



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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CHRISTINE BERTHET
Chair

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District Manager

January 20, 2016

Thomas F. Prendergast
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Metropolitan Transportation Authority
2 Broadway
New York, NY 10004

Re: Response to MTA Proposal to Split M5 Bus Route.

Dear Chairman Prendergast:

On December 16, 2015 representatives from the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) presented a proposal for service improvements on the M5 bus line in Manhattan, to the Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) Transportation Committee. The presentation laid out a plan, which would split the M5 in Midtown at 37th Street creating two separate north and south routes. Traveling from the George Washington Bridge Bus Terminal in Washington Heights to the South Street Ferry Terminal the M5 is currently one of the longest routes in the system and travels through Manhattan's most congested areas.

CB4 appreciates MTA's initiative to improve service on this line for the 11,700 weekday riders, and we recognize the challenges presented by this 12-mile route; however, we have serious concerns about this proposal. Our primary concern is that the split in the route will not result in improved service but only become an inconvenience to commuters who depend on this route. Since the route will now split at 37th street, it will no longer service the Times Square and Theater districts from the south, forcing riders to find other forms of transportation. We find this to be particularly concerning because many bus riders are those who find it difficult to commute using the subway, and would find the extra travel distance or the transfer of buses to be a significant burden. Additionally, we believe this proposal lacks consideration for and creates difficulty for bus riders who are elderly, physically handicapped, bound to wheelchairs, or using canes and crutches, by forcing them to either transfer buses or travel further to their destination on crowded midtown sidewalks.

Along with these concerns, which we believe must be seriously considered before moving forward with this proposal, we would like to offer the following recommendations:

- It is very important that one fare between the two new lines be honored creating a free transfer for riders traveling between the north and south M5 lines. This free transfer would be in addition to the existing free transfer to another cross town or subway ride.
- Instead of splitting the lines, we request that the MTA consider maintaining the M5 line as is, but amending certain bus trips to travel the proposed split route. This would maintain service for those who may be traveling either north and south passed 37th street, while increasing service with the split route improvement.
- We recommend the MTA consider expanding the use of the M5 limited service as an alternative to splitting the route. We believe this would provide more frequent service to major stops along the M5 route without inconveniencing riders who travel through the Midtown split.
- If the MTA moves forward with the split, instead of co-locating the termini in midtown, we recommend that they locate them sufficiently apart so that the routes overlap in midtown thus providing greater service options for both north and south commuters. For example, the northern segment could end at 23rd or 14th Street and the southern segments could end at 45th or 59th Street, with the stops in between being served by both routes.

CB4 appreciates the opportunity to comment on this proposal and we hope the MTA will take our points into consideration before moving forward with this proposal. Furthermore we believe the proposed split of the M5 bus line is adding a lot of constraints to the riders without addressing the fundamental issue: Bus Service throughout Manhattan is plagued by service delays and inconsistent service due to heavy traffic. We urge the MTA to work closely with the New York City Department of Transportation to create more dedicated bus lanes and SBS services on 6th and 7th Avenues in order to truly address the problem of prioritizing mass transit over vehicular traffic, as should be in the 21st century. CB4 further urges the MTA to consider Route Balancing between the East and West sides to give more options to riders on all Manhattan bus lines,

cc Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer
Councilmember Corey Johnson
Assemblymember Richard Gottfried
Senator Brad Hoylman
Mayor's Office For People with Disabilities
Department of Transportation Manhattan Commissioner Margaret Forgiione
Rider's Alliance Executive Director John Raskin