SERVICE CHANGES:  NYC TRANSIT COMMITTEE NOTIFICATION
MTA BUS OPERATIONS COMMITTEE NOTIFICATION:
IMPLEMENT S79 SELECT BUS SERVICE ON HYLAN BOULEVARD

Service Issue

S79 service currently carries approximately 8,800 passengers on an average weekday making it the second busiest route on Staten Island. The area it serves has nearly 100,000 residents within ¼ mile, and the route travels via Hylan Boulevard, the busiest bus corridor on Staten Island. Hylan Boulevard is the fourth of the first phase of corridors converted from conventional bus service to Select Bus Service. The Select Bus Service components on Hylan Boulevard, including bus lanes, pedestrian improvements and traffic signal improvements, benefit not just S79 buses, but all buses on the corridor.

Recommendation

Implement Select Bus Service on Hylan Boulevard. This service, which will be called S79 Select Bus Service (SBS), will replace S79 local service. Local service will continue to be provided on Richmond Avenue by the S59 and on Hylan Boulevard by the S78. In combination, this package of service improvements will result in 20% faster travel time, up to 15 minutes, for S79 customers.

Budget Impact

Implementation of S79 SBS on Hylan Boulevard will result in increased annual bus operating costs of $300,000. Much of this increase in service will be dedicated to ensuring that local bus frequencies on the S59 and S78 will meet NYCT service guidelines along Richmond Avenue and Hylan Boulevard once the S79 SBS is implemented. It should be noted that the level of S78 and S59 service currently operated accurately meets current customer demand. These costs are included in the approved Select Bus Service operating budget. SBS service will operate with the same hours and frequency as does the current S79. There will be no reduction from the current levels of bus service along Hylan Boulevard.

Implementation Date

September 2012.
Purpose

The purpose of this Staff Summary is to obtain Presidential approval and to inform the NYCT Committee and the MTA Bus Operations Committee of the implementation of Select Bus Service on Hylan Boulevard. This service, which will be called S79 Select Bus Service (SBS), will be implemented in September 2012.

Discussion

MTA New York City Transit (NYCT) has been closely working with the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) to implement Select Bus Service in New York City. Both agencies have been working cooperatively for a number of years on this effort.

SBS Definition

Select Bus Service is a high-performance surface transportation system that incorporates elements such as bus lanes, traffic signal priority (TSP), traffic signal optimization, faster fare collection, fewer stops, high-capacity low-floor buses, a branded service and attractive stations. A combination of these features results in an improvement in speed and service reliability. Each transit corridor has different characteristics and physical constraints that determine which SBS elements are appropriate for the corridor.

All of these features, except for off-board fare collection, will be brought to the Hylan Boulevard SBS corridor based on their ability to improve speed and reliability. The S79 SBS will not have off-board fare collection because overall boarding times on the S79 are relatively fast due to highly dispersed boarding patterns. Most of the travel time savings are anticipated to be generated from fewer stops, the inclusion of bus lanes and traffic signal optimization.
SBS Screening Process

The first phase of the SBS project included a citywide screening process where corridors were evaluated for their suitability for SBS. The 100 busiest bus corridors in the city were identified and then evaluated using a series of qualitative measures. Based on community input and a technical evaluation, 15 corridors were selected. The 15 concept plans were presented at another series of citywide public meetings. Again, based on community input and technical analysis, the five strongest corridors were selected. The corridor that was selected for Staten Island is Hylan Boulevard. This route had support among Staten Island residents, community groups and elected officials.

Hylan Boulevard ranks highly as a corridor for SBS conversion due to the width of the thoroughfare for modifications and reallocation of lane space, the volume of buses utilizing the corridor and the number of customers that would be positively affected from the upgrade to SBS. As a result, the measures applied to the corridor are beneficial to not just the S79 but also to the S78, S59 and the numerous Staten Island to Manhattan express bus routes that also operate on the corridor.

It should be noted that the current proposal is not the first for Hylan Boulevard. Previous proposals, including a median bus lane, were considered but rejected due to a lack of community support. This proposal for the corridor represents a comprehensive effort to improve the thoroughfare while incorporating the concerns of local residents, community groups and customers.

Service Plan

The plan for this service is to replace the S79 local with S79 Select Bus Service. All S79 service would operate with one service pattern between Bay Ridge and the Staten Island Mall. The service would operate via 86 St, Fort Hamilton Parkway, the Verrazano Narrows Bridge, Narrows Road, Steuben Street, Hylan Boulevard, Richmond Avenue, Platinum Avenue, and Ring Road to Marsh Avenue terminal as does the current S79 (see Figure 1).

