

The Day the Mets Became a Contender
Shoot-out at the 79th Street Boat Basin

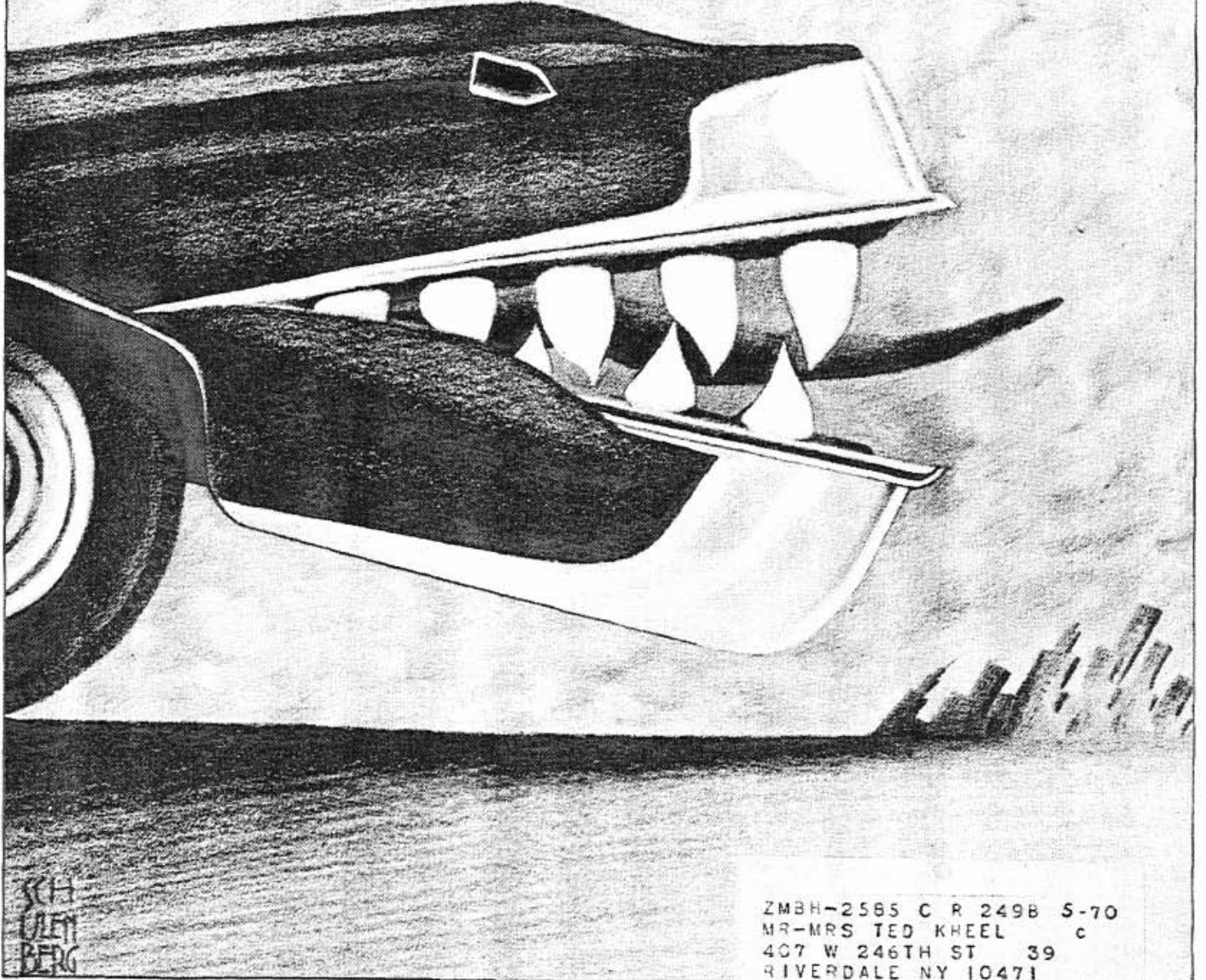
40 CENTS

SEPTEMBER 22, 1969

NEW YORK

How To Stop Cars From Devouring the City

By Theodore Kheel



ZMBH-2585 C R 249B S-70
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Page 26

