

New York City transit workers, commuters describe breakdown of subway system

Our reporters
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Following a train derailment in upper Manhattan on June 27, New York State Democratic Governor Andrew Cuomo has announced a “state of emergency” for the New York City subway system.

According to the new plan by the governor, the state will allocate an additional \$1 billion to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) capital plan. The MTA, which oversees the New York City subway system, has remained horribly underfunded for decades and has accumulated a debt of roughly \$36.5 billion.

The antiquated system is increasingly plagued with delays and technical issues. In April and May of this year there were two power failures, which caused serious delays and the rerouting of seven lines.

A *World Socialist Web Site* reporting team spoke with MTA workers and commuters about the recent derailment and ongoing transit crisis.

Eric Simon, a train operator, told the WSWWS, “The new MTA Chairman [Joe] Lhota is wrong when he blamed ‘human error’ for the derailment because someone applied the emergency braking system. Applying the emergency braking system does not cause derailment. You have to be a train operator to know about the emergency brakes, the switches and the track. I heard two supervisors have been suspended for having track rail material on the track.”

Another train operator explained the passengers’ situation: “I came in after the derailment. It was messed up. The riders are complaining that there are too many delays, and the MTA keeps making them pay higher fares. Many passengers were really frightened. No politicians showed up, not Cuomo or [New York Mayor Bill] de Blasio, to apologize for what happened and say what is going to be done about it.”

Natalie Kabare is a bar manager in the 125th Street area, near where the subway car was derailed. She

described the accident. “This is something that puts people in danger. We are paying higher prices to ride the MTA now, but the derailment puts people’s lives in danger. It scares me to take the train now.

“Do they check the trains all the time? Do they check the track all the time? It seems to me they should hire some more people to make sure this is done properly. I don’t blame human error for this derailment. I blame mechanical problems with the system.

“How old are the cars we are riding in? If they are more than 40 years old they should replace them. The fares keep going way up, so we should have safe reliable transportation.”

Don was a rider on a train close behind the train that derailed. He told the WSWWS, “Yesterday, I was on the first A train stopped at the 168th Street station. At first, they didn’t give us any reason for the delay. Then they said there was a fire at 125th Street. Then they gave out the mostly correct information, and they made us get off the train.

“The whole system needs to be redone, but they won’t put up the money to do anything until there is a major accident that kills many people.

“This country isn’t like it used to be. Now the food prices are so high you can’t even buy food. You look everywhere in the city and they are building luxury high-rises where bankers or young tech people will pay \$4,000 a month in rent. They can eat whatever they want. The number of poor people is increasing but we are being pushed out of everything.

“I didn’t vote for Trump. And I think all the politicians are a waste of time.”

Reporters also spoke to Donald Cabico, a hospital nurse, the day after the derailment. “When the derailment happened I was already at work, but I usually go down as far as 125th Street to go home and

come to work. It took me so long to get home, I thought I wasn't going to make it. I live in Queens, and I had to transfer twice to get to the 7 train at Times Square, which would take me to Queens. The people I was riding with were all complaining about the delays. This morning I had similar problems getting to work.

“What happened shouldn't happen. They are doing maintenance on a daily basis. I don't know what caused the derailment, but it is scary. I felt it last night. If it happened yesterday it could happen any time.

“I hold the MTA responsible. It is the government. They are responsible.”



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