

THE SUBWAY IS YOURS...



#TSIY

THE SUBWAY IS YOURS...

**Samuel Hardman
Prof. Swati Piparsania
Design for Protest
Spring 2020 / amid COVID-19**

**Industrial Design
Pratt Institute**



#TSIY



Push bar for e





this door open creates
opportunities for fare evasion.

#TSIY

Acknowledgments

I want to thank my professor Swati Piparsania for helping with this project from the very beginning before it even really was a project. It would not be what it is without her guidance. It is important that I recognize Decolonize This Place as a constant source of inspiration and a leading example of decolonization in action. I would also like to mention Forensic Architecture and The Funambulist Magazine for helping me see new ways in which design can be utilized and put into practice.

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How can design protest?

Oftentimes we feel as if we have no control over the way things around us are. Oftentimes we don't. What we do have control over is how we respond to the things around us. Some responses are more productive than others, and some responses can get you into trouble depending on who or where you are in the world. Nonetheless, these responses *can* in time shape the way things around us are.

Protest is an example of a productive way to respond. Protest is an objection to the status quo. It is an expression of opposition. It is dissent in action. It is recognizing an alternative way of being, and fighting for it. Protest can take many forms at many scales. These forms could be the way you dress, the things you buy, the places you eat, the things you design, the things you don't design, etc... In a time where everything might feel out of your control, protest can empower us by making our voices heard in a world that doesn't seem to listen. In our protests we are brought together with others who feel the way we do.

For me, and I think for my class as whole, it was important for us to identify what didn't need to be designed. Protest is often thought of in forms of physical action, but for this class we were to design an *object that protests*. We recognized the DIY nature of many objects in physical protests, as well as the hypocrisy of designing a mass produced object of protest that someone would have to buy. We also realized that more often than not, those protesting are vastly outnumbered by those not protesting. When you're outnumbered you have to be innovative in order to get anyone to listen to you. Luckily, innovation is what being a designer is all about.

Traditionally, industrial design has been about product design. These products are a representation of peoples needs, but also the market's demands. Industrial designers have directly participated and influenced the mass consumer culture that we are faced with today. At the same time, industrial design has continually evolved and now encompasses much more than just product design. If we are to continue to progress toward a better and more equal future for all, then I believe it is the role of designers to innovate in ways that prioritize people over profits. Sometimes the best way to do that is through protest.



Fare Control Fair Evasion



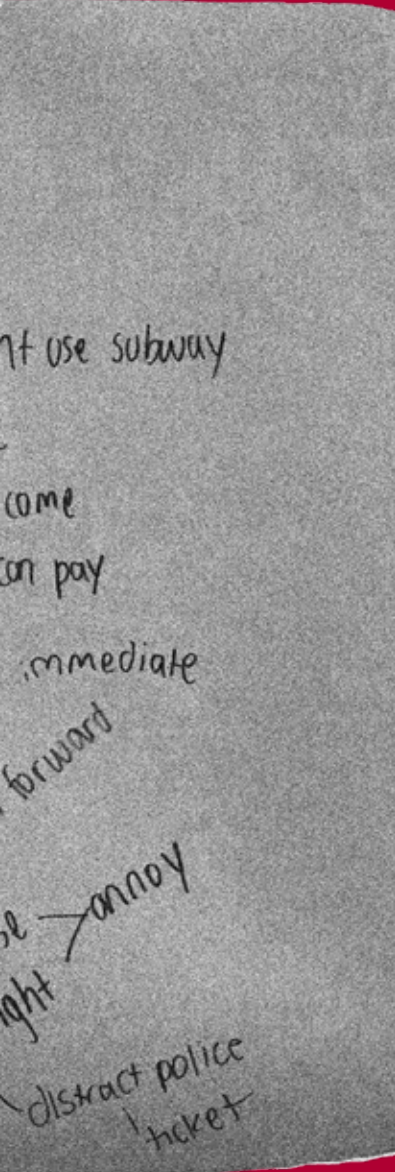
The objective of this project is to promote Fair Evasion by creating a visual and physical presence of opposition to Fare Control within the New York City (NYC) Subway. The stickers and sticker dispenser I have designed serve as a kind of helpline that spreads accessible knowledge and tools to subway riders that can be used against Fare Control.

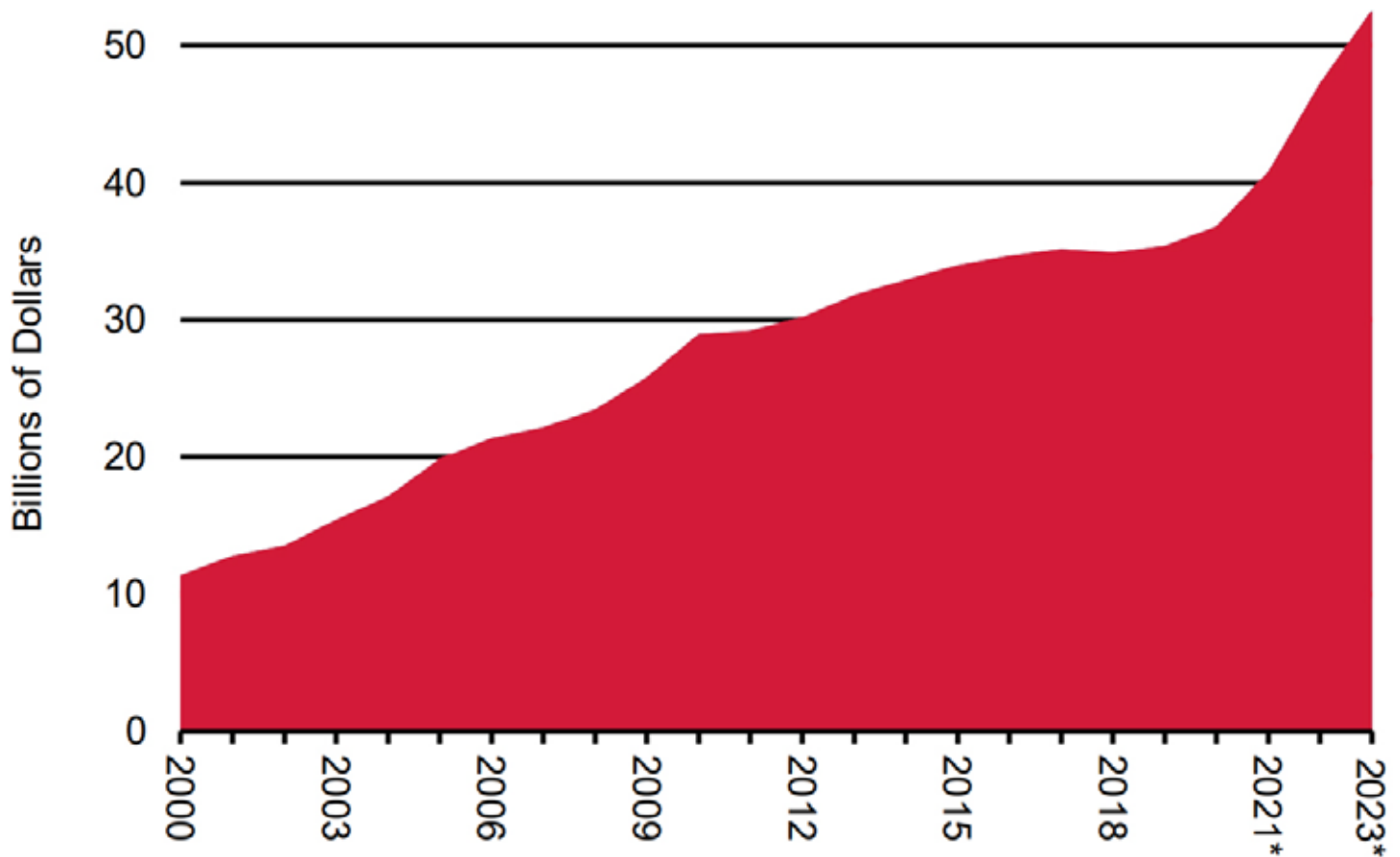
Fare Control is a tactic used to pay for the operations and upkeep of public transit. Fair Evasion is a response to the abuse of Fare Control when that control has become unfair. The service the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) offers has changed into a disservice, and the abuse of Fare Control in NYC by the MTA and the New York Police Department (NYPD) continues to escalate making paying for the subway unjustifiable.