How to Stop Cars From Crushing the City

By Theodore W. Kheel

A labor mediator who has been close to many of New York's transportation crises, Mr. Kheel argues that the present 20-cent fare must be preserved in order to prevent the increase of car use in the city that a raise would surely bring about. More cars, of course, would then result in greater traffic and pollution problems. Good, cheap, public transportation, he says, is a civil right in city and suburb alike.



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The Numbers Writer

By Robert Deane Pharr

A day in the life of Freddy, who writes numbers in Harlem. Illegal though it be, the numbers game is a way of life in the ghetto areas, spreading short-lived and occasional money into the players' lives. For Freddy, it spreads quite a lot of money.



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How 123rd Street Took the Torch

By R. O. Blechman

An urban fable in which the Statue of Liberty is seized and occupied and its island is fortified. How will the mayor respond? How indeed?



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Tuesday, July 8:

The Day the Mets Became a Contender

By Paul D. Zimmerman and Dick Schaap

When it comes to futuristic fantasies, look no further than this year's Mets and their performance as a National League power. The day they beat the first-place Cubs with a stunning ninth-inning rally was the day when the fantasy first seemed real.



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THE LIVELY ARTS

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After Many a Turkey Dies the Summer

By Judith Crist

Cinematically, as well as meteorologically, it's been a pretty soggy summer all round.



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Bring Back Busby

By Alan Rich

Few movie directors solved better than Berkeley the problem of putting music into images.



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Advice to the Hatelorn

By John Simon

Thoughts about standards of criticism, including the possibility of "objectivity," occasioned by some recent correspondence.

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"So What?" Indeed!

By John Gruen

What's a nice museum like the Guggenheim doing with Roy Lichtenstein in this day and age?

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By Nicholas Pileggi

A little-known gang war between Cubans and Puerto Ricans is causing considerable bloodshed in town.

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By Gael Greene

Conspicuous consumption can be fun when the chef is on the beam.

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Volunteer jobs can lead to satisfactions other than financial.

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World's Most Challenging Crossword

From *The Sunday Times of London*

Cover: the automobile vs. the city, by Bob Schulenberg.

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Between the Lines

"It is possible to save the 20-cent fare in New York City," says mediator Theodore W. Kheel, who wrote "How to Stop Cars From Crushing the City" on page 26, "but there are a lot of roadblocks to overcome, so to speak. The importance of trying to manage the



Kheel: Roadblocks to overcome

total transit system is so great that every possibility should be considered. I think tolls should be doubled on the bridges and tunnels which would alleviate traffic congestion, but as for banning private vehicles altogether, I would say only as a last resort.

"To solve the matter-of-fact, routine problems, of course, you don't have to use advanced technology. You can institute things like the exact-fare system—which will prevent robberies and speed up transportation. There are so many things that can be done; it's merely a matter of common sense. Decisions have to be made in the interest of the greatest number."

Kheel lives in the Bronx and uses "a combination of mass transportation and private transportation" to get to and from his Manhattan office. He has mediated "just about every transit dispute since 1946," New York's newspaper disputes, and everybody's railroad, trucking, shipping and airlines problems, but isn't involved in any major negotiations at the moment. And what about another transit strike? No comment, says Kheel.

When Robert Deane Pharr, author of "The Numbers Writer," was a student at Fisk University in Nashville, he was "a guy who drank a lot, and drank with guys who were in the numbers racket." And he was living off-campus with a family headed by "the controller" (the numbers boss in town). His vicari-

ous involvement ("I was never in it—never made or lost a penny") led him to write a novel on the subject. *The Book of Numbers* was published this past April.