The S79 will make limited stops at high ridership locations and major transfer points. 71% of the local stops will be eliminated on the S79 SBS, reducing the number of stops in each direction from 75 to 22. These 22 SBS stops serve 70% of the S79 boardings so the majority of current customers should benefit from the new service. Local service will continue to be provided on Richmond Avenue by the S59 and on Hylan Boulevard by the S78.

The S79 will be rerouted along two route segments, Yukon Avenue and Richmond Hill Road, which will save customers a total of four minutes in each direction (see Figures 2 and 3). Approximately 200 customers will have to walk to a new S79 stop on Richmond Avenue at Yukon Avenue and fewer than 100 customers will have to walk to a new S79 stop on Ring Road at Macys. NYCT is working with the management of the Staten Island Mall to build improved customer facilities at bus stops and a new stop at Macy’s. These improvements are anticipated to be completed in 2013.
Staten Island Mall-bound S79 trips will also serve the Eltingville Transit Center via a streamlined route path (see Figure 4). The new entry to the Transit Center directly from Richmond Avenue, instead of a circuitous route via Arthur Kill Road and Wainwright Avenue, will save customers from waiting at the Arthur Kill Road/Richmond Avenue intersection twice.

The S79 SBS will provide passengers the opportunity to transfer to:
- The B subway line at 86 Street;
- The Staten Island Railway at the Eltingville Station; and
- Express buses, local buses and parking at the Eltingville Transit Center

Northbound (Bay Ridge-bound) Stations: Southbound (Staten Island Mall-bound) Stations:
Marsh Av / Westport Street
Ring Road / Staten Island Mall Macy's
Ring Road / Staten Island Mall Sears
Richmond Av / Yukon Avenue
Eltingville Transit Center
Richmond Av / Genesee Avenue
Richmond Av / Eltingville SIR Station
Hylan Boulevard / Winchester Av
Hylan Boulevard / Nelson Av
Hylan Boulevard / Bay Terrace
Hylan Boulevard / Buffalo Street
Hylan Boulevard / Tysens Lane
Hylan Boulevard / Ebbitts Street
Hylan Boulevard / New Dorp Lane
Hylan Boulevard / Midland Av
Hylan Boulevard / Seaview Av
Hylan Boulevard / Old Town Road
Hylan Boulevard / Clove Road
Hylan Boulevard / Narrows Road
Narrows Road / Fingerboard Road, Staten Is
92 Street / Fort Hamilton Parkway, Brooklyn
Narrows Road / St Johns Avenue
Hylan Boulevard / Buffalo Street
Hylan Boulevard / Bay Terrace
Hylan Boulevard / Ebbitts Street
Hylan Boulevard / Nelson Av
Richmond Av / Hylan Boulevard
Richmond Av / Eltingville SIR Station
Richmond Av / Genesee Avenue
Eltingville Transit Center
Richmond Av / Yukon Avenue
Ring Road / Staten Island Mall Sears
Ring Road / Staten Island Mall Macy's
Marsh Av / Westport Street

Span and Frequency

The S79 SBS service schedule will be comparable to the current service schedule of the S79 local. Weekday service will operate from 4:15 a.m. to 12:20 a.m., Saturday service will operate from 4:45 a.m. to 11:15 p.m. and Sunday service will operate from 5:20 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. As with all routes, when ridership and running times stabilize, service levels will be adjusted to meet our loading guidelines. It is further anticipated that savings achieved through faster speeds will be reinvested to provide more service as ridership grows.
Travel Time Savings

Current travel times on the S79 vary by time of day. One-way travel times can be as high as 80 minutes, but 75 minutes is typical of much of the day. These improvements will speed S79 travel times by approximately 20% over current conditions, depending upon time of day and direction of travel. This averages to approximately 15 minutes of travel time savings end-to-end.

Bus Lanes

One key element of Select Bus Service is bus lanes. Bus lanes are typically located in areas that would benefit from segregation of bus traffic from general traffic without significantly increasing the delays encountered by general traffic in the remaining travel lanes. Currently on Hylan Boulevard there are AM and PM peak hour “No Standing” regulations between Clove Road and Lincoln Avenue. With the S79 SBS, NYCDOT will introduce continuous peak hour curb side bus lanes between Clove Road and Lincoln Avenue. These lanes will be in effect northbound from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and southbound from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m, Monday through Friday. Consideration was given to extend the bus lane south to Tysens Lane. However traffic analysis showed that this change would overload the remaining general lanes of traffic and could result in extensive delays at intersections in the vicinity of New Dorp Lane.

In addition, new bus lanes will be installed on southbound Richmond Avenue approaching Hylan Boulevard and in both directions near the Staten Island Mall. These bus lanes are installed in congested areas that would provide faster travel for buses, have no effect on parking, and would not significantly inhibit traffic flow.