The Trouble With The MTA

This project began in the fall of 2019 when I started doing research around the MTA and whether or not it would be possible to hack a metrocard. Soon after I began, it was announced that the MTA would be hiring 500 new transit police officers to improve ‘quality of life’ issues in the Subway. Videos and photos of subway riders being harassed by the police began to surface all over the internet. One particular video stood out to me. It was a video of a teenager being thrown to the ground in a subway car and arrested by a group of around 15 cops.¹ He allegedly hadn’t paid the fare and it was reported he was carrying a gun. No gun was found. I watched that video several times in shock and disgust. Why do you need that many cops, most of whom were standing around doing nothing, to arrest a teenager who allegedly hadn’t paid \$2.75 to ride the subway? Answer: you don’t. From there I wanted to understand what had led to this current ‘crackdown on fare evasion’, and what other problems the MTA wasn’t properly dealing with.



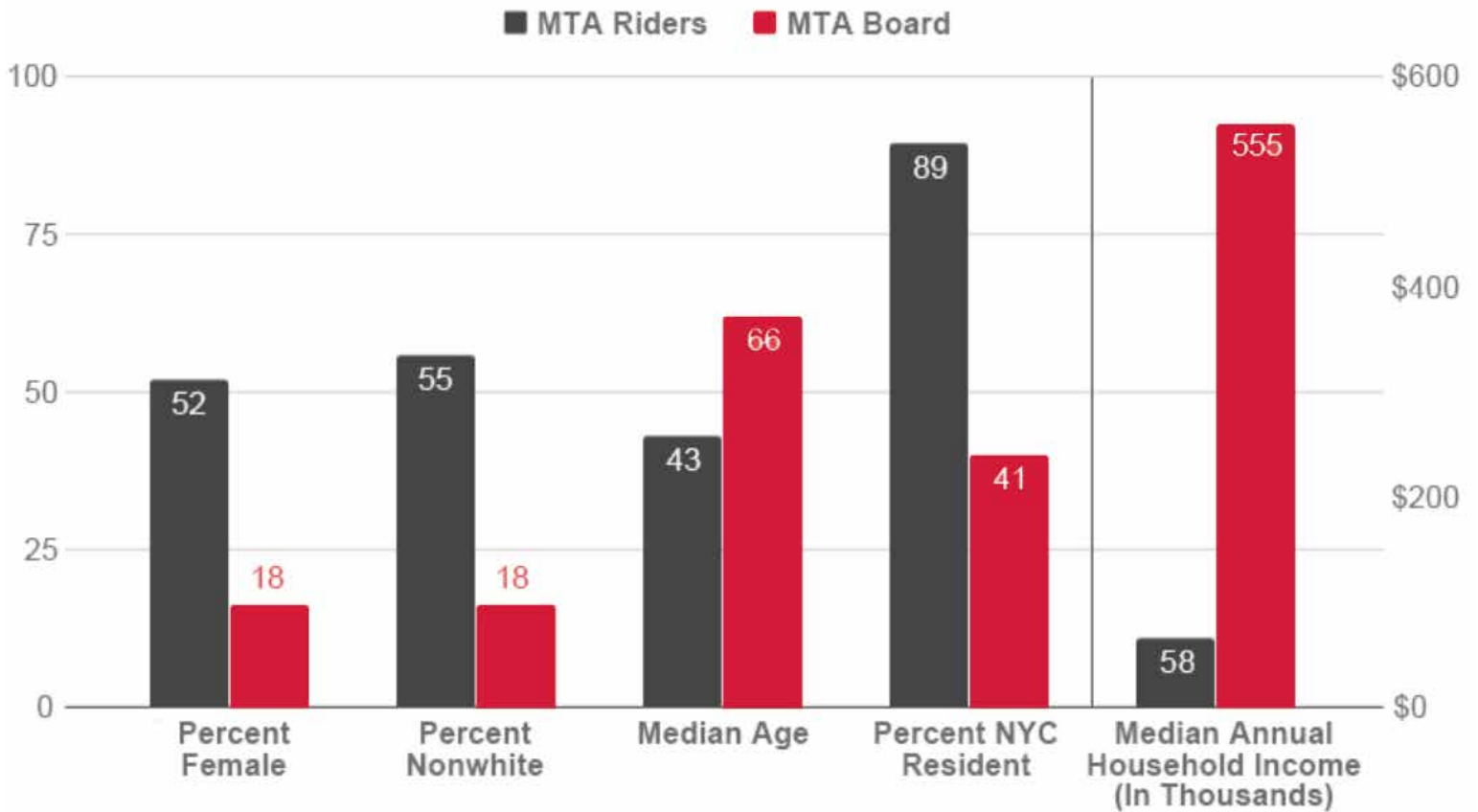


MTA debt outstanding.²

DEBT

The MTA’s mission is to “preserve(s) and enhance(s) the quality of life and economic health of the region we serve through the cost-efficient provision of safe, on-time, reliable and clean transportation services.”³ The MTA is essential to daily life in NYC and the surrounding area. It is the largest public transportation agency in North America and the systems it oversees are some of the oldest. Since its formal creation in the late 1960s, the agency has faced a multitude of challenges. In the late 1970s, they began issuing bonds to help pay for the costs of upkeep and repair to their crumbling infrastructure.⁴ Since then, they have continued to issue bonds, continued to improve their infrastructure, and continued to accumulate a massive amount of debt. This reliance on loans from Wall Street has shifted their mission of serving the needs of NYC subway riders to serving the needs of wealthy investors.

