



NYPIRG's  
**Straphangers Campaign**

# A FARE HIKE AND SERVICE CUTS?

## the facts:

*The Metropolitan Transportation Authority has proposed to raise fares and cut service next year. The NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign has prepared this fact sheet to explain why this would be unfair—and what help we should demand from city and state officials.*

### More For Less

The MTA is proposing to raise fares and cut service. The yearly cost of 7-day unlimited-ride MetroCards, for example, would go up at least \$150—about the same impact on riders as a 30-cent fare hike! The 30-day MetroCards could go from \$70 to \$84.

And what do riders get in exchange? The MTA plans to slash bus service, close 164 station booths, remove conductors from two subway lines and cut service on the G line. And 2006 is worse. Even with a fare hike in 2005, the MTA is saying it will slash evening and weekend subway service and eliminate 33 bus routes and overnight service on 95 bus routes, increasing waits and making transit even more overcrowded.

### The State Shortchanges City Transit

Why the pressure to raise fares and cut service? Because New York State under Governor George Pataki has forced the MTA to rely heavily on borrowing backed by its operating budget in the last decade to rebuild the transit system. As a result, the MTA has been forced to borrow or refinance \$22 billion in bonds and now faces a huge and growing bill. Its yearly interest payments on the bonds—called “debt service”—will double between 2003 and 2007, going from \$800 million to \$1.6 billion.

This massive burden is part of a pattern of shortchanging city transit.

City subways and buses move 84% of the state’s transit riders. But we only get 63% of state aid for transit coming from Albany. That comes to \$350 million a year we are shortchanged, which would go a long way to meeting the \$436 million deficit projected for the city subway and bus system in 2005. In contrast, the LIRR and Metro-North move just 5% of the state’s riders, but get 23% of state transit aid—a windfall of \$275 million a year (see box).

### Riders Already Pay Their Fare Share

Fares just went up last year, with the largest hike in the history of the system.

And riders in New York City already pay a higher share of the costs of running the subways and buses than riders on any other system in the country (see box).

### SHORTCHANGING SUBWAY AND BUS RIDERS\*

% of all state riders moved by city subways and buses: 84%

% of state aid going to city subways and buses: 63%

**yearly shortfall: \$350 million**

% of all state riders moved by LIRR and MetroNorth: 5%

% of state aid going to LIRR and MetroNorth: 23%

**yearly windfall: \$275 million**

\*Source: NYS Department of Transportation, 2002 Annual Report on Transit Assistance Programs

### AN UNFAIR FARE BOX BURDEN

% FARE REVENUES OF OPERATING FUNDS EXPENDED, 2002\*

NEW YORK CITY	53%
BOSTON	29%
CHICAGO	42%
LOS ANGELES	27%
MIAMI-DADE	25%
NEW JERSEY TRANSIT	45%
PHILADELPHIA	40%
PATH	32%
WASHINGTON, D.C.	41%

\*Source: National Transit Data Base, Federal Transit Administration

We are also shortchanged on service. Ridership on city subways and buses is at its highest level since the 1950's, with a million more riders on an average day than just eight years ago. But service lags badly. Since 1996, annual subway ridership has risen 29%, but service has only increased about 11%. Bus ridership has soared 41% in eight years—from 435 million in 1996 to 735 million in 2003, but service has increased only 27%.

### **The Governor and Mayor Can Act**

Governor George Pataki got the MTA into its fiscal mess by starving the agency for rebuilding funds. He appoints the board of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and picked its current chairman, Peter Kalikow. In the coming months, we will need his leadership to keep fares affordable and service levels decent.

Mayor Bloomberg could also speak up for the interests of city riders. He says he's troubled by the proposed increase. But what will he do? Transit deserves city support, especially in tough economic times.

Before considering raising fares, Governor Pataki and state legislative leaders should end unfair state transit aid funding inequities.

The governor should also consider a range of possible new revenue sources, including reinstating the commuter tax and dedicating it to city and suburban transit needs. More than 75% of daily LIRR and 60% of Metro-North riders also use the subways. Mayor Bloomberg has suggested peak-hour tolls on city bridges and tunnels, including the East River bridges. The \$800 million a year this would generate could help keep fares affordable and support transit improvements, while also reducing rush-hour traffic congestion.

### **Some Demands**

Here's what riders should demand from officials before they consider raising the costs of taking the subway or bus:

- **More service and less crowding.** Riders know from bitter daily experience how jammed and stressful is to ride our crowded subways and buses. There should be a major increase in service, including guaranteeing no more than a four-minute wait anywhere in the subways during rush hours. We need more subway cars and buses, better stations and replacement of aging tracks and signals to make the system safer and more reliable. (See the Straphangers Campaign fact sheet on the MTA's proposed five-year rebuilding plan.)
- **Faster and more reliable service.** New York City has the slowest buses in America. It takes longer to go from East Harlem to downtown than to go from New York to Philadelphia! And subway travel times have slowed on some lines due to safety concerns. Buses should given greater priority on city streets. We also need modern subway signals to allow faster speeds, more frequent service and greater safety.
- **Better discounts.** The MTA should look at ways to make fare discounts more affordable and attractive, including bi-weekly MetroCards and discounts when traveling with children.

**For more information, call (212) 349-6460 or visit [www.straphangers.org](http://www.straphangers.org)**