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Press Release

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IMMEDIATE

MTA Customer Satisfaction Remains Steady Despite Disruptions from Superstorm Sandy

Surveys of Customers Show Satisfaction Levels Little Changed From Previous Year on New York City Subways and Buses, LIRR, Metro-North and MTA Bridges and Tunnels

Customer satisfaction surveys conducted in June 2013 show essentially stable satisfaction ratings across all services operated by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). Overall ratings for each MTA service either remained steady or changed within the margin of sampling error or by no more than two percentage points.

The MTA views the results as a very favorable outcome because they came in the wake of billions of dollars of infrastructure damage and large service disruptions caused by Superstorm Sandy, followed several months later by a fare and toll increase.

"These results give testimony to the core strength of MTA operations, the public's fundamental satisfaction with MTA services, and the public's recognition that MTA requires the resources to continue to manage the system well during a period of slow economic recovery," said MTA Chairman and CEO Thomas F. Prendergast. "I am especially pleased to see improving satisfaction with local bus service attributed to the continuing expansion of Select Bus Service (SBS), improved real-time information through expansion of MTA Bus Time™, acquisition of new buses, and enhanced security measures through cameras, driver-protection shields, and our fare evasion crackdown."

New York City Subway

Overall, 76% of subway customers reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with service, an increase of one percentage point from the prior year, but within the margin of sampling error.

Among the key findings:

Safety: Most subway customers reported feeling safe on platforms. Eighty two percent reported that they are satisfied with their subway platform safety. Seventy three percent reported that they recall platform safety announcements and 86% of this group are satisfied with the messaging. These results are indicative of a highly successful communications campaign.

Ridership: The impact of increased ridership on subway appears to be starting to affect satisfaction levels. Customers who said they were satisfied or very satisfied in response to the metric "Keeping station platforms from getting too crowded during rush hours" decreased to 66%, from 71% the year prior. Satisfaction with "Keeping subway trains from getting too crowded during rush hours" decreased by 2 percentage points. The MTA intends to monitor this rating carefully as ridership grows.

"Aside from their safety and security, customer satisfaction is always an important goal," said MTA New York City Transit President Carmen Bianco. "Despite the operational challenges we have faced in the past year as a result of Sandy, these results are a testament to our unrelenting efforts to provide the best service possible."

New York City Local Buses

Overall local bus customer satisfaction increased to an all-time high of 74%, up five percentage points from the prior year. This increase is considered statistically insignificant because it came within the margin of sampling error. Regardless, the continued high rating reflects service restorations/additions, service performance improvements, personal security initiatives, and better communications.

Among the key findings:

Service reliability: Rush hour service reliability ratings increased to 76% satisfied or very satisfied, up from 68% the previous year. This reflects an increase in mechanical reliability of buses and improvements in the percentage of trips completed.

Security: Personal security ratings on local buses increased to 84%, up from 76% the previous year. This reflects a crackdown on fare evasion and the installation of more on-board video surveillance cameras.

Real-time bus information: Access to real-time bus locations improves bus customer satisfaction levels. The MTA Bus Time™ real-time bus tracking system expanded to the Bronx during the survey period, and satisfaction levels increased accordingly. (Since the survey was completed, it has expanded to Manhattan as well.)

- Satisfaction with "Knowing how far away the next bus is" increased to 63% in the Bronx, compared with 42% in the other boroughs.
- The satisfaction rating for "How long you have to wait for a bus to arrive" reached an all-time high of 59% citywide, and 67% in the Bronx.

“Providing real time bus arrival information through MTA Bus Time is part of our ongoing commitment to improve the customer experience, said Darryl Irick, Senior Vice President, New York City Transit Department of Buses & President, MTA Bus Company. “This effort, together with Select Bus Service and service restorations and additions, has gone a long way toward customer satisfaction.”

Long Island Rail Road

Overall satisfaction of Long Island Rail Road customers was 84%, down two percentage points from the prior year. The decrease was the net result of several year-to-year changes at the branch level. Satisfaction increases on the Oyster Bay, Ronkonkoma and West Hempstead Branches were counterweighted by a decline on the Port Jefferson/Huntington Branch, which experienced service disruptions during the survey period that were caused by track work and other conditions. And the lingering impact of Superstorm Sandy-related service disruptions pushed satisfaction levels downward on the Long Beach Branch.

Enhancement of service on several key branches including Port Washington and Ronkonkoma is expected to improve customer satisfaction in the coming months.

“The LIRR is always working to improve the customer experience, including recent service enhancements like restoring half hourly weekend service on the Port Washington Branch, increasing service on the busy Ronkonkoma Branch and improving Montauk service this summer by moving the Cannonball to Penn Station,” said LIRR President Helena E. Williams. “In addition, we are continuing our effort to improve customer communication by adding Customer Service Ambassadors to Penn Station, Jamaica and Atlantic Terminal. They will be armed with smart phones and iPads to better assist customers face to face with their questions. And soon we will be releasing a new LIRR app for smart phones that will put train time, fare and service information at our customer’s fingertips – all in one application.”

Metro-North Railroad

Metro-North’s overall rating remained steady at 93%. At 96%, Hudson and Harlem line customers continued to indicate their high satisfaction with overall service. Overall satisfaction on the New Haven Line also remained constant at 88%, despite a derailment in Bridgeport, Connecticut, that caused delays along the New Haven Line just five weeks before the survey was conducted.

New Haven Line customers riding on M-8s were more satisfied with Metro-North than those riding older equipment on the line. Conversely, as a result of service impacts caused by the derailment, satisfaction with on-time performance declined seven percentage points. In general, Metro-North recorded five-point increases in satisfaction with restrooms on trains and at Grand Central Terminal, with those riding the M8 cars far more satisfied with restrooms than those who ride older railcars.

“We are pleased to see that our customer satisfaction remained high and that, in particular, our New Haven Line customers are pleased with their new railcars,” said Howard Permut, President of MTA Metro-North Railroad. “As more M-8s are put into service, and as we complete our ongoing track work in the Bronx, we expect that satisfaction with our service will continue to rise.”

MTA Bridges and Tunnels

Overall, satisfaction among motorists using the MTA’s seven bridges and two tunnels decreased by one percentage point, with 84% saying they were satisfied or very satisfied. The decline was muted despite the closure of the Hugh L. Carey Tunnel and Queens-Midtown Tunnel due to flooding by Superstorm Sandy.

Key findings:

All Electronic-Tolling is Viewed Favorably: 95% of Henry Hudson Bridge customers are satisfied with their travel experience now that All-Electronic Tolling has been implemented.

E-ZPass Increases Satisfaction: Satisfaction with the speed of completing toll transactions increased to 84%, up from 77% the year prior. During the same time, the use of E-ZPass increased significantly as a result of financial incentives and programs that made it easier to obtain an E-ZPass.

“We are pleased that customers are embracing new programs such as AET at the Henry Hudson Bridge as well as the MTA Reload Card, and Pay-per-trip which help make E-ZPass easier than ever to use,” said MTA Bridges and Tunnels President Jim Ferrara.

Agency-specific surveys were completed by more than 21,000 customers in May and June. Paper surveys were distributed on board LIRR and Metro-North trains and at toll plaza cash lanes; customers had the option of returning the survey to a staff member or by mail. Subway and bus customers were called via random telephone surveys. E-ZPass customers were randomly selected and solicited via mail and email. The MTA uses the information learned from the survey to focus resources on areas that need improvement.