



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN

SCOTT STRINGER
BOROUGH PRESIDENT

May 4, 2012

Joseph J. Lhota
Chairman and Executive Officer
Metropolitan Transportation Authority
347 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10017-3739

Re: Replacing Lost or Stolen Reduced-Fare MetroCards

Dear Chairman Lhota:

As you know, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) provides reduced-fare MetroCards (RFMs) to senior citizens and persons with disabilities throughout the five boroughs. I write to you today in an effort to address an ongoing problem with the program – namely, the lengthy and convoluted process that seniors and persons with disabilities must endure when their cards are lost or stolen and need to be replaced. In fact, many of these straphangers report waiting up to three months for replacement cards, a needless delay that very often poses significant financial and logistical burdens on these already vulnerable populations.

Under the current system, senior citizen and disabled riders are forced to navigate a lengthy, Byzantine process to replace their reduced-fare cards if they are lost or stolen. For bus service, they are required to show proof of age or disability to drivers and pay \$1.10 in exact change, a time consuming interaction that serves no one well. To access subways, they must wait for assistance from a station agent, who will provide them with a single-use MetroCard and a return trip slip for \$2.25. In the latter case, the straphanger is instructed to give the slip to the station agent on their return trip to get through the turn-style. However, because budget cuts have eliminated so many station agent positions, this process is often futile.

All of this takes an emotional, physical and financial toll on New Yorkers who have a right to expect better service. My office has learned of cases where seniors sometimes wait as long as several months for a replacement if their reduced-fare MetroCards are lost or stolen. They have reported confusing interactions with the MTA's MetroCard service line. Others said replacement cards had been promised over the phone but never arrived in the mail. One woman, who is disabled, reached a person at MetroCard services who told her a replacement would arrive

in four days. A week passed and in a follow-up call to the MTA, the woman was told that it would take six weeks to get her a card. Finally, after calls to the Assistant VP of Corporate Communications, she got her card after 12 weeks. Another constituent who has arthritic knees and walks with a cane frequently descended the steps of the 86th Street station on Broadway, only to find that a station agent was not available to help him access the system. One straphanger was so frustrated by the lack of a station agent that she paid a fellow straphanger to swipe her through.

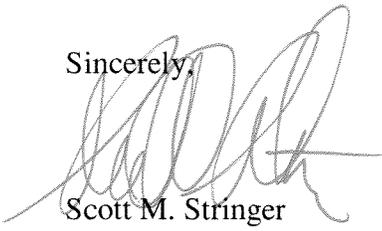
There is a simple solution to this problem: provide temporary MetroCards to seniors and disabled riders who have their reduced-fare cards *lost or stolen*. There is plenty of precedent for this. Today, any straphanger can turn in a *defective* card at the MetroCard Service Center on Stone Street in Lower Manhattan, the MTA's only full-time, walk-in service center, and get a temporary card on the spot. Alternatively, they can do the same thing at one of two mobile MetroCard vans that serve many neighborhoods. Riders can recover the remaining value on their unlimited or other MetroCards, while seniors and persons with disabilities can get a temporary replacement that works for up to three months. This process provides relatively seamless service to straphangers while providing Transit the necessary time to replace these faulty cards with new, permanent ones.

I am writing to request that the MTA use the same process to replace *lost or stolen* reduced fare cards as they currently use to replace *defective* ones. Providing these reduced fare cards – either by mail or in person at the Stone Street center, at the MetroCard vans, or at one of 16 designated MetroCard senior centers – will reduce the burden seniors and disabled persons face when trying to replace their lost or stolen cards. It would also largely eliminate the cumbersome process that bus drivers and station agents must now perform to determine reduced-fare eligibility. Because the MTA can deactivate the lost or stolen cards automatically, there is no reason to believe that providing temporary cards would lead to an increase in fraud.

The reduced-fare program is essential for thousands of New Yorkers who would otherwise face significant hardship in meeting their transportation needs, and I thank the MTA for its continued commitment to ensuring that all New Yorkers have access to vital mass transit. I am confident that the problem so many of my constituents have encountered can be addressed and I urge you to act as soon as possible in making necessary changes.

I look forward to your swift response and consideration.

Sincerely,



Scott M. Stringer

Manhattan Borough President