

RAT ATTACK!



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR
Bill Perkins

Report on Rats in the Subway



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I. Introduction

Although the constituents in the 30th senatorial district vary ethnically, culturally and economically, they all encounter the same chronic rat problem whenever they use the subway system. Most people have a visceral reaction to rats, but that alone is not why we must make every effort to rid them from our subways.

Rats can carry and transmit diseases, some of which are fatal to humans and dogs. Rats can spread disease through their urine, feces and from bites. Rats also carry parasites like fleas, worms and mites which can spread diseases as well. At the time of this writing, the Malaysian government is battling an increase of Leptospirosis, a rat borne illness which has killed nearly 100 people this year. While New York city is not Malaysia, the public health crisis they are confronting, underscores the potential danger posed by an out of control rat population. In particular, New York city's subway system, with its densely packed trains and enclosed spaces, provides an ideal environment for communicable diseases to spread quickly.

New Yorkers think we have a serious rodent problem in our subways that can be resolved. This is the news that comes from a district-wide rat survey conducted by my office over the past 6 weeks. Over 15,000 surveys were distributed, in the mail, on-line and in-person at train stations. People's passion for this issue was evident wherever we handed out surveys. Within days of our mailing, we received stacks of mail from constituents who had taken the time to fill out, stamp and mail back our surveys. The response was overwhelming.

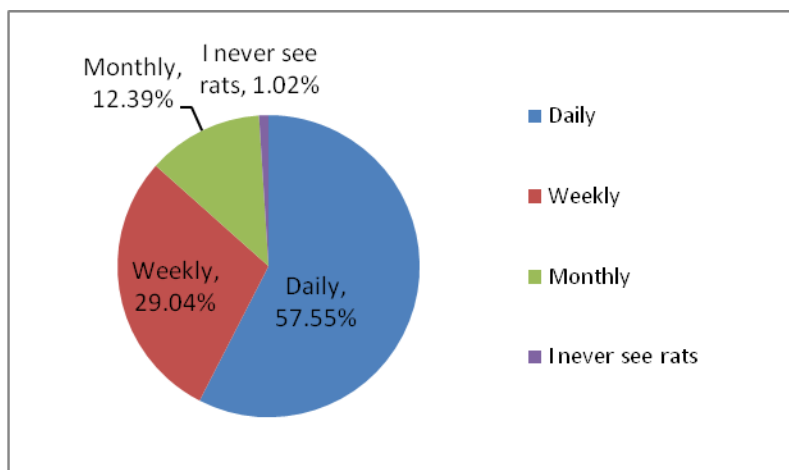
As the results came in, three things are clear: 30TH District residents overwhelmingly feel they are facing a 'severe' problem, they believe that the problem of rats rampaging through the subway is partly due to inept pest-

control by the Metropolitan Transit Authority and most feel strongly that the conduct of train customers, eating in stations, on trains, and carelessly discarding refuse on the tracks or platforms, plays an important role in compounding the problem.

II. Findings

How Often Do you See Rats in the Subway?

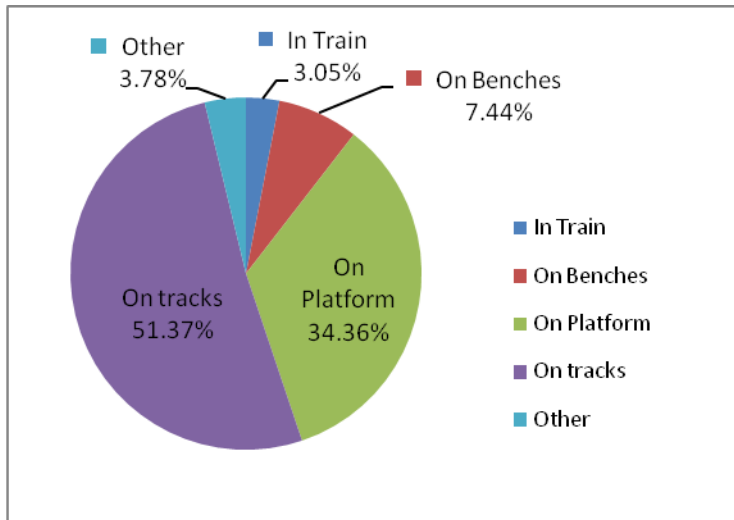
Daily	2884	57.55%
Weekly	1455	29.04%
Monthly	621	12.39%
I Never See Rats	51	1.02%



87% of respondents said they see rats daily or weekly.

