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## True North: Transportation Issues in Riverdale and Edenwald

Amelia Zaino

May 11, 2012

What is the typical vision of New York City? Just ask any out-of-towner. He envisions the entire city as one mega-Manhattan, an exaggerated universe of skyscrapers, crowded streets, noise, and people. He envisions the thundering crash of the subway echoing beneath the gritty streets. This subway is an overwhelming maze that touches every part of this mega-Manhattan. There is no place on the island that cannot be reached by the train, immortalized in poetry, song, and image. The out-of-towner knows he can take the famed A train to Harlem. He knows the city is dynamic and perpetually in motion. The subway is the artery of mega-Manhattan's core. It cannot function without it.

But mega-Manhattan is just an idea. The true New York City is a place of diverse scenery. Beyond Manhattan are neighborhoods that range from suburban and idyllic to chaotic concrete jungles. With this being said, the all-encompassing subway does not reach all parts of the city. If the subway is the artery of the city, then logically, one can conclude that these parts of the city are left alone, cold and numb and devoid of the economic and social energy the subway provides. A lack of subway access would indicate that certain neighborhoods would be unable to sustain themselves and remain attractive places to live.

The Bronx is one borough with certain sections that the subway either does not reach, or barely touches with solitary lines. It is a borough of opposites; some of its residents enjoy a middle-to-upper class lifestyle while others barely cross the poverty line. The polar nature of the Bronx makes one think that different neighborhoods have nothing in common. However, two

Bronx neighborhoods with drastically different natures are in a very similar situation in regards to subway access. First there is Riverdale, the picturesque neighborhood of the Northwest Bronx that sits on the banks of the Hudson River, set upon hills that rise beyond the elevated reach of the #1 subway line. The second is Edenwald, the Northeast Bronx neighborhood comprised of monolithic public housing structures set on a slight hill west of the Hutchinson River valley and the swamps now occupied by Co-Op City.

Riverdale can be described as a charming area, a part of the Bronx that very well may be an extension of Manhattan. Cafés line the streets where businesses cluster together. On a warm, sunny afternoon, moms can be found pushing strollers while walking dogs cheerfully among blooming trees. Young professionals make dates to enjoy a sushi dinner at one of the many Japanese establishments along Riverdale Avenue. A Starbucks graces the landscape and serves as a popular meeting place for families. Teenagers hang out together, enjoying an outdoor meal on their lunch breaks from high-class private schools like Riverdale Country Day School and the Fieldston School. Apartment buildings with doormen and swimming pools rise along the skyline, boasting dramatic and unspoiled Hudson River views. Riverdale supplies Manhattan with a steady base of professional workers that long for a taste of suburban life while still remaining close to the urban center.

In fact, one of the only things that differentiate Riverdale from its nearby more urbanized neighbor is its topography. Riverdale is situated atop high hills. From Bedford Park, the neighborhood on the opposite side of the Jerome Park Reservoir, Riverdale appears to be an entirely different world, elevated on verdant hills. Once a visitor to Riverdale approaches the intersection of West 231<sup>st</sup> Street and Riverdale Avenue, he must brace himself for a struggle up the cliff and above the retaining walls holding back an enormous slope. Riverdale's heights

extend to levels above two hundred feet.<sup>1</sup> Its streets do not follow an organized pattern like those of Manhattan, rather, they curve and slope around rocks, retaining walls, and steep hill-tops. As its streets are not like Manhattan's, neither is its mass transit access. The lonely subway route extending to Riverdale is the local #1 line, which trudges along Broadway in a valley below the hills that characterize the neighborhood. Unlike busy Manhattan, a subway station is not an easy walk away for many Riverdale residents. It requires either a hilly hike or local bus ride.

Geographically, Riverdale is very close to Manhattan, but its hilly nature and lack of immediate subway access renders access to the community difficult and time-consuming.

As a result, buses dot the landscape of Riverdale. One can find the Bx9, a route comprised of mostly articulated buses that runs along Broadway en route to Fordham and West Farms. Westchester routes 1, 2, and 3 take residents into Yonkers. Uphill, on Riverdale Avenue, is the Bx7 that leads residents of Riverdale to Inwood and Washington Heights. Further south is the Bx10, which connects residents to the hospitals of Norwood and the steep slopes of Spuyten Duyvil, or South Riverdale. A rare find is the Bx20, which provides supplementary access to Spuyten Duyvil and Inwood, running only at select times on weekdays. The Bx1 provides access to the Grand Concourse. About every half-hour during the midday, and quite often during rush hours, the roars of massive express buses echo through Riverdale. The BxM1 offers residents a link to the East Side of Manhattan, the BxM2 to the West Side, and the lonely BxM18 that brings residents to downtown Manhattan. The BxM3 passes along Broadway en route to Getty Square in Yonkers. While it seems as if this complicated network of buses makes life in Riverdale easier, residents still report commute times of up to an hour.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "10471". 40°53'28.14" N. 73°54'38.17"N. Google Earth. 2 June 2011. 20 Mar 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Zaino, Amelia. "Transportation in Riverdale." *Kwik Surveys*. N.p., 23 Mar 2012. Web. <[http://kwiksurveys.com?s=LNKIGM\\_aa900000](http://kwiksurveys.com?s=LNKIGM_aa900000)>.

In stark comparison, Edenwald lies in a corner of the Northeast Bronx almost as far as one can get from Manhattan in the Bronx, except for nearby Wakefield. On a warm, sunny afternoon, mothers are also pushing strollers, but with far more children. Young men are typically seen playing basketball, or sleeping in late to the sounds of pulsating rap music. There is no retail in the housing complex. One must walk to Laconia Avenue for a slice of pizza or take-out Chinese, or to Boston Road for Kentucky Fried Chicken. Teenagers are nowhere to be found in the midday, until the afternoons when they loudly congregate on benches and staircases, carefully examining those who pass. To the north and east of Edenwald are small tracts of private homes, many with cars in their driveways. Edenwald lies in the outskirts of New York City, aesthetically and socially as far from Manhattan as one can get.

The buildings that comprise the Edenwald Houses complex are nearly identical, ranging in height from 3 stories to 14 stories tall. They are built with the same uniform reddish brick. Unlike Riverdale, or most parts of the city, the housing complex is not an organically formed neighborhood. It has only existed since the early 1950s.<sup>3</sup> The tall buildings create a permanent shadow on the neighborhood, and it is infamous for its crime. Bronxites at a young age are told to stay far away from the complex, at risk of getting involved with the wrong people. Residents tell of feuds and wars with neighboring housing complexes such as the Boston-Secor Houses near Dyre Avenue.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps, one thing that Edenwald and Riverdale have in common is topography. Edenwald is also located atop a hill, with some parts reaching around 140 feet above sea

<sup>3</sup> New York City Housing Authority, "Edenwald Houses." *NYCHA Housing Developments*. N.p., n.d. Web. 23 Mar 2012. <<http://www.nyc.gov/html/nycha/html/developments/bronxedenwaldhouses.shtml>>.

<sup>4</sup> "Uptown Day...." *Nothing Too Fancy*. Tumblr, 17 Jul 2011. Web. 23 Mar 2012. <<http://colormeintricate.tumblr.com/post/7724330285/uptown-day>>.

level.<sup>5</sup> Mass transit does not really touch this part of the Bronx. West of Edenwald, atop yet another hill is White Plains Road, where the #2 subway line roars above. The #5 train is described by some residents as the neighborhood's "lifeline"<sup>6</sup> and chugs along in a valley to the east. Edenwald sits awkwardly in between the two transportation corridors, with neither being particularly more convenient than the other. The only form of transportation that cuts through the shadows of the buildings is the lonely Bx31, a local route stretching from pastoral Woodlawn in the West to the more lively and transportation-friendly Westchester Square to the south. To the west is the Bx8 which, while a bit of a walk away, can also connect residents to Westchester Square. On Boston Road to the south, the Bx30 provides access to Co-Op City and Norwood while the Westchester routes 60 and 61 allow residents to access employment and shopping in the northern suburbs.

While sharing some similar aesthetic qualities, statistically, Riverdale and Edenwald are very different. Bronx Community District 8, of which Riverdale is a part of, had 24.9 percent of its population receiving government assistance in the form of cash assistance (TANF)<sup>7</sup>, Supplemental Security Income, and Medicaid. In contrast, Bronx Community District 12 which includes Edenwald has 36.7 percent of its population receiving some form of assistance.<sup>8</sup> Its birth rate is also much higher, with 13.9 births per 1000 people compared to 12 births per 1000 people

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<sup>5</sup> "10466."40°53'12.12"N, 73°50'49.67"W. Google Earth. 17 Jun 2010. 20 Mar 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Zaino, Amelia. "Transportation in Edenwald." *Kwik Surveys*. N.p., 23 Mar 2012. Web. <[http://kwiksurveys.com?s=LMMEJI\\_7382663c](http://kwiksurveys.com?s=LMMEJI_7382663c)>.

<sup>7</sup> New York City Department of City Planning, "Community District Profiles." *District Profiles- New York City Department of City Planning*. City of New York, Feb 2012. Web. 20 Mar 2012.

<sup>8</sup> New York City Department of City Planning.

in District 8.<sup>9</sup> As of 2000, 44 percent of District 8's population was of non-Hispanic white origin. 65.9 percent of District 12's population was of African-American descent.<sup>10</sup>

According to the U.S. census, in the year 2000, the average median household income of Riverdale was \$53,842. In that same year, the average median household income of the Edenwald housing complex, the adjoining Baychester Houses, and surrounding private homes was \$21,881, with 37.9 percent of families below the poverty line. Only 62.5 percent of Edenwald residents boast a high school diploma, compared to Riverdale, with 84 percent of its graduates finishing high school.<sup>11</sup> The average unemployment rate of Riverdale is a typical 7.2 percent while Edenwald's unemployment rate hovers near 14 percent.<sup>12</sup>

Riverdale and Edenwald are barely three miles apart, part of the same county, being Bronx County. Both neighborhoods depend on access to Manhattan and the surrounding areas for access to employment, cultural institutions, public institutions, and much more. However, a lack of said access can have different affects on a neighborhood's economic and social viability. One would assume that because the subway stimulates development, without it, the neighborhoods would fail. Contrary to this, Riverdale and Edenwald still boast active populations—how does each neighborhood manage to keep itself afloat despite being minutes from Manhattan? It seems as if a neighborhood's attitudes toward transportation can reflect on its attitudes toward other issues such as politics, cleanliness, crime, and economic <sup>vitality</sup> ~~vitality~~. This thesis will show the ways in which a lack of subway access and a neighborhood's ability to cope with the problem affects a community.

<sup>9</sup> New York City Department of City Planning.

<sup>10</sup> New York City Department of City Planning.

<sup>11</sup> New York City Department of City Planning.

<sup>12</sup> New York City Department of City Planning.

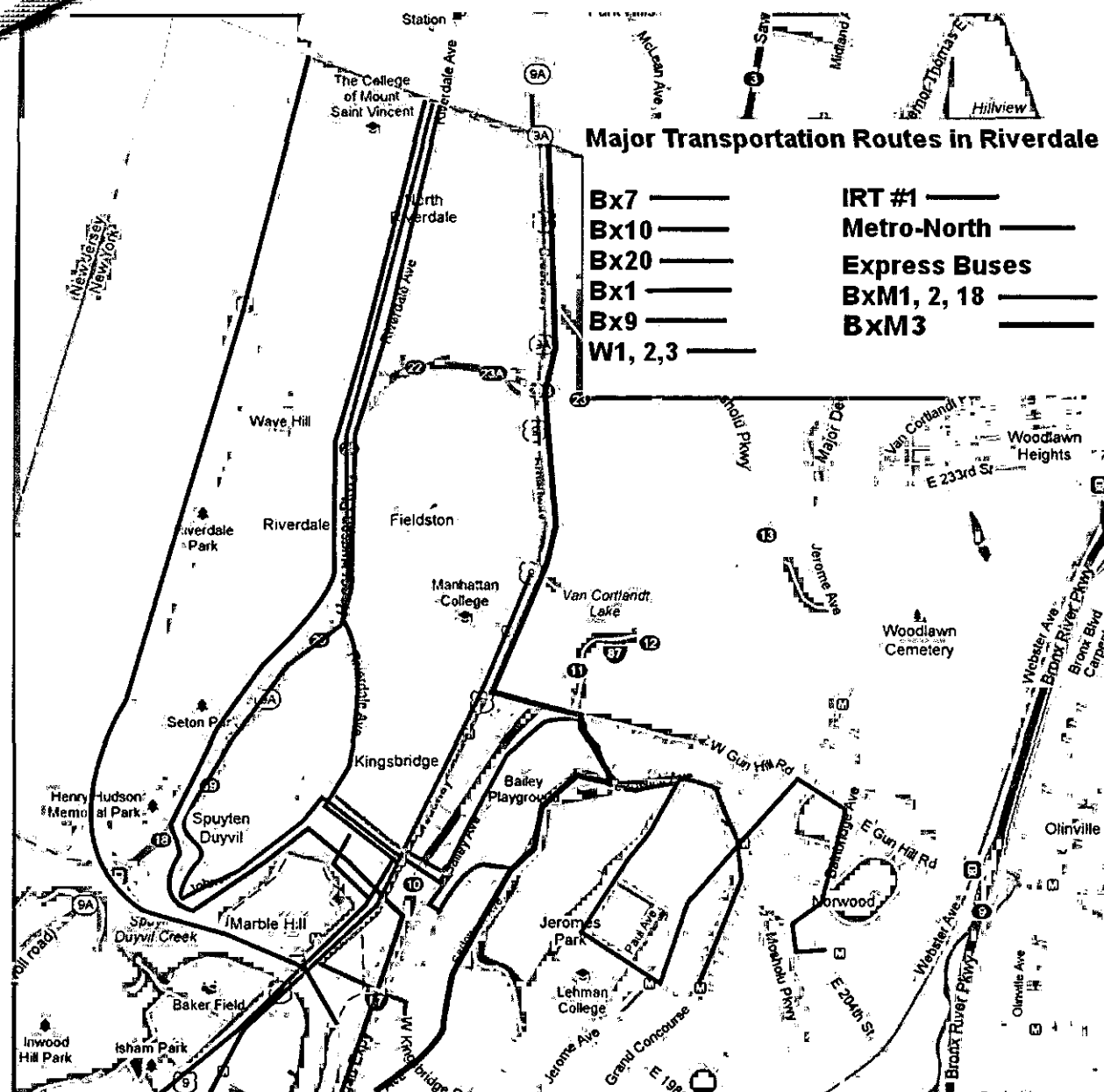


Figure 1.1

The above map shows the various bus routes in Riverdale and their relation to each other and the transfer to the #1 subway. The point in the lower left where all the routes meet is the 231<sup>st</sup> Street Subway Station. Not included on this map is the Hudson Rail Link which will be discussed in a later chapter. Map courtesy Google.



