

BOMA – NEW JERSEY

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BOMA NEW JERSEY - TRANSPORTATION REPORT

September 2026



Transportation Enters Its Gaga Era: The Costume Only Works If You Can Sing.

Glenn Waldorf, Bell Environmental Services



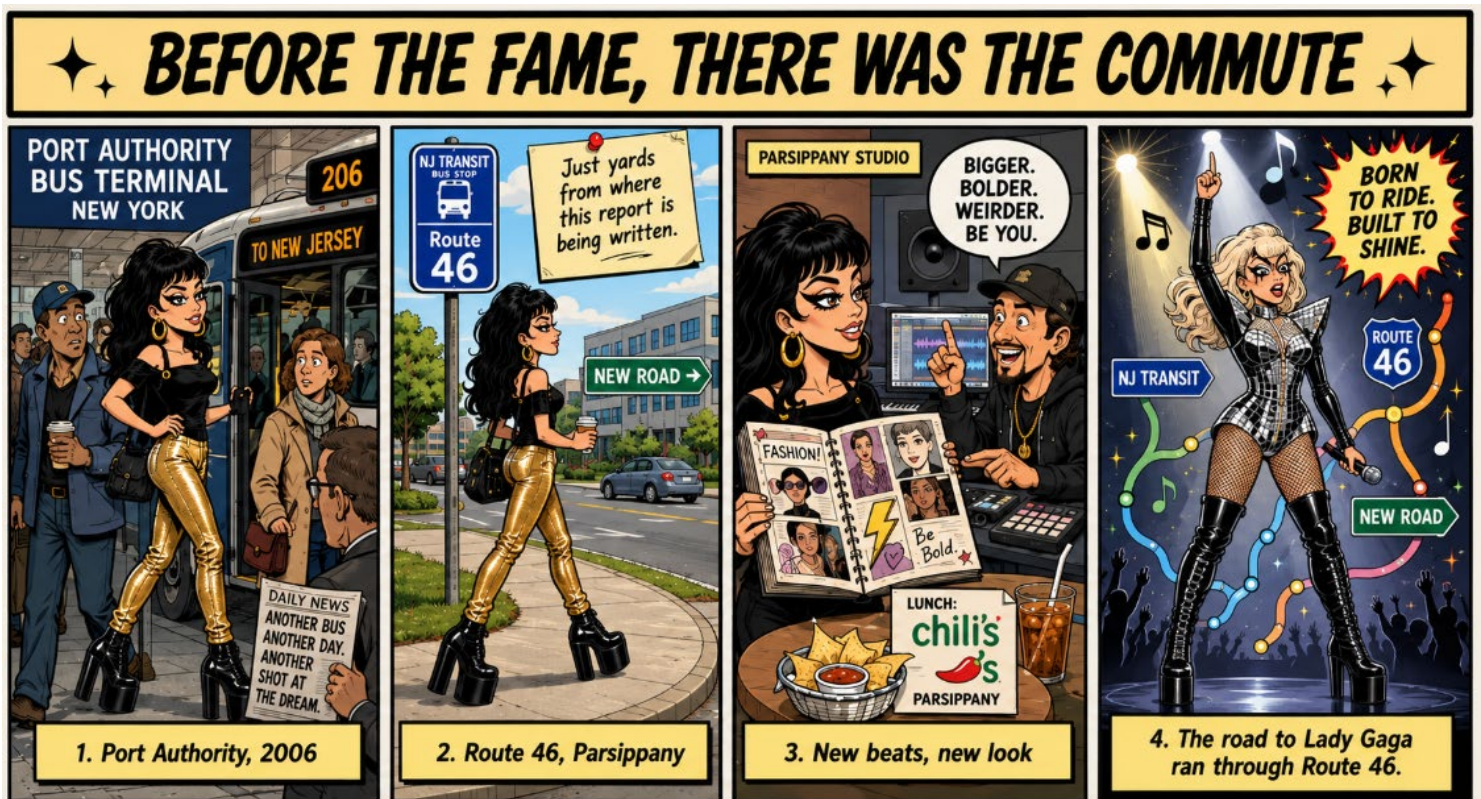
Transportation Has Found Its Voice: Now it has to deliver the performance.

