

The 2019 Cozy Awards

NEW YORK CITY'S CLOSEST BUS STOPS

B 54

WTA

When It Comes to Bus Stops, “Cozy” is a Bad Thing

Any frequent bus rider knows that when bus stops are too close together, buses spend more time stuck at stops, leading to slower commutes and worse service. Overly-close stop spacing can cause a number of challenges for a bus system. Every time a bus reaches a stop, not only does it have to wait for riders to exit and board, but also often has to wait to merge back into traffic. This not only slows buses down, but increases variability in timing, making riding the bus less reliable. And there's not much upside: when stops are especially close, they do very little to improve service coverage, as the coverage areas of such cramped stops significantly overlap and end up being redundant. The problems are especially acute on the congested roads of New York City: currently, it is estimated that New York City buses spend almost 25% of their route time at bus stops.¹

¹ https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/the-other-transit-crisis-how-to-improve-the-nyc-bus-system/#_edn3

International industry best practices recommend bus stops in an urban area be spaced about 1,000 feet apart, slightly less than the quarter-mile (1,320 feet) that people are generally willing to walk to access transit.² In the 1980s, the MTA adopted a minimum stop spacing goal of 750 feet between local stops — about three city blocks — but our analysis finds that 30% of the city's stop pairs fall short of that goal.³

The first biennial “Cozies Awards” highlights the prevalence of close bus stops in New York City. We analyzed every MTA Bus and New York City Transit bus stop pair to identify and “award” the closest stop pairs in each borough. The full methodology can be found in the appendix. The final “awards” were given to stops spaced at or below 80 meters, or about 260 feet apart, which is slightly less than a Manhattan city block, almost exactly the length of four of the MTA's articulated buses, and about one-third of the MTA's own recommended minimum stop spacing of 750 ft. In total, 32 stop pairs were closer than 80 meters, affecting 37 routes.

In a city where so many residents rely on public transit, close stops are detrimental to a functioning bus system that truly serves the city. Fixing this problem is also one of the most cost-efficient ways the MTA can improve transit service, since rebalancing stop spacing costs a fraction of many other operational or capital improvements. The MTA recognizes the importance of this and is moving to rebalance stops as part of the Bronx bus network redesign. It is important that the authority continues to prioritize stop spacing as bus network redesigns move forward in Queens, Brooklyn, and Manhattan. Moreover, as the MTA rebalances stops, the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) can simultaneously invest in bus stop upgrades, including full accessibility at all stops systemwide. If New Yorkers want to see faster, more reliable, and fully accessible public transit, they should embrace the MTA's efforts to rebalance bus stops, making the Cozies Awards a thing of the past.

² https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/ped_transit/ped_transguide/ch4.cfm

³ https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/the-other-transit-crisis-how-to-improve-the-nyc-bus-system/#_edn7

The *Coziest* Bus Stops in New York City

BROOKLYN

Brooklyn wins the 2019 award for “Coziest Borough,” with 11 stop pairs closer than 80 meters, affecting 10 routes. The 2019 Brooklyn Cozy Award goes to the B54, where a pair of stops are spaced 64 meters apart on Myrtle Avenue. With a route-level average speed of 5.2 miles per hour, 1 in 11 buses bunched, and a “D” grade from the Bus Turnaround Coalition, the B54 is a prime candidate for stop spacing adjustments. Notably, the B54 pair is only the third coziest pair citywide. The runners up for the Brooklyn Cozy Award are the B1 at 86th Street and the B15 at Hegeman Avenue, at 64 and 67 meters respectively. The B1 has an average speed of 6.1mph and a “D” grade from Bus Turnaround, while the B15 received an “F” grade for its slow speed and frequent bunching: one in five buses is bunched on the route.

A Cozies Honorary Mention goes to a pair of B60 stops that are just 40 meters apart — the city’s shortest recorded spacing. However, as one stop is in use only during school hours, this pair is not eligible for a Cozy Award.

