



COUNCIL MEMBER JESSICA LAPPIN SELECT BUS SERVICE REPORT CARD



SPEED

The MTA reports that SBS has speeded trips on the East Side by nearly 19 percent. That means that riders can expect to save about two minutes for every mile they ride – a noticeable improvement in service. That rate should improve even further when a new wireless system goes online to extend the duration of green lights for the buses. These improvements highlight the potential SBS holds for East Side commuters.

A-

ACCESSIBILITY

More than half (56%) of available seats on the buses may be difficult or impossible for a disabled or elderly passenger to use, since of the 54 seats available on the new buses, a full 30 require a passenger to go up one and sometimes two steps. In addition, riders complain that the narrow aisle of the bus makes it difficult to navigate.

SBS stops are about a half mile apart. Those who do not live near one of those stops rely on local buses and transfers. However, an imbalance between the number of local and Select buses along the M15 route often leaves local riders waiting while several select buses pass by. Frustrating for riders, this also makes the use of SBS more challenging.

C-

TICKETS / EASE OF USE

The biggest complaint Council Member Lappin’s office receives about Select Bus Service is that the ticket machines don’t always work. When machines are broken or out of paper, it is impossible to buy a ticket. Without a ticket, riders who board the bus risk being issued a \$100 summons. A recent afternoon survey conducted by Council Member Lappin’s office found that 10 percent of the machines in her district were out of service. In addition, the machines are placed close to the curb facing the street, leaving little room to stand, especially if multiple people are waiting to buy tickets.

C

ENFORCEMENT

Designated bus lanes are meant to provide a clear path for the buses. How clear that path stays is a function of how well the city enforces the bus only designation. The police issued more than 15,200 tickets and towed 156 cars that violated the bus-only lanes between late November and mid-December. This concerted action sends a clear message that the police are enforcing these regulations vigorously.

Select Bus Service also rests on rules requiring that passengers purchase tickets before boarding the bus. Constituents note that enforcement can be unpredictable and unreasonable. Riders complain about being issued \$100 summonses even when the ticket machines were malfunctioning and purchasing a ticket was impossible. Furthermore, buses are often stopped while inspectors are on board, defeating the goal of a speedier commute. A better balance needs to be found to ensure rigorous and reasonable enforcement.

B

OVERALL

Despite promises of shorter waits, faster commutes, and improved convenience, Select Bus Service has been disappointing for many Upper East Side residents. The potential remains for SBS to be a boon for a community that is still waiting for the completion of the continually-delayed Second Avenue Subway. The MTA has already demonstrated that it is taking this service seriously and that it can improve commute times. However, there are several issues of rider convenience and use that need to be addressed before SBS can be declared a complete success.

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Data for this report was gathered from constituent phone calls and e-mails, meetings, media reports, and staff visits to all SBS stops in Council Member Lappin’s District.