

June 7, 2010

To the editor:

If things do not change, the MTA stands poised to radically cut and eliminate bus service throughout Queens: Q14, Q15, Q24, Q26, Q30, Q31, Q42, Q48, Q74, Q75, Q76, Q79, Q89, QM22, and QM23, X51. Residents, whether riders or not, must united to oppose these misguided and harmful actions. As a first step contact your state legislator to press the Governor and the MTA. Second, call 3-1-1 and demand that the Mayor who found the time to tape a commercial to urge Lebron James to play here to prevail upon the MTA to restore these cuts.

The MTA and its chairman/CEO Jay Walder refuse to exercise other options that would avert these cuts. Instead, they chose to balance their books on the backs of working people who depend on these bus lines each day. The issue is not money; it's policy. The public needs to know MTA chair Walder, once of Queens but late of London, testified to the NYS Assembly that he would NOT (emphasis added) apply new funding or saved resources to restore service cuts and eliminations. This is just an outrage. For many Queens residents, buses provide the ONLY transit option.

Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1056, which represents drivers and mechanics who work for MTA New York City Transit's Queens bus division, had made the case for funding. Legislators support the restorations. It remains a question of priorities. Senators Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand sponsor legislation to direct federal operating aid, previously denied NYC transit, to the MTA. The City Council proposed averting service cuts through \$90 million in unused federal stimulus monies to cover operations and applying some \$50 million in funds currently allocated to pay-as-you-go capital. The public needs to weigh in and make clear its preference for bus service over massive projects that offer meager service to Queens – and nothing for decades!

Moreover, we cannot let these harmful cuts stand at a time when MTA management takes care of folks at top, perpetuates wasteful policies and practices and advances costly megaprojects that benefit connected developers and other insiders. “Tell the MTA NO! Local 1056 will continue to speak out and urges our elected and community leader allies to keep up the pressure against the cuts and for using stimulus funding to fund the operations shortfall.

The bottom line is public transportation cannot be viewed as just a private sector, market driven service. It provides the economic and social hub of our society and the lifeline of all our citizens, and no reasonable person or entity can support these harmful service cuts. ATU Local 1056 will continue to rally, lobby and organize against the service cuts. Add your voice. Make it heard.

Sincerely,
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