News Release

For Immediate Release:
Tuesday, July 23, 2019, 10 a.m.

M14A Wins 2019 Pokey Award for Slowest Bus
NYC's Slowest Bus Route At 4.3 MPH, Slower Than a Manatee!

B15 Wins Schleppie Award
Most Unreliable NYC Bus; One Out of Five Bunch

M42 Takes Home Lifetime Depreciation Award
Riders are Mad as Hell and They're Not Taking It Anymore

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

The first is the sixteenth-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" (see **Methodology** on page 6).

The "winner" of the 2019 Pokey Award is... the M14A, clocking in at an excruciating **4.3 MPH.** It had the slowest speed out of more than 60 high-ridership bus routes reviewed by the Straphangers Campaign and TransitCenter. The groups noted that the M14A has recently been upgraded to an SBS route, with off-board fare payment and bus stop consolidation, but the most critical element to speeding up service, a dedicated busway, has recently been blocked. Without a bus lane along 14th Street, traffic congestion is negating the gains that M14 riders should see from these improvements.

The groups noted that at 4.3mph, the M14A moved slower than a manatee, which typically averages 5 miles an hour.

While manatees are slow, they play an important role in maintaining a healthy underwater ecosystem, and yet are often put at risk by motorboats in overcrowded waters. Similarly, the M14A provides a vital service to New York City's transit system each day, yet suffers from heavy congestion along its route, threatening its performance and ridership.

“Riders on high-ridership routes endure bus service that barely moves faster than walking. Fortunately, NYC DOT plans to speed up service with dedicated bus lanes on 14th Street in Manhattan, Church Avenue in Brooklyn, Fresh Pond Road in Queens, and Broadway in the Bronx — riders need swift action on these projects,” said Mary Buchanan, Research Associate at TransitCenter.

“For years, the M14A has been one of the slowest buses in New York City, so this year’s Pokey Award should come as no surprise,” said Jaqi Cohen, Campaign Director for the NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign. “The recent implementation of SBS along the route has been a welcome change for M14 riders. Still, there is no better way to speed up service along the route than by rolling out the red carpet for bus riders with a dedicated busway.”

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

B35	4.8mph	Between Brownsville and Sunset Park
Bx19	4.8mph	Between New York Botanical Garden, Bronx and Riverbank Park, Manhattan
M14A	4.3mph	Between Lower East Side and Chelsea Piers
Q54	6.4mph	Between Jamaica, Queens and Williamsburg, Brooklyn
S48[1]	7.8mph	Between St. George and Mariners Harbor

Though it’s small consolation to riders, the decline in bus speeds at least seems to have bottomed out. None of the City’s slowest high-ridership routes have gotten slower over the past year. In fact, this year’s honorees are slightly faster than last year’s Pokey winners, by about 0.1 mph.

“Our findings highlight what many city bus riders already riders know from daily commuting," said Gene Russianoff, Senior Attorney for the NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign. "Despite significant bus improvements in recent years, far too many riders still suffer slow and unreliable bus service."

The second award is the twelfth annual “Schleppie Award.” It is awarded to the city’s least reliable bus routes.
The Schleppie Award is based on the percentage of buses observed that “bunch.” “Bunching” occurs when two or more buses arrive at a stop at the same time, which is a sign that large gaps have opened up in service, lengthening the wait for riders. The Schleppie Award is comprised of golden lumbering elephants on a pedestal.

[1] No local Staten Island buses are “high-ridership” with 10,000 daily riders or more, so the S48 is included in this award as the slowest bus overall in Staten Island.

And the winner in 2019 is…the B15! One out of five buses, or 20%, arrive bunched on the B15, and that means long waits and too much unpredictability for 19,827 daily weekday riders traveling between Bed-Stuy and JFK Airport.

"Traveling to the airport is a universally stressful experience. For Brooklyn bus riders, that experience is only made worse by taking the B15, which is the only bus in Brooklyn that connects riders to JFK airport," said Cohen.

"It's extremely frustrating to wait twice as long for a B15 only to see two show up at the same time," noted Buchanan. "What makes it even more aggravating is that we know the solution: Dedicated, enforced bus lanes would un-bunch even the B15."

