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ATU Local 1056 Testimony at Assembly MTA Hearing

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Submitted by ATU Local 1056, Daneek Miller, President/ Business Agent to the Assembly Standing Committee on Corporations, Authorities and Commissions, James Brennan, Chair

Amalgamated Transit Local 1056 appreciates this hearing as opportunity to comment on the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Budget and to share its concerns of regarding the future policies, planning and finances of the MTA. I am I. Daneek Miller, President and Business Agent for ATU Local 1056, which represents drivers and mechanics who work for MTA New York City Transit's Queens bus division. I also co-chair the MTA Labor Coalition.

As I did during the MTA's own budget [hearings](#), I commend former MTA Chair Joe Lhota, Authority President Tom Prendergast and Bus Division chief Darryl Irick for their leadership leading up to, and in the aftermath, of *Superstorm Sandy*. And I want to especially commend and praise the system's workers including the membership of ATU Local 1056 for stepping up and helping New Yorkers get by and making sure alternative modes of transit existed while we waited for subway service to resume system-wide. This demonstrates how buses matter both as a practical and flexible transit mode. Buses offer a cost-effective means to expand public transit options where none or insufficient modes exist.

Based on our experience and knowledge of the MTA system, ATU 1056 puts emphasis on the need to continue to rebuild bus service – [as we did this month](#) - and invest in the infrastructure necessary to keep our buses running and deliver the best service possible to New Yorkers and those who visit or work here. This includes the need to move on a new Jamaica Depot, to bolster the Casey Stengel Depot against flooding risks (Managers moved the buses to “higher ground” in advance of Sandy.) and to look at a bus terminal in Flushing that then Assembly member – now Member of Congress – Grace Meng proposed late last Spring.

Public transportation remains key to economic growth. No doubt certain folks in real estate and development recognized when they pushed for the Far West Side station between Javits and Times Square. For just that same rationale – economic growth and meeting the public's needs for transit, ATU 1056 advocates a better bus replacement schedule for Queens with too many old buses and modernized bus terminals to meet existing ridership capacities as well as the new Jamaica depot.



*Representing all hourly rated Employees
of the Queens Division, Who safely
Operate and Maintain Buses for MTA
New York City Transit.*

*Serving the communities of Queens,
Manhattan, and the Bronx since
January 23rd, 1935.*

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Longer term the MTA must focus on better use of its bus lines to serve intra-borough needs rather than just funneling riders to subways and rail. Better planning also increases utilization of some under-capacity routes that offer needed service and foster local growth.

We continue to advocate a review of certain MTA practices and operations. The newly created Business Service Centers – transit's “CityTime” – duplicate services and create inefficiencies that undermine rather than enhance worker productivity. Too many times we observe errors in paychecks, delays, mishandling of health claims and the like. Anyone who studies worker productivity knows the difference content worker brings on the job; the the BSC introduced a way to undermine our efforts to maintain that edge. As we observed with other so-called efficiency projects – from CityTime to E9-1-1, a scheme that claims to save dollars through technology too often diverts dollars from services and capital improvements and fail to deliver savings (if any at all) to justify the boondoggle.

Many also question how the MTA contracts out, including for professional services. This makes much of its legal services unnecessarily costly and inefficient.

Many pundits and commentators often glossed over how transit was shortchanged, if not outright robbed, by the city and state over the years.

The ATU Local 1056 also urges the MTA, state and city to seek and obtain more federal stimulus and other funding for transit. Our local works with concerned residents, our electeds, our brothers and sisters in labor and our International to effect this assistance from Congress.

Investing in transit means more than repairs, new cars and buses and routes; it means a stable, affordable fare that encourages mass transit use and provides an affordable means for workers and visitors to get around. It remains absolutely imperative that the MTA and the City and State officials who appoint the MTA board and all of our electeds remember the plight of our fellow working stiffs. Others have described reasonable revenue measures to the extent they prove necessary and ATU Local 1056 pledges to be part of any reasonable conversation that involve fairness and equity.

Thank you.