



THE COUNCIL
OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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CHRISTINE C. QUINN
SPEAKER

August 8, 2007

Peter S. Kalikow
Chairman
Metropolitan Transit Authority

Dear Mr. Kalikow,

We are writing to express our extreme frustration, concern, and confusion regarding the MTA's apparent inability to keep the city's subway system running when there is inclement weather. As you know, this morning after a couple of hours of heavy rain the subway system was paralyzed. Multiple lines were taken out of service, while others were delayed and rerouted. Commute times were doubled and quadrupled for many riders.

What is most troubling is that today's delays follow the long delays that commuters suffered three weeks ago, on July 18th, after another heavy rain. For the overall system to experience two significant disruptions, in less than a month, because of rain – even significant rain – is simply not acceptable. As we try to convince more New Yorkers to take mass transit, we have an obligation to make sure that mass transit is reliable and that there are minimal delays.

We would like to know why the subway is prone to flooding and service shutdowns in inclement weather. It is our understanding that there may be an issue with the pumping system that removes water from the tunnels, and that the pumps are old and often get blocked up. We are concerned that the age and maintenance of the pumps may be contributing to the flooding that is plaguing the system. Therefore, we request information on the age of the pumps, the maintenance schedule of all pertinent flooding prevention technology, a record of any and all failures of relevant machinery in the operation of these pumps, and any and all information on the overall pump system.

Rain is not a rare occurrence in this city, so the MTA needs to undertake whatever repairs are necessary to prevent major flooding of tracks and stations. In addition, a more effective public communication system needs to be developed, to better alert commuters to any delays that do occur. New Yorkers deserve better and should not expect that anytime it rains they will experience the inconvenience they did today.

The MTA provides a critically important service to New Yorkers, and we recognize that City government must be a partner in working to ensure efficient and reliable service. We look forward to having conversations about whatever capital improvements or other investments may be necessary to provide more dependable service and will work with the MTA to explore all funding sources that could make these improvements a reality.

Sincerely,

Christine C. Quinn
Speaker

Betsy Gotbaum
Public Advocate

John C. Liu
Transportation Committee Chair