# News Release

## And the Winner of the 2018 Pokey is … the M42!
## NYC's Slowest Bus Route At 3.2 MPH;
## Slower Than a Chicken Runs: "Eat My Dust," says Bird

## And the 2018 Schleppie Goes to…the B12!
## Most Unreliable NYC Bus; One Out of Five Bunch

New York, NY — The NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign and TransitCenter today gave out two "awards" for poor bus service in New York City.

The first "prize" is the fifteenth-annual "Pokey" award, given to the slowest of New York City Transit's local bus routes.

The un-coveted Pokey award is a golden snail on a pedestal. The award is based on the average speeds of routes. High-ridership routes (with 10,000 daily riders or more) were considered for the "award."

**The "winner" of the 2018 Pokey is... the M42,** clocking in at an excruciating 3.2 MPH. It had the slowest speed out of more than 200 local bus routes reviewed by the Straphangers Campaign.

-more, more, more-

The groups noticed that the M42 moved far slower at 3.2 miles per hour than the pace at which a chicken can run (9 miles per hour).[i] This is the fifth time out of fifteen awards that M42 has won the Pokey, a truly "terrible" record said the groups.

"Riding a bus can feel like being in a funeral procession, where you are awaiting a slow caravan of crowded, crawling and bunched buses," said Gene Russianoff of the Straphangers Campaign. "It's maddening. Much more can be done to make them run faster."

"Bus riders in NYC are used to the stressful and frustrating experience of waiting for a bus that doesn't arrive when it's supposed to, only to show up bunched with two or three other buses," said Tabitha Decker of TransitCenter. "Bus lanes, priority at traffic signals and better dispatching are needed to take these buses from schleppie to peppy."

The Straphangers Campaign has switched from very limited, although accurate, physical field observations. Starting this year, we have extracted bus speeds and bunching from thousands of data points generated by MTA New York Transit BusTime data and analyzed by TransitCenter.

There is a detailed **methodology at the back of this news release** explaining how our colleagues at TransitCenter provided the know-how that made this survey possible for speeds and bunching.

According to our analysis, the slowest, high-ridership buses in each borough were:

| B63 | 4.7mph | between Fort Hamilton and Brooklyn Bridge Park |
|---|---|---|
| Bx19 | 4.6mph | between New York Botanical Garden and Riverbank State Park |
| M42 | 3.2mph | between Circle Line Pier and East Side, via 42nd Street |
| Q20A | 6.4mph | between Jamaica and College Point |
| S48[ii] | 7.3mph | between St. George and Mariners Harbor |

**-more, more, more-**

**The second award is the eleventh annual "Schleppie." It is awarded to each of the city's least reliable bus routes.**

The Schleppie award is based off of the percentage of buses observed that "bunch", using data generated by BusTime. "Bunching" occurs when two or more buses arrive at a stop at the same time, meaning that they are not on-schedule. The Schleppie award is comprised of golden lumbering elephants on a pedestal.

**And the winner in 2018 is…the B12!** One out of five buses, or 21.4%, arrive bunched on the B12, a level of service that is clearly inadequate. In 2016, the B12 moved 15,380 riders on an average weekday.

"New Yorkers know from bitter daily experience that service is often unpredictable and unreliable," said Jaqi Cohen, Straphangers Campaign Coordinator. "New Yorkers want transit officials to put an end long waits and bus bunching. Buses can move faster, but that requires transit officials to act. Taking steps such as adding more dedicated bus lanes, expanding traffic signal priority for buses and permitting board at all doors can make a huge difference in overall bus speed and reliability."

Mary Buchanan, Research Associate at TransitCenter, said, "Buses in Boston, Philadelphia, D.C., San Francisco, and L.A. perform far better than New York City buses. Can we call ourselves the best transit system in the U.S. when our buses are dead last in speed and reliability?"

According to the groups, the most unreliable bus routes in each borough are:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **B12 Local** | 21.4% | between Brownsville and Prospect Lefferts Gardens |
| **Bx21** | 17.9% | between Westchester Square and Mott Haven |
| **M4** | 15.3% | between Washington Heights or Fort Tryon Park and Midtown |
| **Q43** | 17.2% | between Floral Park and Jamaica |
| **S78[iii]** | 10.6% | between Bricktown Mall and St George Ferry Terminal |

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# Table One:
# THE POKEY AWARD
**Average Speeds of the 15 slowest, high ridership New York City Transit Local Bus Routes**

| Route | Average MPH |
|-------|-------------|
| M42   | 3.2         |
| M14D  | 3.9         |
| M66   | 4.0         |
| M14A  | 4.0         |
| M102  | 4.2         |
| M96   | 4.4         |
| M116  | 4.5         |
| M7    | 4.6         |
| BX19  | 4.6         |
| M11   | 4.7         |
| M100  | 4.7         |
| B63   | 4.7         |
| B12   | 4.8         |
| M15   | 4.8         |
| M1    | 4.8         |

*Pokey awards are based on the total distance traveled in miles divided by the travel time in hours per route, between 10am-4pm on weekdays for May 2018. See selection in Methodology.

