



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Daniel L. Squadron

Senator Squadron, Speaker Silver, Council Member Chin Propose First-Ever Local Permit System for Intercity “Chinatown Buses”

DANIEL L. SQUADRON February 4, 2011

| ISSUE: **TRANSPORTATION, ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORT**



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 4, 2011

Electeds Introduce Legislation that Would Allow NYC to Regulate Curb Pick-Ups and Drop-Offs

Senator, Speaker and Council Member Bring Together Community Leaders and Bus Companies to Combat "Wild West" in Chinatown and Citywide

New York, NY—State Senator Daniel Squadron, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, and Council Member Margaret Chin announced a new bill being introduced in the state legislature today to create a first-ever permit system for intercity buses that pick up and drop off passengers on the street in New York City. The permit system would replace today's chaotic lack of rules, which has caused myriad problems for communities and bus companies -- including congestion, pollution and inefficiency. The permit system is intended to improve the health, safety and welfare of the public and neighborhood residents—addressing challenges that have arisen with the rapid expansion of the affordable bus industry in the last 15 years.

The proposed legislation would authorize New York City to pass a local law to regulate intercity passenger buses through a permit system, which would include assigning pick-up/drop-off locations, providing for community board and MTA input and regulating enforcement. Permits could be issued for up to three years, and holders would pay the city an annual fee. (See further details below.)

State Senator Daniel Squadron said, "With no rules to regulate buses, the streets of Chinatown are like the wild west and that doesn't work for bus companies or the community. Today's system makes it hard to operate a business within the bounds of the law, and plagues the community with noise, pollution, and chronic congestion. I am pleased to be introducing this legislation with Speaker Silver and Council Member Chin to bring order to the chaos, benefitting bus companies and the community alike."

Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver said, "For too long, the streets of Lower Manhattan, and particularly Chinatown, have been overrun by private, intercity buses that have no clear rules for where and how they are allowed to operate. Because of a lack of adequate regulation of this industry, we have had to contend with traffic congestion, pollution caused by idling buses and dangerous conditions for pedestrians. Today, we are introducing legislation that will bring order to that chaos by allowing the city to regulate this industry in a way that will improve the quality of life for our community and make our streets and sidewalks safer."

City Council Member Margaret Chin said, "This bill offers a pathway for veteran intercity bus service operators who have been denied the necessary permits in the past. It is imperative that we work to incorporate these services into the fabric of our transit network. It will directly address their needs by designating easily identifiable pickup and drop-off points and give intercity bus operators the quality work environment they deserve. This will protect passengers of intercity bus companies and ensure that better business practices are maintained."

"The intercity bus business has grown exponentially in the past few years, and with it problems with traffic congestion, sidewalk obstructions, noise and neighborhood quality of life concerns," said City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn. "I want to thank Speaker Silver and Senator Squadron for introducing this thoughtful bill that will for the first time allow New York City to create standards and a process for appropriately regulating these previously unregulated businesses, to better manage when and where they make their discharges and pickups to minimize neighborhood disruptions and to require insurance, to best protect the safety and security of passengers and the public at large.

Pei Lin Liang, President of the Fung Wah bus company, said, "I am pleased to join our elected representatives from the State and City levels to announce the introduction of this important legislation. For years, the bus parking situation in Chinatown has been chaotic. The lack of regulation has caused problems for the community and for the bus companies as well. Our company, Fung Wah, was the first long-distance bus company to operate out of Chinatown. For 13 years we have been waiting for a system that will allow us to conduct our business more easily and in harmony with the local community. With this bill, everyone wins.

David Crane, Chair of Manhattan Community Board 3's Transportation Committee, said, "Regulation of intercity long distance buses has been a CB 3 priority for several years—and the need grows every year. More and more residents have contacted the Board for help with their concerns of congestion, pollution, lack of access on sidewalks, and safety. The bus companies need regulations that provide ways for them to comply with the law, to operate safely, and coexist on our congested streets. Community Board 3 has been working with City agencies and Senator Squadron, Assembly Speaker Silver, and Council Member Chin to create a plan that will improve long distance bus operations. We are very appreciative that our elected officials have worked with us and made these first steps toward resolving the bus issue a reality. We also very much appreciate that they are supportive of community review through the community board."

Manhattan Community Board 1 chairperson Julie Menin said, "In an area that has some of the highest levels of air pollution in the city, this new legislation will not only improve air quality for residents and workers in the neighborhood, but also will ameliorate pedestrian safety and traffic congestion. I applaud Speaker Sheldon Silver, Senator Daniel Squadron and Council Member Margaret Chin for their leadership on these important community issues."

Justin Yu, President of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, said, "This legislation is an important step. We now have a solution that will help both the community and the bus companies at the same time."

Virginia Kee, community leader, said, "Safety must be a top priority, and this legislation will help ensure the safety of passengers, community residents, and others. I look forward to its passage into law and thank Senator Squadron, Speaker Silver and Council Member Chin for their efforts."

Jimmy Cheng, President of the United Fujianese American Association, said, "We need more organization of loading and unloading passengers in Chinatown. This legislation will allow the community and bus companies to work together with the city to create a clearer system."

Christopher Kui, the Executive Director of Asian Americans for Equality, said, "I commend Senator Squadron, Speaker Silver and Council Member Chin's intercity bus permitting proposal in bringing together community leaders, residents and local businesses to establish legal permitting guidelines to protect the safety of our neighborhoods."

Mae Lee, Executive Director of the Chinese Progressive Association said, "While the Chinatown buses provide an economical way to travel, a recent survey that we have been conducting shows that Chinatown residents are very concerned about the impact that traffic congestion and idling has on air quality and health. We hope that bus permits will create a system that can resolve these problems."

###

NEW YORK CITY INTERCITY BUS PERMITTING PROPOSAL

The proposal would authorize New York City to pass a local law to regulate intercity passenger bus service through a permit system. The system would:

Prohibit intercity buses from picking up and dropping off passengers on city streets except at approved pick-up and drop off locations

Assign a city agency to implement and enforce the permitting system

Establish a community board review process for issuing permits and designating locations/relocations for bus pick-up and drop-off

Require consultation with the MTA in designating locations/relocations for bus pick-up and drop-off and issuance of permits

Provide public notice of all permit applications within five days of submission

Require applicants to obtain five thousand dollar surety bonds

Mandate agency review, and approval or denial, within ninety days of submission of application

Require the display of permits in buses

Exempt school buses, sight-seeing buses, transportation authority buses, municipal buses and others

Authorize a maximum \$275 annual fee to be credited to the city as well as civil penalties for violations

Prohibit the adoption of any system until there has been a public hearing