These bus lanes will be painted red for visibility, and there will be overhead, highway-type signs indicating that the lane is for buses only. The bus lanes will be 11-12 feet wide. These bus lanes will also benefit other express and local buses in the corridor.

Bus Lane Enforcement

Enforcement of bus lanes is a critical part of the success of this project. NYCT and NYCDOT have worked closely with the NYPD on bus lane enforcement. The New York State Legislature authorized use of camera enforcement of bus lanes along SBS corridors. Thus, Hylan Boulevard bus lane will be enforced both by NYPD and cameras. Vehicles may enter a bus lane only to make the next available right turn or to quickly drop off or pick up passengers. Violating bus lane rules results in a $115 – $150 fine. Summonses issued through camera enforcement are not moving violations.

Bus Pads

Many of the bus pads along Hylan Boulevard are in poor condition resulting in substandard bus stops. As part of this project NYCDOT will replace deficient bus pads and lengthen bus pads where necessary. This work has already begun and will continue throughout 2012 and 2013.
Pedestrian Access

NYCDOT will upgrade medians, curbs and sidewalks at key bus stop locations along Hylan Boulevard to improve safety for customers boarding and disembarking buses. In addition, bus shelters will be added where demand warrants and physical conditions permit them. These improvements will also benefit riders on other Hylan Boulevard routes and other pedestrians.

Traffic Signalization

The Hylan Boulevard Traffic Improvement Study, which preface this service proposal, included a rigorous analysis of traffic flow on the corridor and recommended measures to optimize signal timings and improve signal progression. These modifications will be implemented during the summer of 2012. A new type of bus priority device called an advance signal will be piloted on Hylan Boulevard late in 2012. In addition, during 2013, traffic signal priority (TSP) will be enabled along the S79 route on Hylan Boulevard and Richmond Avenue. With TSP specially-equipped buses are able to request that traffic signals hasten or extend the green time through intersections. This system is already in place in select locations on Victory Boulevard and Fordham Road and has decreased running times.

Branding

The buses to be used for S79 SBS will have a different appearance than other NYCT buses. The current Orion VII Next Generation low-floor buses will be utilized but have a distinct wrap that will stand out from a distance. This branding identity will also be used for S79 SBS marketing materials and station features. The front of the bus will also feature the signature flashing blue LED lights, which will signal to customers that an SBS bus is approaching the stop.

On-Bus Passenger Information

The S79 SBS will also be the pilot route for advanced on-bus passenger visual and audio information which will improve the transit experience for visual or hearing impaired customers. Like all Staten Island local and express bus routes, the S79 SBS also features the Bus Time interface, which since January 2012 has provided real-time location of buses along the route. Bus Time has a text version that given a unique bus stop code displays the next three S79 trips approaching. In addition a web based display is currently operating at the Eltingville Transit Center that shows the location of all S79 buses along the route.

Public Outreach

NYCT and NYCDOT staff has attended approximately ten community meetings on this project including three informational open houses which were held at venues along the corridor.
Additionally, a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was convened to provide guidance in the design and implementation of SBS in this corridor. The CAC comprised a broad range of stakeholders, from elected officials to Community Boards to major area institutions. There has been thorough discussion of all the issues, and many points of concern have been addressed through changes to the project including the addition of stations.

**Alternatives**

1. *Do Nothing.* If no actions are taken, S79 service along Hylan Boulevard will continue to be slow and inefficient, discouraging ridership growth.

**Recommendation**

Implement S79 Select Bus Service (SBS), replacing S79 local service. Local service will continue to be provided on Richmond Avenue by the S59 and on Hylan Boulevard by the S78. In combination, this package of service improvements will result in 20% faster travel time for S79 customers.

**Budget Impact**

Implementation of S79 SBS on Hylan Boulevard will result in a net increase in annual bus operating costs of $300,000. Much of this increase in cost is for an increase in service levels on the S59 and S78 to insure that they will continue to meet NYCT service guidelines along Richmond Avenue and Hylan Boulevard once the S79 SBS is implemented. It should be noted that the level of S78 and S59 service currently operated accurately meets current customer demand. These costs are included in the approved Select Bus Service operating budget. SBS service will operate with the same hours and frequency as does the current S79. There will be no reduction from the current levels of bus service along Hylan Boulevard.

**Implementation Date**

September 2012.

Approved:

[Signature]

Thomas F. Prendergast
President
FIGURE 2 - S79 SBS REROUTE AT YUKON AV

- New SBS Stop
- Discontinued Stop
- Existing Route
- Proposed Route
- Bus Lane

Staten Island

Area of Detail
No Change in Northbound Service to Brooklyn

- New SBS Stop
- Discontinued Stop
- Existing Route
- Proposed Route

FIGURE 4 - ELTINGVILLE TRANSIT CENTER STATEN ISLAND MALL BOUND S79