



NYPIRG

Straphangers Campaign

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NEWS RELEASE

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Straphangers Campaign's Top Ten Best and Worst of NYC Transit: 2010-2019

Each year, the NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign releases its annual best and worst top ten lists for New York City's subways and buses. This year, the Campaign has decided to reflect back on the past ten years in transit, releasing its first ever "Top Ten Best and Worst of the Decade".

"The past decade was unquestionably tough for New York City's transit riders," said Jaqi Cohen, Campaign Director for the NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign. "While there were some major wins worthy of celebration, riders continue to feel overburdened and underwhelmed with service."

The best moment of the decade? After years of hard-fought advocacy, New York State finally passed congestion pricing for New York City. The worst? Higher fares, unprecedented service cuts, and the effects of Superstorm Sandy on New York City's transit system which are still being mitigated 7 years later.

Detailed lists are below.

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Top Ten Best List for New York City Transit: 2010-2019

1. **Congestion Pricing:** In a truly historic moment for New York City's transit riders, and after many years of advocacy, Albany finally passed congestion pricing in New York State's FY2020 budget. Congestion pricing is expected to raise tens of billions of dollars in much needed new revenue to fund transit capital projects and will go into effect in 2021.
2. **Fast Forward:** In 2018, New York City Transit released its highly ambitious plan to repair and modernize transit service, a plan which was well received by transit riders and advocates alike. The plan includes efforts to resignal New York City's subway system on an expedited timeline, redesign the city's outdated bus network, and overhaul subway station accessibility by equipping 70 additional subway stations with elevators and ramps.
3. **Fair Fares:** A historic win for low-income New Yorkers, New York City is now funding half-priced MetroCards for low-income New Yorkers. The full program will be open for enrollment in 2020, with almost 100,000 eligible New Yorkers already enrolled in the program.
4. **On-Demand Access-A-Ride:** In 2017, the MTA launched a revolutionary pilot program to a small number of Access-A-Riders that provided on-demand, single trip service. This pilot has been largely considered "life changing" by those who have used it due to its flexibility and easy scheduling, allowing riders to book single trips whenever they need to travel. The fate of the pilot, however, can be found on our "Top Ten Worst of the Decade" list.
5. **14th Street Busway:** Until recently, buses along 14th Street in Manhattan crawled along so slowly that the Straphangers Campaign "awarded" the M14A with the [2019 Pokey Award](#) for New York City's slowest bus, moving at an average speed of 4.3MPH. In October, the City implemented a busway along 14th Street, giving street priority to the tens of thousands of bus riders who take M14A/D buses each day and vastly improving travel speed and ridership numbers on both routes.
6. **BusTime:** In 2011, the MTA launched BusTime, allowing riders to track the location of their bus in real-time. Not only has BusTime proved a useful tool for riders to find out when their bus will arrive, but it has provided riders and advocates alike with new data to better analyze how bus service is performing throughout the five boroughs.
7. **2nd Avenue Subway Opens:** Some 90 years after it was first recommended, the Second Avenue subway opened its first three stations on January 1, 2017.
8. **NYC's Better Buses Action Plan:** New York City released its plan to expand street priority for buses and improve New York City bus speeds, the slowest in the country, 25% by the end of 2020.
9. **Pre-Tax Transit Benefits:** New York City now requires businesses of 20 or more to offer employees the option of participating in a federal pre-tax program, saving subway, bus, and commuter rail riders potentially hundreds of dollars in commuting costs each year.
10. **"It's OMNY Time":** The MTA is moving forward with updating its fare payment technology by replacing the now-outdated MetroCard with OMNY, a tap-and-go payment system. OMNY is currently available at a number of stations throughout the boroughs, as well as on Staten Island express and local buses.

Top Ten Worst List for New York City Transit: 2010-2019

1. **Fares Skyrocket:** Riders experienced five fare increases throughout the 2010s. At the beginning of the decade, the MTA's base fare was \$2.25, today the base fare costs \$2.75. Perhaps more starkly, a monthly unlimited MetroCard costs riders \$89 per month in 2010, in 2019, a monthly unlimited costs \$127 per month. Without including pre-tax benefits that some New Yorkers qualify for, monthly MetroCard holders spent an additional \$456 in 2019 on MetroCards than they would have in 2010.
2. **Superstorm Sandy Strikes:** Superstorm Sandy wreaked havoc on the lives of New Yorkers and battered New York City's public transit system, causing unprecedented damage. The storm decommissioned several subway lines, flooded stations, and cost almost \$5 billion to "fix and fortify" the MTA's transit system.
3. **Service Cuts:** Many riders are still reeling from the draconian service cuts of 2010, when the MTA, faced with a \$750 million operating shortfall, eliminated two subway lines, dozens of bus routes, and reduced service on subways and buses throughout the system. While some service has since been restored, most notably the W train in 2016, the MTA faces a steep operating deficit in coming years, threatening future levels of service.
4. **Budget Woes:** The MTA's finances are in bad shape, with an operating deficit expected to exceed \$1 billion by 2022. Without new sources of revenue or cost cutting measures, the agency may look to raising fares and slashing service to close the gap in future years.
5. **2017 Summer of Hell:** The summer of 2017 presented no shortage of problems for subway riders who were forced to sweat it out all summer long. Among the challenges straphangers faced included: riders trapped in an F Train sauna during rush hour, trains that derailed in both Harlem and Brooklyn, and subway on-time performance which plummeted to a dismal 65%.
6. **Transit Raids:** Throughout the decade, the Governor diverted millions of dollars away from the MTA's operating budget to pay for capital projects, service state debt, and, in a particularly egregious example, bail out three state-run ski resorts in Upstate New York.
7. **Debt Balloons:** The MTA's debt grew rapidly throughout the decade, from \$32 billion in 2010 to over \$40 billion in 2019.
8. **Station Infrastructure Failures:** Issues abounded throughout the subway's 472 stations. The newly-constructed Hudson Yards station opened with leaks, ceilings collapsed on platforms at Barclay Center and Borough Hall stations, debris fell overhead along elevated segments of the 7 Line, and three quarters of subway stations remained completely inaccessible.
9. **Fate of AAR On-Demand:** Two years after its implementation, the MTA announced in late 2019 that while it was expanding its successful on-demand e-hail paratransit pilot service to an additional 1,200 riders, it will significantly reduce service. This service reduction includes a limit on rides to 16 rides per month as well as a \$15 subsidy cap.
10. **Bus Ridership Plummet:** As bus speeds slowed throughout the decade, bus ridership continued to plummet. Between 2012 and 2019, ridership dropped by over 370,000 daily riders, or over 14%.