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Stand Clear of the Closing Doors, Please: Transit Equity, Social Exclusion, and the New York City Subway

Taylor Novick-Finder
Pitzer College

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**Stand Clear of the Closing Doors, Please:
Transit Equity, Social Exclusion, and the New York City Subway**

Taylor Novick-Finder

In partial fulfillment of a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Environmental Analysis,
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Readers: Professor Susan Phillips and Professor Lance Neckar

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ABSTRACT

The history of transportation planning in New York City has created disparities between those who have sufficient access to the public transportation network, and those who face structural barriers to traveling from their home to education, employment, and healthcare opportunities. This thesis analyzes the legacy of discriminatory policy surrounding the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) and city and state governments that have failed to support vital infrastructure improvement projects and service changes to provide multi-modal welfare to New York's working poor. By exploring issues of transit equity as they pertain to the New York City subway system, this thesis raises the question: which communities lack adequate access to public transit opportunity and what are the policies and historical developments that have created these inequities? Through examination of grassroots community-based movements towards social justice and transportation equity, this thesis will review the proposals, campaigns, and demands that citizen-driven organizations have fought for in New York City. These movements, I argue, are the most effective method to achieve greater transportation justice and intergenerational equity.

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INTRODUCTION

“Urban transit systems in most American cities have become a genuine civil rights issue – and a valid one – because the layout of rapid-transit systems determines the accessibility of jobs to the black community. If transportation systems in American cities could be laid out so as to provide an opportunity for poor people to get to meaningful employment, then they could begin to move into the mainstream of American life. The system has virtually no consideration for connecting the poor people with their jobs. There is only one possible explanation for this situation, and that is the racist blindness of city planners” – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Public transportation is often referred to as the great equalizer of public resources. Providing access to various opportunities such as employment, education, healthcare, and so on, mass transit offers the most equitable mode of transportation for those who cannot afford an automobile. Although mass transit is widely accepted as offering equal opportunity to all, that is hardly the reality. In practice, public transportation agencies have often employed for-profit business mindsets, prioritizing the bottom line over the needs of transit-disadvantaged populations. This thesis argues that the access offered by public transportation is not distributed equally amongst all socioeconomic groups, and policy decisions made by transit agencies, urban planners, and politicians have perpetuated discriminatory practices that have made mass transit increasingly inaccessible and unaffordable for low-income communities. With a focus on the New York City subway system, this thesis argues that the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the state-operated governing body for NYC public transit, views its riders as consumers rather than as citizens, privileging New Yorkers with varied transit options. I claim that historical developments in the decades following WWII, such as urban renewal, slum clearance, and federal housing policies that promoted suburbanization, highway development, and white flight, segregated New York and marginalized low-income residents and communities of color to the fringe of the city, devoid of adequate transit access. I postulate that by not

expanding service to meet the needs of transit-disadvantaged communities, the MTA and the New York City government have employed discriminatory public transportation policies. These inequities have been exacerbated by an influx of gentrification over the last three decades, facilitated in part by politicians who aided the interest of real estate developers. This thesis will conclude by reviewing the advocacy of grassroots transit equity community organizations, which I argue is the most effective strategy to fight for transportation justice.

For millions of urban residents, public transportation is the only means of traversing the city. As a critical means to address urban poverty and racial and economic inequality, good transportation policies can be a critical difference maker between a legitimate opportunity for disenfranchised opportunities to achieve upward mobility, or a continued legacy of economic stagnation and systematic oppression. The movement for transportation equity, the basic right to adequate access to a transportation network, is a manifestation of a larger movement for civil rights and environmental justice. In *Highway Robbery: Transportation Racism and New Routes to Equity*, renowned environmental justice scholar Robert Bullard argues that transportation policy has created an opaque narrative: that transportation investment projects have aided and abetted the flight of people, jobs, and development to the suburban fringe (R. Bullard, Johnson, and Torres 2004).

This research is concerned with the impact that lacking public transportation access imposes onto a community. In my opinion, no analysis of urban transit in the United States is complete without a consideration for how public services benefit communities in different ways. Our social standing has determined where we live; influencing the amount of access we have to good education and employment, ultimately dictating our ability for

upward mobility. Inequalities in the transit system are directly a product of decisions made in the political and planning realms, and it is critical that scholars and practitioners alike study these legacies in order to plan for a more equitable future.

Transit inequities in New York City are created and reinforced by a subway and bus network that fails to provide adequate service to various communities, hereby called 'transit deserts', and a regularly increasing fare that is cost-prohibitive for the working poor, who often must choose between the current round-trip subway or bus cost of \$5.50 and putting food on the table for their families. In a city where 58% of the working poor rely on subways and buses to get to work and one in four low-income New Yorkers cannot afford its cost (Community Service Society 2016a), there is clearly something wrong.

Robert Bullard describes the impact that transportation projects can have onto marginalized communities, "many federally subsidized transportation construction and infrastructure projects cut wide paths through low-income and people of color neighborhoods. They physically isolate residents from their institutions and businesses, disrupt once-stable communities, displace thriving businesses, contribute to urban sprawl, subsidize infrastructure decline, create traffic gridlock, and subject residents to elevated risks from accidents, spills, and explosions from vehicles carrying hazardous chemicals and other dangerous materials," (R. Bullard, Johnson, and Torres 2004).

The shift of federal transportation policy in the 1950s from supporting public transportation to highway projects was a radical transformation that has plagued low-income and people of color communities. For instance, the neighborhood of Sunset Park, Brooklyn, was completely transformed by the creation of the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel in 1950, a project pushed by notorious master builder Robert Moses. Insisting that Sunset

Park was “a slum” that was not particularly worth saving, Moses redirected trucks coming out of the newly created tunnel onto Sunset Park’s Third Avenue, which was for decades the heart of Sunset Park’s cultural activities (R. Bullard, Johnson, and Torres 2004). Moses also reclassified the Gowanus Parkway as an expressway (a component of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, or BQE, as it is known today), and by doing so widened the expressway right up to the windows of residences. As a result of policies that privileged automobile and truck traffic, Sunset Park experienced a significant decline throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s. Along with the federal housing policies that encouraged redlining and denied loans to people of color, the transportation policies of the postwar decades had a devastating impact on reducing social services and welfare in New York City.

In addition to the many physical barriers that inner-city highways have created, this shift in transit priorities has led to significant cutbacks in mass transit subsidies that have further isolated disadvantaged communities, leading to severe immobility and unemployment, resulting in intergenerational economic stagnation. This dichotomy of transit access has formed a system of disproportionate transit impacts, referred to by transit scholars Karen Lucas and Peter Jones as ‘transit goods’ and ‘transit bads’ (Lucas and Jones 2012). The wealthiest members of society receive ‘transit goods’, such as high speed rail, modern highways, ample transit options with superior service. Meanwhile the poorest and socially disadvantaged groups suffer ‘transit bads’, the burden of structural barriers in the built environment, inadequate transportation options, poor service, and externalities such as exhaust fumes from cars and tractor trailers bellowing through communities on elevated freeways.

This thesis will explore the histories of urban planning policy that has created a disproportionate system of access to the public transportation network in New York City, and will examine the ways in which transit inequity exists in the NYC subway network today. By reviewing contemporary literature in the transportation equity scholarship, and assessing how these inequities manifest themselves in the history of the NYC subway, this thesis raises the question: why does the subway privilege access for some communities, but leave others without sufficient transportation opportunity and access to the city? To investigate this issue, I will explore the policies and history of racist public policy, income inequality, residential segregation exacerbated by white flight, and gentrification, which have segregated various communities on divisions of race and class. I will also assess current movements and case studies of how community organizations are fighting for transportation justice, pressuring transit agencies to implement progressive fare structures that level the playing field for the working poor, while also suggesting ways to involve underrepresented communities in the planning process. By exploring issues of transportation equity, this thesis will analyze what are the powers that dictate our urban public transportation networks, and how these actors can adjust their policies to have the New York City subway system provide service that better meets the needs of populations that need it most.

Chapter One will begin by reviewing the critical literature surrounding transportation justice, accessibility, and equity. Chapter Two assesses the history of the development of the New York City subway, analyzing its inheritance from private corporate ownership to publicly governed city oversight and finally a state-governed authority. Chapter Three revolves around the post-WWII developments such as the boom of the

automobile industry, rapid suburbanization, the construction of urban freeways, and urban renewal programs, that segregated New York City along barriers of race and class. Chapter Four considers the impact of post 1990s economic recession gentrification on the isolation of the working poor, leading to economic stagnation. This chapter also analyzes the recent changes in employment patterns in New York during the 1990s and early 2000s, with significant job growth in the outer boroughs that have made the periphery to core mentality of the NYC subway inadequate for many. Chapter Five discusses several citizen-driven grassroots community organizations that advocate for transit equity in New York City, and reviews the proposals and demands put forth by these groups to democratize the transportation system. A conclusion will bring together the histories, key literature and contemporary movements related to public transportation justice in New York City, and provide suggestions for how urban planners and city officials can plan future projects in a fairer and more just manner.

By writing this thesis paper, I hope to contribute to the ample body of transportation equity literature worldwide, as well as the vast history of urban planning in New York City, to incite future conversations on how the built environment dictates a person's ability to obtain good education, employment and a fruitful life. New York City's transit system is the most comprehensive of its kind in the United States, and in many ways is indeed the great equalizer, but it could be so much better. Various policies at the city and state level have prevented the subway from expanding into communities that need it, and a lack of financial support at each level of government, which has led to increased fares – making New York public transit cost prohibitive for many working New Yorkers today.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Various scholars have explored the relationship between the planning of transportation infrastructure in the built environment, and barriers communities face to good education and employment. This lack of parity in public transportation opportunity and access is referred to in the transportation literature as “transportation justice”. Transportation Justice has been referred to as the expansion of environmental justice principles to transportation issues, exploring mobility, access, and modal opportunity, with regards to how urban transportation networks provide unequal opportunities for people to travel to essential locales such as school, work, and healthcare facilities.

This chapter seeks to identify the key literature pertaining to transportation equity, justice, and just urban planning processes. I will first review key scholars who investigate a history of discriminatory transportation policies that have produced disproportionate levels of access to the city. Then, I will analyze scholars’ definitions of transportation justice. The following section will explore theories of equity and justice as they pertain to planning processes of urban transportation systems. In particular, I spend time reviewing the work of authors who suggest what an equitable distribution of transit services may look like, and what reforms transit agencies must employ to achieve a sense of distributive justice.

Across various urban settings, scholars have identified many burdens that transportation justice issues can impose onto a community. Bullard (2004) argues that white racism in transportation policy has denied many black Americans and other people of color the benefits, freedoms, opportunities, and rewards that public transportation offers to white Americans. Pucher (1982) contends that transportation authorities regard

low-income patrons as a 'captive market', for whom financial restraints force these communities to rely on transit systems regardless of the quality of service they are provided.

Urban transportation researchers have provided definitions for transportation justice, accessibility, and equity, and have suggested methods to properly diversify transit agencies to plan equitable systems. Wee and Geurs (2011) maintain that a system built on the principles of sufficientarianism would require planning considerations to provide the best service for those with the lowest welfare, alleviating the systematic disadvantages that current transit structures pose. Fainstein (2010) introduces the concept of 'the just city', calling to rectify injustices in a world where control of investment resources by a small stratum constantly re-creates and reinforces subordination. Gössling (2016) builds off Fainstein's philosophy, contending that cities must embrace concepts of equity, democracy, and diversity to overcome neoliberalism and allocate resources in a fair and just manner. These authors argue for a deliberative democracy approach that necessitates full participation of subordinated groups, facilitating a healthy civic community where citizens talk to one another, exchanging ideas and devising new understandings of how to plan transportation networks that provide opportunities for all.

Discrimination in Public Transportation

Transportation scholars and civil rights activists have discussed the role that access to a good, comprehensive transportation network provides to a society. In particular, authors have sought to contextualize the social impact of discriminatory transportation policies and inadequate access lead to social exclusion and subjugation. In his book

Highway Robbery: Transportation Racism and New Routes to Equity (2004), sociologist Robert Bullard argues that transportation-related decisions have been shaped by white racism. Bullard argues that national transportation infrastructure has denied many black Americans and other people of color the benefits, freedoms, opportunities, and rewards offered to white Americans. Further, he asserts that many of the economic problems that persist in urban areas involving a lack of mobility could be eliminated if existing transportation laws were vigorously reformed in a nondiscriminatory way.

Bullard identifies several structural barriers that have prevented people of color from achieving parity in urban transportation networks. Bullard distinguishes racist priorities in transportation investment funding, white flight, lack of representation on transportation boards and commissions, and disproportionate allocation of transportation benefits as being main factors leading to transport-related discrimination.

Urban sociologist John Pucher (1982) asserts that inequities in transportation services can be traced to economic policies of transit agencies, which have treated riders as consumers rather than as citizens. Pucher argues that these agencies inherited their economic structure from their previous development and ownership by private corporations. When public transit systems were privately owned, such as the New York City subway, their services and fare structures were designed to maximize profits and minimize losses.

In his 1982 study, *Discrimination in Mass Transit*, Pucher asserts that contemporary transportation agencies have sought to prioritize the maximization of total transit ridership. He claims that in order to do this, the optimal economic strategy would be to offer the best services and discounted fares to those customers with elastic demand and

varied transit options, and to discriminate against those who have fewer transit options by providing them with lower quality service at premium fares (Pucher 1982). “It has been widely hypothesized that transit systems have in fact tended to regard their low-income patrons as a captive market. Due to financial constraints and auto unavailability, these disadvantaged riders could be counted on in spite of poor service and inequitably high fares,” Pucher asserted.

According to a recent study by Ravit Hananel and Joseph Berechman (2016), transport investment decisions depend fully on the model of supply and demand, where their underlying principle was the theory that free markets should be dictated by consumer preferences, and therefore the responsibility of agencies is to meet consumer demand for transportation with appropriate infrastructure and service (Hananel and Berechman 2016). By using the economic theory of supply and demand, transit authorities are prioritizing the generation of economic capital, and are providing superior service to those with more transportation choices rather than serving those who need the service most.

Sociologists Mark Garrett and Brian Taylor (1999) have argued that, in addition to being morally unjust and discriminatory, this financial model of viewing those who rely on public transit the most as ‘transit captives’ and prioritizing those with ample transit options is economically inefficient. Garrett and Taylor identify four factors for why transit agencies have prioritized policy that attracts riders who would otherwise commute in cars, rather than for those who need transit most. These influences include public pressures to alleviate traffic congestion, environmental regulations to improve air quality, civic competition for limited fiscal resources, and a changing political landscape making it difficult to implement redistributive social programs (Garrett and Taylor 1999).

Garrett and Taylor maintain that public pressures, such as alleviating car traffic congestion, reducing automobile dependency, and improving air quality, have impacted transportation policy and decision-making. They claim that transit agencies have prioritized converting suburban automobile commuters to opt for rail, bus, and other public transportation options as a top priority. They argue that in order to provide attractive alternatives to automobile commuting, transit operators must offer substantial incentives to sway citizens with various travel options, which requires expensive public investments in infrastructure improvement projects for suburban communities, and in turn diverts funding away from necessary renovations and service upgrades for those who are more dependent on public transportation (Garrett and Taylor 1999). This diversion of funds was particularly troublesome in the New York metropolitan area in the postwar period of the 1950s and 1960s, where mass transit was relegated to a position of secondary importance to the automobile and urban freeway projects. It is also evident in more recent investment priorities, which favor suburban commuter rail over urban transit.

Defining Transportation Justice

In an attempt to identify the impacts that disproportionate mobility can have on a community, transportation scholars have coined the term, Transportation Justice, to refer to the social inequities that transportation policy creates and reinforces. Authors Michelle Oswald Beiler and Mona Mohammed (2016) define transportation justice as “the expansion of environmental justice principles to transportation through investigating mobility, access, and modal opportunity” (Oswald Beiler and Mohammed 2016). Beiler and Mohammed argue that low-income, minority, and transportation constrained communities are

disproportionately burdened by transportation development projects, and seldom receive parity in the benefits of public transportation. Examples of this include the siting of freeways, which are disproportionately located in low-income communities, and the prioritization of commuter rail development. Scholars Sarah Rock, Aoife Ahern, and Brian Caulfield (2013) add to the definition of transportation justice, referring to transportation-related equity to be a form of distributive justice. Rock, Ahern and Caulfield define distributive justice as “the fair distribution of transport impacts (benefits and costs) throughout all sectors of society. Swedish transit scholar Stefan Gössling defines urban transportation justice as “an achievement of greater equality or the abolishment of injustices”, which he refers to as the disproportionate burdens that a lack of decent transportation places onto a community.

A 2012 study by Transportation Scholars Karen Lucas and Peter Jones identified the concept of transport ‘goods and bads’, the uneven disproportionate impacts of public transportation on advantaged and disadvantaged groups in society. They argue that the wealthiest in society tend to gain the most benefits from public transportation, while transit dependents, those who need public transportation most, suffer the systems’ worst effects. Lucas and Jones claim that this uneven distribution further subjugates transit dependents, impairing people’s ability to fully participate in society, possibly leading to social exclusion and isolation (Lucas and Jones 2012). Some scholars have recently attempted to measure this subjugation, though no formal method of evaluating transit-related equity exists (Chakraborty 2006) (Rock, Ahern, and Caulfield 2014).

Other studies have evaluated the sociological impacts of these transit decisions on a community. In his 2012 paper, *Social networks, mobile lives and social inequalities*, British

sociologist John Urry builds upon the notion of social capital as a transportation justice issue, describing how low levels of 'network capital' and transport resources can lead to low social capital and the exacerbation of existing social inequalities. Urry defines network capital as "the capacity to engender and sustain social relations with those people who are not necessarily proximate and which generates emotional, financial, and practical benefit." Without the potential of network capital through a just public transportation system, individuals are deprived of the ability to create, circulate and share tacit knowledge, and are therefore unable to access new social capital (Urry, 2012). Thus, the issues of transportation justice are far beyond a community's lack of subway stations or the ease to travel quickly to work, and are instead a complex amalgam of physical, social, geospatial and psychological factors intertwined to produce structural inequalities that plague TJ communities for generations.

Transportation Decision-Making

The disproportionate levels of access that transportation systems provide communities are the product of deliberate planning processes of transit agencies. Scholars have argued that many of these agencies fail to properly mediate the social justice impacts of disproportionate mobility, as transportation investment decisions have continuously been made by a small group of officials, many of whom are not informed of the plight that transportation justice communities endure. The following section identifies the relevant sociological and philosophical theories that help to inform transit agencies on just planning practices.

Various recent studies have explored the social, political and economic conditions that factor into transit agency planning and decision-making. Karel Martens (2006), a Dutch researcher of urban development, contends that transport policy remains ill equipped to mediate the social justice concerns of disproportionate mobility, given that transportation policies have progressively exacerbated the problems they have caused through continued inappropriate infrastructure investments and decision-making processes (C. Martens 2006). In the case of New York City, this was particularly evident in the postwar policies of urban renewal and slum clearance, in which Robert Moses dedicated city resources to highway development and suburbanization, and consequentially left urban neighborhoods underserved and neglected.

Other scholars are more optimistic of the potential for reform in transportation planning processes. Jones and Lucas (2012) identify five short-term social impacts on transport decision-making: accessibility; movement and activities; health-related; financial-related; and community-related. Accessibility to public transportation is one of the most widely documented issues in the transportation literature. Jones and Lucas describe accessibility as providing “measures of the degree to which people can reach the goods and services that society considers are necessary for them to live their daily lives, but with an emphasis on potential/capability rather than actual behavior”. They suggest that scholars study accessibility issues at both a micro level, of the specific accessibility issues of infrastructure, and at the meso level, studying accessibility at the neighborhood level, evaluating the social impacts and plight of communities devoid of adequate transportation opportunities.

