BLUE LIGHTS ON NYC MTA BUSSES TO BE DISCONTINUED

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) in 2008 initiated a number of new limited stop Select Bus Routes in New York City. The 140 specially painted busses assigned to the service, also called Bus Rapid Transit, operate in Manhattan, Bronx and Brooklyn along exclusive traffic lanes and require passengers to buy tickets at a sidewalk kiosk to eliminate delays associated with fare box fumbling.

Blue flashing lights were installed on the upper front corners of the busses so riders could see an express bus coming in the distance and decide whether to hop on a regular bus or wait.

It has been pointed out to the MTA a number of times that the NYS Vehicle and Traffic Law (VTL) Section 375 (41) limits blue lights on vehicles to use by volunteer firefighters on their personal vehicles when engaged in emergency operations and to the rear of EMS, police and fire vehicles engaged in emergency operations. US government vehicles are not bound by these restrictions. When questioned about the illegal blue lights, an MTA spokesperson's response in 2010 was "I doubt whether there's anyone out there who will mistake a 60-foot bus for a volunteer firefighter's vehicle."

Complaints have continued and according to a NY Times article: "For a start, some people complained that the buses could be confused with emergency vehicles. They said the lights caused drivers to pull over when they didn't need to, and, in the words of one City Council member, Vincent Ignizio of Staten Island, "desensitized the public for what is reserved in law for emergency vehicles only." On 1/18/13 the MTA formally announced that the lights would be turned off, "to eliminate the possibility of confusing the vehicles with volunteer emergency vehicles."

The MTA said it was still deciding on an alternate way to make the buses stand out. Green lights are out as the VTL limits their use to volunteer EMS personnel. Besides, motorists might mistake green lights high up on a bus for traffic lights and proceed through an intersection