Route	Distance (m)	Location
B54	64	MYRTLE AVENUE, VANDERBILT & CLINTON AVENUES
B1	64	86 STREET, 19 & NEW UTRECHT AVENUES
B51	67	HEGEMAN AVENUE, THOMAS BOYLAND & BRISTOL STREETS
B83	70	NEW LOTS AVENUE, BRADFORD STREET & MILLER AVENUE
B15	73	LEWIS AVENUE, DEKALB AVENUE & PULASKI STREET
B13, B15, B20	74	OPPOSITE CORNERS OF EUCLID AVENUE & LINDEN BOULEVARD
B14	76	SUTTER AVENUE, VAN SINDEREN AVENUE & JUNIUS SREET
B61	77	PROSPECT PARK WEST, 18 & 19 STREETS
B60	77	WILSON AVENUE, DECATEUR & SCHAEFFER STREETS
B8	80	AVENUE D, EAST 53 STREET & KINGS HIGHWAY
B8	80	18 AVENUE, 49 & 50 STREETS

QUEENS

Route	Distance (m)	Location
Q55	74	MYRTLE AVENUE, EITHER SIDE OF WOODHAVEN BOULEVARD
Q56	75	JAMAICA AVENUE, 89 & 90 STREETS
Q38	77	63 DRIVE & 63 ROAD, EITHER SIDE OF QUEENS BOULEVARD
Q11	78	164 AVENUE, 96 & 97 STREETS
Q102	80	30 AVENUE, 29 & 30 STREETS
Q36	80	JAMAICA AVENUE, 212 PLACE & 213 STREET

Six bus stop pairs in Queens are 80 meters apart or less. The 2019 Queens Cozy Award winner is the Q55, whose stops on Myrtle Avenue on either side of Woodhaven Boulevard are 74 meters apart. The Q55 received a “D” grade from the Bus Turnaround Coalition, with an average speed of 6.5mph.

The runner up for the Queens Cozy Award is the Q56, with stops on both 89th and 90th Street along Jamaica Avenue. Like the Q55, the Q56 earned a “D” grade, with an average speed of 5.8mph.

A Cozies Honorable Mention goes to the Q33, whose first and second stops are just 73 meters apart. While the first stop is technically a turnaround and layover point on a side street, these two stops bring the bus to a halt just as it starts its route. With 1 in 14 buses bunched, an average speed of just 5.5mph — worse than almost three-fourths of all MTA buses — and a “D” grade from Bus Turnaround, the Q33 has seen a 5% drop in ridership between 2016 and 2017.

MANHATTAN

Route	Distance (m)	Location
M2	68	EDGECOMBE AVENUE & WEST 155 TH STREET
M10	76	CENTRAL PARK WEST, 108 TH & 109 TH STREETS
M4, M5	77	BROADWAY, WEST 136 TH & WEST 137 TH STREETS

Three stop pairs in Manhattan earned the dubious distinction of a 2019 Cozy Award or a runner-up slot, affecting four bus routes in total. The 2019 Manhattan Cozy Award goes to the M2, with two stops 68 meters apart. These stops are located diagonally across the intersection of Edgecombe Avenue and West 155th St., with one located on the approach to a narrow, heavily-trafficked bridge that serves as a primary crossing into the Bronx. Stopping twice in such a short distance in a hectic intersection offers a confusing and slow experience for riders and contributes to frequent traffic jams on this route. This slowdown also affects the Bx6 SBS, which runs along the same bridge and is frequently caught in congestion. The M2 earned a “D” grade, with one in eight buses bunched, and its average speed is 5.5 mph — slower than 73 percent of all Manhattan buses.

The runners-up for the 2019 Manhattan Cozy Award run along major thoroughfares: on Central Park West, the M10 stops at both the 108th and 109th Street intersections, adding unnecessary time to a straightforward route. This is also true for two stops along Broadway, at W. 136th and W. 137th, where both the M4 and the M5 stop. The M10 is the recipient of a “D” grade, with a 5 mph average speed, and the M4 and M5 earned an “F” and a “D” respectively from the Bus Turnaround Coalition, with average speeds of 4.8mph and 6.1mph.

