



CSI complex devoid of city bus service

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College of Staten Island students walk toward the campus after getting off a bus on Victory Boulevard near the school's entrance.

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. -- In a borough sorely under-served by public transportation, the College of Staten Island sits as a sprawling complex without city bus service. And folks at the school are trying to change that.

A study by the college shows that some areas of the Island have a heavy concentration of bus stops, but the CSI campus also lacks adequate bus stops on surrounding streets.

Advocates at the school, including a professor and the student government, are trying to make their case to the MTA, which continues to maintain that service can't be added because it would add cost.

But other large complexes, like Sea View Hospital Rehabilitation and Home and the Teleport industrial park, have bus stops on their campuses, so CSI simply wants the same level of service for its thousands of students.

"Staten Island is very poorly served by (public) transit," said CSI professor Jonathan Peters.

"The College of Staten Island happens to reside in one of the biggest holes in the city."

"Bus 93 terminates right at the door of the campus, so we're just looking to get the bus a little further into the campus," Peters said.

"The college would allow the MTA to run through the campus if they want, and they probably should."

They also complain that the area around the campus is under-served, compounding the problem.

The campus currently runs a shuttle bus service for students with a daily average ridership of 1,900 people, and the current MTA bus stop at the entrance to CSI is the seventh busiest stop on the Island behind areas such as

the ferry terminal and the mall, Peters said.

"We're a major hub," he added.

And an MTA bus traveling through the campus would benefit more than just CSI employees and students.

Given the number of people that drive to and from the campus, Peters explained that better bus service for the campus could take between 300 and 400 cars off of the nightmarish section of Victory Boulevard daily, alleviating some of the chronic traffic tie-ups along that corridor.

MTA Board members Mitch Pally and Allen Cappelli proposed reinstating \$20 million for services to be split among New York City Transit, the Long Island Rail Road and the Metro-North Railroad, at the MTA's Nov. 16 board meeting.

Out of a \$12.6 billion annual MTA budget, Cappelli felt that finding the \$20 million to restore or enhance services sorely missed would be relatively easy if the rest of the boards resolve to do so is there.

"We've been cutting back for a number of years, but we will have to continue to cut non-transportation issues," Cappelli said.

"We're making some calls to some public officials to help make the argument as well."

Although Cappelli declined to identify the public officials that he has reached out to, he did say if the rest of the board approves the \$20 million request that one of the service "enhancements" he is eyeing is extending an MTA bus through the CSI campus.

"We're trying to create a pot of money to provide services such as that (the CSI bus service)," Cappelli said.

In a letter of support from several transportation advocacy groups sent Nov. 29 to MTA acting Chair Andrew Saul and Executive Director Joseph Lhota it voiced support for the additional \$20 million to be reallocated to restore some of the services cut in June of 2010.

Some of what was cut include: 20 local and 12 New York City express bus routes, hours of operation on 39 local bus routes, 570 bus stops and other rail and subway services, according to the letter signed by NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign, Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, Transportation Alternatives and Tri-State Transportation Campaign.

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