Accessibility considerations must consider the wider implications for communities and neighborhoods to reach decent education and employment opportunities, and not simply the distance their transportation options can provide them. Transport and urban planning researchers Tayebbeh Saghapour, Sara Moridpour, and Russell Thompson (2016) define transit-based accessibility as the “distance between a destination and public transport stops or by the length of a journey from an origin to a destination via public transportation”. Rock, Ahern and Caulfield contend that accessibility should be defined as “the extent to which the land use and transport systems enable (groups of) individuals to reach activities or destinations by means of a (combination of) transport modes”. Accessibility is therefore a measure of the quality of transport opportunity, not simply the quantity.

Contemporary transportation literature also makes considerations for the economic considerations that transit authorities make when enacting policy and infrastructure decisions. Turkish Professor of Urban Planning, Eda Beyzait (2011), contends that since transport projects utilize a Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA), they fail to consider social impacts of transit projects at a disaggregate level and disregard individual diversities and the actual needs of a society. Rock, Ahern and Caulfield (2013) agree that utilizing a CBA is limited as it focuses on aggregate welfare and they instead argue for a Multi-Criteria Analysis, where several criteria can be taken into account simultaneously, to make a balanced assessment based on diverse objectives and preferences of the various actors in the decision-making process.

Dutch transport scholars Bert van Wee and Karst (2011) agree that CBAs are unsuitable for evaluating social exclusion policies, such as public transit inequity, and

consider the role that transportation would optimally play in providing a potential 'equity of opportunity', where disadvantaged communities have adequate access to education and employment opportunities, or 'equity of outcome', which implies that society has the responsibility to ensure that disadvantaged people can succeed in attaining a decent level of education and employment. They distinguish three primary theories to consider in transportation equity studies today: utilitarianism, egalitarianism, and sufficientarianism.

These three theories of ethics are important to understand when making considerations over whether a public entity, such as a transportation system, meets the needs of the people its designed to serve. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, utilitarianism, or more specifically act consequentialism, is the claim that an act (or in this case, public utility) is only morally good if the total amount of good it produces is greater than the total amount of bad it produces, which is strongly related to a Cost Benefit Analysis, weighing pros and cons against each other to determine if the return on investment is net positive (Wee and Geurs 2011). The theory of utilitarianism appears to be commonplace in transit agency planning policy, and it could be argued that most public transit projects have a net benefit to society, even if those benefits are not distributed equally amongst that society's people.

Egalitarianism theory, on the other hand, holds the premise that all people should be treated equally (Sen 2004). In this line of thought, transit agencies should strive for the greatest benefit to those most disadvantaged in society, which would help level the proverbial playing field for individuals for whom private modes of transportation are inaccessible. Some scholars argue that in the case of transit accessibility, 'pure equity' would be impossible given the intrinsic nature of cities, where certain realms are

intrinsically privileged given how city centers are developed (K. Martens, Golub, and Robinson 2012).

Sufficientarianism, like Egalitarianism, assumes that everyone in society deserves a certain level of comfort, implying a threshold of 'what is sufficient'. If this threshold is set at a level comparable to the most basic option of transit available to the economically privileged, this theory would assume that all members of society deserve that degree of accessibility as an intrinsic human right. Similar to Egalitarianism theory, Sufficientarianism necessitates that those with the lowest welfare be provided the best services, to help alleviate the systematic disadvantages that an inequitable system of distribution provides to them.

As an alternative to previous welfarist approaches, Amartya Sen, Professor of Economics and Philosophy at Harvard University, introduced "the notion of basic capabilities" which he described as "the ability to move, to meet one's nutritional requirements, the wherewithal to be clothed and sheltered, the power to participate in the social life of the community" (Sen 1980). According to Hananel and Berechman (2016), Sen's capabilities approach (CA) combines concepts of freedom, welfare and equity into one framework. They argue "the capabilities approach focuses on the question of what a person can achieve if provided with primary goods rather than on the question of how many goods that person possesses" (Hananel and Berechman 2016).

The capabilities approach has been adapted by various transit scholars to study transit-based accessibility in the context of social justice (Beyazit 2011) (Wee and Geurs 2011), and has been expanded upon and adapted to analyze various transit-related issues. In particular, the Capabilities Approach has been used as a tool to question the efficacy of

using a Cost Benefit Analysis in measuring the social exclusion and isolation caused by transit based inequity. Beyazit (2011) argues that the CA incites a debate on the relationship between capability of mobility, and the opportunities that a transport system offers, which requires active engagement from a variety of stakeholders. Beyazit contends that since transport has the important function of enhancing human capabilities, it is therefore possible to measure using the CA.

Other scholars contend that the CA is an inappropriate measure to evaluate transit equity. Hananel and Berechman argue that these measures focus on minimum thresholds of access that communities should receive to be considered socially and morally just, and therefore group communities together and fail to account for individual adversities and externalities. “Decision-making procedures based on the capabilities approach do not ask: What is the best infrastructure project alternative that produces the highest justice results. Instead, it specifies the desired results and then the means to attain them. One may conclude by stating that application of the capabilities approach to “real” transportation projects sounds utopian.”

Planning the Just City

Political theorist Susan Fainstein agrees that transportation measures derived from the Capabilities Approach fail to consider the vast social diversity that exist in some urban areas. In her 2010 book *The Just City*, Fainstein argues that those initiatives that are based upon the Capabilities’ Approach focus on thresholds of minimum conditions that are inappropriate as the absolute benchmark for these diverse neighborhoods. Instead of

arguing for a threshold of basic capabilities, she argues for the maximization of three values Fainstein believes constitute urban justice: equity, democracy, and diversity.

Gössling (2016) agrees with Fainstein, arguing that 'just cities' can "only come into existence where residents have the right to inhabit, to appropriate, and participate, for which it would be necessary for cities to embrace concepts of equity, democracy, and diversity, and to overcome neoliberalism and its allocation of resources at the expense of wider social benefits". Moreover, Gössling argues that there is a considerable paradox between the stated ambitions of transit planning agencies to create more sustainable urban transport systems and the persistent reality of policy geared towards the car, and this leads to an 'implementation gap' in transport planning, which he refers to as 'inconsistencies'. These inconsistencies in transport planning and implementation Gössling frames as injustices, which prevent the fulfillment of the just city. Gössling suggests that transport systems have been developed on the basis of specific industry interests, which do not necessarily represent broader societal goals. He maintains that in order for urban transport networks to be equitable, measures to incorporate distributive justice must be considered.

In her 2009 study, *Spatial Justice and Planning*, Fainstein too argues for a deliberative democracy approach, one where planners seek to listen first, especially to subordinated groups. "The vision of the just city calls for rectifying injustices in a world where control of investment resources by a small stratum constantly re-creates and reinforces subordination, thus resisting attempts at reform," Fainstein proclaimed. Thus, Fainstein claims that participants in strong democratic deliberation processes must consider community participation to be absolutely critical towards enacting just policy.

Urban policy consultants Judith Innes and David Booher (2000) argue that in order for deliberative and collaborative planning processes to flourish, a new paradigm for public participation must be instituted. "Public participation is ostensibly also about fairness and justice. There are systematic reasons why the least advantaged groups' needs and preferences are likely to be unrecognized through the normal analytic procedures and information sources of bureaucrats, legislative officials and planners. So public participation gives at least the opportunity for people to be heard who are overlooked or misunderstood" in the planning process. Thus, Innes and Booher maintain that for these collaborative methods to become commonplace, a set of principles and relatively easy to follow guidelines must be developed so these conversations can be representative, democratic and influential. Since communities who are often underrepresented in the transportation planning process are also often historically marginalized in other aspects of life, they may face difficulty attending planning meetings and engaging in the process. Innes and Booher therefore argue that these collaborative planning processes must be designed to assure a way for these communities to engage nonetheless. Innes and Booher contend that these collaborative planning processes can lead to a healthy and informed civic community. "When civic community is alive and well, it means that citizens talk to one another on public issues and build an understanding of these issues through interchange with others. As a result, they become better informed, not only about the issues, but more importantly about what they want and believe in themselves. They begin also to develop some shared sense of being part of a community as they acquire more understanding and empathy for one another and come to understand the problems and opportunities they share" (Innes and Booher 2000).

Conclusion

This literature review considered the concept of transportation justice, a growing body of literature concerned with the disproportionate impacts of transportation policy and the repercussions these policies have for those who live in communities underserved by public transportation. This literature is particularly concerned with the legacies of discriminatory transportation decision-making that divides urban areas on those who have adequate access to transit, and those who are deprived of essential services such as mass transit. Amongst specific importance are public pressures, such as the tension between persuading those with varied transportation options to choose mass transit and offering adequate services to those most dependent on public transportation. Scholars also identify several theories that evaluate what communities need in regards to transportation to be considered adequate, which is often referred to as a threshold approach or a capabilities approach. Looking forward, transportation scholars suggest that collaborative planning processes require public participation in order to be democratic and just.

Chapter Two: MANANAGEMENT OF THE NEW YORK CITY SUBWAY

Over the course of the last century and a quarter, the New York City subway system has seen a tumultuous history of management from several entities. Originally developed by wealthy mercantile businessmen in a public/private partnership at the end of the nineteenth century, the subway has since been governed by the New York City Board of Transportation, the Transit Authority, and most recently the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). Evolving from a privately operated corporation to a municipal agency, the management of the New York City subway reveals a complex narrative of social and economic decision-making, political influences, and a changing legacy of societal priorities. By documenting this changing narrative, this chapter will demonstrate how the inheritance of a municipal transportation authority from a for-profit corporation has shaped the socioeconomic policies of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority today. Officially designated as a public benefit corporation, I argue that the MTA's goals are to maximize profits rather than serve the region's people to its fullest capability, making it a public authority that views its riders as consumers instead of citizens.

This chapter will explore the management philosophy of the various agencies; private, publicly managed by the city, and publicly managed by a state agency, to assess how the subway's fare structuring program privileges those riders who have the financial choice to another mode of transportation. Then, considerations will be made for how disinvestment caused by automobile and highway construction diverted city funds essentially needed for mass transit. This period of disregard for public transportation maintenance in New York City is characterized by service delays, decreased ridership, and a frenzy of graffiti, representing a communal frustration with the planning choices of New

York City in the 1960s and 1970s. The chapter will end by analyzing the priorities of the state agency, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, a body that has steadily increased mass transit fares to a level now cost-prohibitive for one in three New Yorkers while restructuring debt to delay the burden of new projects to future generations.

The Early Years: 1888-1953

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, New York City was experiencing a major economic and population boom, and businesses needed a means to transport workers from rural towns in northern Manhattan to industry downtown. On January 31st, 1888, Mayor Abram S. Hewitt, a wealthy iron manufacturer, proposed the construction of a rapid transit railroad, modeled after the world's first underground railway in London. As a stealthy businessman, Hewitt was able to balance the public and private sectors to craft a proposal that served the interests of both groups. His proposal was the first to tie government ownership with private construction and operation, inspiring the Rapid Transit Act of 1894. The Rapid Transit Act gave the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York control of rapid transit planning, while also allowing government investment in the privately operated subway corporations. This enabled the city to keep fares at a stable and accessible price of five cents per ride, while also developing a transportation network that could alleviate overcrowding and encourage settlement in the lightly settled outer boroughs (Derrick, Passwell, and Petretta 2012).

In October 1904, the first New York underground subway opened for operation. The Interborough Rapid Transit Company (IRT) was led by merchants and financed by August Belmont Junior, a wealthy racehorse owner/breeder. Offering an efficient and affordable

way to get from lower Manhattan to upper Manhattan and the Bronx, the IRT was a great success, with an extension to Brooklyn being planned within its first year of operation. Before long, however, tensions between the mercantile IRT owners and local politicians soared, as the IRT acquired its only competitor, the Metropolitan Street Railway, and won veto power over new construction. In his article, *Politics of the Third Rail*, sociologist Garrett Ziegler contends that the subway was designed to serve the needs of oppressive corporate interests. "From the outset of the subway's construction, the dominant systems of power were concerned with organizing the spatial flows of an abstracted populace in order to maximize industrial-corporate productivity," he wrote (Ziegler 2004).

The IRT's acquisition of the Metropolitan Street Railway and subsequent veto power drew concern over a group of progressive reformers who sought to break the Interborough's subway monopoly. These reformers argued that the construction of new lines would disperse immigrants from crowded urban slums to the outskirts of the city, where they could have better and healthier living conditions and a transit system that would allow them to commute into the central business district (Hood 2004). This progressive movement called upon city officials to provide a new system of subway operation.

In March 1913, a Dual Contract system was approved, integrating the IRT with the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company (later renamed the Brooklyn-Manhattan Transit Corporation, or BMT). The dual system more than doubled the total transit mileage and extended the subway into new parts of the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens, raising the number of passengers using rapid transit in NYC annually from 810 million in 1913 to over two billion riders annually by 1930 (Derrick 2001). The BMT provided a competitor to the

IRT, breaking the monopoly that plagued the early years of the subway management. From the development of the dual system up until the outbreak of WWII, virtually all of New York City's population growth took place in the "subway suburbs" opened for development by these two subway corporations (Derrick, Passwell, and Petretta 2012). Most significantly, the Dual Contract agreement mandated a five-cent fare, which the companies were reportedly pleased with, because they felt that the provision would end any pressure to lower the fare (Sparberg 2015). The companies themselves, however, succumbed to economic crisis a decade later as a result of post WWI inflation. Without the option to raise the nickel fare, the IRT and BMT began to run with a deficit. Their demands for an increased fare were met with strong resistance from a vocal public who were haunted by the memories of the IRT's monopolization of transit at the turn of the century.

The failure of the dual system to cope with WWI related inflation while being restricted to the nickel fare opened a void to be filled by a publicly owned transit operator. John F. Hylan, an urban populist who passionately opposed the private subway operators, was elected Mayor in 1918. Responding to a riding public who considered the nickel fare an entitlement that they simply would not give up, Hylan made the maintenance of the nickel fare a lynchpin of his administration (Sparberg 2015). According to historian Clifton Hood, "Hylan acted within the context of a political culture where public ownership and regulation combined with private operation to encourage competition and discord rather than cooperation, where strong popular pressures for a low fare and for high-quality passenger service intensified the friction between government and business, and where ideological resistance to public investment in rapid transit perpetuated the system's fiscal problems" (Hood 2004).

In 1925, Mayor Hylan won approval by the State of New York to build an independent subway system, the IND, created by state law and managed and operated by the city government. From 1932 to 1940, the IND built subway lines throughout the city, providing faster and more convenient service and encouraging development in previously neglected areas, such as Queens Boulevard in Queens (Derrick, Passwell, and Petretta 2012). With this new municipally operated agency providing superior service, the IRT and BMT companies saw stark reductions in ridership and their financial conditions worsened. Additionally, as the Great Depression ravaged privately owned business operations, an opportunity presented itself for the subways to be unified as a single system. In June 1940, Mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia acquired the Interborough and Brooklyn-Manhattan subway systems, merging them with the independent subway system to form a single subway network operated by the New York City Board of Transportation. This unification did not solve the transit's fiscal problems, and the financial emergency resulting from the Great Depression and WWII forced the subway to operate on deficits, undermining the city's ability to continue to offer a stabilized nickel fare. This operating deficit mounted pressure for the new publicly managed unified subway system to raise the fare, which was met with substantial resistance.

Perhaps the strongest supporter of maintaining the nickel fare was Stanley M. Isaacs, a liberal Republican who served as Manhattan borough president from 1938 through 1941 and then as a city council member until his death in 1962. Isaacs rejected the business industry's logic that the subway ought to be a self-supporting business that offered a product that deserved a higher cost, and instead contended that rapid transit was a vital municipal service that gave the city "a great unifying force" and served as the

“highway of the masses” (Hood 2004). Arguing that the city did not charge user fees for schools, sanitation pickups, fire protection, water supply, or street repairs, that the same philosophy should be applied to the city’s transit system. He suggested that the operating costs of the subway should be supported by property tax, asserting that “the capital charges of those subways which had built up real estate values should be carried by real estate” (Hood 2004).

Isaacs’ defense of the public right to transit is particularly remarkable in today’s political climate. Operating out of a friendlier political climate where politicians’ values tended to cross the aisle much more frequently, Stanley Isaacs represented a political will that stood for all people – not just the rich and powerful. Isaacs’ greatest fear was the mounting competition of the private automobile, which was praised by his business adversaries as the future of transportation. When in 1945, master builder Robert Moses unveiled an \$82 million plan for more than two hundred miles of highways and bridges that would be funded by a city budget freed of subway expenses, Isaacs objected.

“I believe that this is probably the most audacious proposal yet made to saddle those least able to afford it with the cost of civic improvements which in the main serve those in the higher income brackets; to make those who do not own cars but travel in the subway indirectly subsidize the motorist. The whole program is clear. The straphanger is to pay double the present fare so as to carry the full interest upon and amortization of the capital cost of the subways. Why? So the city will be able to borrow more money to build parkways, expressways, and highways, which are to be furnished free of charge for the capital improvements to the man who can afford his own car, doesn’t travel on the

subways, and doesn't pay even a nickel toward the construction of the speedways furnished him," (Hood 2004).

The decades following World War Two were characterized by an exodus of middle and upper middle class New Yorkers to the suburbs, facilitated by the rise of the automobile and housing policies that encouraged suburbanization. The subway as a result experienced a significant decrease in ridership. Though in 1947 the unified subway system experienced a then record high in ridership, about two billion per year, ridership dwindled over the proceeding decades, reaching a record low of less than a billion annual riders in 1977. Various factors contributed to this. The New York City Metropolitan area developed rapidly following World War Two, fostered by high automobile usage and federal highway projects that weakened the region's financial and population base. Massive amounts of government funds were consumed by Robert Moses' elaborate network of highways, parkways, bridges and tunnels. Federal mortgage policy encouraged construction of ample new housing, particularly in the rapidly expanding New York suburbs, diverting the subway systems' rider base. Meanwhile, new construction and expansion of the system was essentially frozen during the war, and capital investment in subsequent decades was insufficient to both meet the needs of infrastructure maintenance and allow for continued expansion of the system. This inability to expand the system following World War Two made the subway inadequate to meet the needs of changing demographics and employment patterns (Derrick 2001). The subway fare increased to a dime on July 1, 1948, and would soon again be raised to 15 cents upon the creation of the Transit Authority in 1953. With financial pressures mounting, the Board of Transportation was considered a never-ending political football that needed reform, prompting the creation of a new

management solution that would remove the entire transit system from direct mayoral control (Sparberg 2015). In March 1953, New York State abolished the Board of Transportation and announced the creation of a new public agency, the New York City Transit Authority (NYCTA), independent of the mayor and mandated by law to set the mass transit fares at a level appropriately able to cover all operating costs, allowing the NYC budget to no longer focus on subsidizing mass transportation. According to historian Clifton Hood, “The Transit Authority contributed to the subways’ subsequent physical deterioration by enshrining the ideology of business management, insulating transit management from the public, and lessening the accountability of top elected officials for transit decisions,” (Hood 2004).

The Transit Authority: 1953-1968

The creation of the New York City Transit Authority ushered a new era with a reformed mindset. No longer concerned with providing transit services to the masses at an attainable cost, the subway was now managed by a body concerned with the bottom line. Mandated to charge a fare sufficient to cover all operating costs, the NYCTA increased the fare to fifteen cents on July 25, which required the creation of a subway token. The token, which was used from 1953 to the adoption of electronic collection machines in 2003, became synonymous with the system’s new ideology. The cost of municipal transportation in New York City was for the first time separate from the city’s fiscal responsibility, and costs would continue to mount as inflation and financial problems dictated. To make matters worse, the system was left in disrepair following World War Two, posing serious economic burdens to the city’s rider base.