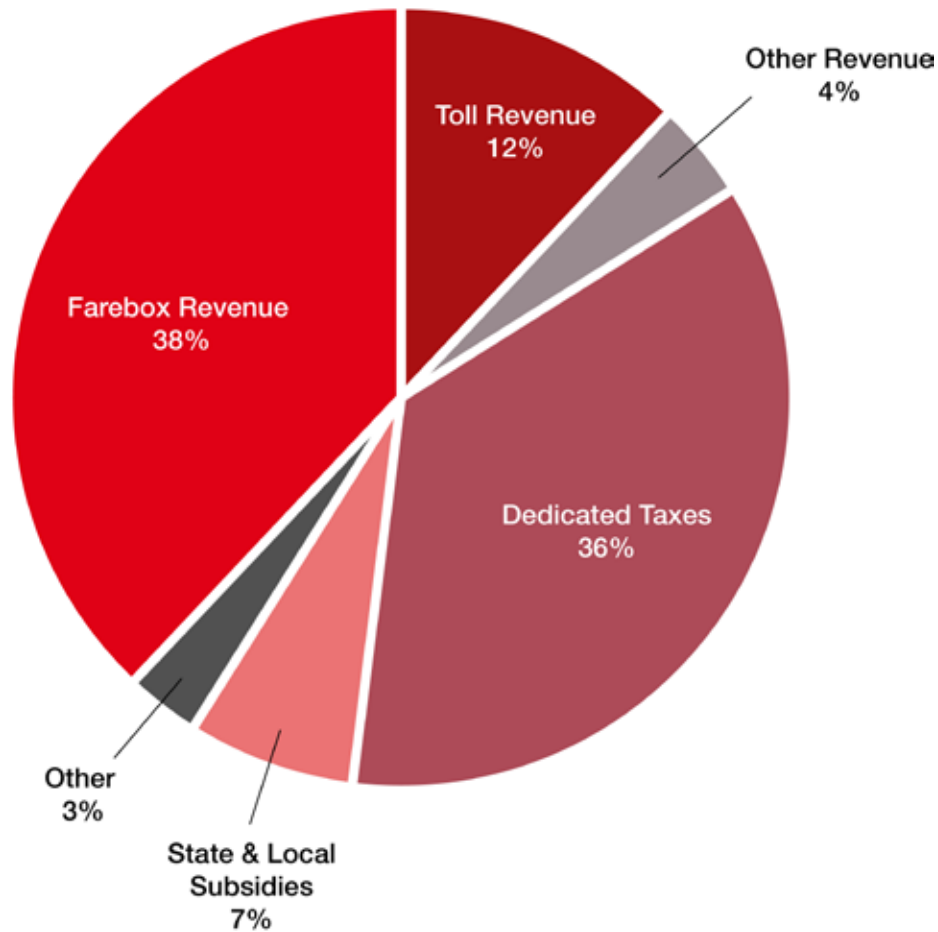
MTA Riders vs. MTA Board



2018 MTA Board demographics.⁵

MANAGEMENT

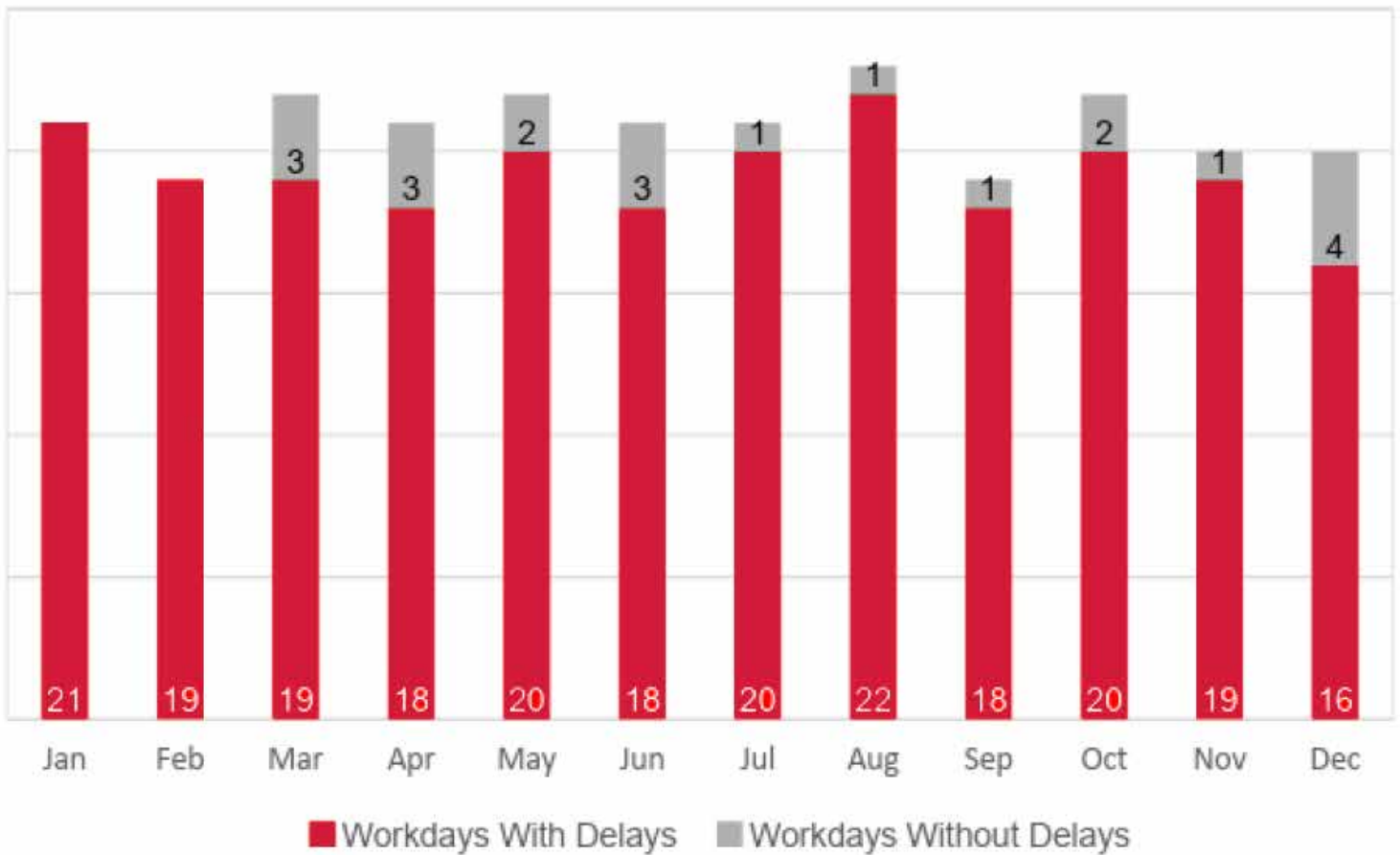
Governor Andrew Cuomo avidly refutes that he controls the MTA, and yet he directly appoints the majority of those involved in overseeing it.⁶ Who the MTA really serves is well reflected when looking at the Board of Directors. Only 41% of Board members live in NYC, and have a median income of \$555,000. In comparison, 89% of MTA riders live in NYC, and have a median income of \$58,000.



