

GREATER HARLEM  
**COALITION**

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917.674.3313

April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Mr. Patrick J. Foye, Chairman & CEO  
Metropolitan Transportation Authority  
2 Broadway  
New York, NY 10004

**Re: M35 Bus (Manhattan) MTA**

Dear Mr. Foye,

Our community is contacting you to respectfully request the removal of the M35 Bus Line from our neighborhood in East Harlem.

This request is a matter of the highest priority for our community. The families, business owners, and churches of Harlem and East Harlem have suffered for decades due to the MTA's unwillingness to change the M35 route, despite our longstanding efforts to seek a resolution. The reasons underlying this urgent request are as follows:

- 1) **The M35 caters primarily to "high-need" passengers.** Most of the M35's riders are troubled individuals suffering from mental illness, drug addiction, homelessness, or who were recently released from prison. This high-needs population boards the M35 Bus on Randall's Island, where several large institutions are based, including:
  - Manhattan Psychiatric Center, a massive facility for the mentally ill, run by the New York State Office of Mental Health;
  - Odyssey House, a 420-unit facility for individuals who are coping with drug & alcohol abuse, mental illness and homelessness;
  - Clarke Thomas Men's Shelter, a 234-bed facility for homeless men, run by the Department of Homeless Services;
  - Schwartz Assessment Center, a 377-bed homeless shelter for men; and
  - Help USA Keener Homeless Facility, a shelter for homeless men.
  
- 2) **Our streets are flooded with high-need individuals.** The daily influx of these high-needs individuals from Randall's Island inundates our neighborhood's streets with men who are

unstable, sometimes dangerous, and in need of help. These individuals linger, loiter, and drug themselves on our streets. This has resulted in:

- Filthy sidewalks where open defecation is common;
- Criminal activity that has overwhelmed Police Precincts 25 and 28, and places East Harlem as the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest crime rate neighborhood in all Five Boroughs of New York City;
- Drug dealers who prey on the people who disembark from the M35 in East Harlem;
- A particularly seedy congregation of M35 passengers hanging out at the corner of Lexington Avenue & 125<sup>th</sup> Street, a notorious junction where crowds of vagrants hinder pedestrian access to the 4, 5, and 6 subway lines; and
- Retailers commonly needing to hire security guards to staff their front doors.

3) **Quality of life is severely affected for the people of the neighborhood.** The M35 Bus has had a devastating effect on the daily lives of the people of Harlem and East Harlem:

- Families do not feel safe walking the sidewalks with their children. This fear persists during daytime hours, not just at night;
- Commuters are fearful of entering the Subway entrance (at 125<sup>th</sup> & Lex) and the Metro North Train (at 125<sup>th</sup> & Park);
- Retailers are tormented by vagrants brought to our community by the M35 bus and often forced to hire a security guards to protect their businesses;
- Restaurants note that customers report being uncomfortable and do not return to their establishments; and
- Business offices are reluctant to open in the neighborhood (the recently rebuilt landmark "Corn Exchange" office building at 125<sup>th</sup> & Park has been vacant since it opened, five years ago. No businesses will rent space there due to the heavy presence of the high-need population).

East Harlem is home to the highest concentration of low-income families in New York. Our densely residential neighborhood is already struggling and ill-equipped to handle the burden that the M35 Bus brings with it. Our community strongly believes that this bus should not be unloading passengers in a residential neighborhood under any circumstances. Instead, the M35 should bring its passengers to a non-residential area, such as a commercially-zoned or industrial-zoned area, where passengers can still obtain access to subways and other public transportation.

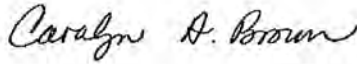
As you may know, our community has been corresponding with the MTA for decades, repeatedly requesting relief from the presence of the M35 Bus (see attached correspondences from 2003, 2008, 2013, and 2019). Prior correspondences were typically met with rejection or simply ignored altogether. However, in October 2019, the MTA responded that its Operations Planning Team "evaluated the option of discontinuing the stop entirely." Our community demands to know what the MTA has done to follow through on this long-overdue solution.

We ask the MTA to once again consider our community's longstanding request, to restore dignity, safety, and prosperity to our area. We invite you to meet with us to discuss this in further detail, or to schedule a walking tour with us to fully experience the severity of this issue. Please contact Syderia at [917.674.3313](tel:917.674.3313)/[Syderia@aol.com](mailto:Syderia@aol.com) for additional information or to schedule an appointment.