According to a 1954 Transit Authority annual report, the system was left in complete disarray following years of mismanagement and disinvestment during the Second World War. The annual report refers to an “enormous backlog of urgent major repairs which have been deferred far beyond the time recognized for proper maintenance standards” (New York City Transit Authority, 1954). In order to remedy the condition of the subway fleet, the TA spent \$993.8 million between fiscal years 1954 and 1967, or \$70.9 million annually, to rehabilitate rail equipment that had heavily deteriorated. These costs were bore by the Authority’s capital budget, which is separate from its operating budget produced by fare collection.

TABLE 1
Trends in Age Composition
and Average Age of Subway Car Fleet, 1953-1967

<u>Age of Cars</u>	1953		1960		1967	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
30 years +	2806	49.3	2576	39.2	1974	27.2
20 - 29	1096	19.2	1822	27.7	50	0.7
10 - 19	986	17.3	761	11.6	1610	22.2
0 - 9	810	14.2	1407	21.5	3610	49.9
TOTAL	5698	100.0	6566	100.0	7244	100.0
AVERAGE AGE	27.3 years		20.2 years		15.3 years	

SOURCES: New York City Transit Authority, Facts and Figures (1979-1980); Annual Reports (1960, 1971)

Figure One: Cohen, James K. 1988. “Capital Investment and the Decline of Mass Transit in New York City, 1945-1981.”

The Transit Authority was tremendously successful at improving rolling stock conditions, even though its rider base was depleting. As shown in Table 1, nearly half of the city's subway fleet was thirty years or older in 1953, leading to regular breakdowns and a constant need to remove cars from the track for repair. By 1967, the TA was able to greatly reduce the overall age of its subway fleet, with nearly half of all subway cars under ten years of age. With a younger fleet and fewer breakdowns, the city saw a solid increase in ridership, improving from 1.31 million passengers in 1958 to 1.38 million in 1964 (Cohen 1988). Such a drastic improvement in service can be attributed to the substantial capital investment of the Transit Authority, just short of \$1 billion over this fourteen-year period.

By the mid 1960s, the NYCTA had reversed the downward spiral in transit ridership, largely due to an improved public perception of the fifteen-cent fare, which was considered a good value while other consumer goods and services had risen in cost (Sparberg 2015). Although the fare increased to twenty cents in July 1966, the hike was only the second during the tenure of the Transit Authority, and kept the cost competitive with other cities' mass transit systems, which was still attainable for most New Yorkers. By 1968, external pressures both political and economic pushed the NYCTA into the creation of a larger authority managed by New York State, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA)

The inception of the MTA was the product of a long battle between Mayor John Lindsay and Governor Nelson Rockefeller. Though perceived by the public as like-minded liberal Republicans, Lindsay and Rockefeller privately disliked each other and viewed each other as rivals, with mutual higher political ambitions that they viewed as putting each other at odds (Sparberg 2015). Frustrated with the mounting transit costs on riders, Lindsay proposed a 1965 plan to use surplus toll revenues from the Triborough Bridge and

Tunnel Authority (TBTA) to offset the NYCTA's deficits. Robert Moses, Chairman of the TBTA, called the proposal "illegal", and his supporters rallied to defeat Lindsey's lobbying trip to Albany. After acquiring the Long Island Railroad from Pennsylvania Railroad in 1965, Governor Rockefeller created a Metropolitan Commuter Transportation Authority (MCTA) and set his eyes on the city's mass transit system.

Metropolitan Transportation Authority: 1968-Present

In 1968, New York State Governor Nelson Rockefeller expanded the Metropolitan Commuter Transportation Authority (MCTA) to include the Transit Authority (TA), the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority (TBTA), and all other public transit operations in the city, to form the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). Upon the formation of the MTA, Governor Rockefeller campaigned for a \$2.5 billion transportation bond, which became the main issue in the November 1967 election. Of the \$2.5 billion, \$1.25 billion was dedicated to the state's mass transit system, with the largest portion going to New York City and the seven counties surrounding it (Sparberg 2015). The 1967 transportation bill represented a priority that the city and state would support maintenance and expansion of New York's transportation infrastructure, but the specific priorities of this support were far more nuanced.

Rockefeller appointed his close friend and advisor William Ronan as MTA Chairman, and issued a "grand design" for upgrading the New York Metropolitan area's transportation network, a plan similar to the extravagant highway schemes put forth by Robert Moses. The grand design focused on building new subways within New York City, upgrading the commuter rail services, raising platform levels, and providing direct access to midtown for

the Long Island Railroad. With the exception of the purchasing of new rolling stock, the grand design had little consideration for rehabilitating the existing transit infrastructure (Derrick, Passwell, and Petretta 2012). Funding for this project was comprised the 1967 bond issue approved by NY State voters, as well as an expected increase of transportation aid from the federal government. Though it seemed like this project would succeed at first, the ambitious early plans of the MTA came to an abrupt halt, with New York City, and the state as a whole, experiencing a major economic downturn in the early 1970s, causing voters to reject bond issues in 1971 and 1973. In 1974 Nelson Rockefeller was appointed Gerald Ford’s vice president, and William Ronan resigned as MTA chairman.

Under MTA oversight, service declined steadily. Though the MTA invested more than the TA did in capital investment for infrastructure maintenance, rolling stock experienced significant delays and system failure – increasingly worse as the 1970s progressed. The average distance a subway car would travel between failure between 1968-1980 of 17,780 miles was a 43% drop from pre-1968 levels of 31,319 miles.

Investment and Service Outcomes

<u>Year</u>	<u>Capital Investment</u> ¹	<u>Delay Minutes</u> ²	<u>Mean Distance Between Failures</u> ²
1964-1967	75,452,000	100,539	31,319 miles
1968-1980	91,819,000	203,081	17,773 miles

SOURCES: New York City Comptroller, **Annual Reports (1964-1980)**; New York City Transit Authority, **Monthly Mileage and Train Delay Reports (1964-1980)**; **Car Equipment Inspection Survey Reports (1973-1980)**
 1. In 1967 dollars.
 2. Annual averages.

Figure Two: Cohen, James K. 1988. “Capital Investment and the Decline of Mass Transit in New York City, 1945-1981.”

This deterioration is strange, however, when considering the increased system investment in the years following the creation of the MTA. Although the fiscal crisis of the 1970s decreased city funding to the agency, state and federal funding for mass transit increased steadily during the 1970s. This was due in part to the passage of the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1970, which authorized \$12 billion to mass transit projects nationwide. The total capital resources available were actually higher in the years following the creation of the MTA, yet this period saw a progressive decline in service and a heightened demand for maintenance to the rolling stock.

From 1953-1967 (the years the subway was operated by the Transit Authority), the TA spent 44.1% on infrastructure maintenance and only 17.5% on new route construction. When the MTA assumed control in 1968, priorities were reversed and 41% of funds were dedicated to the “grand design” of system expansion, with only 22.9% of funds invested in modernizing the existing infrastructure (Cohen 1988). These percentages are particularly significant when considering that the difference in available funding was only increased by 13%. This priority shift to system expansion drew substantial funds that were previously used for infrastructure maintenance, leading to dilapidated conditions and regular delays.

With a greatly diminished rider base and a lack of institutional support to maintain the rolling stock to their condition in the 1960s, the subways became a canvas for graffiti artists to express themselves. Representing a loss of control for government officials, subway graffiti epitomized the frustration that New Yorkers had about political ineptitude in the 1970s and into the 1980s. As historian Garrett Ziegler describes, “Graffiti is the very definition of a tactical appropriation of ordered space – it gives legibility to the individual rendered invisible by the totalizing perspective of the planned subway. Graffiti is such a

disruption of rational space, in fact, that it seems to highlight the residual fears in the breast of the urban subject, thus further undercutting the productive designs of the planned city” (Ziegler 2004). Fed up with government bureaucracy and the economic decline of New York in the 1970s, people began to speak out against a public transportation system that seized to meet the need of its citizens. Ziegler refers to graffiti as “the most overt manifestation of a long line of interconnected and developing tactics of resistance to the functionalist city.”

Before long, the MTA and the New York City police force began to crack down on graffiti artists, and along with its increased acceptance in mainstream artist culture, subway graffiti lost its popularity and the public started to view it with disdain. In 1982, Mario Cuomo was elected Governor and appointed David Gunn to run the TA, with a massive cleanup effort as his focus. Embarking on a campaign to crack down on subway graffiti artwork, Gunn made clear that the MTA would be reclaiming control of the system. By 1989, Gunn had completed his clearing of graffiti from the New York City subway cars, and was dubbed “The Man Who Saved the Subway”, admired by transportation bureaucrats around the globe (Ziegler 2004).

The acclaim that Gunn received from fellow transit officials illuminates the ultimate goals of agencies like the MTA: to maintain supreme authority over urban areas, and ensure order. This might be acceptable, if their aims were to provide equitable transit to all members of the city, yet I argue that this priority pales in comparison to economic gain. The 1990s saw a radical economic transformation, one that helped form the inequities that plague the NYC transit system today. George Pataki was elected Governor in 1994, and he championed a campaign to convert state and local funding for capital projects to a system

of borrowing through the sale of bonds backed by various revenue streams (Derrick, Passwell, and Petretta 2012). Though this evaded the need to increase taxes to cover capital renewal costs, it placed the burden of these expenses onto future taxpayers and transit riders, leading to increased and rising fare prices today. This mentality of putting off the expense of infrastructure maintenance may have seemed like a decent idea at the time, but it has led to fare structuring today that puts public transportation in New York City at a price that's inaccessible for millions of New Yorkers who need it most. This system of accruing significant debt in order to finance infrastructure improvement projects has become commonplace for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

In 2002, the MTA, advised by interested financiers and Wall Street investment bankers, adopted a debt-refinancing strategy that extended the repayment period for \$13 billion debt they incurred from a \$20 billion capital improvement program for the years 2000-2004. Policy analysts Jonathan Justice and Gerald Miller argue that this refinancing program violated a fundamental professional norm of cost minimization, by incurring more than \$4 billion in additional interest payment fees on that original \$13 billion debt (Justice and Miller 2011). By deferring this debt to future taxpayers and estimated increased fare prices in the coming decades, the MTA is placing the burden of these costs onto future generations, compromising intergenerational equity and the ability for the agency to continue modernizing the subway system in the future. This represents the agency's priority to serve the needs of the present, while possibly neglecting the ramifications for the future. Given the apparent lack of citizen input in this decision making process, it is important to recognize the structural entities that do exist to keep the MTA in check and advocate for improved transportation options for all New Yorkers.

Conclusion

The history of management of the New York City subway system illuminates the problematic nature of a transit authority that was originally created as for-profit corporations. The relationship between public investment and private for-profit management at the subway's inception has never fully shed its complexities. Although the subway management has had input from government officials since WWII, its economic policies do not provide modal opportunity to all citizens of New York City. As urban sociologist John Pucher argues, "public transit agencies have perpetuated historic discriminatory patterns of service and fare structure inherited from private transit operators and have, in addition, introduced new and perhaps more serious forms of inequity" (Pucher 1982). Indeed, as fares for the subway and bus continue to rise, the affordability of New York City public transportation has created a scenario where thousands of New Yorkers must choose between taking the subway or bus, and putting food on the table. That is not a choice that anyone should have to make.

The disinvestment in mass transit following World War Two had ramifications throughout the United States on urban subway and bus systems, but particularly in New York City where so many residents rely on mass transit to get to work. The lack of attention to the disproportionate impacts of fare increases and structuring begs several questions about how the MTA operates. How can transit agencies restructure their political and financial structure to include voices that are historically silenced from their decision-making process? Should the most transit-disadvantaged members of society be given the best public transit service, given that they depend on it the most to work for the possibility of upward mobility? The following chapters will explore the diversion of resources

following postwar suburbanization, recent developments such as gentrification that have further isolated New York's most disadvantaged residents, and finally examples of community organizations that are advocating for transit equity in various forms including affordability, access, and representation.

Chapter Three: POSTWAR TRANSIT INEQUITY IN NEW YORK CITY

Similar to other large cities in the United States following the end of World War Two, New York City experienced several monumental changes that have vastly altered land use, demographics, employment patterns and public transportation. A rise in automobile production and usage led to the development of freeway projects nationwide, making highway-based transportation the foundation for rapid suburban development. The exodus of middle and upper-middle class white Americans to newly created suburban towns stripped cities of large amounts of their tax base, immobilizing the functional vigor of social services including schools, healthcare facilities, and public transportation. Many industries fled the city too, pulling thousands of decent manufacturing jobs out of the urban core and devastating the urban economy.

The tremendous success of the automobile, coupled with the strength of auto and oil lobbies, effectively relegated mass transit to a realm of secondary importance, signaling an era of divestment and neglect that lasted for decades. Discriminatory housing and bank lending policies prevented immigrant and minority communities from sharing in this rapid suburbanization, significantly altering the demographics of Manhattan and its outer boroughs. This chapter will explore the historical postwar developments that have divided the New York City Metropolitan Area over those who have access to the transportation network, and those who have been deprived of this essential opportunity. I will begin by analyzing how the automobile, highway development, and suburbanization in the decade following WWII diverted funding for NYC mass transit. Of exceptional importance in this time period is the manipulative zeal of Robert Moses, who was possibly the most impactful figure in the creation of New York City's public infrastructure and whose policies towards

“urban renewal” and “slum clearance” had a devastating effect on immigrants and people of color. I will then assess how the conception of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, a state agency created in 1968, completely changed the funding priorities and investment structure of mass transit in New York City and established political tension between the city and state governments over who is responsible for maintaining and developing new public transportation projects.

The Flight to Suburbia

In the years following World War Two, the New York Metropolitan Area experienced an exodus of middle and upper-middle class white residents to newly developing suburbs of Nassau and Suffolk counties in Long Island and to Westchester and Rockland counties to the north. This process of rapid suburbanization eroded the city’s tax base, reducing revenues available for social welfare expenditures and making jobs and educational opportunities inaccessible to those left in the urban core. Additionally, the massive postwar flight to the suburbs was overwhelmingly white: New York City experienced a net migration of 464,000 whites during the 1940s, 828,293 whites during the 1950s, and 519,338 white residents during the 1960s (Wallock 1991). According to sociologist Nathan Kantrowitz, African-Americans made up 13.6 percent of New York City’s residents in 1960, but only 4.8 percent of the residents of Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester, and Rockland counties (Kantrowitz 1969). Puerto Ricans amounted to 7.8 percent of the city’s population, but constituted only 0.5 percent of the suburban population. Kantrowitz describes the rapid white flight to the city’s newly developing suburbs as both divisive on race and class lines, as leaving Manhattan was a sign of social mobility: moving outward

meant moving upward. New York's socioeconomic transformation following this postwar suburbanization is somewhat unique in the context of other urban postwar redevelopment processes in the United States. Unlike many American cities in the postwar years, where a declining central city was surrounded by a prosperous suburban ring (known as the "doughnut complex"), New York developed differently. In New York, the core of the city was "revitalized", the surrounding portions of the city (most parts of the outer boroughs) became "blighted", and the entirety of the city was encircled by the "prosperous suburbs" (Wallock 1991).

This process of suburbanization and revitalization of the urban core pushed people of color and low-income people to the outer ring of the city, communities in Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx, which are less served by social services such as public transportation. By the mid-1970s, as a nationwide economic recession was ravaging the majority of America's cities, New York's working poor was hit particularly hard. This led to shrinking opportunities and declining social conditions, exacerbated by inflation trends and recessionary cycles of the economy, a soaring deficit of the federal government, deep cuts in social welfare at the federal and state levels, and a steep decline in low-income housing (Katz 1996). While the economic recession of the 1970s affected all New Yorkers, the decline in social services impacted marginalized communities in a disproportionately burdensome way. As federal and state subsidies encouraged growth in the suburbs and this precipitous white flight divided resources into the "prosperous suburbs" and the "blighted" outer boroughs, those living in underserved communities had declining governmental support.

White flight deteriorates the conditions of the urban core in several facets. In addition to damaging the reputation of the neighborhoods being vacated, white flight also leads to the abandonment of manufacturing and other industries, reducing several sources of revenue for the municipal tax base and diminishing social services. In New York City, suburbanization and white flight led to an exacerbation of existing social problems, on a larger scale. According to a 1961 study by Rosalind Tough and Gordon D. Mac Donald, “areas that were middle-income housing less than ten years ago, are below standard today largely because of overcrowding and lack of maintenance; schools in these areas which were previously meeting the educational needs of children from middle-income homes, today are servicing the children from the disadvantaged groups and in many instances achieving a level of education below that for New York City as a whole” (Tough and Donald 1961).

The Impact of Urban Renewal on New York City: The Legacy of Robert Moses

It could be argued that no one individual impacted the development of modern New York City than Robert Moses. Referred to by many as the “Master Builder”, Moses deceptively manipulated the many titles he held to develop New York in his vision. Though he was never elected to any of his positions in public office, Moses was able to usurp the respect of mayors, governors, and presidents to progress his agenda of constructing the modern American city. Social organizer Omar Freilla describes Moses’s process, “elected by no one, Moses held everyone from mayors and governors to presidents in check. His power came from the skillful manipulation of the spoils from the many titles that he often held simultaneously. The lack of accountability to the public allowed by these various organizations provided him with plenty of room to move about in secret. [Moses] is

credited with having shaped the face of the modern American city more than any other person” (Freilla 2004). Following the development of Moses’s strategy of urban renewal, this chapter will assess how Moses’s policies divided New York City along racial and socioeconomic lines, and how this division has led to inequalities in the subway system today.

In the 1950s, the Committee on Slum Clearance of the City of New York, led by Robert Moses, published twenty-six site-specific slum clearance brochures, attempting to demonstrate the blighted conditions that persisted in these areas. In an effort to convince politicians and urban planners that these sites in need of redevelopment, Moses and his Committee relied on the portrayal of five photographs for each site, providing only a small amount of text in a caption, to convey these communities as slums. This redevelopment was made possible by Title I of the US Housing Act of 1949, which provided subsidies for the clearance of areas designated as slums, allowing private developers to rebuild these communities in their vision. Far too often this redevelopment meant the complete demolition of the existing buildings and amenities in the community, so the developers could recreate the space in their image. Of course, this process of eliminating blighted areas resulted in thousands of displaced working-class New Yorkers, dispersing refugees across the outer boroughs of the city. In this sense, slum clearance was an instrument of social engineering, though Moses and his colleagues expressed little sympathy or consideration of the impact of these urban renewal processes.

In order to designate these communities as eligible for urban renewal, Moses utilizes the definition of a slum from the US Housing Act of 1937, which stated that “the term ‘slum’ means any area where dwellings predominate which, by reason of dilapidation,

overcrowding, faulty arrangement or design, lack of ventilation, light or sanitation facilities, or any combination of these factors, are detrimental to safety, health or morals” (Chronopoulos 2014). To communicate these sites as slums and therefore deserving of redevelopment, the Committee on Slum Clearance sought to photograph these sites as communities in disrepair and beyond a state of rehabilitation. As urban historian Themis Chronopoulos describes, “many of these photographs emphasized elements that made the built environment appear disorderly, obsolete, and beyond repair. These principles favored the clearance of entire sites rather than the partial redevelopment of blighted spots.” In this sense, Moses utilized documentary photography to brand the urban environment of working-class people as disorderly and dispensable and prime for redevelopment. The brochures described various considerations such as land use, the condition and age of existing structures, land coverage, existing zoning, population density, and tenant data, however in each case their primary argument was that the valuable space was being underutilized, and the city needed to redevelop the area to better epitomize the modern city. As Samuel Zipp, author of *Manhattan Projects: The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Cold War New York* described, city powerholders believed that urban renewal “could deliver the proper cityscape of a world-class city, underwrite the city’s status as an icon of global power, and make it... the capital of international modernity” (Chronopoulos 2014).

