved the needle slightly, cutting the number of signal problems that delay trains. The percent of morning rush hours scrambled by subway signal problems declined from 92% in 2018 to 78% in 2019.

When signal problems delay rush hour trains, riders miss work, work opportunities, and other appointments. Signal delays often cause back ups that reverberate throughout the day. The 1930s technology that underlies our signal system is failing and must be replaced to deliver the modern, reliable subway New York needs.

Everyone acknowledges that much more must be done to fix the subway. Last year, the governor and legislature enacted congestion pricing and the MTA put forward its largest-ever capital program. With signal problems still plaguing transit, riders want to know when the promised improvements will be complete and reliability meaningfully improved.

## **Methodology**

Millions of New Yorkers rely on the subway to get to work during the morning rush hour, from 6 am to 10 am. Service failures cause enormous anxiety, frustration, and sometimes lost wages too. During 2019, there were 253 non-holiday workdays. For each of those days, the Riders Alliance examined MTA service alerts archived at [mymtaalerts.com/messagearchive.aspx](https://mymtaalerts.com/messagearchive.aspx). We counted signal problems, tallying them by month.

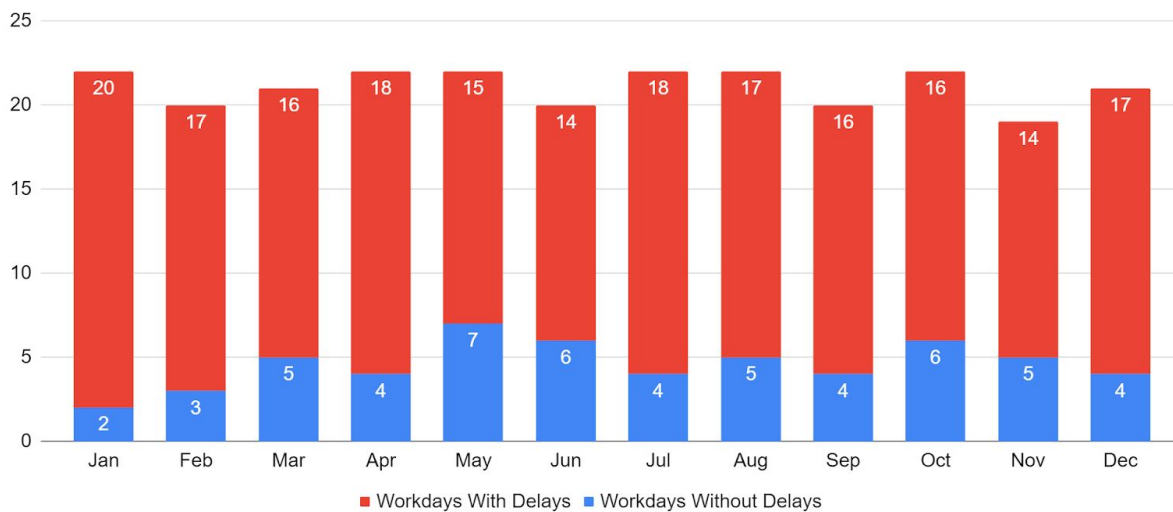
## **Findings**

Of 253 morning rush hours in 2019, 198 -- or 78% -- experienced signal problems that delayed trains. January and February were the worst months, with the fewest days without signal problems. But December stood out because there were actually more days with signal problems delaying trains in December 2019 than in December 2018, not the direction that these numbers should be trending.

## **Conclusions**

As the Subway Action Plan wraps up, much more work remains to be done. Riders are eager for the promised improvements of the MTA Capital Program. While those improvements themselves may take years, the release of the promised timetable for signal upgrades will offer important peace of mind and crucial accountability at this turning point for New Yorkers

**Morning Rush Hour Signal Delays**  
By Month (Jan-Dec 2019)



**Morning Rush Hour Signal Delays**  
Workdays With Delays By Month (Jan-Dec)