2019 MTA operating budget.⁷

FUNDING

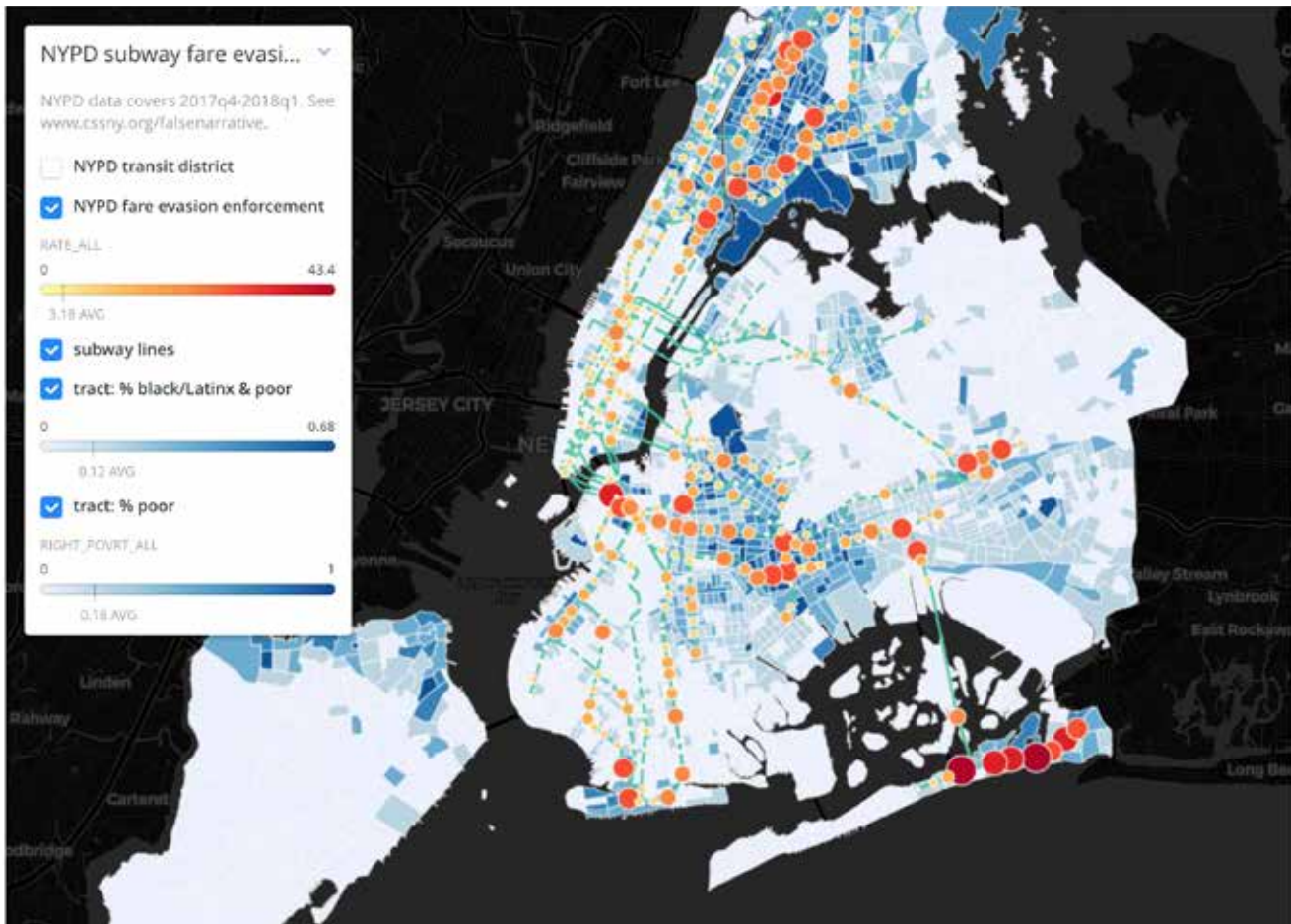
A system reliant on bonds from private investors and managed by people who don't use it consistently, often forgets its biggest source of revenue is the MTA riders. The MTA's largest funding source is revenue they collect from riders. 50% of their revenue comes from fares and tolls, and 43% comes from taxes and subsidies. In other words, the MTA is almost entirely funded by riders and the people of New York. And yet, the needs of these riders are ignored or only partially met time and time again.



2018 morning rush hour signal delays.⁸

SERVICE

Over the years there have been many improvements to the MTA but only after years of campaigning or lobbying and usually with some of the needs not fully met. Just 118 of the city's 472 subway stations have elevators.⁹ The MTA continually ignores the Americans with Disabilities Act by renovating stations without adding ramps or elevators. The MTA has only recently begun to replace their 100 year old manual Block signaling technology with their new and much more accurate Communications-Based Train Control (CBTC).¹⁰ These Block signals led to 92% of rush hours commutes in 2018 suffering from delays due to broken or malfunctioning technology.



2018 NYPD fare evasion data.¹¹

POLICE

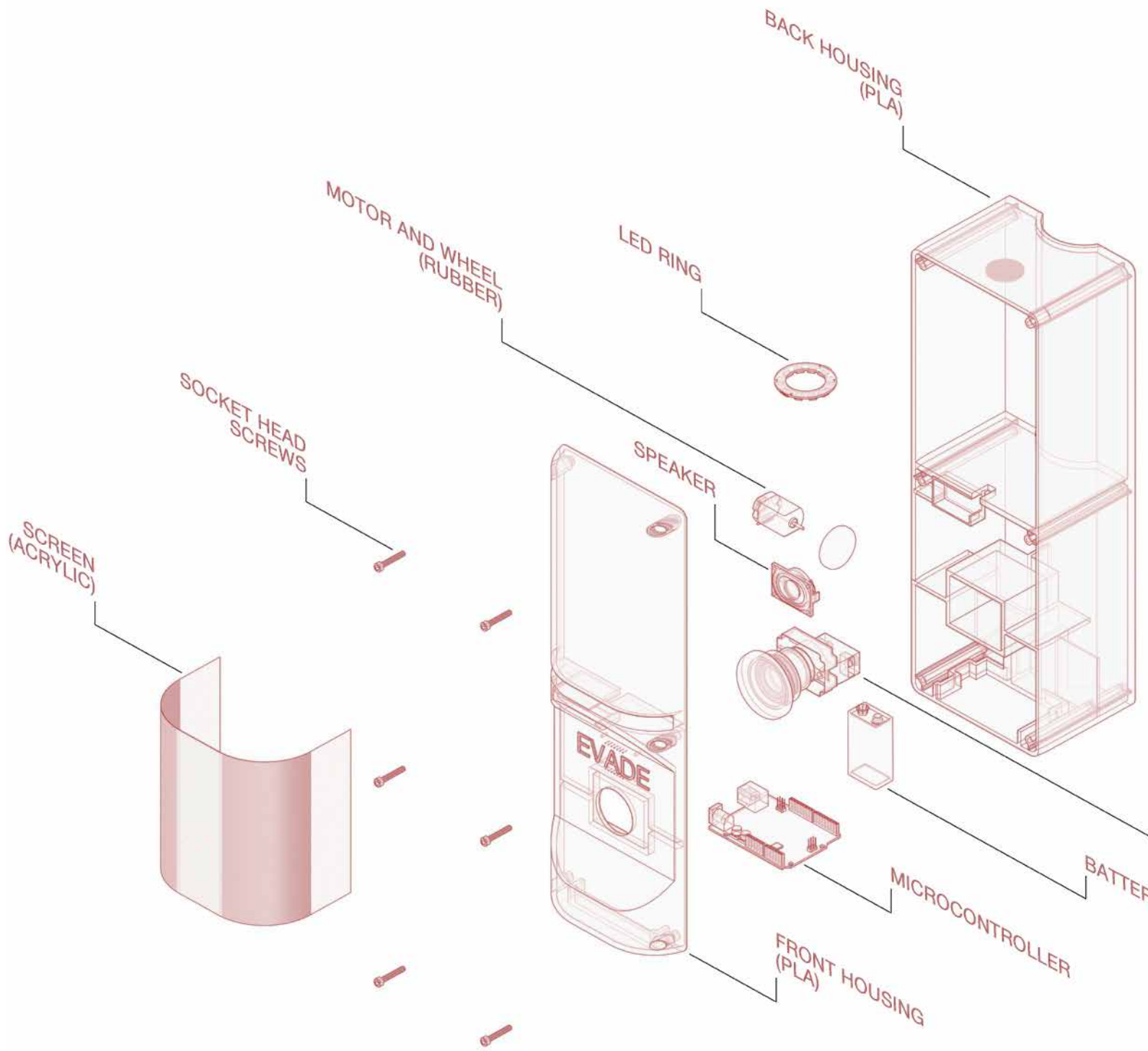
As service has declined, those that can, have opted for other forms of transportation. Those that can't, have had to deal with the system as it is. Instead of improving the 'quality of life issues' of the everyday MTA rider by improving the system, the MTA has opted to create a fake fare evasion narrative that targets those that rely on the MTA. This so-called 'fare evasion crackdown' is just another way for the mega-wealthy to distract the public from their reluctance to pay for the common good of the public. Wanting to justify this crackdown, the police are sent to high-poverty neighborhoods where people often struggle to afford the fare. In fact, enforcement intensity in the city's 130 stations in high-poverty neighborhoods are more than twice as high as the remaining 262 stations. Furthermore, there is more enforcement in black and latinx high-poverty neighborhoods than any other. **This is not a 'crackdown on fare evasion.'** **This is the criminalization of poverty.**



