

The Public Ought To Know

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By Corey Bearak

Is Select Bus Service (“SBS”) Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)?

Last month we **discussed** City Council legislation to require Bus Rapid Transit (“BRT”) throughout New York City. At a Council hearing the day that column appeared, I **testified** for ATU Locals 1056 and 1179 on the need for a bus plan that focused beyond BRT to look at local bus service.

Sitting through the hearing and many meetings on the City's BRT proposals it calls Select Bus Service, I recently concluded SBS

resembles not BRT at all; in fact **SBS represents a significant enhancement and re-branding of existing *limited* bus service.**

Limited service evolved over the years. It once involved a bus running as a local than after a certain point running express until it reached its terminus. Over time, the MTA added stops along key transfer points in response to rider requests to enhance service. Only “local” buses previously served those mid- to end-point riders.

NYC's Department of Transportation and the MTA often describe their SBS collaboration as BRT. This results primarily from the plan feature that involves the installation dedicated bus lanes. It also includes off-bus fare collection. In a major departure from BRT, the SBS still focuses primarily on getting riders to subways or connecting bus routes. As a result, new BRT route opportunities that might deliver riders from outlying City neighborhoods to Manhattan's central business district remain to be developed. In some cases many existing express routes, if provided enhancements included with SBS, would look more like BRT.

How might the riding public respond if the City/MTA effort to *sell* SBS simply focused on how the dedicated bus lanes and other enhancements that rebrand limited service as SBS offers better service than currently offered? Would not a discussion on improving existing bus service engender a better partnership with the community?

***Corey Bearak can be reached at StrategicPublicPolicy.com. Find his ebook, *The Public Ought To Know*, at [Kindle](#), [Nook](#) and [Apple iBooks](#).**

