



GSOC-UAW LOCAL 2110

MAKING A BETTER NYU SINCE 1998

The Union for Graduate Employees at New York University

As New York City workers, union members, and commuters, we are deeply dismayed by the Transport Workers Union Local 100's support of the [decision to flood our public transportation system with even more police](#). The MTA's claim that fare-beating is to blame for both the city and state's gross negligence and underfunding of public infrastructure is clearly false. Its proposed solution--heavy policing worthy of the legacy of anti-black cop hero William Bratton--is an attack on workers, the poor, communities of color, migrants, and queer people. We oppose this plan. GSOC calls for an end to broken windows policing, jail construction, and incarceration in our city and everywhere, and we urge New Yorkers to demand free public transportation. We also share MTA workers' sense of urgency for a safe workplace free from the assaults that have become more frequent recently. But more police harassing and arresting riders is not the solution.

We have watched in frustration as the Mayor's office and the MTA brass, led by new Transit Authority President Andy Byford, have tried to shift the blame for the city's deteriorating "public" transportation away from privatization, underfunding, and systemic neglect toward the supposedly villainous "fare-beaters"--poor New Yorkers who hop turnstiles because they cannot afford the increasing fare. From our own stations across New York City, we see salaried uniformed cops guarding the turnstiles every day against the threat of a poor person skipping a \$2.75 fare. More police on our subways and buses is not a solution to the MTA's budget problems, nor is it designed to be. More police is a solution to the same thing it always has been: the white supremacist fear of and need to attack poor, black, brown and queer people. In the current moment, it is used specifically to clear the way for real estate developers by making white transplants feel "safe" in black and brown neighborhoods. Instead of more cops, more fines, and more jails, New York City needs a free, operational, and reliable public transportation system, built and maintained by well-paid organized labor.

The financial absurdity of using police, courts, and even jails to "save money" for the MTA aside, we have a right to transportation across our city. Most of the time we get on the subway, we're going to work anyway (we all know how hard New Yorkers strive to avoid the train on our precious days off). Even if a worker gets paid \$15/hr when they arrive, at \$3 each way that's over 20 minutes worked just to cover the cost of showing up--and that's before taxes. The existence of the fare in the first place is a tax on workers that saves the bosses money on their supply of labor. Moreover, the simple cost of stationing police officers full time at these turnstiles could be going to desperately needed repairs. Rather than trying to pass a policing project off as a public transportation solution, we can defund the NYPD and fund the MTA. Why spend money on harassing and oppressing people when you could be building infrastructure that New Yorkers can be proud of, unless improving service was never the intended goal in the first place?

With this plan, Byford and Cuomo have thrown in with Mayor and presidential “hopeful” Bill de Blasio’s Bratton-style law-and-order politics. This time around, we are getting the liberal version, with the rhetoric of progress and modernization replacing the more openly racist vitriol of Giuliani and friends. We are told that there is no public money for MTA repairs months after Cuomo and de Blasio begged Amazon to accept billions in tax forgiveness. Hundreds of thousands of NYCHA residents are made to live in squalor while de Blasio aggressively works to [privatize public housing](#). At the same time, de Blasio promises \$11 BILLION to build four new jails, with no real plan to close Rikers Island. The City and the State collaborate to give us gentrification and privatization disguised as affordable housing, increased police violence in the name of workers’ safety, and four new jails they say will decarcerate NYC.

Meanwhile the NYPD continues to murder, maim, and rape our community members with impunity, while all we get are more cops on our blocks and more empty gestures toward “re-training.” Beneath the cheap liberal talking points pedaled by our Democratic Party Mayor, Governor, and City Council, a city-wide expansion of the carceral apparatus is underway. Andy Byford is just another mercenary passing through for a paycheck. But for those of us who live here, and who will try to stay here, the consequences of the current push for more cops and more jails will be felt for a century. Fare-beating arrests disproportionately punish the poor, of course, but also people on parole and probation, as well as migrants and the undocumented. More cops on the buses and subways will absolutely mean more deportations.

We call on workers, unionists, and all who fight for a more just and safer New York to abandon the catastrophically failed strategy of throwing police and incarceration at social problems. In the case of the decision to flood our trains and buses with cops to hunt down our neighbors who couldn’t afford a \$3 fare, saying no is not enough. We must demand, as workers, a transportation system that serves *us*, and not only our bosses. This means publicly supported, free-to-access, reliable, and well-maintained *public* transportation. To do this, we’ll need to grow the workforce that the Transport Union Local 100 represents--adding jobs, benefits, and increasing pay. Let’s pay the maintenance workers and stephangers, not the NYPD. Mental health professionals and NYCHA workers, not the DOC.

We are also taking this moment to make a more general call: for fewer, not more, police, an end to broken windows, “neighborhood” and patrol policing altogether, a permanent moratorium on jail construction, and the immediate closure of Rikers Island. Sending cops into our neighborhoods to “look for trouble” has produced nothing but more violence, [and it almost never results in that television-fantasy of stopping a crime in progress](#). More cops means more arrests. More arrests means more people in jail, prison, and [ICE detention centers](#). When our neighbors are without shelter, [the patrols lock them up](#). When kids can’t afford a subway fare, they give them an unpayable ticket. When our trans and gender non-conforming friends, family, and comrades [simply walk down the street](#), the patrols arrest them for solicitation. And when workers go out on a picket-line, the police are the ones thirstily waiting for the order to break them up, pen them in, or make arrests.

None of this is new. Police forces were started in the US for three reasons: [to capture and return black people who had escaped slavery](#), [to displace and murder indigenous peoples](#), and to [break strikes](#). Since their inception, prisons and police forces have been expanded, extended and empowered by reforms made in the name of “progress.” And yet they have never wavered in their primary commitment to repression, abuse, and violence. No amount of PR funding, “implicit bias training,” and athletic leagues can erase these histories, nor can it obscure their resonance in the present. The interests of workers, and anyone fighting for liberation from oppression, exploitation, and state-sanctioned violence, are diametrically opposed to the interests of the police that protect the very order that produces these injustices. This is equally true for both private and so-called “public” police.

We make the following three demands:

1. **No more cops on the MTA. No more cops anywhere.** Get the NYPD away from our trains and buses, out of our schools, and off our blocks. They don’t make us any safer—they constantly inflict harm upon us and our communities. And by continuing to share information with ICE, they are as much a part of the deportation machine as the concentration camps. To learn more about alternatives to policing, we encourage everyone to use the resources gathered by Mariame Kaba at [Transform Harm](#).
2. **Transportation is a right. Abolish fares.** It’s time the bosses who benefit the most from public transportation start paying for it. We need to stop giving them free shipping on labor. No-fare, unlimited transportation for all New Yorkers Now. GSOC strongly supports actions and campaigns like [#SwipeltForward](#), and encourages all of our members and fellow New Yorkers to swipe others in, every chance they get.
3. **No New Jails, Close Rikers Now.** The decision to add more police anywhere in New York is a signal that we are moving toward more, not less, reliance on punishment and incarceration. The addition of more police to the buses and trains, perhaps the most dense gathering places of the city’s poor and working people, assures us that the plan is to continue to punish poverty. We follow our comrades at [GWC in their support of the No New Jails NYC campaign](#), and the growing national No New Jails movement. We echo their demand to Close Rikers Island and every single jail on that horrific trash-heap, without building a single new cage. If they build it, they will fill it. And we know who they will fill it with. New York needs real decarceration. Workers need real decarceration. Our students need real decarceration. [Sign their petition here.](#)