



Service Changes: Request for Public Hearing: Queens Bus Network Redesign

Sarah Wyss, Interim Chief, Operations Planning

Service Issue

This is a request for the Chair and CEO to authorize holding a public hearing regarding a proposal to redesign the Queens bus network to better match ridership demands while improving service for customers. The Queens Bus Network Redesign focuses on reimagining the bus network to increase connections, improve reliability, speed up travel, and simplify service. The redesigned Queens bus network has simpler, more direct routes, improved bus stop balancing, enhanced connectivity, improved frequency on key routes, and expanded bus priority. More specifically, we have partnered with the New York City Department of Transportation (NYC DOT) to identify 24 priority corridors in Queens for potential bus priority improvements.

A phased implementation is currently targeted for mid-2025. More details and the full report can be viewed at <https://new.mta.info/project/queens-bus-network-redesign>.

Recommendation

As per MTA service change guidelines, a public hearing is required for changes affecting 25 percent or more of a bus route or service span. We therefore are recommending to hold a public hearing in 2024 regarding the proposal to redesign the Queens bus network.


Staff Summary



Bus Company



New York City Transit

Subject	Queens Bus Network Redesign Request for Public Hearing
Department	Operations Planning
Department Head Name	Sarah Wyss
Department Head Signature	
Project Manager Name	Evan Bialostozky

Date	April 4, 2024
Vendor Name	N/A
Contract Number	N/A
Contract Manager Name	N/A
Table of Contents Ref #	N/A

Board Action					
Order	To	Date	Approval	Info	Other
1	President		X		
2	Chair & CEO		X		
3	NYCT/MTA Bus Committee			X	
4	Board			X	

Internal Approvals			
Order	Approval	Order	Approval
		4	Chief Cust. Officer
7	President	3	General Counsel
6	Deputy CFO	2	Sr. Dir., External Relations
5	SVP, Buses	1	Interim Chief, OP

Purpose

The purpose of this staff summary is to gain the approval of the President and Chair & CEO to hold a public hearing on a proposal to redesign the Queens bus network.

Discussion

Approximately 2.4 million residents live in Queens, with the borough's population increasing by just over seven percent since 2010.

The Queens bus network carries approximately 800,000 customers on an average weekday. On its own, Queens bus ridership would be the third highest in the United States, only trailing Los Angeles and Chicago. Nearly 52 percent of Queens residents rely on public transit for their daily commutes and at least 11 percent commute primarily by bus. There are 113 bus routes in Queens: 83 local bus routes (44 operated under MTA Bus Company and 39 operated under New York City Transit) and 30 express bus routes (27 operated under MTA Bus Company and three operated under New York City Transit).

An Existing Conditions report was published in August 2019. This report included an in-depth analysis of the following key data elements: population and employment demographics, travel patterns, ridership, bus speeds, and street conditions. The report, along with valuable information gathered from our customers through public outreach, was used to inform the decision-making and overall process that created each version of the Network Redesign plan to date - a redesign of the Queens bus network to increase connections, improve reliability, speed up travel, and simplify service.

The Original Draft Plan was released in December 2019. For three months following the release, outreach events were conducted, including workshops; open houses; community board presentations;

briefings with elected officials, civic organizations, transit advocates, and other stakeholders; and direct outreach to customers at subway stations and bus hubs. Those efforts garnered over 11,000 comments before the project was paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the course of the pause, customer input was reviewed, and it was ultimately decided that the best way to restart the project would be to formally withdraw the 2019 Draft Plan from consideration. However, all the public feedback provided helped inform the New Draft Plan which was released in March 2022. The New Draft Plan aimed to address as many customer concerns as possible while still including some well-received elements of the Original Draft Plan. The release of the New Draft Plan was followed by several months of outreach to collect feedback on the revised proposals.

Revisions were then made to the New Draft Plan in response to feedback from customers, operators, elected officials, and labor unions, resulting in the Proposed Final Plan, which was released in December 2023. The Proposed Final Plan again addressed concerns while carrying forward the principles of our Bus Network Redesigns and the proposals from the New Draft Plan that were well-received.

Public input is still being solicited on the Proposed Final Plan. Any revisions to the Plan based on public input received during public outreach and the public hearing will be shared in a Proposed Final Plan Addendum between the public hearing and the required MTA Board vote.

In the new Queens bus network, local and express bus routes will continue to serve the same general geographic areas that they do today. Many routes will have routing changes to make them simpler and more direct while expanding connectivity. The Plan proposes bus stop removals to improve bus stop balancing and to speed up buses, as well as schedule changes to better match current ridership patterns. Schedule changes include frequency increases and decreases and extended and reduced service spans. Additionally, we have partnered with the New York City Department of Transportation (NYC DOT) to identify 24 priority corridors in Queens for potential bus priority improvements.

The plan proposes changes to the route types in the local network. In today's local network there are three route types: Local, Limited and SBS (Select Bus Service). The Queens Bus Network Redesign proposes two changes:

1. Limited routes will not have an underlying Local route, and the average stop spacing for Limited routes will decrease.
2. A new "Rush" route type will be introduced. The purpose of Rush routes is to connect quickly between outer-borough neighborhoods and transit hubs with wider bus stop spacing closer to the transit hubs and closer spacing in the outer neighborhoods.

Other proposed changes to the Queens local bus network include:

- Twenty-seven new Rush routes;
- Major frequency increases on eight routes;
- Minor frequency increases on 20 routes;
- Increased frequencies on six major corridors in at least one time period;
- Fifteen new route labels;

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- An investment in the all-day frequent network, bringing 10-minutes-or-better service on weekdays from 6am-9pm to an additional 200,000 Queens residents;
- Eight new routes operating overnight, bringing access to the overnight network to an additional 127,000 Queens residents;
- Improved interborough connections between Queens and the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan.

In addition, proposed changes to the Queens express network include one new route (the QM65 operating from southeast Queens to downtown Manhattan), the discontinuation of one route (the QM3), as well as other routing, bus stop, and frequency changes.

Recommendation

As per MTA service change guidelines, a public hearing is required for changes affecting 25 percent or more of a bus route or service span. We therefore are recommending to hold a public hearing in 2024 regarding the proposal to redesign the Queens bus network.

Alternatives

1. *Do nothing.* The status quo would be maintained, missing an opportunity to modernize the bus network and improve speed and reliability.