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Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Earth Day Message, 2015:
Support (and use) public bus transit; it helps save our environment!

By **Mark Henry**, Chair, ATU NYS Legislative Conference Board and President/ Business Agent, ATU Local 1056, and **Bennie Caughman**, President/ Business Agent, ATU Local 1179

As we observe Earth Day 2015 and seek to improve our environment, we remind our policymakers and decision-makers to include public bus transit options and strengthen existing bus capabilities. As we seek to protect and upgrade our environment, it remains important to recognize how public bus transit enhances our environment and reduces our carbon footprint while supporting our economy and investment. After Sandy, New Yorkers experienced how ATU Locals 1056 and 1179 memberships and sister transit unions stepped up and helped New Yorkers get about on public buses while the MTA worked to resume subway service system-wide. ATU Local 1056 represents drivers and mechanics who work for MTA New York City Transit's Queens Bus Division. ATU 1179 represents bus operators, mechanics and supervisors who work from the Far Rockaway and JFK Depots of the MTA Bus division (former Green Bus lines). Besides Sandy, the service our members provide – during periodic subway service shutdowns to allow repairs – demonstrate how buses matter both as a practical and flexible transit mode. Buses offer a cost-effective means to expand public transit options, including sensible bus rapid transit, where none or insufficient modes exist.

ATU advocates a transformative, long-term initiative to make our transportation system best-in-class, but it cannot be done without federal dollars. Congress must pass the Obama Administration's [GROW AMERICA Act](#), a comprehensive multi-year program to fund infrastructure improvements; identifies \$115 billion for transit investment that New York should tap for bus and other transit improvements.

ATU relies on our extensive experience and knowledge of the MTA system. We emphasize rebuilding and enhancing bus service. We also call attention to the inherent need for dedicated funding for public investment in the infrastructure needed to keep our buses running. This ensures the MTA delivers the best service possible to New Yorkers and those who visit or work here. As the need for public bus service increases the MTA must progress on its facilities that maintain buses. As a prime example, the MTA must finish an expanded and redesigned Jamaica Depot; this facility can be the epicenter of new technology and efficiencies that help our environment and commuters. The MTA must bolster the Casey Stengel Depot against flooding risks (Buses got moved to “higher ground” in advance of Sandy.), make repairs to the Far Rockaway Depot that sustained heavy damage by Sandy, modernize the 165st Street Bus Terminal and make it passenger-safe and develop a passenger-friendly Hub for a congested downtown Flushing bus terminus.

Public transportation remains key to economic growth. Investors in real estate and developers recognize public transit's assets. For economic growth, a better environment and meeting the public's transit needs, ATU champions a better bus replacement schedule and more new buses overall for Queens, modernized bus terminals to meet existing ridership capacities and the new Jamaica depot. Longer term the MTA must better use its buses to serve intra-borough needs rather than just funneling riders to subways and rail. Rebranding is not the right option but expansion of bus transit helps any community grow.

On this Earth Day 2015, ATU locals across New York State support public bus transit; it helps save our environment, creates jobs and builds communities.