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Wednesday, June 19, 2013

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At Forum, Mayoral Candidates Back Bus Lanes, Shy Away From Funding

by Stephen Miller



Democratic (top) and Republican and independent (bottom) candidates for mayor talked transportation this morning. Photo: Stephen Miller

At a mayoral forum on transportation this morning, the first since [a February event](#) hosted by Transport Workers Union Local 100, eight candidates offered ideas on how they would improve the city's road and transit network. For the most part, the candidates were eager to support buses, quick to get agitated about bike lanes, and short on realistic ideas for how to fund their plans.

The forum, organized by the University Transportation Research Center, packed a room with over 200 students and transportation professionals at Baruch College, with questions posed to the candidates by a lineup of experts. There were two panels: the Republican and independent candidates — Adolfo Carrión, John Catsimatidis, Joe Lhota, and George McDonald — followed Democratic candidates Sal Albanese, John Liu, Bill Thompson, and Anthony Weiner. [Bill de Blasio](#) and [Christine Quinn](#) did not show, leaving empty seats behind their name tags.

Many of the candidates wanted more mayoral control over the city's transit network, if not an outright transfer of responsibility from the state. While city control of subways and buses is unlikely, Lhota said, "that doesn't mean we shouldn't bring it up." Even without full control, he said, the mayor can exert influence through MTA board appointments, providing operating subsidies, and adding bus lanes.

The candidates all cited the need to expand the bus network, particularly Select Bus Service and express buses; many of them also spoke highly of ferries, which require substantial subsidies.

Albanese, Carrión, and McDonald all endorsed "Gridlock" Sam Schwartz's ["fair toll" plan](#), which would increase or add bridge tolls where there are transit options while cutting tolls where transit is scarcer. Albanese said he would split revenue from the toll plan: Three-quarters of it would go to transit operations, with the goal of reducing the pressure for fare hikes, and a quarter would go to capital investment. McDonald, citing the MTA's growing operating budget, [driven by labor and debt costs](#), said he would dedicate all of the program's revenue to capital investments.

Catsimatidis said that he opposes any proposal that would add or increase tolls, while Thompson [repeated his long-standing call](#) for assessing vehicle registration fees by weight and reinstating the commuter tax, which would be dedicated exclusively to transit. Liu, while calling a return of the commuter tax unrealistic, said Congress should allocate more funds to transit.

Albanese and Carrión both said they would create a national coalition of mayors to advocate for more federal investment in transit, using Bloomberg's Mayors Against Illegal Guns as a model.

Liu also said the city should use revenue from real estate development in the outer boroughs to finance bus service expansion, citing the Hudson Yards 7 train extension as a successful example of this type of funding mechanism. Lhota also spoke favorably of the 7 train extension, and called for more tax increment financing. (With real estate tax revenue falling below expectations at Hudson Yards, city tax dollars are now [making up for shortfall](#).)

Anthony Weiner did not discuss funding mechanisms for transit investment.

In his question to the candidates, Transportation Alternatives Executive Director Paul Steely White noted that

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WORD ON THE STREET

bike-share and bike lanes [enjoy higher approval ratings](#) than the mayoral candidates, a fact that Weiner mocked. "I actually have some polling here that says that a proposal to give rocket packs to every citizen to fly to work has 90 percent, so congratulations on your polling," he said, before reiterating that while he calls himself "a pro-bike Democrat" and uses Citi Bike, he believes "there are good bike lanes and bad bike lanes." Weiner [once again](#) claimed that the Broadway bike lane near his apartment hinders commercial deliveries and impedes emergency response.

Liu said he is an "avid cyclist," but claimed that bike lanes were only really necessary in Manhattan. "The city is still insisting on a one-size fits all model," he said. "The hazards from trucks and buses and cars are not as great as they are in Manhattan."

