

MONTHLY ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Planning and Regional Development Department

THE PORT AUTHORITY OF NY & NJ

November 2017

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NYC Accessible Transportation?

It is no secret that the New York City transportation network is currently in dire straits. As documented in the New York Times recently, the public transit system in the city is groaning under the weight of a booming population and a long history of financial neglect, and service has markedly deteriorated across a broad array of metrics. However, for those who live, work, or travel to New York City and have physical disabilities, the city has always been a difficult place to get around. According to 2015 census data 6.7%¹ of New York City residents have an “ambulatory difficulty,” a proportion that is sure to grow as the population ages. Finding ways to better incorporate these residents into the city is of paramount importance.

Currently, just 23% of subway stations have elevators. Though this is an improvement over 2008 when only 16% were wheelchair accessible, the remaining stations are entirely inaccessible to riders in wheelchairs [or infant strollers for that matter] and pose significant challenges to riders with other physical disabilities. This 23% figure, however, masks wide spatial inequalities in the distribution of ADA-accessible subway stations: while more than 38% of stations located below 110th Street in Manhattan have elevators, just 17% of stations elsewhere in the system are similarly equipped. The concentration of elevators in high-traffic stations is understandable, but ignores where most New Yorkers with disabilities actually live. Manhattan’s 34% share of ADA accessible stations far outweighs its 18%² share of New York City residents with an ambulatory disability.

The problems don’t end with too-few stations with elevators. An audit earlier this year from New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer’s office detailed just how much more work the state-run agency needs to do to keep the elevators it does have in good shape. The MTA has a stated goal of 96.5% availability for elevators throughout the subway system, a number it is struggling to hit. The audit revealed that a third of scheduled maintenance was performed either late or not at all, and concluded that NYCT “cannot ensure that its 407 elevators and escalators are presently, and will continue to be, in good operating condition.”³

¹ U.S. Census Bureau (2015). Disability Characteristics.

² U.S. Census Bureau (2015). Disability Characteristics.

³ Stringer (2017).

THE WATCHLIST

Economic Variables

Current - One Year Trend

UNITED STATES

			Oct 2016 - Oct 2017
Real GDP [Annual Rate]	Q3 2017	3.3%	
Unemployment Rate	Oct-17	4.1%	
Consumer Price Index [Annual]	Oct-17	2.0%	
Gasoline Price [Regular]	Nov-17	\$2.56	

PORT AUTHORITY REGION

Regional Employment [NY MSA]	Oct-17	9,665	
Consumer Price Index [Annual]	Oct-17	1.8%	
Port District Exports [\$Bill]	Sep-17	\$12.54	
Port District Imports [\$Bill]	Sep-17	\$22.01	
Case-Shiller Home Price Index	Aug-17	4.4%	
Commercial Real Estate Asking Rent			
Midtown	Q3 2017	\$84.20	
Downtown	Q3 2017	\$62.95	

