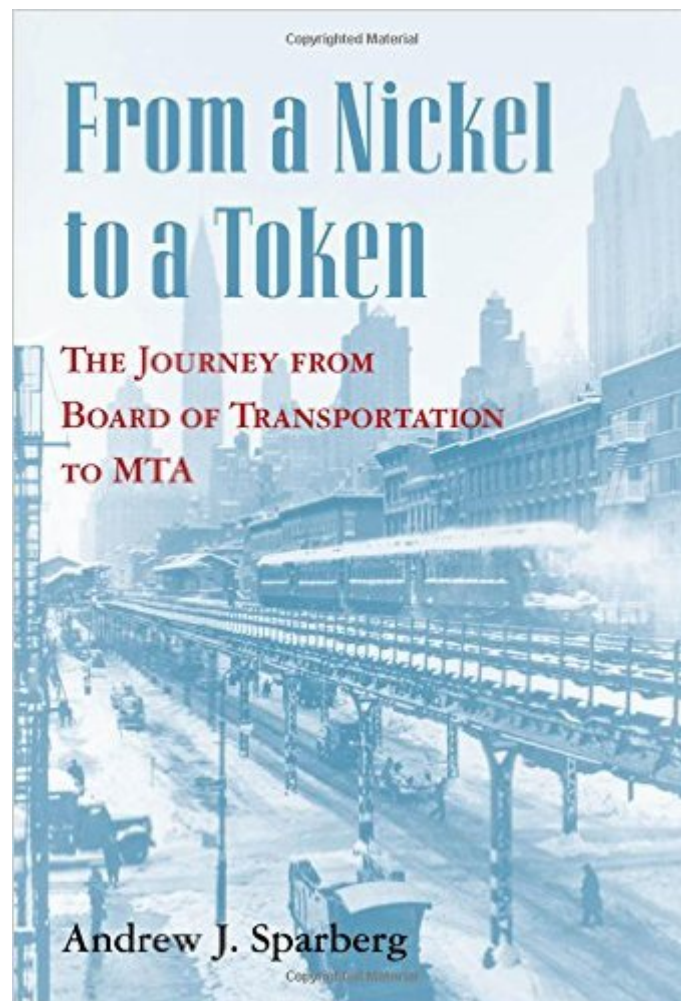


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# From A Nickel To A Token: The Journey From Board Of Transportation To MTA (Empire State Editions)



## Synopsis

A must-read for transit buffs, *From a Nickel to a Token* chronicles twenty specific events in the history of New York City's mass transit systems between 1940 and 1968, including large numbers of rare photos. Streetcars "are as dead as sailing ships," said Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia in a radio speech, two days before Madison Avenue's streetcars yielded to buses. LaGuardia was determined to eliminate streetcars, demolish pre-1900 elevated lines, and unify the subway system, a goal that became reality in 1940 when the separate IRT, BMT, and IND became one giant system under full public control. In this fascinating micro-history of New York's transit system, Andrew Sparberg examines twenty specific events between 1940 and 1968, book ended by subway unification and the MTA's creation. *From a Nickel to a Token* depicts a potpourri of well-remembered, partially forgotten, and totally obscure happenings drawn from the historical tapestry of New York mass transit. Sparberg deftly captures five boroughs of grit, chaos, and emotion grappling with a massive and unwieldy transit system. During these decades, the system morphed into today's familiar network. The public sector absorbed most private surface lines operating within the five boroughs, and buses completely replaced streetcars. Elevated lines were demolished, replaced by subways or, along Manhattan's Third Avenue, not at all. Beyond the unification of the IND, IRT, and BMT, strategic track connections were built between lines to allow a more flexible and unified operation. The oldest subway routes received much needed rehabilitation. Thousands of new subway cars and buses were purchased. The sacred nickel fare barrier was broken, and by 1968 a ride cost twenty cents. From LaGuardia to Lindsay, mayors devoted much energy to solving transit problems, keeping fares low, and appeasing voters, fellow elected officials, transit management, and labor leaders. Simultaneously, American society was experiencing tumultuous times, manifested by labor disputes, economic pressures, and civil rights protests. Featuring many photos never before published, *From a Nickel to a Token* is a historical trip back in time to a multitude of important events.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I have read several histories of the New York subway system, but this one is different. It doesn't cover the very early part, which is pretty well known anyway, but goes into great detail about the critical development of the system from the twenties right up to the time of the MTA. It includes a great amount of information about the cast of characters who were responsible for the way the subway turned out. I recommend this book for all subway fans and even regular riders of the great New York City subway system.

Andrew Sparberg has made a wise approach to the history of public transport in New York City from 1940 to 1968. Rather than a mere chronological account or a detailed list of route modifications, the author has given us brief chapters, each focused on a single important development, such as Chapter 7, "1948: Goodbye to the Nickel," in which he chronicles the doubling of the subway fare and the creation of fourteen inter-divisional free transfers. I found every chapter interesting. Even though, as a young transit fan, I observed each year, this book has provided me with much more understanding of the events. For example, I did not realize the extent that the Quill vs. Wagner contract negotiations were mere showtime. The principals already agreed on the outcome.---From his research, Mr. Sparberg has delivered to the reader a wealth of background information, and he has accomplished this succinctly.---The 150 photos, small but appropriate, have excellent captions. I also applaud the author for a useful bibliography and index.---Where the municipal government let down the riding public is given less mention: the willful reduction of East Side rapid transit from ten tracks to four; and the zero enthusiasm for extending the Pelham Bay Line to Co-op City.

Well written, interesting and comprehensive.

Great read for anyone interested in NYC transit history.

Good Book.

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