



Metropolitan Transportation Authority

State of New York

March 17, 2017

Ms. Carmen Maldonado
Audit Director
The Office of the State Comptroller
Division of State Government Accountability
59 Maiden Lane, 21st Floor
New York, NY 10038

Re: Final Report #2016-F-23 (New York City Transit – Trash Can Free Stations Pilot Program)

Dear Ms. Maldonado:

This is in reply to your letter requesting a response to the above-referenced final report.

I have attached for your information the comments of Darryl C. Irick, Acting President, NYC Transit, which address this report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "V. Hakim" with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Veronique Hakim
Interim Executive Director

c: Donna M. Evans, MTA Chief of Staff
Michael J. Fucilli, Auditor General, MTA Audit Services

Attachments


Memorandum



New York City Transit

Date March 17, 2017

To Veronique Hakim, Interim Executive Director, MTA

From Darryl C. Irick, Acting President, New York City Transit 

Re **NYCT Response: Trash Can Free Stations Pilot Program Report 2016-F-23**

The aforementioned audit by the State Comptroller's Office is a follow-up to their prior Audit of the Trash Can Free Stations Pilot Program (2014-S-29), requesting an update on actions planned to address items they consider unresolved. Listed below are the recommendations contained in the report, followed by NYCT's response.

Recommendation #1: Objectively review the results of the Pilot Program, focusing on originally stated purposes and objectives. Assess performance against those purposes and determine whether to continue the program. Consult with the MTA Board regarding impact on riders.

The Pilot Program is complete, and there are currently no stations without trash cans. During the Pilot Program, performance was evaluated against the stated purpose: to improve the customer experience in stations. The primary measure of success was the amount of trash collected from the pilot stations; the less trash generated in the stations, the fewer bags to be stored, collected and potentially exposed to customers.

While the Pilot Program successfully reduced the amount of trash removed in the can-free stations, NYCT also embarked on a more robust initiative in 2016 to improve the station environment, Operation Track Sweep. This multi-pronged initiative included a renewed effort to partner with customers to keep stations clean, publicizing the impact of littering and asking customers to do their part to prevent track fires. Returning trash cans to the mezzanines of all pilot stations by January was part of this effort.

Other elements of Operation Track Sweep and our trash collection efforts are listed below:

- In June 2016, NYCT began a new cleaning schedule that increased the frequency of track cleaning from 34 stations every two weeks to 94 stations every two weeks.
- In September 2016, NYCT launched an intensive two-week, system-wide cleaning during which more than 500 workers removed trash and debris from the tracks at all of the system's 469 stations – more than 10 miles of subway station track.
- In January 2017, NYCT began testing two powerful – but portable -- track vacuum systems that can be quickly deployed, operated from platforms, and moved easily from one station to the next.

- Subsequent phases of Operation Track Sweep include additional system-wide cleaning initiatives, ordering additional portable vacuum units, which will arrive in the fall of 2017, and the arrival of a trio of powerful new track vacuum trains, the first of which will be delivered in the fall of 2017.
- The MTA is also purchasing 27 new refuse cars to move debris out of the system more quickly and support the new expanded cleaning effort. The cars are equipped with special railings to secure and transport wheeled garbage containers that are collected at subway stations.
- The MTA Board has been briefed on NYCT's overall strategy and enhanced programs to remove trash from our system.
- After trash is collected, it is sorted for recycling. In 2016, NYCT generated 11,623 tons of subway refuse, of which about 50% was recycled. By contrast, New York City's residential collection recycling rate is about 17%.
- With the post-collection recycling program, NYCT received a credit of \$534,674, which reduced the overall cost of disposal of subway refuse by almost 70%.

Recommendation #2: Develop clear measurable goals and measures of success before deciding to extend or expand the Pilot Program. Establish and use appropriate data collection and evaluation measures. Report on results within a definitive time period (e.g., two months) of the end of the evaluation period.

The criteria used to measure the success of the Pilot Program were appropriate and measurable. As discussed above, the Pilot Program is complete, and trash cans have been returned to the mezzanines of all pilot stations.

Recommendation #3: Prominently post notices at all stations selected for the Pilot Program announcing the change and periodically remind customers of the stations with no trash cans.

The Pilot Program has ended and trash cans have been reinstalled, so there is no longer a need to post reminders for customers.

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|-----|--------------|------------|---------------|---------------|
| cc: | W. Habersham | J. Gaito | S. Librera | V. Ramotar |
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