



COMMUNITY BOARD ELEVEN

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Nilsa Orama
Chair

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District Manager

November 19, 2019

Hon. Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Hon. Cy Vance, Jr.
District Attorney
One Hogan Place
New York, NY 10013

Re: MTA Quality of Life Policing

WHEREAS Manhattan Community Board 11 (hereinafter "CB11"), whose primary mission is to advise elected officials and government agencies on matters affecting the social welfare of the district encompassing East Harlem, Randall's Island, and Ward's Island;

WHEREAS in June 2019, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced that 500 uniformed officers will be assigned to subway stations and bus stops to combat fare evasion, homelessness, and other quality of life issues.¹ The Citizens Budget Commission estimates the price tag of this expanded police force patrolling the MTA will cost roughly \$663 million over the next decade.² Manhattan District Attorney Cy Vance said his office will invest \$40 million in this proposal;³

WHEREAS CB11's Statement of District Needs for Fiscal Year 2020 recognizes that the crime rate citywide and in East Harlem has decreased over the past two decades. Similarly, NYPD data indicates that crime in the city's transit system is down 1.4 percent year-over-year through September,⁴ and NYPD Chief of Transit Edward Delatorre on November 12, 2019 told MTA board members that overall crime in

¹ <https://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/ny-fare-evasion-mta-cops-cuomo-20190617-43xr7bp55rcrjnipa6n6vcei7m-story.html> and <https://gothamist.com/news/mta-hiring-500-new-cops-fix-quality-life-issues-subway-system> and <https://gothamist.com/news/why-mta-cracking-down-homeless> and <https://gothamist.com/news/mta-board-members-reconsider-new-subway-cops-what-strategy-here>

² <https://gothamist.com/news/mta-board-members-reconsider-new-subway-cops-what-strategy-here>

³ <https://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/ny-fare-evasion-mta-cops-cuomo-20190617-43xr7bp55rcrjnipa6n6vcei7m-story.html> and <https://gothamist.com/news/mta-hiring-500-new-cops-fix-quality-life-issues-subway-system>

⁴ <https://www.amny.com/transit/dispute-over-subway-crime-nypds-top-cop-says-cuomos-wrong-on-dramatic-increase-remark/>

the subway is down this year, with "declines in nearly all categories of crime" compared to this time last year;⁵

WHEREAS recent incidents over transit policing has generated immense community outrage, including incidents involving: two churro sellers handcuffed by NYPD officers on Brooklyn subway platforms, officers pointing their guns inside a crowded subway car, punching teenagers in the face, and holding up an L train to remove a man seen dozing off on a bench;⁶

WHEREAS on Tuesday November 12, 2019, four officers tackled and handcuffed a young Black subway candy vendor in CB 11's district, with video showing four officers piling on top of the man at the 125th Street station on Lexington Avenue subway station;⁷

WHEREAS Black and Hispanic people made up 84 percent of evasion arrests in Brooklyn, compared to just 12 percent for white people, and East Harlem's community has a similar community demographic.⁸

WHEREAS the annual median household income in East Harlem is \$30,973 which is significantly lower than the median NYC household income of \$53,373--and less than half of the median household income in Manhattan--\$72,871. Of the 98,151 residents age 16 and older in East Harlem, 50.3 percent are either unemployed or not in the labor force. Nearly thirty percent of family incomes in the past 12 months were below the Federal poverty line, the percentages are even higher for youth and seniors (45 and 36 percent respectively); one-third (31 percent) receive food stamps;

WHEREAS East Harlem has one of the highest rates of incarceration in the city: 302 out of every 100,000 adults are in jail, and this high rate has a devastating effect on their individual futures, as well as the larger community, which is three times higher than the citywide average (Community Health Profile 2015);

WHEREAS many individuals in East Harlem have a negative view of the police, and while City officials have stated that stop and frisk is no longer NYPD policy, recent video footage of policing of subway vendors as well as Black youth in Brooklyn and the Bronx has raised serious concerns about how police are making such stops, and whether they are truly motivated by public safety;⁹

WHEREAS adding 500 police officers would increase the MTA's projected operating deficit to over \$1 billion over the next four years and it would be a harmful use of public money, and would be in addition to the more than 2,500 officers that currently patrol the MTA;¹⁰

WHEREAS this proposal is part of a punitive approach to fare enforcement and homelessness that criminalizes low-income New Yorkers – disproportionately New Yorkers of color. And it would exacerbate the criminalization of poor New Yorkers and communities of color who depend on transit every day;

⁵ <https://gothamist.com/news/mta-board-members-reconsider-new-subway-cops-what-strategy-here>

⁶ <https://gothamist.com/news/mta-board-members-reconsider-new-subway-cops-what-strategy-here>

⁷ <https://patch.com/new-york/harlem/video-candy-seller-arrested-harlem-subway-station>

⁸ https://smhttp-ssl-58547.nexcesscdn.net/nycss/images/uploads/pubs/Fare_Evasion_FINAL_10_6_17_smaller.pdf

⁹ <https://gothamist.com/news/video-shows-nypd-cops-brazenly-ignoring-stop-and-frisk-reforms>

¹⁰ <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/05/nyregion/mta-police-officers-subway-plan.html>

WHEREAS it subjects New Yorkers who can least afford it to hyper-aggressive policing tactics and excessive force - as we recently saw in viral videos where excessive force was used against teenagers in Brooklyn train stations;

THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED that CB11 calls on

1. Governor Cuomo to halt plans to hire 500 new MTA police, and redirect and invest these public dollars back into the community by improving the quality and accessibility of our public transit; and
2. District Attorney Cy Vance to redirect his proposed \$40 million to needed civil reentry programs that work with community groups to provide rehabilitation and other supports to citizens returning from prison; including access to jobs, affordable housing, and education opportunities.

Board Vote: 33 in favor, 3 opposed, 2 abstaining

Sincerely,



Nilsa Orama
Chair

cc: Hon. Robert J. Rodriguez, New York State Assembly (via email)
Hon. Inez Dickens, New York State Assembly (via email)
Hon. Brian Benjamin, New York State Senate (via email)
Hon. Jose Serrano, New York State Senate (via email)
Hon. Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President (via email)
Hon. Corey Johnson, New York City Council (via email)
Hon. Diana Ayala, New York City Council (via email)
Hon. Bill Perkins, New York City Council (via email)
Hon. Ben Kallos, New York City Council (via email)
Hon. Keith Powers, New York City Council (via email)
Jumaane Williams, New York City Public Advocate (via email)
Hon. Scott Stringer, New York City Comptroller (via email)
Hon. Adriano Espaillat, United States Congress (via email)
Hon. Charles Schumer, United States Senate
Hon. Kristen Gillibrand, United States Senate
Judith Febraro, Manhattan Community Board 11 (via email)