Pharr was born in Richmond and raised in New Haven. He attended four Southern colleges and graduated from Virginia Union University.

"My studio has a fantastic view—nice and seedy, a crazy mixture of all sorts of unlikely things—and it's being ruined," laments cartoonist R. O. Blechman. "Buildings are going down all around me. It just kills me. I know I'm going to get a high-riser just five feet away with millions of people staring in at me.

"Meanwhile, there are all those people who are being evicted. And there's the Statue of Liberty—that great big empty building. I love the irony. Why shouldn't homeless people just go in and use it? The idea for this cartoon-fantasy about the occupation of the Statue has been germinating in my mind for about a year now."

Blechman, who took to the drawing board when he was political cartoonist for the Oberlin College newspaper, is responsible for the artwork in the prize-winning man vs. stomach Alka-Seltzer TV commercials. He teaches a course in comic art with Chas. B. Slackman



Blechman, as seen by Slackman

(one of our frequent illustrators) at the School of Visual Arts, and has three books to his credit; his new film *The Emperor's New Armor* is about to make its debut in the New York Film Festival at Lincoln Center. He says that he's a nut about New York and, like most nuts, has never visited the Statue of Liberty.

How to Stop Cars From



SCHULENBERG

Crushing the City

“More people are being induced to drive their own cars and the traffic congestion gets worse. Unless we halt this trend away from mass transportation, New York City cannot survive.”

On a television program recently, I was asked: “What is so sacrosanct about the 20-cent fare? With the consumer price index rising at the record rate of one-half of one per cent a month, why single out bus and subway fares for special protection?” My questioner might also have added that the publicly owned bus and subway lines are losing millions of dollars annually and will undoubtedly be losing even more after the year-end negotiations with the Transport Workers Union wind up. Besides, the law requires the Transit Authority to charge a fare high enough to cover operating costs. This principle—the self-sustaining fare—was written into law in 1954 when Governor Thomas Dewey got the state legislature to create the Transit Authority to take over the city-owned bus and subway lines.

It all sounded plausible in those days, when “subsidy” was still a dirty word and “authority” meant “efficiency.” An independent agency, not beholden to vote-hungry politicians, would run the buses and subways with the same cold precision with which Austin Tobin and Robert Moses ran their respective bridge and tunnel authorities. There would be no nonsense about saving the fare when operating costs exceeded revenues—the Transit Authority was mandated to raise it. Politicians could scream all they wanted to, and while the fare would go up, no one who had to face the voters could be blamed. There was one thing wrong with this: no one ever really believed the mayor had no control over the fare (even though legally he was powerless), and ways were often found for the city to sub-

sidize the fare, mainly by assuming some expense item in the T.A. budget. Incidentally, this happily accounts for the fact that the fare is as low as it is. If Governor Dewey's self-sustaining fare had ever been allowed to function as he planned it, the fare would be close to 50 cents a ride today, and the manifold troubles of the city would look small by comparison.

We know now that Governor Dewey was wrong and that the self-sustaining fare is self-defeating. Of course, it is the natural inclination of politicians to oppose increases in the prices which voters have to pay for things, but we have learned that there is something special about raising the transit fare. We have learned from our own experience—and it has been confirmed by the experience of practically every city in the United States—that when the fare goes up, bus and subway riding comes down and automobile traffic increases. In 1948, when the fare was still a nickel, there were 2,000,000,000 subway rides a year. Today, with mass transportation more vital than ever, there are only 1,300,000,000 rides a year—a drop of 700,000,000. Compare this to the number of vehicles that crossed the Hudson River bridges and tunnels of the Port of New York Authority in 1948 (42,000,000 a year) and in 1968 (117,000,000, or nearly three times as many). The drivers today still pay the same 50 cents a ride which drivers paid in 1948. The Holland Tunnel, too, charges the same toll it collected in 1927, when that Port Authority facility was first opened.

