

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Parents from all five boroughs come together to Improve school transportation.

NYC, January 22, 2011

On a bitter cold Saturday afternoon, January 22, twenty-five people including Union representatives, parents and public school professionals came from all five boroughs to a meeting co-sponsored by the Penn South Parents' Committee in Chelsea and the Parents to Improve School Transportation (better known as PIST). They came from as far as Bayside, Queens and Staten Island with the goal to consolidate efforts to change the problematic situation of special education school busing under the Department of Education's Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT) whose offices are located in Long Island City, Queens.

Transportation issues include: mass cutting of routes every September that leads to long, overcrowded rides for the children in disregard of their special needs; itineraries that cause students to arrive late to school and/or leave early; grouping a much wider range of ages and disabilities together on the bus than would be acceptable in the classroom; and frequent, sudden changes to what bus a child must ride.

The gathering heard from Rebecca Ramos, vice president of the elected parent body known as Citywide Council on Special Education. They heard from Michael Reilly of the Community Education Council of District 31 (Staten Island) where parents have sued OPT to reinstate general education busing for 7th and 8th graders. He stated that during this first fall without the yellow buses, already three students have been struck by cars while walking on some of the many Staten Island streets, which have no sidewalks. Staff and parents from various schools, and other advocates for the rights of people with disabilities, made comments on how to confront and raise awareness of the busing issues. Leading members of Amalgamated Transportation Union Local 1181, which represents yellow school bus drivers, escorts and mechanics, were present and pledged their support. A representative of TWU Local 100 invited the meeting organizers to speak at a Transportation Town Hall being organized by several labor and community groups this coming March 10.

Readers are invited to visit www.pistnyc.org for multimedia information, including videos of parent testimonies from this past November, and to learn about upcoming activities as they are planned.

For Information, Please contact: pistnyc@gmail.com