

# ATU Advocates for Safe Surface Transit

October 27, 2015

**By Mark Henry, President/ Business Agent, Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) 1056, and Chair, ATU NYS Legislative Conference Board**

Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) advocated greater oversight over surface transit by NYC agencies at City Council Hearing earlier this month. At the Thursday, October 22 Transportation Committee hearing, ATU Locals 1056 and 1179 opposed Int. No. 570 to ease on eliminate municipal regulations on commuter vans.



ATU supports Int. No. 861 to increase penalties for illegal van operations and Int. No. 860 to study safety related issues in the commuter van industry and suspend new or existing commuter van licenses pending its completion.

A majority of the commuter vans operate unregulated, unlicensed or illegally. These vehicles offer a commuting straphangers a dangerous alternative to MTA bus service. The van services already duplicate existing bus service provided by the MTA. ATU 1056 and ATU 1179 members – bus operators and mechanics – work for MTA New York City Transit's Queens Bus division and serve the riding public. Illegally operating commuter vans prey on bus routes, picking up and discharging passengers at MTA bus stops.

Unlike the drivers such as ATU (and TWU Local 100) members who operate MTA buses in Queens, van drivers face no requirement to maintain a Commercial Driver's License, receive no 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 van 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 Council must work to make sure that NYPD and Taxi and Limousine Commission, and not just intermittently, address this safety issue.

ATU also recommends the City Council enact legislation to restore its review, oversight and approval of any privatization of transit services, including these Commuter vans.