When bus fares went from five to seven cents, shortly before the subway

fare was increased to a dime, experts told me there would be a sharp drop in riding. I refused to believe that a mere two cents would produce such a shift. It did. When, a little later, the bus and subway fare was raised to 10 cents, revenues were at \$127,000,000 a year. Theoretically they might have gone to \$254,000,000, but only \$199,000,000 was realized. There was a \$55,000,000 immediate drop and a further decrease thereafter. The last fare increase—from 15 to 20 cents—produced a 4 per cent drop in riding.

As the subway fare goes higher, the monetary return is smaller because of the decrease in passengers. The experts tell us that if the 20-cent fare goes to a quarter, there will be a 5 per cent drop in riding. This means that the increase will produce about \$16,000,000 less than might be anticipated simply by multiplying the 5-cent increase times the number of current riders.

When riding declines, service has to be curtailed: buses and subways cannot be run as frequently; booths have to be closed; unprofitable stops are eliminated. In turn, this discourages more riders, and revenues drop even further. Soon there is no incentive to buy new equipment, improve service or make mass transportation more attractive. In the meantime, automobile usage is increasing: streets become clogged with cars; buses, with a carrying capacity a hundred times as great as private cars, are slowed down; more people are induced to leave this form of mass transportation to drive their own vehicles, and the traffic gets worse.

Traffic congestion is not merely a nuisance. It imposes a tremendous cost

“... As the subway fare goes higher, there is a drop in riding, and when riding declines, service has to be curtailed...”

on everyone. For every minute a truck is delayed in getting to its destination, there is additional labor required, fuel consumed, insurance to be paid and wear and tear on the equipment. This all goes into the price we have to pay for the product or service we buy. Vehicular traffic rips up our streets. It takes money to repair and maintain them. Police officials, who are desperately needed for other critical assignments, have to direct traffic, ticket violators, tow away illegally parked cars and tend accidents involving both injury to human life and property damage. The courts and the hospitals whose facilities are required in the case of automobile accidents represent substantial additional cost items for the public.

Then there is the matter of pollution. According to the authoritative 1965 special committee report of the City Council on Air Pollution in New York City, “Vehicular exhausts are the major source of carbon monoxide in the atmosphere, a major source of hydrocarbons and oxides of nitrogen, and a major source of the known carcinogen, benzpyrene.” The level of this cancer-producing agent is so high that breathing in New York City “may cause inhalation of the benzpyrene equivalent of two packs of cigarettes per day.” How can we measure this cost to the public?

Any balanced analysis will surely prove that the taxpayer actually pays, for every person who chooses to drive to and from work in his own car, an indirect subsidy at least 10 times as great as the indirect subsidy now paid the mass-transit rider. I do not suggest that people be stopped from using private cars to get to and from work, but is it not fair to ask anyone who chooses private transportation to pay a price reasonably related to the cost he imposes on the public?

I am not exaggerating when I say that unless we halt the trend away from mass transportation, this city and most others cannot survive. We are all aware of the decline of the cities. We are aware that our ghettos are growing in size and intensity. We see the relief rolls swelling in staggering numbers. We know the importance of training the unemployed for new jobs. But we do not thoroughly understand how essential a sound policy of transportation is to solving these problems.

A transportation system is the lifeblood of a city, and our city will

continue to disintegrate unless we can efficiently and effectively move goods and people. If too many people go by car and too few by bus or subway, problems result. We can and do have an affluent economy producing job opportunities, and we can provide job training to make every able-bodied person who needs a job qualified to fill one. But it does no good to have a trained applicant for an existing opening if he cannot get to work.

Transportation is as much a civil rights issue as housing and education and jobs. The jobs are not in the ghettos, and they are not going to be. More and more of them are becoming available in the suburbs, where factories can get the space they need. That is why it makes no sense any longer for our transit system to end at the city's boundaries. The job market includes nearby Westchester, Connecticut, Long Island and New Jersey. We need a metropolitan transportation authority with jurisdiction over the entire area and the power to make policy decisions over all forms of ground transportation.