Liu, Thompson, and Weiner all couched their opposition to bike lanes in objections to the planning process. Weiner said that the administration "has been dripping with condescension" when it works with communities on bike lanes. "It comes back to making sure that communities are involved in the discussion," Thompson said.

Once again, Sal Albanese was the only Democrat to [offer a reality check](#) to the rest of the field. "All the bike lanes that have been put into place have been put into place with community input," Albanese said. "The bottom line is that it's great for the city." Carrión and McDonald also offered full-throated endorsements of bike lanes.


The forum included its fair share of questionable ideas from the candidates. Lhota proposed building park-and-ride facilities at the ends of subway lines so suburbanites could park and pay a \$2.50 subway fare, instead of using Long Island Rail Road or Metro-North. He also championed extending subway lines in the outer boroughs, including a new subway tunnel from Bay Ridge to Staten Island, while Catsimatidis said the city should consider a monorail along the Long Island Expressway.

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 **J_12** • 12 days ago
I'd like to see proposals to improve transit performance without additional capital i money for capital budget anytime soon.

I think there are large parts of city, in all boroughs, where it would be beneficial to better service. There is so much redundancy in the bus system, with multiple line stretch where multiple lines run along the same route, one of the lines should eith and skip all local stops in that section.


Local buses are really terrible for trips longer than a couple miles. They are best f for getting to/from the subway for areas that are beyond walking distance from t by and large the city would benefit if most local bus routes were no longer than a instead of making long runs.

Bus routes are the easiest and cheapest part of the transit system to change. O can be re-routed far more easily than rails and tunnels, and yet we are not taking

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 **Andrew** → J_12 • 12 days ago
One of the common purposes of branching (the phenomenon you describ common trunk for some distance) is to provide adequate service to a bus on ridership patterns, it sometimes (but not always) makes sense for som service), and many trunks are set up that way. But if most of the ridership best to leave all of the service local, so that riders have short waits.

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 **Bolwerk** • 12 days ago
Monorails and more buses? The usual dumb, generic ideas. The right answer is o situational, and should consider the best mode for the job, and should involve any 'n ride within NYC borders.

SBS is an easy thing to promise because it promises the TWU more jobs while ac

“ I find ironic that shortly after Taustine's letter, which was prompted by the NYT's report on bike congestion in Amsterdam, the Times published this story: "Seven-and-a-Half Million Cars Trigger Parking Wars in Delhi" ”

– qrt145


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 **Daniel Winks** I'd check to see if it is indeed against the law and file a complaint for the sake of filing a...
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The best part (for pols) is it's easy to shrug off when they find there is no money improving transit.

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Miles Bader → Bolwerk • 12 days ago

Who the hell builds a *monorail* these days?! Except in very specific circums monorail designs are inferior in just about every way to plain old steel-duo-

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Jimbo853okg → Miles Bader • 12 days ago

Agree. Sounds like something Professor Harold Hill sold to Springfiel

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Peltidelphia → Miles Bader • 12 days ago

Monorail isn't really that inferior. The only real limitation is that more than rail switches. Monorail is able to handle steeper grades and tire wear.

The problem with monorail is that its biggest selling point is novelty. of narrow beamways, but that's often negated by safety requirem

Also, outside of transit circles, many people conflate all modern ele Vancouver Skytrain monorails because of their concrete guideway. metro" services have largely taken it over.

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Miles Bader → Peltidelphia • 12 days ago

Of course there are various different factors, but the thing that they:

- + Use short, narrow cars, and this reduces their capacity q
- + The beam-straddle design takes up a significant amount *further* reduces capacity.
- + Use rubber-tires, and are very noisy and rough as a resu don't know whether this is inherent or to reduce wear or no
- + The vaunted "tighter curves" seems true, but in practice ride (which in turn makes it much more desirable to have a

Of course some of those points are shared with rubber-tire buses.

Anyway, the result is that I'm left with an impression of mo low-speed transport, somewhat uncomfortable and noisy, b a transportation system

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Peltidelphia → Miles Bader • 12 days ago

Most monorail systems have cars with similar width to rail, u and articulated rather than coupled. They might have less c capacity would be the same.