BRONX

Route	Distance (m)	Location
BX26	63	GUN HILL ROAD, GUNTHER AVENUE, & ALLERTON AVENUE
BX10	71	EAST 206 STREET & BAINBRIDGE AVENUE
BX40, BX42	75	EAST BURNSIDE AVENUE & GRAND CONCOURSE
BX18	75	EAST 170 STREET & GRAND CONCOURSE*
BX11	75	EAST 170 STREET & GRAND CONCOURSE*

* FIXED IN REDESIGN

While five bus stop pairs affecting seven routes were eligible for Cozy Awards in 2019, the Bronx bus system is undergoing a network redesign that will address some of the very worst offenders on the awards list. Three of the stop pairs our analysis identified are currently slated to be rebalanced as part of the MTA's redesign.

Unfortunately, the closest stop pair in the city, spaced just 63 meters apart across East Gun Hill Road, remains intact in the redesign plan. The route serving that pair, the Bx26, is the recipient of the 2019 Bronx Cozy Award, as well as the recipient of the 2019 New York City Cozy Award for serving the closest stop pair in the entire city. The Bx26 earned a "D" grade from the Bus Turnaround Coalition for its slow average speed of 6.6mph and middling reliability (buses bunch about 1 in 17 times).

The runners up are the last two stops of the Bx10 at 71 meters apart, a route that has earned a "D" grade and has an average speed of less than 8 mph. Despite the last stop being a layover point, route maps and signage indicate to riders that the bus stops at both places, unnecessarily holding up traffic, slowing down riders who plan to get off at the layover point,

and confusing users. This pair is followed by a remarkable three-way tie affecting four bus routes: the Bx40, Bx42, Bx18 and Bx11 all have stops 75 meters apart. None of the four bus routes in the four-way tie earned above a "D" grade, with the Bx18 and Bx11 earning "F"s.

STATEN ISLAND

Route	Distance (m)	Location
S76, S86	78	CEDAR GROVE AVENUE, TOPPING STREET & GARIBALDI AVENUE
S57	79	PORT RICHMOND AVENUE, POST AVENUE & ALBION PLACE

On Staten Island, only two stop pairs are closer than 80 meters, affecting three routes in total. The winner of the 2019 Staten Island Cozy Award is a two-way tie between the S76 and the S86, both of which stop twice in two short blocks along Cedar Grove Avenue. Meanwhile, the runner-up S57 stops twice in just under 80 meters along Port Richmond Avenue.

The S76 and S86 have very disparate grades from the Bus Turnaround Campaign: the S76 received a "C," but the S86 received an "F" grade, with average speeds of 6.3mph. Where the S86 suffers most is on reliability, with only 35 percent of buses on this route on time. Meanwhile, the S57 received a "C" overall, clocking in at a relatively zippy 10.5mph--better than over 90% of buses citywide. However, the S57 received a "C" and "D" for bus bunching and on-time performance—both metrics that could be improved through better stop spacing.

Troubling Trends — And *Hope* on the Horizon

While this year's Cozy Awards focuses on stop pairs less than 80 meters apart, there are many other pairs of stops that fall well below the MTA's guidelines for stop spacing. In our analysis, a number of trends emerged across the overly-close bus stops:

- *A majority of the closest stop pairings are located on successive, short blocks — an approach in direct violation of the MTA's stop spacing guidelines to “have minimum desired spacing interval of approximately 750 feet, or about three blocks between bus stops.”⁴*
- *Many close stops were across busy intersections, likely to prevent pedestrians from having to cross dangerous roads. However, this also means a bus will stop for passengers, wait for a light, merge back into busy traffic, and then stop again moments later. Consolidating some stops near both sides of the intersection, and lengthening spacing accordingly, would still allow riders to use a stop on either side of the intersection.*
- *Some public amenities like hospitals, parks, and schools are served by multiple very close stops, even when a single stop could serve that amenity effectively and provide better service for those trying to access it.*
- *Close stops sometimes exist on both ends of apartment complexes, often senior housing or NYCHA housing. This*

approach can be counterproductive due to the impact frequent stops have in slowing and disrupting service: low-income and transit-dependent populations have as great a need for high-quality, efficient transit as other riders.

