



College of Staten Island to MTA: Please serve us better

By Jamie Lee

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College of Staten Island associate professor Richard Flanagan needs binoculars to see the front gate of the Willowbrook campus from the Center for the Arts, illustrating the need for MTA bus service within the facility.

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. —WILLOWBROOK — According to representatives of the College of Staten Island, there are 1,600 bus stops within the boundaries of the borough.

Yet if you combine the ridership of the two buses that stop at the Willowbrook campus' front gate, the S62 and S93, with that of the CSI shuttle bus from the Staten Island Ferry, you would have the third-most-trafficked bus stop on the Island.

Increasing service there, then, would seem like a no-brainer.

Instead, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority has stonewalled proposals to extend city bus service onto CSI's Loop Road and make one stop in the heart of the campus at the Center for the Arts.

"Extending the bus routes onto the campus would streamline public transportation for students, faculty and staff members coming and going from CSI," said Associate Professor of Political Science Richard Flanagan, during a sitdown with elected officials and CSI group leaders last week.

With an enrollment of nearly 14,000 students — and just under 3,000 parking spaces — the combined ridership of individuals coming to campus via bus service is more than 2,000 individuals per day.

That's more than get on and off at the intersections of Hylan Boulevard-New Dorp Lane or Bay Street-Victory Boulevard, as well as the Ring Road stop in front of the Staten Island Mall.

In fact, the only two locations that would see more bus traffic are the St. George Ferry Terminal and the Eltingville Transit Center.

"This is standard A-B-C, 1-2-3 stuff in terms of public transportation," said Associate Professor of Finance Jonathan Peters. "You move the buses to where the people are and where they're going. The MTA keeps saying they want to better serve the community, but how do you do that without adding routes and service?"

There was complete agreement with the student representatives at the meeting, which included state Assemblyman Lou Tobacco (R-South Shore) and City Councilman Vincent Ignizio (R-South Shore), who have

long been proponents of a similar route extension of the S74 in Charleston.

"As Prof. Flanagan and Prof. Peters explained today, there is a great need for improvement in our bus service on campus," said Ben DeAngelis, representing the Straphangers Campaign of CSI's branch of the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG). "The current system means that students have to transfer from their MTA bus to the loop bus, or walk into campus, taking up valuable time. With a main hub centrally located, students could get to class easily when arriving on campus."

The elongated, and inconvenient, commute has translated to negative effects in the classroom, he said.

"As an organization, we believe that in order for students to do well in class and get the education they need, transit to and from campus must be made as smooth as possible," DeAngelis charged. "For too long, Staten Island has been ignored by the MTA, and now as the borough and college's population grow, we need to accommodate for these changes."

And the fact that the S62 route included a path along Loop Road during the 1960s, '70s and '80s before CSI moved to Willowbrook has caused some to ask why it can't simply be restored.

"The former bus route [which was No. 112], which is now the s62, included going through the property of the former Willowbrook State School," said Dr. Alan I. Benimoff, referencing a 1969 bus map of the Island. "This should strengthen the case for running the S62 through the CSI campus."

Routing S62 buses onto the campus and adding a stop at the central Center for the Arts would create a 1.7-mile diversion and tack on some five to 10 minutes in additional travel time, said New York City Transit spokesman James Anyansi.

"We think it would be a major inconvenience for the customers who live west of the college," he said.

In addition, the S62's schedule was designed to meet ferries arriving and departing from St. George, and changes in its timetable would result in missed connections, he said. On top of that, extending the route would increase operating costs.

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