

Methodology:

2015 Pokey and Schleppe Awards

I. Pokey Award

This report is a follow-up to the NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign thirteen previous *Pokey Award* reports issued annually from 2002 to 2014. The methodology used by the Campaign in this report is similar to the ones used in earlier reports.

Selection of Routes

The Straphangers Campaign chose to measure speeds on a sample of 40 bus routes. The survey was designed to provide a 'snapshot' of the most-used routes in the system and in each borough, as well as traditionally slow-moving crosstown bus routes in Manhattan. Because of significant differences between route patterns of the Manhattan M14A and M14D, these routes were measured separately. On four routes — the B35, Bx1, Bx15 and Q44 — regular local bus service did not run terminal to terminal on weekdays at 12:00 noon, and therefore limited bus service speeds were measured on these routes. The Bx12 local and Bx12 SBS routes, as well as the B44 and B44 SBS routes, and the Bx41 and Bx41 SBS routes were measured separately. We did not include the M34 SBS, M34a SBS, M15, M15 SBS, and M86 SBS because of substantial construction at the time of the survey, resulting in 35 reported routes.

Bus Speed Measurement

Surveys were conducted by Straphangers Campaign Coordinator Cate Contino Cowit and five staff members between June 19 and October 26, 2015. Each route was measured with an actual trip in both directions, beginning with the first bus departing from a terminus after 12:00 noon. The return trip was made from the second terminus back to the first on the next bus available. During each trip, surveyors recorded to the second the amount of time taken from terminus to terminus. Timing began as each bus pulled out of the first stop and concluded immediately after stopping at the last. In our analysis, times were converted to a fraction of an hour. Distances covered were measured to the nearest 1/100th mile using GIS software. Bus speeds were calculated by dividing the total number of miles per run by the fraction of the hour taken to cover the total distance. Below is an example of how this methodology was applied to a sample route, Manhattan's M116.

Sample Calculation — M116 Crosstown

Bus speeds on the M116 were measured on August 10, 2015. Surveyors boarded a westbound M116, which pulled out of its terminus at E. 120th Street and Pleasant Avenue. This trip began at 12:00:12 PM and concluded at 12:28:16 PM at the western terminus, W. 106th Street and Broadway. The westbound trip represents a distance of 2.48 miles, which was covered in 28 minutes, 4 seconds.

Immediately following their westbound measurement, surveyors boarded the next eastbound M116 at its western terminus — W. 106th Street and Broadway — at 12:40:14 PM. The bus came to a stop at its eastern terminus — E. 120th Street and Pleasant Avenue — at 1:10:04 PM. This trip represents a distance of 2.88 miles, which was covered in 29 minutes, 50 seconds.

In all, the two-trip run on the M116 covered a distance of 5.36 miles in a time of 57 minutes and 54 seconds, or 0.965 hours. This corresponds to an average bus speed of 5.6 miles per hour.

The Straphangers Campaign wishes to thank the staff that assisted in the survey: Tiffany Brown, Jaqi Cohen, Patrick Krug, Tassia Rosa, and Emily Skydel.

II. Schleppe Award

This report is also a follow-up to the NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign's nine previous *Schleppe Awards* issued annually from 2006 to 2014.

In awarding the Schleppe, the campaign used official “wait assessment” data released in September 2015 by MTA New York City Transit for bus service during the first half of 2015, the most recent period available. The measure is reported for 42 high-volume routes.⁹

“Wait assessment” is defined as follows by transit officials:

“Wait Assessment is measured weekdays between 7:00 a.m. and midnight. It is defined as the percentage of observed service intervals that are no more than the scheduled interval plus 3 minutes during peak (7 a.m. – 9 a.m., 4 p.m. – 7 p.m.) and plus 5 during off-peak (9 a.m. – 4 p.m., 7 p.m. – 12 a.m.).”¹⁰

The campaign believes that this is the best measure made by transit officials that shows how closely buses are sticking to their scheduled intervals. As such, it reflects the degree to which buses bunch together, or arrive with big gaps, a gauge of what riders experience.

To be eligible for a Schleppe, a route must have at least 20% of its buses arriving bunched or with big gaps in service. This year, transit officials used “Bus Time data for the 42 high-volume routes as compared to sample data used for the First Half 2014.”¹¹

Since 2008, transit officials significantly changed this measure. In the past, the agency reported a different measure for evening service. It used to compare how closely service arrived according to printed schedules at night. Now the agency reports only wait assessment for the entire day. As a result, historical comparisons of Schleppe Awards before 2008 are not meaningful.

⁹ Wait assessment data can be found at pages 282-285 of the September 2015 MTA New York City Transit Committee Agenda.

¹⁰ Since September 2010, transit officials have measured wait assessment differently for the subways. It is reported on a monthly basis and is measured on weekdays between 9 a.m. and midnight. It is defined as the percent of actual intervals between trains that are no more than the scheduled interval plus 25%.

¹¹ MTA New York City Transit Committee Agenda, September 21, 2015, Page 281. Retrieved from http://web.mta.info/mta/news/books/pdf/150921_1000_transit-bus.pdf.