

NYers sound off on fare hikes

Commuters not thrilled to be footing MTA's bill

BY TIM HERRERA
tim.herrera@am-ny.com

Straphangers will now have to pony up a little extra to get around the city, as today is the first commuting day of the MTA's new fares.

Under the new fare system that went into effect yesterday, the monthly unlimited MetroCard rose to \$112, an \$8 increase. Weekly cards cost a dollar more at \$30, and the single-ride fare increased by a quarter to \$2.75.

The spike is the fourth in five years, with the price of a 30-day card jumping more than 38% since 2008.

The new prices are expected to bring in about \$450 million annually for the money-troubled agency, but for some commuters, the hikes are coming too frequently.

"It dips into my livelihood," said Shelby Chestnut, 31, who lives in Bedford-Stuyvesant.

"Things like this affect how much I have to support my family," said Chestnut, who gives money to her 67-year-old mother. "The people who take the subway are the people who can least afford it."

Some commuters said that service increases haven't kept up with price hikes. (WITH ANNA SANDERS AND SHEILA ANNE FEENEY)

Tales of the transit increase

Looking to beat the fare hike, **Desiree Rucker** did what many New Yorkers have done: She bought a bike.

"I'm certain I'll be saving money," said the 23-year-old database manager from Bedford-Stuyvesant, who works in Midtown.

"Why not be healthy and save money?" she said, adding that the bike will pay for itself once the weather warms up.

Echoing a sentiment many straphangers have expressed, Rucker said she'd rather have a functioning, lower-cost subway system than one with bells and whistles, such as countdown clocks in some stations.

"I don't know if all the improvements are necessary," Rucker said. "I'd rather have an affordable, reliable system."

LaShawn Green, 41, is a receptionist from Long Island City who buys a 30-day unlimited card every month. Already scraping by, she said the fare hike is just one more thing making her rethink life in New York.

"Too many recent fare hikes!



Victor Medina



Ian Owens

This is just a little too much," Green said. "What's the reason for it?"

Green said she's already cut down on eating \$7-\$8 lunches from Midtown restaurants, and with the fare hike, she'll be brown bagging her meals even more often.

The city's spiraling costs have Green considering moving out of town, she said. "The MTA needs to give us a break," she added.

Like many straphangers, **Ian Owens** said he sees the reasoning behind the MTA raising fares every few years, but it doesn't make them easier to take.

Owens, 31, of Harlem, rides the subway every day on his way to work at the Bowery Hotel, and said he has no choice but to adjust his budget for the extra expense.

"I understand they have to increase the price every couple of years, but I feel it does hurt when there's not an overall increase of [things like] salaries and stuff," Owens said. "I'll just make an adjustment. It's a necessity. Something will have to give somewhere."

"I'm going to have to start bringing lunch to work or walking to certain jobs," said **Victor Medina**, 42, an elevator mechanic who lives in Ridgewood.

"It's outrageous," he said. "I already pay the weekly fare, which is high, and that's a big increase, especially because I'm constantly on the train for work."

He added: "The service has gotten a little better, but they shouldn't increase the fare."

(TIM HERRERA WITH SHEILA ANNE FEENEY AND ANNA SANDERS)

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Green

