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IN ORDER TO ENSURE RIDERS CONTINUED SERVICE, MTA CHALLENGES UNIONS TO SETTLE CONTRACTS BY NEXT WEDNESDAY

At 10:00 a.m. today, MTA's Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky made the following statement at MTA's Gateway Headquarters:

"Yesterday one of our unions, the bus drivers union (UTU), delivered a notice of intent to strike at the end of next week, and of course we are still operating day to day with the mechanics union (ATU). We are disappointed that the unions are again leaving our passengers, most of whom totally depend on our busses and trains to reach to their jobs, schools and medical providers – worried and angry.

"But we are not surprised.

"MTA unions have always waited to the last minute to make a deal. At the eleventh hour, the MTA has to consider the welfare of its riders and the public, while the unions only have to consider improvements for their already well-paid members. So there is always time at the last minute to address the benefits the union wants to add to its contracts, but never time to address the MTA's issues. We cannot allow that to happen in this round of negotiations – too much is at stake.

"So I am issuing this challenge to the union leaders. Let's set a goal of reaching agreement by 5:00 p.m. Wednesday, September 13th. I believe all we need is 48 hours of intensive bargaining to resolve all of the outstanding issues. So if we begin meeting again on Tuesday, we will have enough time. But the MTA negotiators are ready to get back to the table as early as 6 PM tonight.