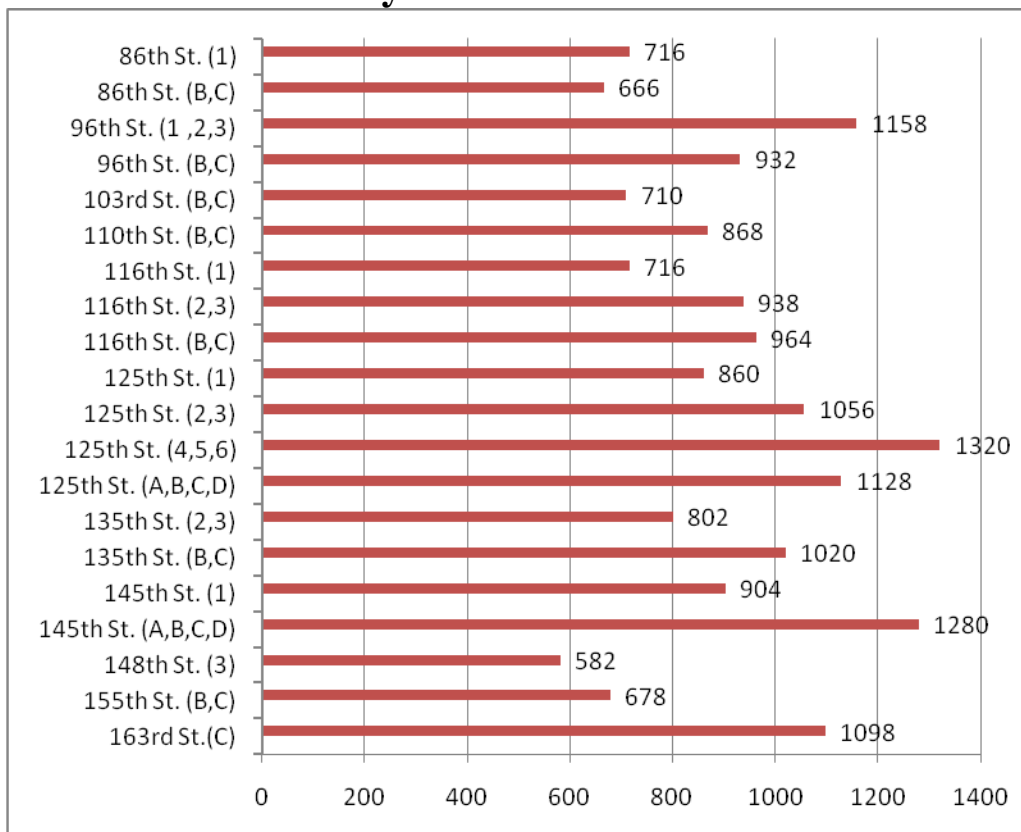
Where have you seen rats in the subway?

In Train	149	3.05%
On Benches	364	7.44%
On Platform	1681	34.36%
On Tracks	2513	51.37%
Other	185	3.78%



86% say they see rats on the tracks or on the platforms.

