

Bus Stops and Routes for Queens Split Across Two Files

This is an important update regarding several of the bus stop and route features in our [NYC Mass Transit Spatial Layers](#) series. We've discovered some anomalies between our descriptions and the file contents, and have updated our metadata accordingly:

- The bus route and stop files initially designated for Queens actually just contain features in eastern Queens, primarily east of Flushing Meadows and I-678. We've changed the titles of these files to Eastern Queens and updated the descriptions accordingly.
- The local bus routes and stops for western Queens are lumped into the Bus Company (i.e. express bus) files for the entire city. We've changed the titles of these files to Western Queens and Bus Company and updated the descriptions accordingly.

This isn't an ideal arrangement, as the local buses in Queens are fundamentally different from the express buses. You can distinguish between the local and express services by looking at the route number in the attribute table: if the route is designated with a 'Q' immediately followed by a number, it's a local Queens route. Otherwise, it's an express bus route. It's harder to tell with the stops; you can compare them against the routes to see which are local and which aren't. Most of the stops located in western Queens will be local bus stops.

Why are the files structured this way? It has to do with the internal organization of the MTA and how the buses are managed. The bus lines are divided into different groups based on how they are administered, and the data is structured to reflect this. When we download the raw GTFS bus files to process them, we download one set designated for each borough and one set designated for the bus company. Whatever is in those original sets gets carried over into the new files we create. Our files simply follow the provenance of the MTA files.

In some cases it's normal for bus routes or stops to appear in a neighboring borough, and we've noted this in our metadata all along. For example, the M60 is a Manhattan local that runs through Harlem to LaGuardia Airport in Queens. It appears in the Manhattan files and not the Queens files since it's designated as a Manhattan bus and stops primarily in Manhattan. Other cases are odd exceptions; the M100 runs in northern Manhattan from Harlem to Inwood, but is included in the Bronx files and not the Manhattan ones. In that case, it's simply because that route is managed / administered alongside the Bronx routes.

But the split within Queens and the combination with the express buses is counter-intuitive, and we're going to consider re-organizing this data when we assemble our next version at the end of this year. For now, we've updated the metadata for the May 2016 version so that users are aware of this issue. If you want all bus stops or routes for Queens, this data is split into two files: a file with local buses for eastern Queens, and another with local buses for western Queens that also includes express buses city-wide.