

**Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Opposes Int. 1557;
Testimony to NYC Council Committee on Transportation
by**

**Mark Henry, President and Business Agent, ATU Local 1056 and Chair, ATU NYS
Legislative Conference Board**

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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Int. 1557 requiring five year plans to install bus and bike lanes on New York City streets. 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.

As a mass transit professional 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.

The focus of transit improvements must not only be on subways but must significantly **MUST** include Bus Service to better serving these communities. Thus, ATU welcomes plans to look at more bus lanes but strongly opposes any mandate for installing bike lanes which very well may conflict with the need to install bus lanes along the same route.

Any example of just this conflict involves the installation of bike lanes along much of Queens Boulevard. A bus route operated by ATU (1179) members along the entire length of that main road running from Jamaica to the Manhattan side of the Ed Koch Queensborough Bridge received bike lanes which makes certainly complicates any installation of much needed bus lanes along that exact corridor!

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. This especially includes SMART traffic planning.

Smart traffic planning places a priority of installation of bus priority lanes ahead of any planning involving bus priority lanes AND pedestrian plazas. This legislation particularly **FAILS** in mandating bike lanes both in priority AND quantity ahead of bus priority lanes. Just makes absolutely no sense.

Let's face facts, NEW subway lines are not in the plans for the "Outer Boroughs" such as Queens. This makes efforts to improve bus service essential when it comes to moving New York forward.

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ATU strongly 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. Protective bus lanes become essential part of this planning and requiring bike lanes at level in excess of bus lanes presents clear conflicts with this priority imperative.

In Queens, we also need a clear understanding on the need to assign a priority to buses. The City Council can prove helpful by joining ATU and advocating for service priorities outlined in many prior testimonies to city and state legislative hearings:

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.

Provide fully-functioning depots to repair buses – new and existing – timely. 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.

Overhaul existing and/or create new create terminals to facilitate commuter transfer between transit modes. 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

More transit funding is definitely needed. A bond referendum in support of Mass Transit will provide the necessary monies to keep the economic engine of New York attractive and running. Also ATU recommends increasing 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 and other part of this city where responsible lawmakers share the much needed goals to decrease if not eliminate “transit deserts.” This approach means avoiding legislative restraints that restrict, if not wholly impair the ability to maximize improvements to realize the best possible bus public transit for those who live, work and/or visit New York City.

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

Thank you.

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