By photographing empty lots and poorly constructed fences, these brochures presented these communities as visually unattractive and reinforced the assumption that there was something wrong with these areas. As Chronopoulos notes, “there was nothing more uneconomic than the absence of a building in a dense urban area. The fact that the missing building had not been replaced by another one inferred that the owners of the land

and potential lending institutions did not consider the area as commercially viable.” But this assumption fails to consider other reasons for these landowners to not replace vacant lots with new buildings, such as a lack of economic opportunity or personal choice. This assumption also disregards the possibility that landowners were discriminated against by lending institutions, making the development of empty lots nearly impossible.

In addition to representing slums as characterized by empty lots and unattractive fences, Moses’s Committee on Slum Clearance also portrayed abandoned buildings as a manifestation of urban blight, representing a lack of economic opportunity and a stagnation of profitability of these buildings. The photographs disregarded the possibility that the owners simply lacked the capital to maintain these units to a state considered modern by the general public, not out of personal choice. Additionally, the brochures showed back alleys filled with heavily utilized clotheslines, and ground littered with garbage, exhibiting a sense of visual chaos. Chronopoulos argues that the photographs also portrayed these areas as dirty, “from a public health point of view, people who existed alongside these back alleys probably lived in unhygienic conditions. The images of back alleys also asserted that the buildings of different owners were too close to each other and that no building improvement would be able to alter this. The only possible remedy was that of site clearance.”

Through his Committee on Slum Clearance of the City of New York, Robert Moses effectively portrayed historically neglected and disadvantaged neighborhoods as dilapidated and dirty, and in need of redevelopment. The Committee’s brochures on slum clearance demonstrated communities as plagued with abandoned buildings and empty lots, all together failed to include the narratives of the thousands of residents of these

communities, who were being effectively obliterated from their homes. According to Omar Freilla, Moses's "application of federal 'urban renewal' and 'slum clearance' programs reshuffled the neighborhoods of New York City, creating new housing opportunities for wealthy whites. But the net effect of his projects was even greater than could have been imagined and was to have far-reaching consequences" (Freilla 2004).

Robert Moses epitomizes the environmental justice concerns of private housing development as much as any figure in New York City history. His vision of "urban renewal" and "slum clearance" displaced nearly a quarter of a million New Yorkers, a disproportionate majority of who were poor Latinos and African Americans. Specifically targeting unsuspected communities that lacked the resources to defend against the charge of urban blight, Moses represents the symbol of all that is wrong with government planning. For the communities that Moses displaced with his "urban renewal" projects, Moses's legacy is one of racism and classism, forced removals, the splitting of neighborhoods, economic depression, and increased pollution (Freilla 2004).

Robert Moses's Highway Projects: Motorization and Displacement

Robert Moses is notorious for his priority of highway construction and suburbanization, despite the various ramifications these projects had on the residents of the land where the highways were to be laid. As Moses himself argued in a 1954 statement to the President's Advisory Committee on a National Highway Program, urban expressways "must go right through cities and not around them. When you're operating in an overbuilt metropolis you have to hack your way with a meat axe" (Mohl 2002). Though the main goal of Moses's highway projects was to address urban traffic congestion issues, a secondary

aim of Moses and his conspirators was to promote urban redevelopment projects that would flatten slums and revitalize blighted communities.

The creation of massive highways in the New York Metropolitan Area displaced thousands of low-income New Yorkers, devastating countless working class communities. Moses's Cross Bronx Expressway, for example, gouged a huge trench across a primarily working-class Jewish community of East Tremont, which not only displaced these residents from their homes but also triggered the rapid decline of the South Bronx, still very apparent today (Mohl 2002). The development of the Cross Bronx Expressway also represents Moses's lack of care for the displacement of communities, given his determination to bisect the neighborhood. As the New York Times reported in 1963, Moses refused a proposal to run the expressway along the boundary of nearby Crotona Park, which would have saved 1,530 apartments at no additional cost (NY Times Editorial Board 1963). By then it was too late – the Cross Bronx Expressway had been laid directly through the neighborhood in 1960, and within a few years, crime had become commonplace. As Robert Caro, author of *The Power Broker*, a Pulitzer Prize winning biography of Robert Moses observed, “after seven o'clock, the residential streets of East Tremont are deserted, roamed by narcotic addicts in gangs like packs of wolves” (Caro 1975).

The construction of the Cross Bronx Expressway represented Moses's mentality towards the various communities that stood between Moses and the infrastructure he sought to create. His refusal to redirect the portion of the expressway in East Tremont indicates Moses's disregard for working alongside community organizers and activists. According to Anthony Flint, author of *Wrestling with Moses*, the construction of the Cross Bronx Expressway “represented Moses's dominance over neighborhood objections... the

Cross Bronx Expressway broke up thriving and diverse immigrant enclaves and jump-started the economic and social decline of the Bronx” (Flint 2011).

While urban expressways certainly contribute to the economic vitality of cities and stimulate growth, their ability to reduce traffic congestion has been questioned by various scholars. In her most influential book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, urban theorist Jane Jacobs criticizes Moses for his construction of aboveground expressways within New York and other cities. Jacobs argued, “instead of serving as bypassers, expressways in cities serve too frequently as dumpers. Mr. Moses’s proposed plan... is always presented appealingly as a fast route to keep traffic out of the city... [and yet] by accommodating traffic aimed at the heart of the city, it will actually tend to choke up city bypass traffic” (Jacobs 1992). In this way, the urban freeways that Moses promoted have actually exacerbated traffic congestion, while also encouraging a steady increase of truck traffic and bottlenecking throughout New York’s most industrial neighborhoods. As Omar Freilla described, “Moses’s celebrated highways unleashed forces that gutted stable neighborhoods and sent marginal ones careening over the edge. They provided the city’s white middle class with an escape route made of long, clean stretches of road to the mythic garden paradise of suburbia, just as the city’s manufacturing base was beginning to erode” (Freilla 2004). Freilla also recounted



Figure Three: East Tremont, the Bronx

how this suburbanization exacerbated income inequality, “the gap between rich and poor ballooned, and the entire city suffered as statewide political power shifted north and east, following the white exodus into suburban single-family homes. New York City would be left isolated for decades with a crumbling infrastructure, a traffic-jammed nightmare of roads, and a deserted population not found on anyone’s agenda at the state.” As the creation of freeways and automobile-oriented developments took center stage, mass transit was relegated to a secondary economic function. Public funds raised through private investment was primarily attracted to highway-based transportation, generating an abundance of secure investment economic development opportunities, while limiting the ability for mass transit to secure the accumulation of much needed capital (Cohen 1991).

Without the ability to acquire necessary funding for system expansion or rehabilitation, the Transit Authority was forced to yield to the automobile as the driving force of urban development. In this case, capital markets and investment opportunity were the most impactful variables driving the management of the subway system. By the late 1960s, Robert Moses’s reign of authority was coming to an end, along with a halt in highway construction nationwide. As outlined in chapter two, transit investment priorities shifted drastically during the late 1960s and 1970s under the formation of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), focusing on system expansion and neglecting service improvements. While the neglect and degradation of the subway during this period impacted all New Yorkers and led to a decline in ridership throughout the system, the inability to create new subway lines has hurt low-income New Yorkers the most. The following chapter will examine the impact of recent the economic recession of the early 1990s on transit inequity in New York City.

Chapter Four: Gentrification, Displacement and Employment Shifts: New York City since 1990

Various historical developments and policy decisions have impacted transportation access in the New York City metropolitan area over the course of the past two and a half decades. The economic recession that ravaged the United States in the early 1990s significantly impacted New York's job market, affecting employment patterns that would ultimately reshape the way New Yorkers commute. The recession also enabled a restructuring of housing markets, facilitated in part by targeted federal expenditures that serve to expand patterns of gentrification (Wyly and Hammel 1999). Spatially targeted mechanisms, that Wyly and Hammel call "e-zones" are determined for their potential for economic development, and subsequently subsidized to encourage 'revitalization' by more affluent residents. Gentrification has continued to displace low-income residents to isolated regions of the outer boroughs where people have less access to public transportation, leading to social exclusion and economic stagnation.

In this chapter, I argue that postrecession gentrification, coupled with discriminatory housing policies of the federal government in the 1990s and early 2000s; enabled developers to decimate once stable low-income communities, leading to the displacement and social exclusion of these neighborhoods' residents. A shift in employment patterns in New York City during the 1990s transformed the commuting patterns of low-income New Yorkers. Manhattan experienced a significant loss in available jobs, while employment in the outer boroughs rose. These postrecession changes in housing and employment have made New York's public transportation increasingly inadequate for low-income residents, who are insufficiently served by the subway and need superior inter-borough service in order to make possible the opportunity for upward mobility. This

chapter will begin by documenting the rise of gentrification, leading to displacement and isolation of low-income residents, as a result of the economic recession and federal housing policies of the early 1990s. The next section will consider the impact of political governance at the city and state level during the 1990s and early 2000s, and how decisions by these individuals affected housing, employment, and transportation policies. The chapter will conclude by analyzing the changing job markets of New York City and how employment shifts since 1990 have mounted pressure on the city's bus system, illuminating the need for improved transit service in the city's outer boroughs.

Gentrification in New York City, 1990 to Present

Understood as the transformation of a neighborhood or space for more affluent residents, gentrification has been a major focus of urban land use literature for decades – particularly in New York City. Many scholars have studied the relationship between real estate development and gentrification (Hackworth 2002), as well as the consequential neighborhood revitalization that accompanies urban renewal (Wyly and Hammel 1999) (Smith 2002), for both its positive impacts to a community and its many negative repercussions. Scholarship examining the impact of gentrification and displacement on public transit accessibility is far less common. This study contributes to the conversation on gentrification and displacement/social exclusion in New York City, adding to the dialogue a consideration of how these processes impact mobility and modal opportunity.

Gentrification, as a social phenomenon, has occurred in New York City for decades. As early as the late nineteenth century, businesses and wealthy mercantiles began moving into areas in downtown Manhattan previously occupied by low-income communities and

consequentially displacing these residents to upper Manhattan and the Bronx. During the 1960s and 1970s, various Manhattan neighborhoods such as SoHo and the Upper West Side became gentrified by affluent residents who returned to the city after their exodus to the suburbs a few decades prior. Contemporary gentrification literature suggests that the gentrification that resulted from the economic recession of the early 1990s initiated a restructuring of the process itself, operating differently than it had before. Several factors facilitated this change, including deregulation in finance during the 1980s (Squires 1992), an expansion of credit, including subprime lending (Harvey 2006), and a reorientation of economies predominantly focused on manufacturing and trade towards real estate (Fainstein 1994). According to sociologist Jason Hackworth, postrecession gentrification operates differently than gentrification patterns prior to the recession because of a restructuring in the real estate industry, giving corporate developers the ability to initiate the gentrification process; the openness of local and federal government to approve housing policy and rezone neighborhoods; and the marginalization of oppositional movements to the urban redevelopment process (Hackworth 2002).

By the mid-1990s, corporate real estate agencies had acquired the capital and political clout to acquire large swaths of previously industrial land and rezone it for residential development. Local, state and federal government also shifted their policies to encourage real estate development in areas considered underutilized. The Queens West Project, a 1982 mixed-use plan to redevelop the industrial neighborhood of Long Island City, is one of the best examples of government espousal of the gentrification process. Primarily an industrial and commercial neighborhood, Long Island City posed various obstacles to developers such as inconsistencies in zoning and complications with mortgage

insurance policies. The success of the Queens West Project was made possible by advocacy from ex-public officials and the support of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), who agreed to provide mortgage insurance to the project in 1996 (Passell 1996). The support of the FHA signaled a shift of the federal government towards heightened support of the real estate industry, ultimately indicating the federal government's backing of the gentrification process.

In addition to the many negative ramifications that gentrification has on a community, several scholars have also noted the possible benefits it can have. If gentrification can occur without causing widespread displacement, it has the potential to increase socioeconomic, racial and ethnic integration, desegregating urban areas and eventually school districts (Lee, Spain, and Umberson 1985). Existing residents can also benefit from the infusion of residents with more political influence, as they can help the community acquire better public services, and gentrification may also bring new housing investment and stimulate retail and cultural services (Freeman and Braconi 2004). While these potential benefits are promising, they are often thwarted by the displacement of low-income residents and the resulting erosion of cultural identity and unity. Several studies have suggested that gentrification may not always directly displace residents, if newcomers are moving into apartments that are already vacant, though the gentrification process may encourage low-income residents to not move into a gentrifying community if they were not already living there (Vigdor, Massey, and Rivlin 2002). And though gentrification may not always be directly displacing residents from their communities, it is increasing the average rent burden for poor households living in gentrifying neighborhoods (Freeman and Braconi 2004), and if gentrification occurs on a wide enough scale it could also result in a gradually

shrinking pool of available affordable housing, exacerbating the existing housing and transportation problems of the poor.

Studies evaluating displacement resulting from gentrification express that the process impacts the most vulnerable members of society the most. According to a 2006 study by Kathe Newman and Elvin K. Wyly, displacement is more common among the foreign-born, female-headed households, those in poverty, and those in older-age groups. Similarly, renters living in substandard units or in seriously overcrowded homes are more likely to have been displaced, compared to those who are more satisfied with their housing conditions who are less likely to have been displaced by gentrification processes (Newman and Wyly 2006). These displaced residents were forced to move further outward in the outer boroughs, isolating them from the public transportation network and from education and employment opportunities. According to Newman and Wyly, as the 1990s proceeded displacement effects appear in more parts of Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx, as renters were forced to seek homes further from the central business district in areas that they could afford (Newman and Wyly 2006). They also conducted ethnographic interviews with residents, discussing the impacts of gentrification on their communities.

In Newman and Wyly's study, a Latina former resident of Lower Park Slope described her displacement from the neighborhood. "In 1999 my landlord doubled the rent in the apartment but we didn't understand why... My rent went from \$750 to \$1200. So he almost doubled it... He put trees on it, fixed the gates and then sends everybody a letter saying the rent doubled. It wasn't that he wanted to make it nice for us. That's where gentrification affects people. He was making it look better and fixing it up but he was doing it with a mission to put in luxury condos for other people" (Newman and Wyly 2006). Many

displaced residents were forced to leave the city altogether, and others who remained were relegated to the city's shelter system. In July 2003, more than 38,000 people, including more than 16,500 children, used the New York City shelter system, far exceeding the last peak of 28,737 in March 1987 (The Supportive Housing Network of New York 2003).

For displaced residents lucky enough to not be pushed out of the city or into the city's shelter system, the vast majority has been concentrated in neighborhoods where poverty is rampant. According to a study conducted by the Community Service Society of New York in 2008, half of the city's 1.4 million poor people lived in neighborhoods where the poverty rate was at least 24.8 percent, while one-quarter lived in neighborhoods where the rate was at least 34.1 percent (Community Service Society 2008). These poverty pockets are predominantly in Upper Manhattan, the South Bronx, and Central Brooklyn, areas where public transportation is primarily designed to bring workers into Manhattan's central business district, and fails to account for the thousands of workers whose jobs are within their borough or in another outer borough. For this reason, communities have developed alternative forms of transportation – such as Brooklyn's Ultra-Orthodox Jews who travel on a specific B110 bus between homes in Williamsburg and Borough Park, and the 'gypsy' cabs that have become commonplace in Black and Afro-Caribbean communities in Brooklyn and the Bronx (Krase 2016), though an analysis of these specific transportation remedies is outside the scope of this study.

Gentrification as a Manifestation of Neoliberalism

Several scholars have identified the third wave of gentrification, spanning from the early 1990s economic recession to the collapse of the housing market in 2008 (though

arguably persisting through today), as a manifestation of the neoliberal changes in real estate and federal urban housing policy. Now an area of significant economic importance for cities as revenue producers, gentrifying neighborhoods are advanced not only through increased movement of affluent residents into inner city neighborhoods, but through a larger process of corporate real estate developers and the politicians that aid and abet this process. Scholars Kenneth Gould and Tammy Lewis argue that Mayor Michael Bloomberg instituted the neoliberal, social equity-blind urban greening of New York City (Gould and Lewis 2017). Bloomberg's Administration is notorious for their close relationship with real estate developers and their interests.

In particular, local politicians have played a prominent role in this recent wave of gentrification, through land assembly, tax incentives, property condemnation and the adjustment of zoning laws (Hackworth and Smith 2001). These rezoning policies were most apparent during the Bloomberg Administration, which implemented dozens of neighborhood-scale rezoning's to catalyze economic growth and lay the foundation for new residential development (Goldberg 2011). This facilitation and promotion of free markets within the context of urban planning and housing is key to neoliberalism, as Historian David Harvey (2010) argues, "the [neoliberal] ideology rested upon the idea that free markets, free trade, personal initiative, and entrepreneurialism were the best guarantors of individual liberty and freedom and that the 'nanny state' should be dismantled for the benefit of all... The interests of the people were secondary to the interests of capital, and in the event of a conflict between them, the interests of the people had to be sacrificed" (Harvey 2010). In this sense, neoliberalism privileges the growth of GDP and market transactions as the ultimate measure of success, disregarding the importance of basic

human rights of housing and access. Gentrification, as the driving agent of this process, sends a clear message to those who are victims of its plight: that poor people, who in New York are predominantly immigrants and people of color, are not welcome in New York City unless they have financial benefit to offer the city.

The Role of Government in Postrecession Gentrification

The role of the federal and New York City governments have been fundamental to the post late 1980s economic recession-induced wave of gentrification in NYC. After decades of disinvestment of cities by the federal government, the imperative to generate tax dollars had become as pressing for city governments as ever (Hackworth and Smith 2001). Following the economic despair of cities in the 1970s and into the 1980s, banks became weary of lending to city governments unless they held a businesslike ledger sheet, and this explains part of the tendencies towards neoliberalism in the New York City government. The other major influences in forming government policy are the individual politicians who oversaw the development of New York since the late 1980s, in particular the city's mayors.

The 1989 election of David Dinkins, New York's first African-American Mayor, signaled a powerful shift from the 12-year divisive market-oriented policy under Ed Koch. The first and only person of color to serve as mayor of New York City, Dinkins represented a symbol of progressive change. With a "tremendous and growing commitment" to community-based housing at the center of his platform, Dinkins brought with him serious promise, though his four-year term that paralleled the ramifications of the 1991 stock market crash proved to produce little impact. Inheriting a declining local economy with

severe funding cuts to the electoral base, Dinkins was unable to generate the grassroots enthusiasm that carried him to victory and by the end of his four-year term the Dinkins administration showed few differences from the policy agenda of the Koch administration before him (Sites 1997). His failure to reform the system in his campaign's vision suggests the power of neoliberalism's ideology in New York City government.

Following Dinkins was Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, who when elected in 1993 represented an agenda of market-oriented development policy that was unique from those pursued by Koch or Dinkins. According to historian William Sites, "Giuliani's own political themes have vividly echoed many of the priorities of New York's corporate agenda, including greater subsidies to the financial sector and to the Downtown and Midtown Manhattan CBDs, weaker public oversight in land use, retrenchment and less equitable disbursement of education funding, selective privatization, and the removal of homeless people from publicly visible areas" (Sites 1997). In the context of a changing New York City real estate market, Giuliani's victory as New York's mayor in 1993 also represented a change in the relationship between business and city government, which historian Neil Smith describes as a crisis of social reproduction. "Amidst a restructuring of the relationship between capital and the state, a burgeoning crisis of social reproduction, and heightened waves of political repression, there is also a rescaling of urban practices, cultures, and functions in the context of changing global relations and a dramatically altered fate of the nation-state" (Smith 2002).

