



October
2008

Amalgamated Transit Union Local #1576 Newsletter

President's Report by Kathleen Custer, President/B.A.

For those of you at Community Transit, you've by now you've received, from Joyce Eleanor, Community Transit's CEO (whom, by the way hasn't ever been at the table during these contract negotiations), a letter explaining *from CT's perspective* the status of negotiations between CT and ATU Local 1576. The letter was conveniently sent while I was out of town.

While it states that its purpose is to "provide you with information," I can assure you that its purpose is otherwise. Rather than inform you, its purpose is to try to drive a wedge among the membership, and to try to soften you to accept a labor agreement that would significantly erode many of the rights and benefits you have enjoyed for many years, and for which the Union has fought hard over the course of decades.



I had intended on holding off on sending out a broad communication to the membership, because our attorneys have been preparing an Unfair Labor Practice charge with the Public Employment Relations Commission ("PERC") relating to CT's conduct in these negotiations. It was my intent to hold an all-members meeting after the charge was filed, to allow you to hear the truth about what CT is offering, to demonstrate how it would adversely affect your lives on a daily basis, and to allow you to ask questions of the Union officers, as well as the Union's attorneys. At this point, the charge is expected to be filed with PERC tomorrow. I will be calling for that all-members meeting shortly.

In the meantime, please be assured that I and the other Union officers are fighting diligently to obtain a better contract. Do not be persuaded by Ms. Eleanor's recitation of how she sees CT's proposal—it conveniently leaves out the details of how the PTO process would work, and why it would amount to a substantial degradation of what you currently enjoy under the existing contract, and her explanation of their proposal of the increase in the daybook is not complete as she describes.

By now, you also should have received a letter from me along with an invitation to a meeting on November 1st. This meeting is intended to provide you with accurate information relating to the negotiations.

When we meet, you will be provided *all the details* of CT's proposal—not just the points CT chooses to provide in its effort to disarm you and destroy the solidarity of the Union.

In solidarity,

Kathleen Custer
President/Business Agent



Working Conditions



I have promised to be a voice for working conditions as long as I am your Vice President, and as long as I draw breath for that matter. When we signed on for the jobs we have we were confident we were qualified to do the job, and put our best side forward to do so. Whether we are Coach Operators, Para Transit specialists or one of the many other classifications like Training, Dispatch, Maintenance or Customer Service Specialists, we show up every working day to do the very best we can at what we do. Coach Operators and Para Transit Specialists are two very grueling job classifications. Oh yes, it looks easy enough, but wait until you actually do the job. Coach Operators sign up for about 5 years of split shifts, meaning they work an 8 hour day over a period from 13.5 hours to 15 hours. This doesn't count their drive time to and from work. This is grueling and taxing on the body, mind and attitude. Para Transit Specialists work with ill and disabled people. The agencies we work for so diligently often take customer service to the extreme. Time after time the passengers account is treated like it is carved in stone while the person performing the job is seemingly hung out to dry.

Your Union Officers, Executive Board Officers and Shop Stewards are fighting for the very best in working conditions. When we are dealing in contract negotiations we are working hard to bring to the membership the very best working conditions possible. This year we have 3 contract negotiations: Community Transit, First Transit Everett and Senior Services. Your President, Kathleen Custer, and the EBoard Officers from First Transit Everett brought to the membership a ratified contract in several months. It is a good contract and the best contract we have been able to negotiate for them so far. Senior Services (DART) is a different story. Negotiations are not progressing as fast and results are not coming nearly as rapidly as we had hoped they would. Nevertheless, at least we are negotiating and as long as we are talking the process is moving forward. President Custer and your EBoard Officers at DART are working very hard to get you the best contract possible. Fortunately for us, First Transit in Tacoma doesn't come up until next year. We will be seasoned and ready for that task at the appropriate time.