Twenty years ago, a star was born. Before the Little Monsters looked up to a global superstar. Before she was featured in the [Paris Olympic opening ceremony](#) and multiple [Super Bowl appearances](#). Before she was the sought-after celebrity in [The Devil Wears Prada 2](#), recorded the [love song for Top Gun: Maverick](#), and invited us to the Mayhem Ball, [Lady Gaga got off a bus on Route 46 in Parsippany](#).

She was still Stefani Germanotta, a 19-year-old singer-songwriter commuting from New York to work with producer Rob Fusari. She was never subtle, arriving with tumbling black hair, dark eyeliner, gold pants and enormous platform shoes to walk a quarter-mile down [New Road](#) to the studio. That studio was just yards from the office where I write this report. If transportation really has entered its Gaga era, the metaphor wasn't pulled out of a feathered hat. It happened next door.

Over several months, Germanotta's music changed. Rock gave way to dance beats. Her increasingly outrageous appearance became inseparable from the [performance](#). [Eventually, Lady Gaga emerged](#).

But here's what made the whole thing work: she could sing.



Strip away the costumes, makeup, dance beats and spectacle, Gaga is a serious musician whom other stars [seek out](#). [Anything Goes! She can sit at a piano](#). She can [go cheek to cheek with Tony Bennett](#). [She can act](#). The spectacle got people's attention, but her talent keeps us coming back for more.

The costume only works if you can sing.

Transportation seems to be discovering the first half of that lesson.

Public agencies that once communicated largely through press releases, service advisories and bureaucratic prose increasingly have personalities. NYC DOT jokes with [Elmo during the Knicks' playoff](#)

run and posts a crowd celebrating outside Madison Square Garden with the line, “I’ve never seen so much excitement for bus infrastructure.” New Jersey government has embraced a much more conversational and snarky public voice on its social media feeds and road signs. Transportation officials, politicians and agencies increasingly use humor, video and social media to make projects understandable and, occasionally, even entertaining.

That's not frivolous. Transportation has always had an attention problem. Most people aren't going to read a capital plan or study the details of a busway. If some personality gets people to notice what government is doing, good.

New York's mayor has been particularly adept at the small gesture made visible: filling a pothole, riding a bike, getting the message to wear his helmet, appearing on a bus, turning ordinary government activity into something people notice. There is value in showing the public that somebody is paying attention.

But attention creates expectations.

A clever post doesn't make the buses run faster. Filling one pothole in front of cameras doesn't fix the streets. A great rendering doesn't build a station. And swagger (our previous Mayor's favorite word) can't substitute for budgets, engineering, management or competence.

The bigger transportation challenges facing New York and New Jersey won't be solved on social media. Penn Station, the BQE, Gateway, bus service, aging tunnels, airports and major capital projects require the considerably less glamorous work of actually delivering.

This report has followed the same course. The covers have gotten louder and the presentation more playful, but the substance is still the point. This month we're looking at both sides of the performance: the style that gets our attention and the chops underneath it.

The lights are on. The costume looks terrific. Now let's hear them sing.

Before we get to the full report, one serious note.

This issue will arrive just before the 25th anniversary of September 11.

We remember those who were lost, their families, the first responders, and everyone whose lives were changed that morning.

New York also had to figure out how to begin being New York again.

A month later, musicians and comedians gathered at Madison Square Garden for The Concert for New York City.

And when Saturday Night Live returned, Lorne Michaels famously asked Mayor Rudy Giuliani whether it was okay to be funny again.