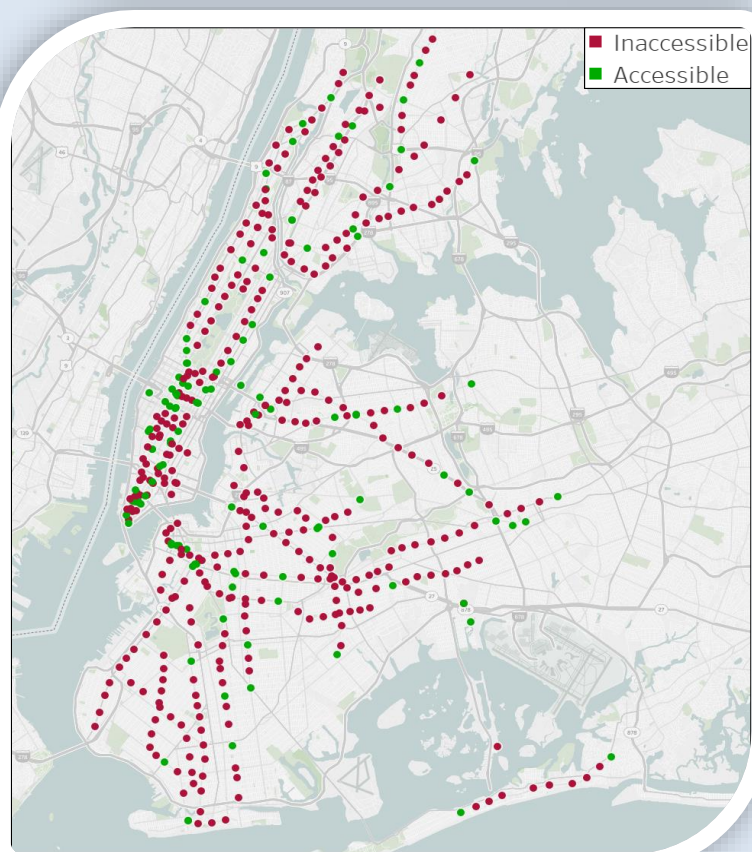


Figure 1. New York City Subway Stations

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AVIATION	Sep '17	YTD	Sep '17/'16	YTD '17/'16	PORT COMMERCE	Sep '17	YTD	Sep '17/'16	YTD '17/'16
Revenue Passengers (000's)	10,637.8	99,726.0	-5.0%	2.0%	Port Trade				
John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK)	4,899.1	45,271.6	-4.9%	0.9%	Container Imports (TEUs)	287,753	2,528,349	13.3%	6.4%
LaGuardia Airport (LGA)	2,305.5	21,737.2	-14.8%	-2.9%	Container Exports (TEUs)	113,739	1,043,405	7.1%	3.3%
Newark Liberty International Airport (EWR)	3,387.2	32,411.8	2.3%	7.0%	Containers lifted on/off Express Rail	46,505	425,664	4.8%	4.1%
Stewart International Airport (SWF)	46.0	305.4	90.8%	48.0%					
Revenue Freight (Short Tons)	187,296	1,626,845	6.5%	7.4%	TUNNELS, BRIDGES & TERMINALS	Sep '17	YTD	Sep '17/'16	YTD '17/'16
Domestic	66,926	568,845	3.0%	4.9%	Eastbound Vehicle Volumes (000's)	10,072	89,172	1.0%	0.4%
International	120,370	1,058,000	8.5%	8.9%	George Washington Bridge	4,347	38,729	-0.5%	0.2%
Flights	103,743	966,160	-5.5%	-0.9%	Lincoln Tunnel	1,610	14,185	0.9%	-1.1%
Domestic Air Carrier	73,204	687,215	-7.1%	-1.3%	Holland Tunnel	1,248	11,067	-2.0%	-3.5%
International Air Carrier	25,165	227,472	3.3%	0.7%	Bayonne Bridge	198	1,701	48.7%	41.1%
General Aviation	5,374	51,473	-18.8%	-0.9%	Goethals Bridge	1,353	11,802	3.0%	0.4%
Paid Parked Cars	576,024	5,420,243	-8.5%	-11.2%	Outerbridge Crossing	1,316	11,688	2.4%	2.6%
Revenue AirTrain Passengers	871,974	7,669,542	-0.2%	3.1%	Eastbound Volumes by Vehicle Type (000's)				
					Autos	9,213	81,493	1.2%	0.4%
					Trucks	615	5,459	0.2%	0.2%
					Buses	244	2,216	-1.5%	-1.2%
FERRY OPERATIONS	Sep '17	YTD	Sep '17/'16	YTD '17/'16	PORT AUTHORITY PULSE	Apr '17	Mar '17	Change	
Passengers (000's)					(Seasonally Adjusted, 2010=100)				
New Jersey Ferries	758.6	6,787.9	0.2%	2.2%	PA Pulse (Transportation Activity Index)	100.7	98.2	2.5%	
					PA Freight Pulse	97.1	95.3	1.9%	
					PA Passenger Pulse	104.2	101.1	3.1%	
PATH	Sep '17	YTD	Sep '17/'16	YTD '17/'16	U.S. TRANSPORT. SERVICES INDEX	Sep '17	Aug '17	Change	
Passengers (000's)	6,972.0	62,165.0	4.1%	5.2%	(Prelim., Seasonally Adj., 2000=100)				
Average Weekday	293.4	2,549.7	5.5%	5.6%	TSI - Combined Index	128.7	128.3	0.3%	
Average Saturday	124.2	1,033.6	14.4%	5.1%	TSI - Freight	129.2	129.0	0.2%	
Average Sunday	95.6	807.1	13.8%	7.2%	TSI - Passenger	127.3	126.4	0.7%	

TRANSPORTATION FOCUS

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Thanks to this lack of maintenance it should come as no surprise that the system averages 25 elevator outages per day according to *Access Denied*, a report from the Transit Center that came out this fall. This means that even after a person with a disability has organized her trip in such a way to ensure that both the start and end stations are equipped with elevators, there is no guarantee that she will in fact be able to use either station. The need to redesign a route upon arriving at a station and finding it inaccessible imposes large time costs on riders.

Back in 2013, the City's Taxi and Limousine Commission settled a suit brought against them by a collection of disability rights organizations. As part of the settlement the City was required to ensure that 50% of the medallion taxi fleet is wheelchair accessible by the year 2020, a goal it is on track to meet thanks in part to a 30 cent surcharge levied per taxi trip to pay for the program. However, Uber, Lyft, and other transportation network companies are not held to this standard. To make matters worse, they pay neither the 30 cent surcharge funding the increase in accessible taxis, nor do they pay the 50 cent State MTA fee. As these companies eat away at taxis' market share, fewer wheelchair-accessible vehicles are available for rides. For residents of areas without elevator service in nearby subway stations, accessible taxis play an important role in the transportation network. Moving forward, the City will need to find creative ways to make sure that TNCs are available to serve residents unable to use the subways.

Myriad challenges call out for the MTA's attention today, and many worthy projects are likely to go unfunded. However, New York's residents with disabilities deserve a transportation system that allows them to participate fully in the life of their city. Other cities with old subway systems like Chicago and Boston have found creative and innovative ways to ensure access to the transportation network – and it's time for New York City to do the same.

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