That leaves Community Transit. We negotiated and mediated there for 10 months. Community Transit made it very clear that they wanted to shove PTO down our throats and tie it to our medical benefits. In other words, if we swallowed the PTO, then we could have Company paid medical benefits. If we would not swallow PTO we would then have to pay into the medical benefits plan. We said we were not interested from day one. Ten months later in their last and final "What If" offer, the PTO was still there. Kathleen Custer, Patty Ceis and I spent 3 full days working on a counter proposal. When we offered that proposal, it was totally rejected; by the end of the meeting it was clear to us that we either swallow the PTO or get nothing.

Here is where the working conditions come in. Working those long hard hours over so many years, people literally become "sick from their jobs". When the coach operator finally gets away from those split shifts the best straight piece of work available is working long hours into the night. Even when one finally gets to the daylight hours, the runs begin at 2:48 in the morning. Management has not walked in our footsteps, or if they have they've forgotten, and they don't have a clue what we put up with day after day. Truthfully, I almost feel sorry for them because they are so clueless as to our working conditions. On top of this they re-invent the SOP's and the disciplines offering us no opportunity to negotiate these disciplines. So, my fellow brothers and sisters, we take our hats off to you and from the bottom of our hearts recognize the hard work that you do because we have been there and they have not.

Whenever contract negotiations come up, regardless of the property, we have the responsibility to build upon the current contract language striving for better working conditions and avoiding the "take-aways" the companies want to impose upon us. PTO, brothers and sisters, is confusing, complicated and controlling. PTO in a contract is a definite take-away for our members. If we were to accept it, we would not be accepting a good contract. "Beware of the wolf in sheep's clothing."

In Solidarity,
Rick Jurkovic
Vice President



Dear brothers and sisters as your safety committee representative I need your help. Since the books came out for the new shake-up I have looked through them and became quite disappointed. I am disappointed in the fact that the runs I was looking at showed a significant reduction in recovery time. Recovery time is that time between the ending of one route and the start of the next route. So I ask all of you to help me verify that certainty by submitting your run cards to me with actual times.

My plan is to submit all run cards with insufficient recovery time to the safety committee. I believe the recovery time is a key factor in providing safe service to our passengers. If there is insufficient recovery time for us to get out of the seat and stretch out our legs or take a walk for blood flow circulation purposes or go use the restroom or have a bite to eat to keep from going into a diabetic coma or pass out do to a lack of nutrients to the bodywell then something needs to be done about recovery time and I ask you to help me do just that.

In addition to your making notes to your run card I also ask you to take the time to get out of the seat after a trip and stretch your legs if you need to or use the restroom or eat if need be in order to be and feel safe to drive your next trip.

Should you find that a particular route you are driving has insufficient recovery time for you to do what you need to do to feel safe and you are more than six minutes down starting your next trip. Feel free to call in and say you are six or whatever time down do to "Driver Maintenance"

Speaking of calling in for being more than six minutes down per the SOP . The 3 common reasons to call in for being down more than six minutes. They are (1) traffic....commuter hours are the worst and means buses will not make the time points (2) customer service..... which includes waiting for passengers to get there fare together or sit down or maybe even having to secure a passenger in their mobility device. and the 3rd is Driver maintenance.

Make those notes and put them in my box so that I can present my case to the safety committee for better recovery time to the run cards. Remember "Individually we make a difference ,yet collectively we make an impact" Let us all work together in this collectively so we can make that impact

Peter Majkut
Safety Committee Member

Letters to the Editor

One Member's Response to Joyce's Letter Regarding Contract Negotiations

Joyce Eleanor,

Every time there is a crisis, be it a winter storm, flood or other circumstance that requires the "Drivers" to go above and beyond, we do.

We do because we know that our passengers are depending on us. US! the Drivers, Supervisors, Dispatchers and the Mechanics to get them where they are going and/or keep them safe. After the crisis is over you pat everyone on the head and say good little boys and girls.

Come contract time your negotiation hacks offer a contract with take-aways and act as though "we", the Drivers, are the red-headed stepchild.

