



Woodlawn, Bronx

5 Cents: A local/express initiative to re-fund the pay-per-ride public.

For one day, Publicworks Office offered 5 cents cash to MTA subway riders in exchange for empty returnable containers, including bottles, cans, and less-than-one-ride ("empty") MetroCards.

As an improvised third-party logistics network, the 5 Cents Street Team provided service at all 27 subway platforms on the 4 train, from the Bronx to Brooklyn.



Woodlawn, Bronx

A rider who carries multiple “empty” MetroCards.

Riders boarding trains outside Manhattan expressed the most immediate understanding of the cash-for-cards offer.



Mosholu Parkway, Bronx

Riders review the offer explained in the yellow flyers.

Some riders presented multiple cards for a refund; other riders told us that they kept a collection at home, but didn't have any "empty" MetroCards with them.



Bedford Park Boulevard, Bronx

Three returnable containers on the tracks: 15 cents.

Bottle deposits encourage an informal network of individuals to collect and return containers that are diverted from the solid waste stream; we encountered one returnable container collector at the Bowling Green station.

Left-over amounts on pay-per-ride MetroCards encourage the re-use of a single card. While it is possible to combine these left-over amounts onto a new card, our observations indicate that many cards are either discarded or held indefinitely; carried in a wallet or stored in a drawer at home for a never-actualized future refill.



Bedford Park Boulevard, Bronx

A rider exchanges an "empty" MetroCard for 5 cents.

Some riders just wanted to get rid of an "empty" MetroCard, declining the 5 cents cash.



Kingsbridge Road, Bronx

"Empty" MetroCards littering the area around the card reader and vending machines.

There are countless tools (including two iPhone apps) that have been created to calculate the amount needed to bring a pay-per-ride MetroCard balance to a round number of rides (i.e. a multiple of \$2.25). The MTA offers a 15% bonus when you add \$8 or more to a MetroCard. This system makes the math required to end up with a multiple of \$2.25 too complicated for most riders to calculate on the go.



Fordham Road, Bronx

An "empty" MetroCard, both worthless and worth-y, in an ecology of urban redeemables.



Mount Eden Avenue, Bronx

An "empty" MetroCard, both worthless and worth-y, in an ecology of urban redeemables.



Mount Eden Avenue, Bronx

A rider trades three "empty" MetroCards for 5 cents (each).



Mount Eden Avenue, Bronx

An "empty" MetroCard sits on (in?) the fence, neither claimed nor cleaned away.



170 Street, Bronx

An "empty" MetroCard on the ground.

If it were a nickel (or a bottle) would this MetroCard remain on the ground?



167 Street, Bronx

An "empty" MetroCard on the corrugated red roof.

MetroCards, like playing cards, are perfect for distance-throwing contests. Unlike playing cards, MetroCards are plastic and persist in the environment much longer.



149 Street-Grand Concourse, Bronx

The first underground stop on the 5-cent Local/Express.

Is it possible for indifference to be palpable? On the enclosed, underground platforms, the space felt more programmed and people seemed more guarded.



149 Street-Grand Concourse, Bronx

Matching yellow/grey outfits.

We got our "5 cents" letters professionally ironed onto our t-shirts at Gifted (51 Seventh Avenue South). The owner implied that it was his first sale of the day...just before closing time on Monday.



68th Street, Manhattan

The Lenox Hill crowd.

At this station, we were asked by a rider if there was a limit to the number of MetroCards that could be redeemed through our service. The rider told us he has "a thousand cards" at home. (Answer: There is no limit).

We were asked by another rider at this station if we were part of Improv Everywhere. (Answer: No).



Grand Central-42nd Street, Manhattan

No bottles yet...

Between the MTA and independent collectors, empty bottles and cans (unlike MetroCards) don't remain long on the platforms.



Brooklyn Bridge-City Hall, Manhattan

Two bottles!

We got our first two bottles on the train between 14th Street-Union Square and Brooklyn Bridge-City Hall. Two (six-year old?) riders eagerly finished their drinks to take advantage of the 5-cent offer.



Between Fulton and Wall Street, Manhattan

"Ladies and gentlemen..."

When boarding the train, we felt riders expected that we would begin a plea for their loose change.



Wall Street, Manhattan

Most riders in Manhattan said that they used monthly passes (precluding the “empty” card issue).

At Wall Street, we met Janet L. Falk. She told us that she does freelance marketing and public relations, and gave us her business card.



Nevins Street, Brooklyn

An "empty" MetroCard on the platform.

Brooklyn riders were often outgoing and asked us about our project without any direct prompting. At Borough Hall, one rider even broke into a song (about us)!



Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn

Watching for the train.

One rider, running to catch the train, doubled back to ask what we were doing before jumping aboard.



Utica Avenue, Brooklyn

"This is the last stop on this train..."

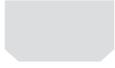
The last and final deposit was made by two grade-schoolers that we met at Franklin Street who were interested in "helping the environment." Neither had an "empty" card, but one found a single-ride card on the platform at Utica Avenue which she exchanged for 5 cents before transferring to the 3 train.



5¢



5¢



5¢



25¢



0¢



0¢



0¢



0¢



50¢



50¢



0¢



0¢



50¢



20¢



0¢*



0¢



5¢



0¢



0¢*



0¢



0¢



25¢



0¢



0¢



0¢



0¢

Returnable container scorecard

4 train, from Woodlawn to Crown Heights

Total returned bottles: 3

Total returned bottles in the Bronx: 0

Percent with redeemable value: 100%

Total redeemable value: \$0.15

Total refunded in cash: \$0.15

Net gain/loss: \$0

Total returned MetroCards: 23

Total returned MetroCards in Manhattan: 0

Percent with redeemable* value: 30%

Total redeemable* value: \$2.25

Total refunded in cash: \$1.15

Net gain/loss: +\$1.10

* Redeemable for MTA rides only, no cash