

STATEMENT ON NEW MTA ADVERTISING POLICY

Today, the MTA adopted changes to its advertising standards for ads on subways, trains and stations that contain political, religious or moral expressions. In the future, these ads will have to contain a "conspicuous legend" stating it is a paid ad, identifying the ad sponsor(s) and noting that its posting does not constitute an endorsement by the MTA.

The Straphangers Campaign believes the MTA has adopted a responsible approach respecting free speech.

The Campaign has used transit ads to reach millions of riders since 1991. In coalition or alone we have purchased ad space to oppose fare increases and support more service and government investment in transit. Once, in the year 2000, the MTA refused to put up an ad with the caption: "With livestock it's called animal cruelty. With people it's called a morning commuter." The ad listed sponsors, including the Straphangers Campaign, the Transport Workers Union Local 100, the General Contractors Association and the Regional Plan Association. The agency argued that it could censor the ad because it would be harmful to the morale of transit workers. The New York Civil Liberties Union filed suit and the MTA settled, letting the ads go up in the transit system.

As the changes move forward, we will have questions, such as:

- How will MTA determine if the ad contains "religious, religious, or moral" expression? (That language was already in the standards.)
- What is the definition of a "conspicuous" legend? How much of the ad space would be devoted to the legend?
- What should be done in the case where there are many sponsors?