Please, DO NOT EVER AGAIN write to me at my home trying to circumvent the contract/ Labor negotiation process.

I/we have elected officials of the ATU representing my/our interests. Should you want to be part of the process, then you should be at the negotiation table, and offer a contract that respects and honors our efforts.

D.F. Noblick
ATU Represented Operator

Letters (cont.)
Fred's Vision Quest

Recently, Fred wrote that his Vision of a kinder, warmer Transportation Department is in full swing and progressing well. Not that I'm a pessimist— lord knows I've been, for the past 14 years, wanting to soar with the eagles instead of gumping with the guppies. I will not be a deterrent to his hopes and dreams.

During Fred's short tenure here the Union has advised him that on at least 3 issues he is marching to the wrong drummer. But, as usual, there is a stiff-neckedness amongst the Managers at his level. We've had to go to Arbitration and we're batting nearly 1000% so far. Now, I'll be honest, Fred hasn't called me to see what I'd do to make the department better, but I would like to provide him with a Ten-Step Program:

1) He needs to go to his immediate bosses (Ms. Starcher, Mr. Turpie & Ms. Eleanor) and tell them that HE is in charge of the Transportation Department. If he succeeds in producing a kinder, warmer, better functioning Transportation Department, then he gets the credit and laurels. If he fails, he knows how to update his resume.

2) Fred had supposedly removed himself because of "other pressing commitments" from the Management Negotiating Team for our now expired contract. Word amongst the driving ranks is that HR had told Fred to go back to his office; that they will take care of the matter. He needs to demonstrate that HE is the Lead Company Negotiator for the Transportation Department.

3) He needs to utilize a well known maneuver used by Managers to get rid of managers: The Re-organization. Two of the Assistant Managers have collectively been responsible for the majority of the angst between the Transportation Department and the Operators. The Assistant managers need to be told that the Department is going to shrink down to two Assistant managers and that the current Assistant managers can "re-apply" for the slots.

4) Our Supervisors have to be utilized better as Supervisors. Ms. Baumann would be solely responsible for the training and mentoring Supervisors into the position of "Associate Transportation Managers". The role of Associate Supervisor needs to be reintroduced.

5) A position similar to a Command Sergeant Major in the Army need to be created for the Supervisor ranks. This person would be responsible for the training and development of the personnel in this department. She/he would also be an ombudsman that Operators and Dispatchers could approach with issues before going to a Manager.

6) I was at the introduction of Fred's vision. He stated we've got outstanding people in our ranks. "We've even got an MIT graduate". This statement alone should put an end to outside hiring for Dispatchers or any other position. Talk about a slap in the face if you are the most qualified and some Outsider is hired who doesn't know a "combo" from a "rumba". Reintroduce the position of Associate Dispatcher and introduce the position of Associate Trainer.

7) After 90 days into the Re-organization, hire another Assistant manager to assist with the workload.

8) Customer Comments: Fred needs to create a committee of Senior Operators to review complaints against operators, checking for accuracy of the charge BEFORE the Operator is called on the carpet.

9) Fred needs to stop the abuse of "Combos" on the weekends. He also needs to end combos that sign in for their second half after 4 PM (we currently have combos signing in after 6 PM for their second half).

10) L&I: We hear that this is a mismanaged program full of problems. It's my understanding members are having to use attorneys to resolve issues. If true, Fred needs to deal with the abuse of HIS Operators.

Tim Lynch
ATU Represented Operator

Respecting Privacy



I promised some of our members at Community Transit that I would put this blurb in our newsletter. It is for those who have had a problem with other members asking too many personal questions when he/she has preplanned sick leave in the daybook. Please note that sick leave in the daybook does not count against the compliment of drivers that can be given the day off. The only reason it's shown in the daybook is so that someone can know for sure if he/she has been approved or not. Asking someone why they need that day off is inappropriate and can put a coworker in an awkward position of having to tell someone that it's none of their business. I'm sure we all appreciate having our confidentiality respected so to risk being too corny, please follow the old Golden Rule on this and treat others privacy with the respect you'd enjoy.

