

ATU 1179 Comments on NYCDOT/ MTA SBS Cross Bay/Woodhaven Corridor Scheme

By John Lyons, President/ Business Agent, Amalgamated Transit Union Local No. 1179; and
Chair, ATU Legislative Conference Board.

As the NYC Department of Transportation and the MTA press ahead with their so-called Select Bus Service Scheme (“SBS”), ATU Local 1179 strongly recommends policymakers, planners, community members and their representatives look first at the problem and needs, rather than try to impose a specific remedy. 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). The exhibits and presentations impress those who view them but the analysis and underlying premise follows a faulty premise: SBS as a solution.

The current approach, even with all the outreach meetings more resembles the proverbial square peg into a round hole metaphor.

The greatest need remains how best to enhance local service along the Woodhaven/ Cross Bay Corridor. Thus any bus study should not start with SBS but with the need to improve bus service. In fact the SBS scheme would decrease the local service that requires enhancement.

A review of bus service along the corridor indicates few rides go the entire route end to end. In fact, the overwhelming number of rides involve getting on and off at points in between.

The core problem along Woodhaven/Cross Bay Blvds. involves traffic. Thus ATU 1179 notes two objectives of any transportation reforms along the corridor. First, improve bus speed along the corridor. Second, reduce traffic.

The volume of traffic on Woodhaven/Cross Bay Blvds already exceeds capacity along its existing configurations. Bus service must be sufficient to offer an incentive to leave cars at home. The current scheme/ approach offers nothing regarding efforts to encourage the driving public to switch to buses.

Improving bus service requires:

- *greater enforcement against double-parked vehicles. (For example, the primary cause of traffic between Pitkin Avenue and 160th Avenue southbound involves double and triple parked vehicles along the route. This must be fixed.)

- *addressing traffic choke points (bottlenecks) not currently being looked at in the SBS discussions (Union, Tpke. Eliot Avenue, Rockaway/ Liberty Avenue). Any successful plan must address this.

- *staggering buses to address bunching and insure riders can get on the first bus during peak ridership periods

- *connecting riders with other bus lines and subways (transfer points)

- *ensuring sufficient overall local bus service. SBS must compliment increased local service, not diminish it. Local buses remain vital to the community and the local economy.

Historically, the actual times saved with SBS has been statistically insignificant. Any new bus plan needs to examine the restructuring of schedules. Staggered service in key areas during peak hours, and, changes in expected time points throughout the day need to be adjusted accordingly. The Rockaways needs serious service changes as well. No easy access to or from the peninsula from anywhere else in Queens exists.

Without a comprehensive plan examining all relevant factors, as well as offering realistic solutions to current infrastructure issues, the only result realized will involve more congestion, bunching of buses and an overall reduction in the local service the communities along the Cross Bay/ Woodhaven Corridor desperately require.

November 7, 2014

Corey Bearak
ATU 1179 Policy & Political Director
Bearak@me.com
(718) 343-6779