



The Aftermath

Posted by [Glenn](#) on December 23, 2005 - 11:48am in [The Oil Drum: Local](#)

Topic: [Policy/Politics](#)

Tags: [mta](#), [new york](#), [oil](#), [peak oil](#), [public transportation](#), [strike](#), [twu](#) [[list all tags](#)]

I meant to finish this last night, but after walking something like 20 miles over the last 3 days and handing out information for [Transportation Alternatives](#) at the Queensboro bridge last night I was a little tired so you'll have to forgive me. :)

Now that the strike is over and the trains and buses are running again, we can take stock of the third transit strike in 40 years (1966, 1980, 2005) and the third time that NYC's transportation system has been disrupted for more than 24 hours in less than 5 years (Sept 11, Blackout 2003, the Transit Strike). All of these events have illustrated the [value of mass transit](#), the inability of cars to replace it and the need for more transportation alternatives to both mass transit and automobiles.

The Strike underscores the economics of transportation. Transportation = Commerce. The subway system is the lifeblood of NYC's commerce and when it's shutdown, city businesses and government risk losing a combined \$400-\$600 million a day. But Transportation is not about Public Health and Safety like Police, Fire, Sanitation and other public sector unions covered by the Taylor Law. No matter which side of the labor dispute you took, I think we can all agree that mass transit is economically important. I believe that this strike was more about the economics of the the working class in NYC, the two New Yorks (white collar vs. working class) that Freddy Ferrer talked about. Inflation in housing costs and other basic costs of living make a 3% annual raise in NYC a net decline in standard of living for the working class. I hope that as peak oil ripples through the economy, both New Yorks can work together to overcome the challenges in an equitable manner.

The strike was another recent reminder that New York's transportation system is complex and can fail for many different reasons - terrorism, power outage or labor problems. There are also daily subway outages and major changes every week for repairs or planned capital improvement. And even on a good day, there is overcrowding and slow service on buses and subways. Automobiles can simply not fill that void, even during a minor disruption. All of this shows the need to encourage more people to bike to work, in-line skate to work, walk to work, carpool to work, etc. We are blessed with a dense and relatively flat city perfect for all types of person-powered transportation and we should make these safe and accessible to as many people as possible.

The best policy tested during the strike was the restriction of entry to Manhattan south of 96th street to vehicles with less than 4 persons in it during the morning commute. This was also done after 9/11 and it has proven its ability to reduce unnecessary traffic in the downtown business districts of Manhattan. As someone who lives in that zone, it was wonderful to see my street free of cars and mostly free of their honking horns. We need to test a ban on single occupancy vehicles (SOVs) for a few months and see what impact this has on air quality, noise, accidents and traffic

Once again, [Great Job New York!](#) You make me proud to be a New Yorker!

Here are some ideas for cyclists from Transportation Alternatives on what to tell the [Mayor](#)

- *Mandate bike access in buildings
- *Create more and better protected bike lanes
- *Increase police enforcement to keep bike lanes safe and clear
- *Create safe routes to and from greenway paths and the East River bridge biking and walking paths
- *Install more bike racks



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