In addition to loosening restrictions on business and providing tax incentives to seek the needs of corporate interests, the Giuliani Administration became known for being 'tough on crime'. With a 44.3 percent drop in felonies between 1993 and 1997 and a 60.2

percent drop in murders and homicides during the same period, Giuliani took credit for New York City's role in reducing crime nationwide (Greene 1999). Much of this reduction on crimes in New York in the mid 1990s could be credited to the appointment of William Bratton, who served as Giuliani's New York Police Department (NYPD) Commissioner from 1994-1997. Bratton became known for the broken windows policy that he promoted throughout his tenure as NYPD Commissioner, a theory that claims that if disorderly conduct is not suppressed, it will attract predatory criminals to roam the city at will and lead to more serious crime problems. In their 1982 article, "*Broken Windows*," James Wilson and George Kelling describe the broken windows theory: "just as unrepaired broken windows can signal to people that nobody cares about a building and lead to more serious vandalism, untended disorderly behavior can also signal that nobody cares about the community and lead to more serious disorder and crime" (Wilson 1982). The city's broken windows, zero-tolerance strategy had tangible impacts on crime reduction in only a few years time, but also created a much more divisive police state and made residents increasingly distrusting of one another. As the chief of the New York Transit Police from 1990 to 1992, Bratton pursued a transformative policy of quality-of-life policing that was responsible for the arrests of thousands of young New Yorkers for fare evasion, which he credits with greatly reducing the possibility for more serious subway crime (Bratton 1996). In reality, the program led to the hyper criminalization of youth of color and a program of targeting public transit fare evasion, which constituted the highest number of arrests by the NYPD in 2015 – over 29,000, 92% of which involved people of color (Bailin and Maclin 2016).

While Giuliani's Administration promoted the 'tough on crime' stance they took in the mid 1990s and its ramifications for the country at large, there is a wealth of documentation supporting a rampant charge in police misconduct and abuse in New York City during this time. The human rights organization, Amnesty International, reported that the total number of citizen complaints filed annually with the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) increased more than 60 percent between 1992 and 1996 (Greene 1999). To this point, the Giuliani/Bratton campaign contributed heavily to a divisive relationship between communities in New York City, while mandating policing policies that are contrary to community needs and basic human rights.

Shifting Job Markets and Commuting Trends

Another major shift in New York City during the 1990s was changing employment patterns, in which workers are increasingly commuting within their borough or to another outer borough, while employment in Manhattan has decreased during this time. According to the *Behind the Curb* report produced by The Center for an Urban Future, growth in the healthcare and education industries in Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx has outpaced employment opportunities in Manhattan since 1990. The number of Brooklyn residents traveling to Queens for work has grown significantly since 1990, compared to an increase of only 13 percent of those commuting to Manhattan, while the number of Bronx residents traveling to Queens or Westchester County for work grew by 38 percent during this time.

Two of the most prominent industries experiencing growth during this period were health care and education, with significant development in the outer boroughs. According to the *Behind the Curb* report, New York City gained nearly 120,000 jobs in those two

sectors alone between 2000 and 2009 – and this growth is particularly pronounced in New York’s outer boroughs. During the economic boom between 2003 and 2008, Brooklyn had a bigger percentage increase in jobs than Manhattan did, while the Bronx gained 3,647 jobs during the economic recession of 2008-2009, during which Manhattan lost over 100,000 jobs (Byron 2013). This growth has increased the number of workers commuting within their own borough or in adjacent boroughs, making the NYC subway an inadequate transit mode for New York’s changed economy.

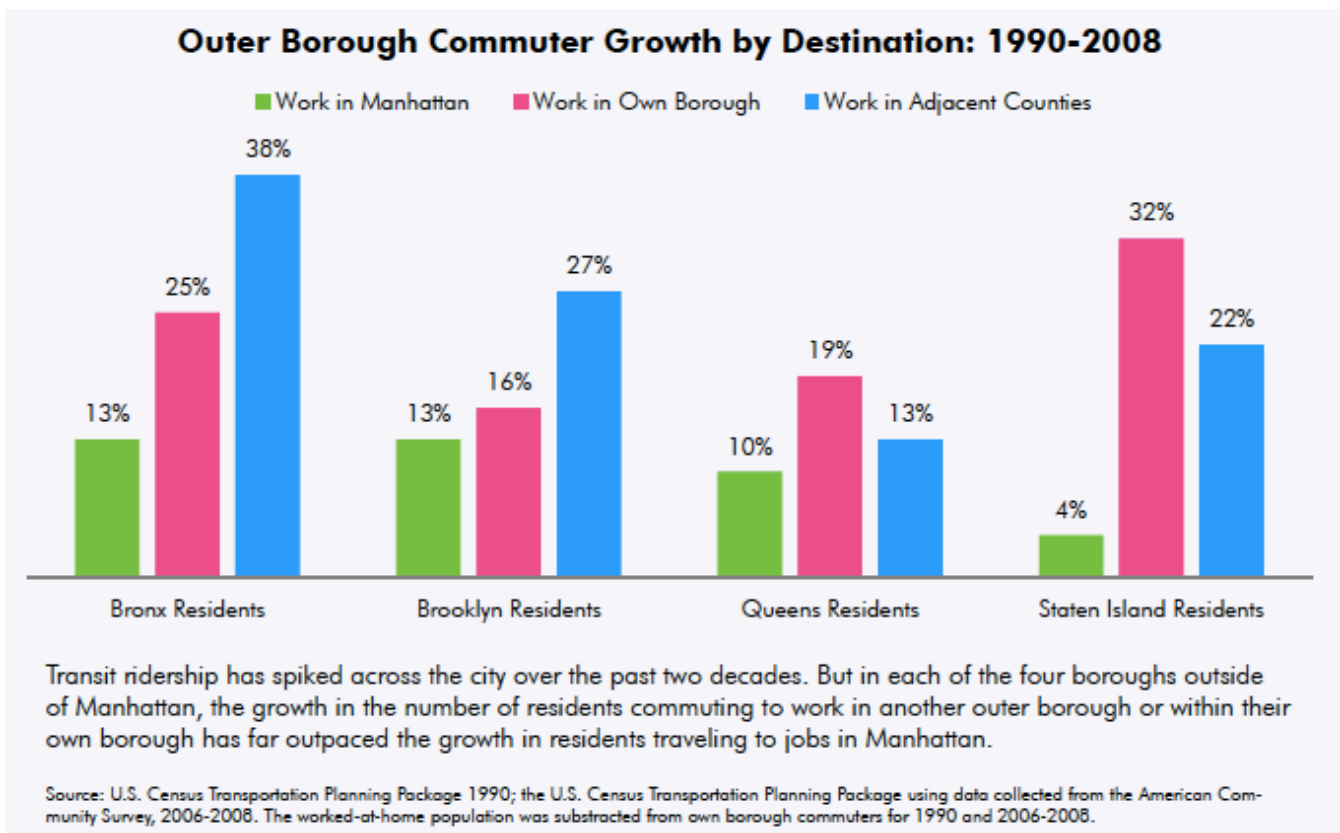


Figure Four: the Center for an Urban Future, *Behind the Curb* (2011)

“The transit system is all optimized as if everybody works in midtown Manhattan, south of 59th Street,” said Jonathan Peters, a transit expert at the College of Staten Island.

“The MTA seems to be under the impression that all job growth in the city is still occurring in the Manhattan Central Business Districts, but its not,” (Center for an Urban Future 2011).

Indeed, the fastest growing industries, health care, education and manufacturing, are all consistently moving towards parts of the outer boroughs that are difficult to reach by the subway. Though Manhattan is renowned for its many hospitals, particularly uptown, the growth experienced since 1990 has been in health care facilities such as New York Hospital in Flushing, Queens, who recently completed a new wing as part of a \$210 million modernization program, and SUNY Downstate Medical Center in the East Flatbush neighborhood of Brooklyn. Neither facility is particularly accessible by subway, and employees rely on the city’s bus service to travel to work.

In addition to health care, education has seen impressive growth in the outer boroughs. Between 2000 and 2009 the New York healthcare industry saw 85,648 new jobs in health care 31,789 jobs in education (Center for an Urban Future 2011). Manufacturing, too, has experienced significant increases in outer borough employment. Despite its overall decline in the city, 81,000 manufacturing jobs are now located in hard-to-reach districts in the outer boroughs,

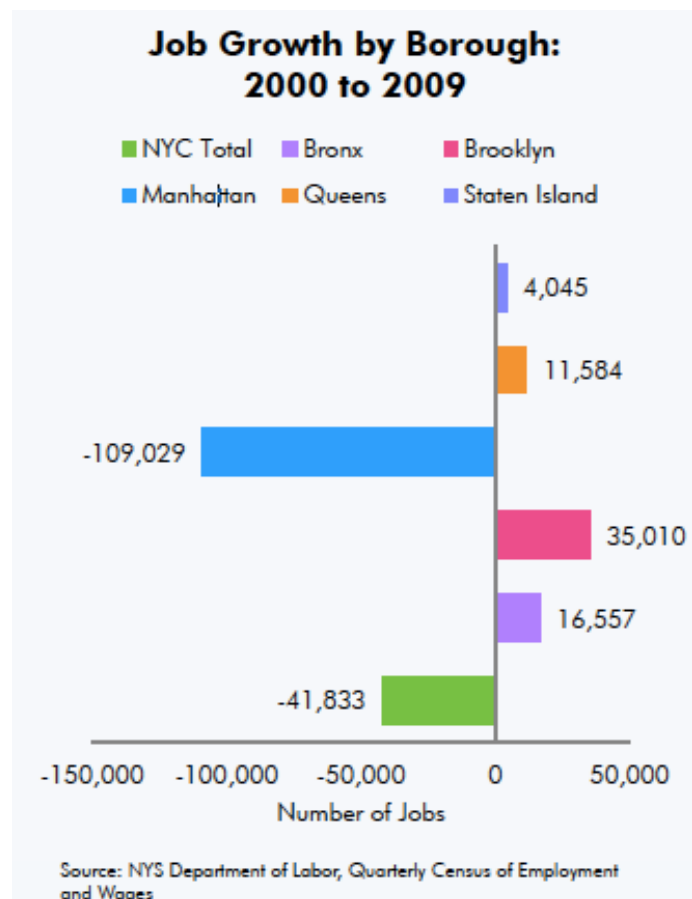


Figure Five: the Center for an Urban Future, *Behind the Curb* (2011)

such as College Point in northeastern Queens and Maspeth on the Brooklyn/Queens border. When considered along with the growth of airports, such as John F. Kennedy airport in southeastern Queens, which provides over 55,000 jobs, employment patterns have certainly changed since New York's transit system was created.

Though New York City lost 41,833 jobs between 2000 and 2009, the majority of this was concentrated in Manhattan due to the economic recession of 2008. The other four boroughs each experienced substantial growth, particularly Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Queens. For the thousands of employees who now commute between these boroughs, the Subway simply is not enough.

With the subway proving inadequate for New York City's modern job environment, more New Yorkers are traveling to work by bus. According to the MTA, bus ridership has increased by 60 percent since 1990, and transit planners predict future increases of possibly 30 percent or more per decade (Center for an Urban Future 2011). This has pressured the city's bus system, which has seen a steady decline in service over the past couple decades. Between 1996 and 2006, average bus speeds in New York slowed by 11 percent, from 9 mph to 8 mph, which is one of the slowest averages in the country (NYC DOT 2010). For those of whom the bus is the only option to commute to work, service this slow is a major drain of time spent in one's day, and for a city the size of New York, it's simply unacceptable.

These slow bus services contribute greatly to the horrendous commutes that New Yorkers endure. Residents of New York City already have amongst the longest commutes in the country, and low-income New Yorkers are much more likely to have long commutes than any other group in the city. Two thirds of New Yorkers who commute more than an hour to

work earn less than \$35,000 annually, and immigrants and people of color are much more likely than white New Yorkers to have long commutes.

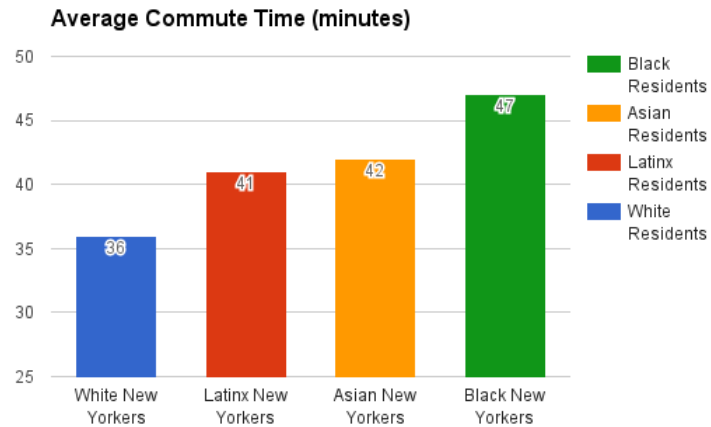
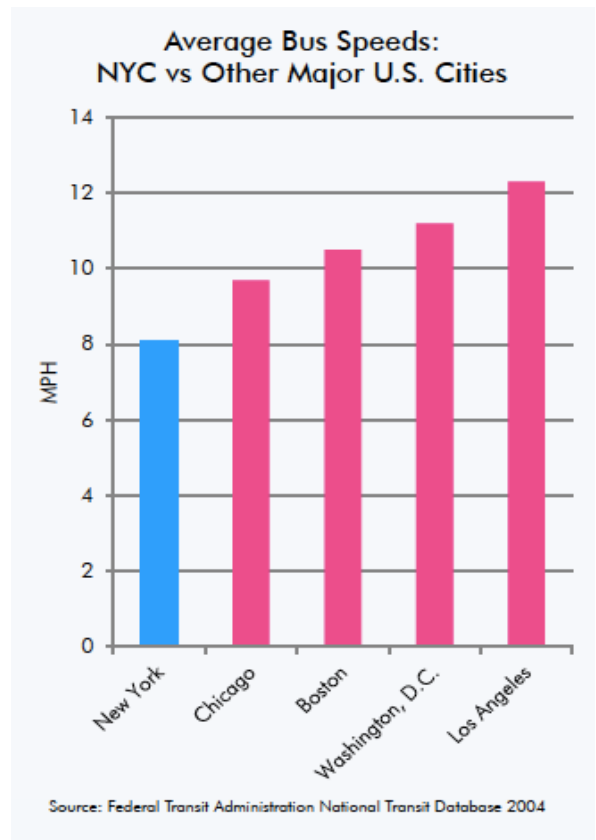


Figure Six: the Center for an Urban Future, *Behind the Curb* (2011)

For the millions of New Yorkers who live in the outer boroughs and rely on the bus to commute to jobs within their borough, the service is simply not to par with that of the subway, and like the subway – the bus fails to provide adequate interborough connections. While the bus operates as the main mode of transit for outer borough residents who work within their own borough, it fails to provide adequate service to workers who commute to other outer boroughs.

Figure Seven: the Center for an Urban Future, *Behind the Curb* (2011)



According to the *Behind the Curb* study, the number of commuters who cross the border between Brooklyn and Queens has increased by 15 percent since 1990, with nearly 160,000 commuters making the trip daily. Only 9 percent use the bus, without the majority either driving and taking a subway to Manhattan and transferring.

With a subway system that is failing to meet the needs of a changing outer borough economy and a bus system that is seeing increased ridership, the City needs to establish better and more efficient ways to get residents from their homes to work. One proposal that has gained traction is the implementation of Bus Rapid Transit, a proven model of highly efficient express bus service that was first introduced in Curitiba, Brazil, in 1974.

Responding to the need of New York’s changing job landscape and commuter trends, the Pratt Center for Community Development published a report, titled *Mobility and Equity: Impact of Transit Deficits for New York’s Underserved Neighborhoods*, which made the case for bus rapid transit in New York. The Pratt Center report identifies the major areas of job growth over the past couple decades, expressing the dire need for improving inter-borough transit options.

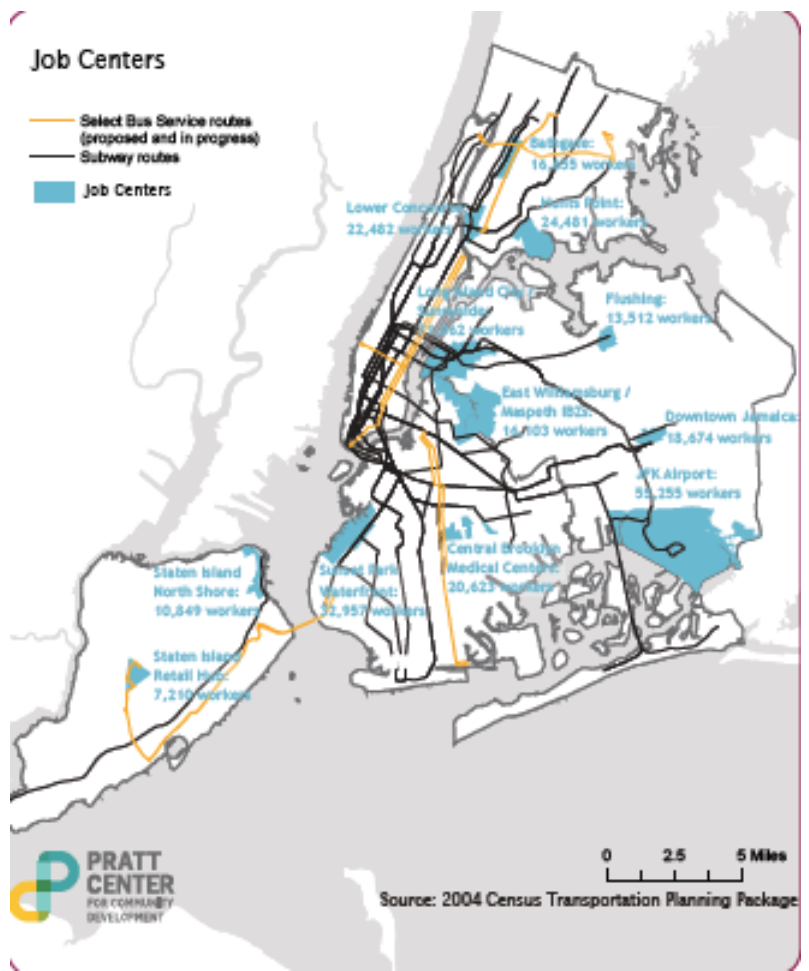


Figure Eight: Pratt Center for Community Development, *Mobility and Equity for NYCs Transit Starved Neighborhoods* (2013)

Mapping Transit Inequity

When I began my research on this thesis paper, I was particularly interested in how maps could be employed to express issues of transit equity. In order to document how a lack of accessibility to public transportation disproportionately impacts low-income residents and New Yorkers of color, I have created a series of maps using ESRI's Community Analyst online software. Using ESRI's ArcMap Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software, I collected subway station shape files from New York City's OpenData website, and created quarter-mile buffers around each station. For the purposes of this study, a transit accessibility measure of 0.25 miles was implemented, which is comparable to the 400 meters that transit scholars Saghapour, Moridpour, and Thompson established in their 2016 study (Saghapour, Moridpour, and Thompson 2016).