Patty Ceis
Financial Secretary/Treasurer

First Transit Tacoma

Here we go once again. I hear a lot of Drivers sitting in the break room complaining about issues, such as routes, that the Union doesn't do anything about. And Here I Go Again!! If you don't let us KNOW about a problem you're having, how can we go to Management and bring up the problem? But then, there are those people that, no matter what we do or say, are never going to be satisfied. They are quick to blame the Union. They really have no clue what you Union Representatives, Tony, Roy and I, do behind the scenes to try and make the working conditions a little better for us all. There are still a few who are complaining about the Union dues. If you are not happy about the information I give, please don't take it out on me. There is a Union meeting every month. The notice is posted on the Union board telling you where and when the meetings are. You can call Patty Ceis, our Financial Secretary, and she can explain to you where your dues go and how much they are.

Thanks,
Laura Sandoval
Executive Board Officer

Commentary

By John Sainz, Recording Secretary

We've all had a chance to see Joyce's letter by now. Hopefully, you've also seen the ATU's response as well. Let me assure you, there was much more to the PTO than what was covered in the CEO's letter. You'll be hearing EVERYTHING very soon. We will be conducting an All Members Meeting on November 1st. You should have received another letter in the mail from the Union by now containing the time and place of the meeting.

I have been heartened to find that not one single member I've spoken with has bought into Joyce's letter. I've made it a point to talk to senior Operators, those in the seniority range when I came into the Union and those of you in the newer ranks. The response has been pretty much the same. In essence you've told me "There may be something good in here from what we can read, but there has to be much more that meets the eye. If you don't support it, then we don't either." We've had emails and phone calls to the office in support of our position. If there are any of you who are leaning toward accepting CT's offer, we've not heard from you.

A note to the newer folks who haven't been here long enough to have an idea how CT operates, consider this. It doesn't matter to CT that they may have put a signature on an agreement. If they decide two minutes later they don't like the agreement, they simply ignore it. Ask the more senior people you've met how many times CT has changed the SOP, at their whim, and begun immediately disciplining members. Remember the trial attendance policy? It was supposed to be in effect for a specified time period. CT continued to discipline members under the trial policy for months after they trial was over. We had to go to Arbitration to win, but CT was forced to remove all discipline handed out after the trial period. You simply cannot trust something from them just because they've signed on to it. Also, note in the PTO letter, it states the PTO for the ATU members is "SIMILAR TO" what the mechanics agreed to. Webster's Dictionary defines the word similar as: 1) "having characteristics in common; strictly COMPARABLE; 2) ALIKE in substance or essentials." Nowhere in Webster's does it say similar equals the same. You really have to watch how CT words things.

I've worked for some real tough employers before. There was one thing each of them, with one exception, did though. They took good care of their employees. The one exception was McDonald's. I have never seen such a hostile working environment in my 42 years of employment. I don't see any reason for it other than they consider us slime and treat us badly because they can. So, here comes the SOLIDARITY test. We must stick together now more than ever. I wouldn't want CT to think they can divide us with the goal of dissolving the Union. If that happens, look out. If you think it's bad now, imagine this place without the Union to stand in the company's way and force them to live up to them contract.

In Solidarity,
John.



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WEINGARTEN RIGHTS

“If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated, or affect my personal working conditions, I respectfully request that my Union Representative, Officer, or Steward be present at this meeting. Without representation present, I choose not to participate in this discussion.”

Upcoming Meetings

Sunday November 16, 2008 ~ 1:00 P.M.

Everett

(2810 Lombard)

Sunday November 16, 2008~ 5:30 P.M.

Tacoma

(IBEW Hall, 3049 S. 36th, Tacoma)

Tuesday November 18, 2008 ~ 10:00 A.M.

Everett

(2810 Lombard)

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UPDATE YOUR INFO FOR THE UNION HALL

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