Emergency Evasion

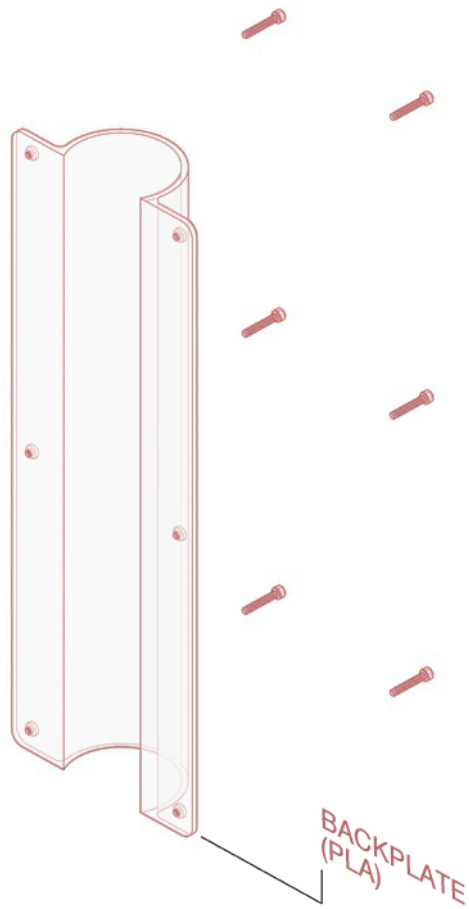
People who don't know what's best for the Subway riders have decided what is best for the Subway riders for far too long. If the MTA's debt is going to continue to soar; Cuomo and the Board are going to call the shots from afar; the infrastructure that needs to be fixed is ignored; and the Subway is going to be over-policed, then why continue to pay for the Subway? The objective of this project is to promote Fair Evasion by creating a visual and physical presence of opposition to Fare Control within the NYC Subway. The sticker dispenser and stickers I have designed serve as a kind of helpline that spreads accessible knowledge and tools to subway riders that can be used against Fare Control.

The Subway is a dirty, crowded, noisy, and busy place. It's filled with commuters, tourists, kids, families, performers, workers, signs, advertisements, announcements, music, rats, trash, and much more. The average Subway rider isn't going to be phased by much of this. In fact they probably tune most of it out. I needed to create something that would get the rider's attention, give them something to remember, allow them to engage, and enable them to act.



COMPONENTS

The dispenser would be installed on a pole inside a Subway car where riders could use it. It would work much like a money gun does. Riders would come up to the dispenser, push the evade button, and stickers would shoot out all over the Subway car. The riders would then pick up the stickers and place them around the Subway or distribute them to other people. The dispenser would also have a microcontroller so that it would dispense stickers randomly even without human interaction. To draw more attention to the object, a speaker inside the dispenser would play the word “Evade”, every time it shot out stickers. A light within the dispenser would draw even more attention to the object as well as making the connection to actual MTA help points more obvious.



BUTTON SWITCH

THE SUBWAY IS YOURS...	Date	05/2020
	Proj No	0.0.1
Dispenser — Exploded View	Dim	4x5.5x12"
Samuel Hardman	Sheet	1 of 1



MTA Help Point Intercom by Antenna Design.¹²

FOR THE MTA BY THE MTA

When people think of the MTA, the first thing they picture is probably not design. But everything they do picture (crowded train, smelly platform, turnstile, card vending machine, etc) has been designed. Many of these designs serve to help riders in case of an emergency. The emergency exit gates let people exit quickly, the emergency brake can bring the train to a sudden stop, and the help points can get a worker or first responder to you within minutes.

As a designer I think it's important that we understand what has been successful in the past and update it. These emergency objects function well. But they function in a way that the MTA deemed acceptable. What I decided to do was reappropriate these emergency objects, but for a new emergency. The emergency of oppressive fare control that subway riders face everyday. And I still wanted to provide help. But I wanted to help riders understand that they don't have to accept this Control, and I wanted to provide them with ways around it.



3/4 , back, and front view of my sticker dispenser.

The subway is a public space that is funded by everyone, and yet there's almost no public display of ownership. By taking back an object that exists within the subway, I am pushing forward the idea that the subway is the rider's to take back. If people felt that they were listened to, then maybe people would have a little more respect for the MTA and they might think that the Subway is a service worth paying for.



Stickers shooting out of the dispenser.

SPECTACLE Aside from reappropriating the MTA, I needed to make a spectacle. Seeing an object shoot out stickers all over the Subway on its own would, I think, be a new sight for most riders. The bright red stickers flying around and laying all over the floor would also be hard to ignore. The ability of this object to actively protest autonomously is functionally useful, as well as a clever way to call attention to itself. By shooting stickers without someone pressing the button, viewers would become more interested. Once interested, it would be a rush to approach this object and set it off yourself. This creates a combination of stress and celebration that makes the interaction both memorable and rewarding. It's not easy to get the attention of the average Subway rider, but stickers flying all over the Subway car might be enough to get people talking to other people later on.



Dispenser mounted to a pole inside of a Subway car.

SHORT TERM

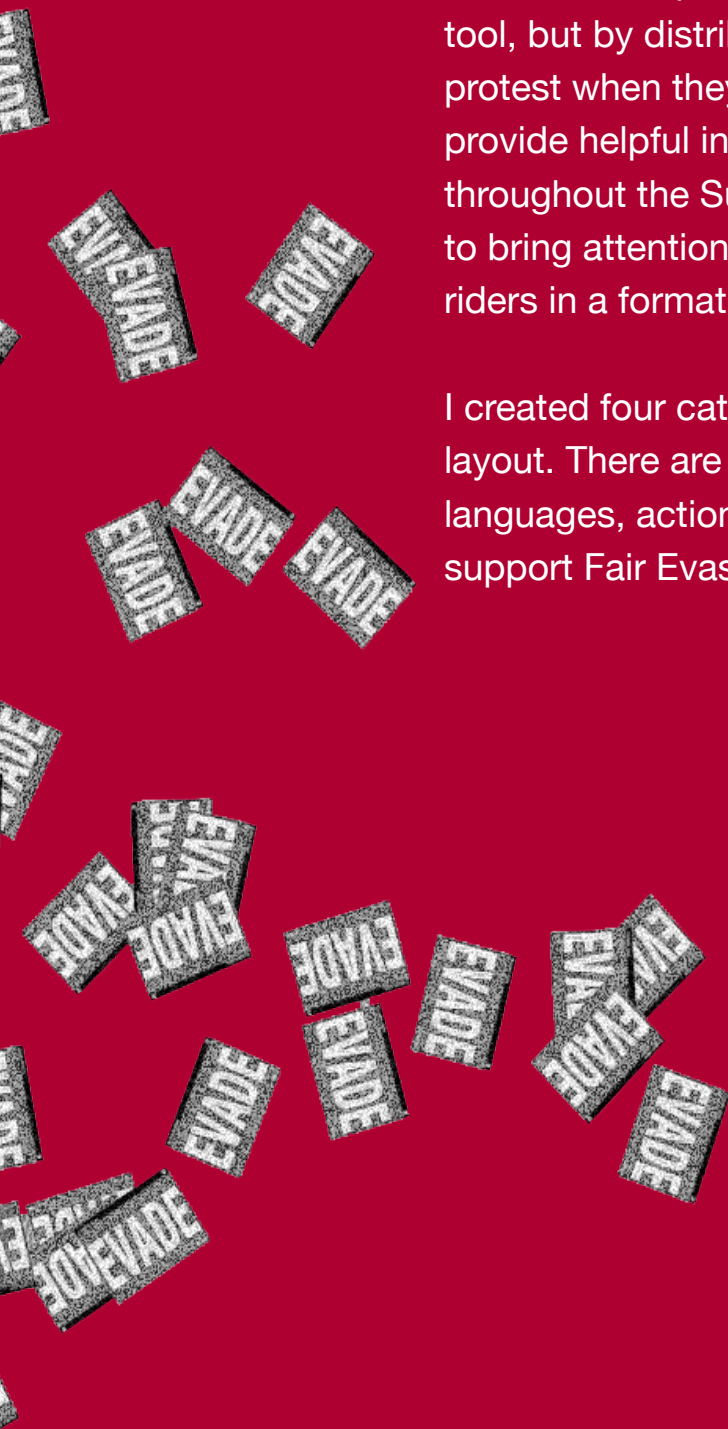
By placing the dispenser on a train, it takes up physical space in opposition that quickly moves throughout the city. This would only last for a short amount of time, but in that time this dispenser and stickers would reach a much larger audience than I ever could on my own. This also provides the opportunity for riders to intervene and become members of the protest, rather than merely spectators. This creates a collectivization similar to the feeling of being in a physical protest. Once these stickers are in the hands of people all across the city, they can then spread even further and throughout different communities that again, I couldn't reach all on my own.

