

March 7, 2003

Hon. Lawrence G. Reuter
President
MTA New York City Transit
370 Jay Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201-3814

Re: Planned Subway Station Booth Closings

Dear Mr. Reuter:

Manhattan Community Board No. 4 is writing to you to protest the MTA's proposed closing of 177 subway station booths, many of which are in or near our Board's Chelsea-Clinton location. The closing would have a serious impact on the thousands of our residents who depend on our subways to carry out their daily lives as well as on many businesses.

While we appreciate the budget problems faced by mass transit in our City, we do not believe the solution lies in reducing service to an already beleaguered public. The MTA has not publicly justified its deficit claims by opening its books to inspection and other ways must be found to maintain the high level of service to which our riders are entitled.

We also appreciate the advantages of technology and are not unaware of the use of automated ticket dispensers and turnstiles by modern subway systems. However, even where such systems are deployed, as in the Washington DC Metro, station entrances are staffed to provide necessary services and information to the public.

The problems engendered by further booth closings are numerous:

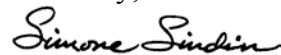
- Many riders will face insurmountable difficulty in reaching train platforms via the high entrance turnstiles proposed as replacements for normal turnstiles and gates that are now part of the staffed entrance installations. This will impact heavily on the elderly, the physically disadvantaged, parents with strollers and travelers with baggage or equipment. The system will be less ADA-accessible than at present.

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- While the MTA contends there will be at least one staffed booth open at each station it minimizes the difficulties involved. Staffed booths may be as much as 600 feet (more than 1/9 of a mile) from unstaffed ones.
- In many cases, the staffed booth will be across the tracks from the unstaffed booth and not reachable to persons inside the system. There are many such examples in the Board 4 area alone. At stations along 7th Avenue – 18th, 23rd and 28th Streets – there is no way to get from one platform to another to reach the staffed booth except by exiting, going upstairs to the street, crossing the street and going down the stairs. The only other alternative for riders is to take a train in the opposite direction to the next major station and then use stairs to go from one platform to another. At 23rd Street and 8th Avenue there is an internal connection but only at one end of the platform and it requires using stairs to tunnel under the tracks, a lonely and frightening device.
- The staffed booths provide both a crime deterrent and a way for passengers to seek help in case of attack or illness. The MTA plan offers no alternative and there is no sign that they have considered the matter. Among possibilities are closed-circuit TV and help buttons and intercoms.
- There is no way for a mass exit from a station in event of fire, accident or other problem through the high exit turnstiles.
- There are often technical problems with Metrocards and Metrocard readers that customers require assistance to resolve.

Manhattan Community Board No. 4 urges that MTA withdraw its plan for additional booth closings and seek other solutions to its financial problems.

Sincerely,



Simone Sindin

Chair

Manhattan Community Board No. 4

This letter was passed at Manhattan Community Board No. 4's March 5, 2003 full board meeting.

cc: Elected Officials
Community Boards
Straphangers Campaign
Transport Workers Union, Local 100