

## BRONX PRESS REVIEW

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# Praise is high for Bronx Cultural Trolleys in report

By **CANDICE M. GIOVE**

When it comes to weighing in on the success of cultural trolleys operating outside of Manhattan, the Bronx Cultural Trolley tops them all.

The Center for an Urban Future evaluated routes in The Bronx, Queens and Brooklyn over a six month period and recently published "A Bumpy Ride," a 22-page report on its findings, through a project funded by the Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation. In the report, the organization praises the Bronx Council of the Arts-operated trolley because it actually draws passengers and lures visitors to a number of Bronx institutions and businesses.

"Dozens of cultural institutions lie out of sight and mind for tourists and New

Yorkers alike, in neighborhoods that are far from public transportation and hard to access without a car. Trolleys can offer a convenient and safe way to explore these cultural treasures," said Tara Colton, associate research director of Center for an Urban Future. "But there's limited awareness of the trolley routes, and the people that do hop on board are often local residents who just view the trolleys as free ground transportation."

Developed in 2002 by the Bronx Council on the Arts, the Bronx Cultural Trolley takes passengers to the "South Bronx Cultural Corridor" on the first Wednesday night of each month from 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Sites on this tour include the Longwood Gallery at Hostos Community

College, the Bronx Museum of the Arts and the Pregones Theater.

The Center for an Urban Future found that because the BCA pumps so much money and time into the once-a-month tour, Bronx institutions actually get a boost from its presence. The BCA reported spending up to \$150,000 a year to fund the trolleys. According to the report, that money is used to pay for staff and advertisements, including spots on WNYC.

Unlike trolleys in other boroughs, such as the one in Queens that was forced to stop operating because of low ridership, the Bronx Cultural Trolley has seen an increase in passengers. In 2003 they had 620 riders, a number that grew to 821 last year.

"We have staff all over the place moni-

toring, coordinating, dropping by different sites," Bill Aguado, BCA president, told researchers. "We don't just show up once a month—this is a month-long planning process. There is a lot of time involved but it also increases the profile of the BCA and increases the profile of The Bronx, so it is a win-win."

The report criticized NYC & Co., the city's convention and visitors' bureau, and I Love New York, a state tourism agency, for not promoting trolleys in the boroughs. The Bronx Cultural Trolley is the only one mentioned by the government tourism agencies.

Though lacking a mention on those websites, the Bronx Trolley operated by the Bronx Tourism Council does draw out-of-towners to the borough by picking up travelers at NYC & Co.'s Midtown Manhattan visitors' center. That trolley tour operates on weekends, delivering passengers to the Bronx Zoo, the Botanical Gardens and Arthur Avenue. It had 3,500 passengers in 2006. The Bronx Trolley used to have a wider scope, including stops at Van Cortlandt Park and Jerome Avenue, but stops were pared down in 2006.

A third trolley, the City Island Seaside Trolley, operates on the first Friday of the month, though it is not as well known or as crowded as the other routes. Paul Klein, vice president of the City Island Chamber of Commerce, told researchers that while the trolley is in its infancy, it has enormous potential.

"We could do it every Friday or run it on the weekends as well. We could use it to supplement bus service and get people moving back and forth easier," he said.

The Bronx Tourism Council owns the trolley used for all three routes.

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