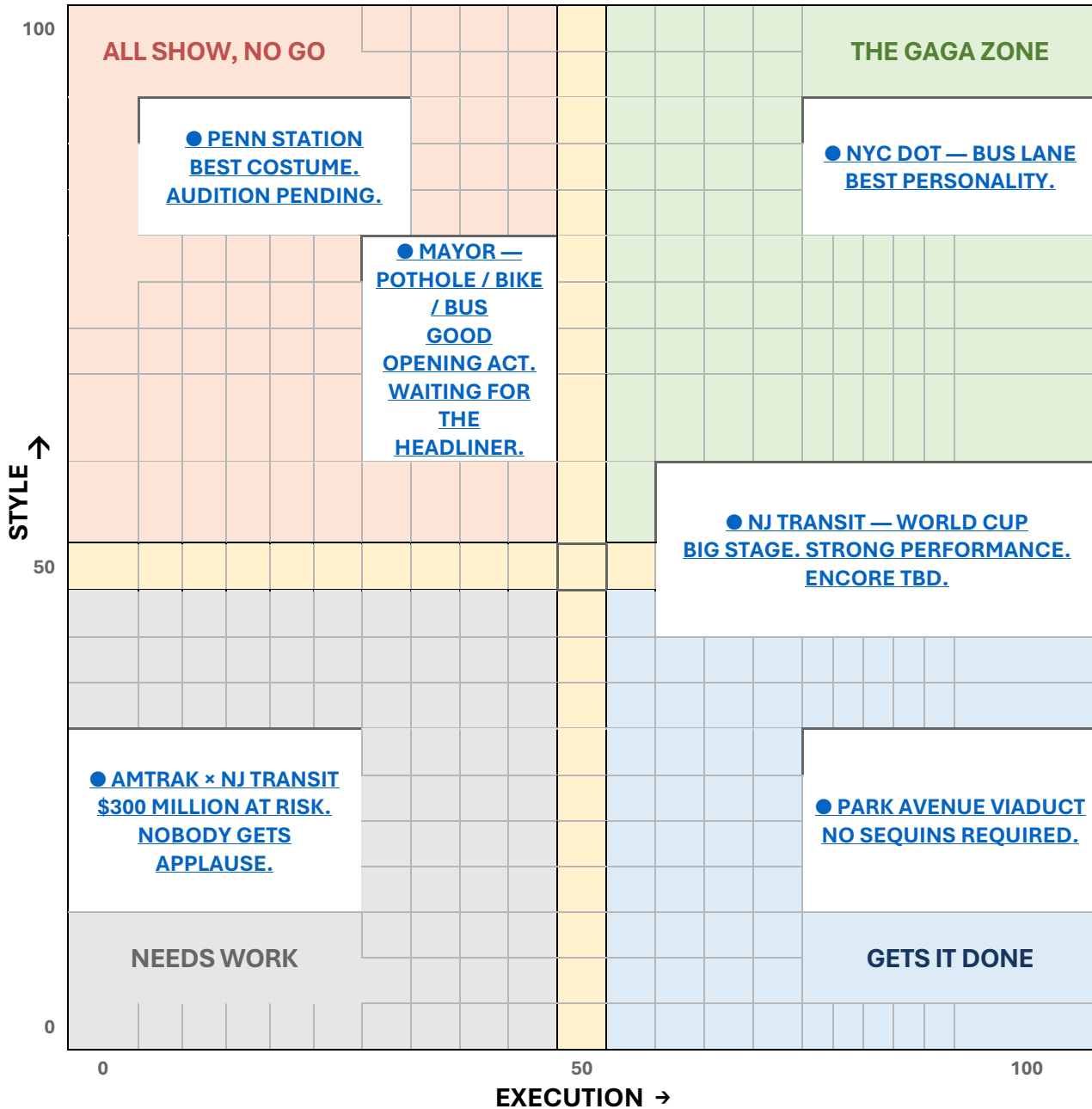
Giuliani answered:

“Why start now?”

That's worth remembering too.



INTRODUCING THE SEPTEMBER 2026 GAGA MATRIX - EXECUTION VS. STYLE



WHAT THE JUDGES SAID:

NYC DOT — Bus Lane Announcement with Knicks Fans • Best Personality. Style and substance meet. A clever way to get people talking about actual bus infrastructure.

NJ TRANSIT — World Cup • Big Stage. Strong Performance. Encore TBD. Moved enormous crowds successfully. Strong execution, roughly 50/100 on style.

