



NYPIRG

Straphangers Campaign

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NEWS RELEASE

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Straphangers Campaign Releases Surveys of Subway Car Announcements for 2011 and 2012

**For First Time Since 1997, A Majority of Subway Car Announcements of
Delays Were Found to Be Clear and Correct**

**Basic Informational Subway Car Announcements Are Made About 85%
of the Time in 2011 and 2012, Surveys Finds**

**Perfect Score For Basic Announcements in 2011: 6; In 2012: 4
Worst Lines in 2011: 3 and C; Worst in 2012: R**

(New York, New York) – For the first time since 1997, the Straphangers Campaign found that a majority of subway car announcements of delays and disruptions were clear and accurate, according to two surveys released today by the group.

In another finding, some 85% of basic informational announcements made on subway cars are clear and accurate. (A basic announcement—made at or between stops—includes the name of the station, destination or direction, train letter or number, and transfer opportunities (if any).)

“We found that Transit officials are doing a better job keeping riders informed,” said Straphangers Campaign Field Organizer Jason Chin-Fatt.

— more, more, more —

The 2011 survey was conducted by 62 volunteers between January 3 and April 30, 2011. The 2012 survey was conducted by 69 volunteers between January 17 and April 29, 2012. In both surveys, volunteers made 6,000 observations of in-car announcement opportunities on 20 subway lines. In 2011, our surveyors experienced and rated 148 delay and service change announcement opportunities during the survey period. In 2012, they experienced 116 delays.

In the 2011 survey, some 51% of delays and disruptions experienced by our raters on all lines had clear and accurate announcements. In the 2012 survey, that increased to 59%. This can be compared to our 2010 survey, which found that good delay announcements were made only 40% of the time.

Official transit guidelines give conductors a list of 18 possible delay announcements with detailed reasons. These announcements range from: "unruly person on the train" to "waiting for connecting train." The policy says, "If there is a delay, [the conductor] must make an announcement immediately [and again] within 2 minutes after that."

In the previous ten surveys, in a majority of delays and disruptions experienced by our raters, there was either no announcement—or an inaudible, garbled or incorrect one.

In contrast, in 2011, subway car announcements of delays were correct, clear and ungarbled 51% of the time (75 out of 148 delays). Of the remaining 49%, delay announcements were not made at all 22% of the time (33 out of 148 delays); 3% were inaudible or garbled (4 out of 148) and 24% (36 out of 148) were rated "incorrect." These were meaningless announcements that "we have a red signal," ones lacking key information such as, "this local is now an express" (with no explanation), or ones with jargon such as, "we have a schedule adjustment."

In the 2012 survey, subway car announcements of delays and disruptions were made 59% of the time (68 out of 116 delays). Of the remaining 41%, delay announcements were not made at all 14% of the time (16 out of 116 delays); 3% were inaudible or garbled (4 out of 116); and 24% (28 out of 116) were rated "incorrect."

In another finding, some 85% of basic informational announcements made on subway cars are clear and accurate. This is largely unchanged from our last survey in 2010, which was 83%. (See Attachments.)

In the 2011 survey, the 6 line provided basic announcements 100% of the time, the only line to do so. In the 2012 survey, the 4 was the only line to have a perfect score. (In both years, the top-ranking lines had automated announcements.)

The C and 3 performed worst in our 2011 survey, with adequate basic announcements 66% and 65% of the time respectively. The R came in last in the 2012 survey, with only 56% adequate basic announcements.

These two surveys follow ten similar surveys conducted between 1997 and 2010. (See Methodology.)

MTA New York City Transit does not survey delay and disruption announcements on subway cars. The Agency did survey the "percentage of cars with public address announcements" in the first half of 2012. Some 89% of cars are rated as having public address announcements. This is broken down by cars with automated announcements (99%) and conductor announcements (79%).