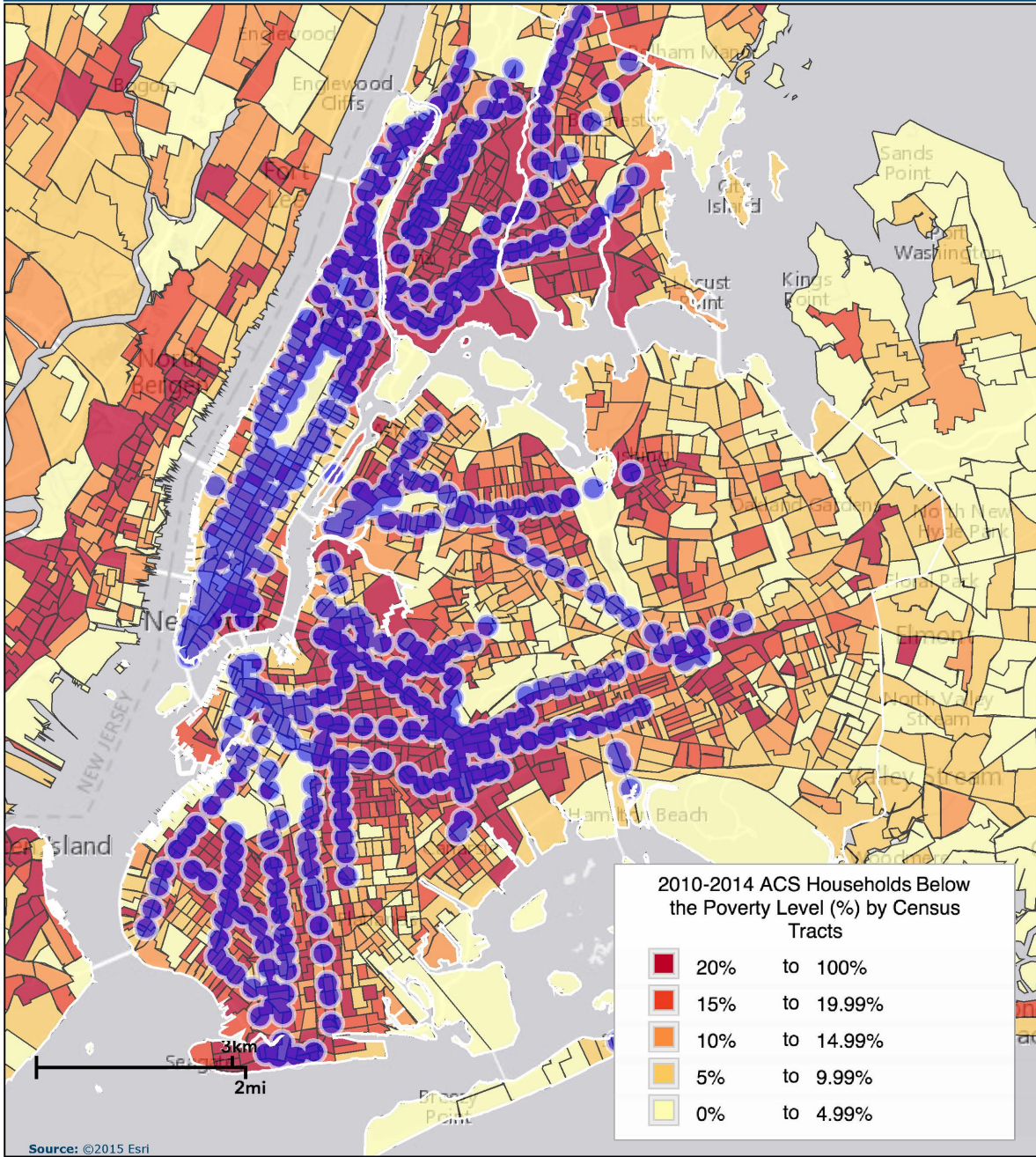
I then interpolated data from ESRI and the American Community Survey (ACS) into the Community Analyst, creating a series of maps that explore the relationship between the NYC subway system and low-income communities and communities of color. By creating a series of figures that reflects this disproportionate access to the New York City subway, I hope to express the very visceral cases of transportation injustice in New York City.

The first figure appearing on the following page is expressing census tracts of communities living below the federal poverty level. Tracts that appear in orange range from 10 percent to 20 percent of residents living below the poverty line, while the darkest shade of red symbolizes communities with over 20 percent of the population living in poverty. Neighborhoods in the South Bronx and Central Brooklyn have the highest concentration of residents living in poverty, and these areas are also amongst the most inaccessible from the city's subway system.



NYC Subway Deserts and % Below Poverty

2010-2014 ACS Households Below the Poverty Level (%) by C...



April 12, 2017

©2016 Esri

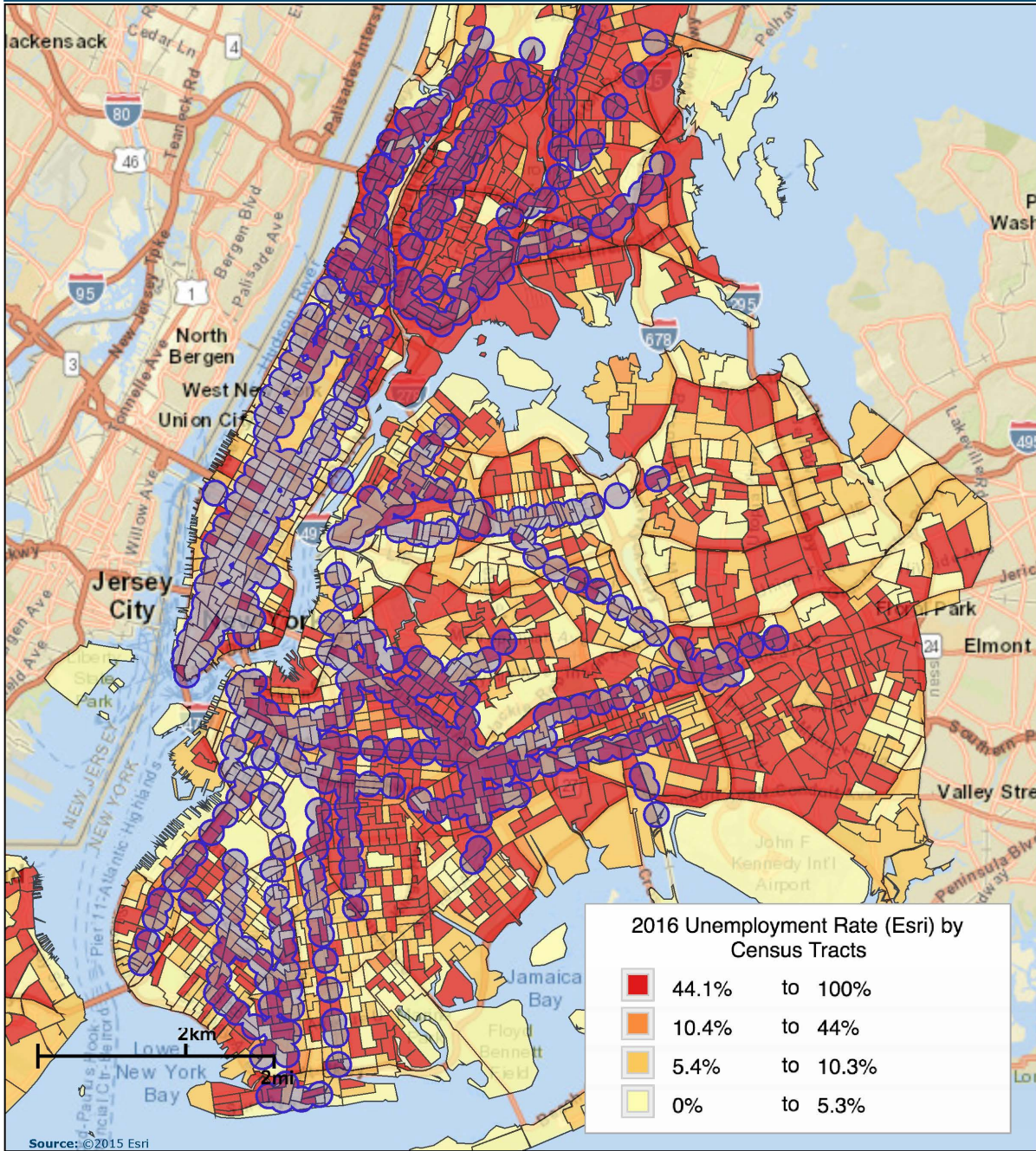
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Map One: the New York City Subway System and Communities Living Below the Federal Poverty Level



NYC Subway Deserts & Unemployment Rates

2016 Unemployment Rate (Esri) by Census Tracts



April 03, 2017

Map Two: the New York City Subway System and 2016 Unemployment Rates by Census Tract

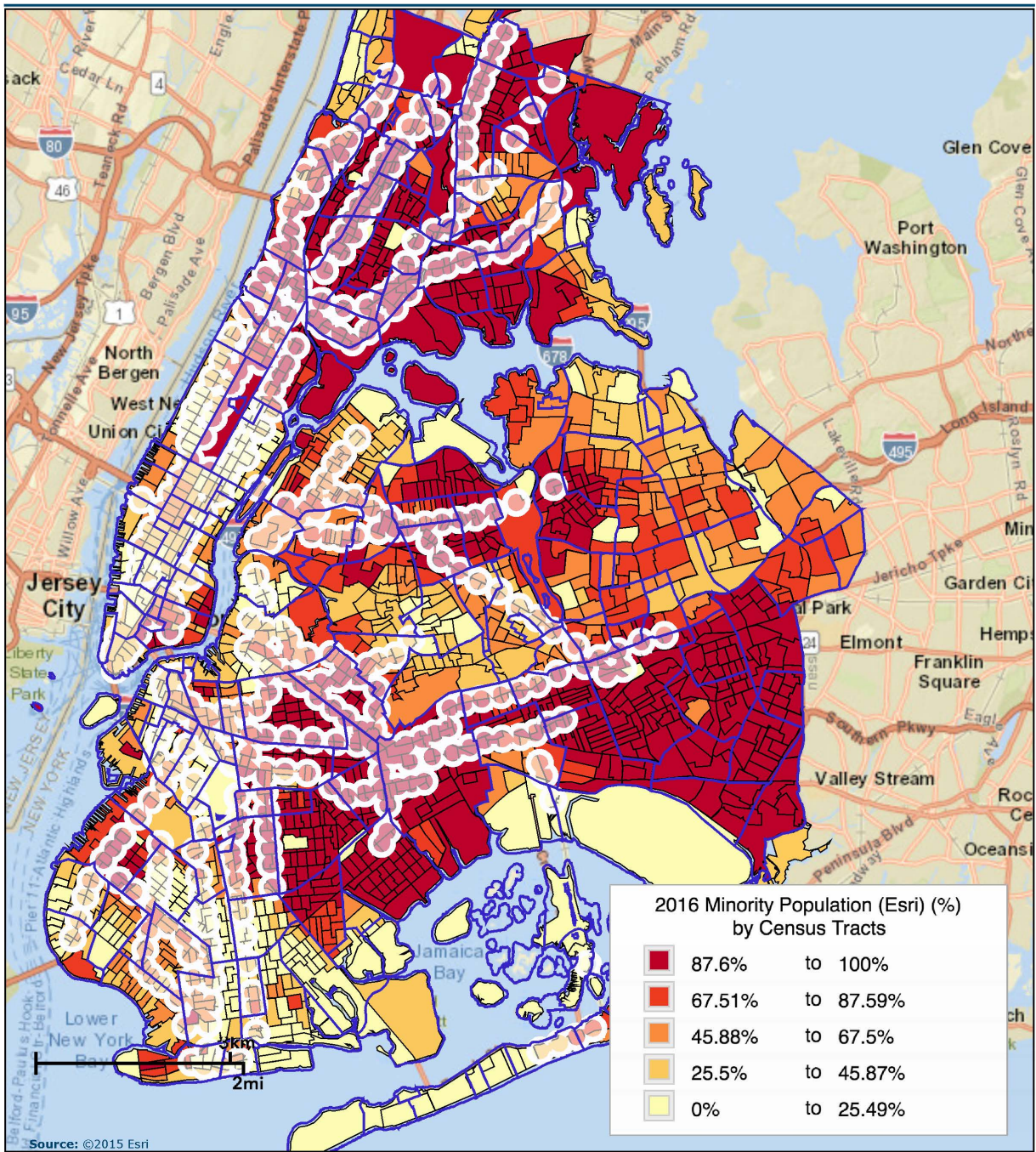
In map two, the quarter mile subway buffers are juxtaposed with Esri's Unemployment data for 2016. This research is primarily concerned with red census tracts, which represent neighborhoods living with at least 44 percent of working-age residents unemployed or without a stable source of work. These communities are most impacted by the rising fares of NYC public transit, and are considered the most transit dependent population in the city. The most significant findings from this map are the predominance of communities without access to employment opportunities in the outer boroughs of the city – in areas that have been historically marginalized, quite literally, to areas inaccessible to public transportation. In addition to the antiquated outer borough to Manhattan route formation of the subway, the recent employment shifts outlined in this chapter reflect why this inaccessibility to the subway leads to economic stagnation and unemployment.

This pattern of marginalization for low-income residents has a disturbingly close relationship to the racial makeup of New York's outer boroughs. Map Three reflects the current distribution of people of color in New York City, expressing an unequal distribution of transit resources. Large parts of the Bronx, Eastern Queens, and Southeastern Brooklyn are predominantly people of color, and the subway system fails to provide sufficient access to public transportation for these communities. In this figure, white circles represent quarter mile buffers around each subway station, superimposed onto census tracts representing the percentage of people of color. Map Four and Map Five reflect specific distributions of Black residents and Hispanic residents, expressing the subway's inability to adequately serve communities of color.



NYC Subway Stations and % Persons of Color

2016 Minority Population (Esri) (%) by Census Tracts



March 27, 2017

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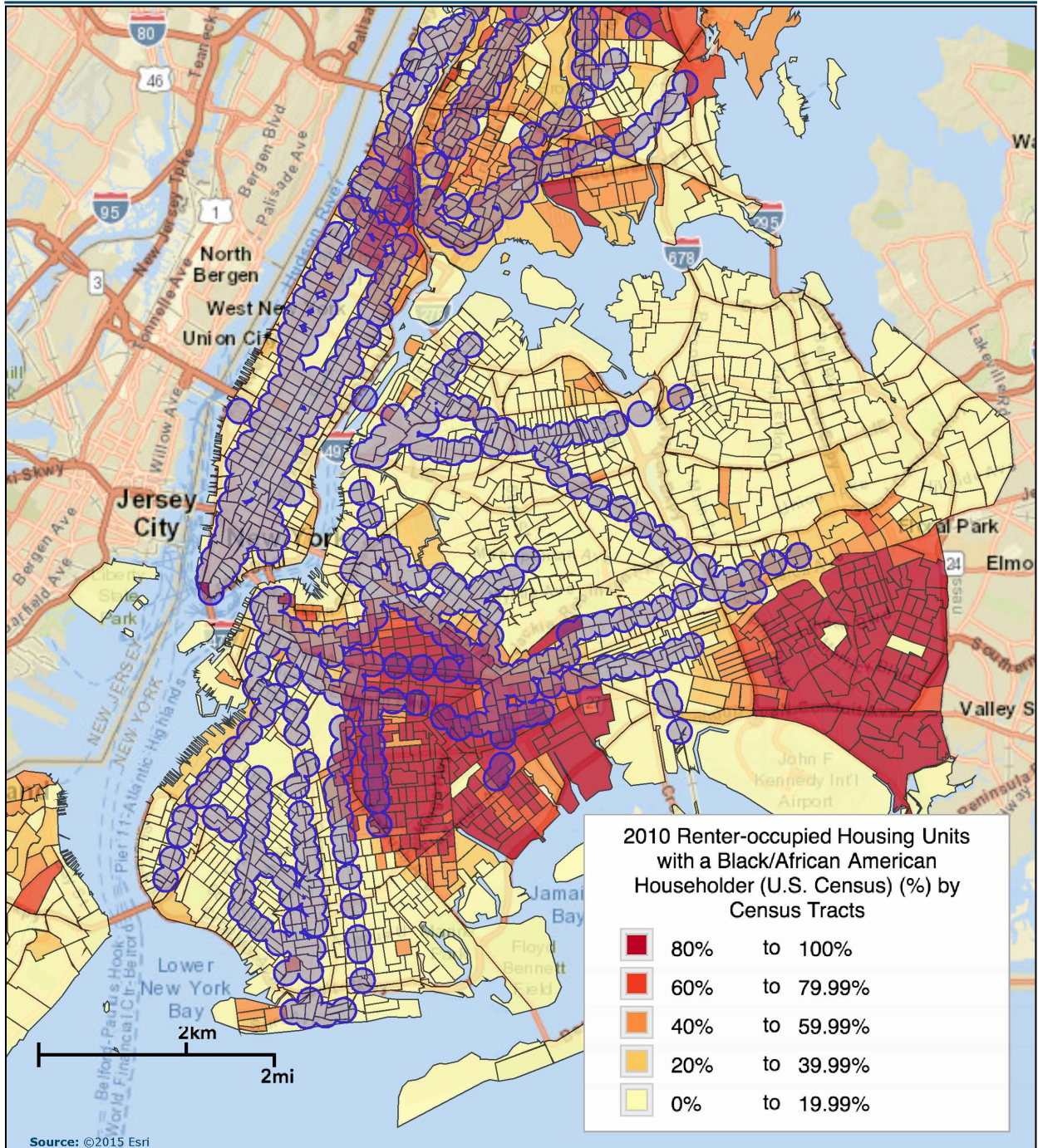
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Map Three: the New York City Subway System and 2016 Percent People of Color by Census Tract



NYC Subway Deserts and % Black Residents

2010 Renter-occupied Housing Units with a Black/African A...



Source: ©2015 Esri

April 02, 2017

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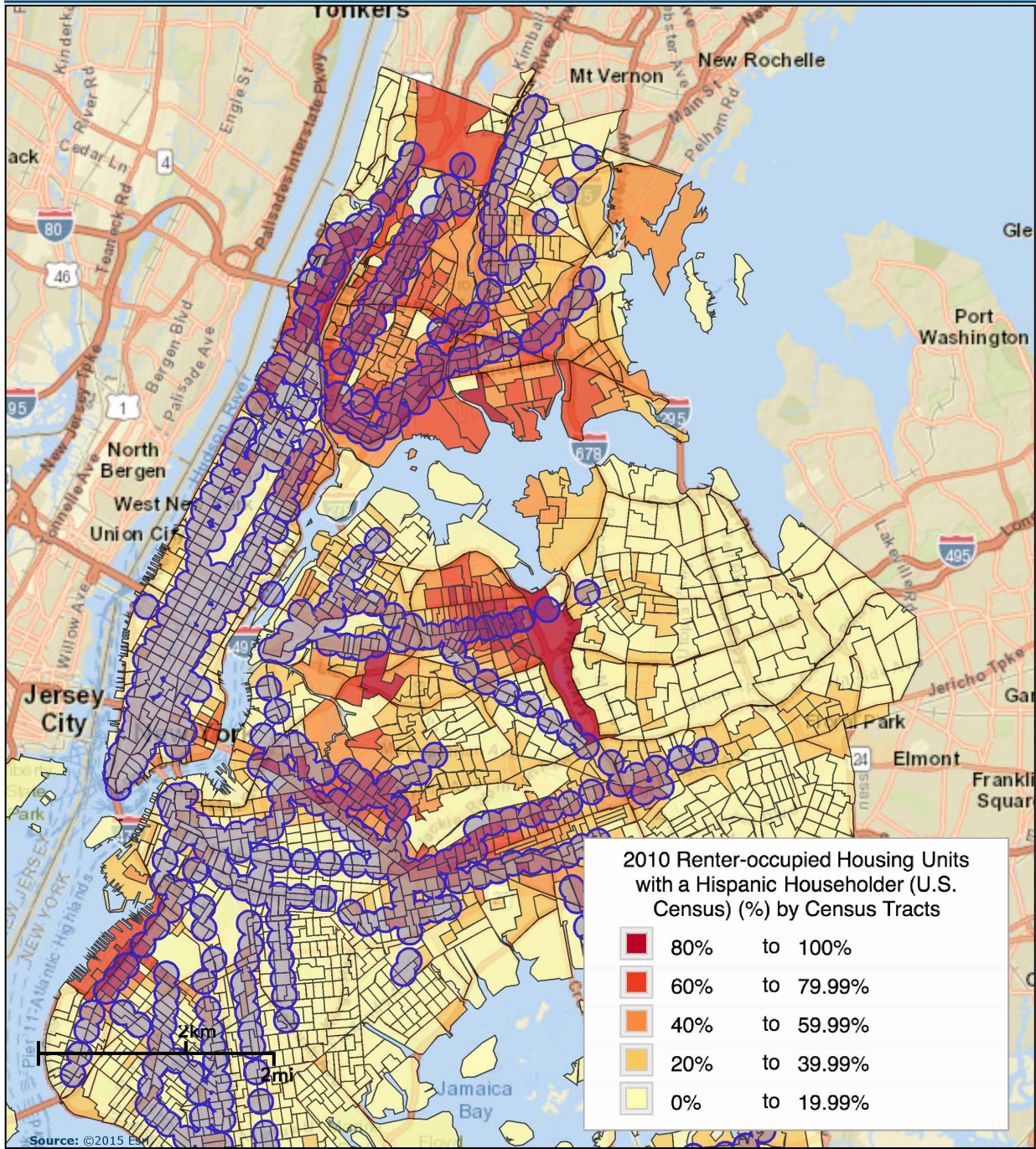
Page 1 of 1

Map Four: the New York City Subway System and 2010 Neighborhoods with Predominantly Black Renters



NYC Subway Deserts and % Latinx Residents

2010 Renter-occupied Housing Units with a Hispanic Househ...



April 03, 2017

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Page 1 of 1

Map Five: the New York City Subway System and 2010 Neighborhoods with Predominantly Hispanic Renters

Maps Three, Four and Five reflect the disproportionate lack of transit benefits that burden communities of color in New York City. In particular, maps four and five respectively represent the distribution of Black renters and Hispanic renters as of the 2010 U.S. Census, and the dearth of subway stations in many of these neighborhoods. Map Four conveys significant concentrations of Black residents in Southeast Brooklyn and Southeast Queens, regions of the city that are generally underserved by the NYC subway system. These areas also coincide with the distribution of neighborhoods with high levels of unemployment represented in Map Two. Map Five indicates a similar concentration of Hispanic residents in the South Bronx, Northern Queens, and Southwestern Brooklyn. These neighborhoods are generally in coastal and industrial areas, lacking access to decent public transportation.

