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Bronx Borough Board

Report: The State of the Bronx Subway Stations

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I. Introduction

In 2002, the Fordham Bedford Housing Corporation released a report describing the deteriorating conditions of Bronx subway stations. This report highlighted four stations on the B/D line: 205th Street, Bedford Park, Kingsbridge Road, and Fordham Road.

Researchers found these stations needed numerous repairs, including concrete repair, repainting, tile replacement, ceiling repainting, and cleaning. At 205th Street station, there was also a large amount of water damage.¹

Of these four Bronx stations, two were listed again in a recently released report by the New York City Transit Riders Council as being among the top five worst stations in the New York City. This new survey found that both Kingsbridge Road and 205th Street still have many of the same problems as found in 2002. Kingsbridge Road has water leaking from the ceiling, which needs to be repaired and repainted, while 205th Street still needs concrete repairs, tile replacement, and ceiling repainting. Water damage remains a significant problem at this station, which ranked first in the worst structural damage among NYC subway stations.²

The report seeks first to review the findings of the recently released study by the New York City Transit Riders Council regarding the four Bronx subway stations. Second, it seeks to present an analysis of past work and future plans for rehab work on all 83 subway stations in the Bronx.

¹ *Station Conditions Report to New York City Transit*, The Fordham Bedford Housing Corporation, April 2003

² *Hit or Miss: A Survey of New York City Subway Stations*, New York City Transit Riders Council, August 2004

II. New York City Transit Riders Council

On August 4, 2004 the New York City Transit Riders Council, a 15-member transit group that represents bus and subway riders, released the results of its survey of the conditions of 50 subway stations from the riders' perspective. Ten years have passed since the New York City Transit Riders Council (NYCTRC) last conducted a subway station conditions survey (1994). This survey grew out of a continuing desire among members of the Council for an evaluation of the transit environment from the passenger's perspective. In 1983, at the urging of the Council, New York City Transit (NYCT) began conducting a quarterly Passenger Environment Survey (PES). The original PES evaluated buses and subway cars; stations were added at the end of 1992. In mid-2003, budgetary considerations reduced the frequency of the PES to a semi-annual survey.³

The members of the Council conducted the most recent survey as a follow up to the similar survey performed ten years ago to determine how station conditions had changed and to test the efficiency of NYCT's Passenger Environment Survey (PES). Council members surveyed stations in Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx on criteria that include: litter, working telephones, exposed wires, conditions on walls, ceilings, stairs and handrails, etc. Fifty subway stations were selected for study out of a total of 408 stations in the system. Using the subway's performance in each of these categories the Council ranked the 50 stations from best to worst.⁴

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

III. Bronx Subway Survey Results

Ranking of Bronx Subway Stations: (Worst to Best Out of 50)

| Ranking | Subway Station | Train Line | % of Conditions Meeting Top Standards |
|---------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | Mosholu Parkway | BX 4 | 59% |
| 2 | 174-175 Sts. | BX B,D | 60% |
| 3 | Kingsbridge Rd. | BX B,D | 60% |
| 5 | 205 St.-Norwood | BX D | 63% |
| 12 | Cypress Ave. | BX 6 | 69% |
| 25 | Wakefield - 241st St. | BX 2 | 76% |
| 27 | 170th St. - Grand Concourse | BX B,D | 76% |
| 32 | 3rd Ave.-149th St. | BX 2,5 | 80% |

The survey reported definite improvements have been made to the condition of subway stations over the past 10 years, but some Bronx stations like the one at 205th Street-

Norwood in the Bronx are in very poor condition. In fact, four of the five worst rated stations belong to the Bronx; three of which are on the B/D line. The four stations are Mosholu Parkway on the 4 line, 174-175 Streets on the B/D lines, B and D stations at Kingsbridge Road, and 205th Street – Norwood on the D line. Broken tile, leaking water, and crumbling concrete are a few of the noticeable features of the station at 205th Street – Norwood; ranking first in most structural damage of the 50 stations surveyed. The concrete on many of the pillars has eroded, baring rusted metal. Tiles are missing, the subway map is outdated, and water drips through the ceiling- so much leaking water it runs like a stream between the tracks. Some transit workers, who did not wish to be identified, have said they are worried about their health while working in such conditions at the 205th Street – Norwood Station.⁵ This station is home to the end of the D line and a major bus transfer.

