



NYPIRG

Straphangers Campaign

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Straphangers Campaign Issues “State of the Subways” Report Card 1, 7, and L in Unprecedented Tie for Best Line with “MetroCard Rating” of \$2.05; Worst Lines: 5 and A at \$1.50 Rating Subway Cars Are Breaking Down More Often; Subway Car Cleanliness Shows Slight Uptick

(New York, NY) The NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign today issued its eighteenth annual "State of the Subways" Report Card since 1997, rating the 1, 7, and L as the best of 20 subway lines in an unprecedented three-way tie with a "MetroCard Rating" of \$2.05. The 5 and A came in worst with a MetroCard rating of \$1.50.

The report card is based on an extensive review of official transit data on six measures of subway service, some of which are not released publicly on a by-line basis. The measures included are for all of 2015.

"Passengers on the top lines - such as the 1, 7, and L - hands down get a much better ride for their MetroCard than those on its worst, such as the 5 or A," said Gene Russianoff, Straphangers Campaign Senior Attorney. "Disparities abound throughout the system."

The 5 has been rated worst a total of four times in eighteen years - 2000, 2003, 2015, and now 2016. The A has been rated worst only once before, in 1999.

Russianoff noted that the report's MetroCard Ratings were a shorthand tool to compare lines and are based on a formula developed in consultation with independent transportation experts. A line could receive a rating of \$2.75 if it scored, on average, in the top 10% on six measures.

The report's findings show the following picture of New York City's 20 subway lines:

- 1. There was a three-way tie for best subway line, with the 1, 7, and L each garnering a MetroCard Rating of \$2.05.**
 - a. Tops in service: The 1, 7, and L (along with the 6) provided the most generous amounts of morning and evening rush hour service;
 - b. Individually, these lines performed well on some features:
 - The 1 is less crowded and cleaner than the average subway line.
 - The 7 had less frequent subway car breakdowns than the average subway line and the greatest percentage of clean subway car interiors.
 - The L had a nearly perfect score for accurate and understandable subway car announcements.
- 2. The 5 and the A tied as the worst performers in the subway system, with a MetroCard Rating of \$1.50 each.**

- a. Bottoms in regularity: The 5 and A are two of the system’s most irregular lines.
- b. Individually, these lines performed below average on several features:
 - The 5 was the second most crowded line in the system.
 - The A provided less frequent midday service than the average subway line and its subway cars experienced breakdowns at an above-average rate.

3. System-wide, for 20 lines, we found the following on four of the six measures we can compare over time: car breakdowns, service regularity, car cleanliness and in-car announcements.

- a. **The car breakdown rate worsened** from an average mechanical failure every 141,202 miles to every 131,325 miles, comparing the 12-month period ending December 2014 to December 2015 - a loss of 7%.
- b. **Subway regularity decreased since our last report.** Lines meeting the “wait assessment” standard—which measures the regularity versus gaps and/or bunching in service—decreased 1.8%, from 78.8% regular in our last report, to 77.4% regular in the period ending December 2015. We found that only four lines improved (2, 3, F, and G), while sixteen worsened (1, 4, 5, 6, 7, A, B, C, D, E, J/Z, L, M, N, Q, and R).
- c. **Subway cars rated clean improved slightly**, from 92% in our 2015 report to 93% in our 2016 report. We found that eleven lines improved (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, F, G, L, N, and R) and nine declined (4, A, B, C, D, E, J/Z, M, and Q).
- d. **Accurate and understandable subway car announcements remained the same**—91% understandable and accurate—since our last report. We found five lines improved (7, C, D, F, and M), ten declined (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, A, G, J/Z, and R) and five did not change (B, E, L, N, and Q).

4. There are large disparities in how subway lines perform.

- a. **Breakdowns:** The Q had the best record on delays caused by car mechanical failures: once every 489,956 miles. Cars on the C were worst, with a breakdown rate almost eight times higher: once every 61,544 miles.
- b. **Cleanliness:** The 7 line had nearly a perfect score at 99%. The dirtiest line - the Q - had 15% of its cars rated moderately or heavily dirty.
- c. **Degree of crowding:** The 4 was the most crowded line, at 112% of the crowding guidelines at the AM rush peak load point. The R was the least crowded, at 72%.ⁱ
- d. **Amount of scheduled service:** The 6 and 7 lines had the most scheduled service, with two-and-a-half minute intervals between trains during the morning rush hour. The C line ranked much lower, with nine-minute-plus headways during the same time period.
- e. **Regularity of service:** The G had the greatest regularity of service, arriving within 25% of its scheduled interval 81% of the time. The most irregular line was the 5, which performed with regularity only 67% of the time.
- f. **Announcements:** Three lines – the E, M, and N lines - had perfect performance for accurate and understandable announcements made in subway cars, missing no announcements and reflecting the automation of announcements. The 1 and B lines were worst, missing or garbling announcements 23% of the time.

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ⁱ In previous reports, the Straphangers Campaign calculated crowding conditions using New York City Transit’s annual *Cordon Count*. In the 2016 report, we cite a new data set—*Sixty-minute Weekday AM Rush Peak Load Point Summary*—recently made available by New York City Transit.