*The above map shows the major routes of transportation in the Edenwald area. Note the neighborhood's position (highlighted in blue) in between the #2 and #5 lines. While the private homes to the southeast of Edenwald are far closer to the #5 train, the center of the housing complex adjacent to Laconia Avenue is much further. The small purple line at the very bottom is the BxM10 express bus to Manhattan. Map courtesy Google.*

At first glance, Riverdale and Edenwald have little in common. After all, how could a neighborhood comprised of pristine, tree-lined hills share any characteristics with a high-density community of public housing units? The two neighborhoods, while polarized in the year 2012, were not very different at all in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The Bronx was not an independent city, compared to Brooklyn or the towns that comprised Queens. It was part of Westchester County until 1874, when the West Bronx (Riverdale included) was annexed to New York City. Soon after, by the mid-1890s, the East Bronx, including the towns of Wakefield and Eastchester, between which Edenwald is now located, was annexed to the major metropolitan center.<sup>13</sup>

Both neighborhoods retained rural characters before and even after annexation. Historically, Riverdale had been, and still is to today, a district of vast estates. Even when the Hudson River Railroad ran along the neighborhood's perimeter, the wealthy and famous of Manhattan sought to reside in the quieter, more beautiful neighborhood to the north. For example, famous icons such as Mark Twain and Theodore Roosevelt called Wave Hill at West 252<sup>nd</sup> Street and the Hudson River home.<sup>14</sup> Over in Edenwald, vast expanses of farmland sat above the Hutchinson River valley as late as the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Even the construction of the White Plains Road line to the west did little to spark any development.<sup>15</sup>

The rural Riverdale and Edenwald did not sit by idly in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, while Manhattan boomed in its urban chaos, however. Both neighborhoods served as important nodes

<sup>13</sup> Hartman, David, and Barry Lewis. "A Walk Through the Bronx." *Thirteen*. Educational Broadcasting Corporation, 2005. Web. 25 Mar 2012. <<http://www.thirteen.org/bronx/history2.html>>.

<sup>14</sup> McNamara, John. *History in Asphalt: The Origin of Bronx Street and Place Names*. Third. Bronx, NY: Bronx County Historical Society, 1991. Print.

<sup>15</sup> NYC GIS. *NY City Map*. 2012. Map. City-Wide GIS, New York. Web. 25 Mar 2012. <<http://gis.nyc.gov/doitt/nycitymap/>>.

between the central business district and points north, and still do up to this very day. Riverdale and Kingsbridge sit directly across the Harlem River from Manhattan. Historian William Tieck described this area as a "crossroads capital" where various different forms of transportation meet. He provides the area with an extremely romantic description of its transportation options:

"Do you ever stand at the corner of 225<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway and reflect that here is one of the great crossroads in this part of creation? Where else would you find—all intersecting or meeting each other—ordinary pleasure and commercial traffic, buses, a subway-elevated, and a canal connecting two important rivers, and a main line railroad, not to mention the Major Deegan Expressway close by and two and three-engined jets in their take-offs from La Guardia?"<sup>16</sup>

Of course, with Riverdale sitting at a critical entry point to Manhattan, one would expect that any means of getting to the island would be quite the profitable business venture. In fact, the neighborhood name of Kingsbridge comes from the King's Bridge, a toll bridge across Spuyten Duyvil Creek that ferried traffic to and from Manhattan. The bridge was constructed by the wealthy Phillipse family that owned much of the land along the Hudson well into northern Westchester County. Of course, the powerful family missed no opportunity to charge a toll. When a free bridge was constructed in competition, the family tried to toll the bridge but was stopped by Benjamin Palmer, the merchant behind the development of nearby City Island.<sup>17</sup>

By 1850, the transportation of Riverdale shifted from a focus on bridges to the railroad. The Hudson River Railroad, today's Metro-North Hudson Line, runs along the riverbank providing fast and efficient service to Grand Central in Manhattan and as far north as Poughkeepsie. Initially, the trip was even quicker, as trains followed the tracks along Manhattan's western shore directly into Midtown. However, by 1872, the Hudson River Railroad merged with the Spuyten Duyvil and Port Morris Railroad, creating the line we know today that

<sup>16</sup> Tieck, William. *Riverdale, Kingsbridge, Spuyten Duyvil: New York City: A Historical Epitome of the Northwest Bronx*. New York: FH Revell, 1968. Print.

<sup>17</sup> Tieck, 22.

was along the Harlem River and serving the neighborhoods of University Heights and High Bridge.<sup>18</sup>

It seemed as if the railroad did not change Riverdale's character much. In 1864, the neighborhood was described as "nothing more than 'a group of villas and a R.R. station'". By the 1880s, Thomas Edsall had little faith in Riverdale's economic vitality, arguing that "there are no places of business in Riverdale." Even by 1912, it was said that "there are no stores in Riverdale." What little business and activity that took place in Riverdale depended almost entirely on railroad service. The area's first specified edifice was a post office, constructed primarily for the purpose of getting mail onto trains with charming names such as the "Empire State Express."<sup>19</sup>

Even though Riverdale's peace and quiet lured famous names north from Manhattan, it became a prime target for the next boom in New York City's rapidly evolving transportation system. The Interborough Rapid Transit Company, with its tumultuous history, began running trains from City Hall, across 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, and north along Broadway in 1904. Developers of the subway system, the Rapid Transit Commission, craved a route that would provide the highest level of profitability, and Broadway was determined to be that street. However, Broadway below 59<sup>th</sup> Street was closely defended by its wealthy property owners. North of 59<sup>th</sup> Street, its character was less dense, allowing the Commission to create the route to Kingsbridge. Aside from issues of profitability, a major deciding factor behind the choice of this route was to ferry

<sup>18</sup> Brennan, Joseph. "Bronx Railroad Stations." *Abandoned Stations*. Columbia University, 2002. Web. 25 Mar 2012. <<http://www.columbia.edu/~brennan/abandoned/bronx.html>>.

<sup>19</sup> Tieck, 112-113.

the poor from the slums of lower Manhattan to neighborhoods like Riverdale and Kingsbridge, where the "bright sunshine and the air" would "benefit their lives and their health."<sup>20</sup>

The IRT subway along Broadway originally did not serve Riverdale very well at all. It originally made a sharp right along West 230<sup>th</sup> Street to meet with the New York Central's Putnam Railroad that cut in a valley parallel to today's Major Deegan Expressway. By 1907, however, the IRT Company decided that that arrangement was not ideal, and instead decided to continue the route along Broadway, north to West 242<sup>nd</sup> Street and Van Cortlandt Park. Service along Broadway to today's northernmost terminal for the #1 line began in 1908.<sup>21</sup>

Riverdale residents were hopeful that the subway would bring activity to their quiet, practically anemic neighborhood. Land speculator Charles T. Barney wasted no time investing in the northwest Bronx. Subway historian Clinton Hood describes his hunger for land:

"To exploit his inside knowledge about the subway's route, station locations, and construction timetables, Barney organized a syndicate that commanded nearly \$7 million in capital. This syndicate began buying property in Harlem, Washington Heights, and Fort George around 1901, and it shifted to Inwood and the Bronx the following year. For instance, it purchased 109 lots around the 225<sup>th</sup> Street and 238<sup>th</sup> Street stations in the Kingsbridge section of the Bronx. No inventory of the syndicate's holdings was ever made public, but Barney held title to 350 parcels and probably made hundreds of thousands of dollars."<sup>22</sup>

Almost instantly after the first train rumbled above on the elevated structure, stores began to pop up in the neighborhood. In 1915, local businessmen were so ecstatic to have the subway, the local paper "embarked on a crusade" to convince the IRT Company to extend the subway north to the city line via underground tunnel. At the very least, they believed an extension to Mosholu Avenue would serve their needs just fine. It is interesting that residents wanted the best of both

<sup>20</sup> Katz, Wallace. "The New York Rapid Transit Decision of 1900." *NYCSubway.org*. N.p., n.d. Web. 25 Mar 2012. <<http://nycsubway.org/articles/haer-nyrapid.html>>.

<sup>21</sup> "IRT West Side Broadway/7th Ave." *NYCSubway.org*. N.p., 2005. Web. 25 Mar 2012. <<http://nycsubway.org/lines/westside.html>>.

<sup>22</sup> Hood, Clifton. *722 Miles: The Building of the Subways and How They Transformed New York*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995. Print.

words: a subway that would spark development, with an underground tunnel that would allow Riverdale to retain its idyllic character.<sup>23</sup> Even the new subway was not immune to troubles, however. Residents were already complaining about service patterns, which would turn out to be an issue even into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.<sup>24</sup>

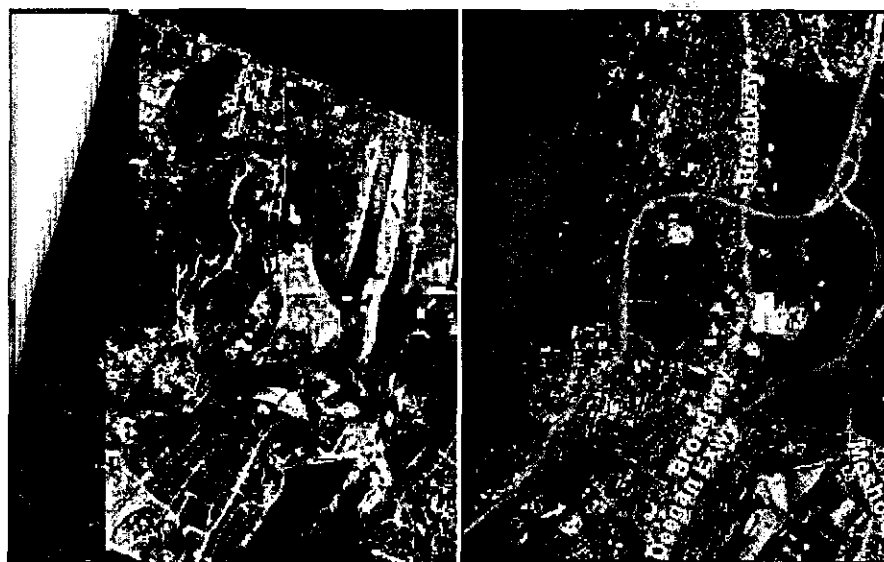


Figure 2.1

The image above compares a 1924 aerial photo of the Riverdale/Kingsbridge area, while the satellite image on the right shows the same area in 2010. Note the construction of highways and high-rise buildings, but with many trees and open spaces still left. Photos courtesy NYC.gov.

While Riverdale was evolving with its railroads and new subway, Edenwald was a quiet land of farms that sat quietly along Boston Post Road. Julia Asbury, an old-time resident of the Edenwald area, described it as “like a country place”.<sup>25</sup> However, one major player of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century had his eyes on the Northeast Bronx: J.P. Morgan. His New York, Westchester and Boston Railway was constructed to rival railroads that extended, almost like Boston Post Road,

<sup>23</sup> Tieck, p. 112-113.

<sup>24</sup> Fischler, Stan. *The Subway: A Trip Through Time on New York's Rapid Transit*. Revised. Flushing, NY: H&M Productions, 1997.

<sup>25</sup> The Students of P.S. 68. *Wake-Eden: Past and Present*. Bronx, NY: The School, c.1970. Print.

all the way to Massachusetts and Maine. The theme of the NYW&B, even through its end, was to save money. One of the key factors for constructing the route through the sparsely settled Northeast Bronx was that it would save money in terms of property acquisition. It even shared infrastructure with the New Haven Railroad south of East 174<sup>th</sup> Street in the Bronx.<sup>26</sup> By 1912, its final cost was estimated to be \$36,434,173.25.<sup>27</sup>

While saving money was on Morgan's mind, some aspects of the railroad did not miss a detail. The NYW&B's stations were individually designed to a high, meticulous standard, as the railroad was expected to develop upper-class suburbs.<sup>28</sup> Even today's Baychester Avenue station that serves Edenwald is rather beautiful for a subway station, but it remains in poor condition in desperate need of renovation. When the railroad opened in 1912, it was described as giving "everyone the best service," with 20 minute headways even outside of rush-hour, unusual for a railroad and better suited for a rapid-transit line.<sup>29</sup>

Sadly enough, Morgan's dream of developing suburban paradises through the Northeast Bronx and Westchester County never materialized. The line was "financially anemic"<sup>30</sup> and barely made any profits. Part of the reason was the line's terminals: unlike the Hudson River Railroad of Riverdale, the New York, Westchester and Boston did not continue into the elaborate Grand Central Terminal, but ended awkwardly at the Harlem River.<sup>31</sup> The only way that passengers could get to Manhattan was through an elaborate system of transfers to the IRT routes

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<sup>26</sup> Harwood, Herbert. *J.P. Morgan's Magnificent Mistake: The New York, Westchester, and Boston Railway*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008. Print.

