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IMMEDIATE

MTA Reports Results of 2014 Customer Satisfaction Surveys

Satisfaction with New York City Subway Continues Gradual Five-Year Uptrend; Satisfaction with Buses, LIRR, and MTA Bridges and Tunnels Hold Steady; Metro-North already Addressing Reasons for Decline in Satisfaction

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) today released results of its annual customer satisfaction surveys showing a continuation of a gradual increase in satisfaction with the New York City Subway that has been underway since 2010, when the MTA began tracking satisfaction for all MTA services using the same rating scale for the first time. Overall satisfaction with New York City Buses, the Long Island Rail Road, and MTA Bridges and Tunnels remains essentially unchanged in comparison with recent years.

Satisfaction with Metro-North declined in the wake of a year marked by a series of challenges. Metro-North is taking numerous well-documented corrective actions to prevent disruptions and accidents of the kind that took place in 2013, to restore long-term reliability to schedules and ultimately to regain the confidence of its customers.

Highlights of customer satisfaction results follow for each MTA service:

New York City Subway

Overall, 78% of subway customers reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with service, an increase of two percentage points from the prior year. Overall satisfaction levels have increased each year since 2010, when overall satisfaction with the subway was 71%. The subway has the highest level of satisfaction with the value for the money of any MTA service, at 74%. The increased satisfaction was recorded despite the temporary closing of two subway tunnels for extended periods of time for Superstorm Sandy-related repairs.

Among the key findings:

Ridership growth from more customers riding more often in both rush and non-rush hours: The number of customers who report that they travel primarily during rush hours decreased for the fourth consecutive year, dropping to 39% in 2014, from 49% in 2010. This is matched by a commensurate increase in the number of riders saying they ride equally during rush and non-rush hours. At the same time, satisfaction with "keeping the subway from getting too crowded during rush hours" increased to 51% in 2014, up from 43% in 2013. The improved rating of rush hour crowding can be attributed to improved and stronger management by train crews and supervisors. Subway ridership increased 1.8% during average weekdays and 3.2% during average weekends, during the 12-months ending May 2014.

Stations: Key subway station attributes have increased significantly since 2010. Station cleanliness is now rated at 74% satisfied, up 10 points from 2010. Clarity of announcements on platforms is also rated at 74% satisfied, up 11 points since 2010. Information in stations about unscheduled delays increased the most, with 71% of customers reporting they are satisfied in 2014, up 15 points since 2010. New York City Transit has mounted an aggressive campaign to bring real-time arrival information, including countdown clocks, to stations over this time period.

Other highly-rated subway attributes included:

- Convenience of subway stops (90% satisfied)
- Personal security in stations before 8 p.m. (87% satisfied)
- Comfort of temperature on subway cars (84% satisfied)
- How fast the subway gets you where you want to go (83% satisfied)
- Courtesy and helpfulness of subway conductors (83% satisfied)
- Working condition of MetroCard Vending Machines (83% satisfied)

"Operating a 24/7 system as ridership continues to rise puts an extremely high premium on reliable service, because it's the only way to move so many people quickly and efficiently," said New York City Transit President Carmen Bianco. "We continue to make every effort to sustain this reliability by investing to preserve, protect, and make necessary upgrades to our infrastructure, and we are pleased that customers recognize those efforts. However, more needs to be done and we hope to build on this momentum moving forward."

New York City Buses

Seventy percent of customers of local buses in New York City reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied. This measure has been essentially stable since 2011, when there was an identical rating.

Among the key findings:

Value: A record 73% of local bus customers said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the value of local service relative to the fare paid.

Real-time bus information: Those who report being satisfied with "knowing how far away the next bus is" has increased significantly in tandem with the spread of the MTA Bus Time™ real-time bus tracking system. This year, 56% reported being satisfied with this metric, up significantly since 2012, when it was 48%. Further gains are anticipated in the future. The Bus Time system expanded to Brooklyn and Queens only three months before the surveys were completed.

