

Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Testimony to NYS Senate Queens Delegation
by
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Legislative Conference Board

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Thank you for the opportunity to advocate for necessary improvements to public transit in the City of New York. I am Mark Henry, President and Business Agent for Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local No. 1056; and Chair, ATU NYS Legislative Conference Board. I represent ATU Local 1056 which represents drivers and mechanics who work for MTA New York City Transit's Queens Bus Division and ATU Locals across the State of New York on their legislative concerns.

Transit in this city operated by MTA focuses primarily on economics, income level and not the population's needs; it's the Tale of Two Different New York's. The reality is that your income level can dictate where you live or how far you must commute to get to work, school or other basic necessities. The focus of transit improvements is not only on subways but must significantly **MUST** include Bus Service to better serving these communities.

As a mass transit professionals and a rider of Public transit in this city, the ATU Locals across this city and state offers unique and valuable insights. ATU Locals has always emphasizes that smartly investing in public transit keys growth in the economy and job creation We are your "Green Alternative" not Bike lanes or Pedestrian malls.

Where speed of service is concerned, Queens suffers greatly from its inferior bus network. Queens residents need a commitment to expand bus service and remove the impediments that slow the movement of buses. This includes enforcement of traffic restrictions that apply to vehicles and pedestrians.

Let's face facts, NEW subway lines are not in the plans for the "Outer Boroughs" such as Queens. That makes it imperative that the MTA's current schedules to replace existing buses remain on schedule. Any deviations are in fact costly and impactful on operational needs of Transit deserts such as Southeast Queens.

ATU supports bus service changes, expansions, and enhancement with collective thought and input. This includes better use of MTA bus lines to serve intra-borough and inter-borough public transit needs rather than just using most bus routes to funnel riders to subways and rail.

In Queens, we also need a clear understand of the need to project public transit as integral part of any new development.

Restore remaining bus service cuts from 2010. Expand (all) bus service to operate 24 hours. Introduce express bus service in Southeast Queens at the level that exists in Northeast Queens.

Buses, new and existing, require fully-functioning depots to repair equipment timely, and in many cases, overhauled or newly created terminals to facilitate commuter transfer between transit modes.

Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Testimony to NYS Senate Standing Committee On Corporations, Authorities & Commissions, March 1, 2019, page two

The MTA NYCT Jamaica bus depot in Central Jamaica NY lags decades behind schedule to improve underserved communities in Southeast Queens; it needs to be completed.

Downtown Flushing still needs a site identified for a full-scale bus terminal before development there makes it impractical.

In future planning, provide for more electric bus purchases and charging stations for the transition to a zero-emissions fleet, rather than current small pilot that introduces 60 all-electric buses

Frankly, a MTA capital budget that smartly invests in bus public transit it enables more bus routing alternatives also relieves stress on subways and roadways.

Funding is definitely needed. A bond referendum in support of Mass Transit is needed to provide the necessary monies to keep the economic engine of NY attractive and running. Also increase the current MTA surcharges by 2%.

In Closing, Improving better yet Investing in bus service offers the smartest, most strategic path to effectively upgrading public transit infrastructure and most importantly, public transit service, including in Queens.

Bottom line, reliable and viable transit like more buses better used correctly help decrease if not eliminate the “transit deserts” and increase access to a valuable commodity its people.

Thank you. I am available for questions and available to the committees upon request.

Thank you.

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