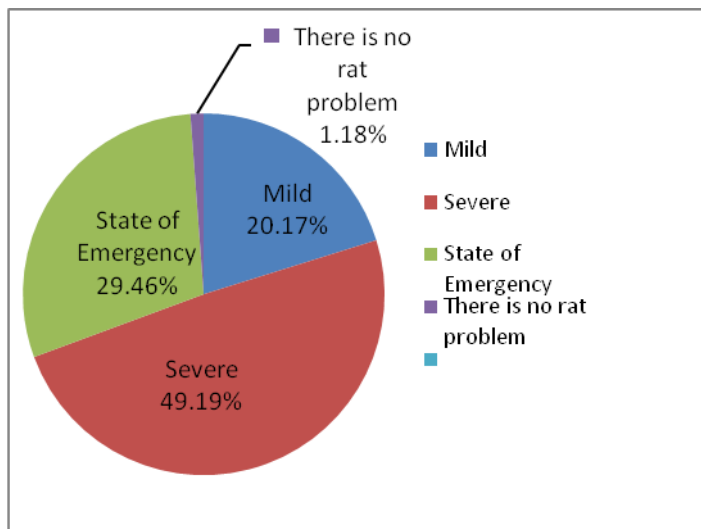
In which stations do you see rats?



96th St. (1,2,3), 125th St. (4,5,6), 145th St. (A,B,C,D) and 163rd St. (C) are the stations where most rats were sighted.

How would you describe the rat problem?

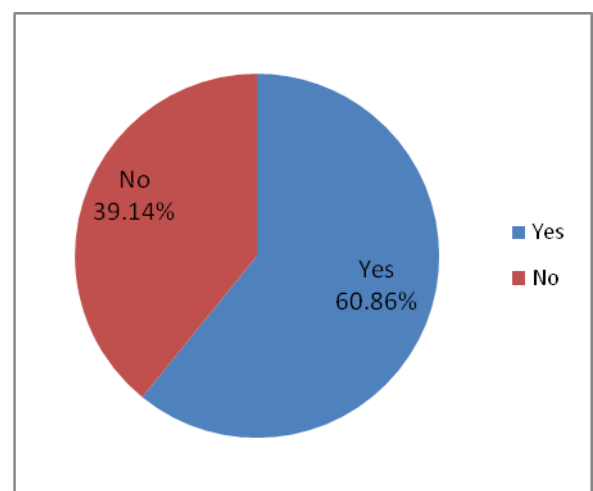
Mild	975	20.17%
Severe	2377	49.19%
State of Emergency	1424	29.46%
There is no rat problem	57	1.18%



80% describe the rat problem as Severe or State of Emergency.

Do you think public transportation can be rat free?

Yes	2862	60.86%
No	1840	39.14%



III. Recommendations

Almost a decade ago, chairing the New York City Council Select Committee on Pest Control, our recommendations about what to do about rats was the same as now. A commitment by government to devote the resources necessary to fight rat proliferation is key. But also essential is a determination by the public, that they will do their part too. Effective rat control can only be achieved by altering the environment to make it far more inhospitable to rats. This approach, has been termed Integrated Pest Management.

Poison, a quick and powerful tool in rat abatement, is alone not sufficient to decimate the rat population. The possible health risk to humans that poison poses, means pesticides must be used judiciously. These dangerous substances must be used in conjunction with other practices like sealing off holes in walls, and removing all possible food sources. Rats are intelligent creatures and will not ‘take the bait’ if there is real food around.



Taking an aggressive initiative, I have proposed a few common sense solutions. Each is guaranteed to produce dramatic and immediate results without exploding the budget.

Ban Eating in Subway

Despite any small inconvenience to subway customers, the centerpiece of this action is legislation I am sponsoring to ban eating within train stations or on platforms. The amount of food presently being consumed in train stations contributes greatly to the growing problem of rats on the subway. As things

are now, the City subway system might as well be a rat restaurant, with a blinking sign that reads ‘all you can eat’” said subway advocate Ellyn Shannon on her survey.

Other large train systems in the U.S. like the D.C. Metro, and Chicago’s CTA already have a no eating policy. As a result, their transit systems are virtually rat free. Large train systems in other parts of the world like India & Dubai also ban eating. This is an idea which would provide immediate results and could potentially generate money if small fines accompanied a violation of this rule.

Public Hearing on MTA’s pest control practices / No eating on Subway Bill

While it is unclear what exact measures the MTA is using to combat rats so far, it is clear that they are failing. In these hearings we will delve into the design and implementation of the MTA’s pest management strategy.