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

B15	20.0%	Between Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn and JFK Airport, Queens
Bx3	19.2%	Between Riverdale, Bronx and Washington Heights, Manhattan
M11	14.0%	Between Greenwich Village and Harlem or Riverbank Park
Q24	16.3%	Between Jamaica, Queens and Bushwick, Brooklyn
S78[2]	10.1%	Between Bricktown Mall and St George Ferry Terminal

The groups noted one sign of progress. The number of routes eligible for the Schleppie Award – with at least 15% of observed buses bunched – has decreased since 2018. This is in large part due to recent efforts by the MTA and NYC DOT to reverse years of failing bus service.

The third award is the groups' newest award, known as the "Lifetime Depreciation Award", honoring a bus route with longstanding service so poor that many riders have stopped taking it.

The first ever Lifetime Depreciation Award goes to… the M42! It has won the Pokey Award five times in years past with average speeds of less than 4mph. But over 5,000 daily M42 riders, or a third of its total ridership, have stopped taking the bus since 2012. Current ridership has dipped so low that the M42 is no longer eligible for a Pokey

[2] No local Staten Island buses are "high-ridership" with 10,000 daily riders or more, so the S78 is included in this award as the most bunched route in the borough.

award. This year, the groups recognize the M42 as a route whose notoriously slow service – at 3.5mph as of May 2019 – has convinced many riders not to take the route at all.

–30–

Table One:
THE POKEY AWARD
Average Speeds of the 15 Slowest, High Ridership New York City Transit Local Bus Routes*

Route	Average MPH	Route direction (end to end, both directions)
M14A	4.3	Between Lower East Side and Abingdon Sq
M102	4.4	Between Harlem and East Village
M96	4.5	Between East Side and West Side
M14D**	4.6	Between Lower East Side and Chelsea Pier
M7	4.6	Between Harlem and 14th Street
BX19	4.8	Between NY Botanical Garden and Riverbank Park
M15	4.8	Between East Harlem and South Ferry
B35	4.8	Between Brownsville and Sunset Park
M3	4.9	Between Fort George and East Village
M4	4.9	Between Cloisters and 32nd St
B63	4.9	Between Bay Ridge and Cobble Hill
B12	5.0	Between Lefferts Gardens and East New York
M100	5.0	Between Inwood and East Harlem
M101	5.0	Between East Village and Harlem
BX2	5.1	Between Kingsbridge Heights and Mott Haven

*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 2019. See selection in Methodology.

**The M14D was originally awarded the Pokey Award with an average speed of 4.1 miles per hour in May, but July data post-implementation of Select Bus Service showed that its average speed improved to 4.6 miles per hour.

Table Two:
THE SCHLEPPIE AWARD*
15% Or More Arrive Bunched
New York City Transit Local Bus Routes

Route	% of buses bunched	Route direction (end to end, both directions)	Bunched buses
B15	20.0%	Between Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn and JFK Airport, Queens	1 in 5
Bx3	19.2%	Between Riverdale, Bronx and George Washington Bridge, Manhattan	1 in 5
B12	17.6%	Between Lefferts Gardens and East New York	1 in 6
B41	16.5%	Between Kings Plaza and Downtown Brooklyn	1 in 6
Bx21	16.4%	Between Westchester Square and Mott Haven	1 in 6
Bx36	15.8%	Between Soundview, Bronx and George Washington Bridge, Manhattan	1 in 6
B6	15.8%	Between Bath Beach and East New York	1 in 6
B68	15.2%	Between Coney Island and Windsor Terrace	1 in 7
Q58	15.1%	Between Ridgewood and Flushing	1 in 7
B35	15.0%	Between Rockaway Park and Brooklyn College	1 in 7

*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 2019. See selection in Methodology.

METHODOLOGY

To determine this year's award winners, we used electronic MTA BusTime data for May 2019 to determine route-level speed and bus bunching. We only looked at 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 2019.

We only considered high-ridership bus routes, with at least 10,000 average daily riders on weekdays, according to the latest MTA estimates from 2018, 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 has been 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 on 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 rate of bunching of greater than 15% (or one bus bunched out of seven) was an inadequate level of bunching. Any route with more than 15% of buses bunched was deemed to have 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.