Early Alweg monorails did have wheel wells in the cabin, usu the height of the floor over the beam, so the load wheels a

Rubber-tired metros in France, Montreal, and elsewhere are impact on acceleration, but not speed.

Tighter curves don't turn it into a roller coaster. It's a featur no different than rail. I've been on some subways that can

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up to run like a rail system, why not just run a rail system?
rule out conventional rail, monorail is just a different way of

^ | v Reply Share >



Joe R. → Peltidelphia • 12 days ago

In addition, anything with rubber tires is at an efficiency disadvantage. Monorails have a coefficient of rolling resistance similar to tires, 0.0008 to 0.002, depending upon wheel/rail condition, bearing

^ | v Reply Share >



qrt145 → Miles Bader • 12 days ago

Strange, my personal impression of rubber-tired subway trains is that they are less noisy and less rough than the metal-wheel

I can't speak for monorails, though.

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Bolwerk → qrt145 • 12 days ago

You can't speak for conventional rail in general either. In many cases, it's dangerous because people *don't* hear it.

Really, any mode can be pretty quiet – though engines running probably gonna be louder than an electric trolley-bus.

^ | v Reply Share >



Miles Bader → qrt145 • 12 days ago

Aren't the Montreal/Paris cars "rubber around steel", on steel

The sort of rubber tires monorails (and the Yurikamome line tracks, and seem to get very noisy as speed increases (when

Steel-on-steel by contrast, can be almost silent if the track is laid high (for local transit) speeds.

^ | v Reply Share >



Bolwerk → Miles Bader • 12 days ago

Heh, I dunno. About a decade ago, it was the major object of major concern, as you may remember from nyc.transit or misc.transport.rail. It's largely superseded monorails in that regard, so Catsimatidis – who is just behind on his talking points.

^ | v Reply Share >



Ben Kintisch • 12 days ago

I'm glad that SBS, once a radical new experiment, is now a new transportation option. They talk about bike infrastructure, though.

3 ^ | v Reply Share >



Daphna → Ben Kintisch • 12 days ago

NY State Senator Bill Perkins still thinks SBS is a radical new experiment, even after learning from some of these candidates. He and a tiny number of MTA officials are vocal in their fear of change that they got the SBS plan for 125th Street c

Even the remaining half of the plan, from Lenox to 2nd Avenue is in jeopardy. The committee revoked their support. This committee voted to support the plan in May and still like the plan and have no complaints about it, but they want the M35 to have support for 125th Street M60 SBS until they get the M35 to return to Randall's Island. The issue with the M35 has nothing to do with transportation but has to do with the MTA's plan from Randall's Island to East Harlem. Some on the Transportation Committee are vocal by half a block - as if that will somehow put the "undesirables" in a more narrow street stuck in traffic on a dysfunctional street without appropriate curbside regul

average bus speeds - about 10mph slower than average NYC buses.

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Pepe → Daphna • 11 days ago

The current M35 bus stop location has been a problem the East H. over a decade without success. While some may have issue with the dangerous sidewalk congestion issue at that bus stop location. Hun Island converge on a very narrow sidewalk to board a bus at a stop entrance. Simply put, there is too much demand for too small a site to eliminate the problem at the current location and would not require Street would allow waiting passengers to congregate on a very wide access to business or building entrances, while still having easy access

Given CB11's past support for SBS, it stands to reason that they'd Street SBS if and when the M35 stop was relocated.

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Andrew → Pepe • 11 days ago

Thanks for clarifying the issues.

But I'm still confused. Once past the subway entrance, the sidewalk looks just as wide as the one by Pathmark. Wouldn't pushing the stop well as moving it around the corner? In fact, I see that the city is addressing the exact problem you're trying to solve.