One of the best ways to correct the imbalance between mass and private transportation is through pricing. Adam Smith taught us that price goes up when demand exceeds supply, and vice versa. Likewise, when price goes up, demand comes down, and vice versa. That is why bus and subway usage in this city has dropped so precipitously since the nickel fare was abandoned and riders in ever-increasing numbers switched to automobiles.

I propose doubling the tolls on the bridges and tunnels to save the 20-cent fare. I know there are practical obstacles to this move, but I believe they can be eliminated, and there is equity in favor of this proposal.

Existing tolls, antedating the Depression, are at the same level as they were when the subway fare was a nickel. The original thought was that tolls would be charged until the bridge or tunnel was paid for and then be dropped. But both the Port of New York Authority, the most successful example of an authority (an independent public agency financed solely from the revenues of profit-making activities), and the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority chose to use the revenues to build an empire of still more profit-making enterprise. Today the Port Authority has assets of over \$2 billion and would rank high on *Fortune's* list of the 500 largest corporations in the United States if it were

a private company. Ironically, it is subject to less public scrutiny and supervision than any of the private companies on that list. It pays no taxes, and no agency of government really knows how much it makes or spends. It retained former Governor Dewey to argue before the Supreme Court of the United States that it was immune from Congressional investigation, and he won. How far would General Motors get with such a claim?

The concept of a port authority was originally attractive because it held out the promise of providing New York and New Jersey with expensive bridges and tunnels at no cost to the taxpayer—no direct cost, that is—since all of its revenues would come from persons who used its facilities. The Port Authority has fulfilled this promise and has since expanded into operating piers, airports, trucking terminals and now the largest building in the history of the world, the twin-towered World Trade Center in lower Manhattan. (Incidentally, who is going to pay for the mass transportation that will be urgently necessary to transport the tens of thousands who will work in or visit the Center?)

In 1968, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority assumed jurisdiction over the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority and the Transit Authority. This action probably represents the most important single step toward a unified policy of transportation that New York has yet taken. For the first time, a portion of the mass transportation of metropolitan New York is under the same jurisdiction as is automobile transportation, and, for the first time, the opportunity of achieving some balance between mass and private transportation exists.

But the MTA's jurisdiction is too limited. It doesn't have power over the free tunnels and bridges in New York City. It is confined to New York State and can do nothing for mass transportation to and from New Jersey or Connecticut. It should have jurisdiction as wide as the real metropolitan area of New York, and it should have power to direct all agencies of mass transportation, including the Port Authority, to take whatever actions are best suited to the public good. It doesn't have to take over the Port Authority, but there is no longer any reason for the Port Authority to be independent of policy supervision on transportation in the general interest.

For all of its vaunted efficiency, the Port Authority commands too high a

price from the community for its total independence of any form of supervision. We cannot afford to allow the Port Authority to make far-reaching decisions on transportation by itself simply because it supposedly pays its own way. The social cost of the millions of automobiles the Port Authority entices into New York and New Jersey every day cannot be dismissed. What about the traffic strangulation, the air pollution, the street and pavement

deterioration, the police involvement? Are these not properly part of the cost of the Port Authority's operations? We pay for them even though the Port Authority charges no taxes.

Other ways to save the 20-cent fare involve some form of subsidy. At times, there have been suggestions that the subsidy come from the federal government, the state or the city. President Nixon has submitted a mass transportation bill designed to do what I am

talking about. But it is still at least a year away, the amount proposed for all of the United States is woefully insufficient, and there is no trust fund similar to the grant given for roads and highways. This means that each year the proponents of mass transportation will have to plead with Congress for a new appropriation, but they can't compete with the mammoth automobile lobby, especially when it is aided by such powerful public agencies as the Port Authority. Governor Rockefeller has said that the state will not give any money to save the fare, but I don't think that statement can be accepted as final. Transportation is not the only need the city has. I have the impression that the city is broke and needs massive help from state and federal sources. I hope I am wrong, but unfortunately all the evidence indicates that I am not.