Although the subway system was all but complete by the end of WWII, and many of these communities' demographics have changed significantly since then, this disproportionate distribution of transit benefits is an expression of environmental racism. I argue that the inability for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and New York City government to expand the subway system into these underserved regions, or to provide adequate alternative options, is a manifestation of transit discrimination. In future research, I plan to delve deeper into studying ways to measure transit equity issues and hope to expand on this research by continuing this thesis of maps representing transit injustices, while also incorporating other variables such as temporal considerations and learning ways to represent gentrification and displacement historically in my maps.

Conclusion

In the nearly three decades since the economic recession of the early 1990s, New York City has experienced remarkable changes in housing, employment and commuting patterns, which have exacerbated public transit inequalities that were already problematic in New York. This chapter has outlined the major policies that have impacted where New Yorkers live and work, and how they travel to and from their places of work. The growing influence of neoliberal planning policies, coupled with heightened cooperation between the city's mayors and the real estate industry, has led to a proliferation of gentrification in New York's outer boroughs, displacing low-income residents and isolating them in neighborhoods with inadequate access to public transportation. Policing tactics introduced by Commissioner Bill Bratton have led to the hypercriminalization of New Yorkers of color, and fare evasion policing tactics under the city's zero tolerance policies has cost the city a significant amount of fiscal resources. Finally, a reformed economy has moved workers to industries that are underserved by the city's public transportation system, creating a need for improved bus rapid service and other efficient alternatives.

The following chapter will review the various citizen-driven community organizations that have presented proposals and solutions to New York's transit equity woes. The majority of these groups have formed in response to the increasing inequalities in the public transportation nexus since 1990, and have gained traction in response to a growing lack of accessibility and affordability of transportation in New York City.

Chapter Five: TRANSIT ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Over the past few decades various organizations in New York City have advocated for heightened equity and fairness within public transportation. With a collective purpose of reforming the management and structure of transit affordability and accessibility, these organizations focus on issues of accessibility, affordability, and justice relating to New York City public transportation. Though the four community based movements discussed in this chapter each advocate for a particular set of issues within public transportation in New York City, they are all connected through their shared dedication to improving access and affordability for the city's most transit disadvantaged.

This chapter will begin by discussing the Fair Fares Campaign, which proposes a discounted MetroCard program for low-income New Yorkers. I will then review the demands of The Coalition to End Broken Windows, an organization that calls for an end to the Broken Windows policing philosophy introduced by NYPD Commissioner Bill Bratton in the 1990s, which has led to the hyper criminalization of New Yorkers of color. The subsequent section considers the Move NY Fair Plan, a partnership of organizations advocating for congestion tolls on bridges entering Manhattan to support new mass transit services and upgrades. The chapter will conclude by reviewing the Pratt Center for Community Development's report making the case for Bus Rapid Transit, building on the past success of express buses in many cities' new urbanism approach.

Building upon the distinct but interconnected issues of rising transit fares; discriminatory investment priorities by the MTA; a subway system that fails to support recent job growth in the outer boroughs; and hyper criminalization of New Yorkers for fare evasion; these organizations all fight for one shared value: transportation justice. I argue

that these community organizations are epitomizing the vision of planning the just city, including public participation and deliberative democracy in their organizational philosophy. All together these organizations represent a cohesive movement of New Yorkers who have been discriminated against and left out of the transit planning process, as well as their allies, who collectively have a unified vision – a just and fair system of transit that benefits us all.

“Fair Fares” Campaign for Reduced-Fare MetroCards

On April 10, 2016, local transit advocacy groups The Riders Alliance and The Community Service Society of New York submitted a report launching their “Fair Fares” Campaign. Their proposal to New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio and the City Council put forward a program offering half-fare MetroCards for riders below the federal poverty level (Bailin and Maclin 2016). The Fair Fares Campaign is the culmination of research discussed earlier that was conducted by the Community Service Society and The Riders Alliance, submitted a week after the proposal launch as a report titled “The Transit Affordability Crisis.” In this report, the organizations outline the burden that rising public transit fares impose onto hundreds of thousands of New York’s working poor. “For New York’s more than 300,000 working poor, transit expenses often exceed over 10 percent of their family budgets, limiting their ability to access jobs and forcing them to forgo other necessities,” the report states (Community Service Society 2016a). The Community Service Society also conducts annual surveys on transit equity in New York City, called “The Unheard Third”. Their 2015 Unheard Third Survey illuminates a clear class disparity over the modes commuters take to work. Poor New Yorkers (those living at or below the federal poverty

line) are the most transit dependent, 58% of who rely on public transit to get to work and around the city.

The near poor (which the CSS defines as families living between the federal poverty line, and 2x the federal poverty line) are nearly as dependent on public transportation, using subways and buses 56% of the time. Moderate income and higher income families rely on public transportation less, highlighting the fact that lower-income families are much more dependent on public transportation and are hit the hardest as fares increase, because they have fewer alternatives to the public transit system.

In the public release for the Fair Fares Campaign, David R. Jones, President and CEO of the Community Service Society, referenced the critical need for such a program. “Economic mobility and transit affordability go hand in hand. To get to work, pick up your kids from school, go to the doctor, to do almost everything you need to do in New York City to survive requires riding the subway or bus,” said Jones. The Transit Affordability Crisis report also noted that respondents to the 2015 Unheard Third Survey expressed that rising

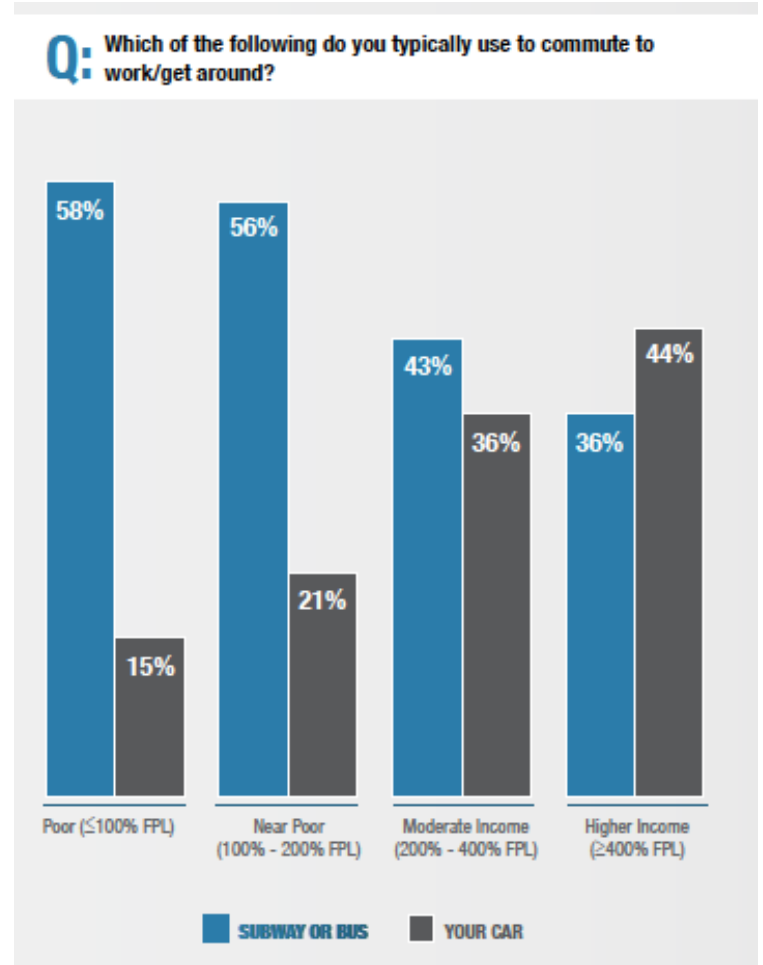


Figure Nine: The Community Service Society

fares are the biggest problem with subways in New York City, with 29% of respondents selecting this obstacle.

The rising costs of the subway and bus fare in New York City reflects the system's increasing lack of affordability that compromises hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers' ability to achieve good education, employment, and healthcare opportunities. In addition, the prohibitive cost of the subway or bus fares prevents low-income individuals from getting medical care, or exploring job opportunities outside of their community. According to CSS's 2015 Unheard Third Survey, 25% of low-income, working-age New Yorkers report rising fares preventing them from getting medical care, while 34% of low-income, working age New Yorkers said they have not sought employment outside their neighborhood because of prohibitive public transportation costs (Community Service Society 2016a). This inability to seek employment opportunity outside one's neighborhood is particularly challenging for low-income Latinos, out of whom 43% expressed that public transit fares restrict their job searches to a walking distance from their homes.

A particularly powerful component of the reports submitted by these organizations is the personal accounts that their members detail, providing an ethnographic authenticity that most studies fail to consider. In "The Transit Affordability Crisis", Leslie W., a 44-year old substitute teacher and Riders Alliance member from Central Harlem described the difficulty that rising transportation costs impose onto working class New Yorkers. Occasionally having to decline jobs because of transit fares, Leslie says the rising costs of transit "feels like an attack" on the working poor. "The hidden message is that the working poor should not be living in New York City," she reflected.

Another Riders Alliance member, Manny A., expressed similar sentiments in the Transit Affordability Crisis report. “You have to go through hurdles to get social services,” he said. Manny also reflected on the difficult choice many low-income New Yorkers must make, which is to jump the turnstile or enter through an open emergency exit. “Its not an easy choice, and I’m not the only one making it: lots of people in the neighborhood are getting arrested for hopping the turnstile. We need a program like this.” In fact, arrests for farebeating are now the most common arrest that the NYPD makes. According to Robert Gangi, Director of the Police Reform Organizing Project, farebeating arrests totaled 29,000 in 2015 alone. 92 percent of these arrests involved people of color (Bailin and Maclin 2016). “There arrests are, in effect, one of the principal ways that the city and the NYPD criminalize low-income New Yorkers of color,” said Gangi.

The Transit Affordability Crisis also outlines precedents that already exist for subsidized public transit for working Americans. CSS cites the Seattle ORCA Lift program, which offers half-price discounts on peak fare for Seattle residents earning below 200% of the Federal Poverty Line, and the San Francisco Low Income Lifeline Pass and Free Muni service, a half-price monthly pass for the city’s bus system for residents living below 200% of the Federal Poverty Line. Meanwhile, the New York City MTA already provides discounted MetroCard rates for students, the elderly, and the disabled.

In their 2014 Unheard Third survey, the Community Service Society found bipartisan support for their idea to offer half-price fares for low-wage workers. While the 82% of low-income respondents who favor a reduced transit fare is not surprising, the 58% of moderately high-income respondents who favor the concept is promising.

Additionally, 64% of respondents who identify as Republican also favor the idea, suggesting that a subsidized transit fare program could be quite popular in New York City.

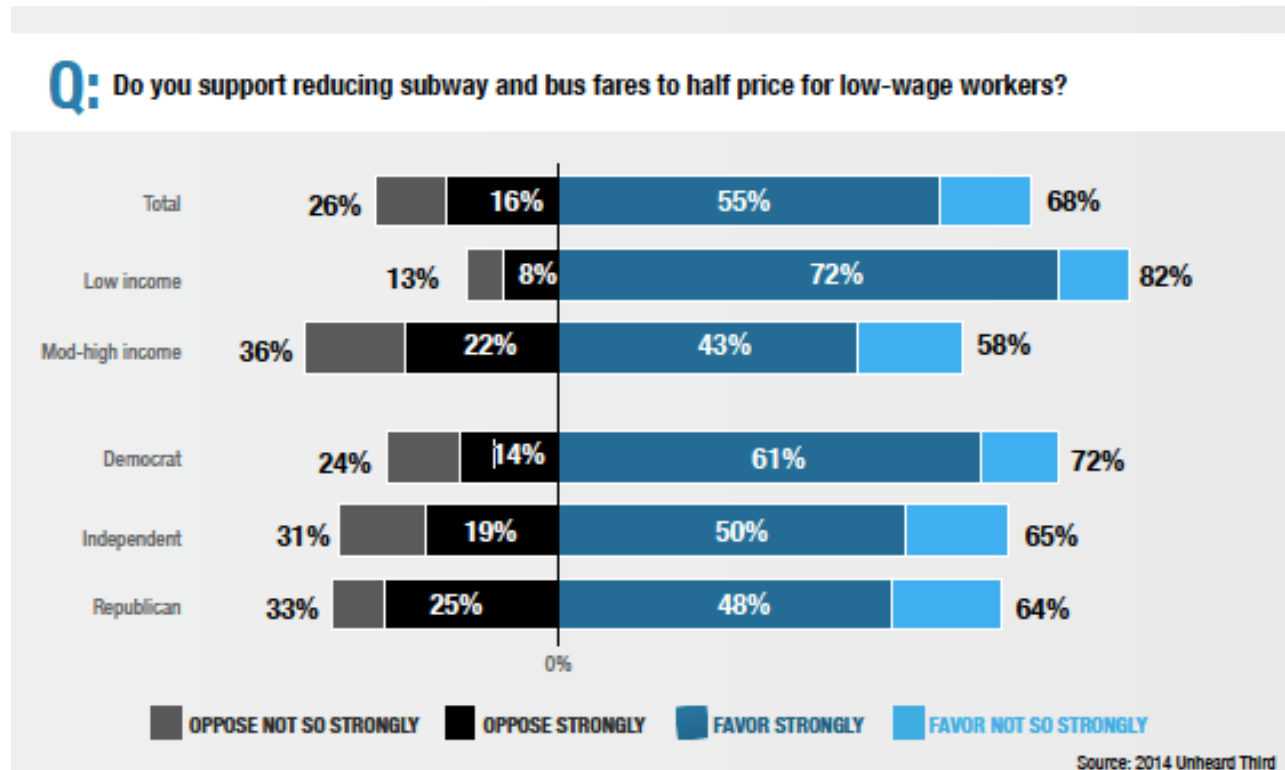


Figure Ten: The Community Service Society of New York

The proposal put forth by The Riders Alliance and The Community Service Society of New York called for half price MetroCards for all city residents between the ages of 18 and 64 in families with incomes below the federal poverty level. Though the results of the Unheard Third surveys suggest a need for reduced-fare transit opportunities for New Yorkers living at 200% of the federal poverty level and lower, the organizations assume that this proposal would more likely be enacted given its lesser cost in revenue. As is the custom of various public benefits administered by the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA), the proposal assumes that participants in this program would not

be required to be citizens or legal permanent residents to be eligible for discounted fares, and suggests that reduced-fare MetroCards be sold directly to participants from the MTA.

Riders Alliance and CSS propose that state and city funding sources be used to cover the foregone farebox revenues, estimated at roughly \$115 million during the first year of the program and \$194 million during year two once more eligible New Yorkers participate. The proposal suggests several funding options to make up this cost, namely a statewide gasoline tax, extending the current “millionaire’s tax”, or allocating funds from the city budget. A proposal like this would also alleviate the financial burden the City spends prosecuting fare beaters, which the New York Times estimates the City spent \$50 million for in 2016 (NY Times Editorial Board 2017). The Times also notes that reduced-fare MetroCards would also reduce the costs of detaining fare beaters at Rikers Island jail, another unnecessary cost taxpayers cover to criminalize low-income New Yorkers of color.

In a statement to Mayor Bill de Blasio on October 19, 2016, the Community Service Society of New York and the Riders Alliance, along with 24 other community organizations, 27 New York City Council Members, and two elected officials, expressed the critical need for a discounted transit fares program. “Upward mobility, made possible by commuting to good jobs and higher educational opportunities throughout our city, requires actual physical mobility. But that is becoming out of reach for one out of four low-income working-age New Yorkers who according to survey research often cannot afford bus and subway fares,” the letter stated. “The economic benefits of Fair Fares would help bridge the growing economic gap between the wealthy and the poor, promote a fairer public transit system, and build a more progressive city.”

The letter to Mayor de Blasio concludes by referencing the low-income reduced fare programs that San Francisco and Seattle have adopted, noting the potential for New York to be a keystone city in the transit equity movement. “New York City should lead the way in ensuring that turnstiles are the entry-point, not the barrier, to economic opportunity” (Community Service Society 2016b).

The Coalition to End Broken Windows

In response to the various ways in which the New York Police Department (NYPD) criminalizes New Yorkers of color, a group of community organizations formed to create The Coalition to End Broken Windows. Uniting to create a call to action to mediate the injustices created by the Broken Windows zero-tolerance policing philosophy introduced in the 1990s and discussed in the previous chapter, The Coalition to End Broken Windows has released a list of demands seeking to end quality-of-life criminalization and a divestment of the New York police force.

According to the coalition’s website, the Broken Windows policing program targets subway or bus fare evasion, performing in the subway, sleeping or taking up two seats in the subway, as well as various other low-level civil crimes. “Broken Windows encourages police to harass, racially profile, entrap, and produce mass police interactions, primarily but not exclusively, in low-income Black and Latino communities. This is often fueled by the NYPD’s well-known quota system and results in mass arrests, mass summonses, lost work days, jail time, barriers to housing, loss of child custody and even deportations” (End Broken Windows Coalition 2017). This program has continually targeted Blacks, Latinos

and other people of color in a disproportionate and discriminatory manner, as well as the homeless, the undocumented, and LGBT communities.

Amongst various actions that the coalition demands on their website is to invest in poor communities of color by creating a free MetroCard program for low-income New Yorkers. They call it the #SwipeItForward campaign, encouraging residents with unlimited MetroCards to offer others a free swipe on their departure from the subway. By helping their fellow New Yorkers with a free ride, the Swipe It Forward campaign protects low-income residents from the NYPD's #1 Broken Windows arrest: fare-evasion. Distinguishing this proposal from the Fair Fares proposal is the demand to provide unlimited MetroCards for free rather than half price, which would be doubling the lost revenue for the city but would also reduce arrests for fare evasion and saving the NYPD and transit police millions as well. Though this demand for free MetroCards to reduce the NYPD's targeting of people of color is very understandable, I argue that the strategy that the Fair Fares campaign puts forth is more likely to succeed in a polarizing political climate that condemns public support of social services.

