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**Select Bus Service Gets High Praise At Mayoral Candidates' Transit Forum**

By: Jose Martinez



Subway and buses are what moves most New Yorkers, and the candidates for mayor, including former MTA Chairman Joe Lhota, held a forum solely on the topic on Tuesday in Baruch College in Manhattan. NY1's Transit reporter Jose Martinez filed the following report.

The Second Avenue Subway is finally being built and the 7 train is extending to the Far West Side. But the consensus among mayoral candidates at a forum at Baruch College in Manhattan on Tuesday is that expanding bus service is the way to go to meet the transit needs of residents in growing neighborhoods outside of Manhattan.

"There will be far greater need for mass transit service and I think we focus on the buses," Democratic candidate John Liu said.

Apopular choice among the contenders is to have the city Department Of Transportation boost the number of speedier Select Bus Lines, where commuters can pay fares before boarding and there are special lanes and fewer stops.

There are four existing Select Bus routes, and plans to add more, with candidates saying better bus service can make getting around easier, especially for those living far from subway lines.

"You're going to have to increase Select Bus Service as well as express bus service across the city of New York. That's the way to get the city moving, that's the way to create transportation equity," said Democratic candidate William Thompson.

Hosted by the University Transportation Research Forum at Baruch College, the session drew all of the major candidates, minus Christine Quinn and Bill de Blasio.

Those who showed said they would push for mass transit improvements if elected mayor - even if the job holds little actual control over the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. Several said that needs to change.

"The fact of the matter is that we need to get control of the MTA," said Democratic candidate Anthony Weiner.

But there is not much chance that could happen. The MTA has been a state agency since it was created more than 40 years ago.

The one candidate who headed the MTA until just a few months ago, Republican candidate Joe Lhota, called again for stretching the N or the R into Staten Island and expanding service in Brooklyn and Queens.

"The subway system needs to be expanded and as mayor, I will discuss it," Lhota said.

A Republican rival, John Catsimatidis, dismissed that idea.

"We can dream about it. It will never, ever be done in anybody's lifetime in this room," he said.

While the bulk of the candidates were in agreement on the need to need to expand Select Bus Service, the question of by how much, and for how much, will be left for another time.

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