

The Bulletin



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This Month's Cover Photo:

R68s 2924+2916
(Westinghouse-Amrail,
1988) are approaching their
north terminal at Franklin Av
on 12/2/2017. Jeffrey Erlitz
photograph.

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ALL R-179 CARS REMOVED FROM SERVICE (From *The New York Times*, January 8, 2020)

An entire fleet of New York City's newest subway cars was abruptly pulled out of service on Wednesday after two recent episodes raised concerns that doors could open while trains were moving, according to people involved in the transit system who were told about the defects.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which runs the subway, did not provide details about the episodes that led it to sideline the 298 cars, but officials said that no riders had been injured.

Authority officials also declined to comment on whether the problems would have allowed doors to open while trains were in motion until an investigation is complete.

The removal of the cars, which were being used on trains on the **A**, **C**, **J**, and **Z** lines, is a significant setback in the authority's effort to modernize the subway system's antiquated infrastructure. It is also the largest such equipment removal in recent years.

The new cars were supposed to replace others that date to President Lyndon B. Johnson's administration and are some of the oldest train cars in operation in the world.

The new cars, known as R-179s, were bought as part of a problem-plagued, \$600 million contract between the authority and the Canadian manufacturing giant Bombardier that has raised questions about the MTA's oversight of its vendors.

Troubling signs emerged when the cars first started to roll after multiple delays.

Transit workers complained that the R-179's speedometer was hard to see, that the master controller used to drive the train was uncomfortable and that the space between cars was too narrow for some workers to maneuver in.

A more pressing concern for riders was that

the new cars broke down more often than some older ones that had been in service since the 1980s, according to authority data.

"As documented, the MTA has identified repeated issues with Bombardier's performance and finds this latest development unacceptable," Andy Byford, the President of the New York City Transit Authority, said in a statement on Wednesday. "We intend to hold the company fully accountable."

The authority has hired an outside firm to inspect the faulty cars and has replaced them for now with others in its roughly 6,700-car fleet. The move has resulted in trains running less frequently on the **J** and **Z** lines, officials said. It was unclear how long the inspections would take.

"There is nothing more terrifying than the idea of a door flying open when you're leaning against it," said Nick Sifuentes, the Executive Director of Tri-State Transportation Campaign, an advocacy group. "But from a safety perspective, it's good that this is being flagged now and can be rectified immediately."

A Bombardier spokeswoman said on Wednesday that the company's own investigation of the cars, which prompted the authority's action, showed that the doors had not been properly calibrated by a supplier, Nanjing Kangni Mechanical & Electrical of China.

She declined to elaborate.

"We are now inspecting all of the R-179 cars and, where necessary, making adjustments to ensure the safe and reliable performance of the doors for the entire fleet," she said.

Modernizing the subway-car fleet has been a priority since the system fell into crisis in

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