Testimony from MTA officials and experts in the field of pest control should highlight the path towards a cleaner, more rat-free subway environment.

The hearing will also give the MTA officials, Pest control experts and the public an opportunity to weigh in on my legislation which proposes to ban eating in subway stations.

More Trash Receptacles & Better Refuse Storage

Trash receptacles should be increased to adequately meet the demands of our city’s bustling subway system. We can only keep tracks and platforms trash free if there are sufficient trash receptacles to do so. Also, trash cans must be emptied often enough so that they are not overflowing with garbage that ends up on the platform or tracks, and eventually on a rat’s dinner plate.

During the course of my survey I had an opportunity to observe trash in plastic bags before collection and disposal in a refuse room at the 161st Street subway station. It was stored in a space which was completely unsecured against rats and other vermin. Needless to say I saw more rats at this station

than at any other. All such rooms throughout the subway ought to be sealed with rat-proof doors and all holes and cracks in walls sealed securely.

Public Education Campaign

The public needs to be made aware that they have a critical role to play in the eradication of rats from the subway. The MTA should place posters throughout the system with slogans like: “If you feed em...You breed em!” or “starve a rat today...throw your trash away.” The public must be made aware that littering and improperly disposing of food plays a major role in the presence of rats in the subway and throughout the city. If New Yorkers did nothing more than shift their behavior, we would enjoy a major decrease in rat sightings.

Urban Rodent Abatement for Transit Systems (URATS)

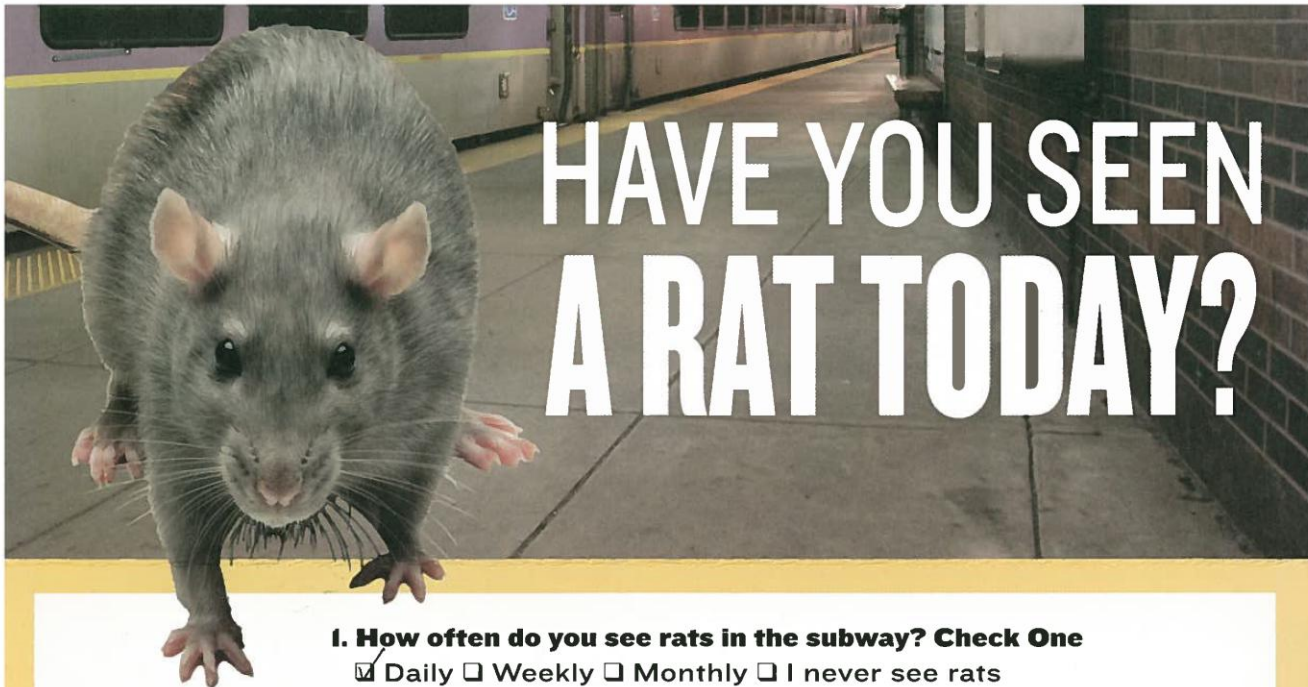
URATS is a pilot program I will begin promoting for New York City’s subway systems to specifically focus on rats. It’s mission will be to greatly reduce or eradicate rats from the transit system by utilizing many of the best practices from rat experts and pest control professionals. In addition to the critical work this initiative aims to accomplish, it will also create jobs, perhaps even rehiring New York City’s recently laid off pest control workers.