Sincerely,



Syderia Asberry-Chresfield.



Carolyn A. Brown PHD.



Shawn Hill

Founders of the Greater Harlem Coalition (an organization of 6,000 residents, businesses, and churches in Harlem. <https://greaterharlem.nyc/>)

cc: Patrick Foye, Chairman and CEO, MTA  
Craig Cipriano, President MTA Bus  
Janno Lieber, President Construction & Development  
Sarah E. Feinberg, Interim President, New York City Transit  
Anthony McCord, Chief Transformation Officer  
Thomas J. Quigley, General Counsel  
Catherine Rinaldi, MTA Metro-North  
Veronique Hakim, Managing Director  
Mario Peloquin, COO  
Patrick Warren, Chief of Safety  
Alex Elegudin, Systemwide Accessibility  
Maxwell Young, External Affairs  
Owen Monaghan, Chief of Police  
Timothy Ellis, Government & Community Relations  
Amanda Kwan, MTA Spokesperson  
Judy McClain, Chief, Operations Planning  
Buckley Yung, Manager, Short Range Bus Service Planning  
New York Today at the NYTimes

**The Greater Harlem Coalition** is comprised of the following tenant associations, churches, schools, businesses, cultural institutions, and retailers:

Block Association of West 118th Street  
100-168 West 121st Street Resident Block  
Association  
118 Street Block Association  
120th Street Block Association  
124 East 117th Street Tenants Association  
125th Street Business Improvement District  
128th Street Block Association  
1775 Houses Tenants Association  
314 - Pizza, Pasta & Wine Bar  
97-98 Lexington & Park Ave. Neighbors

A. Philip Randolph Square Neighborhood  
Alliance  
A.K. Houses Tenants Association  
Advocates 4 The Community  
Asberry and Associates, LLC  
ATAPE Group, LLC  
CentralCasting Solutions LLC  
Chaiwali  
Chocolat Restaurant & Bar  
CIVITAS  
Clay  
Columbus Distributors

Compass Realty  
Covington Realty Services  
D and D Enterprise  
Dorrence Brooks Property Owners & Residents  
Association  
DR3J Consultants  
Edward Jones  
Elaine Perry Associates  
Ephesus SDA Church  
Eye Cycle  
Freeland Liqour  
Friendly Hands Ministry  
Friends of the Harriett Tubman Monument  
Future Giants Organization  
Gastiaburo + Stella Real Estate  
Ginjan Cafe  
Graham Court Renters Association  
Greater Calvary Baptist Church  
Hakimian Organization  
Halstead Manhattan  
Hamilton Terrace Block Association  
Harlem American  
Harlem Arts Foundation  
Harlem Business Alliance  
Harlem Lacrosse  
Harlem Lofts  
Harlem Neighborhood Block Association  
Harlem Park to Park  
Harlem Properties Inc.  
Harlem Shake  
Harlem Wine Gallery  
HarlemHome  
HarlemHoopz  
Il Cafe Latte 1  
Il Cafe Latte 2  
Indian Summer Harlem  
Jacqueline Allmond Cuisine INC  
Le Petit Parisien  
Lenox to 5th 124th Street Block Association  
LenoxFive 127th Street Block Association  
Lido  
Malcolm Pharmacy  
Mirada Home Owners Association  
MoHo Dance  
Mount Morris Park Community Improvement  
Association  
MXB United

Neighbors United of West 132nd Street Block  
Association  
New 123rd Street Block Association (Lenox -  
7th)  
New York Council for Housing Development  
Fund Companies, Inc.  
Open Hands Legal Services  
Paris Blues Jazz Club  
Pativity, LLC  
Progressives Educating New Yorkers, Inc.  
R. Kenyatta Punter and Associates  
Rubys Vintage  
Sayers and Doers  
Silent Procession Nyc4pr  
Silicon Harlem  
SottoCasa Pizzeria  
StreetSquash  
Sugar Hill Concerned Neighbors Group  
Super Nice Coffee and Bakery  
T.H.E. Works  
Union Settlement House  
United New Church of Christ  
Upholstery Lab  
Uptown Democratic Club  
Uptown Townhouse  
Valeries Signature Salon  
Virgo Hardware  
West 119th Block Association  
West 121st Street Block Association  
West 126th Street Block Association  
West 130th Street Homeowners Association  
West 132nd Street Block Association  
West 135th Street Block Association  
West 136th Street Block Association  
Wynn Optics