The Pathmark location is already a bus stop for the Bx15, and the M35 now has a dedicated stop of its own, but by moving it to 125th St. service. I'm afraid I don't see the benefit.

Finally, even if there is merit to the proposal, I am perplexed by the improvement simply because they're not getting their way with your nose to spite your face. Somehow I get the sense that the city is riding buses, and don't care about people who do ride buses.

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Andrew → Daphna • 12 days ago

That's absurd. The M35 uses 124th instead of 125th because, to be in the right lane. What difference does it make?

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Pepe → Andrew • 11 days ago

Relocating to the stop to 125th Street would not require a lane to be in the right lane to make a stop. Instead, the bus would turn left and turn on to 125th Street.

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Brownstone2 → Daphna • 12 days ago

There are reasons I dislike bus service, and prefer bicycles and rail

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Joe R. → Brownstone2 • 12 days ago

Same here. I'm not seeing much point to a form of motorized transport the speed a slow cyclist can maintain. Either speed the bus

1
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Andrew • 12 days ago

The candidates all cited the need to expand the bus network, particularly Select Bus Service, which require substantial subsidies.

Any particular reason you add that ferries require substantial subsidies (which is a

Going back to 2010, prior to the service cuts (because that's the data I've seen), \$4.22 per trip for a ride costing an average of \$16.42 - a subsidy of \$12.20 per trip of \$4.18 per trip for a ride costing an average of \$17.98 - a subsidy of \$13.80 per


Local bus riders receive far less of a subsidy: on NYCT, \$1.59 per trip (average fare \$3.35 per trip (average fare paid of \$1.28 compared to a cost of \$4.63).

<https://docs.google.com/spread...>


<https://docs.google.com/spread...>

And this isn't because express bus riders are in greater need of subsidy. On the c neighborhoods. Many express bus riders look down on the very subway and local


^ | v Reply Share [see more](#)

 **Joe R.** → Andrew • 12 days ago
I'm glad to see the two buses local to me (Q64 and Q65) have good fare pretty busy.

^ | v Reply Share


 **Brownstone2** → Andrew • 12 days ago
Boats are holes in the water that you fill with money to keep afloat. That i particularly with adding bikes. There appropriate places for ferries where th that's a limited subset. Much like express buses.

1 ^ | v Reply Share


 **Daphna** → Andrew • 12 days ago
Select Bus Service is different than express buses. SBS buses are the loca payment and a dedicated bus lane pigmented red.

Thank you for that information about the NYCT and MTA express buses. subsidy per trip on those.


1 ^ | v Reply Share

 **Andrew** → Daphna • 12 days ago
I'm aware of the distinction, but I probably could have made it clea


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 **Wi Cho** → Daphna • 12 days ago
SBS is Limited-Stop service plus added benefits. Local service is toc


^ | v Reply Share

 **jooltman** • 12 days ago
"I actually have some polling here that says that 'Is Anthony Weiner a condescer congratulations on your polling,"

5 ^ | v Reply Share

 **Nolan** • 12 days ago
if I remember correctly all of the candidates supported SelectBusService expansio bus lanes.

1 ^ | v Reply Share

 **Daphna** → Nolan • 12 days ago
That is a good distinction to make. Supporting something in concept, like S future mayor does not back that up with the courage to assign dedicated

It is easy to support SBS or biking in theory; the real test comes when str bus route or to bicyclists.

2
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Anon commuter • 13 days ago

Weiner had the smartest and accurate comment in regards to Bill Thompson sittin he do on that Board and why is the Battery Park Authority still in existence.

