

**Statement of Mark Henry, Chair, Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) NYS
Legislative Conference Board & President/Business Agent, ATU Local 1056
on MTA Bus Redesign Plan for Queens**

January 17, 2020

“On its surface, this plan fails to recognize currently underserved neighborhoods. It also removes the necessary mobility needs of the borough with longer rides to areas not part of existing typical commutes,” stated Mark Henry, Chair of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) NYS Legislative Conference Board and President/Business Agent of Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1056 in Queens. “It ignore the transit needs of many parts of the borough, especially transit deserts with its emphasis on greater access to revitalized or gentrified neighborhoods. Most commutes within the Borough will be challenging for the average Queens rider.”

President Henry added, “It appears that consultants who view Queens as a car borough, not a necessary transit Borough, orchestrated this proposed bus route redesign. This so-called redesign attempts to mask a money-saving pitch it in no way represents a service enhancing remapping. The routes mean longer commutes and/or two and three step transfers to connect to other bus lines, rail or subways.”

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MTA Bus Redesign Workshop Schedule

Neighborhood	Date/ Time	Location	Address
Ridgewood	Jan. 21, 6:00- 8:00 p.m.	Greater Ridgewood Youth Council	59-03 Summerfield St, R
Flushing	Jan. 22, 6:00- 8:00 p.m.	Queens Flushing Library	41-17 Main St, Flushing,
Jamaica	Jan. 23, 6:00- 8:00 p.m.	Queens Educational Opportunity Center	15829 Archer Ave, Jama
Kew Gardens	Jan. 28, 6:00- 8:00 p.m.	Queens Borough Hall	120-55 Queens Blvd, Ke
Ozone Park	Jan. 29, 6:00- 8:00 p.m.	JHS 202 Robert H Goddard	138-80 Lafayette St, Ozo
Corona	Jan. 30, 6:00- 8:00 p.m.	Langston Hughes Library and Cultural Center	100-01 Northern Blvd, C
Long Island City	Feb. 4, 6:00- 8:00 p.m.	Jacob Riis Settlement	1025 41 Ave, Long Islan
Rockaways	Feb. 5, 6:00- 8:00 p.m.	RISE/Rockaway Waterfront Alliance	58-03 Rockaway Beach E Far Rockaway, NY 1169

You can also submit your comments, questions, concerns, and ideas [here](https://mta-nyc.custhelp.com/app/comments_queensbus).
<https://mta-nyc.custhelp.com/app/comments_queensbus>

Additional Commentary submitted to NYC Council, November 12, 2019

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 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 have always emphasized that smartly investing in public transit keys growth in the economy and job creation. We are your "Green Alternative" that properly resourced can induce those who rely on less efficient transportation modes to public transit.

The focus of transit improvements must not only be on subways; it must significantly **MUST** include Bus Service to better serve these communities. 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.

Let's face facts: No plans include NEW subway lines for the "Outer Boroughs" such as Queens. This makes efforts to improve bus service essential when it comes to moving New York forward. Look at the MTA Plan spread sheet; all you see for buses involve these acronyms: "SGR" (state of good repair), "NR" (normal replacement) and "SI" (system improvement as in improved quality replacement bus). What you see not at all in Queens: "NE" (network expansion.... expanding service).

Too often policymakers and advocates ignore the utility of bus public transit; instead they implement BIKE LANES, Pedestrian malls and VISION ZERO initiatives which, while healthy alternatives, contradict and impede the growing need for PUBLIC Transit, specifically reliable Bus Service, to operate. Ferries and light rail must be incorporated and connect with our Bus, Rail and subway networks.

We need to end this impractical mindset against buses and commit to expand bus service – especially in Queens which suffers greatly by the inferior bus network that currently exists there.

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.

In Queens, we also need a clear understanding on the need to assign a priority to buses. Our legislators can prove helpful by joining ATU and advocating for service priorities outlined in many prior testimonies at 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 to Manhattan.

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. Improvements still lag to protect the Casey Stengel Depot in Flushing against storm flooding.

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.

The MTA plan must 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

Frankly, MTA's capital budget that smartly invests in bus public transit options not also assists many residents who currently rely on personal vehicles, it enables more bus routing alternatives that relieve stress on subways and roadways. Please refer to Appendix A for the capital investment in buses and related infrastructure that ATU recommends in order to facilitate an overall strategic approach involving greater use of buses.

Funding Issues

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. ATU recommends increasing the current MTA surcharges by 2%.

The current NYC Hotel Network could generate \$100 million with a simple \$5 per day assessment that must be directed to transit service improvements.

The Federal government needs to change the formula for public transit needs in New York State. ATU talks not only of funding for transit service but capital projects as well.

The capital investment in buses and related infrastructure ATU recommends facilitating an overall strategic approach involving greater use of buses:

► In the absence of any plan to revamp lines servicing southeast Queens to address both populations increases and existing and projected public transit needs;

- ▶ Identify bus depots which need repair or replacement and schedule such, with a focus on real progress on Jamaica Depot;
- ▶ Identify any need for new bus terminals – downtown Flushing plagued by congestion and related issues – remains a prime candidate;
- ▶ 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;
- ▶ Acquire more buses – 200 additional per year over ten years beyond what’s proposed in Fast Forward, to deploy on existing, revised and/or new routes – a key component of any improvement plan
- ▶ Address congestion on local bus lines particularly during rush hours; this means using the data from the “Bus Trek” system to address bus schedules in a shorter timetable than currently exists;
- ▶ Make standard on every new bus not just outfitting 1,000 buses – audible pedestrian turns warning systems and specify additional cameras on all new vehicle orders;
- ▶ Include long overdue ADA-compliant audible announcements on all buses;
- ▶ Introduce off-bus fare collection not just for SBS in Queens ASAP but all routes;
- ▶ Introduce dedicated bus lanes for local and limited bus routes such as enjoyed in Manhattan, with proper enforcement; explore cameras in bus stops and use of cameras in lanes that limit parking during rush hours; to generate revenue for service enhancements;
- ▶ Include enforcement against illegal Commuter Van operations as part of the existing plan that advocates increased enforcement presence on bus routes where needed, including identifying times and areas of more frequent operator assault and streamlining communications between (the MTA’s) Department of Buses and law enforcement;
- ▶ Integrate into the command center where it empower staff to providing real-time service and schedule information to all bus operators by 2020 and deployment of on-street dispatchers to targeted locations and terminal points to help keep buses moving and resolve issues;
- ▶ Implement free transfers between commuter rail and public bus transit – as currently exist between buses and subways and local and express buses – which pays for itself (see Analysis A below);
- ▶ Management employment practices – including inconsistent discipline – remain an issue and require re-thought when it results in a need to hire and train someone new to replace someone already trained and experience;

► Charge the entity looking at BQX – to also review linking the waterfront neighborhoods via buses, which can occur almost instantaneously. (All the more important as funding issues remain with the rail version); and

► 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.

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Analysis A:

Currently no bus to rail or rail to bus transfer exists.

So many **opportunities** exist to connect bus riders to rail. It just may relieve some the parking strain that neighborhoods near rail hubs experience; moreover, that helps local merchants in places such as Queens Village and Bayside where committed patrons often drive around looking for parking; others might drive to Long Island malls.

So why not apply the cost of the bus fare to offset part of the LIRR fare? If 1,000 commuters take advantage of this, it involves \$5,000 per day, \$25,000 per week, \$1.3 million. Perhaps one-half take the subway or drive. That means additional revenue. 500 monthly ticket LIRR fares from Zone 3 totals \$1,308,000. Interesting math. A wash.