<sup>27</sup> Harwood, 68

<sup>28</sup> Harwood, 43

<sup>29</sup> Harwood, 57

<sup>30</sup> Harwood, 89

<sup>31</sup> Harwood, 75

at 180<sup>th</sup> Street or at Hunts Point Avenue. By December 31, 1937, the railroad would have closed for good.<sup>32</sup>

Evidently, the failed NYW&B had little to no effect on Edenwald. New York City officials, by the late 1920s, were a bit concerned with this part of the city that had not developed quite like the others. Its accessibility was rather poor, leading the City's Board of Transportation to make a monumental decision: extend the Independent (IND) Concourse Line eastward along Burke Avenue to Dyre Avenue. Bronx officials were baffled by this decision and believed that a line on Fordham Road would make far more economic sense than a line in the desolate Northeast Bronx. But the Board of Transportation knew exactly what they were doing: there were plans to build an airport in the swamps along the Hutchinson River, in today's Co-Op City. There were also plans, under the new trend of slum-clearance, to build low-income housing along Boston Road.<sup>33</sup>

Unfortunately, the Burke Avenue subway was plagued by a mix of financial hardships and indecision. One route had the subway travel along Burke Avenue, with a connection to the faltering NYW&B line. Another route moved the line further north, having it run along Boston Road, which would be a shorter walk from many areas of the Northeast Bronx, including Edenwald. Frederick S. Loewenthal of the Edenwald Taxpayers Association encouraged the development of the line along Boston Road.<sup>34</sup> While this was before the construction of the housing development, the residents of the area were still concerned with access to Manhattan. By 1937, residents were desperate for access after the closure of the NYW&B.

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<sup>32</sup> Harwood, 119

<sup>33</sup> Raskin, Joseph. "The Unbuilt Burke Avenue Subway and the Battle of the Northeast Bronx." *Bronx County Historical Society Journal*. 47.1&2 (2010): 35-56. Print.

<sup>34</sup> Raskin, 42



Also competing for access to the Northeast Bronx was Robert Moses, who sought to blast through the area with an express truck highway along the route of the NYW&B. The Burke Avenue plan was given practically nothing: for 1939, only \$185,000 was allowed for the route's construction, after a large chunk of money was given to Moses for his construction of the Circumferential Parkway in Brooklyn and Queens. Fortunately, residents of Edenwald and the surrounding communities would not go down without a fight: forming the Allied Civic Associations group to fight a takeover of the area by Moses, arguing that the right-of-way of the NYW&B was "a natural rapid-transit route"<sup>35</sup>. In order to battle the juggernaut that was Moses, the Allied Civic Associations began a petition urging the city to acquire the right-of-way in January 1939<sup>36</sup>

On October 25, 1939, a meeting was held at Evander Childs High School where City Council President A. Newbold Morris proclaimed that the Burke Avenue line would be far too expensive, and that the best plan of action would be for the city to connect the NYW&B right-of-way to the existing subway. While residents initially opposed this plan because they felt it did not serve the area adequately, it became a choice of either the city acquiring the line, or Moses building an expressway on the line. By January 9, 1940, the indecision came to a halt and the city signed a contract to operate a rapid-transit service on what would be called the Dyre Avenue Line, today's #5 train.<sup>37</sup>

The residents' discontent with the eventual decision and the city's failure to construct the Burke Avenue subway showed in the early years of the Dyre Avenue Line's operation. It originally ran as a shuttle to East 180<sup>th</sup> Street, where residents had to pay a separate fare to board

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<sup>35</sup> Raskin, 44

<sup>36</sup> Raskin, 49

<sup>37</sup> Raskin, 48-49

the IRT. The route was described as a “curio to all but the few passengers who rode the shuttle during wartime and the immediate post-war years”.<sup>38</sup> It was said that few people knew about the route, even those who worked for the city’s transit system.

Interestingly enough, however, by 1955 the public’s feelings toward the route changed: in 1955, the Dyre Avenue’s reception changed from doubt and obscurity to optimism: “The Dyre Avenue would soon be more than paying its way” across the Northeast Bronx. Interestingly enough, this change in opinion coincides with the opening of Edenwald Houses in 1953. In fact, after the opening of the housing complex, ridership on the Dyre Avenue Line increased so much that a direct connection to the IRT at East 180<sup>th</sup> Street was constructed in 1957, when the “orphan” was given the designation of the #5 Lexington Avenue Express.<sup>39</sup>



Figure 2.2

*The image above compares a 1924 aerial photograph of Edenwald and its surroundings, while the image on the right is from 2010. Note the change from quiet country lanes and trees to buildings, with streets cut through the landscape. Photos courtesy NYC.gov.*

The sudden popularity of the Dyre Avenue line is a testament to Edenwald’s character as a late-bloomer of a neighborhood. Most of the development, including the housing projects, took place in the years following World War II. After the construction of the New England Thruway,

<sup>38</sup> Fischler, 180

<sup>39</sup> Fischler, 180

Baychester Avenue changed from a suburban lane to a major artery linking truckers to points all across the country.<sup>40</sup> Streams that once trickled through the neighborhood were filled in, existing only in Seton Falls Park.<sup>41</sup> Quiet country inns transformed to mini-malls and shopping centers along Boston Post Road. The neighborhood once called "Swedenwald" thanks to its Scandinavian population shifted to a primarily Caribbean-American enclave.<sup>42</sup> Edenwald was to never be the same after World War II, and would continue to grow far into the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

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<sup>40</sup> P.S. 68, 42

<sup>41</sup> P.S. 68, 45

<sup>42</sup> P.S. 68, 33

### Chapter 3: Twentieth Century Dreams and Visions

Well into the mid-twentieth century, New York City was a constantly changing landscape. Bridges stretched across waterways, connecting boroughs once only linked by ferries. Robert Moses was a household name at the same time the Cross Bronx Expressway destroyed homes in the Tremont section of the Bronx. The 1950s and 1960s saw drastic changes in population. Residents, particularly white residents fled into the suburbs, thanks to the interstate highways cutting through the city and reaching far across the country. By the 1970s, it seemed as if New York City was declining with a fiscal crisis leading to funding cuts across the board. Given these conditions, one could safely assume that any sort of transportation development in any part of the city would be far out of the question. Take, for example, the Third Avenue elevated rail line. Once a popular lifeline for residents of Tremont, Morrisania, Fordham, and Williamsbridge, the line was rendered a dead horse and torn down in 1973.<sup>43</sup>

Even beyond the destruction of a much-needed line, the city's subway system was in deplorable condition. Trains were smothered in reckless graffiti. Tracks were in such poor conditions that trains were sometimes forced to run as slow as ten miles per hour.<sup>44</sup> These poor conditions did not just affect riders in the outer boroughs; these problems affected customers citywide and even included the traditionally clean and safe Manhattan. With a lack of funding for transportation, all would seem hopeless through the 1970s and 1980s. However, residents of Riverdale and Edenwald were lucky in one respect: both neighborhoods were the targets of long

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<sup>43</sup> . "3rd Avenue El." *NYCSubway.org*. N.p., 2005. Web. 8 Apr 2012. <<http://www.nycsubway.org/lines/3rdave-el.html>>.

<sup>44</sup> Feinman, Mark. "The New York City Transit Authority in the 1970s." *NYCSubway.org*. N.p., 19 Nov 2002. Web. 8 Apr 2012. <<http://www.nycsubway.org/articles/history-nycta1970s.html>>.

range plans and capital improvement projects that would seek to improve the commute and quality of life of residents of both communities.

While the rest of New York City was experiencing a decline in population and activity, particularly subway ridership, the Northeast Bronx was a major exception to this rule. In 1977, the population of the Northeast Bronx was estimated to grow by approximately 61,000 people by 1990.<sup>45</sup> City planners realized that even with the projected increases in population and development, there was little to offer in terms of employment opportunities, forcing residents to apply for jobs in Manhattan. At the same time, the New York City Transit Authority was eagerly preparing to complete the Second Avenue Subway. In order to meet the proposed increase in commuting activity, the Transit Authority proposed connecting the existing Dyre Avenue subway to the new Second Avenue Subway in Manhattan, relieving crowding and delays on the Lexington Avenue line and providing better access to the central business district in the city.

There were three proposals suggested in a 1977 report by the New York City Transit Authority:

The first was called the Pelham-Dyre Proposal. It would call for half of the northbound Second Avenue trains to be routed to the Pelham Line (today's #6 line), and the other half to be routed along Dyre Avenue. The IRT #5 would be terminating at E. 180<sup>th</sup> Street, while a new Second Avenue "N" Train would continue along the Dyre corridor, providing residents of Edenwald and the entire Northeast Bronx with a one-seat ride as far out as the Sea Beach Line in

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<sup>45</sup> New York City Transit Authority. *Rapid Transit Extension to Northeast Bronx: Final Report*. New York, 1977. Print.

Brooklyn. An additional station would be built at Hunts Point Avenue, allowing residents to transfer between the Dyre and Pelham lines without having to enter Manhattan.<sup>46</sup>

The second proposal was called the Penn Central-Dyre Avenue proposal. It would call for half of the northbound Second Avenue trains to continue along the Dyre Line with the other half connecting to what, at the time, was called the Penn Central right-of-way. As in the Pelham-Dyre proposal, the Dyre Avenue Line trains would be called the "N" train and continue down Second Avenue, to Broadway, and head out to Brooklyn via the Sea Beach line.<sup>47</sup>

The third proposal was called the White Plains-Dyre proposal. Like the others, there would be an "N" train running along the Dyre Line. Additionally, there would be a "Y" train running along White Plains Road. The IRT #2 and #5 lines would therefore terminate at E. 180<sup>th</sup> Street, though a free transfer would allow Dyre and White Plains riders to transfer to whichever line they needed, West Side or Lexington Avenue. In this plan, as with the Pelham-Dyre proposal, there would be no use for the Penn Central right-of-way. Dyre Avenue "N" trains would follow Second Avenue, to Broadway, and to Brooklyn via the Sea Beach Line.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> New York City Transit Authority, 57

<sup>47</sup> New York City Transit Authority, 57-60

<sup>48</sup> New York City Transit Authority, 61

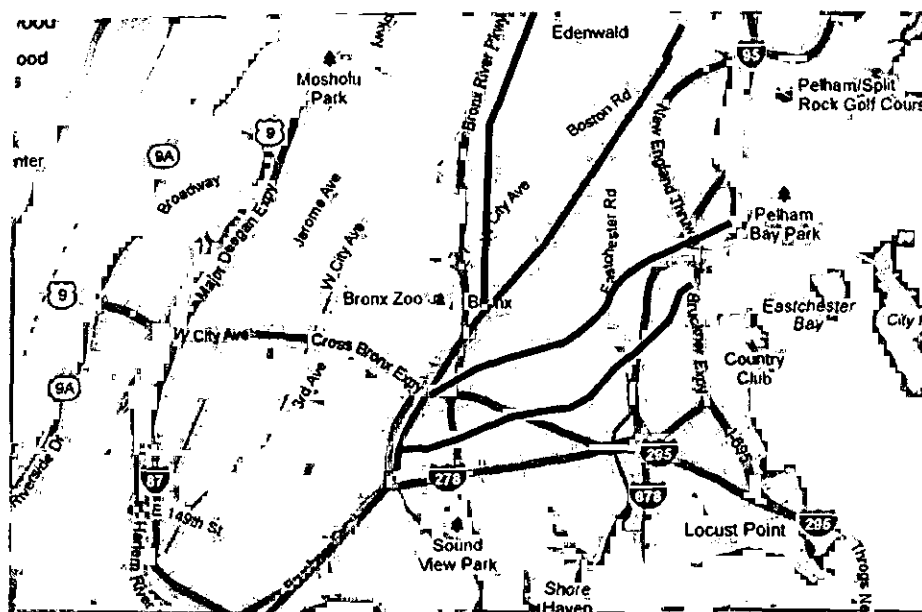


Figure 3.1

The above map illustrates Bronx connections to the Second Avenue Subway, with the Dyre Avenue Line highlighted in turquoise. Map courtesy Google.

While the plans differed in specifics, they all called for two lines connecting to Second Avenue. Each plan boasts a headway of two minutes for each train along Second Avenue, with four minutes along Dyre Avenue during peak periods. At the time of the proposals, the headway of #5 trains along Dyre Avenue was listed as eight minutes during peak periods, and ten minutes during midday.<sup>49</sup> This is compared to today's current headway of 8-11 minutes during rush hour.<sup>50</sup> The proposal estimated a trip decreasing from an average of 48 minutes from the Northeast Bronx to 42<sup>nd</sup> Street to an average of 40 minutes.<sup>51</sup> Evidently, this increase in headways would be a great benefit to riders along the Dyre corridor, especially residents of Edenwald included in the increasing patronage of the Baychester Avenue station. In addition, a subway running along Second Avenue would be significantly less delay-prone than the current Lexington Avenue service, which is a victim of congestion because of three routes using the right-of-way.

<sup>49</sup> New York City Transit Authority, 22

<sup>50</sup> Metropolitan Transportation Authority. *5 Train Timetable*. 2011. Web. <<http://www.mta.info/nyct/service/pdf/t5cur.pdf>>.

<sup>51</sup> New York City Transit Authority, 64

On the other side of the Bronx, big plans were on the drawing board in the 1980s.

