

Beating the Straphangers

Funny? No. It's just plain outrageous that subway farebeating exceeds the costs of the proposed MTA cuts to our subway service.

Imagine that loss over a decade: the lost revenue could exceed \$150-200 million. Maybe even more.

Even the smaller mis-estimate deserved attention.

This just demonstrates the need for the MTA to look within before it cuts service. What else might there be?

Forensic accounting where art thou?



Fare-beaters cost NYC Transit a staggering \$27 million in 2009, new research finds

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For years, [NYC Transit](#) has wildly underestimated how often riders beat the fare, which cheats the cash-crunched agency out of millions of dollars, the Daily News has learned.

Fare-beaters jump turnstiles or enter through emergency exit gates about 19 million times a year, a new agency analysis shows.

That's far more than the old estimate of about 5 million a year, which went out the window in April, when agency bean counters changed the way they tally scofflaws.

The lost revenue is staggering.

Fare-beating deprived NYC Transit of approximately \$27 million last year alone, based on an average subway fare of \$1.48, according to the new analysis.

Under the old method of estimating fare-beating, the agency believed it was losing about \$7 million a year.

The lost revenue is even larger than the amount the Metropolitan Transportation Authority plans to save with subway service cuts that are scheduled to go into effect soon to help plug a large budget gap.

Some paying straphangers fumed Monday when told about thievery at the turnstiles. "It makes me mad because I have to pay for them," said 44-year-old [Bronx](#) baby-sitter Eleac Ramierez.

Others at the 49th St. N- and R-train station in [Manhattan](#) said they're also peeved at authorities for not staffing many entrances.

"There should be a guard there," [Thomas DeMarcus](#), a 30-year-old Queens actor, said at the unstaffed 47th St. entrance to the station.

The unstaffed station turned harried [Long Island](#) parents Maria and [Oscar Garces](#) into fare-beaters.

The couple, struggling with a stroller yesterday, could find no token booth clerk to open the door. So [Maria Garces](#) swiped her [MetroCard](#) and then let in her husband, who did not pay a fare.

"It's hard," Garces said.

NYC Transit for years arrived at fare-beating figures by using a formula based on the observations of token booth clerks. A one-day count was conducted each month, agency spokesman [Paul Fleuranges](#) said.

An MTA audit concluded the agency was way off the mark. Clerks weren't keeping accurate tallies because they had other duties like selling MetroCards, Fleuranges said. Because of staff cuts, there also are fewer clerks to make observations, Fleuranges said.

Despite the cuts in personnel and the massive increase in fare-beating numbers, Fleuranges insisted the system has not seen a spike in actual turnstile-jumping.

Instead, he said, an unreliable system of estimating has been replaced with a better method that provides a more realistic picture.

NYC Transit now uses "traffic checkers" who are randomly placed at a sampling of turnstiles to count fare-beaters, Fleuranges said.

The MTA passed a budget in December that includes \$17.6 million in subway service cuts and millions more in bus service cuts.

The moves include adding two minutes to the waits for lettered-line subway trains on weekends, eliminating W-train service and shortening the G line.

The authority also plans to lay off up to 450 token booth agents.

"The MTA's only going to make jumping the turnstile more inviting by slashing scores of clerks from subway station entrances," [Gene Russianoff](#) of the [Straphangers Campaign](#) warned.

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With Stephanie Gaskell

http://www.nydailynews.com/news/ny_crime/2010/03/16/2010-03-16_cheaters_cost_mta_millions_farebeaters_underestimated_for_years.html