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NYC Transit   IMMEDIATE

MTA Hosts Federal, Regional Transit Officials in Bus Safety Symposium

Transportation Experts, Vehicle Manufacturers Highlight Challenges to Pedestrian Safety

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) hosted more than 75 researchers, representatives from major bus manufacturers and safety experts from federal transportation agencies and transit agencies around North America to discuss bus and pedestrian safety issues during a bus safety symposium on May 10.

Mark R. Rosekind, Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), provided the keynote speech to an audience that included officials from MTA New York City Transit, New York State and City Departments of Transportation, transit unions, and bus agencies for metro areas such as Philadelphia, Chicago, Toronto, Miami, Washington, D.C., Montreal and Los Angeles. He applauded the MTA for gathering all of the key players in a room with the ultimate goal of making collective recommendations for necessary regulatory, operational and technological advancements to improve bus/pedestrian safety around North America.

NYC Transit's top priority continues to be providing safe and reliable service, and works seamlessly with NYC DOT to implement the City's Vision Zero pedestrian safety initiative. NYC Transit, however, faces challenges unique to no other regional transit systems in that it operates the largest bus fleet in North America to accommodate the largest bus ridership in North America. Round-the-clock service is provided through some of the country's most densely populated urban areas.

"Like most transit and transportation agencies across the country, we are tasked with expanding and enhancing our bus service as well as implementing new technologies and safety systems," MTA Chairman and CEO Thomas F. Prendergast said. "By inviting the brightest minds in the country to weigh in on best practices and recommendations for next step advancements, we are essentially pooling our limited resources to arrive at consensus about what additional research, technological advancements or regulatory reform is needed to achieve the best possible bus/pedestrian safety outcomes."

In addition to working closely with bus manufacturers to design safer vehicles and with federal transit agencies and industry experts to share best practices and experience, NYC Transit is researching new technology to further improve pedestrian safety on New York's crowded streets.

In 2016, NYC Transit is testing new safety technology on a small group of buses, with the goal of gathering operations and efficiency data for larger pilot programs next year. The first is a collision avoidance system, which uses smart cameras to pro-actively warn bus operators audibly and visually in the event of a potential collision happening in the front or the sides of the bus. The second technology, a pedestrian turn warning system, automatically alerts pedestrians audibly at a crosswalk when buses nearby are making right or left hand turns.

NYC Transit's safety goals are reliant on data, such as critical data on vehicular and pedestrian usage, flow and traffic as well as other research provided by NYC DOT. Safety initiatives and changes that have been implemented following data shared between the two agencies include the introduction of bus-only lanes, relocations of bus stops, bulbs and traffic islands, directional changes on major streets and installations of pedestrian plazas.

"Over the past two years, we have been able to decrease pedestrian and bicycle incidents involving buses by 16.4%. We need to do everything in our power to make sure that we not only hold on to the gains we've achieved, but that we continue to push to eliminate bus accidents altogether," Chairman Prendergast added.

More than 2.5 million customers ride MTA buses every day on 315 routes covering more than 3,300 miles within New York City. For more information about the MTA's safety efforts, visit mta.info/safety.