

For Immediate Release: Friday, February 21, 2014

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

**ATU Local 1056 Opposes Van Application that impacts Q85/ Q111/ Q113  
Urges DOT, MTA, TLC, NYPD to Address Illegal Vans  
Not Just How Vans Get Licensed At Issue; How Vans Operate Matters!**

Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1056 questioned an application for a commuter van service from Rosedale to the Parsons/ Archer Subway, when the MTA already operates three bus routes that service the community and a fourth route that connects residents with another subway route. “The vans based in Nassau would duplicate existing bus service provided by the MTA – particularly the Q85, Q111 and Q113 routes, and, like most other so-called commuter vans, prey on bus routes, picking up and discharging passengers at MTA bus stops,” stated ATU 1056 President and Business Agent Mark Henry in testimony presented at a NYC Department of Transportation hearing at Queens Borough Hall, Friday, February 21, 2014 at 2:00 p.m. Rather than consider new van services, we use this opportunity to call on City and State agencies to work together address the scourge of vans that operate illegally and unsafely in many City communities including southeast Queens. “Whether or not vans get licensed remains a small part of the equation,” explained Mr. Henry. “Vans licensed and unlicensed operate illegally and unsafely operate along bus routes and deprive the MTA of revenue that it can re-invest in bus service.” ATU 1056 members – bus operators and mechanics – work for MTA New York City Transit’s Queens bus division and serve the riding public.

“In particular, NYPD, the Taxi and Limousine Commission and the MTA really need to coordinate their activities at such transit bus hubs as Parsons Archer and 179<sup>th</sup> Street Hillside,” added Mr. Henry. Just as the MTA and NYPD have focused on farebeating by some who ride our buses, these agencies need to work with the TLC to address the outright theft of fares by these vans. These hearings really need to include the MTA because vans directly impact revenues at time when communities seek bus service restorations and enhancement. DOT’s responsibility in determining bus stops with the MTA and the safe flow of traffic and overall pedestrian safety also must be part of any deliberations.”

“So-called commuter vans, unreliable, often unsafe and many more times than not operating illegally, offer straphangers a dangerous alternative to MTA bus service,” Mr. Henry said. “The woefully inadequate response to illegal, unregulated and unsafe vans allows these unsafe vans to ply bus routes, pick up passengers at bus stops and the subways, deprive the Authority of revenue and reduce passenger counts that the Authority uses to cut service. Their operation *de facto* recreates the two-fare zones we fought to eliminate.”

“Unlike the drivers such as 1056 members who operate MTA buses in Queens, these van drivers do not get recurrent training, do not find themselves subject to drug testing and periodic medical evaluations while they race along city streets putting all at risk. If a vans has an operating license but operates along a bus route and picks up and discharges passengers at bus stops, it operates **ILLEGALLY**. Few vans follow ANY rules. The Authority must work with NYPD and TLC, and not just intermittently, to address this safety issue.”



-30-