IV. Conclusion

New York City is considered by many to be the capital of the world. As one of the busiest cities in the country with one of the largest transportation systems, we have to take the problem of rats more seriously. Through a concerted effort by the MTA, and with the cooperation of the public, we can and we will succeed in winning this fight. Remember : **If we feed em, we breed ‘em!** Let’s all be a part of the solution and rid our great city of Rats!!

Addendum

- I. Copy of a completed “Have You Seen a Rat Today” survey.**
- II. Selected Comments from rat surveys.**



HAVE YOU SEEN A RAT TODAY?

1. How often do you see rats in the subway? Check One

☒ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ I never see rats

2. Where have you seen rats in the subway? Check all that apply

☒ On Platform ☒ On Tracks ☐ In Train ☐ On Benches ☐ Other _____

3. In which stations do you see rats? Check all that apply

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 163rd St. (C)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 135th St. (2,3)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 125th St. (1)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 103rd St. (B,C)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 155th St. (B,C)	<input type="checkbox"/> 135th St. (B,C)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 116th St. (2,3)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 96th St. (B,C)
<input type="checkbox"/> 148th St. (3)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 125th St. (4,5,6)	<input type="checkbox"/> 116th St. (B,C)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 96th St. (1,2,3)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 145th St. (A,B,C,D)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 125th St. (2,3)	<input type="checkbox"/> 116th St. (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> 86th St. (1)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 145th St. (1)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 125th St. (A,B,C,D)	<input type="checkbox"/> 110th St. (B,C)	<input type="checkbox"/> 86th St. (B,C)

☐ Other 157th Broadway

4. How would you describe the rat problem? Check One

☐ Mild ☒ Severe ☐ State of Emergency ☐ There is no rat problem

5. Do you think public transportation can be rat free? Check One

☒ Yes ☐ No

6. Additional Comments

No Food In the Subway unless you
Get a Fine. Plan & Simply.

**Survey can be mailed, faxed, called in or completed online at:
perkins.nysenate.gov**

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Senator Perkins Rat Survey Comment Summary:

Having distributed over 15,000 rat surveys throughout the 30th New York State Senatorial District, without including return postage, my office had the tremendous response of over 5,000 completed surveys. Most people who completed the survey, included commentary about their experience encountering rats in the subway.

We received innumerable notes commending us for addressing this problem with the survey. But what's especially gratifying, is the obvious thought and considerable time residents took to relay their observations to us. A majority of the comments are consistent in identifying causes of the rat problem, as well as in suggesting viable solutions. Below are the highlights from the comments section.

“I saw a rat climb up an unsuspecting woman's leg at the 125th Street station. Rats are constantly on the platform there...in garbage cans[and] on the level of the token booth.”

