

What's Better, What's Worse During Bloomberg's Administration

by Bruce Schaller

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New Yorkers' experience of the transportation system has changed since the current mayor took office. That is clear from the newly released mayor's management report, which emphasizes the administration's accomplishments, but in fact presents both good and bad news.

(Except as noted, all figures compare fiscal year 2004, which ended this past June, with fiscal year 2001, during which the mayor took office.) **Better**

* Traffic fatalities declined by 15 percent to 330. There were declines in every category: motorists/passengers, bicyclists/pedestrians and those related to driving while intoxicated. New York City now has about one-half the number of traffic fatalities per 100,000 residents as do Los Angeles and Cook County (which includes Chicago).

* Bridges that are rated very good or good increased from 14.7 percent to 27.8 percent as a result of comprehensive preventive maintenance and rehabilitation programs. Subway service on the Manhattan Bridge doubled as a decade-plus of work on that bridge was completed. However, the amount of bridge painting - a simple but essential maintenance function - declined by 17 percent.

* Slightly fewer people are running red lights at camera-equipped intersections: Notices of Liability issued from red light cameras declined seven percent.

* Travel time on through streets in Midtown declined by about two minutes, to six minutes and 31 seconds since launch of the program in October 2002. The Thru Streets program restricts some vehicular turns off of nine streets between 34th and 60th streets on weekdays from 10 am to 6 pm.

* One hundred percent of intersections have LED lenses and international pedestrian signals; there were none three years ago. The LEDs are brighter, use less electricity and last longer than their predecessors. **Worse**

* Streets maintained with a pavement rating of "Good" fell from 82.2 percent to 74.3 percent. Ratings declined in all boroughs even as the number of pothole repairs increased by 57 percent, to 190,000.

* The cleanliness rating of city-franchised, privately operated buses dropped from 96.8 percent to 70 percent. City officials blamed this decline on labor issues and the pending (and repeatedly postponed) transfer of the program from the city Department Of Transportation to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

* Average response time to traffic signal defects increased from one hour 37 minutes to two

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hours and 35 minutes. These are required to be fixed within two hours.

* On-time trips on the Staten Island ferry declined from 97 percent to 93.4 percent due to heightened security procedures, mechanical problems on aging boats, terminal construction and a fatal accident in October 2003.

* Taxicab service complaints increased 46 percent. This increase might be in part due to greater public awareness of the 311 complaint number, which began taking taxi complaints last October. But the profile of complaint by type suggests that service quality worsened in some areas but not others. Complaints for service refusals increased by 59 percent; for violation of traffic rules complaints increased by 59 percent. Complaints for overcharging increased by much less (16 percent) and the number of complaints about rude or abusive cab drivers was essentially unchanged.

* "Adoption" by businesses of arterial highway segments fell from 93.1 percent of the system to 62.2 percent. The business community evidenced a lack of interest in this program to sponsor the cleaning of highway segments. **About the same**

* Operable on-street parking meters as a percentage of all meters inched up from 90.7 percent to 91.6 percent. The chance of finding a non-working parking meter was essentially unchanged as the percentage of parking meters that are electronic nearly doubled, from 58 percent to 96 percent. Evidently, the electronic meters work just as well as the old mechanical parking meters. **Better or worse? - depends on your point of view**

* Summonses issued for moving violations fell by 11 percent to 1,252.

* Parking violation summonses increased by 16 percent to 8,859 summonses. The number issued by police officers declined slightly, more than offset by increased issuance by parking enforcement officers.

* Vehicle tows increased by 13 percent to 117,189.



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