- *Some of the closest stop pairs in the city are first and second stops or the penultimate and final stops. In practice, some of these stops are either pick-up only or drop-off only — despite signage, MTA maps, and online sources indicating otherwise. Partial-service stops are problematic because passengers unfamiliar with the service may be skipped over if they plan to use an inactive stop. Further, limits on pick-ups and drop-offs do not prevent the bus from stopping at both stops anyway, which slows down service and delays passengers using the rest of the route. For example, a bus may stop at a “full-service” stop to pick someone up, then pause immediately after at a drop-off only stop if someone onboard requests the stop.*

The Cozies might be the worst bus stop spacing examples in New York City, but they are far from anomalies: unfortunately, they represent a system-wide approach to bus stop planning that has resulted in far too many bus stops placed far too close together. The result contributes to the slow, unreliable service that plagues New York City's two million daily bus riders.

⁴ <http://web.mta.info/mta/compliance/titlevi-subway-bus-service.html>

Fortunately for riders, balancing bus stops to provide faster service doesn't require notable capital or operational investment from the MTA, making it an affordable, largely cost-neutral fix for bus service. While NYCDOT would incur costs to ensure all bus stops are fully accessible, including providing curb cuts and sidewalk improvements on the routes to stops, rebalancing reduces the number of stops that the agency must improve. While re-spacing bus stops requires agencies' staff time, a community outreach program, and support from elected officials and stakeholders,⁵ the MTA is currently undertaking these efforts as part of its local bus network redesigns in four of the five boroughs over the next few years.

The MTA should make stop spacing a pillar of its four upcoming network redesigns. An efficient stop spacing approach would meet the MTA's own standard of at least 750 feet between stops and would result in stops spaced a little over a thousand feet apart, on average. This includes the ongoing Bronx Bus Network Redesign — draft plans have improved stop spacing but still don't meet industry standards, or the agency's own guidelines (currently, nearly 45% of stop pairs in the Bronx are less than 750 feet apart, and the MTA has suggested rebalancing stops to meet the standard).

While the MTA focuses on stop spacing in its ongoing Bus Network Redesign, New York City's DOT has a large role to play in improving conditions at and around bus stops to ensure that all riders can reach bus stops without encountering barriers to access. The DOT should look at implementing accessibility and passenger environment improvements at every bus stop, including:

- *Improving sidewalk conditions at and around bus stops, including crosswalks and curb cuts, and installing new sidewalks at bus stops where they currently do not exist;*
- *Adding benches and, where possible, building new shelters at bus stops;*
- *Enhancing crosswalks at intersections and accelerating street safety improvements;*
- *Completing a citywide survey of accessibility at each bus stop.*

Bus stops that are placed sufficiently far apart allow bus service to move faster and more reliably, while not providing redundant service to any one area. A carefully planned and ambitious approach to stop placement, mobilized in the MTA's upcoming bus network redesigns, will make bus service comfortable and convenient, not cozy and slow, for all New Yorkers.

⁵ https://transitcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06BusStopBalancing_Final_061719_Pages-1.pdf

Methodology

Stop data was taken from MTA Transit Feeds data, include "stops," "stop-times," and "shapes," last updated in May 2019. Calculations in SQL combined the three data sets to calculate the distance between successive stops along each line. Stop distance was verified using MTA Bus Time, Google Maps, Google Street View, and field observations.

