



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Alessandra Biaggi

TESTIMONY: Bronx Bus Redesign Final Plan Public Hearing

ALESSANDRA BIAGGI February 20, 2020

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I would like to begin by extending my gratitude for your commitment to improve bus service in the Bronx through the Bronx Bus Redesign. The redesign is a critical opportunity to reimagine public transportation in the Bronx, and increase accessibility and mobility for residents across the borough. Many of my constituents in the 34th Senate District rely heavily on bus service to travel for work, school, medical appointments, family visits, and cultural activities. It is imperative that the final plan for the Bronx Bus Redesign reflects their needs, and does not disrupt necessary service. On behalf of the 34th Senate District, I write to express my concerns with several items outlined in the final Bronx Bus Redesign proposal.

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With regards to the Bx29, which services City Island, it is not necessary to remove the bus stops on Cross Street, Schofield Street, and Pell Place to increase the frequency of the bus line. Many aging New Yorkers living on City Island who are limited in mobility prefer shorter distances to their bus stops, in order to decrease the need for walking. Frequency improvement can still be achieved by allowing bus drivers to bypass bus stops if there are no passengers waiting at a stop, or if no passenger is getting on or off at a stop, which is currently common practice.

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In regards to the southbound Bx7 and the Bx10 in Riverdale/Kingsbridge, I implore the MTA to increase bus service for both buses. The Bx7 and Bx10 buses quickly, and frequently, run out of space for additional passengers to board during peak hours. This forces riders to wait for the next bus, and or even multiple buses, before they can get on. This is particularly common for passengers who board at 231st Street and Broadway. The frequent inability to board the first bus that arrives creates major disruptions in a rider's commute and understandable frustration. It is vital that the Final Plan meets the high demand for the Bx7 and the Bx10 buses so that constituents can arrive on time for work, doctors appointments and other daily activities.

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While today's hearing is for Local, Limited and Select Bus Services, it is important to address a large systemic change proposed in the Bronx Bus Redesign final plan – cuts to express bus service. In response to an uprising of community opposition led by transportation advocates in the Northwest Bronx, I commend you for postponing the proposed cuts to express bus service until 2021. On behalf of my constituents in the 34th Senate District, I urge you to reconsider express bus service cuts all together. The proposed cuts to express buses will drastically affect weekday, weekend, and night service for the BxM1, BxM2, BxM3, BxM4, BxM6, BxM8, BxM9, and BxM11. These cuts will negatively impact the commute times for constituents who work, attend school, doctor's appointments or utilize their leisure time in Manhattan, and other parts of the borough. The purpose of the Bronx Bus Redesign is to make transit more frequent and accessible for Bronx residents, not diminish needed and preferred bus service. We were informed that the Bronx Bus Redesign is intended to be a net-zero (cost neutral) project – it is not an opportunity to save money by cutting service at the expense of Bronx residents.

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In 2019 the New York State Legislature approved congestion pricing to fund MTA repairs. We must intentionally utilize this new revenue stream to fix our broken transit system instead of cutting back on service that supports the community. Congestion pricing also incentivizes New York City residents to leave their vehicles at home and utilize our mass transit system. It is counterintuitive to cut bus service when we are trying to reduce traffic and the number of personal vehicles on city streets. Many neighborhoods that are serviced by the express buses are on the outskirts of the Bronx, and do not have other comparable alternatives for transportation to downtown Manhattan. Proposed cuts to express bus service would double the commute time it takes for residents of Riverdale, Woodlawn, City Island, Co-Op City, and Throggs Neck to travel to downtown Manhattan, and or force them to rely heavily on their cars.

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On November 18th, 2019 approximately 500 members of District 34 in the Northwest Bronx gathered for a community-lead town hall to express their concern in regards to these cuts. A showing this size of community opposition should not be taken lightly. For these reasons, I ask that the proposed cuts to express service in the Bronx be rejected entirely.

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The configuration of public transportation should always prioritize the interests of the communities it is built to serve, and must consider every angle of impact. I commend the MTA for engaging community members in the Bronx Bus Redesign proposal process and creating space for Bronx riders to voice their needs and concerns. I urge you to take every Bronx resident's feedback into account – I look forward to seeing a Bronx Bus Redesign Final Plan that is representative of our community's demand.