Compared to Edenwald and the surrounding area, Riverdale and the Northwest Bronx remained relatively stable through the 1970s and 1980s. Community Board 8 reported a 3% decrease in population between 1980 and 1985.<sup>52</sup> The greatest concern of residents and planners was not how to meet the needs of a growing population, but rather, how to improve upon existing and aging infrastructure. Concerns arose not from improving the subway, but from improving traffic and the parking for shoppers and residents. In 1988, the Kingsbridge-Riverdale-Van Cortlandt Development Corporation released a plan that it hoped would be implemented by the year 2000. The plan describes the neighborhood's public transportation as "convenient," rendering far less attention than the Northeast Bronx in terms of subway development.<sup>53</sup>

Parking and automobile access were integral to the development of the Riverdale area in the 1980s because of the economic conditions of the area. Many residents preferred to shop in Westchester or New Jersey because the stores in these suburban-style malls offered better options with ample parking. With new shopping centers being constructed along Broadway at the time of the report, there was growing concern regarding parking along the street, above which the #1 subway line runs. Residents were forced to stand out in the road while waiting for buses such as the Bx9. With all this taken into consideration, it seems that the "El" created a challenge for Riverdale's development.

In fact, the area was torn in regards to the presence of the "El." Many thought the structure was aesthetically unpleasant, but also feared a loss of commercial activity as seen when the Third Avenue El in the Bronx, Myrtle Avenue El in Brooklyn, and the Jamaica El in Queens

<sup>52</sup> Kingsbridge-Riverdale-Van Cortlandt Development Corporation. *Long Range Plan, Year 2000: Dedicated to the Communities of Kingsbridge, Riverdale and Van Cortlandt*. New York: Riverdale Press, 1988. Print.

<sup>53</sup> Kingsbridge-Riverdale-Van Cortlandt, 41



were taken down.<sup>54</sup> As a result, the 1988 plan offered several proposals to find a compromise that would improve Riverdale's aesthetic along Broadway while retaining an adequate level of subway access.

The first proposal would redirect #1 service and route it along the near-abandoned Putnam Line running in a low cut to the east of Broadway. The existing "El" structure would be torn down. Originally considered in 1968 as part of a Riverdale Area Master Plan, the idea would route the #1 subway along W. 230<sup>th</sup> Street to the Putnam Line, which continued as far as Yonkers. The benefits of the plan would be plentiful: businesses on Broadway would receive improved lighting and shoppers would endure less noise. The street could be widened to four lanes, helping to improve the parking and traffic situation for Riverdale residents.<sup>55</sup>

The plan was not without its faults, however. The Putnam line was constructed a part of a regional transportation system. Because of its nature as a through route, the line would not be able to serve the local community as well as the #1 train. Also, the New York City Transit Authority lacked the funds after investing most of its money into improving the existing conditions of the New York City Subway, including investing in new R62 subway cars for the #1 line and renovations to the existing elevated structure.<sup>56</sup> Geographically, as well, the line would do a very poor job of serving Riverdale. Residents would have to walk down the hill much as they already do with the existing service, and would have to walk even further.<sup>57</sup>

Another proposal included tearing down the elevated structure entirely and replacing it with bus service, which, as the plan mentions would not benefit riders heading to Manhattan and

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<sup>54</sup> Kingsbridge-Riverdale-Van Cortlandt, 43

<sup>55</sup> Kingsbridge-Riverdale-Van Cortlandt, 44

<sup>56</sup> Kingsbridge-Riverdale-Van Cortlandt, 43

<sup>57</sup> Raskin, Joseph. "Transportation in the Northeast Bronx." Message to Amelia Zaino. 16 Feb 2012. E-mail.

would be redundant with what, at the time, was express bus service provided by the Liberty Lines company. It would also increase traffic and make conditions more difficult for drivers throughout the region using arterial highways such as the Major Deegan Expressway and Henry Hudson Parkway.<sup>58</sup>

Other proposals featured in the 1988 plan have actually been implemented within the twelve-year time frame. The writers of the plan were well aware of the fact that many Riverdale residents used local buses to access the subway. At the time, this would require payment of two separate fares, creating what is known as a "two-fare zone."<sup>59</sup> They proposed either free shuttle services or a transfer system. The transfer system became a reality with the advent of the Metro-Card in the mid-1990s. They also suggested that an express subway service from Riverdale to Manhattan be studied and considered.<sup>60</sup> The service was implemented in the form of the #9 train, a skip-stop service that began in August of 1989. It had a short life, however, and was discontinued in May 2005 after ridership began to increase in skipped stations such as 238<sup>th</sup> Street. The commute for Riverdale residents would only increase by an estimated three minutes.<sup>61</sup> A final proposal that materialized for Riverdale residents is shuttle service to the Riverdale and Spuyten Duyvil Metro-North station, which manifested in the form of the Hudson Rail Link bus service.

Both Edenwald and Riverdale had big changes in store that would shape the way the neighborhoods would grow far into the twenty-first century. With a growing population needing better access to Manhattan, service to Second Avenue would be the ideal way for the newly

<sup>58</sup> Kingsbridge-Riverdale-Van Cortlandt, 45

<sup>59</sup> Kingsbridge-Riverdale-Van Cortlandt, 59

<sup>60</sup> Kingsbridge-Riverdale-Van Cortlandt, 59

<sup>61</sup> Chan, Sewell. "On Its Last Wheels, No. 9 Line is Vanishing on Signs." *New York Times* 25 May 2005, n. pag. Web. 9 May. 2012. <[http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/25/nyregion/25train.html?\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/25/nyregion/25train.html?_r=2)>.

developed Edenwald to adjust to its surroundings and make it far easier for residents to get to work. The professional population of Riverdale would greatly benefit from a quick and seamless transfer to the central business district to its south. Some of the decisions made in these volatile years would lead both neighborhoods to where they are today: polar opposites in distant corners of the Bronx atop hills with the critical economic tie to Manhattan.

#### Chapter 4: Where Are We Now?

Much has changed in the neighborhoods of Riverdale and Edenwald since the mid-to-late twentieth century. In Riverdale, massive high-rise condominiums seem to pop up overnight, attracting new populations of young professionals. The buildings block the bucolic Hudson River views. A mall opened on the corner of 225<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway, boasting a Target and even a Starbucks. A mall known as "Riverdale Crossing" is being constructed at 237<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway, at the former site of the Stella D'oro cookie factory.<sup>62</sup> Meanwhile, on a Facebook group for residents of the Edenwald Houses, one resident bemoans the current conditions of his community. When I asked why the 47<sup>th</sup> Precinct was relocated from White Plains Road to its current location on Laconia Avenue, resident Lee Strong described that "the housing police could not handle the projects when our 'brothers' started losing respect for themselves," and added that there was no "guidance" for youths.<sup>63</sup>

With these changes, I could not help but wonder how an average day would be for a resident of Edenwald or Riverdale. The statistics speak volumes: in 2011, 1,977 major felonies took place in the 47<sup>th</sup> Precinct that patrols the Edenwald Houses and surrounding neighborhoods. While this is a 15.44 percent decline since the year 2001, the number is still greater than the 1,013 felonies reported by the 50<sup>th</sup> Precinct that oversees Riverdale. The area boasted a decline of nearly 32% in major felonies since 2001<sup>64</sup>. I could imagine the increased caution that Edenwald residents would have in comparison to those in Riverdale, but also realized that

<sup>62</sup> Lam, Miawling. "Work Begins This Week on Stella D'oro Mall; 500 Parking Spaces Seen." *Riverdale Review* 12 Apr 2012, 1. Print.

<sup>63</sup> Strong, Lee. 13 Apr 2012. Facebook, Online Posting to *Edenwald Houses*. Web. 9 May. 2012.  
<<http://www.facebook.com/groups/edenwald/>>.

<sup>64</sup> CompStat. . New York City. Police Department. *47th Precinct*. 2012. Web.  
<[http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/downloads/pdf/crime\\_statistics/cs047pct.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/downloads/pdf/crime_statistics/cs047pct.pdf)>. Same data is available for the 50<sup>th</sup> Precinct.

Riverdale was not completely safe. Some residents argue that the neighborhood's proximity to the immigrant community of Kingsbridge on the eastern end of Broadway affects its safety and character.<sup>65</sup>

Of course, regardless of the threat of criminal activity, life still goes on, and residents of both neighborhoods must travel to work, public institutions, and places for recreation and shopping. Below are tables of average weekday ridership for major routes:

Average Weekday Ridership by Station or Route, 2011	
Baychester Avenue (5)	3,840
233 <sup>rd</sup> St (2/5)	5,379
Bx31 (Woodlawn-Westchester Sq Local)	10,271

*Figure 4.1*

*The above table lists the average weekday ridership of the subway stations and the major bus route of Ederwald. Data courtesy MTA: New York City Transit.*

Average Weekday Ridership by Major Station or Route, 2011	
Van Cortlandt Park- 242 St	6,504
231 St	9,170
BxM1	1,604
BxM2	813
BxM18	303
Bx7	14,672

<sup>65</sup> Personal Communication with Author, Name Withheld

<b>Bx10</b>	10,395
<b>Bx20</b>	939

*Figure 4.2*

*The above table lists the average ridership of major subway stations in Riverdale and major bus routes west of Broadway. Data courtesy MTA: New York City Transit and MTA Bus.*

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**Average Metro-North Ridership by Station, 2009\***

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<b>Riverdale</b>	670
<b>Spuyten Duyvil</b>	1,018

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*Figure 4.3*

*The above table lists the average weekday ridership of Metro-North's Hudson Line. Data courtesy MTA: Metro-North Railroad.*

*\*Data only available for inbound (to Manhattan) ridership.*

The above data illustrates that the most ridership and activity is centered on major nodes of transportation, spots where residents of both neighborhoods can transfer to and from bus routes. These routes, called "feeder routes", allow residents to reach parts of the neighborhoods otherwise unreachable by subway. <sup>66</sup>As a result, it is imperative that "feeder routes," such as the Bx7, Bx10, and Bx20 as well as the Bx31 run in a timely and efficient manner, allowing customers to make necessary transfers and also enabling the buses themselves to manage the large crowds that depart from the subways. Riverdale's node is the intersection of West 231<sup>st</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>New York City Transit Authority

Street and Broadway, where the #1 subway stops. It is also a busy commercial strip.



Figure 4.4

*This Bx9 picks up passengers slightly north of the 231<sup>st</sup> Street station. Photo courtesy Inphinite Nazario.*

On the other hand, Edenwald's major node is located at the intersection of East 233<sup>rd</sup> Street and White Plains Road, also a part of a major commercial strip. It is not an uncommon sight to see hoards of teenagers hanging out at the bus stop, or even clustered in the doorway of an adjacent Dunkin' Donuts attempting to stay warm. The Bx31 roars through this intersection, often times one right after the other, and other times, as one resident explained, there is an "awkward silence" between buses. However, many Edenwald residents rely on this lonely route, even with its faults. Some riders complain of missing buses and frequent "bunching", which one driver from West Farms Depot admitted is a problem on the route. He explained that when a few "runs", or trips, were cut, the Bx31 suffered as a whole resulting in excessive crowding.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Personal Communication with Author, Name Withheld.



*Figure 4.5*

*The above image was taken on a Friday afternoon after school at East 233<sup>rd</sup> Street and White Plains Road. Image courtesy of the author.*

I decided to reach out to both residents of Riverdale and Edenwald to see how they felt about their respective transportation situations. It is a mixed bag of commutes in Riverdale, with some preferring to use the local bus, others preferring Metro-North, and others riding the express buses. Most residents seem fine with the location of the subway in relation to the neighborhood's central area atop the hill.<sup>68</sup> However, there are mixed opinions of local bus service. A young couple I interviewed one sunny afternoon on Riverdale Avenue loved the neighborhood, but complained that the Bx7 "doesn't come often enough" in the off-hours, but is much more reliable in the morning. Resident Kathleen Kehoe, who works at Columbia University, reported that "the buses are slow, and it adds quite a bit of time to my commute," particularly in the winter.

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<sup>68</sup> Zaino, 2012



Retired city worker Steven Scher told me a few horror stories of his local bus experiences in Riverdale. One time, an older bus was incapable of making it up the steep hill along which Riverdale Avenue runs. Another resident working in Lower Manhattan credited the local routes, saying that they make it “easy enough” to access the #1 line, and in the event that the line fails, the A train is also “easy enough” to get to.<sup>69</sup> One driver from Kingsbridge Depot, which oversees the Bx7 and Bx10 buses, admitted that even he would like to see improved service on the routes because of their inconsistency: sometimes more Bx7s will show up than Bx10s, causing the Bx10s to become more crowded.<sup>70</sup> It seems as if the mixed bag of opinions regarding local bus service in Riverdale is a testament to inconsistent service.

Edenwald residents seem to agree on one thing: the #5 train is simply inadequate at serving the needs of the neighborhood. One resident who works as far away as Camden complains that the line’s frequent delays force him to miss his connection to the Northeast Corridor train at Penn Station. One girl who lives near the Edenwald Houses was coming home late from Manhattan one evening, when her typical 45-minute journey transformed into a 3-hour ordeal.<sup>71</sup> Fatima, a home health aide living in the south side of the housing complex, argued that her weekend appointments are often delayed because of poor service during the train’s off hours. Resident Hector Lugo, an employee at Rockefeller University in Manhattan, told me that he dislikes the Bx31, and prefers to walk to the #2 or #5 trains, depending on his mood. He reported that his commute is safe, but complained that “the same guy keeps staring” at him every single day on the walk to the subway. Anthony Moore, a student at Apex Technical School in Manhattan, complained that there was no “average” travel time when I asked him how long his

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<sup>69</sup> Zaino, 2012

<sup>70</sup> Personal Communication with Author, Name Withheld

<sup>71</sup> Zaino, 2012

commute was on a daily basis, attributing the fluctuations to delays on the #5 line. On the other hand, self-employed Dr. Rev. Juan Alvarez, with an optimistic smile, believed that transportation was something that residents had "adapted to," getting used to conditions over the years. No Edenwald resident, however, thought their commutes were particularly safe, with many emphasizing that they do not walk alone at nights, and sometimes have to avoid "random bums" on the way to the subway.<sup>72</sup> This is a stark contrast to Riverdale residents, who all boasted of the neighborhood's inherent safety.

