



# NEWS

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CONTACT: JIM SMART/ RICK JAGER  
MTA MEDIA RELATIONS  
(213) 922-2707/922-2700  
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## MTA MAKES STRONG GAINS TO REDUCE BUS OVERCROWDING

MTA officials announced today that the agency will meet the goals of a federal consent decree that calls for reduced overcrowding on Metro buses by the end of the year. Authority officials noted that during the last month all mid-day bus trips exceeded the specified target and recent rider counts showed that 97 percent of all MTA service meets this requirement today.

MTA Executive Officer for Operations Ellen Levine said that ridership surveys taken in October showed overcrowding has been cut from a year ago to 15 standees or less during rush hours on the most heavily used lines. In many cases, there were no standees, especially during off-peak hours.

The new survey involves the counting of passengers on 20 of the MTA's busiest lines and 57 others for a total of 77 lines. This represents three-fourths of the MTA's services. During the month, more than 400 checks were made by two dozen MTA schedule checkers at some of the busiest locations served by the MTA.

"No major urban system can provide a seat for every passenger during rush hours, but our customers are entitled to be comfortable whether sitting or standing." Levine said. "We also are acutely aware that we have a ways to go to improve our on time record and bus cleanliness."

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Levine said that despite budget constraints the MTA has taken a number of steps to improve service this past year. She noted that the MTA has added 102 buses into service and, by the end of this year, will add 50 additional vehicles.

The MTA Board of Directors also has authorized the order of up to 278 new compressed natural gas buses, and the Authority is seeking federal funding to purchase additional buses for the MTA and 17 other regional transit operators.

The MTA also has implemented a special 75-cent reduced cash fare between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m. and introduced a special \$11 weekly bus pass while also reducing the price of the regular monthly pass from \$49 to \$42.

The improvements in bus service are part of the MTA's actions to comply with a federal court consent decree entered into one year ago by the MTA and representatives of citizen bus rider groups.

"The consent decree called for us to reduce overcrowding and make other improvements, and we are working to achieve full compliance," said Allan Lipsky, MTA Deputy Chief Executive Officer. "The Agency's financial restructuring will give priority to funding bus purchases. Modernizing the bus fleet will improve our financial picture by reducing maintenance and operating costs and, most importantly, provide better service for our customers."

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