



Double the Time, Double the Fare

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Topic: [Demand/Consumption](#)

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Open Letter to the MTA, NYC DOT and City Planning Dept of NY based on my travel experience yesterday:

On Sunday May 14th (Mother's Day) 2006 it took me double the time and double the fare to travel from 86th St & Second Ave to New Brighton Staten Island. Normally it only takes 1.5 hrs and \$2, but this weekend the NYC's transit system failed to deliver on its mission of moving people through the city efficiently for one \$2 fare.

I was going see my Mother speak at a special program at her church on Staten Island. However I missed most of the program because of inadequate transportation options connecting my apartment (85th & Second Ave) and South Ferry as well as infrequent ferry service to Staten Island (once hourly on weekend mornings) and I had to pay double to price for this very long trip because the 2 hour transfer had expired.

My morning started with a quick check of all my transit options. I briefly considered biking to the ferry, but decided it was too dangerous on the East Side since there are no protected bike lanes. Then I reviewed my mass transit options, which showed:

- 1. The 4/5 trains that I normally take to the Staten Island ferry were not running to Bowling Green.*
- 2. The Staten Island Ferry was running every hour on the half hour (7:30, 8:30, 9:30)*
- 3. The M15 was running although with no Limited Stop service was available at this time. This was how*

I decided to take the M15. Backing into when the church service would start (10:45am) I decided that the best Ferry would be the 9:30am since the 8:30am would be way too early and the 10:30am would be too late (the Ferry trip takes 25-30 minutes and the bus ride takes. And I figured that the normally slow M15 would take about an hour to get to South Ferry even considering there was very little traffic this early on a Sunday morning.

At 8:15am I started waiting at the 86th street and Second Ave stop for about 10 minutes and then boarded the bus at 8:25am. The Bus showed up and we made pretty good time down Second Ave and then, without any prior announcements, the bus just stopped at Houston and Allen streets at 8:55am. Myself and about 10 other people, all still hoping to make the 9:30am Ferry, patiently took our bus transfers and waited for the next bus.

We still had 35 minutes to make the Ferry and I was only about 2 miles away, but the next bus did not show up for 20 minutes (9:15am). I still had some hope of making the 9:30am Ferry, but we hit a number of red lights at empty intersections in downtown Manhattan. The Bus unloaded at the ferry terminal exactly at 9:30am. After I got off the bus I ran a few steps thinking the ferry might be running a few minutes late, but then I heard the Ferry's horn sound

off and realized it was already too late. All the other bus passengers were visibly disappointed too. One young high school age kid looked at me, said "Typical" and rolled his eyes. What frustrated me even more is that when I went back to look at the Saturday local M15 service to South Ferry, the schedule (<http://www.mta.nyc.ny.us/njct/bus/schedule/manh/m015cur.pdf>) actually calls for the bus to arrive exactly when it did at 9:30am, just as the Staten Island Ferry is pulling out of the slip. That is a completely useless arrival time for people hoping to make the Ferry.

Then I waited in the ferry terminal for an hour, got on the ferry at 10:25am and arrived on the other side at 10:55am. There I boarded the S40, which instead of giving me a transfer, charged an additional \$2 to my metrocard. It left the terminal at 11:05am. I rode the bus to Clinton Ave. where I walked two blocks to the church service (11:15am) which was halfway finished.

What I find most troubling about this experience was that this failure happened without any external factor intervening:

There was little traffic on the roads.

The buses spent very little time picking up or dropping off passengers.

The bus drivers and ferry operators all did their jobs according to the schedules they were given.

Even I, the passenger, did my part in avoiding subway disruptions by doing my homework on service changes and left plenty of time to make it to my destination.

But even with everyone doing their job right, the system failed to deliver. The system, as it was designed, functioned operationally well, completely failed in it's mission of getting people efficiently through the city on one fare.

I respectfully request an explanation for what the NYC DOT, the MTA and the City Planning can do in the future to prevent failures like this in the next few months. I am well aware of the long term plans for a Second Ave subway and the planning process ongoing for BRT lines, but my question is:

What are you going to do now about these types of failures?

Here are some of my ideas on what NYC DOT, the MTA and the City Planning can do now to prevent these types of problems:

1. *Make Biking Safer:* The Eastside greenway as well as safe protected bike lanes on First and Second Ave should be planned and installed as soon as possible to provide a minimum level of safety to cyclists and reduce the burden on the mass transit system when regular maintenance work is being done.
2. *Make Busing more Efficient:* MTA Buses should be fitted with preferred signaling devices to change lights in their favor, particularly at low volume intersections, like many other cities have embraced as part of their Bus Rapid Transit plans. Specifically on days when subway lines are disrupted for maintenance work, more buses should be put on the redundant routes nearby to handle the needs of those passengers.
3. *More Frequent Ferries:* The Staten Island Ferry should have a minimum of one ferry every half hour at all hours. This would significantly reduce the amount of time that transit riders would waste
5. *Extend Metrocard Transfer Time:* On slow service weekends or whenever there are major disruptions to the subway system, transit riders often face the same double fare that I did through no fault of their own. Please consider extending this window of time for the free transfer to 3 hours.

I also request a \$2 refund for the extra amount I paid because of the transit system's failure to

And I included my full name, address and the information on the back of my Metrocard.



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