Even if subsidy money is forthcoming from some source, there still must be a central transportation agency for the entire metropolitan area, and the Port Authority is the main obstacle. Most people despair of changing its structure, but the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority seemed equally impregnable and fell by the wayside. Robert Moses was lord of all he surveyed, but he ultimately had to accept the decision that an over-all agency of transportation in New York State was required. Unlike Moses, Austin Tobin of the Port Authority, operating quietly out of the public glare, is largely immune to opposing views because of the bi-state structure of his agency, his skill in public relations and the vast resources at his disposal. I daresay that most people in this city have never heard of him even though he has been in his powerful post for over 25 years, making decisions that profoundly affect the way people live in this city.

There is a spirit of reform in the air. We are developing a new sense of public priorities, perhaps stimulated by the attitudes of young people. The idea that a public agency is beneficial simply because it is run like a private company has passed. We are seeing private corporations, whose right to make a profit is ingrained in our system, recognize that they have an obligation to the community that goes beyond merely obeying its laws. They now know that they must do more to help solve the problems besetting our cities than merely paying taxes. The Port Authority cannot for long continue to claim that because it requires no tax resources to run its activities, it has no responsibility for the urban problems which are all intertwined with transportation policy. The separate agencies of transportation, public and private, can no longer be allowed to go their separate ways. ■

Alternatives to Hiking Transit Fares And Increasing Congestion

(1) Reinstate tolls on the four free East River crossings (Queensboro, Williamsburg, Manhattan and Brooklyn Bridges) and charge the same tolls on the Triborough Bridge and Queens-Midtown and Brooklyn Battery Tunnels.

(2) Collect tolls of \$1 on bridges and tunnels, westbound only (except the Triborough Bridge, where the toll should be 50 cents each way). This would lower the cost of construction, operation and maintenance and would speed traffic.

(3) To raise the low average of 1.7 persons per vehicle entering Manhattan, collect tolls in inverse proportion to the number of people in the car. Accordingly, four people traveling in a car would pay a toll of 25 cents, while one person would pay a toll of \$1.

(4) Discontinue all bridge and tunnel discounts for commuters.

(5) Collect the same toll from all vehicle classes in order to discourage passenger cars, which are of least economic significance, and promote a greater percentage of automatic toll-collection devices, with more lanes at a set width.

(6) Place a tax on parking lots—a course especially needed in light of the profiteering now going on by parking-lot owners. Lowering the price, as Bess Myerson Grant seems to be suggesting, would only encourage more commuters to bring their cars into the city. Increase construction of parking lots in peripheral areas.

(7) Stagger office hours to ease congestion.

(8) Run express buses from the suburbs into the city.

(9) Improve service and quality (air conditioning, cleaner subways, etc.) of mass transit to increase usage.

(10) Accelerate plans for the Second Avenue subway to satisfy the transportation needs of Lower East Side residents.

(11) Outlaw all cars from the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel to 86th Street.

(12) Implement a graduated subway fare structure so that long-distance riders would pay more. Passengers coming to Manhattan (below 100th Street) from outside would pay several tokens (reduced to 15 cents each), depending on the distance traveled. Passengers leaving Manhattan (below 100th Street) to outlying areas would pay a single token fare. Those passengers going from one outside area to another nearby would be given a special ticket entitling them to a partial refund of their entry cost. The refund would be paid as they exit. Passengers traveling within Manhattan (below 160th Street) would pay a single token both ways.

(13) Eliminate entirely all bus and subway fares within the five boroughs of New York City and finance the upkeep of the transit system by a "commuter tax" to be paid by all residents, non-residents and businesses earning income in the city and to be collected weekly like withholding tax.

(14) Build Norman Mailer's monorail.

—Ed.