Table One:
**Best to Worst Percentages of Clear and Accurate Basic
 In-Car Announcements, 2010-2012***

Line	2012	2011	2010**
4	100%	98%	99%
L	99%	99%	99%
N	99%	92%	99%
Q	99%	99%	85%
6	99%	100%	100%
M	98%	98%	99%***
2	98%	98%	99%
E	98%	97%	98%
J	97%	95%	96%
F	96%	99%	92%
5	96%	98%	100%
A	79%	75%	76%
1	78%	77%	64%
G	71%	73%	79%
C	69%	66%	60%
D	69%	76%	60%
3	67%	65%	67%
B	67%	70%	55%
7	64%	76%	63%
R	56%	70%	62%
System	85%	86%	83%***

* System results significant within +/- 2%. Line results significant within +/- 6%.

** 2010 survey conducted between January 26 and June 25, 2010.

*** Results reflect old routing of M line prior to June 2010; system number includes results of V and W lines which were discontinued in June 2010.

**Table Two:
Breakdown of Basic In-Car Announcements
by Line, 2012**

Line	Clear and Accurate Announcement Made	Clear but Inaccurate Announcement Made	Announcement Garbled or Inaudible	No Announcement Made
1	78%	1%	12%	8%
2	98%	0%	1%	1%
3	67%	1%	19%	13%
4	100%	0%	0%	0%
5	96%	0%	0%	4%
6	99%	0%	0%	1%
7	64%	1%	15%	20%
A	79%	0%	14%	6%
B	67%	1%	26%	6%
C	69%	0%	25%	5%
D	69%	0%	18%	13%
E	98%	1%	0%	1%
F	96%	1%	1%	1%
G	71%	0%	14%	15%
J	97%	0%	1%	3%
L	99%	0%	0%	1%
M	98%	0%	0%	1%
N	99%	0%	0%	1%
Q	99%	0%	0%	0%
R	56%	0%	27%	17%
System	85%	0%	9%	6%

*'Clear and Accurate Announcement Made' results significant for system within +/- 2%. Line results significant within +/- 6%. Some percentages do not total 100 due to rounding.

**Table Three:
Breakdown of Basic In-Car Announcements
by Line, 2011**

Line	Clear and Accurate Announcement Made	Clear but Inaccurate Announcement Made	Announcement Garbled or Inaudible	No Announcement Made
1	77%	0%	8%	15%
2	98%	0%	0%	2%
3	65%	0%	24%	10%
4	98%	0%	0%	2%
5	98%	0%	0%	1%
6	100%	0%	0%	0%
7	76%	1%	11%	12%
A	75%	0%	15%	10%
B	70%	0%	15%	15%
C	66%	0%	11%	23%
D	76%	0%	14%	9%
E	97%	1%	0%	1%
F	99%	1%	0%	0%
G	73%	0%	15%	12%
J	95%	0%	3%	2%
L	99%	0%	1%	0%
M	98%	0%	1%	1%
N	92%	0%	3%	5%
Q	99%	0%	1%	0%
R	70%	1%	12%	18%
System	86%	0%	7%	7%

*'Clear and Accurate Announcement Made' results significant for system within +/- 2%. Line results significant within +/- 6%. Some percentages do not total 100 due to rounding.

METHODOLOGY:
NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign Survey of Subway Car Announcements
2011 and 2012

These two surveys are a follow-up to ten past surveys on announcements released by the Straphangers Campaign between 1997 and 2011. This is the first time the Straphangers Campaign has released two years' worth of surveys at the same time.

The 2011 survey was conducted by 62 volunteers between January 3 and April 30, 2011. The 2012 survey was conducted by 69 volunteers between January 17 and April 29, 2012. Both surveys are based on data collected during actual subway rides taken during each period respectively. Volunteers were instructed to complete a survey entry every time they used the subway system throughout that period. The survey form was designed to measure how each subway trip conformed to the guidelines laid out for in-car announcements by MTA New York City Transit. During survey rides, volunteers recorded announcement data for the first three stops of their trip. Specifically, surveyors noted the date and line of each trip, and monitored the following routine in-car announcements made at or between stops:

- a. station name;
- b. route designation (number or letter);
- c. route destination (borough or terminal);
- d. transfer options (if applicable);
- e. upcoming station name; and
- f. "stand clear of the closing doors" announcement.

Surveyors noted whether each appropriate item was announced, and whether any announcement made was understandable and accurate.