MAYOR — Pothole / Bike / Bus • Good Opening Act. Waiting for the Headliner. Visible small wins and gestures. Still no proof of concept on the biggest transportation challenges.

PENN STATION • Best Costume. Audition Pending. Plenty of renderings, politics and attention. Still waiting for the performance.

PARK AVENUE VIADUCT • No Sequins Required. Five years early and nearly \$200 million under budget. Pure chops.

AMTRAK x NJ TRANSIT • Nobody Gets Applause. A feud putting roughly \$300 million in improvements at risk.

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORTATION NEWS

1. **Diesel prices hit record highs and transportation costs rise with them**

U.S. diesel prices reached record levels this summer, increasing costs for trucking, agriculture, construction and the many consumer goods that depend on freight transportation.

2. **Gas prices reached a record Labor Day high**

Average U.S. gasoline prices reached a record level for Labor Day as war, refinery disruptions and tight supplies kept pressure on motorists.

3. **Airline fares may stay high even if fuel prices come down**

Delta's CEO said airline fares are likely to remain elevated even if fuel prices decline as carriers continue to deal with higher operating costs and strong demand.

4. **Congress budgeted billions for major transit projects, but the money is not being spent**

Major transit projects around the country face uncertainty as federal funds already appropriated by Congress remain delayed or unspent by the Trump administration.

5. **The U.S.-Canada trade fight reaches autos, parts and steel**

Escalating trade tensions between the United States and Canada are raising costs and uncertainty for automakers, parts suppliers and transportation-related industries on both sides of the border.

6. **U.S. tourism faces a \$40 billion travel slump**

Changes in international travel patterns associated with U.S. policy have produced a major decline in tourism spending with consequences for airlines, airports, hotels and destination economies.

7. **Google Maps tested whether routing could improve traffic for everyone, not just one driver**

By discouraging routing through the worst road segments at their worst hours, the experiment improved traffic speeds on targeted segments by roughly 2 percent in the median participating city.

8. **Police are discovering how difficult it is to enforce traffic laws against driverless cars**

Autonomous vehicles are creating new enforcement problems because many traffic laws and policing practices were designed around a human being sitting behind the wheel.

9. **Cities are already making room for flying taxis**

New York, Los Angeles and other cities are beginning to plan infrastructure for electric vertical-takeoff aircraft even though certification, economics and public acceptance remain significant hurdles.

10. **Airline "surveillance pricing" draws congressional scrutiny**

New Jersey Congressman Frank Pallone is asking airlines for information about whether customer data and individualized pricing practices could result in different passengers being offered different fares.



REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION NEWS

1. **Penn Station redevelopment becomes another Amtrak-MTA fight**

Amtrak moved ahead with its Penn Station redevelopment process while MTA Chairman Janno Lieber declined to join the proposed partnership and raised concerns about the MTA's rights and role at the station.

2. **Could Penn Station become "Trump Station"?**

A Trump administration official raised the possibility of renaming Penn Station, prompting immediate political opposition and adding another controversy to an already complicated redevelopment.

3. **Penn Station may be able to handle more trains without demolishing another Midtown block**

An Amtrak study found that operational and infrastructure changes could increase Penn Station capacity without requiring demolition of the entire block south of the station.

4. **Remnants of 19th-century New York stand in the way of the 21st-century Gateway tunnel**

Hudson River Tunnel construction encountered old wooden pier piles beneath Manhattan, creating another challenge for the massive Gateway project.

5. **Summer storms repeatedly flooded roads and transportation systems across NY and NJ**

Heavy summer storms inundated streets and highways, disrupted transportation and required rescues across portions of New York City and New Jersey.

6. **The World Cup became a massive real-world test of regional transportation**

Transit agencies moved enormous crowds between New York, New Jersey and MetLife Stadium during eight World Cup matches and generally avoided the breakdowns many riders had feared.

7. **A federal fight over driver's-license data could affect New York and New Jersey commuters**

A dispute over access to driver's-license information raised the possibility that immigrant drivers, including some bus and transportation workers, could be sidelined.

