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**New Yorkers WEAR RED to show your support for federal funding for public transportation infrastructure.**

**Don't *X* Out Public Transit**

Amalgamated Transit Union Local No. 1056, elected officials, including State Senator Toby Stavisky, Assembly Members Rory Lancman and Grace Meng, City Council Member Leroy Comrie, representatives of Assembly Members Michael Miller and David Weprin and advocates come together to support federal funding for public transit and oppose cuts currently on the table in Washington. At a news conference today, Tuesday, September 20, 2011, at the 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue bus stop adjacent to the Pedestrian Mall near 136-80 39th Avenue (west of Bowne Street, east of 138th Street) off the Main Street/ Roosevelt Station in downtown Flushing, members of the public are being asked to darn red clothing today and contact federal lawmakers with a simple message:

***Don't Cross Out ("X") Out Public Transit***

"Decisions in Washington can make or break our economy, particularly here in New York," stated **ATU Local 1056 president/business manager I. Daneek Miller**. "The President's *American Jobs Act* includes \$50 billion to upgrade America's road, rails and airports. We need our Members of Congress and Senators to back this legislation that invests in the economy and grow jobs in America. This starts with an investment in public transportation infrastructure. And that makes any plans to cut rather than increase federal support for mass transit inopportune and BAD for business. We will also call on the Governor Cuomo to stop raids on MTA dedicated tax funds by passing the Transit Funding Lockbox Bill (S4257/A6766)." Local 1056 represents drivers and mechanics who work for MTA New York City Transit's Queens bus division. More information and an on-line petition may be found at <http://supporttransit.org/>.

**Senator Stavisky** stated, "When the state Legislature makes an appropriation to the MTA, that money has to stay with the MTA. But in recent years, \$143 million earmarked for the MTA was diverted to help balance the state budget. The money is supposed to be in a 'lockbox,' but everybody has a copy of the key, and that means that the legacy for the MTA's ridership is service cuts and fare hikes."

"I co-sponsored the Transit Funding Lockbox Bill so that funds raised for mass transit actually go to support mass transit, and aren't diverted for other purposes -- bus and subway riders, and taxpayers, deserve no less," said **Assemblyman Lancman**.



**Assembly Member Meng** stated, "Right here in Flushing, what our people need more than anything is protection from the countless service cuts and fare hikes. The intersection of Main Street and Roosevelt Avenue is the third busiest intersection in New York City behind only Times Square and Herald Square while the 7 Train - Main Street station is the busiest station outside of Manhattan. I strongly urge Governor Cuomo to sign the Lockbox Act into law - money dedicated to public transit should go to transit, and nowhere else. The people of Flushing and Queens must be protected to ensure quality and affordability."

"I am honored today to stand with Local 1056 on this critical issue," stated **NYC Council Deputy Majority Leader Leroy Comrie**. "I urge Gov. Cuomo to sign the lock-box legislation and provide New Yorkers with much-needed relief from rising tolls and fares. In Queens, we have yet to realize overdue infrastructure improvements and many transit riders, who have some of the longest commutes in the City, are really not getting the type of service they need and deserve. Additionally, I am proud to join my colleagues in government and transit riders across the nation in voicing outrage over Republican proposals in the U.S. House to slash transit funding. In this harsh economy, Republicans cannot be allowed to pass punitive measures that will create even more hardships for working-class Americans."

**Assemblyman Miller** stated, "I stand with the ATU 1056 in their call for the Governor to sign this lock-box legislation. New Yorkers should never be subjected to steep fare hikes that take money from the pockets of the poor. Creating this lockbox will ensure that dedicated funds remain with the New York City transportation system and will not be used for any other purpose. I am proud to support this proposal, and any other proposal that protects the everyday riders of the New York City transportation system from outrageous fare hikes like those we have seen in years past."

President Miller outlined the federal issues, stating: "The House leadership proposes to cut more than one-third of federal funding across the board for public transit and surface transportation programs. If implemented, transit riders can expect service delays, fare increases and over-crowding, and businesses can face a period of no growth."

The transit union leader added, "The proposed federal transit cuts means increased unemployment and stranding many Americans without access to their jobs and basics such as grocery stores, medical and faith services."

"Our nation's economy and to thrive, New York – especially the Greater New York region," explained President Miller, "REQUIRES a thriving, working integrated mass transit system that relies on bus, subway and commuter rail service. This means reforming the existing antiquated federal funding formula to allow large population urban areas (population 200,000 or more) to use monies for transit operations."

Daneek Miller discussed the need for the lockbox, "When dedicated transit funds get diverted to the general fund, New Yorkers lose. After New York State diverted \$143 million of dedicated transit funding to balance its budget last year, New Yorkers got stuck with the harshest service cuts in a generation. The MTA cut 37 bus routes, 570 bus stops and two subway lines.

"Dedicated funds remain critical to public transit, particularly the operating budget. The Legislature approved certain taxes on the premise with the promise being the revenues would support mass transit. Dedicated taxes make up a vital 37% of MTA operating revenue. These funds, explicitly created to support the MTA provide a stable and reliable funding source. Without them, the MTA may look cut services further, delay construction projects, and increase already scheduled fare hikes. This would affect the lives of millions of people and hurt the state's economy."

"The MTA reduced and eliminated bus service throughout Queens last year. We need to reverse these harmful cuts. We need a commitment from the MTA that any additional Federal, State or City funding will support service (operations) restorations."

"Investment in transit projects also supports the construction and manufacturing trades,"

concluded President Miller. “The investment in solid, consistent, reliable transit service pays big dividends and any adherence to the short-sighted penny-pinchers will further setback the economy and slow if not derail our (economic recovery). A re-investment in operations makes certain our transit system moves people, workers and consumers, and students, to keep our urban centers dynamic.”

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Left to Right: Assembly Member Grace Meng, ATU 1056 President I. Daneek, State Senator Toby Stavisky, Assembly Member Rory Lancman, ATU 1056 Vice President Mark Henry, Lisa Del Valle representing Assemblyman David Weprin, and ATU 1056 Financial Secretary Luis Alzate.



Left to Right: ATU 1056 Financial Secretary Luis Alzate, ATU 1056 President I. Daneek, City Council Council Member Leroy Comrie, and ATU 1056 Vice President Mark Henry.

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