The annual operating budget pays for the 60,000 people who work at the MTA. It pays for their wages… as well as operating the trains and buses.

– Hayley Richardson

Despite six fare increases over nine years, subway and bus service has declined noticeably. What’s going on?

“The unreliability of the system is in large part caused by a failure to invest in more maintenance.”

– Hayley Richardson

“Every five years the MTA makes a decision on its capital budget for physical infrastructure, like trains and stations. The 2024 MTA capital budget is about $50 billion dollars.”

– Danna Dennis, Community Organizer, Riders Alliance

The MTA earns money from lots of different sources including tolls, taxes, and advertisements. Fares provide the biggest chunk of revenue — about 35% or $6.2 billion. In comparison, fare evasion costs the MTA less than 2% of this amount.

“The annual operating budget pays for the 60,000 people who work at the MTA. It pays for their wages… as well as operating the trains and buses.”

– Hayley Richardson

Despite six fare increases over nine years, subway and bus service has declined noticeably. What’s going on?

“For some people having police around makes them feel safe. For some people seeing a police officer makes them feel threatened… The MTA [should] conduct fare enforcement in a way that doesn’t terrify communities.”

– Hayley Richardson

“A lot of [the MTA budget] goes to paying off debt and transit service, but nothing has been going towards the actual infrastructure… [For example,] when we hear about people being stuck for a long time in the tunnels, it’s because of our outdated signal system from the 1930s. It’s kind of like putting a Band-Aid on a big sore.”

– Danna Dennis, Community Organizer, Riders Alliance

“In the summer of 2019, New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo and the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) announced a new campaign to stop fare evasion, including plans to hire 500 new police officers.

In the fall of 2019, CUP collaborated with Teaching Artist Stephen Kwok and public high school students from Life Sciences Secondary School to investigate this issue. Students interviewed public officials, surveyed community members, and determined key stakeholders working on the issue. This is a public to what students learned about public transportation, their transit needs, and how local communities can advocate for their transit needs.

WHAT’S FARE EVASION?

Fare evasion is when people try to ride public transportation without paying. According to the MTA, train and bus fare evasion totaled almost $300 million in 2019.

In NYC, police officers can either fine you $100 for fare evasion, or they can arrest you. The police have the power to choose.

In the summer of 2019, the MTA announced it would hire 500 new police and step up enforcement at 15 subway stations and 50 bus stops where fare evasion was most common. According to the MTA, the goal is to deter fare evasion, not to increase arrests.

“Isn’t that what we want ticket violations to do?… Get people to pay their fare…”

– David Miranda, Senior Arraignment Attorney, Criminal Defense Practice, Neighborhood Defender Service

“Over 80% of people who are arrested for fare evasion are of color. 80% of people given summonses are of color. 89% of those arrested are people of color.”

– David Miranda

In 2019, videos showing aggressive arrests of young people of color and women with kids in subway stations went viral. In response, several mass demonstrations protested increased spending on police and demanded decreasing all public transit free.

“For some people having police around makes them feel safe. For some people seeing a police officer makes them feel threatened…”

– David Miranda, Senior Arraignment Attorney, Criminal Defense Practice, Neighborhood Defender Service

“In January 2020, New York State Attorney General Letitia James launched an investigation to determine if NYPD officers have illegally targeted people of color on NYC subways through a fare evasion crackdown.

In 2019, videos showing aggressive arrests of young people of color and women with kids in subway stations went viral. In response, several mass demonstrations protested increased spending on police and demanded decreasing all public transit free.

“For some people having police around makes them feel safe. For some people seeing a police officer makes them feel threatened…”

– David Miranda, Senior Arraignment Attorney, Criminal Defense Practice, Neighborhood Defender Service

“Over 80% of people who are arrested for fare evasion are of color. 80% of people given summonses are of color. 89% of those arrested are people of color.”

– David Miranda

In 2019, videos showing aggressive arrests of young people of color and women with kids in subway stations went viral. In response, several mass demonstrations protested increased spending on police and demanded decreasing all public transit free.

“For some people having police around makes them feel safe. For some people seeing a police officer makes them feel threatened…”

– David Miranda, Senior Arraignment Attorney, Criminal Defense Practice, Neighborhood Defender Service

“In January 2020, New York State Attorney General Letitia James launched an investigation to determine if NYPD officers have illegally targeted people of color on NYC subways through a fare evasion crackdown.

In 2019, videos showing aggressive arrests of young people of color and women with kids in subway stations went viral. In response, several mass demonstrations protested increased spending on police and demanded decreasing all public transit free.

“For some people having police around makes them feel safe. For some people seeing a police officer makes them feel threatened…”

– David Miranda, Senior Arraignment Attorney, Criminal Defense Practice, Neighborhood Defender Service

“In January 2020, New York State Attorney General Letitia James launched an investigation to determine if NYPD officers have illegally targeted people of color on NYC subways through a fare evasion crackdown.

In 2019, videos showing aggressive arrests of young people of color and women with kids in subway stations went viral. In response, several mass demonstrations protested increased spending on police and demanded decreasing all public transit free.

“For some people having police around makes them feel safe. For some people seeing a police officer makes them feel threatened…”

– David Miranda, Senior Arraignment Attorney, Criminal Defense Practice, Neighborhood Defender Service

“In January 2020, New York State Attorney General Letitia James launched an investigation to determine if NYPD officers have illegally targeted people of color on NYC subways through a fare evasion crackdown.

In 2019, videos showing aggressive arrests of young people of color and women with kids in subway stations went viral. In response, several mass demonstrations protested increased spending on police and demanded decreasing all public transit free.

“For some people having police around makes them feel safe. For some people seeing a police officer makes them feel threatened…”

– David Miranda, Senior Arraignment Attorney, Criminal Defense Practice, Neighborhood Defender Service
New York Governor chooses the head of the MTA and a majority of its board members. They have a lot of power to make decisions, including approved over budgets and how money is spent.

“The most important decisions are about funding. That’s made at the head, and the state runs the MTA. The MTA is its own separate agency, but it is state funded and state run.”

- Dan Quart, New York State Assembly Member, District 73

WHO’S IN CHARGE?

“Make it Easy to Pay!”

“Fare evasion should be decriminalized across the city. It’s really difficult to pay for transit sometimes. We’ve all seen the MTA crackdown on fare evasion. Make Fares Affordable!”

- Danna Dennis

Decriminalize it! Make Fares Affordable! Make Fares Fair! Cancel the Debt! Make the Money Elsewhere! Make Fares Affordable!

Decriminalize it! Make Fares Affordable! Make Fares Fair! Cancel the Debt! Make the Money Elsewhere! Make Fares Affordable!

WHO’S IN CHARGE?

“Make it Easy to Pay!”

“Fare evasion should be decriminalized across the city. It’s really difficult to pay for transit sometimes. We’ve all seen the MTA crackdown on fare evasion. Make Fares Affordable!”

- Danna Dennis

Decriminalize it! Make Fares Affordable! Make Fares Fair! Cancel the Debt! Make the Money Elsewhere! Make Fares Affordable!

WHO’S IN CHARGE?

“Make it Easy to Pay!”

“Fare evasion should be decriminalized across the city. It’s really difficult to pay for transit sometimes. We’ve all seen the MTA crackdown on fare evasion. Make Fares Affordable!”

- Danna Dennis

Decriminalize it! Make Fares Affordable! Make Fares Fair! Cancel the Debt! Make the Money Elsewhere! Make Fares Affordable!