3
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Guest • 13 days ago

The forum included its fair share of questionable ideas from the candidates. Lhotz subway lines so suburbanites could park and pay a \$2.50 subway fare, instead of

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Bolwerk → Guest • 12 days ago

Quelle surprise. The GOP has always seen the city as a doormat for the s

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Joe R. → Guest • 12 days ago

I'll be on board for this idea as soon as we extend all the subway lines to c concept actually isn't a bad one if modified slightly. End the expressways c huge parking garages near the last stop on the subway. That will end the reclaimed land inside city limits where the expressways were to build much

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UnknownBird → Guest • 13 days ago

Do the neighborhoods at the end of the subway lines really want giant par

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Alex Knight → UnknownBird • 12 days ago

And even if they did (which I seriously doubt), where the hell woukd blocks of housing to put up garages? Unlike the DC Metro and BAR undeveloped areas. They terminate in dense, walkable neighborho waste on parking. He just lost a lot of cred with that boneheaded i

2
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Miles Bader → Alex Knight • 11 days ago

Even if they *did* terminate in partially undeveloped areas, gi huge disincentive for better development patterns...

^ | v
Reply Share
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Susan Donovan • 13 days ago

Liu said he is an "avid cyclist," but claimed that bike lanes were only really necessa

Wow. That is really depressing. At least I know one person I'm NOT going to vot Brooklyn!

How is Manhattan different? Washington Heights has the Exact same built enviro
This is really clueless!

14
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Jimbo853okg → Susan Donovan • 12 days ago

Liu is a lying opportunist who wants it both ways.

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snrvlakk → Susan Donovan • 12 days ago

I live in terror every time I ride on Queens Blvd. I can't BELIEVE I voted f

^ | v
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Joe R. → Susan Donovan • 12 days ago

I personally feel we need good bicycle infrastructure MORE in the outer bc great transportation options for many trips. The bicycle infrastructure we c right in that it doesn't make cycling any faster, and has marginal safety be We should have just focused on upgrading the Hudson and East river gree middle of the island.

Liu claims the outer boroughs don't need more cycling infrastructure. Here

- 1) The traffic on major arterials, which are often the only viable thru route have double-parked vehicles galore, jaywalking pedestrians, and school bu
- 2) Thanks to heavy truck/bus traffic, the pavement on said arterials is in c ride up Hillside Avenue, Jamaica Avenue, Queens Boulevard, just to name
- 3) The arterials are littered with traffic signals which are exceedingly poorly choice-run red lights or average not much better than walking speed.
- 4) The few "good" bike routes which exist generally don't really go all that

My proposal:

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^ >



Brownstone2 → Susan Donovan • 12 days ago

Yes.

^ Reply Share
^ >



Robert Wright • 13 days ago

I can prove to "avid cyclist" Anthony Weiner that the Broadway bicycle lane does his avid bicycle along the lane. It is constantly obstructed with deliveries, pedestria fast away from other cars.

It's pretty useless as a bike lane, of course, but that's another story.

10 Reply Share
^ >



Morris Zapp • 13 days ago

Congratulations on your polling. Zing!

But seriously: Douche.

5 Reply Share
^ >



Morris Zapp → Morris Zapp • 13 days ago

I'll elaborate, in case the candidates or their operatives are reading.

I'm a one issue voter. My issue is the physical well being of my loved ones this, and does not care to.

Your little zinger cost you my vote, Weiner. Was it worth it?

6 Reply Share
^ >



Jass • 13 days ago

Why does Weiner still have political aspirations?

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Bolwerk → Jass • 12 days ago

For the same reason he had them before he tweeted his dong. Tweeting and had absolutely no meaningful impact on whether Anthony Weiner has

The fact of the matter is, Anthony Weiner was a right-wing populist "libera because he hasn't changed at all. I wish he never resigned from Congress mayor now.



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Jimbo853okg → Bolwerk • 12 days ago

Regarding Weiner's political ambitions, I think he knows he'll lose the that Huma and he moved to Gramercy to wait out Carolyn Malone maybe when Senator Chuckie is vulnerable or dies, The Wein Macf guy is all about.



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Bolwerk → Jimbo853okg • 12 days ago

Heh. Well, whatever. He can leave New York and go to Wa:

But as someone holding executive authority, he crosses the




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