*“ The problem has gotten much worse over the last few months. I used to see an occasional rat; now there're a lot more. **Probably because I'm seeing a lot more garbage on the tracks.** I don't like large rats running at me on platforms...”*

*“It is disgusting and not sanitary, a public health problem. NYC is very dirty! If everyone helps to keep their city clean, it would probably help. It all depends on citizens. South Korean trains are rat free...**Start giving tickets for garbage to passengers!**”*

*“**The tracks must stay clean.** The situation is so far gone, not enough cleaners and too many people who throw trash everywhere and just don’t care ! **We need more cleaners from MTA.** But with budget cuts that won’t happen. It can be under control though.”*

*“**The reason why is because all the trash on the tracks.** the subways are very dirty. the Brooklyn Bridge stop have them on the platform. **STOP THE RATS !**”*

*“**RATS HAVE RUN ACROSS MY FEET MULTIPLE TIMES**
Fix It!”*

*“In comparison with Russian Metro English Underground subway in New York, is really dirty with a lot of rats. **Problem is many people eat and throw their garbage on the tracks!** It will never be rat free, because people will leave garbage on*

the platforms & trains, etc. There are very large rats on the platform. Stop the cut backs and layoffs at the MTA, trash all over the station. Stop the cut backs and layoffs MTA, trash all over the station!”

“Everyone should learn to use the garbage cans! That's what they are there for, is to be used.

Not only in subway station, rats are running on the street all over Harlem. Fine people for littering or eating on the subway If people would stop littering!!!! heftier fines for litterbugs and enforcers. They are so BOLD - they are not afraid of people. I am seeing rats not mice. People should stop littering If people use garbage cans, and if more people is given tickets, the problem can be contained. The garbage is left on the platforms in certain stations. ”

The train system was once rat free! Please put up signs ‘Don't be a slob!’ ‘you are feeding the rats’! People leave food on the platform -open boxes of leftover food. we will never be rat free if they continue to do this!

THE RATS ARE TAKING OVER THE SUBWAY, AND ARE WALKING AROUND LIKE THEY ARE ONE OF US GETTING ON THE TRAIN TO GO TO WORK OR SOMETHING. IT'S A PROBLEM THAT NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED RIGHT AWAY, I'M SCARED ONE OF THEM MAY JUMP ATTACK ME ONE DAY. THEY DON'T RUN WHEN YOU STOMP FOR THEM TO GET AWAY, THEY STAND THERE LIKE I'M STANDING IN THEIR TERRITORY AND RUN TOWARD YOU READY TO ATTACK!!! STATE OF EMERGENCY! Get them out of the train stations!"

"The MTA is a disgrace. Europe and Asian public transit are glistening clean compared to our subways. Much more money should be spent on public transit and less on Wall Street bailouts. I'm a guy so they really don't bother me much, but I've even seen female Police Officers get scared because a Rat was close by. So something more should be done to control them because whatever they're using isn't working effectively. I don't know whether public transport can ever be 100% rat-free, but it can certainly be much better than it is. I don't see them very often in other cities. Also, although I checked "weekly" for #1 above, I see rats several times a week."

“THIS PROBLEM MUST BE ADDRESSED A S A P . IT'S VERY BAD AND GETTING WORSE! PLEASE HELP. TX.

Food and beverages should not be consumed in subways - with the exception of young children. Discarded food & drink containers invite rodents. A strong campaign against eating & drinking in subways needs to be conducted. First we need to enforce regulations around littering. The behavior of our citizens is contributing to the problem. Quality of life indicators, including littering, need to be addressed in our district.

I use subway system everyday (no car) for work, pleasure, to essentially get everywhere so I'm not limited to the stations in your district. However, I do notice a direct relationship between the amount (or lack thereof) of trash and the sighting of rats. I board the #1 (southbound) at 157th Street and am impressed how clean that platform is. Can't say the same for the northbound side.”