8. **The George Washington Bridge begins shining every night for the first time in its 94-year history**

New energy-efficient tower lighting installed through the Port Authority's larger Restoring the George program made permanent nightly illumination possible.

9. **Amtrak awards contracts for the \$242 million Dock Bridge rehabilitation**

The 91-year-old bridge over the Passaic River, which carries Amtrak, NJ Transit and PATH trains, is receiving a major rehabilitation intended to improve reliability on a critical regional rail link.

10. **A New Jersey bridge outage threatens both Amtrak and NJ Transit riders**

A major bridge outage demonstrated again how a single infrastructure failure in New Jersey can quickly affect rail service throughout the Northeast Corridor.



NEW YORK CITY TRANSPORTATION NEWS

1. **New York chooses a 40-year rehabilitation plan for the BQE cantilever** - The city selected a multibillion-dollar rehabilitation strategy intended to keep the aging BQE Central cantilever operating for roughly another four decades.
2. **The Park Avenue Viaduct project finishes five years early and nearly \$200 million under budget** - The MTA completed replacement of major portions of the structure carrying nearly all Metro-North trains into Grand Central well ahead of its original schedule and budget.
3. **New congestion pricing grades are in** - Research found faster Manhattan ambulance response times after congestion pricing began, while a separate city report found little measurable change in overall air quality.



4. **Mamdani's "fast and free" bus pledge is moving faster on the "fast" part** - The administration is advancing plans to improve bus speeds while the promised systemwide free-fare component remains unresolved.
5. **New York wants to use subway heat instead of simply suffering through it** - The city and MTA are studying whether excess subway heat can be captured and reused to heat nearby public buildings while also reducing sweltering platform temperatures.
6. **New York loosens its outdoor dining rules again** - The city relaxed portions of its post-pandemic outdoor dining regulations as officials continue to balance restaurant needs with street, sidewalk and curb-space demands.
7. **The MTA blows past its overtime budget** - The agency was reported to be roughly \$176 million over its overtime budget while hundreds of employees collected unusually large amounts of extra pay.
8. **The \$21 billion Sunnyside Yard dream loses momentum** - An ambitious redevelopment concept for Sunnyside Yard generated early political enthusiasm but little visible progress as the summer continued.
9. **Illegal vending becomes another Brooklyn Bridge management problem** - Officials faced renewed questions about enforcement and public-space management as unlicensed vendors, including minors, continued operating on the heavily traveled bridge.
10. **Mamdani takes on Amazon over New York's delivery workforce**
A City Council proposal backed by the mayor would require large delivery companies to directly employ more couriers rather than relying heavily on subcontracted delivery networks.

NEW JERSEY TRANSPORTATION NEWS

1. **NJ Transit survived the World Cup, but it cost about \$4 million**

NJ Transit successfully handled enormous World Cup crowds at MetLife Stadium but reported a roughly \$4 million operating loss associated with the special transportation effort.

2. **What happens to the \$100 million MetLife Transitway after the World Cup?**



The bus rapid-transit facility built to improve access to the Meadowlands is now being evaluated for uses beyond the tournament that justified its accelerated construction.

3. **World Cup service was excellent; everyday NJ Transit riders still want the same performance**

NJ Transit's successful tournament operations stood in contrast to a summer that also included cancellations, heat-related breakdowns, inaccurate rider information and severe-weather disruptions.

4. **New Jersey targets high-crash Garden State Parkway interchanges**

A major Parkway reconstruction program will address several high-crash exits and interchanges near the Jersey Shore.

5. **Flock cameras create a statewide debate over safety and surveillance**

Automated license-plate readers have expanded rapidly across New Jersey, helping police track vehicles while raising questions about privacy, data retention and oversight.

6. **New Jersey expands microtransit**

New legislation expands the state's ability to support on-demand transportation programs, particularly for seniors and people with disabilities.

7. **A Pulaski Skyway exit finally reopens after five years**

A long-closed Pulaski Skyway exit returned to service after five years of construction and disruption for North Jersey motorists.