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Appendix: Closest Stops by Borough

Brooklyn

ROUTE	STOP 1 ID	STOP 2 ID	LOCATION DESCRIPTION	DISTANCE (M)	DIRECTION
B60*	305043	308622	Wilson Av, Greene & Bleecker Sts	40	To Canarsie Williams Ave
B54	306927	304390	Myrtle Av, Vanderbilt & Clinton Avs	64	Ridgewood Term via Myrtle
B1	300038	300039	86 St, 19 & New Utrecht Avs	64	Bay Ridge 4 Ave via 86 St
B15	307115	307673	Hegeman Av, Thomas Boyland & Bristol Sts	67	JFK Airport; Spring Creek Drew St Linden Blvd
B83	301142	301143	New Lots Av, Bradford St & Miller Av	70	Spring Creek Gateway Mall
B15	301087	301088	Lewis Av, DeKalb Av & Pulaski St	73	Bed-Stuy Woodhull Hospital
B13, B15, B20	306291	301155	Opposite corners of Euclid Av & Linden Bl	74	Spring Creek
B14	301579	301580	Sutter Av, Van Sinderen Av & Junius St	76	Crown Heights Utica Ave
B61	307227	305858	Prospect Park W, 18 & 19 Sts	77	Park Slope 20 St via Red Hook
B60	30483	304984	Wilson Av, Decateur & Schaeffer Sts	77	Williamsburg Bridge Plaza
B8	300843	300844	Av D, E 53 St & Kings Hy	80	Brownsville Rockaway
B8	300892	300893	18 Av, 49 & 50 Sts	80	Bay Ridge 95th St Station

Bronx

ROUTE	STOP 1 ID	STOP 2 ID	LOCATION DESCRIPTION	DISTANCE (M)	DIRECTION
BX26	103518	101755	Gun Hill Road, Gunther Ave, & Allerton	63	Bedford Park Lehman Col
BX10	802069	102030	E 206/Bainbridge Ave	71	Norwood 205 St Station
BX40, BX42	102702	104010	E Burnside Ave/Grand Concourse	75	River Park Tower via Tremont
BX18	802121	102994	E 170/Grand Concourse	75	170 St Concourse
BX11	103278	102994	E 170/Grand Concourse	75	West Farms Rd

Manhattan

ROUTE	STOP 1 ID	STOP 2 ID	LOCATION DESCRIPTION	DISTANCE (M)	DIRECTION
M2	400268	400267	Edgecombe Av & W 155 St	68	Limited East Village 8th St
M10	401266	401265	Central Park W, 108th & 109th	76	Harlem 159th St via 8 Av
M4 & M5	400609	903236	Broadway, W 136 & W 137	77	Washington Hts Cloisters

Queens

ROUTE	STOP 1 ID	STOP 2 ID	LOCATION DESCRIPTION	DISTANCE (M)	DIRECTION
Q55	504344 / 504357	504345 / 503279	Myrtle Av, either side of Woodhaven Blvd	74	Both directions
Q56	503382	503383	Jamaica Av, 89 & 90 St	75	Jamaica 170th St
Q38	551255	552966	63 Dr & 63 Rd, either side of Queens Bl	77	Rego Park 108 St - 62 Dr
Q11	550512	550513	164 Av, 96 & 97 St	78	Old Howard Beach 99 St
Q102	550525	552124	30 Av, 29 & 30 St	80	Roosevelt Island
Q36	501929	501930	Jamaica Av, 212 Pl & 213 St	80	Floral Park 257 St; Little Neck LIRR Station

Staten Island

ROUTE	STOP 1 ID	STOP 2 ID	LOCATION DESCRIPTION	DISTANCE (M)	DIRECTION
S76, S86	202494	203130	Cedar Grove Ave, Topping St & Garibaldi Ave	78	Oakwood Mill Rd
S57	202782	200902	Port Richmond Ave, Post Ave & Albion Pl	79	Port Richmond



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