After gathering a few opinions of local residents, I decided that the best way to truly experience the daily life of residents of Edenwald and Riverdale would be to plunge myself into their world, and try the commutes myself. Growing up in the Co-Op City section of the Bronx, I was accustomed to waiting for buses and living relatively far away from the subway, but I wanted to see what it would be like in other areas of the Bronx with the same problem. I was fortunate enough to be invited by my long-time close friend Inphinite Nazario on his daily commute to classes at TCI College in Manhattan. At 19 years old, he is a resident of the Baychester Houses, an addition to the Edenwald complex further east. He is ordinarily an articulate young man, but is reduced to swearing and frustration when it comes to the Bx31 and the #5 train.

The first trip I took to Edenwald occurred on the afternoon of February 9, when I departed Fordham College at Lincoln Center to meet with Inphinite (who prefers to be called DeShawn. I will refer to him as such for the rest of this chapter). I left campus at 1:32 PM and arrived at the Columbus Circle station for the #1 train which arrived, to my surprise, at 1:34 PM.

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<sup>72</sup> Zaino, 2012

I transferred to the 2 at 72<sup>nd</sup> Street, which arrived at 1:55 PM. I was lucky that my transfer to the #5 at E 149<sup>th</sup> Street was quick and effortless, and I arrived at Baychester Avenue at 2:30 PM, where I was greeted by a conspicuous police presence. DeShawn insisted that my quick commute was by sheer "luck," to which I responded with a laugh.

On February 16, I decided to test my "luck" by meeting DeShawn after his class located on West 31<sup>st</sup> Street and 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue. We arrived at the 34<sup>th</sup> Street station at 4:23 PM, and the time schedule anticipated the next Wakefield-bound train to arrive at 4:31 PM, which it did, of course, after two #3 trains passed. We stayed on this #2 train, neglecting to transfer at East 149<sup>th</sup> Street, and decided to make the transfer at East 180<sup>th</sup> Street. It seemed as if my luck had run out, as by the time our #2 arrived at the transfer point, the #5 train had long pulled off into the distance. We shrugged our shoulders and decided to stay on to East 233<sup>rd</sup> Street. By 5:24 PM, I jokingly made a comment that I was "losing interest", accustomed to my quick late-afternoon rides on the #6 Pelham Express. We finally arrived at East 233<sup>rd</sup> Street at 5:27 PM when it began to rain. The Bx31 schedule stated that the bus will arrive at 5:34 PM. It arrived in a timely fashion, though we were delayed by a wheelchair passenger boarding the bus. We arrived at the corner of Laconia Avenue and East 229<sup>th</sup> Street at 5:43 PM, an hour and twenty minutes later than when our journey began.

The following day, I persuaded myself to get out of bed and I met DeShawn at his apartment in the Baychester Houses. Getting to see him was a journey in itself, requiring a tedious ride on the Bx31, which in the late morning is filled with passengers spread poorly amongst a low-floor bus. Passengers clamor up front, while there is plenty of room in the back. We departed his home at 10:52 AM for his 12:15 PM class, when he told me that he did not

think it would be a good idea for us to take the #5 train, and instead suggested that we take the #2 train. Apparently, we were not fast enough, as a bus flew by with an intense growl at 10:57 AM. The next bus was scheduled at 11:10 AM, and it arrived two minutes late. We arrived at East 233<sup>rd</sup> Street at 11:24 AM. When we departed the bus, DeShawn pointed out a rickety-looking automobile, which he called a "dollar van," and he said that they were a common sight when the Bx31 was not running. Our #2 train arrived at 11:27 AM. Before we pulled into East 180<sup>th</sup> Street, the conductor made an announcement saying that there was no #5 service between East 180<sup>th</sup> Street and East 149<sup>th</sup> Street-Grand Concourse. I commented to DeShawn that it was a good idea that we did not take the #5, as all its passengers transferred to our train, making it insanely crowded for the middle of the day. Unfortunately, we arrived at 42<sup>nd</sup> Street at a late 12:48 PM.

It seems as if we had better luck on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, when I returned to DeShawn's apartment and insisted that we should take the #5 train to Manhattan, just to see how the trip would turn out. He agreed, and we left his home at 11:01 AM. He is a fast walker, and I had difficulty keeping up. We arrived at the Baychester Avenue subway station at 11:17 AM. The #5 train arrived at 11:20 AM, and we entered car #6319 which had a #2 strip map, faded from carmine red to a gross shade of brown. I could only imagine how confused a visitor would be. The ride was slow pulling into East 180<sup>th</sup> Street, and DeShawn said that "it's running normal, but there's strings attached, trust me." It turned out that he was correct, as the train practically crawled into its next stop at West Farms Square. We transferred at 149<sup>th</sup> Street-Grand Concourse for the #2 train, which arrived at 11:50 AM. We arrived at 42<sup>nd</sup> Street at 12:09 PM, and arrived at TCI's 40<sup>th</sup> Street building at a punctual 12:11 PM.

There were a few additional trips that I took with him that were not planned:

February 11

I met DeShawn at his home to go to dinner with him in White Plains. We decided to walk to the Metro-North station at Woodlawn, a few blocks west of the #2 train. The walk was difficult, and uphill, making me tired. We ended up stopping at random bodegas for snacks and a quick break from all the walking. I regretted my decision not to take the Bx31.

February 13

DeShawn and I were riding the Bx31 for me to get to Allerton Avenue to make the Bx26 transfer to get home, after visiting the vicinity of Pelham Parkway. At 3:39 PM, there was a crowd, estimated to be around 20 people. Two buses arrived at 3:40 PM though the route was scheduled to have 7-8 minutes between buses at that time of day.

March 22

DeShawn and I left Manhattan en route on way to the Community Board 12 meeting and to hang out for a bit in Edenwald. The 2 train we were on had a police officer present in the car. A pair of two white girls stayed on the train past 96<sup>th</sup>. I asked DeShawn "Do they know where they're going?" to which he replied "I've seen richer people. The same way Speedy [a friend] goes to Riverdale to get his mack on." I asked him about the Bx31 that morning, and he told me: "That 31-forget it- I heard one pass and I said 'one will come in 12 minutes.' So then I went to go make breakfast, but luckily I didn't even miss a bus. I waited an extra 15 minutes for a bus to show up

in a 41 minute period." I laughed at him, as I was a little confused. At East 233rd Street, there was a police officer at the Bx31 stop along with a crowd of teenagers.

### March 23

I met DeShawn in the morning casually to interview his mother, and go with him to class. When we arrived at the Baychester Avenue station, an announcement played that a downtown local train was approaching the station. The time was not specific. All over the Dyre Avenue Line, signs have been promising train arrival times for about a year now. We boarded the train and everything was fine until East 180<sup>th</sup> Street. The 2 train was allowed to pass first, even though it was way behind us and had to stop at Bronx Park East.

That afternoon, I met him after his class and we headed home together. We met for a snack in the Union Square area and boarded the #5 train there. We had to board an uptown train heading toward Nereid Avenue, which is not what we initially planned but figured it was okay, since it seemed as no Dyre trains were approaching for a while, at least fifteen minutes. When we got to 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave- 149<sup>th</sup> Street, the conductor announced that the train will be running express, as it is normally scheduled for rush hour. A woman did not hear the announcement and appeared confused when the train missed her local stop. At E 180<sup>th</sup> Street, we decided to wait for a Dyre-bound train when the conductor announced that the 5 train we were initially on was short-turning at Gun Hill Road instead of Nereid Avenue, which would not have allowed us to transfer at 233<sup>rd</sup> Street to the Bx31 to get to Edenwald.

Unfortunately, my closest contact in Riverdale, a Fordham University student named Dorian, was far too busy with his new job to assist me with my travels. I did not mind the solo trips, but someone to show me more of the neighborhood would have been ideal. Riverdale is

also much larger, geographically, than Edenwald, and I did not get to as much territory as I would have liked.

On February 13, after class, I decided to take a very basic ride on the #1 train to its very end at Van Cortlandt Park. I departed Fordham College at Lincoln Center at 11:35 AM and arrived at the Columbus Circle station at 11:40 AM. The #1 train arrived at 11:45 AM. I got a seat in the second car, which was practically empty by the time the train reached Dyckman Street. The train's speed slowed down considerably, particularly around 215<sup>th</sup> Street and the Broadway Bridge. I arrived at Van Cortlandt Park at 12:21 PM. I journeyed up the hill to Waldo Avenue, where Manhattan College is located. I approached two students and asked them what they thought of transportation in Riverdale, to which they replied that the #1 train was "practically always messed up, but the local buses are a big help so it's not too much of a problem." I ventured back down the hill, when a Bee-Line bus from Westchester arrived and released a massive load of passengers coming from Yonkers.

On February 23, I decided to take the same trip, but in style—I splurged on a BxM2 express bus ride. I arrived at Broadway and 63<sup>rd</sup> Street anticipating its arrival at 12:52 PM. However, the bus was early, and I had to run for it since I did not want to wait another half hour for the next one. The bus was quite empty, but the driver was friendly and said hello. I noticed that the bus' route was quite scenic, even passing by the Museum of Natural History and heading through Central Park. The bus meandered its way through Harlem after picking up passengers at Mount Sinai Hospital, but did not stop in the neighborhood. Instead, the bus headed onto the Harlem River Drive, exited at Dyckman Street, and headed across the Broadway Bridge. I

arrived at the intersection of Henry Hudson Parkway and West 239<sup>th</sup> Street at a very early 1:30 PM.

That same day, I decided to take the subway back into Manhattan instead of heading straight home from Riverdale, a journey in itself. I arrived at Riverdale Avenue and West 236<sup>th</sup> Street at 1:40 PM. The Bx7 bus was scheduled to arrive at 1:48 PM, and it arrived close to its scheduled time. I found the bus to be rather crowded for the time of day, and during a break from most schools. My original plan was to take the Bx7 into Manhattan to transfer to the A train, but the bus was uncomfortably crowded to the point where I decided to just get off at West 225<sup>th</sup> Street to transfer to the #1 train. When I arrived at the train station, I was shocked that #1 trains were not running at that station at all. I panicked a little at first, but then decided to trek back up to West 230<sup>th</sup> Street to get the next Bx7. It turned out that the additional walk was a good idea: when the bus arrived at 2:13 PM and travelled to West 225<sup>th</sup> Street, a massive crowd from the shopping center was waiting. The bus arrived at West 207<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway at 2:20 PM. I decided to visit a nearby McDonald's to use the restroom, when I discovered a homeless man passed out in front of the restaurant. I boarded the A train at 2:35 PM, and arrived at Columbus Circle at 3 PM after a conspicuous slow-down between the 145<sup>th</sup> Street and 125<sup>th</sup> Street stations.

The next day, February 24<sup>th</sup>, was a far quieter day and I enjoyed a pleasant, though rainy, ride on the BxM2. I arrived at West 230<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway at 2:16 PM. The bus was scheduled to arrive at 2:17 PM, giving me quite a bit of anxiety as to whether or not I missed it. Fortunately, I did not, as it arrived at 2:18 PM. However, I was out of luck—I was waiting and avoiding getting soaked by the storm at the bus shelter, while the actual bus stopped a few feet



away. The bus was not crowded, but had a few more people than I expected. Traffic on the Major Deegan Expressway was quite bad, as was traffic on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Luckily, I overheard control warning the drivers (and passengers) of the delays. I eventually arrived at 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue at 3:12 PM.

I also did a few unplanned trips to Riverdale:

### March 8

I boarded the Bx7 a little after 1 in the afternoon. The bus was extremely crowded. I asked one woman if it was always like this, to which she responded that it had been since service cuts affected the Bx20, reducing it to a few times a day during rush hour, and increasing the Bx7's headways to 10 minutes. The bus eventually became so crowded that a fight broke out between an African-American woman and a Hispanic man. From what I observed, the gentleman did not move when she asked him, and she resorted to kicking him. She called him an "ignorant bitch ass nigga," and added "that's what happens when you don't say excuse me." The same lady I spoke to earlier lamented: "They should have more buses, but it's uptown," meaning the city has no concern for the outer boroughs. Another man sitting in the back of the bus and observing the whole debacle concluded that "this is what happens when you don't tell the government what's going on."

### March 13

I caught the Bx10 at Norwood around 6 PM. The bus ride was average until it arrived at West 231<sup>st</sup> Street. The bus became insanely crowded. It became rather obvious that Riverdale residents

depend on local bus service to take them further into the neighborhood. The buses were also crowded in the opposite direction, unlike traditional rush hour patterns. The crowd appeared to be pretty professional: everyone was dressed well and put-together. However, the bus driver had to yell at people to move to the rear of the low-floor bus. He yelled at the top of his lungs: "Come on, we can step up back there!" One woman tried to push her way in, but the driver brought that to a swift conclusion: "I have to cut this off honey—nuh uh uh uh no!" He motioned her away with his hand. In contrast, the bus became rather empty past West 239<sup>th</sup> Street as most people departed at West 232<sup>nd</sup> Street.

### March 20

I departed Lincoln Center at 5:25 PM. I arrived at 63<sup>rd</sup> and Broadway at 5:33 PM. The BxM2 was scheduled to arrive at 5:40 PM. It arrived early once more, at 5:36 PM. The demographics of the passengers had shifted and there were more African-Americans than expected, about 5. The bus was far more crowded than what I experienced with midday trips. I could not help but notice that really important-looking men in suits get on board at 79<sup>th</sup> Street and Central Park West. This bus, like the Bx10, was also practically empty by West 249<sup>th</sup> Street.

