

Bus Rapid Transit to Enhance Not Replace Existing Bus Service

February 12, 2015

By Mark Henry, President and Business Agent ATU 1056 and John Lyons, President/ Business Agent, ATU 1179

The essence of Bus Rapid Transit, "BRT" for short, recognizes some simple facts: we have roads; we have buses; why not explore building routes that cost much less, get in operation sooner and serves the public? The City and MTA installed several routes that they describe as a form of BRT, they call "Select Bus Service," or SBS.

While the City Council considers advocating a plan to mandate more SBS, Amalgamated Transit Union Locals 1056 and 1179

strongly recommend instead an overall surface transportation plan that addresses overall bus service, including introducing more BRT, and new and enhanced local, limited and express bus service..

Any drive for BRT must not distract from the very apparent need to bolster local bus service, address congestion that hinders existing local, limited and express service and build new terminals where none exist in transit hubs such as downtown Flushing.

An overall plan would look at needs beyond BRT that also improve bus service:

*The MTA still needs to restore service curtailed since 2010.

*Why not expand bus service to operate 24 hours?

*Why not express bus service in Southeast Queens at the level that exists in Northeast Queens?

Why not introduce BRT from the Rockaways to Brooklyn or Manhattan or Bronx, and Queens to Lower Manhattan.

We need the leadership from transit and transportation planners and legislating a plan for just BRT may just let those who need to deliver overall excellent and NEEDED bus service an excuse to neglect core existing bus service.

ATU Local 1056 represents drivers and mechanics who work for MTA NYC Transit's Queens Bus Division and ATU Local 1179 represents bus operators, mechanics and supervisors who work from the Far Rockaway and JFK Depots of the MTA Bus division (formerly Green Bus). John Lyons is also Chair, ATU Legislative Conference Board