8. **Speeding remains one of New Jersey's leading causes of fatal crashes**

State crash data show that speeding remains the third-leading contributing factor in fatal New Jersey crashes even as drivers continue to routinely exceed posted limits.

9. **New Jersey voters still love having someone else pump their gas**

A new poll found overwhelming support for preserving New Jersey's decades-old prohibition on motorists pumping their own gasoline.

10. **New Jersey's proposed robotaxi rules could leave Tesla out**

A proposed three-year autonomous-vehicle pilot would impose technical requirements strict enough that Tesla's current approach might not qualify.

RAILROAD & SUBWAY NEWS

1. **Amtrak completes the first major phase of East River Tunnel rehabilitation**

The first rehabilitated East River Tunnel tube returned to service after major track, electrical, communications, drainage and structural work.

2. **An Amtrak-NJ Transit feud puts \$300 million in rail improvements at risk**

A dispute between the two agencies threatened funding and cooperation for Northeast Corridor service improvements affecting New Jersey commuters.

3. **The MTA publishes its first systemwide plan to reduce subway train congestion**

The agency laid out a networkwide strategy for addressing track intersections and other bottlenecks that limit the number of trains it can operate reliably. Click on the hyperlink to see the video.



4. **Major construction begins on the new AirTrain Newark**

The Port Authority moved into major construction on the replacement airport rail system intended to provide more reliable connections between Newark Airport and regional rail service.

5. **North Jersey advocates make the case for more light rail**

Transit advocates are proposing extensions and improvements that would expand light-rail access and connectivity across densely populated portions of North Jersey.

6. **The MTA makes the 57th Street M station fully accessible**

New elevators and accessibility improvements brought another Midtown subway station into compliance with modern accessibility standards.

7. **Physical OMNY cards temporarily could not be refilled**

An unexplained system problem temporarily prevented riders from adding money to physical OMNY cards, exposing another vulnerability in the fare-payment transition.

8. **Cashless vending machines begin appearing in subway stations**

Automated cashless vending machines are expanding the range of self-service retail available to riders inside the subway system.

9. **The MTA turns subway lines into a trivia game**

The agency used social media to quiz riders about individual subway lines, another example of the increasingly playful public personality of transportation agencies.

10. **New Yorkers rank the 7 and L as their favorite subway lines**

The MTA's Customers Count survey placed the 7 and L at the top of rider satisfaction while the 5, D and W finished near the bottom.

STREET, BIKE & CURBSIDE NEWS

1. **Three cyclists die in one week as New York confronts another bike-safety crisis**

Three cyclists were killed in hit-and-runs in a single week, all while riding e-bikes, as the city's bicycle death toll reached 17 and Mayor Mamdani acknowledged separately that he needed to do better about wearing a helmet himself.

2. **City Council launches a sweeping review of e-bike and e-scooter safety**

The Council began a broad examination of motorized-device safety as New York continued grappling with illegal devices, battery risks and street-safety concerns.

3. **New Jersey's new e-bike rules produce new problems of their own**

Parents and safety advocates argue that New Jersey's new rules do not adequately address the causes of teen fatalities, while retailers report major declines in legal e-bike sales.

4. **Citi Bike riders push for a \$3 flat fare**

Proposed legislation would cap Citi Bike rides at \$3 as riders and advocates complain that electric-bike trips have become too expensive.

5. **New York plans 500 secure bike lockers at a potential cost of \$26 million**

The city's plan to add hundreds of secure on-street bicycle lockers drew support from cyclists and criticism over cost, appearance and use of curb space.

6. **NYC considers residential parking permits and decides not to pursue them**

After studying whether residential parking permits could better manage scarce curb space, NYC DOT concluded that it did not support moving forward with the idea.

7. **Empire Bins put garbage, sidewalks and parking spaces into the same fight**

New Yorkers who experienced containerized garbage want the program expanded even as the bins consume curb space that drivers and property owners also value.