# Table Two:
# THE SCHLEPPIE AWARD
## At Least One in Seven Buses Arrived Bunched*
## New York City Transit Local Bus Routes May 2018

| Route | % of buses bunched | Route direction (end to end, both directions) | Bunched buses |
|---|---|---|---|
| B12 Local | 21.4% | Between Brownsville and Prospect Lefferts Gardens, Brooklyn | 1 in 5 bunched |
| B15 | 19.8% | Between Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn and JFK Airport, Queens | 1 in 5 bunched |
| BX21 | 17.9% | Between Westchester Square and Mott Haven, Bronx | 1 in 6 bunched |
| BX36 | 17.6% | Between Soundview, Bronx and Washington Heights, Manhattan | 1 in 6 bunched |
| B82 | 17.3% | Between Spring Creek and Coney Island, Brooklyn | 1 in 6 bunched |
| B6 | 17.3% | Between Bath Beach and East New York, Brooklyn | 1 in 6 bunched |
| Q43 | 17.2% | Between Floral Park and Jamaica, Queens | 1 in 6 bunched |
| B46 Local | 16.8% | Between Kings Plaza and Williamsburg Bridge Plaza, Brooklyn | 1 in 6 bunched |
| B41 | 16.7% | Between Bergen Beach or Kings Plaza and Downtown Brooklyn | 1 in 6 bunched |
| B1 | 16.2% | Between Kingsborough Community College and Bay Ridge, Brooklyn | 1 in 6 bunched |
| B25 | 15.9% | Between East New York and Fulton Landing, Brooklyn | 1 in 6 bunched |
| B35 | 15.8% | Between Sunset Park and Brownsville, Brooklyn | 1 in 6 bunched |
| Q30 | 15.8% | Between Little Neck and Jamaica, Queens | 1 in 6 bunched |
| M4 | 15.3% | Between Washington Heights or Fort Tryon Park and Midtown, Manhattan | 1 in 7 bunched |
| BX15 | 15.2% | Between Fordham Plaza, Bronx and 125 Street, Manhattan | 1 in 7 bunched |
| Q56 | 15.0% | Between Jamaica, Queens and East New York, Brooklyn | 1 in 7 bunched |

*Schleppie awards are based on the percentage of buses arriving at less than 25 percent of the scheduled headway after the previous bus, between 10am-4pm on weekdays for May 2018. See selection in Methodology.

# METHODOLOGY

This analysis relied on electronic MTA BusTime data for May 2018 to determine route-level speed and bus bunching. We only examined data for New York City Transit buses; MTA Bus Company buses were not included in this analysis. For both metrics, we looked at all buses traveling on weekdays during midday (10am-4pm) for the month of May 2018.

We only considered high-ridership bus routes, with at least 10,000 average daily riders on weekdays, for the "awards."

## 1. Determining Speed
Before 2018, we generally, selected the bus routes to survey in the following way: First, we would choose each of the top 10 in Manhattan by ridership and each of the top 5 routes by ridership in each of the other four boroughs. When New York City Transit informed us that construction had significantly impacted a route, we would we would make substitutions. Volunteers or staff would then conduct a one round trip observation. That is our surveyors would take a chosen route from its "start" to its "end" then back again. This resulted in just two selected one-way trips per route [– for trips scheduled closest to noon for the first trip. For the return trip, observers would the first departing bus on that route. These observations were usually made between June and towards the beginning of September of a given year.] Despite the far greater size of observations in the new method, there was a large degree of similarity in the results compared to the old method.

Starting in 2018, average speed for each route is calculated using BusTime's measure of distance traveled per route (in miles) divided by travel time per route (in hours). The average speed calculation includes time spent at stops, also known as dwell time, and is an average speed for the entire route in both directions.

## 2. Determining Bus Bunching
New Yorkers loathe bus bunching. That's where riders wait a longer than scheduled time only to have several buses show up at the same time in a "herd." It gives many riders an uneasy sense that daily service is coming an unreliable and unplanned basis. Practically, it could mean showing up late for a family dinner or having to make up a missed class.

We decided that a level of bunching of greater than 15% (or one bus bunched out of seven) was not a minimum adequate level. Any route with more than 15% bunched was deemed an unacceptable level of service.

We define bunching as the percentage of buses that arrives within 25 percent of the scheduled headway after the bus in front of them. So if Bus #2 is scheduled to arrive eight minutes after Bus #1, but instead Bus #2 arrives less than two minutes after Bus #1, then Bus #2 is considered "bunched". Bunching measures the number of observed buses that are bunched at every stop on the route. The bunching rates reported are for the entire route in both directions.

## Endnotes

[i] Chad Buckley, Illinois State University, "Speed is Relative (Human and Animal Running Speeds): 'Are You a Cheetah, a Chicken, or a Snail?'"
https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1045&context=fpml.
[ii] No local Staten Island buses are "high-ridership" with 10,000 daily riders or more, so the S48 is the slowest bus overall in Staten Island.
[iii] It should be noted that while no high-ridership Staten Island bus route bunched more than 15 percent of the time, the S78 was included in this award as the most bunched route in the borough.