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Bronx Trolley Lauded

by Bret Nolan Collazzi

Next time you see the antique-style, green, red and gold Bronx Culture Trolley cruising down the Grand Concourse, serve up a hearty honk of congratulations.

A report on cultural trolleys citywide released August 30 deemed the Bronx shuttle one of only two in all five boroughs to consistently attract riders and improve attendance at local museums, galleries and performance spaces.

The Bronx Culture Trolley, which runs the first Wednesday night of each month courtesy of the Bronx Council on the Arts, is “widely considered the most successful of the city’s trolley routes,” according to a study by the Manhattan-based think tank Center for an Urban Future.

With stops at the Bronx Museum of the Arts and lesser-known cultural institutions like the Longwood Art Gallery at Hostos Community College and the Pregones Theater, the trolley ties together the Concourse’s emerging South Bronx Cultural Corridor, the report states.

In doing so, it not only ferries dozens of visitors to each destination — free of charge — but also helps “change long-outdated perceptions of the borough,” highlighting the borough’s “incredible transformation” and showing visitors “just how much is going on in the Bronx.”

The think tank’s study, titled [A Bumpy Ride](#), offers an otherwise bleak assessment of the city’s cultural trolleys, saying most are either sparsely attended or used as free transit by residents with no intention of attending local exhibits. The other successful route was the Queens Jazz Trail Trolley.

The Bronx Culture Trolley first took off in December 2002 through a grant from Borough President Adolfo Carrion Jr.’s Bronx Tourism Council. It has since expanded its routes, offering trips to Hunts Point art galleries twice a year, and has built up a steady ridership.



Phil Cardone of the Bronx Council, who helps coordinate cultural programming for each tour, said the trolley draws between 75 and 100 riders per month, ranging from Bronx art-lovers looking for new venues to out-of-towners looking for an off-the-beaten-path night out.

One woman from Italy who swaps houses with a friend in Brooklyn each summer hopped on the trolley last year after reading about it from abroad, Cardone said. She enjoyed the tour so much she returned this summer.

The Bronx trolley’s secret, Cardone said, is cooperation between the cultural institutions, which coordinate exhibits and events so there is always something new to see. “Everybody helps nurture each other,” he said. “They work together, nobody’s in competition, and that’s one of the reasons the trolleys work so well.”

Now with a little extra publicity, the Bronx trolley should be able to pull in even more riders from across the city. And what is good for the trolley, Cardone noted, is just about always good for the Bronx.

“This gives people a chance to see the venues, to see the acts and often to see the neighborhoods,” he said. “People say they still had perceptions of the area based the way it was portrayed 20 years ago — and it’s obviously not like that any more.”