



NEWS

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MTA'S STATE OF THE BUS REPORT SHOWS DRAMATIC IMPROVEMENTS TO METRO BUS SERVICE OVER LAST FIVE YEARS

MTA's Metro Bus service now ranks as one of the best among its peers with the dramatic turnaround over the last five years being accomplished by improved management and operations, coupled with the arrival of new clean-burning, state-of-the-art compressed natural gas (CNG) buses.

A record amount of bus service is now scheduled including the popular Metro Rapid Buses. More than 1,100 new CNG buses are now on the road – representing half of MTA's fleet with hundreds more on the way.

As a direct result of putting newer buses on the road and expanding service, MTA has seen customer complaints drop 27 percent since 1998. Customer complaints were at a six-year low last December.

The State of the Bus Report, which tracks both improvements and ongoing challenges in the Metro Bus system, reports that this year MTA is spending \$945 million on its bus operations and bus capital programs. In addition, another \$215 million is being distributed to 16 municipal bus operators in Los Angeles County.

Altogether, MTA this year will spend 45.5 percent of its entire budget on buses, up more than \$213.5 million compared to 1997.

The report shows that in 2000-2001, MTA and its contracted services set a new record for the most bus service operated by MTA or its predecessor transit agencies. MTA today schedules 2,012 peak hour buses for a total of 7,271,125 annual bus revenue service hours, up nearly 1 million hours compared to 1996.

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The report tracks improvements in the Metro Bus system since October 1996 when MTA began implementation of a federal court Consent Decree designed to improve Metro Bus service.

MTA is completely revamping its bus fleet by replacing older diesel buses with new CNG coaches, but it also has increased the number of buses in service by 377 in the last four years. Annual ridership has increased by 47 million boardings.

Other highlights contained in the State of the Bus Report include:

- Improvements in on-street management and supervision along with newer buses has enabled MTA to place 99.5 percent of scheduled buses into service each day.
- Implementation of a Bus Cleanliness Inspection Program has resulted in cleaner buses.
- MTA's operating costs continue to drop, down to \$98.66 per revenue service hours from a high of more than \$110 in 1996.
- MTA has improved mobility for elderly and disabled patrons with the purchase of easy access low-floor clean fuel buses.
- MTA operates the largest clean fuel bus fleet in the nation. One CNG bus equals the reduction of emissions of 7.2 automobiles.

While gains have been made during the past five years, the report notes MTA still faces many challenges in continuing to improve transit service:

- Improve bus in-service on-time performance.
- Eliminate graffiti on the transit system and increase the number of miles MTA operates buses between road calls and breakdowns.
- Control operating costs and increase operating revenues so that MTA can further expand service.

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- Further reduce the bus accident rate.
- Continue to comply with the federal consent decree.
- Monitor MTA contracted bus service providers to ensure that the level of service quality provided lives up to the terms of their agreements.
- Expand the bus operator-training program with a focus on customer service and safety.
- As MTA considers proposals for additional or expanded zone services in the San Gabriel Valley and the San Fernando Valley, careful consideration on how zones might be developed, funded and operated need to be addressed for the benefit of MTA customers while providing adequate protection for the wages and benefits of MTA employees.

The report concludes that service reliability continues to improve and notes that MTA this year alone will take delivery of 500 new CNG buses.

The report also notes that the future for further bus improvements looks bright. MTA, as part of its 25-year Long Range Transportation Plan, is looking to expand the Metro Rapid Bus system to include 22 additional lines throughout the region.

Currently, MTA operates two Metro Rapid Bus lines serving the Wilshire/Whittier corridor from Santa Monica to Montebello and along Ventura Boulevard in the San Fernando Valley.

Designed to provide faster service by using signal transponders on board buses to extend green traffic lights, since debuting last June travel time has been reduced by 25 percent with ridership on the Wilshire/Whittier line up 26 percent and patronage on the Ventura line up 25 percent.

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To further improve bus service, MTA is now acquiring high capacity buses as part of the agency's bus procurement plan, looking at 45-foot buses and articulated buses. Exclusive busways also are planned in various corridors. MTA also is developing a universal fare system that will provide a seamless way that people can travel from one bus system to the other as well as to the Metro Rail system.

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