At the Kingsbridge Road D stop in the Bronx, ranked third-worst, there is water dripping from peeling ceiling paint. Farther down the D line, at the 174th-175th Sts. stop, ranked second-worst, and was found to be very smelly- some subways riders commented that smelled, “like a bathroom.”⁶

IV. NYCT’s Position on the Four Worst Bronx Subways Stations

While Norwood, and other Bronx stations require renovation, one transit employee says it looks like NYCT has completely ignored and neglected the station. Despite Transit Riders Council representatives’ statement that four Bronx stations are among the city’s

⁵ David Epstein, “D Is For Dirty, Decrepit In Bronx” (Daily News 5 August 2004, Sports Final ed.: 24)

⁶ Ibid

worst, there are currently no plans by NYCT to renovate them. In particular, NYCT 's list of stations due for improvement does not include the Norwood Station.⁷ That means five years could pass before anything is fixed at the station. In respect to the findings of the Transit Riders Council for the 205th Street – Norwood station, they said that the station requires immediate attention and improvements.

V. Analysis of Rehab Work for All Bronx Stations

Further research underscores the importance and necessity of subway station improvements – as well as the continued financing of such projects – throughout the Bronx. According to data obtained by the Office of the Bronx Borough President, total annual capital spending on Bronx subway station rehabilitation has increased over the period 2000 through 2003, yet is forecasted to decrease from 2004 through 2008. Of the \$338.9 million total NYCT budget in 2000, \$19.3 million was devoted to the Bronx.⁸ In 2003, despite a lesser NYCT budget of \$197.8 million, a greater percentage of that budget was devoted to the Bronx, with 2003 capital spending at \$94.0 million for the borough alone.⁹

As predicted for 2004 through 2007, both the NYCT overall budget and total capital spending on Bronx stations are expected to decrease. Spending in the Bronx is estimated to decline from \$287.6 million (of the total \$2,272.5 million NYCT budget) in 2004 to \$187.2

⁷ According to statements from NYCTRC staff

⁸ The total New York City Transit (NYCT) budget, calculated for 2000 to 2003, includes station rehabilitations, intermodal facilities/transfer, disabled accessibility, and line structure rehabilitation.

⁹ See *Appendix A: Evaluation of Capital Spending on Bronx Station Rehab*

million (of a total \$889.2 million NYCT budget) in 2007 (Bronx station estimates are not available for 2008).¹⁰ However, it should also be mentioned that despite these downward trends, a greater proportion (21.05%) of the NYCT's budget is to be allocated to the Bronx in 2007 than that in 2004 (12.66%).

Per-Bronx station capital spending has not exhibited any strong general patterns over the period 2000 through 2007. Per-station spending was low in 2000 and 2001, with totals of \$0.2 million and \$0.1 million, respectively. This dramatically increased in 2002, when \$3.8 million was spent per Bronx subway station. Per-station spending again declined in 2003 and totaled only \$1.1 million. It is estimated at near-2002 levels for 2004 (at \$3.5 million per station), but is forecast to decline from 2005 to 2006 (from \$1.8 million to \$1.3 million, respectively). Finally, in 2007, the Office of the Bronx Borough President has estimated per-station spending to be \$2.3 million.¹¹

As obtained by the Office of the Bronx Borough President, total costs per Bronx subway station were \$433.1 million from 2000 through 2003. Over this period, the greatest annual expenditures per station occurred in 2002, at a total of \$314.3 million, while the least annual total costs occurred in 2001, with \$5.5 million spent on work per station. Total costs per station forecast for the period 2004 – 2009 are \$941.9 million. Of this sum, \$287.6 million is to be spent in 2004, \$146.9 million in 2005, \$105.3 million in 2006, \$361.5 million in 2007, \$40.6 million in 2008, and \$0.0 million in 2009.¹²

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid

Certain individual lines completely lack any past rehabilitation work (from 2000 through 2003), as do certain stops along individual lines. These stops include three stations along the 4-line: 138 Street/Grand Concourse, 149 Street/Grand Concourse, and 161 Street/Yankee Stadium. Moreover, no prior rehabilitation work was conducted at the 2/5-line stop at East 180 Street/Morris Avenue, or at the 2-line stations at 3 Avenue/149 Street and 149 Street/Grand Concourse.¹³ However, rehabilitation work is presently underway for a number of 5-line stops.