Announcements (a) through (f) above were grouped and totaled as the "basic" in-car announcement, determined only by characteristics of the line and upcoming station. A basic announcement was deemed *adequate* if all appropriate announcements were made understandably and accurately. In this survey, we recorded 300 basic announcement opportunity observations on each of 20 lines. The Times Square, Rockaway and Franklin Avenue shuttles were not included in the survey.

Our findings then reflect exactly 6,000 basic announcement opportunity observations; of these, our surveyors noted that for the entire system in 2011, 86% of announcements were adequate. In 2012, 85% of announcements were adequate. This system result is accurate within plus or minus 2% (.05 level); confidence for by-line results is plus or minus 6%.

In addition, surveyors recorded whether there was a change in service or delay of two minutes or more. When such a change in service or delay occurred, surveyors noted whether an in-car announcement was made, whether any announcement made was understandable and accurate, and the exact language of the announcement.

Official transit guidelines require that conductors announce changes in service and/or delays. The guidelines also list 18 possible announcements with detailed reasons for the delay ranging from "unruly

person on the train” to “waiting for connecting train.” The policy states: “If there is a delay, [the conductor] must make an announcement immediately [and again] within 2 minutes after that.”

Straphangers Campaign staff members examined the transcription of all recorded service change and delay announcements to determine whether the announcement was “correct” or “incorrect.” An incorrect announcement is one that did not offer riders a meaningful explanation for the change in service and/or delay.

Examples of “Correct” Announcements:

fire/accident/police activity
ahead of/behind schedule, congestion
sick passenger
emergency brake pulled
track/signal work
held by supervision/dispatcher

Examples of “Incorrect” Announcements

schedule adjustment
fix gap in service
red signal
change in service with no further explanation,
such as “This local is running express”

In 2011, surveyors rated 148 delays and service changes during the survey period, of which 115 were followed by an in-car announcement within two minutes of stoppage. Of the announcements made, 75 provided an understandable and correct explanation for the disruption in service.

In 2012, surveyors rated 116 delays and service changes during the survey period, of which 100 were followed by an in-car announcement within two minutes of stoppage. Of the announcements made, 68 provided an understandable and correct explanation for the disruption in service.

Delay and service change data was not examined on a line-by-line basis. The number of such changes would be too low to permit statistically significant comparisons among lines.

MTA New York City Transit does not survey service change and delay announcements on subway cars. The agency did survey the “percentage of cars with public address announcement.” In the first half of 2012 the agency found some 89% of cars as having “public address announcements.” This is broken down between lines with automated announcements (99%) and those with conductor announcements (79%)¹.

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¹ MTA New York City Transit Committee Meeting Book, September 2012, p. 9.3 (PDF p. 228)

2012 surveyors: Uthman Baksh, Daniel Cadiz, Caroline Cerussi, Emelyn Carpio, Jason Chin-Fatt, Laurie Cherenfont, Su Choe, Michelle Chung, Kaliah Clarke, Oral Clarke, Jaqi Cohen, Christina Cross, Allana Diaz, Carrie Dominguez, Latisha Elijio, Daniela Escobar, Demián Fernández, Leonard Fortuna III, Debra Fricano, Shawn Hall, Nour Harrati, Makiba Howard, Meg Knabbe, Catori LaBad, Denroy Lawrence, Eric Legeer, Mikolaj Lis, Josue Lopez, Areli Luna, Ruben Martinez, Karen Mazo, Rahieme McLaurin, Nayelie Melendez, Brian Mentor, Earik Middleton, Violetta Mosheyeva, Twaambo Moyo, Sadia Mumu, Emily Odivo , Andrew Oppenheimer, Roman Ortega, Luciano Ortiz, Alyssia Osorio, Christian Pino, Sean-luc Prince, Enrico Purita, Kristin Rahamut, Estefany Ramirez, Imane Azzam-Rehali, Edwin Riera, Lea Rivera, Alessandra C. Romeo, Tassia Rosa, Oriana Santos, Ethan Schwartz, Marvi Shah, Foday Sheriff, Monica Soto, Tanzia Sultana, Dimitra Thomopoulos, Josh Thompson, Danielle Torruella, Brett Vetterlein, Mildred Vil, Jonalis Villanueva, Bradleigh-Ann Walker, Dana Willbanks, Guang Xia, Andy Zias.