“I don't think the rat infestation will come to end, but if you have more staff on duty empty bins, and not be rude, when

*there talking with token book clerks, at 93rd Street #2519 badge, maybe stations will be more clean. This goes for all stations too. **I think that the Transit Maintenance crew could do a better job cleaning the platforms. I take bus most of the time now. If people would stop leaving food on the platforms + tracks + trash removal was more attentive, perhaps the problem would not be so severe. Could you please address this issue as soon as possible? Thank you! Needs political will. Been attacked by rats in the subway!***

“I would like an experimental program to be conducted. Allow volunteers to have access to gloves, brooms and dustpans, to clean the platform while waiting for the train to arrive. I think many people would participate ... In Berlin you see a mouse, but never a rat in the metro system ...People need to stop throwing trash on the tracks...Garbage pickup should require containers for each building on 155 St. and St. Nicholas Ave...Why do other major cities in the world have subways that are spotlessly clean and ours is so dirty, rats overrun us! [the MTA need] to clean trashcan at least 4 times a day, morning, afternoon, evening, midnights ...Rat population is out of control!”

*“Please make this problem a priority. Rats seem to congregate in **garbage bin the stations should be cleaned more often. People eat on the platform, and the trains have become their dining room and that is what causes rats. People need to be educated. Riders need to be cleaner but Rodents will survive no matter what. It can be tamed if we work together.**”*

*“[the MTA need to place] **posters all over the city and transportations to educate people not to throw food and garbage at stations and on rails**”*

*“We live in a city that has an out of control rodent problem (rats, mice, raccoons, squirrels), because we as people create so much garbage. I doubt if we can be rodent free but perhaps we can find a way to control the problem, **beginning with humans, stop littering, place food & garbage in available containers on subway platforms and provide more containers or at least empty them when overflowing beyond capacity. please work harder to control the rat problem we have in the subways...Concern about rat poisons effecting neighborhood squirrel population...It's embarrassing!**”*

“Garbage should be removed more frequently from the subways by MTA cleaners. In these tough economic times we need to be sure that those on the public payroll are utilized as efficiently as possible rather than expending additional funds! It can at least be better! When the garbage is in the sealed black containers I don’t see them, but when the garbage is thrown around I do. I saw two rats yesterday! A great deal of this problem is an individual’s decision to throw trash in a can or be selfish and litter..Let’s hope you actually do something about this. Please clean up 125th Street and St Nicholas. You want people to move up here but they won’t with the station looking like that.”

“Although it is hard to be rat free for public transportation, we should not provide a comfort environment for rat. We should always check the water leakage, and clean up the silly water on tracks first. the problem is worthy of serious attention. it is particularly bad in the predawn hours when i have to ride the subway.”

“sometimes people throw food on the tracks or on the platforms and on the trains. So, it’s hard to keep the rats problem down...Additionally, I think our streets can be rat-free, however trash pickup, citizen habits, and proper receptacles are far too lacking. Fines on property owners should be enforced on proper garbage disposal...riders eat and leave food for the rats, it’s a 2-way problem. Some rats are fearless and huge.”

“After 10: pm at 137th St #1 going uptown, there is a group of about 5-8 rats frolicking on the platform, near the benches and back and forth through the turnstiles like paying customers. Help us!!! The level of cleanliness at the 163rd Street subway station is horribly low. No wonder the rats love it there.”

“People who use the subways, especially in the stations above, leave food and litter all over the platforms, subway cars and entrances. They don't realize that this kind of littering only

produces more rats. Perhaps a poster/media campaign would help. The people cleaning the stations work hard but it is difficult when passengers do not cooperate. My suggestion is to shut the trains down for two days and do a major extermination job, then follow up with regular maintenance.”

“Rodent control is a multifactorial [sic] issue. Rodents need habit and food.

Food: As long as New Yorkers keep throwing garbage out and making it available for vermin.. Early in the mornings the 116th street is litter with chicken bones

Everyone should be required to lace their garbage into cans that have tightly fitting lids and kept there until garbage day when the bags are put out.

Third the City should require a minimum standard for garbage bags, too do I see garbage on the sidewalk after sanitation has picked up the bag after the bag has broken because some people buy very cheap bags or use shopping bags

Lastly by leaving food out for stray cats people are also feeding rodents

Habitat: There are numerous empty buildings in the area. The owners should be responsible for controlling the rodent population in these properties. When you get a rodent population into an unoccupied residence, given their fecundity, that property is overrun in no time.

Thank for allowing me to comment''

