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In its editorial "MTA Buses in Reverse" (July 26, 1998), the Times went to great pains to point out the shortcomings of MTA's bus operations and yet failed to give us full credit for what we are doing to address those problems and improve service to our 1.1 million daily riders.

We acknowledge that there is considerable room for improvement in our schedule adherence and maintenance performance. If only the Times would see fit to acknowledge that MTA's new management team not only has reversed a downward trend but is making significant performance gains and is correcting a wide-range of pre-existing problems with our bus operations. To that end, MTA has revamped its bus operations structure by adding field supervisors to ensure our drivers stay on schedule, strengthening maintenance supervision at each division and adding four dozen more mechanics to maintain our fleet.

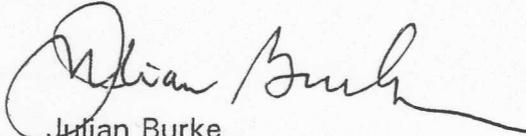
The Times takes MTA to task for converting our methanol/ethanol buses to diesel. The prime reason for our poor bus schedule adherence and maintenance performance is that the engines in these buses fail within 25,000 to 40,000 miles as compared to 250,000 miles for diesel engines. As a result, 200 of these relatively new buses are parked.

Our mandate is to improve our service reliability and thereby lessen overcrowding. Clearly, putting more reliable buses on the road will help realize these goals sooner. Your readers should know that when the methanol/ethanol buses are converted to diesel, they will operate much cleaner than the 18-year old diesel buses that are acting as their temporary replacements.

Moreover, the Times implies that the conversions and the potential purchase of 20 new diesel buses indicate that MTA has reneged on its commitment to clean air buses. In fact, MTA operates the largest clean air fleet in the nation and will order nearly 400 additional Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses over the next two years alone.

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MTA is committed to bettering its service and criticism certainly is justified when we don't meet our goals. However, we believe the Times has done a disservice by not giving credit where credit is due.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julian Burke". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Julian Burke
MTA CEO