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Press Release

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NYC Transit

IMMEDIATE

MTA New York City Transit Renames Bus Depot Honoring First African-American Military Airmen

100th Street Depot Becomes Tuskegee Airmen Bus Depot

MTA New York City Transit's 100th Street Bus Depot is being renamed The Tuskegee Airmen Bus Depot today in honor of the World War II African-American military pilots and support personnel who made up the famed flight-training program at Tuskegee Army Air Field. Over the years, twelve former Tuskegee Airmen have been employed in the New York City Transit system, serving New Yorkers and creating an unbreakable link between the two organizations.

Held at the depot, the rededication ceremony was attended by MTA Chairman and CEO Joseph J. Lhota, NYC Transit President Thomas F. Prendergast and Darryl Irick, President of MTA Bus and Senior Vice President NYC Transit's Department of Buses. Also part of the celebration, were local community leaders and former members of the illustrious 332nd Fighter Group.

The centerpiece of the rededication was a bronze commemorative plaque newly installed in the depot's entryway. Listing the names of each of the twelve Tuskegee Airmen who became employees of the New York City transit system, the plaque will serve as a living reminder of their bravery and dedication to duty. A logo, bearing an artistic rendering of three Tuskegee Airmen and the red-tail P-40 Mustangs they flew, has been incorporated in the plaque, while depot signage has been installed and decals affixed to each bus assigned to the depot.

"The Tuskegee Airmen overcame so much to become one of the most highly respected fighter groups of the War, thanks to the numerous civil rights organizations that convinced the Army to create this iconic African-American pursuit squadron," said Chairman Lhota. "These heroes included pilots, navigators, bombardiers, maintenance and support staff. We see a very similar dynamic at the bus depot. Bus Operators, mechanics and other personnel all working together toward one common goal. That is what makes today's dedication ceremony that much more special."

"It is with a feeling of great pride that we name this bus depot after a group of true American heroes, men who first served their country valiantly and then served our City in various jobs throughout the transit system," said NYC Transit President Thomas F. Prendergast. "This dedication of the Tuskegee Airmen Bus Depot points out their history of achievement and sacrifice and we are all honored to have had a number of them working for the transit system."

The 332nd Fighter Group, or "The Red Tails," as they were known, had the combined duties of battling both American prejudice at the time and Nazi militarism. The Group maintained an impressive record of protecting American bombers as they pounded enemy targets.

Tuskegee Airmen: Reginald T. Brewster, Victor A. Collymore, Conrad A. DeSandies, Harry R. Dickenson, John R. Freeman, Noel R. Harris, Oscar W. Hawkins, Austin D. McKenzie, Maury M. Reid, Jr., Percy E. Sutton, Victor W. Terrelonge and Fred O. Wilson. There are currently two surviving airmen from this group, Reginald T. Brewster and Noel R. Harris.

"I'm extremely proud to be the leader of the MTA's bus operations as we establish this historically relevant New York City memorial to authentic American heroes," said Darryl Irick, President of MTA Bus and Senior Vice President NYC Transit's Department of Buses. "Honoring these former subway, bus and trolley workers who served as Tuskegee Airman and all Tuskegee Airmen for their valiant service, sacrifice and achievement in the face of adversity reflects the honor that they have brought to all Americans, all New Yorkers and to the dedicated men and women of NYC Transit."

The depot is a state-of-the-art bus maintenance and storage facility designed to have as little impact as possible on the surrounding community, far less impact, in fact, than the cramped, 108-year-old streetcar barn that it replaced when it was opened in 2003. Taking into account two major community concerns, additional space was provided to allow indoor parking for the entire fleet and additional bus service lanes that eliminate queuing on the street.

The facility consists of four fully enclosed floors and a mezzanine. Each floor is approximately 80,000 square feet and the mezzanine is 29,500 square feet, for a total building area of 349,500 square feet. The depot is currently home to seven bus routes, 130 buses and a total of 460 employees.