



Struggle-La-Lucha.org

# Get our children to school on time!

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SLL photo: Greg Butterfield



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New York — A rally in Brooklyn’s Cadman Plaza on March 19 demanded better school transportation. They were sick and tired of school bus routes that guarantee children having to wait for and stay on school buses for too long.

The rally was organized by Parents to Improve School Transportation (PIST) and the Comité Timon. These groups are demanding a school bus bill of rights to ensure respect for the riders’ civil rights, the workers’ job rights and everyone’s safety.

It’s not the bus operators or matrons’ fault. They want to do the best job in getting children needing special education to school.

A delegation of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1181-1061 members came to support the fight for transportation inclusion, equity and reform for students.

New York City spends over \$1 billion a year on transportation but the system is all screwed up. Many school bus routes are misdesigned.

Children often have to spend more than an hour on a bus each way with no bathroom breaks. This is especially rough for kids with disabilities.

The problems started when billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg tried to break ATU Local 1181-1061. Mayor Money Bags ripped up the Employee Protection Provisions that guaranteed living wages and work conditions.

The EPP were removed from a significant fraction of the route packages that private companies bid upon. This drove down the companies' bids overall. The bus outfits took the difference out of newly hired workers' wages and benefits.

As Tomas Fret, Recording Secretary ATU Local 1181-1061 said, we want to make the job a career again. Mothers spoke of their children dreading the long bus rides.

"The Department of Education, the bus companies, the state and city officials, lie about the crisis of school buses in New York," said Greg Butterfield, whose two daughters attend Brooklyn public schools. "They lie about the safety of conditions for students with special needs, drivers and aides. They lie about the safety of all students, teachers and school workers."

"And at the national level they lie about U.S. wars," Butterfield added.

"The budget measure signed by President Biden this week cut money for COVID public health measures in order to send billions of dollars more in deadly weapons to Ukraine. U.S. sanctions on Russia are driving up gas prices that not only hurt drivers today, but will be used as an excuse by the bus companies and the DOE for why they can't afford to make the changes to protect children and workers."

After the rally people marched across the Brooklyn Bridge to the Department of Education headquarters on Chambers Street. It's located in an old courthouse whose construction 150 years ago Boss Tweed used to loot \$20 million.

That sort of corruption and neglect causes misery for thousands of schoolchildren today. Stop violations of access to education!