8. **Alternate-side parking violators get stickers as the city experiments with street-cleaning rules**

New York revived highly visible windshield stickers for cars blocking street sweepers while some neighborhoods also experimented with less frequent alternate-side requirements.

9. **Some bus routes slowed after cameras began ticketing double-parked vehicles**

Data showed an unexpected slowdown on some routes after automated enforcement was introduced to keep bus lanes and travel lanes clear.

10. **NYC plans to add 600 curbside electric-vehicle chargers**

NYC DOT is expanding its curbside charging network with 600 additional chargers over the next three years as electric vehicles compete for another piece of limited curb space.



AND NOW FOR 🎵 STRANGE NEWS HARD TO BELIEVE, 🎵 BUT TRUE...

This summer, **Bell Environmental** sponsored **Jim Kerr's "Strange News: Hard to Believe, But True" on Q104.3**. Transportation apparently had enough material for a few Top 10 lists of its own.



STRANGE AIRPLANE & AIRPORT NEWS ✈️ 🛫

1. 🧑✈️ 🚑 **The pilot who needed the ambulance** - A Delta captain became ill in flight, the first officer diverted the aircraft, and the captain remained on the radio long enough to explain to controllers that he was the person who needed medical attention.
2. **A child who would not sit down caused an entire flight to be canceled** 🧒 🛫 - Porter Airlines ultimately canceled a flight after a young child repeatedly refused to remain seated and buckled before takeoff.
3. ✈️ 🛠️ **Passengers used duct tape to restrain a disruptive traveler** - Passengers aboard an American Airlines flight from Dallas to Newark helped restrain a disruptive man with duct tape during an in-flight disturbance.
4. **A bird strike sent flames from an American Airlines engine** 🐦 🔥 - An American Airlines flight made an emergency landing after a bird strike produced visible flames from one of its engines.
5. 🐭 🛫 **Mice raced around LaGuardia Airport** - An airline passenger captured video of several mice running through LaGuardia Airport, including two of the animals clearly visible on camera.
6. **A rodent showed up in JetBlue's overhead cabin** 🐭 ✈️ - A passenger recorded a rodent scurrying through the overhead area of a JetBlue aircraft, including above the airline's premium cabin.
7. 🤢 ✈️ **Passengers reportedly vomited and passed out on an overheated Ryanair aircraft** - Travelers reported becoming sick and fainting while waiting aboard an unusually hot Ryanair aircraft.
8. **TSA named America's cutest canine** 🐕 🏆 - The Transportation Security Administration's annual canine competition produced another winner from the dogs working to protect the nation's airports.
9. 🛫 🧑 **A first-class passenger allegedly solved her broken-seat problem by taking someone else's seat** - An American Airlines passenger was accused of occupying another first-class traveler's seat after discovering that her assigned seat was broken.
10. **JFK has a rooftop pool overlooking the runway** 🏊 🛫 - The TWA Hotel offers a rooftop swimming pool beside Terminal 5 where visitors can watch aircraft without even needing a boarding pass.

🌿 🦉 STRANGE NATURE & ANIMAL NEWS 🦊 🌳

1. 🐳 **New York records its 500th humpback whale since 2012** - A humpback whale spotted in New York waters became the 500th individually recorded humpback in the region since local tracking began in 2012.
2. **Seven whales and 100 dolphins show up on one New York outing** 🐳 🐬 - One summer whale-watching excursion reported seeing seven whales and roughly 100 dolphins during just three hours offshore.
3. 🐳 🚒 **A whale badly damages Carteret's fire-rescue boat** - A collision with a whale caused major damage to a Carteret Fire Department marine unit operating in New Jersey waters.
4. **An otter returns to the Bronx River after roughly a century** 🦦 - A river otter was documented in the Bronx River for the first time since the early 1900s, another sign of the waterway's environmental recovery.
5. 🐟 **Take me to the river! A school of rays turns up in a New York City waterway** - Rays were spotted swimming in a historically polluted New York waterway, providing an unexpected sign of improving aquatic conditions.
6. **Fifteen pigs escape onto a New Jersey highway** 🐷 🐷 - State Police helped round up 15 pigs after the animals escaped from a Sussex County farm and wandered along a roadway.