The D line, which includes 10 stops in the Bronx, completely lacks any past rehabilitation work from 2000 through 2003. Similarly, over this same period, no rehabilitation was conducted upon any of the 9 B-line stops in the Bronx. It should also be noted that of the 18 6-line stops in the Bronx, only a total of \$1.0 million was spent upon intermodal facilities and transfer rehabilitation at the Pelham Bay Park/Bruckner Expressway subway stop.¹⁴

Certain subway stops for which no future 2004 – 2009 rehabilitation work are planned include eight stops along the 6 line: Morrison-Sound View Avenues/Westchester Avenue, Hunts Point Avenue/Southern Boulevard, Longwood Avenue/Southern Boulevard, East 149 Street/Southern Boulevard, East 143 Street-Saint Mary's Street/Southern Boulevard, Cypress Avenue/138 Street, Brook Avenue/East 138 Street, and 3 Avenue/138 Street.

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

The individual subway lines that are not planned to undergo rehabilitation work in the future are generally consistent with those that did not receive work in the past. These lines are the B, D, and 5 lines. Again, the 5-line is currently under construction, though the NYCT has made no plans for long-term future rehab work through 2009. Together, these lines stop a total of 29 times in the Bronx. (It is important to note that subway stops along these lines are repeated in this figure; e.g., both D- and B-line trains stop at the Kingsbridge Road/Grand Concourse subway station.)¹⁵

Comments must also be made upon any relevant rehabilitation work at the worst Bronx subway stations as evaluated by the NYCT Passenger Environment Survey of 2004. From 2000 through 2003, the total cost of rehab work at the Mosholu Parkway/Jerome Avenue stop (along the 4 line) was \$1.0 million.¹⁶ This sum represents the only rehabilitation work done at any of the four worst Bronx subway stations over 2000 through 2003. Furthermore, no future rehab work is planned for 2004 through 2009 at any of the other three worst stations – 174-175 Streets/Grand Concourse, Kingsbridge Road/Grand Concourse, and 205 Street/Bainbridge Avenue. According to estimates made by the Office of the Bronx Borough President, a total of \$27.9 million will be spent at the Mosholu Parkway/Jerome Avenue stop over 2004 through 2009 – but again, this is the only work planned among these four stations.

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid

VI. Recommendations Regarding Bronx Stations

Immediate repairs should be made to the physical conditions of the 205th Street/Bainbridge Avenue (Norwood) station.

Of the 50 subway stops evaluated by the New York City Transit Riders Council in their 2004 conditions survey, the 205 Street/Bainbridge Avenue (Norwood) stop is ranked number one in the amount of structural damage per station. Current conditions pose a threat to riders, as well as to transit workers, who as previously mentioned have expressed sizeable concern for their personal health and safety. This station is the terminus of the D line and is also located at a major bus transfer. The marked degree of pedestrian traffic should serve as further impetus to immediately begin rehabilitation work at this Norwood station.

In addition to immediate rehabilitation work at the 205th Street station, repairs should also be made, by the end of the year, at the other three Bronx stations identified by the New York City Transit Riders Council Survey.

The deficiencies of the three other worst ranking Bronx subway stations – Mosholu Parkway/Jerome Avenue, and the 174-175 Streets/Grand Concourse and Kingsbridge Road/Grand Concourse stops (which both service the B/D line) – must also be addressed. According to this investigation, these stations experienced little rehab work over the past few years (2000 through 2003). Furthermore, neither these three stations nor the Norwood station are included in future renovation plans of the New York City Transit. Immediate capital improvements must be made in these areas.

A thorough assessment should be done in order to determine both present and potential health problems for people working or traveling through the worst at rated Bronx subway stations.

Stations such as the Norwood stop have deteriorated to the point where it is feasible to consider the possibility of detrimental effects upon both rider and transit worker health. Any potential health risks must be identified and assessed as part of the general rehabilitation efforts at these Bronx stations.

A physical survey should be completed within the next few months in order to determine whether rehabilitation work is needed at Bronx stations along the B, D, 5, and 6 lines.

Given the NYCTRC rankings of a number of B-, D-, 5-, and 6-line stops as the present worst subway stations citywide, the potential for future improvements must be evaluated. As enumerated in Section V (Analysis of Rehab Work for All Bronx Stations), the New York City Transit budget has not allocated any forthcoming work to be conducted at stops along the B, D, and 5. While certain 5-line stations are currently under construction, no significant long-term rehab projects have been provided for by the NYCT. This is significant because both the B and D lines have not undergone any rehab work since 2000. Only 1 of 18 stations along the 6-line has had prior work done over 2000 through 2003, and 10 of those 18 stops completely lack plans for future rehabilitation.