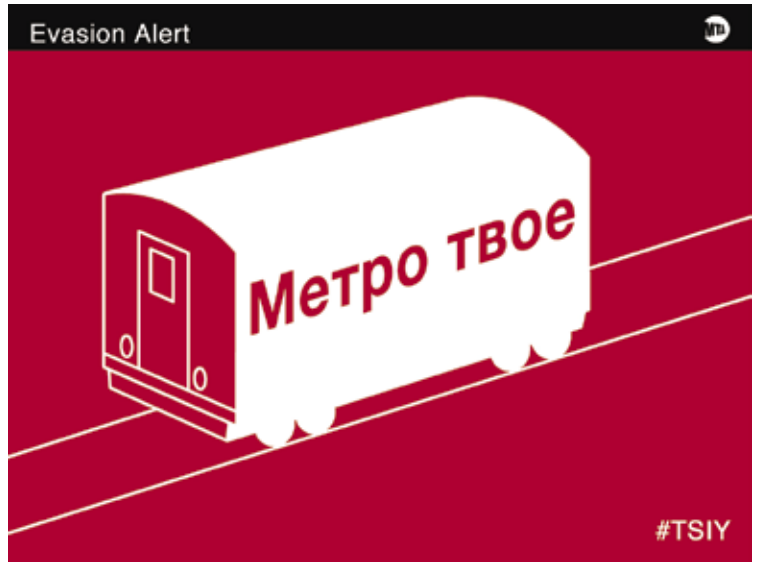


A Protest That Sticks

The dispenser does a good job of creating a spectacle and getting people to remember the event, but the stickers themselves are really what enables people to act. They are in summary an awareness tool, but by distributing them publicly, riders become a part of the protest when they distribute the stickers themselves. These stickers provide helpful information and tips for practicing Fair Evasion throughout the Subway. I again reappropriated the MTA's aesthetic to bring attention to the stickers as well as communicating to MTA riders in a format that is easily understandable.

I created four categories of stickers that exist within the same layout. There are 40 in total. There are logo stickers in various languages, action stickers that tell you ways to evade, facts that support Fair Evasion, and existing contacts to help Subway riders.





LOGO

I created a logo and hashtag to brand the project as well as provide a social media connection for sharing the project. The symbol and title summarize the cause so that at a quick glance my intentions could be understood. NYC has an incredible diversity in languages spoken so I created the logo in 10 variations using the most spoken languages in NYC.¹³



Evasion Alert



EVAADE

#TSIY

Evasion Alert



**HOLD
THE
DOOR**

#TSIY

Evasion Alert



**HOP
THE
TURNSTILE**

#TSIY

Evasion Alert



**RECORD
THE
POLICE**

#TSIY

Evasion Alert



**SWIPE
IT
FORWARD**

#TSIY

Evasion Alert

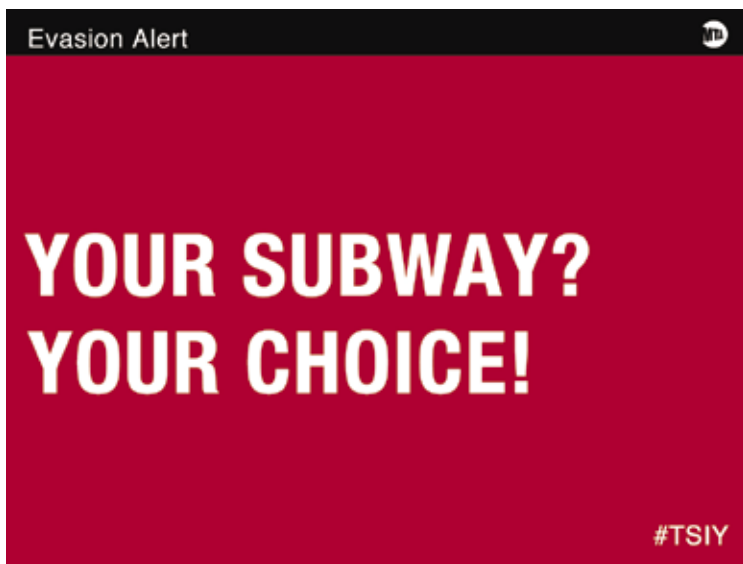


**FARE CONTROL?
FAIR EVASION!**

#TSIY

ACTION

Instead of creating a new way to evade, I simply emphasized the existing actions that can and should be taken by Subway riders. These actions help individuals but also help others in need, or help people that aren't able to blatantly hop over a turnstile.





The Subway is yours...

**Median household income of MTA riders:
\$58,000.
Median income of MTA board members:
\$555,000.**

#TSIY



The Subway is yours...

**Police enforcement in the city's 130 stations
in high-poverty neighborhoods are more than
twice as high as the remaining 262 stations.**

#TSIY



The Subway is yours...

**The MTA's revenue:
50% fares and tolls
43% taxes and subsidies
7% other**

#TSIY



The Subway is yours...

**The man who controls the MTA, Governor Cuomo,
hasn't ridden the subway since January 1, 2017.**

#TSIY



The Subway is yours...

**A train can still be considered "on-time" with
"good service" even with 13-minute waits
between trains at peak times.**

#TSIY




The Subway is yours...

**92% of rush hour commutes in 2018 suffered
delays from signal problems.**

#TSIY

FACT


Many people are already participating in these various forms of evasion. It was important for me to encourage those already evading, but also to try and make people understand who aren't. Many people I spoke to were unaware of the issue entirely, whether they supported evasion or not. There is a lot of information available that supports Fair Evasion that people are unaware of.¹⁴

Evasion Alert 

The Subway is yours...

The MTA has not conducted a public study of who rides the subway since 2008.


#TSIY

Evasion Alert 

The Subway is yours...

89% of MTA riders live in NYC compared to only 41% of MTA board members.


#TSIY

Evasion Alert 

The Subway is yours...

At least 55% of MTA riders are non-white compared to only 18% of MTA board members.

#TSIY

Evasion Alert 

The Subway is yours...

52% of MTA riders are women compared to only 18% of MTA board members.