7. 🐝 **A swarm of bees closes a New Jersey Turnpike service area** - Bees left behind at a Turnpike rest stop forced officials to temporarily close the facility while the swarm was dealt with.
8. **A chicken takes the train in Berlin** 🐔 🚆 - Commuters encountered a chicken calmly occupying a train seat before standing up to stretch its legs during the trip.
9. 🐭 🐭 **Two mice settle their differences in the street** - Video captured two mice appearing to box with one another in the middle of a street.
10. **Yes, TSA lets you travel with a live lobster** 🦞 ✈️ - A live lobster can pass through airport security if travelers follow TSA packaging and inspection requirements.

STRANGE TALES FROM THE ROAD 🚚 🚦

1. 🦑 **More than 20 tons of squid spill onto a Rhode Island street** - A truck accident dumped more than 20 tons of squid onto a roadway and created one of the summer's least appealing traffic obstructions.
2. **Mac and cheese covers a Quebec highway** 🧀 🍝 - A truck crash scattered a load of Kraft Dinner across a Quebec highway and temporarily turned the roadway into a giant pasta spill.
3. 🧑 🚗 **An 11-year-old allegedly drives Mom to 7-Eleven and crashes** - Florida authorities arrested a mother after she allegedly allowed her 11-year-old child to drive to a convenience store before the vehicle crashed.
4. **A giant ball rolls through Chinatown** 🌐 🎱 - New Yorkers encountered an enormous loose ball rolling through Chinatown and doing its best impression of an unscheduled transportation mode.
5. 🚗 🎆 **Waymos drive into live fireworks and then get stuck in July Fourth traffic** - Autonomous Waymo vehicles encountered live fireworks and heavy holiday congestion in San Francisco, leaving some cars stranded or unable to proceed normally.
6. **Delivery robots create their own sidewalk traffic jam** 🤖 🚚
A deployment error sent too many delivery robots onto the same Chicago sidewalk and produced a traffic jam consisting entirely of robots.
7. 🚚 🍺 **Someone steals a truck carrying roughly 40,000 pounds of Pabst Blue Ribbon** - Thieves made off with a truck carrying an estimated 40,000 pounds of PBR in what was described as a remarkably large beer heist.
8. **A moving truck gets robbed of 105 kilograms of frozen chicken** 🐔 🚚 - An Egyptian gang allegedly robbed a moving truck and stole more than 100 kilograms of frozen chicken while the vehicle was on the road.
9. 🌳 🚔 **New Jersey police disguise an officer as a shrub** - Dunellen police used an officer dressed as roadside vegetation to spot distracted drivers during an enforcement operation that produced dozens of citations.
10. 🕒 🚔 **New Yorkers keep climbing into manholes and police are not sure why** - Authorities investigated a series of incidents involving people entering city manholes without an obvious legitimate reason.



WE HAVE ONE LAST AMAZING STORY FOR YOU. AND THIS ONE IS GUARANTEED TO MAKE YOU SMILE.... NOW PREVIEWING

INDIANA JONES AND THE COOKIE OF DESTINY



Click and smile as [Harrison Ford](#) and [Cookie Monster](#) raid the cookie jar and hum the Indiana Jones theme. Watch this 20-Second Clip on [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), [YouTube](#), [Reddit](#), or [Twitter/X](#) and make your day [and week!](#)

The playful moment was tied to a promotional visit with the cast of the comedy series *Shrinking*. How Awesome is Sesame Street? Another famous curmudgeon, Brett Goldstein, who is Ford's *Shrinking* co-star and grumpy soccer coach Roy Kent, said being on Sesame Street was [the best day of his life!](#) ([Even if Cookie Monster is an addict.](#))



ALSO PLAYING ON SESAME STREET...

🍪 [Raiders of the Lost Cookie Jar](#) 🍪

🗑️ [Indiana Jones and the Temple of Trash](#) 🗑️

☀️ [Indiana Jones and the Sunny Day](#) 🌈

