


[Home](#)
[CEO Hotline](#)
[Viewpoint](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

#### Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[CEO Hotline](#)
[Metro Projects](#)
[Facts at a Glance](#)  
(web)

[Archives](#)
[Events Calendar](#)
[Research Center/  
Library](#)
[Metro Cafe](#) (pdf)

[Metro Classifieds](#)
[Retirement  
Round-up](#)

#### Metro Info

[Strategic Plan](#) (pdf)

[Org Chart](#) (pdf)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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## Special Master Says 'No' to Consent Decree Extension

(Aug. 27, 2004) The Special Master overseeing the federal Consent Decree has denied a motion by the Bus Riders Union to extend the decree for another six years.

In a document released late Thursday, Donald Bliss wrote that "with more than two years remaining in the initial ten-year (decree), the BRU at this time has not met its burden of establishing...that extension of the Decree is necessary or appropriate...."

The Special Master added that, while the BRU "has not met its burden of proof," Metro also has not yet met required bus passenger load factor targets or achieved a new service plan.

But he wrote that the most recent quarterly reports "show that some progress has been made, but much work remains to be done."

### BRU can refile motion

Bliss said the BRU could refile its extension motion between Sept. 1, 2005 and May 1, 2006, if "sufficient progress has not been made by the MTA in meeting the requirements of the Decree...."

Signed by the BRU and Metro in 1996, the Consent Decree is currently due to expire Oct. 29, 2006.

Noting that Metro has service requirements to meet by Dec. 31, 2004 and June 30, 2005, Bliss said it is "premature for the Special Master to reach any final conclusion on the MTA's compliance with the load factor targets...."

He pointed out that Metro and the BRU have not been able to reach agreement on a new service plan. He said the BRU had failed to show how fare increases violated the terms of the Consent Decree.

### MTA Statement in Response to the Special Master's Ruling

Issued: August 27, 2004

**By Frank Roberts**  
**MTA Board Chair**

MTA is proud of the accomplishments that have been made over the years to improve the Metro Bus System. MTA applauds the recent decision by Special Master Donald T. Bliss to reject a bid by the Bus Riders Union to extend the current 10-year consent decree past its October 2006 deadline.

We believed all along that we were making great progress in addressing overcrowding on the bus system by adding hundreds of buses into service and developing new Metro services for the transit dependent.

As Chair, I pledge to continue to improve our services and remain confident that once the federal consent decree is over, patrons of the Metro Bus System will be pleased with all that has been done by MTA to improve Metro Bus service.