#TSIY

Evasion Alert



**Transit violation?
347-643-5805**

#TSIY

Evasion Alert



**Police misconduct?
1-800-341-2272**

#TSIY

Evasion Alert



**Title VI complaint?
800-466-8577**

#TSIY

Evasion Alert



**Free legal help?
347-778-1266**

#TSIY

Evasion Alert



**Free legal help?
212-679-6018**

#TSIY

Evasion Alert

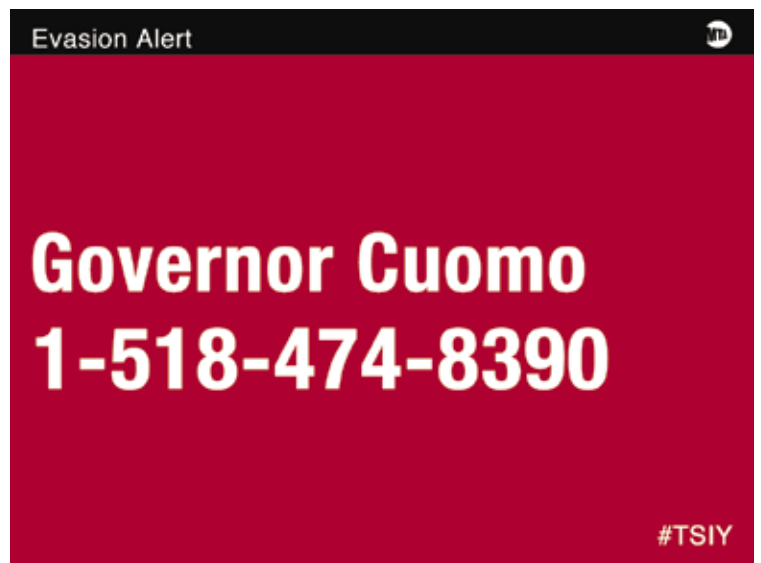
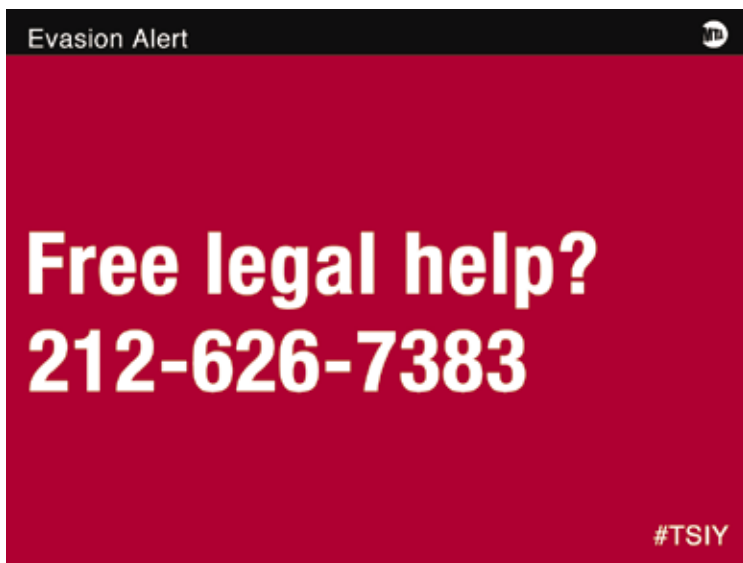
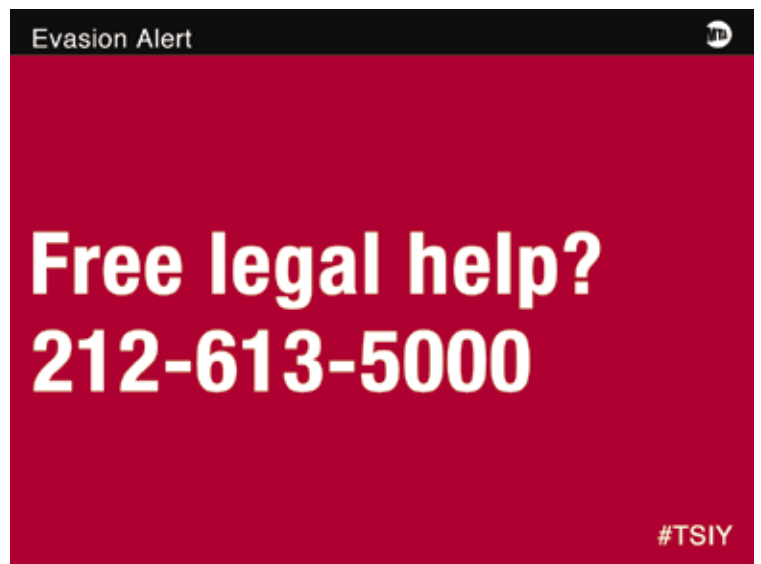


**MTA Services
511**

#TSIY

CONTACT

There are also many existing paths set up to make it easier for people to air their grievances, or to help with legal trouble. I wanted to combine the ones I thought were most relevant and make them more known. Although these “legal” routes are often set up to file complaints and forget about, it’s still important that people know the option is there for them.¹⁵





LONG TERM

Although stickers can be taken down just the same as the dispenser, they are less of an intrusion in the space and would last longer. They are also much easier to replace and update. A protest that doesn't seem to go away is a protest that's hard to ignore. The more people who see the stickers and realize that there is something they can do, the more support the cause gains.



**OF COURSE I
HOPPED THE TURNST
IM GOOFY
NOT STUPID!**

Disseminating Dissent

FILE

The last time my class met in person was at midterms right before spring break. Due to COVID-19, we have all had to pivot and rethink our projects. Many people do not have access to space or materials to make physical models let alone test them. This project and book serve as a design proposal.

It could be said that, unknowingly, this project started simply by scrolling through Instagram. Due to COVID-19, it will seemingly end on Instagram, for now at least. From the start my intentions were to go out and implement whatever I made. As a film minor, I couldn't pass up the opportunity to integrate video into my project. I was going to 3D print the dispenser, print the stickers, dress up as an MTA worker, strap a GoPro to my chest, and go into the Subway to distribute my project. I also planned to collaborate with existing organizations dealing with this issue. I was going to reach out to see if they would help in getting my stickers into as many hands as possible so that we could cover the Subway. None of that can happen now indefinitely.

Instead I created a series of posters that feature the dispenser and the stickers in different contexts within the Subway. They will be shared online along with a hashtag for the project. Each poster has different stickers that shed light on the different perspectives of the MTA's Fare Control. These posters also serve as a future guide on how to use the dispenser and stickers.



Экран Анон
Метро твое
#TBY

Экран Анон
地铁是你的
#TBY

Экран Анон
הרכבת התחתית
שייכת לך
#TBY

Экран Анон
THE SUBWAY
IS YOURS...
#TBY

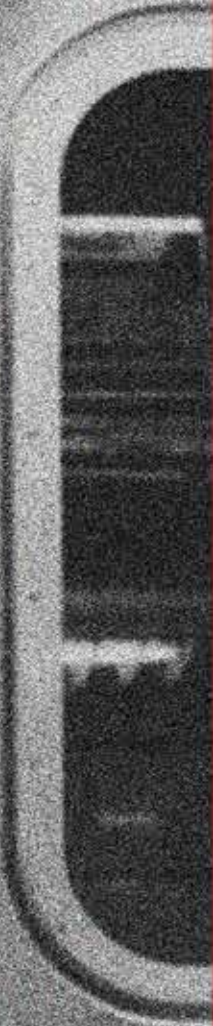
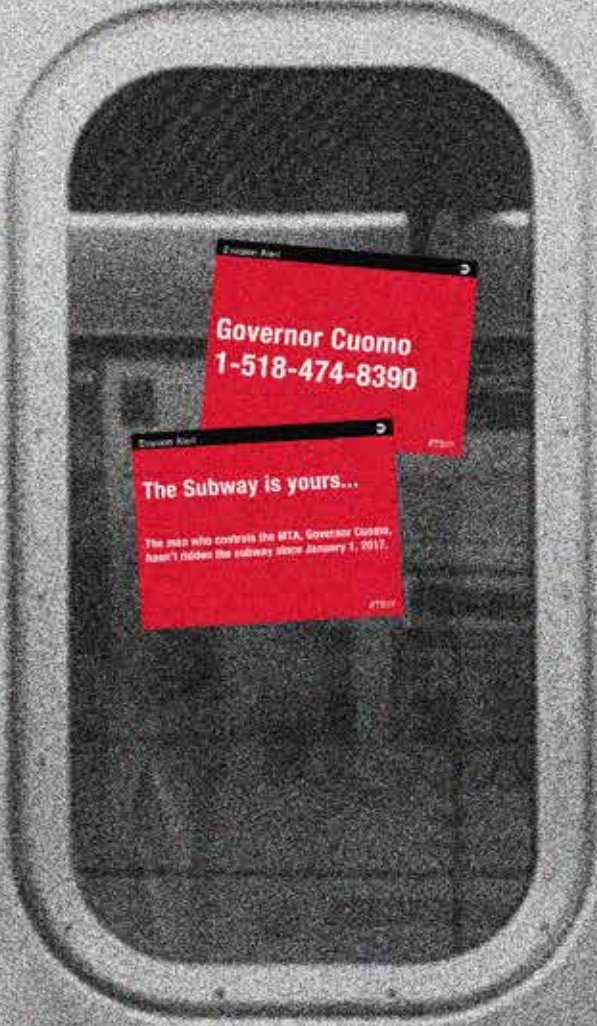
Экран Анон
지하철은 당신의
것입니다
#TBY



