

# Editorial

## Access-A-Ride Veto Hurts Those Most Vulnerable

"It's déjà vu all over again," legendary baseball figure Yogi Berra is supposed to have said. The remark loses its amusing qualities when applied to two successive governors of New York state vetoing bills by Queens legislators that would extend Access-A-Ride service into Nassau County.

Access-A-Ride, also called paratransit, provided by the MTA, offers shared ride, door-to-door transportation service to people who are unable to use public transportation due to disability. Many Queens residents, especially senior citizens, and many of whom live in parts of Queens where subway and bus service are limited, use Access-A-Ride. Many of those same users of Access-A-Ride have serious medical needs. Also, for many Access-A-Ride users, the nearest physicians' offices and hospitals are in Western Nassau County.

Access-A-Ride does not transport passengers into Nassau County. When Queens residents need to reach a destination in Nassau County via Access-A-Ride, they must ride to the county line, cross a busy major thoroughfare and board Able-Ride, a comparable service that Nassau County provides. Both services require advance appointments. Since there is no guarantee that Access-A-Ride or Able-

Ride will coordinate schedules, the chances of being late for a medical appointment are quite high. Many times, people who rely on Access-A-Ride find that the only way they can keep a medical appointment, visit family members or reach any destination that others can access readily by either public or private transportation is instead to use private car services.

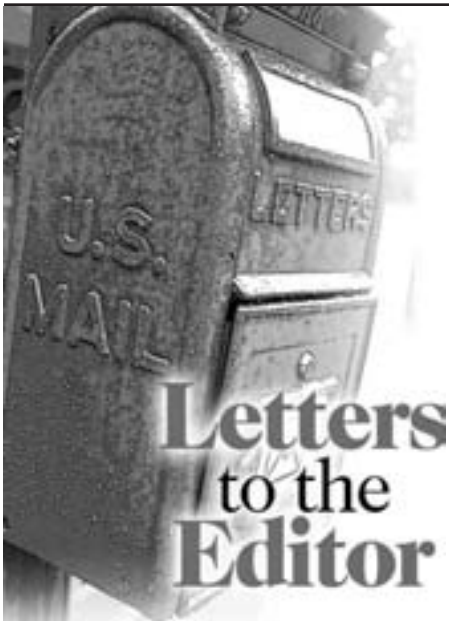
In 2006 Assemblymember Mark Weprin sponsored a bill extending Access-A-Ride service throughout Nassau County. The bill was rejected by most of his colleagues. He then introduced a modified bill that extended Access-A-Ride service five miles into Nassau County. That bill passed the Assembly in 2005 and in 2006 passed the state senate as well, only to be vetoed by then Governor George Pataki.

Weprin and state Senator Frank Padavan sponsored another bill in 2007. This legislation, like Weprin's modified bill, which Pataki vetoed, would allow Access-A-Ride users to travel to destinations up to as far as five miles into Nassau County. Déjà vu all over again—Governor Eliot Spitzer, who succeeded Pataki in January of this year, vetoed the legislation once more.

Pataki, Weprin alleged, acceded to MTA cost concerns. To our knowledge, Spitzer gave no reasons for his vetoing the Weprin-Padavan bill.

We agree completely with Weprin's argument that it makes no sense to deny senior citizens and the disabled access to medical facilities via public transportation. We also applaud Padavan's announced intention again to introduce the bill in the upcoming legislative session. We hope, too, that Spitzer this time will not be swayed by arguments from the MTA that extending Access-A-Ride service into Nassau County and Able-Ride service into Queens is not cost-effective.

Some of the people who use Access-A-Ride and Able-Ride have worked and paid taxes and ridden public transportation all their lives until age and infirmity made it impossible. Other disabled individuals depend on fast, efficient, easy access to medical facilities to maintain a barely adequate quality of life, if not for their very lives. It will be a sad commentary indeed on how we regard the oldest and least able among us if this legislation is again shot down.



### Rebuts Op Ed

To The Editor:

Since you published the op-ed article from Alex Epstein, ("Celebrating Income Inequality", Gazette, Aug. 1, 2007) I assume you might consider publishing this rebuttal.

Mr. Epstein should have lived in the 19th century when there were no controls over the amassing of wealth and no consideration of the average man. In fact, the government encouraged it. Mr. Epstein would remove all regulations on business to hire and fire as they wish, eliminate all minimum wage laws, abolish the graduated income tax, etc. In the past, Mr. Epstein has advocated completely abolishing Social Security, unemployment insurance, EEOC laws, and other employee-related regulations.

The organization he works for, The Ayn Rand Institute is so far to the right politically, it would make the Bush administration look like leftist liberals.

I would suggest that you secure an opposing point of view from the ACLU or other liberal organization.

Irving Feiner  
Woodside

### Thanks CALDC

To The Editor:

On behalf of the Dutch Kills community and, I am sure, the entire Astoria/Long Island City community, we wish to thank the Central Astoria Local Development Coalition for a stupendous and outstanding summer concert series. We especially want to thank Marie Torniali, the Board of Directors and the entire staff for the many hours of dedicated hard work for the enjoyment of the community.

The concert series brings the 120 different ethnic groups together in the true spirit of America. Young and old alike enjoyed our beautiful Astoria Park with the magnificent backdrop of Manhattan.

A million thanks again and we hope we have an even better concert series next summer with the continued support of all the long-time sponsors and hopefully new sponsors for 2008.

Sincerely,  
Gerald J. Walsh  
President,  
Dutch Kills Civic Association, Inc.

### Hails Library, More

To The Editor:

I am really pleased upon hearing on the radio and also in the Aug. 1, 2007 issue of the *Gazette* several positive pieces of legislation or donations that will contribute to positive quality of life for all of our Astoria, Queens residents, as well as for our city. Thank you, *Gazette*, for informing us about the generous large donation of Astoria Federal Bank to the new Long Island City library. Through such philanthropy, our new library can grow, flourish and become an educational, learning, intellectual and recreational haven and oasis for our Astoria residents. It is refreshing and wonderful to read about such caring, especially in a world where the negative is broadcast and printed.

I applaud our U.S. Congressman, Carolyn Maloney, for being such an instrumental force in obtaining federal funding for the new Second Avenue subway. This new subway will ease the passenger load on the Lexington Avenue line, which is the most crowded subway and also enable freedom of movement and enhance our economy in years to come.

I also heard that the Homeland Security Department on the federal level is planning to restore funds to our city. [Congressmember] Peter King has been instrumental in bringing this about in addition to our Carolyn Maloney. We applaud the lawmakers for their dedication and caring about the needs of our city

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