"Installing enhanced GPS hardware has enabled us to better track our buses and provide more seamless service and the MTA Bus Time™ application provides customers with real time arrival information," said Darryl Irick, New York City Transit Senior Vice President of Buses & President MTA Bus Company. "This new technology is yet another way we have improved service and customers appreciate when they know when that bus will show up at their stop."

Long Island Rail Road

Overall satisfaction of Long Island Rail Road customers was 84%, identical to last year and the highest level of satisfaction for any MTA agency.

Praise for Digital and Real-Time Communications: An equal amount of customers, 84%, reported being satisfied with the LIRR's new Train Time app, which provides real-time train arrival estimates and track assignments. Satisfaction with LIRR's social media offerings, including its Facebook page and Twitter feed, is increasing in tandem with growing use of those services. Seventy-eight percent of customers who had used it reported being satisfied with the LIRR's Facebook page, and 77% reported satisfaction with the LIRR's Twitter feeds.

Parking Security: Satisfaction with the security of customers' cars while parked at their home station achieved a record high satisfaction rating in 2014, of 80%.

"We are pleased that our customers are recognizing our ongoing efforts to improve customer communication through initiatives like the LIRR Train Time app for smart phones, which has been downloaded more than 180,000 times since its release last year," said LIRR President Patrick Nowakowski. "We also recognize that we have more work to do to try and improve our On Time Performance while not compromising our safety standards. Our goal is to remain customer focused in all we do and try to exceed customer expectations across the board."

Metro-North Railroad

Metro-North's overall satisfaction declined 20 points from last year, to 73%. MTA management was expecting a decline in satisfaction of this magnitude. The surveys were completed after a year in which the railroad experienced several incidents including a fatal derailment, and impacts to schedules and on time performance. Customer satisfaction with on-time performance, schedules, communications and seat availability all declined by at least eight percentage points.

Customer satisfaction with Metro-North's services on the Port Jervis and Pascack Valley Lines, which were not impacted by service disruptions, were statistically similar to last year.

Among good news for Metro-North, satisfaction with restroom cleanliness continues to increase in tandem with continued roll-out of the new M8 railcars on the New Haven Line, and the satisfaction with the railroad's Quiet Car program, surveyed for the first time this year, scored a high, 87%. Customer satisfaction with Grand Central Terminal continues to be very high, at 96%.

"This year's survey results are sobering but not surprising given the challenges Metro-North has faced during the last 18 months," said Joseph Giulietti, President of Metro-North Railroad. "Our mission is to provide safe, efficient transportation and when we do that, customers are satisfied. We are rebuilding Metro-North and much progress has been made but much more needs to be done. We must and we will regain the trust of our customers."

MTA Bridges and Tunnels

Overall, satisfaction among motorists using the MTA's seven bridges and two tunnels has remained stable for the past five years, with 83% saying they were satisfied or very satisfied this year. Consistent with previous years, travelers are most satisfied with the following service attributes: E-ZPass performance, appearance and cleanliness, lighting, and safety and security.

The Henry Hudson Bridge ranked first with customers at 95%. Respondents who used the Cross Bay Bridge rated it the second highest facility with 93%, followed by the Marine Parkway Bridge and Queens Midtown Tunnel with 92% and 89% respectively. The Bronx-Whitestone Bridge received the lowest rating among the nine crossings at 72%. The lower score can be attributed to ongoing construction that will both upgrade and maintain the iconic crossing, which turned 75 this year. Road work should conclude next year and will provide customers with a smoother crossing and decades of improved service.

Key finding:

All Electronic-Tolling is Viewed Favorably: 95% of Henry Hudson Bridge customers are satisfied with their travel experience, a strong validation of the MTA's implementation of all-electronic toll payment at the bridge, which replaces lines of motorists waiting at toll plazas with toll payment by mail.

"For the second year in a row, customers have responded enthusiastically to All-Electronic Tolling at the Henry Hudson Bridge," said Bridges and Tunnels President James Ferrara. "The feedback is loud and strong that the top priority among customers is crossing our facilities as safely and quickly as possible."

Survey Methodology

Agency-specific surveys were completed by more than 30,000 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.