The End Broken Windows campaign also demands a subway performer 'bill of rights' posted in every subway station, to prevent the routine harassment and arrest of New Yorkers for performing in subway stations. The coalition references Busk NY, a subway performer advocacy organization, which called for a 'Subway Performer Bill of Rights', pointing out the legality of freelance artistic performance in the New York subway system since 1985. Busk NY also calls for a moratorium on all arrests and ticketing of performers, including those performing on subways in operation. The End Broken Windows campaign has been endorsed by dozens of NYC based police reform community

organizations, including the Police Reform Organizing Project (PROP), Families for Freedom, and Black Lives Matter NYC.

While the Coalition to End Broken Windows and the Fair Fares campaigns both address the rising lack of affordability of the subway, neither organization details specific strategies to fund their proposals. One of the shortfalls of many community organizations faces is how to find fiscal resources to support their projects, and the following proposal would create a very significant source of funding for mass transit projects in New York City.

Traffic Congestion Tolls to Fund Public Transportation

A large concern of organizations working towards transit equity is finding ways to fund projects, such as the Fair Fares proposal and other plans to improve public transportation in New York City. Move NY, a grassroots coalition of neighborhood groups and advocacy nonprofits, submitted a proposal to the New York State Assembly called the Move NY Fair Plan. The Plan aims to mitigate traffic congestion, while also creating a large fund to improve transportation infrastructure in New York City. Led by former NYC traffic commissioner Sam Schwartz, the Move NY Fair Plan recommends a \$5.54 toll on four East River bridges connecting Manhattan with Queens and Brooklyn – which currently are free crossings, as well as an equal toll for all vehicles crossing 60th street in Manhattan.

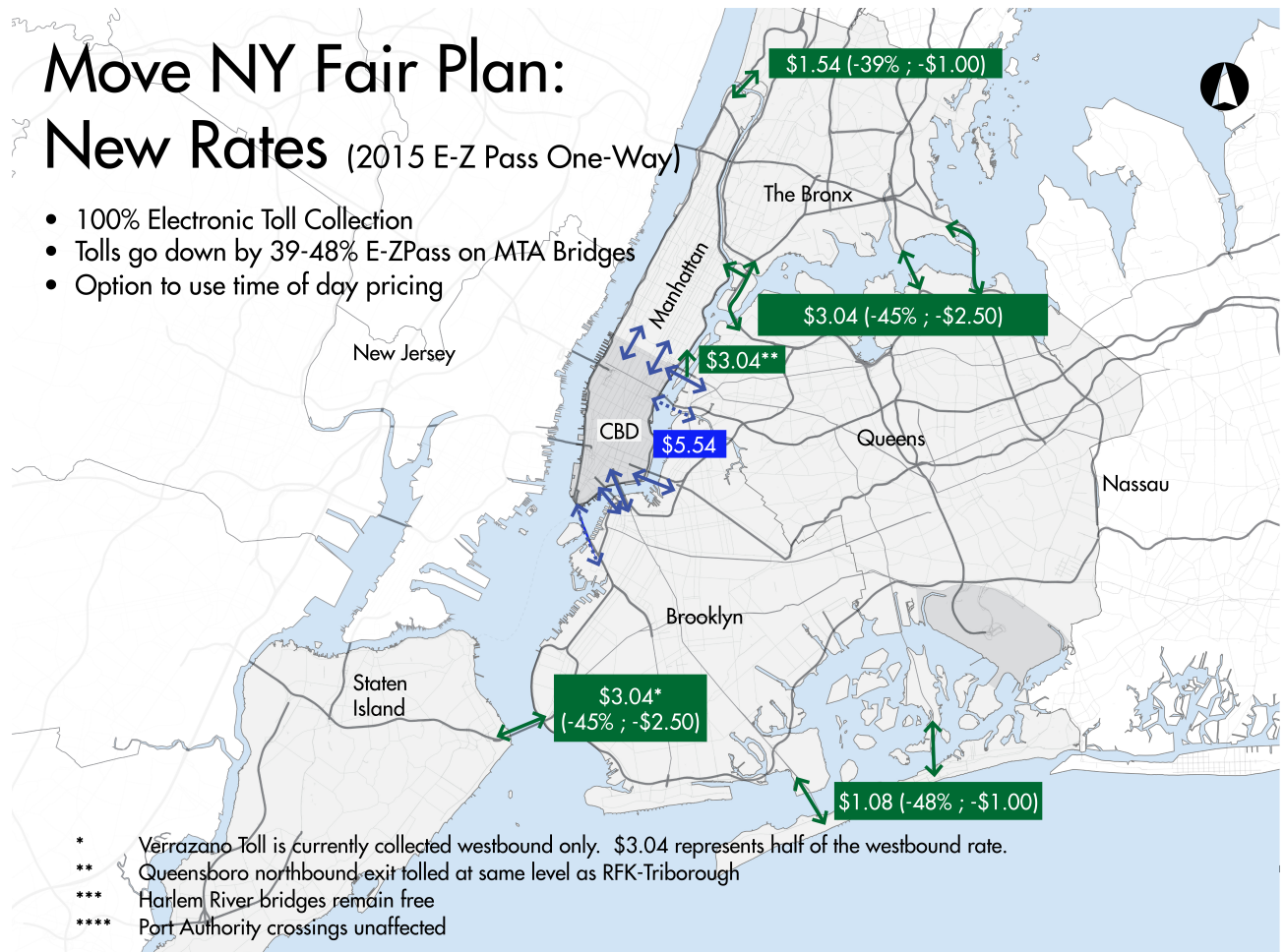


Figure Eleven: The Move NY Fair Plan (2015)

By introducing tolls at these points in the city, the City would be able to lower the toll on several more expensive bridges by \$3.04 in each direction, and would also create a \$1.5 billion transportation fund annually (Fitzsimmons 2015). Of this \$1.5 billion in anticipated annual revenue, 25 percent would be devoted to improving roads and bridges, with the remainder benefitting service upgrades on the City's worst subway and bus lines as well as adding new service in transit deserts. This proposal is monumental in its reach – the added revenue to New York City transportation projects would have the potential for the MTA to establish new routes in rapidly growing immigrant communities currently devoid of public transportation.

The Move NY Fair Plan is supported by New York State Assembly member Robert J. Rodriguez, a representative of East Harlem. Rodriguez introduced legislation to create a \$4.5 billion Transit Gap Investment Fund, specifically to alleviate transportation issues in transit deserts, many areas of Queens, south Brooklyn and Staten Island, which currently are underserved by buses and not served at all by the subway. The Fund would create new bus service and reduce fares on express buses, and would also provide funding to neighborhood community boards to invest in local projects like bike lanes, bus depots, public plazas and station repairs (NY Times Editorial Board 2016). “It’ll go towards real, localized projects, ones identified and prioritized and decided upon at the community level,” explained Assembly member Rodriguez. “It changes how decisions about transportation are made historically” (McArdle 2016).

One of the promising proposals for new subway lines is the Triboro Rx, hypothesized by the Regional Plan Association (RPA) to connect Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx. Currently there is no rail that links the three boroughs, but supporters are encouraged that the MTA could utilize the existing 24 miles of existing rail tracks owned by Amtrak, CSX and the MTA. Bringing together neighborhoods from Co-Op City in the northern Bronx to Bay Ridge in Brooklyn, passing through various neighborhoods lacking public transit currently, the Triboro Rx is estimated to serve an initial daily ridership of 100,000 people (NY Times Editorial Board 2016).

The RPA’s report titled “The Triboro” outlined the various potential benefits the City and its residents would gain from this proposal. Intersecting 17 subway lines and four commuter rails, the Triboro would connect large centers of retail and recreation, improve public health, and could be a major force to protect the city during natural disasters like

Superstorm Sandy, when underground rail is rendered inoperable (Regional Plan Association 2017).



Figure Twelve: The Regional Plan Association, *“The Triboro”* (2017)

In the report, the RPA references the success of mixing freight and passenger rail operations in Chicago, and also cites the London Overground: a circumferential rail system opened in 2010 that carries more than half a million daily passengers from London’s outer boroughs to the Tube, as precedents for why the Triboro proposal would work.

The Triboro Rx plan also proposed an additional conversion of unused commuter rail tracks to a new subway line, connecting the Atlantic Terminal in Brooklyn and Rosedale in Queens using existing Long Island Rail Road tracks. These new services would greatly improve transportation opportunity and mobility for neighborhoods in Brooklyn and Queens, which are currently devoid of public transportation options. They would also

stimulate the economy of the various outer borough communities they connect, and would alleviate overcrowding on subways and buses.

Bus Rapid Transit to Patch Transit Deserts

Some organizations view proposals for subway expansion in outer boroughs as unrealistic and instead argue for improved bus services. A report by the Pratt Center for Community Development, a Brooklyn community-based advocacy organization, titled “Mobility and Equity for New York’s Transit Starved Neighborhoods” argues for the implementation of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). Bus Rapid Transit offers cities cost-effective solution to transit-deprived

neighborhoods that can be implemented at a fraction of the time and cost of light rail. According to the report, BRT features designated bus lanes along central medians, minimizing traffic congestion as well as parking and safety issues; traffic signal priority and turn restrictions, to maximize speed and safety; and safer stations that provide real-time data and reduce loading and unloading time.

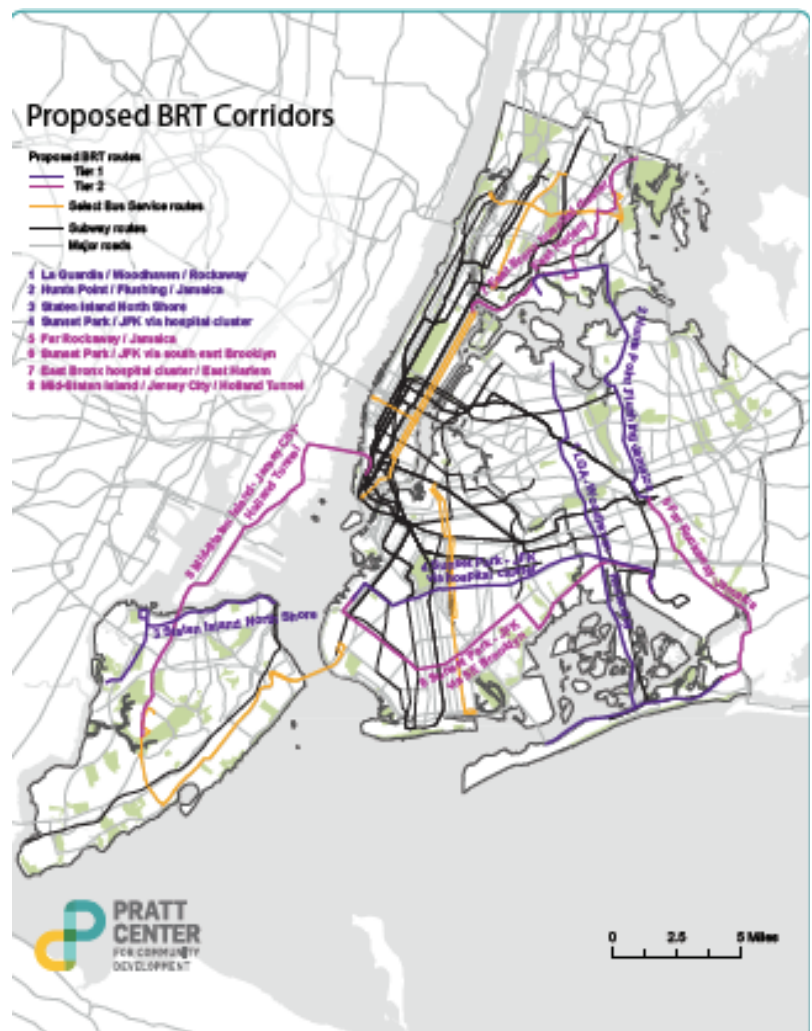


Figure Thirteen: Pratt Center for Community Development, “Mobility and Equity for New York’s Transit Starved Neighborhoods” (2013)

The report recommends eight new, full-featured BRT corridors serving New York's four outer boroughs, selected on their potential benefits and physical feasibility for BRT. It suggests that these areas are in particular need of superior public transportation options, given recent population growth and widening of income inequality. "Many transit-poor neighborhoods that have experienced population growth during the past decade have also experienced declines in local median incomes, along with increases in average household size and percentage of multi-earner households," the report states. "As it becomes less possible for families to afford housing on the income of a single earner, households increasingly include extended families in which several adults work part-time or full-time."

The Pratt Center's report also highlights recent changes in employment patterns, for which the subway does not adequately serve. Since the subway system was nearly completed by the Second World War, it reflects the employment patterns of that time: where workers in the outer boroughs commuted to Manhattan. Intra-borough commutes have become increasingly common, but a lack of subway options and underperforming bus services has made these commutes unbearably slow. According to the *Behind the Curb* study by the Center for an Urban Future referenced in the previous chapter, New York's outer boroughs have seen significant job growth over the past two decades, while employment in Manhattan has declined. Between 2003 and 2008, Brooklyn had a bigger percentage increase in jobs than Manhattan did, and during the recession of 2008-2009, the Bronx gained 3,647 jobs while Manhattan lost 100,799 jobs in that one year alone (Center for an Urban Future 2011). A major force in these changes is the growth in healthcare and education, which have provided thousands of jobs in the outer boroughs over the past few decades.

With the increased job growth in the outer boroughs, the MTA predicts significant increases in bus ridership, which will place more pressure on the already lackluster city bus performance. Bus ridership has increased by 60 percent since 1990, and transit planners believe that future increases of 30 percent or more per decade are a reasonable, maybe even conservative assumption (Center for an Urban Future 2011). During this time period, buses have become notorious for unpredictable schedules due to traffic and a lack of resources. Providing superior bus service to these rapidly growing industries is an essential duty of the MTA.

Pratt's report arguing for Bus Rapid Transit claims that it has the potential to catalyze communities in a manner similar to streetcars or light rail, at a fraction of the cost and time needed to implement. "New research shows that systems incorporating dedicated lanes, well-designed stations, and networked routes not only provide the greatest improvements in travel time and user satisfaction," the report states. "Their permanence can transform BRT corridors, leveraging residential and commercial density, economic revitalization and environmental quality" (Byron 2013). Bus Rapid Transit has the potential to provide an efficient means of transportation for residents of neighborhoods underserved by current bus infrastructure, and would also greatly improve the safety and economic vitality of these communities. It would also serve as a short-term solution to mediate a lack of public transportation in the outer boroughs, which could in the coming decades be complemented by an outer borough light rail, like the Triboro Rx. Furthermore, the implementation of BRT would signal the City's commitment to serve its most transit dependent citizens looking to get ahead.

Scholars have argued that the implementation of BRT could lead to the gentrification of areas that previously had poor transit service (Zuk et al. 2015) (Brown 2016). One of the weaknesses of the Pratt report is the lack of attention given to consider how their proposal could impact this process, however there is a mention in the Appendix of the report, stating that “the experience in other cities has been that BRT has not triggered land speculation or gentrification,” (Byron 2013). While its good that the report did have this reference, additional discussion of this possibility is important.

Chapter Six: CONCLUSION

The increasing inaccessibility of New York City's public transportation system has profound ramifications for the city's working poor, who are disproportionately immigrants and people of color. Throughout the history of the New York subway system, the interests of those in power have been to maximize transit ridership to support the needs of employment centers and industry. As jobs have shifted to the outer boroughs, the city's subway system has become obsolete as a means of transporting residents to their places of work. Politicians have promoted policies that have further marginalized low-income residents to the fringes of the city's transit system, isolating thousands of New Yorkers from decent employment and education opportunities.

This thesis has argued that, through its inheritance from for-profit corporations, the New York City Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) has failed to shed its for-profit, capitalist ideology. By devoting fiscal resources to urban freeway projects and suburbanization, civic leaders in the decades following WWII expressed a visceral priority that serving suburban commuters who are on the whole wealthier than their urban counterparts is what is most important to them. This priority is particularly evident in the MTA's dedication to subsidizing the suburban commuter rail at a rate higher than the city's mass transit systems, reflecting an emphasis on the bottom line and profitability. I have argued that the Metropolitan Transportation Authority operates in a manner that views its riders as consumers or customers, rather than as citizens deserving of transit service that is affordable and serves their needs. In this way, the MTA is an agent of transit inequity in New York City.

The public infrastructure that urban planners and city and state politicians create leaves behind a legacy that can significantly impact or hinder a community's ability to prosper. In the case of the NYC subway, there have been various causes and effects that have had positive and negative reverberations throughout the city. In New York, historical urban renewal policies and suburbanization divided the city, which has been exacerbated by gentrification in more recent years, pushing low-income communities further into isolated regions, deprived of decent access to public transit. Subway and bus fares have raised dramatically over the past few decades, creating a system that fails to meet the needs of the working poor, who are disproportionately immigrants and people of color.

Amongst the robust literature surrounding transit equity worldwide, there is a dearth of scholarship that explores equity issues relating to the New York City subway system. Positioning this research in the context of the global literature on transit equity and transportation justice, I have brought together considerations of citizen-based grassroots transit advocacy organizing and the importance of these efforts towards reforming New York's transportation system to meet the needs of all. By synthesizing these transit advocacy movements, this research promotes the efficacy of community organizing as a method to promote social justice and equity, particularly within the public transportation planning process.

In order to effectively engage in an intersectional movement, transportation justice scholarship must consider the efforts of community organizations advocating for equity and fight for heightened inclusion of historically marginalized voices in the transportation planning process. Congressman John Lewis, renowned for his leadership during the civil rights movement, argues that while explicit signs and policies discriminating against

people of color have been removed, invisible signs still exist today. “Neighborhoods in every major city in America still post invisible signs that say: ‘Poor People and people of color are not welcome.’ The signs may be invisible, but the message is real... When we remove invisible race and class barriers that divide our society, only then will we have just transportation for all Americans,” (R. D. Bullard and Johnson 1997).

Further research should be conducted assessing the impact of transit inequity on isolation and economic stagnation among marginalized communities. Studies that utilize ethnographic accounts are particularly convincing, as they bring abstract ideas to the forefront and personalize inequality in a way that statistics alone cannot. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) provide an effective tool to measure transit isolation as a spatial analysis, and future studies should take advantage of the wealth of data and statistics for New York City, acting as a complement to ethnographic accounts. This research hopes to position itself in the larger context of transit equity scholarship worldwide, where it aspires to encourage scholars to work alongside community organizations to advocate for a more equitable system of transit in New York City as soon as possible.

There is no silver bullet solution for addressing transit equity issues. Improving social services, such as public transportation, can often result in an appreciation of housing values and a consequential wave of gentrification. The introduction of Bus Rapid Transit has also stimulated gentrification for neighborhoods that receive improved transit service, marking an important question that urban planners and transit advocates must make: how can we improve the conditions of underserved communities without advancing processes of gentrification and displacement?

By conducting this research project, I had three objectives in mind. I wanted to research the history of the development and management of New York's subway system, a legacy that I have been interested in since I was young. My second goal was to explore how my perceived inequities relating to public transportation in New York City came to be, and to study the history of policy decisions that created this dichotomy of transit resources. Finally, my third objective was to explore the movements of citizen-driven, grassroots community organizations that are advocating for transit equity in New York City, and pay homage to their efforts. Oftentimes the lessons of academia are weighed heavily with content that is demoralizing for their participants, leading to activist burnout and feelings of helplessness. Through this review of what organizations are doing on the ground to combat transit inequity and other injustices, I hope to encourage my audience to consider the ways that we can resist the wrongdoings that we experience and fight for what we believe is right.

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