

For Immediate Release: Monday, October 31, 2011

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ATU Local 1056 Questions MTA on Safety

Testimony to the New York City Council
Committee on Civil Service and Labor and Committee on Transportation
by I. Daneek Miller, President/ Business Agent, ATU Local 1056

On behalf of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1056, thank you Chairman Sanders and Chairman Vacca, members of the committees and other concerned Council Members present. I am ATU 1056 President and Business Agent I. Daneek Miller. My members and I appreciate this opportunity to outline our safety concerns that impact not only our members – bus operators and mechanics who work for MTA New York City Transit's Queens bus division, but the riding public. We must view transit and bus service even more as customer-oriented, customer contact services; this puts these public servants out on the front line. As a result, Local 1056 members and other bus operators, face members of the public who use our buses and other transit facilities or just choose to “interact” with them.

Just what this means becomes clear when incidents occur that put bus operators at risk when an assailant takes a tire iron and smacks the window where the bus operator sits, when unruly riders decide to act out on moving buses endangering riders and passengers, when upset straphanger lash out at bus operators for service delays and crowded buses that result not from the actions of Local 1056 and or union members but from penny-wise and dollar foolish mismanagement decisions of MTA NYCT Bus Division managers and those above them at the Authority.

When the Authority decides not to replace a driver out sick and or a disabled bus and leaves a route short on buses, it means LONGER waits for riders, often at the worst times – something to think about as the weather becomes colder and more frequently inclement.

When the Authority opts to follow longer than appropriate bus inspection schedules it means unsafe equipment servicing riders and drivers put at risk in buses that just may break down, and do so unsafely. It likely means buses going out of services and runs on routes going uncovered and longer wait times for riders.

When the Authority fails to rebuild an antiquated depot it means whole lines of buses at risk of insufficient maintenance. The noise of buses running in that residential area across from senior housing also impacts on the community.



When the Authority delays in introducing new buses according to a sound replacement schedule, it impacts safety for riders and operators.

When the Authority fails to look out for its employees it could mean the use of questionable chemicals such as “Ultra Pure Solution, 32.5% (AU5 32 Diesel Exhaust Fluid, generic name Urea Acqueos Solution).

When the Authority fails to take seriously contractually required monthly safety meetings in each depot, it sends a wrong message and puts all at risks. A stark recent example likely to recur is flooding at bus garages that occurs following rainfall and snow-melting inside at the bus lifts.

When the Authority fails to follow through with other responsible government agencies, it puts riders, operators and an investment in buses as well as other transit facilities at risk. This particularly includes the NYPD and the lack of a presence at key bus hubs and transit subway-bus hubs such as Parsons Archer in downtown Jamaica.

Further, it involves the woefully inadequate response to illegal, unregulated and unsafe vans that ply bus routes, pick up passengers at bus stops and the subways, depriving the Authority of revenue, reducing passenger counts that the Authority uses to cut service and whose drivers race along city streets putting all at risk. If a vans has an operating license but operates along a bus route and picks up and discharges passengers at bus stops, it operates ILLEGALLY. Few vans follow ANY rules. The Authority must work with NYPD and TLC, and not just intermittently, to address this safety issue.

Finally, it involves decisions of the Authority to disinvest in bus service, particularly in Queens, when resources existed that could maintain service. Bus operators feel the brunt of rider angst and disgust at service reductions – as discussed above.

ATU Local 1056 and our colleagues at our sister locals remain committed to work with our elected officials and community members and the MTA to address these and other issues impact transit in our city.

ATU Local 1056 also commends the City Council for this hearing calling attention to the need to make reforms. The hearings last January in response to the December storm certainly made a positive impact; just witness how the MTA responded to Hurricane Irene as the end of August. We look for a similar positive response as a result of the sunlight this hearing sheds on MTA operations and policies.

Thank you.

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