By observing first-hand life in Edenwald and Riverdale, I am now able to identify key problems with transportation in both neighborhoods. For example, delays on the #5 train are unexpected, making a commute from Edenwald a risky adventure. DeShawn argues that he is almost never notified of service changes on the line, even though he is signed up to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's e-mail and text message alerts. Many residents agree with him, as 3 out of 4 residents that completed an online survey stated that the MTA never let them know of anticipated problems on the line. I signed up for the e-mail alerts myself, and in a

thirty day period from February 25 to March 26, received 23 e-mails related to delays on the #5 train and #2 train in the Bronx. Only seven of these e-mails were regarding incidents in the Bronx, all others were in Manhattan. While the MTA insists that riders are informed of planned service changes in advance, it should be noted that on February 17<sup>th</sup>, when the #5 train was not running between East 180<sup>th</sup> Street and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue-East 149<sup>th</sup> Street, there were no posters in any stations. On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, I received no e-mail that explained the train's slow speed. The notification system appears to be only for sudden delays, such as sick passengers and mechanical problems.

As of the past few weeks, both the #1 and # 5 lines are undergoing drastic weekend construction. The #1 line was not running past 168<sup>th</sup> Street, forcing Riverdale residents to transfer to shuttle buses or use the A line. This shut down seems to occur often. Also, for three weeks between March and April, the #5 was scheduled to run on 20 minute headway during the weekend. For workers like Fatima that work hours beyond the typical 9-5, these kinds of changes can be detrimental. DeShawn's mother, Londra, after becoming fed up with working in Manhattan and dealing with the #5 train's delays, selected to work in a Westchester County shopping center where the commute by Bee-Line bus would be easier.

The MTA states that a capital construction program is underway on the Dyre Avenue Line, with \$265,017 dedicated to modernizing the line's signals.<sup>73</sup> Riders have no idea about this project unless they intensely navigate the Transportation Authority's website. However, in Queens, the #7 line's Communications-Based Train Control project is thoroughly promoted with

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<sup>73</sup> Metropolitan Transportation Authority. "Project Description, Budget, and Scope." *MTA Capital Dashboard*. N.p., 2010. Web. 15 Apr 2012. <[http://mta.info/capitaldashboard/10\\_14/agencies/t/t6080313\\_all\\_data.htm](http://mta.info/capitaldashboard/10_14/agencies/t/t6080313_all_data.htm)>.

an entire webpage devoted to the project. Bronx riders are completely left in the dark when it comes to their transportation options.<sup>74</sup> When inquired as to why Bronx riders are not told of upcoming service changes and why, the question was quickly blown off by representative Fernando Polanco, who provided me with this cookie-cutter response:

"We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience you have experienced in connection with any of our subway systems construction projects. It might interest you to know that the MTA Capital Construction will focus on multi-billion dollar projects that will expand the nation's largest regional transportation network. In addition, please note that New York City Transit has 468 stations in the system, many of which are old and need track, structural and/or cosmetic improvements. The goal of the reconstruction work is to bring our stations into a state of good repair. The 2010-2014 Rehabilitation/Reconstruction Program includes repairing structural deficiencies, highlighting architectural features, enhancing lighting and signage, improving security and revenue control, and enhancing customer comfort."

He proceeded to tell me that the reason why many #5 line riders have no idea as to what is going on their line is because posters are frequently torn down by vandals.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Metropolitan Transportation Authority. "Building a Better 7 Line for You." *mta.info*. N.p., 2012. Web. 15 Apr 2012. <<http://www.mta.info/nycct/service/building7update.htm>>.

<sup>75</sup> Polanco, Fernando. "5 Line Construction." Message to Amelia Zaino. 10 Feb 2012. E-mail.



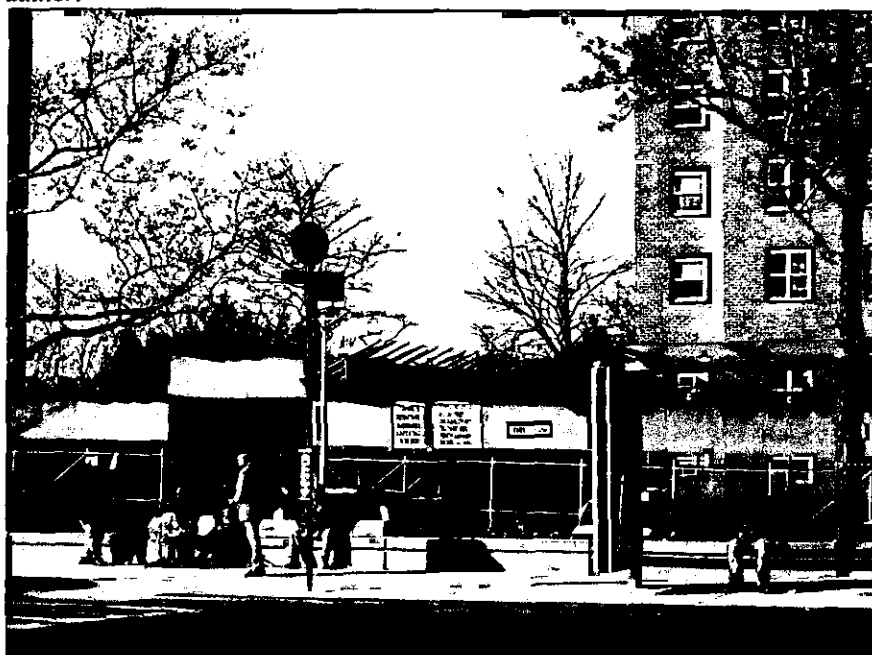
*Figure 4.6*  
A crowded midday Bx7 is not a rare sight in Riverdale. Image courtesy of the author.



*Figure 4.7*  
The #5 train's right-of-way passes over Boston Road, to the northeast of Edenwald. Image courtesy of the author.



*Figure 4.8*  
*The intersection of Schieffelin Avenue and East 229<sup>th</sup> Street, the eastern end of Edenwald. Image courtesy of the author.*



*Figure 4.9*  
*Waiting for the Bx31 on a warm Friday afternoon. Image courtesy of the author.*



*Figure 4.10*

*This steep hill and retaining wall lead to Riverdale Avenue's business strip. Image courtesy of the author.*



*Figure 4.11*

*A rare Bx20 sighting on Henry Hudson Parkway. Image courtesy of the author.*



*Figure 4.12*

*A crowd gathers as a 5 train unexpectedly terminates at East 180<sup>th</sup> Street. Image courtesy Inphinite Nazario.*



## Chapter 5: What Are My Options?

The reality of life in New York City beyond Manhattan is that things are not always working like a well-oiled machine. As discussed in the previous chapter, subways are prone to delays, and buses have yet to run on to-the-minute schedules. What is a resident of Riverdale supposed to do when the Broadway Bridge is up and the #1 line is forced to a stand-still? If the #2 and #5 trains are running erratically, should an Edenwald resident risk missing class or an important job interview? Neighborhoods, especially those whose centers are as far removed from the subway as Riverdale and Edenwald require options for residents to readily access the places that they need to go. Unfortunately, the two communities are not equal in terms of viable and accessible alternatives to basic subway transportation: Riverdale residents, given their overall wealth and higher quality of life, have far more options beyond subway service than do residents of Edenwald and its surrounding community.

Riverdale residents, overall, make incomes that tower over those of Edenwald residents. The average income of Riverdale residents is more than twice that of Edenwald residents, and this number even includes the slightly less affluent community of Kingsbridge.<sup>76</sup> As a result, it is no trouble for a Riverdale professional that works in Manhattan to shell out \$11 per day to ride the express bus. If he wants to avoid traffic, like that of which I encountered even during the midday hours on the BxM2, he has the option of using Metro-North to Grand Central, which will cost him \$15 round trip during rush hours and \$11.50 during the off-peak times. He even has three express buses to choose from, depending on where he works in Manhattan, and the Hudson Line trains leave him conveniently in the middle of Midtown. On the other hand, a resident of

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<sup>76</sup> New York City Department of City Planning

Edenwald living on nearly \$22,000<sup>77</sup> may have a difficult time spending \$11 per day, especially when the BxM10 is quite a walk away from the housing project, which would force him to pay an additional fare to ride the Bx31 to the express bus.

The availability of resources in Riverdale compared to Edenwald shows itself when it comes to the reality of city life. Sometimes, public transportation can be dangerous as tensions are high and there are a lot of people often crowded into a small space. While Edenwald residents reported not being bothered by particular threats on their commutes, except for one resident who complained about a “rapper” in his subway car or the occasional hobo,<sup>78</sup> Riverdale residents will respond quickly to any threats that may arise. One resident I spoke to told me that her son, a student at Fordham Prep, was mugged along with his friend on the local bus. She immediately allotted for him to spend \$20 a day on car service. Unfortunately, the one day he did decide to ride the bus, the young man faced a robbery at gunpoint. In a matter of desperation, his mother decided the best option would be to buy her son a car for his commute.<sup>79</sup>

Residents of Riverdale are also fortunate enough to have an official shuttle service to the Metro-North stations at West 254<sup>th</sup> Street and Spuyten Duyvil. The system, called Hudson RailLink, is a comprehensive shuttle service using what appear to be refurbished school buses to link areas of the community to the railroad stations at the water’s edge. It is a great benefit, helping residents avoid a climb of nearly 200 feet from the Riverdale station to Independence Avenue and a similar hike from the Spuyten Duyvil station to Knolls Crescent and Kappock Street. The buses cost a simple \$2.25, as would a local bus, and provide quick service that can

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<sup>77</sup> New York City Department of City Planning

<sup>78</sup> Zaino, 2012

<sup>79</sup> Personal Communication with Author, Name Withheld

help commuters get to work, home, or places to shop or eat. They are operated by Metro-North, assuring riders of a safe, legitimate trip.<sup>80</sup>

In Edenwald, however, there is no such thing as a Metropolitan Transportation Authority sanctioned shuttle service. The closest things to shuttle services are gypsy cab and dollar van services that perform illegal street hails and provide erratic service that fluctuates in price. One can disembark the 5 train at either Gun Hill Road or Baychester Avenue and be bombarded with cries of "Taxi! Taxi! Cab service!" at nearly any time of day. The fare is also decided by the driver of the service. I asked my partner DeShawn if he ever used any of these services, to which he responded with a resounding "No." I asked why, and he said that the operators will adjust their fares according to business—if business is low, the dollar vans will charge \$2.25 instead of their eponymous price. The dollar van and gypsy cabs are also nowhere near as reliable as the Hudson Rail Link, with its planned route and planned stops. One evening, I was in Edenwald much later than anticipated, and I missed the last Bx30 to return to Co-Op City. Desperate, I actually sought out an impromptu chauffeur and could not find a single one, forcing me to call my mother for a ride home.

Riverdale is also considerably more conducive to vehicular traffic than Edenwald. A simple Google search turned up seven public parking garages in the study area, with many of the residential buildings, such as the newly built Solaria having indoor parking on premises.<sup>81</sup> In fact, driving is so popular in Riverdale that Mr. Scher, the resident I interviewed about public

<sup>80</sup> Metropolitan Transportation Authority. "Hudson Rail Link." *mta.info*. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Apr 2012. <<http://www.mta.info/mnr/html/raillink/raillinkpage.htm>>.

<sup>81</sup> Solaria Riverdale. "Solaria Riverdale-Building." *Solaria Riverdale*. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Apr 2012. <<http://solariariverdale.com/building.html>>.

transportation, complained that some drivers were cutting across exit ramps of the Henry Hudson Parkway, creating their own illegal shortcuts. In fact, residents of Riverdale prefer driving to all other means of getting to work, even with all the available non-subway options at their fingertips.<sup>82</sup> Of course, this is not to say that residents of Edenwald do not drive at all. Many do, in fact the complex has parking lots scattered throughout its north and south halves, and in the adjoining Baychester Houses. However, parking can be tight, with many residents circling around and competing with food deliverymen, gypsy cabs, and other vehicles for space. They also must compete with the 47<sup>th</sup> Precinct, whose massive presence on Laconia Avenue takes up many parking spaces, even converting an abandoned space into a lot specifically for their vehicles.

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<sup>82</sup> United States. Census. 10471, 10463: MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK FOR WORKERS 16 YEARS AND OVER. 2000. Web.

## Chapter 6: The Political Voice

When things go wrong in the public sphere, whether it be at a local, state, or federal level, the course of action is to contact one's elected officials. There is also a great deal of the notion that there is "strength in numbers," meaning if members of a community band together for a cause, they can create change. These are the basic principles taught to many people at a young age, a basic lesson in civic participation that hopes to encourage a generation of leaders. But it seems that through my analysis of transportation in Riverdale and Edenwald, I have come to find that not everyone has the same level of political capital in order to affect change.

The strength of Riverdale's political capital goes back to 2005, the year in which the Metropolitan Transportation Authority was given the right to take over private bus companies in New York City, including New York Bus Service, Queens Surface, and Liberty Lines, all three of which had routes in the Bronx. The Liberty Lines company operated the BxM1, BxM2, BxM3, BxM4A, B, C, BxM11, and BxM18 routes. MTA Bus, the new division of the Transportation Authority charged with managing the newly acquired routes, depots, and buses, argued that they were saving the city money in oversight of the former private companies. They also enforced that they were improving an aging bus fleet, dangerous fueling equipment, and the wasted labor of bus drivers on extended breaks.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Silverman, Norman. "The Merger of Seven Private Companies into One MTA Company." *APTA.org*. American Public Transportation Association, 26 Jul 2010. Web. 22 Apr 2012.  
<<http://www.apta.com/mc/multimodal/previous/2010/Presentations/The-Merger-of-Seven-Private-Companies-into-One-MTA-Company.pdf>>.

