



Funding secured by Schumer, McMahon for shuttle between Staten Island colleges, ferry terminal

By Glenn Nyback

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Sen. Charles Schumer announces the new shuttle service at St. John's University today. Dave Martin, left, presidential chief of staff for Wagner College, the Rev. Patrick J. Griffin, executive vice president for St. John's University's mission and branch campuses, Schumer and Brian Browne, assistant vice president of government relations at St. John's.

The campus shuttle buses that climb steep and curvy Grymes Hill and bring students at Wagner College and St. John's University to and from the Staten Island Ferry have been smiled on by Uncle Sam, thanks to Senator Chuck and Congressman Mike.

U.S. Sen. Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Rep. Michael E. McMahon (D-Staten Island) collaborated on the \$260,000 in federal funding, which will cover the cost of running the shuttle for two years. The funds will ease the burden on the two schools, which have been sharing the expense of running Wagner's 11-passenger vans and were seeking help footing the bill in the current belt-tightening climate.

The shuttles, which have been running for six years, and carry about 200 students a day, are a perk Schumer says reduce traffic and improve safety for students who otherwise would walk to other bus routes.

"This is a very good, worthwhile purpose," Schumer said.

And the shuttles might even improve students' love lives, he said, helping students at St. John's campuses in other parts of the city connect after class and on weekends.

"There might be someone you want to date, and you live in Queens," Schumer said. "We want a happy group of students as well."

McMahon's spokeswoman, Lauren Amendolara, said her boss worked very closely with St. John's in preparing the initial request that led to inclusion of the shuttle funds in an omnibus bill that passed the House on July 23.

The Senate Appropriations Committee approved the expenditure and the full Senate will vote on the omnibus bill when it reconvenes.

"This funding will provide for a convenient way for students to get to school without burdening their budget," McMahon said. "It is also an environmentally friendly program - getting more cars off our roads and alleviating the congestion in our already crowded parking lots. This shuttle service will provide a long-awaited benefit for Staten Island students."

Schumer extolled McMahon as "a leader in the House. ... I am happy to work with him to get this done. I couldn't have a better partner."

When she lived on campus, St. John's senior Fortune Attardo of New Dorp said the shuttles were more convenient than transferring between city bus routes. Plus, the trip can take less than 10 minutes, depending on traffic. "This was my way to get to the city, and pretty much get off the hill," she said.

"In this ever-tightening economy, and given the increased transportation costs faced by our students, faculty and staff, I applaud Sen. Schumer for his support of our collaborative efforts to move more Staten Island campus students around in a quick, cost-efficient and environmentally friendly manner," St. John's President the Rev. Donald J. Harrington said in a statement.

Schumer pledged to do whatever he can to make the funding permanent after the two years are up.

Wagner President Richard Guarasci said in a statement that the shuttles will help students experience "the best of both worlds: A traditional campus on a beautiful park-like borough and easy access to Manhattan."

The College of Staten Island runs its own shuttle bus between its Willowbrook campus and the ferry, and also has benefited from federal funding, granted through the state Department of Transportation, though this year's grant was smaller than the year before, and doesn't cover the entire cost of operating the buses, said CSI professor and transportation expert Jonathan Peters. CSI, like Wagner and St. John's, is also seeking a more permanent funding source. Schumer said CSI need only reach out to his office to get in the running for other federal dollars.

The CSI shuttle was initially given a \$410,000 Job Access and Reverse Commute Program grant to get the service up and running, but received just \$187,000 this year, Peters said, "reducing the amount when we were actually looking for more."

The CSI shuttle buses carry between 1,400 and 1,600 riders a day, with a large chunk of those newcomers to transit, Peters said.

-Contributed by Maura Yates

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