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Report Faults M.T.A. for Delays in Big Construction Projects

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Update, 1:22 p.m. | Construction is a constant in New York City's sprawling public transportation system, but riders often have little sense of what's being done, or when the delays (and jack-hammering) will come to an end.

It may sound like a truism of life in the city, but one watchdog group thinks the authorities could do a better job at keeping the public informed.

A [report](#) [pdf] released on Tuesday by the [Citizens Budget Commission](#) [reprimanded](#) [pdf] the Metropolitan Transportation Authority for leaving the public in the dark about many aspects of its construction projects, from the long-delayed Second Avenue subway line to station renovations at Fulton Street and South Ferry. More progress reports and more consistent, concrete timelines should be implemented, the group said.

Delays are also a serious problem for the authority, even in less sophisticated work like the maintenance and replacement of subway cars, according to the report. It noted that the Fulton Street station renovation is five years behind schedule, installation of a new public address system on the numbered subway lines has been delayed for four years and the replacement of more than 1,000 cars scheduled for last year was delayed for eight months.

With the transportation authority looking for approval from Albany for a five-year capital plan of \$28.1 billion in commitments, the commission believes that officials should create a centralized information system that regularly posts updates to a public Web site and keeps more detailed track of progress on major construction projects.

The commission also believes that the authority's five-year plan is overly ambitious. It noted that in a previous plan, in effect from 2000 to 2004, nearly \$5 billion in projects went unrealized.

"Today the MTA previewed an online dashboard that will provide the public with clear, updated information about all of the projects in the upcoming capital program," said Jeremy Soffin, a spokesman for the authority.

"For the first time, you'll be able to search by project type, line or station to find out exactly where construction stands, why the work is necessary and whether it is on budget. The dashboard will be available online by the end of the year. We look forward to engaging with the Citizens Budget Commission and others in the ongoing public discussion on the MTA's critical capital program."