Riverdale residents were not pleased with the takeover. A Daily News article published in April of 2005, not long after the January takeover of Liberty Lines, provided a laundry list of complaints that residents had with the new MTA Bus operations. On the most basic level, residents complained of delays and poor service and the increased fare from \$4 to \$5. Other complaints were by senior citizens, upset that they had to wait until 10 A.M. to ride half-fare, and students, who with the new fareboxes, had to pay \$2.50 in quarters. Five politicians were mentioned in the article as the voices for these frustrated riders, including Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, Councilman Oliver Koppell, Councilman John Liu (head of the City Council's transportation committee), Representative Eliot Engel, and Borough President Adolfo Carrión. While this league of politicians was not effective in restoring the level of service provided by Liberty Lines, their presence is a great example of how Riverdale residents have a team of powerful representatives voicing their concerns.<sup>84</sup>

Compare this to the voice of Edenwald residents around the same time. Finding any evidence of a political fight in Edenwald for transportation was a challenge. The only evidence I could find was a cryptic message from State Senator Jeffrey Klein's web page:

"Katonah Avenue , the main avenue in Woodlawn. Our Lady of Mercy is a 429-bed teaching hospital and in 2005 treated 50,000 patients in its emergency room, along with 17,000 patients on an inpatient basis, with a daily average of 258 patients.

The MTA's study is due to be completed by Fall 2006."<sup>85</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Lombardi, Frank. "Pols: Express Buses Go South Under MTA." *Daily News* [New York] 08 Apr 2005, n. pag. Web. 9 May. 2012. <[http://articles.nydailynews.com/2005-04-08/local/18304100\\_1\\_new-buses-takeover-plan-express-bus](http://articles.nydailynews.com/2005-04-08/local/18304100_1_new-buses-takeover-plan-express-bus)>.

<sup>85</sup> Klein, Jeffrey. "Klein: Bx31 Bus Should Serve Woodlawn, Our Lady of Mercy Medical Center." *New York State Senate*. N.p., 17 Jul 2006. Web. 22 Apr 2012. <<http://www.nysenate.gov/news/klein-bx31-bus-should-serve-woodlawn-our-lady-mercy-medical-center>>.

Upon careful reading of this text, I realized that these efforts to extend the Bx31 were more for the benefit of Woodlawn residents as opposed to those in Edenwald. The study was completed, and today's Bx31 continues up Katonah Avenue to the Yonkers city line in Woodlawn. While this does provide Edenwald residents with improved access to Van Cortlandt Park, the buses are typically empty past the #2 train station on White Plains Road. The lack of evidence as to any political support for transportation in Edenwald is proven further by the results I gathered from residents themselves. None of the residents I spoke to, or surveys I collected believed their local politicians accurately represented their needs in terms of transportation accessibility. The most positive response was from Fatima, the home-care nurse I spoke to one warm Friday afternoon, who believed her representatives did a "so-so" job at representing her needs.

I figured I could get a better response if I visited a meeting of Community Board 12, the board representing Baychester, Eastchester, Wakefield, Woodlawn, Williamsbridge, and Edenwald. The meeting took place on March 22 in a large community room on White Plains Road and East 229<sup>th</sup> Street. The room was not too packed, not nearly as it was when I visited the Community Board 8 meeting in Riverdale. The meeting had a somber tone, and began with prayer led by the chairman Reverend Richard Gorman. I soon learned that residents of this community board, including Edenwald, had far heavier problems on the table than transportation access. There was grave concern amongst the Board and the audience in regards to the role of police in the community, specifically with the recent murder of *Ramarley Graham* not too far away. Residents were primarily concerned with safety, asking youths to let go of the "dancehall mentality" and realize that life is not always a party.

Issues with safety and law presided in the Community Board 12 meeting, even on the subject of transportation. The head of the Transportation Committee, John Isaac, encouraged

residents to stop the patronization of illegal cabs in the neighborhood. He urged that the MTA would pursue further service cuts if the use of these illegal vehicles reduced the ridership numbers of buses in the area. He emphasized that riding in an illegal cab was also a dangerous situation, both financially and physically: not only could the fare be changed at the drop of a hat, drivers of these vehicles were often uninsured and not the most careful of motorists. With residents of Edenwald and its surrounding communities focused on safety and crime, it became evident that transportation was not a priority, certainly not as much as simply getting from point A to point B safely.

A few weeks earlier on March 13, I had attended a meeting of Community Board 8 in a synagogue on the Henry Hudson Parkway in Riverdale. When I told the woman at the door that I was there for transportation, she told me it would be best for me to leave, as transportation would not be discussed until very late in the evening. I appreciated her honesty and decided to attend the meeting of the Transportation Committee a week later on March 20. This meeting was focused on parking, and very little was mentioned in regards to public transportation except the construction of additional curb space for the bus stop at Broadway and West 242<sup>nd</sup> Street. Again, residents at the meeting were chiefly concerned with the availability of parking spots. Mr. Steven Scher, who I spoke to about bus transportation, attended the meeting to alert the Community Board of a problem with Riverdale drivers making illegal turns off of the Henry Hudson Parkway into the garage of an apartment complex. I found it fascinating that he felt so comfortable bringing up this issue of concern, by himself, to the Transportation Committee.

My experiences at both the Edenwald and Riverdale Community Board meetings allowed me to realize that the neighborhoods have strikingly different priorities. There is also a great deal of inequality in terms of the issues that residents bring to the attention of local officials. It seems



in Riverdale, community members will quickly bring transportation problems to the attention of those who represent them, like Mr. Scher, or one of the many residents that packed the synagogue hall. In Edenwald, residents are too distraught over the unnecessary violence, and are far too frustrated with the police precinct that they feel is not protecting them to bring up other issues, such as the inadequate #5 train service to the attention of their leaders. One resident I spoke to said she was not even sure of the politicians that represent her and her family.<sup>86</sup> I find this alarming and a great hindrance to the development and growth of Edenwald.

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<sup>86</sup> Personal Communication with Author, Name Withheld

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

After studying Riverdale and Edenwald for the past four months, I have fallen in love with each community. Riverdale has a suburban charm with all the modern conveniences of Manhattan, just without the Manhattan price: even frozen yogurt is cheaper. Edenwald is an urban capital with a surprising level of culture: I met two rappers in my studies. Hector and "Speedy" both have promising rap careers, even though it seems that they are a little shy when it comes to public performance. My main concern, however, is with how these people I have come to know can get to where they need to go, and how it affects them.

Overall, Riverdale residents seem complacent with their lack of subway access. Some even credit the neighborhood's charm to the fact that the subway is not at a central point geographically. One survey respondent credits the neighborhood's safety to the #1 line's distance. "A subway tends to bring more crime," they said, "and since Riverdale is affluent and excluded from the rest of the Bronx by hills geographically and it is affluent, that makes the area far safer than any other neighborhood in the Bronx."<sup>87</sup> Many also replied when I asked him how they felt about their lack of subway access responded that they were not even sure if there was a lack of access. "We already have a subway and Metro-North," many argued, and feared that a subway would bring, as it has historically, increased crowds and density. A small minority believed improved subway access would benefit the neighborhood.<sup>88</sup>

Residents of Edenwald are also unsure of the benefits a subway extension would bring. Rev. Dr. Alvarez mentioned that he believed improved access to Manhattan would allow for gentrification in the neighborhood, and force many of the residents elsewhere. Another resident

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<sup>87</sup> Zaino, 2012

<sup>88</sup> Zaino, 2012

believed the construction of a new line or extension would “cause an inconvenience” to residents, similar to that seen on the Upper East Side with Second Avenue Subway construction. Even the Edenwald resident who travels to Camden was leery of the noise an expansion would bring.<sup>89</sup> Another resident held on to the belief that a subway extension would not help the public housing community, as it has far worse problems with gangs and drugs than it does transportation. Finally, my Edenwald ambassador DeShawn maintained that “we need our current lifelines to be fixed rather than a subway extension. An extension isn’t going to fix the current issues; in fact, this may worsen the current problems with the #5 train.”

By taking into consideration the feedback of residents, and my personal observations, I have developed a few solutions that will help alleviate the transportation problems in Riverdale and Edenwald.

#### 1. Reconsidering The Low-Floor Bus Problem

While riding both the Bx7 and Bx31, I noticed both routes had problems with the placement of crowds on the bus. People would gather in the front of the buses, not willing to climb the two steps required to get to the back level over the vehicle’s rear tires. The Bx7 out of Kingsbridge Depot typically runs a fleet of low-floor Orion VII Next Generation hybrid buses. While the buses boast cleaner emissions and a quieter ride, the model has a low-floor set up, requiring passengers to arrange themselves among two separate levels. The Bx31, using a mix of the older model Orion VII CNGs and the newer New Flyer C40LF CNG models, boasts an environmentally-friendly fleet but not one conducive to passenger flow.

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<sup>89</sup> Zaino, 2012

As a result, at some stops, riders must wait for an extended period of time for passengers to enter and depart buses, often with the drivers screaming into the intercom for passengers to stand in the rear.

Because the MTA is undergoing a capital improvement project through the year 2014, it is imperative that the Authority take these issues into consideration. The new Select Bus Service system encourages quicker boarding, but the local buses are suffering with clumsy passenger flow. Research should be dedicated to discovering a hybrid-electric low-floor bus without a considerable difference between levels of seating. For example, the DesignLine EcoSaver IV bus the MTA tested in 2009 uses a ramp to ferry passengers from the lower level to the upper level of the bus.<sup>90</sup> While the buses were deemed inadequate for city service, there should be manufacturers producing similar buses.

## 2. Acknowledgment of the Role of "Feeder" Routes

The MTA has realized that bus ridership is decreasing. This is partly due to poor service, and conditions such as the bunching frequently seen on the Bx31. In fact, the Bx31's ridership decreased from 2010 to 2011 by 8.3 percent. As a bus driver from West Farms Depot stated, runs were cut from the route, causing riders to find alternate means of transportation to the subway and other destinations. However, ridership on feeder routes such as the Bx7 and Bx10 has increased. It is very likely that if runs on the Bx31 had been preserved, its ridership would have remained steady or have improved.

While some believe that the MTA is under the impression that improved subway ridership means that the buses can take a back seat, this is not the case in reality.

<sup>90</sup> Chan, Sewell. "MTA Tests Sleeker Bus With Turbine Engine." *New York Times* 27 Aug 2009, n. pag. Web. 9 May. 2012. <<http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/08/27/mta-tests-sleeker-bus-with-turbine-engine/>>.

Neighborhoods like Riverdale and Edenwald depend on buses to get to the subway. As a result, the MTA should pay special attention to the roles that the Bx7, Bx10, and Bx31 play. For example, neither the #1 train timetable nor the #2 train timetables have their important bus transfer points on the schedules:

### Weekday Service

#### ① Southbound

From Van Cortlandt Park-242 St, Bronx, to South Ferry, Manhattan

Van Cortlandt Park-242 St	228 St	158 St	137 St	103 St	85 St	68 St	Times Sq	Chambers St	South Ferry
242 St	St	St	City College	St	St	Lincoln Ct	42 St	St	Ferry
12:06	12:09	12:21	12:26	12:32	12:39	12:50	12:55	1:01	
12:27	12:28	12:40	12:45	12:51	12:57	13:08	13:13	1:19	
12:47	12:48	1:00	1:05	1:11	1:17	1:28	1:33	1:39	
1:07	1:08	1:20	1:25	1:31	1:37	1:48	1:53	1:59	
1:27	1:28	1:40	1:45	1:51	1:57	2:08	2:13	2:19	
1:47	1:48	2:00	2:05	2:11	2:17	2:28	2:33	2:39	
2:07	2:08	2:20	2:25	2:31	2:37	2:48	2:53	2:59	
2:27	2:28	2:40	2:45	2:51	2:57	3:08	3:13	3:19	
2:47	2:48	3:00	3:05	3:11	3:17	3:28	3:33	3:39	
3:07	3:08	3:20	3:25	3:31	3:37	3:48	3:53	3:59	
3:27	3:28	3:40	3:45	3:51	3:57	4:08	4:13	4:19	
3:47	3:48	4:00	4:05	4:11	4:17	4:28	4:33	4:39	
4:07	4:08	4:20	4:25	4:31	4:37	4:48	4:53	4:59	
4:27	4:28	4:40	4:45	4:51	4:57	5:08	5:13	5:19	
4:44	4:45	4:57	5:02	5:08	5:15	5:26	5:31	5:36	
4:54	5:00	5:12	5:17	5:23	5:30	5:41	5:46	5:51	
5:11	5:12	5:24	5:29	5:34	5:41	5:52	5:57	6:02	
5:19	5:20	5:32	5:36	5:42	5:49	5:54	6:05	6:10	
5:27	5:28	5:40	5:44	5:50	5:57	6:08	6:14	6:19	
5:35	5:36	5:48	5:52	5:58	6:05	6:16	6:22	6:27	
5:43	5:44	5:56	6:00	6:06	6:13	6:24	6:30	6:35	
5:51	5:52	6:04	6:08	6:14	6:21	6:32	6:38	6:43	
5:59	6:00	6:12	6:16	6:22	6:29	6:34	6:45	6:51	
6:07	6:08	6:20	6:24	6:30	6:37	6:42	6:54	6:59	
6:15	6:16	6:28	6:32	6:38	6:45	6:50	7:02	7:07	
6:23	6:24	6:36	6:40	6:46	6:53	6:58	7:11	7:16	
6:31	6:32	6:44	6:48	6:54	7:01	7:07	7:19	7:24	

