



NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign

A project of the New York Public Interest Research Group

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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

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Mock Funeral Held for Nearly 1,000 Hi-Tech Subway Cars; MTA Has Proposed New Cars Replace Clunkers on A, F and R

But Fate of New Cars In “Grave Jeopardy;” MTA Bedeviled by \$14 Billion Shortfall in Transit Funding

Bagpiper Plays Sad Tunes; Mourners Pray for Intercession by Governor Cuomo

The NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign today held a mock funeral for 940 hi-tech subway cars, which the MTA has proposed as part of its \$32 billion dollar Capital Program for the years between 2015 and 2019.

The cars were slated for the A, F and R lines, but their fate is in “grave jeopardy” because of a \$14 billion funding shortfall to fix the transit system.

Standing in the Jay Street-MetroTech subway station, "mourners" at the funeral wore black armbands while listening to bag piper John Maynard play funeral music and speakers mourn the approaching loss.

"Dearly beloved, we are gathered here to ask Governor Andrew Cuomo and State legislative leaders to vote new state aid for the transit system," said Cate Contino Cowit, coordinator for the Straphangers Campaign, a transit riders advocacy group. "It could be curtains for the R211s unless Albany comes to the rescue."

The 940 R211 rail cars would cost \$2.775 billion and replace the remaining R46 cars on the A, F, and R lines, as well as rail cars on the Rockaway Shuttle and Staten Island Railroad. The R46s were built between 1975 and 1978. It should be noted that the current useful life of a subway car is 40 years.

The R46 model cars are clunkers. For example, a standard performance measurement in the transit industry is the “mean distance between failure” (MDBF) of a subway car. The MDBF is based on the distance a train travels before experiencing a mechanical breakdown on a subway car that causes a delay.

—more, more, more—

The MDBF for the whole subway fleet of 6,361 cars is a breakdown every 142,179 miles, as of the 12-month period ending March 2015, the most recent period available. For the R46 cars during the same period, the MDBF is a breakdown once every 88,347 miles – a 62% worse performance.

A wreath hung nearby, reading: “R211, Don’t Rest In Peace” along with a large picture of the R46, wishing the aged cars a sweet repose. The mourners observed a minute of subway silence.

Maynard played two pieces – “Dies Irae” and “Requiem” – both medieval plainsong chants from Latin masses for the dead.

During the ceremony, Straphangers Campaign Field Organizer Jason Chin-Fatt read a subway version of Psalm 23, which went as follows: “Yea, though the R211s walk through the shadow of the scrap yard of death, they will fear no lack of funding. Thy leadership and thy budget staff – Governor Cuomo – they comfort long suffering riders on the clunker cars on the A, F and R. Thou hopefully preparest new revenue proposals to stop the death of R211s... Surely goodness and mercy shall follow the R211s in all their days and they will dwell in the facilities of the MTA forever. Or until the end of their useful lives.”

Contino Cowit also read a version of the Lord's Prayer for subway riders, as follows:

Metropolitan Transportation Authority,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy capital plan come.
Thy massive rebuilding be done, in NYC as it is in the suburbs.
Give us this day our five-year capital rebuilding program,
and forgive us all our unreliable and crowded service,
as we forgive those who think the plan is bloated
and lead us not into massive, unsecured borrowing,
but deliver us from billions in further debt burden.

"Amen," said the mourners.

Gene Russianoff, senior attorney for the Campaign, concluded with a reading based on “Turn! Turn! Turn!” by The Byrds:

For every subway car - crush, crush, crush -
There can be lengthy waits - crush, crush, crush -
Without any explanation, adding insult to injury.
A time to be built, a time to be turned into a reef.
A time to get students to school, a time for students to miss a midterm.
Riders swear because they know they will be late.

—more, more, more—

For every subway car - hot, hot, hot -
Managers control the temperature - hot, hot, hot -
So why did they let senior mechanics take off in a heat wave?
Summer is a great time to embrace.
But the heat makes me refrain from embracing.

In many subway cars - dirty, dirty, dirty -
It's like a garbage dump - dirty, dirty, dirty -
So I swear:
It's a time to gather MetroCards together.
Not a time to cast away MetroCards onto the subway car floor.



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Memorial Service: R211
Wednesday, June 10, 2015
Jay Street-MetroTech Subway Station (A, F and R)

May These 940 Hi-Tech Cars NOT Rest In Peace

Bagpipes by John Maynard

Invocation by Cate Contino Cowit

"Dearly beloved, we are gathered here to ask Governor Andrew Cuomo and State legislative leaders to vote new state aid for the transit system. Otherwise, it could be curtains for the proposed R211 model subway cars.

Psalm 23, a subway version read by Jason Chin-Fatt

Yea, though the R211s walk through the shadow of the scrap yard of death, they will fear no lack of funding. Thy leadership and thy budget staff – Governor Cuomo – they comfort long suffering riders on the clunker cars on the A, F and R. Thou hopefully preparest new revenue proposals to stop the death of R211s... Surely goodness and mercy shall follow the R211s in all their days and they will dwell in the facilities of the MTA forever. Or until the end of their useful lives.

The Lord's Prayer for Subway Riders read by Cate Contino Cowit

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and forgive us all our unreliable and crowded service,
as we forgive those who think the plan is bloated
and lead us not into massive, unsecured borrowing,
but deliver us from billions in further debt burden.

"Crush! Crush! Crush!" read by Gene Russianoff (Inspired by The Byrds' "Turn! Turn! Turn!")

For every subway car - crush, crush, crush -

There can be lengthy waits - crush, crush, crush -

Without any explanation, adding insult to injury.

A time to be built, a time to be turned into a reef.

A time to get students to school, a time for students to miss a midterm.

Riders swear because they know they will be late.

For every subway car - hot, hot, hot -

Managers control the temperature - hot, hot, hot -

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