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Contact: Corey Bearak, ATU 1056/1179 Policy & Political Director (718) 343-6779/ (516) 343-6207

## **Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Earth Day Message, 2022: Strengthening Bus Transit Green & Clean**

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

As we observe Earth Day 2022 facing a continuing need for climate change, reducing reliance on fossil fuels and fostering the development of green and sustainable industries and jobs, we urge our policymakers and, the public at large, to support sound policies that sustain, protect and enhance our communities. After COVID shut down our subways and the chaos and devastation of Superstorm 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. Indeed, our bus operators and maintainers stood on the frontlines of the fight against COVID-19; some – too many --losing their lives; and we stepped up despite our members working under an expired contract that the MTA refused to update when similar transit public servants already worked under a new contract; fortunately our member now work under a new contract secure in a successful arbitration. Today, seek to renew a focus on bus public transit as a cost-effective and sound means to address transit deserts, improve our environment and to support our recovery from the effects of Covid-19.

This starts with smart investment in our human and basic infrastructure, Through ATU International, we strongly supported the inclusion of \$32 billion in emergency operating aid for public transportation in the federal Coronavirus relief package. We also supported the funding for state and localities knowing that funding shored shore up the support we receive from the State and the City. ATU now seeks to ensure the MTA bus redesign for Queens improves service for all Queens communities. It explains while ATU advocates for transit improvements on more than just subways or railroads. We advocate for improvements to bus public transit infrastructure to better serve many communities, especially the transit deserts..

We continue to advocate and testify on the need for progress on major projects and improvements in the MTA Capital Plan essential to ensuring the bus riding public enjoys reliable public transportation. In Queens, two projects that need attention include the (NEW) Jamaica Depot and Casey Stengel Depot (Flooding). The MTA NYCT Jamaica bus depot in central Jamaica lags decades behind schedule to improve underserved communities in Southeast Queens; it needs to be completed. Improvements still lag to protect the Casey Stengel Depot in Flushing against storm flooding. The Far Rockaway Depot sits in a Flood Zone where its buses serve an underserved part of Queens. These depots' buses service underserved, including transit starved, Queens neighborhoods. In Staten Island, where our sister local ATU 726 represents transit workers, massive flooding afflicts the Castleton Depot. Lack of equipment remains an ongoing issue. Providing fully-functioning depots to repair buses – new and existing – remains essential, including for system resiliency.

ATU recognizes, as do most experts, that, without a fully functioning transit system, we cannot expect the New York City – and thus our state and national – economy to fully recover and achieve growth beyond.

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). Our members provide additional transit options – during periodic subway service shutdowns to allow repairs; this demonstrates 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. This allows policymakers to deliver transit improvement early and most cost-effectively.

On this Earth Day 2022, ATU locals across New York State support public bus transit; it helps save our environment, creates jobs and builds communities.

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*Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1056*  
211-12 Union Turnpike  
Hollis Hills, NY 11364  
(718) 949-6444  
[www.Local1056.org](http://www.Local1056.org)

*Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1179*  
214-53 Jamaica Avenue  
Queens Village NY 11428  
(718) 736-1179