### Weekday Service

#### ② Southbound

From Wakefield-241 St, Bronx, to Flatbush Av, Brooklyn

Wakefield-241 St	E 180 St	148 St	135 St	96 St	Times Sq	14 Chambers	14 Chambers	14 Chambers	Flatbush Av	Flatbush Av
241 St	St	St	St	St	42 St	St	St	St	St	St
12:03	12:10	12:22	12:35	12:43	12:53	12:59	1:05	1:10	1:25	1:38
12:23	12:30	12:42	12:55	1:03	1:13	1:19	1:25	1:30	1:45	1:58
12:43	12:50	1:12	1:15	1:23	1:33	1:39	1:45	1:50	2:05	2:18
1:03	1:10	1:32	1:35	1:43	1:53	1:59	2:05	2:10	2:25	2:38
1:23	1:30	1:52	1:55	2:03	2:13	2:19	2:25	2:30	2:45	2:58
1:43	1:50	2:12	2:15	2:23	2:33	2:39	2:45	2:50	3:05	3:18
2:03	2:10	2:32	2:35	2:43	2:53	2:59	3:05	3:10	3:25	3:38
2:23	2:30	2:52	2:55	3:03	3:13	3:19	3:25	3:30	3:45	3:58
2:43	2:50	3:12	3:15	3:23	3:33	3:39	3:45	3:50	4:05	4:18
3:03	3:10	3:32	3:35	3:43	3:53	3:59	4:05	4:10	4:25	4:38
3:23	3:30	3:52	3:55	4:03	4:13	4:19	4:25	4:30	4:45	4:58
3:43	3:50	4:12	4:15	4:23	4:33	4:39	4:45	4:50	5:05	5:18
4:03	4:10	4:32	4:35	4:43	4:53	4:59	5:05	5:10	5:25	5:38
4:23	4:30	4:52	4:55	5:03	5:13	5:19	5:25	5:30	5:45	5:58
4:43	4:50	5:12	5:15	5:23	5:33	5:39	5:45	5:50	6:05	6:18
5:03	5:10	5:32	5:35	5:43	5:53	5:59	6:05	6:10	6:25	6:38
5:13	5:20	5:42	5:45	5:53	6:03	6:09	6:15	6:20	6:35	6:48
5:23	5:30	5:52	5:55	6:03	6:13	6:19	6:25	6:30	6:45	6:58
5:33	5:40	6:02	6:05	6:13	6:23	6:29	6:35	6:40	6:55	7:08
5:43	5:50	6:12	6:15	6:23	6:33	6:39	6:45	6:50	7:05	7:18
5:53	6:00	6:22	6:25	6:33	6:43	6:49	6:55	7:00	7:15	7:28
6:03	6:10	6:32	6:35	6:43	6:53	6:59	7:05	7:10	7:25	7:38
6:13	6:20	6:42	6:45	6:53	7:03	7:09	7:15	7:20	7:35	7:48
6:23	6:30	6:52	6:55	7:03	7:13	7:19	7:25	7:30	7:45	7:58
6:33	6:40	7:02	7:05	7:13	7:23	7:29	7:35	7:40	7:55	8:08

Figure 7.1

The above timetables show the #1 train and #2 train arrival times at major stations. Notice the absence of 231<sup>st</sup> Street on the #1 and 233<sup>rd</sup> Street on the #2.

Without a clear indicator of the train's arrival time, a resident of either neighborhood has to guess what time they should leave their homes to catch the correct bus that hopefully synchronizes with the arrival of the train, providing them with enough time to climb the stairs and pay the fare. The MTA needs to pay more attention to these bus-to-subway transfers and make them a priority, especially in the outer boroughs.

## **Methods to Improve Subway Access and Overall Transportation in Edenwald**

### **1. New Bx25 Route**

A growing neighborhood needs better access to subway transportation. Therefore, I propose the development of a new bus route past Edenwald that will provide residents with access to both the #2 and #5 trains, as well as transfers to other routes in the Bronx. The new Bx25 route (using a designation that formerly ran on Allerton Avenue) will connect the major nodes of the Northeast Bronx via Baychester Avenue. The route will begin at Nereid Avenue and White Plains Road, proceed northeast to Baychester Avenue, then follow the avenue southward through I-95, and terminating at the Pelham Bay Park station on the #6 line. A connection to the #5 line will be available near the intersection of Baychester Avenue and Boston Post Road. Most Edenwald residents will be able to walk to the Bx25, particularly those that are not as close to the Bx31. Edenwald residents will be able to access the #2 subway and Westchester bus routes at the Bx25's Wakefield terminal, and at its southern terminal, the Bx12 Select Bus Service to the major shopping district of Bay Plaza. In the event of #2 or #5 train malfunctions, Edenwald

residents will now be able to ride the #6 train using only one transfer.

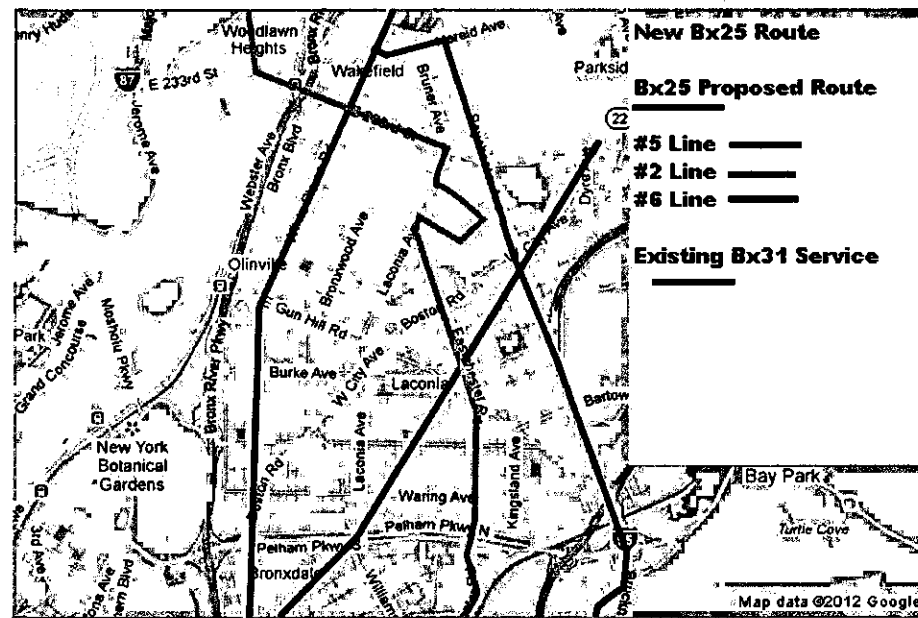


Figure 7.2

*The above map illustrates the proposed Bx25 route in relation to the other transportation options surrounding Edenwald. The route successfully unifies the Northeast Bronx while also providing its residents with different options of getting to Manhattan.*

## 2. Extension of BxM10 Bus Route

While residents of Edenwald do not have a lot of money to spend on transportation, it is also important to consider the cost of lost time, accounting for subway delays and difficulty getting to the subway routes. With this being considered, I propose an extension of the BxM10 express bus into the Edenwald area. The route should continue past the intersection of Boston Road and Eastchester Road, head north on Laconia Avenue, then right on East 233<sup>rd</sup> Street, terminating at Dyre Avenue. With few passengers staying on the BxM10 to its current terminal, which is not located in a particularly residential area (its terminal is between a Burger King and wedding reception hall), this change will increase ridership by bringing it to an area of private homes

while also offering access to Edenwald residents who can afford the extra fare. An extension to the northernmost terminal of the #5 line is the most logical because the BxM10 route already mirrors the subway, meeting it at its East 180<sup>th</sup> Street and Gun Hill Road stations.

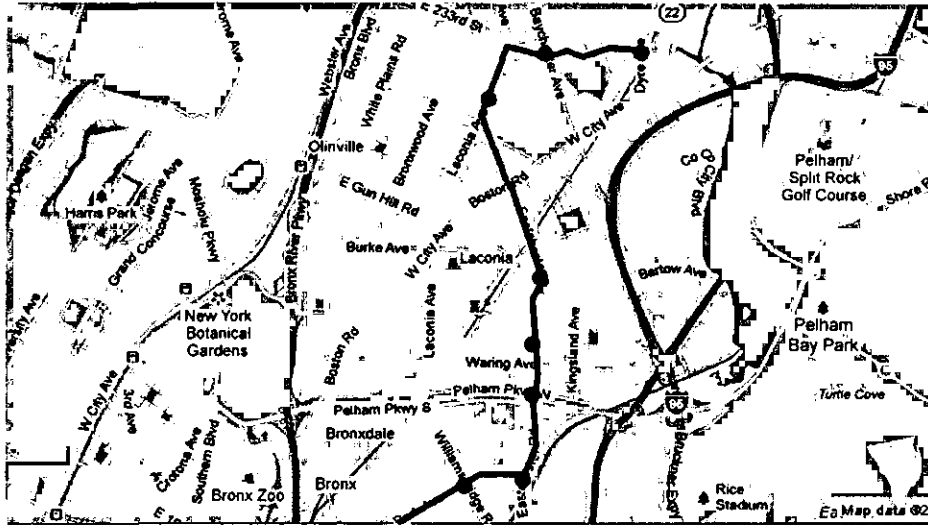


Figure 7.3

*In royal blue is the existing BxM10 route and its stops in the Northeast Bronx, while in sky blue is the proposed extension making stops at East 225<sup>th</sup> Street and Laconia Avenue, Baychester Avenue and East 233<sup>rd</sup> Street, and finally at the Dyre Avenue station for the #5 train.*

### 3. Dedicated #5 Train Service Information

Edenwald residents deserve equal treatment that #7 train riders in Queens receive in regards to being informed of construction projects on their line. Posters should be displayed well in advance, with a clear notice of what is going on, without irrelevant information about what is going on with other lines. As a dedicated capital project, there should be dedicated information. In terms of electronic notifications, I propose an improved webpage on the MTA's website for each individual subway line. This webpage will offer construction details, notification of sudden delays, and general information regarding the line including a detailed timetable. While it may incur additional costs for the MTA, they will not have to spend money on additional programs



such as the Weekender, a pesky weekend annoyance that provides only temporary information about the subways.

### **Methods to Improve Subway Access and Overall Transportation in Riverdale**

#### **1. Bx7 Limited Stop Service**

The Bx7 appears to be a victim of crowding, bunching, and delays. While it is a very popular route for Riverdale residents, it is in dire need of scheduling adjustments. As a result, I propose the creation of a Bx7 Limited Stop Service that will provide faster service to Riverdale from Manhattan, and enabling residents to transfer to both the #1 and A trains. The Bx10 will be able to pick up local traffic along the northern section of Riverdale Avenue and the Henry Hudson Parkway, while a Bx20 with increased headways will pick up local traffic in Manhattan. This will prevent Bx10s and Bx7s from arriving together on their shared route and allow for more space between buses, giving Riverdale residents more options. Also, the Bx7 could be extended to 145<sup>th</sup> Street and St. Nicholas Avenue in Manhattan, giving Riverdale residents more subway routes to choose from as a transfer. The Bx7 would continue to make the same stops in its southern Riverdale Avenue portion, however.

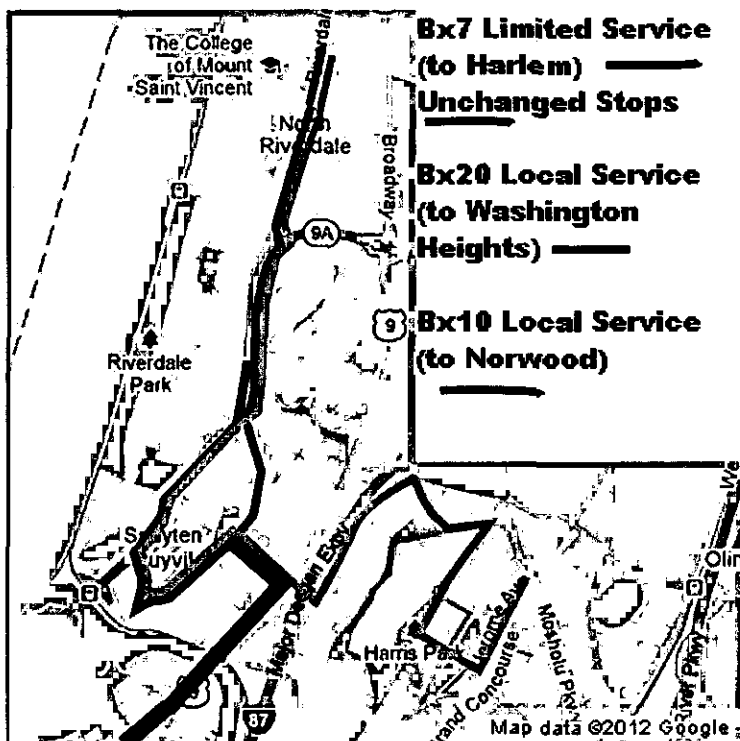


Figure 7.4

The above map shows the new Bx7 Limited and the routes that will pick up its former local traffic. Map courtesy Google.

Overall, it seems that Riverdale does not need many improvements in regards to subway access. Residents are content with the way things are, and necessary improvements had been taken care of through a mix of community activism and political pressure in the twentieth century, such as the creation of the Hudson Rail Link. Only a few more changes are necessary, which the neighborhood should be able to quickly address given its strong vocalization of local issues. Edenwald, on the other hand, is in dire need of voices to speak up for its transportation. The lack of care given to transportation in Edenwald reflects the residents' inability to fight other problems. Improved access would likely increase activity in commercial corridors such as Laconia Avenue and Baychester Avenue. With a strong economic background, the community should be able to stand on its feet and fight persistent crime and police injustices.