L6

Do not hold doors

Do



Do not lean on door

Do

MTA Services
 511

Free legal help?
 212-626-7383

#TSIY

The Subway is yours...

Police enforcement at the city's 120 stations is high priority, keep business and work hours safe as high as the remaining rail control.

Free legal help?
347-778-1266

**FARE CONTROL?
FAIR EVASION!**

**MORE POLICE?
MORE EVASION!**

**HOP
THE
TURNSTILE**



Title VI complaint?
800-466-8577

EVASIVE

Police misconduct?
1-800-341-2272

RECORD
THE
POLICE

Free legal help?
212-613-5000

#TSIY

Customer Alert

**SWIPE
IT
FORWARD**

MTA

Customer Alert

The Subway is yours...

The MTA's mission:
50% fares and tolls
40% fares and tolls
7% other

MTA

LE METRO
EST À VOUS

المترو
للأشخاص



THE NEXT

YOUR SUBWAY?
YOUR CHOICE!

HOP
THE
TURNSTILE

Transit violation?
347-643-5805

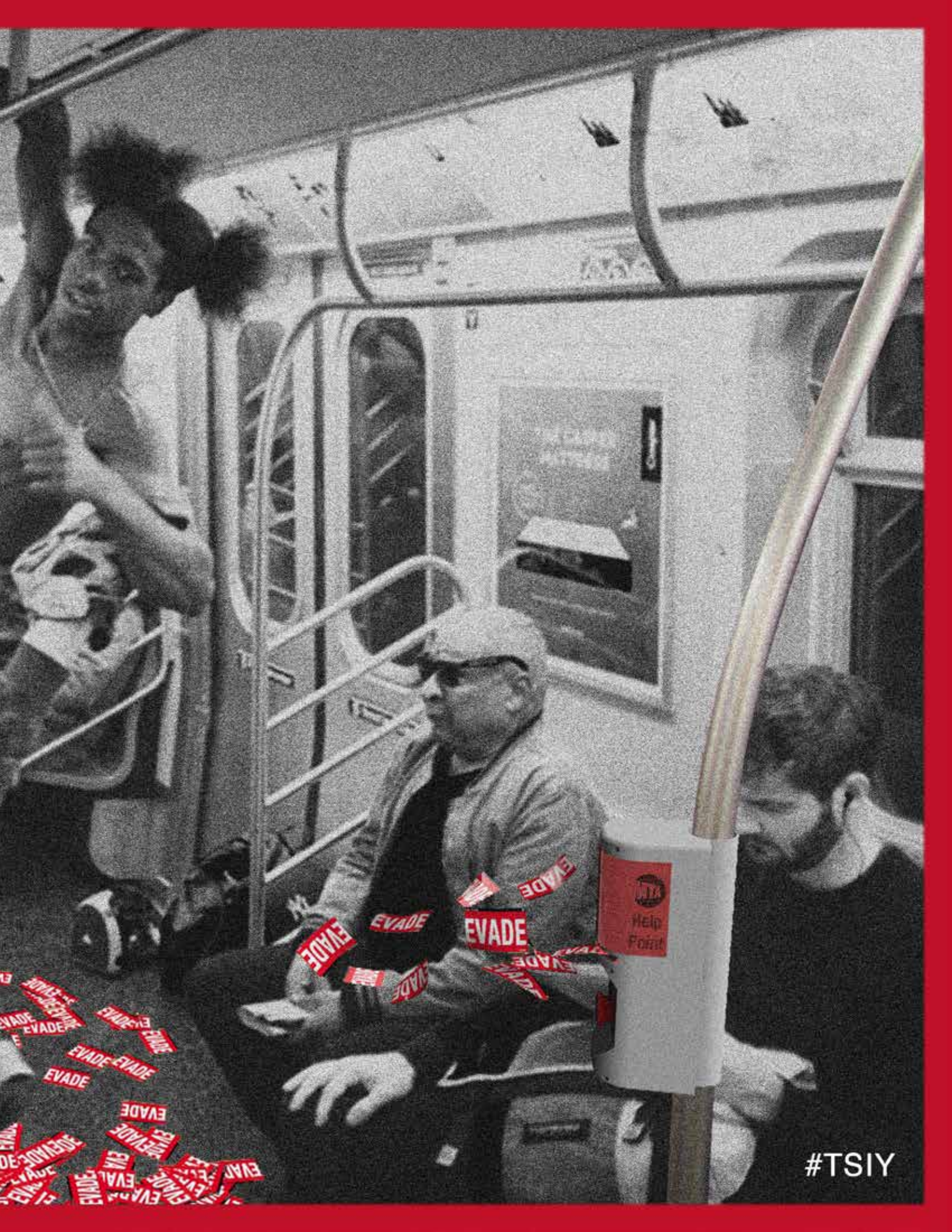
MORE DELAYS?
THE LESS WE PAY!

The Subway is yours...

A train can still be considered "on-time" with "small service" even with 15-minute delays between trips at peak times.

TAP
#TSIY
NEW





#TSIY

East Side & Brooklyn

The Subway is yours...
32% of MTA riders are women compared to only 18% of MTA board members.

The Subway is yours...
A train you still be considered "two-zone" with "peak service" even with 15-minute waits between trains at peak times.

The Subway is yours...
89% of MTA riders live in NYC compared to only 41% of MTA board members.

The Subway is yours...
Median household income of MTA riders: \$59,000.
Median income of MTA board members: \$555,000.



Evacoo Alert

The Subway is yours...

The MTA has not conducted a public study of who rides the subway since 2008.

#TSIY

Evacoo Alert

The Subway is yours...

At least 58% of MTA riders are non-white compared to only 18% of MTA board members.

#TSIY

THE SUBWAY IS YOURS

EVADE

#TSIY



Push bar for e





this door open creates
opportunities for fare evasion.

#TSIY

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- new.mta.info/contact-us/call-us
- web.mta.info/nyct/rules/TransitAdjudicationBureau/ContactTAB.htm
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- www.nycbar.org/for-the-public/free-legal-services
- www1.nyc.gov/site/ccrb/complaints/file-complaint.page
- www.bronxdefenders.org/clients-community/help/
- nlgny.org/contact/
- www.nylag.org/contact-us/
- portal.311.nyc.gov/
- www.governor.ny.gov/contact/NYCitizensCampaign/index.php

**“Only a ‘state of emergency’
can break through the
coherence of the legal
framework.”**

— Exit-Architecture: Design Between War and Peace

**Samuel Hardman
Prof. Swati Piparsania
Design for Protest
Spring 2020 / amid COVID-19**

**Industrial design
Pratt institute**



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