



# Amalgamated Transit Union

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## Local #1576 Newsletter

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January 2009

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**Website: [www.atu1576.org](http://www.atu1576.org)**

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

#### **Union Pickets for Community Transit to Return to Negotiations**

So what now? After the union's Informational Picket on December 2-4, the large group members and officers attended the 12/4/08 Community Transit Board of Directors meeting where I addressed the Board on behalf of the membership urging them to demand that CT come back to the table and negotiate with us. We were successful in our demand. Since then, we have met briefly once with Community Transit where we finalized and narrowed the issues both sides plan to take to arbitration, should we get there. During our meeting we also discussed the concerns of their PTO and sick leave proposals and our member's insistence that it is not acceptable. On Monday January 12<sup>th</sup> I met again with Community Transit to continue negotiations. We had what I felt was a productive meeting with a fruitful discussion and plan to meet again soon where I anticipate proposals will be exchanged. I believe that as long as we continue to talk, it is a step in the right direction. We remain optimistic.

It was necessary for the Union to withdraw one of the two Unfair Labor Practice charges after further review after we discovered that by law, one of our key witnesses- the mediator who assisted us in mediation, is unable to testify. Without the testimony of this witness we felt it was in our best interest not to spend the Union's money to fight a cause we would likely lose. The other ULP is still active and we are awaiting a hearing date.

As I remain hopeful that we will resolve these issues outside of arbitration we are prepared to proceed to arbitration if need be. I certainly hope this is not the case since there are no "winners" in an Interest Arbitration. I also am hopeful that Community Transit will see the benefit of resolving our disputes prior to this process and intend on continuing to put pressure on the agency as well as the Board of Directors, to meet with us in good faith and resolve these disputes. As I said, it is difficult to negotiate with Community Transit when their demands are "all or nothing", so we continue to march.

I know I sound like a broken record, but I again thank you all for your continued support, guidance and patience. Our mission is to bring to you the best contract we can. Without your support- well, you know... so thank you.

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**Senior Services** contract negotiations continue. We have been meeting weekly, taking a short break during the terrible snow storm and holiday's. We are very close to wrapping up the non-economic issues and hope to get in the economic proposals within the next few meetings. It's a difficult at this point to even report to you since we continue to negotiate and have little to actually report until negotiations are completed. Our negotiating team has worked very diligently and hope to have a contract that we endorse to bring to you soon. As I said above, my gratitude extends to all of our members, and to you for *your* support and patience.

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**The recent snow storm** took all of us by surprise, didn't it? I remember watching the weather report and thinking everyone was crazy; even if it snowed, it wasn't going to stick! Boy, was I mistaken. We've heard the "atta-boys" from management and they were well deserved. But you should know how proud your Union is too, of the way you handled this storm. You were, as always, professional and calm and you hung in there even when we weren't prepared. I could say some negatives about the way our agency's handled things- no chains etc., but I won't because it's not about them. This is about you and you did a fine job. You too should be proud.



## Vice President's Report by Rick Jurkovic, Vice President

I just purchased my 2009 Calendar inserts for my notebook and plotted all the meetings I am scheduled to attend in 2009. Now that I have been your Vice President for one year I guess I have been around the block once and this gives me the opportunity to tell you what this job has been like.

Politics has been an important part of this past year, not just at the National, State and Local levels, but right here within our membership. One valuable lesson I learned is that the membership needs have a better understanding who they are electing to be their EBoard officers and Executive Officers. People can win based on popularity contest or name recognition rather than winning based on effort. I think all members who seek to be a Shop Steward should be attending Union meetings as a prerequisite, so they know what's going on and can share that information with the membership. EBoard Officers should have a track record of attending Union meetings on a regular basis. Members who serve on committees, such as the Safety Committee, should also be attending Union meetings to share their committee reports with the membership. The bottom line is the people you choose to represent you should be people who are active in the Union. I had someone ask me during a recent EBoard election who they should vote for. I said I wouldn't tell them who to vote for, but I could tell them who attended meetings. You certainly wouldn't want to elect someone into office who is afraid of their job and not willing to confront management in regards to enforcing the contract.

While I was plotting out all the meetings on my 2009 Calendar it occurred to me that I go to a lot of meetings. Besides the Union meetings there are weekly Grievance Review meetings, monthly Labor/ Management meetings at each property, CT Board meetings, Snohomish County Labor Council meetings and annual meetings like the ATU Northwest Conference and Washington State Labor Council convention. With all this information plotted on my new calendar I can now plot the weekly office day that I need to sort out and file all this work and meet with my fellow officers in keeping up with all that is going on. The rest of the calendar has open spaces for the many other meetings, appointments, grievances, as well as time spent in negotiations and mediation. I enjoy doing this job and look forward to all the challenges coming in 2009.

One accomplishment that I am very proud of that we accomplished as a team is that we finally got our web page up and running. The "think-tank" we formed to work out the details for the informational picket motivated us to get the web page going. We called on one of our own, Eric Wilkinson, a coach operator who made his living making web pages before driving for CT to build this web page for us. I think Eric did a fabulous job in a very short time. If you haven't visited the site, it is ATU1576.org. I felt strongly about having a web page before I came into office and now I am thrilled that we have ours up and running.

After writing about all these meetings I realize we have a busy year ahead of us. We want to finally get a Contract at CT and Senior Services in Everett. The "union busting", right to work, Texas-style Managements haven't beaten us down. I saw the hard work everyone did during our recent snow storms. Management doesn't have a clue about the dedicated people they have working for them because, if they did, they would be working hard to get us a contract rather than wasting time as CT and Senior Services have been doing. All of our member have worked hard and deserve contracts with decent wages and benefits. It's time for them to step up to the table and bargain in good faith. We are committed to work hard so that we will have ratified contracts for all of our members on all of our properties. First Transit Everett showed up to the bargaining table in good faith and we hope that First Transit Tacoma will do likewise this year. Finally, we hope that we can all work together in solidarity to make a better 2009 for all our members.

In Solidarity,  
Rick M. Jurkovic



## President's Report (cont.)

It's been a while since we've had to report a **driver assault**. Our member was terribly assaulted by a young man without warning at Lynnwood Transit Center on December 30<sup>th</sup>. Of course, with all of the rumors and concerns that evolve around an unfortunate situation like this, I can assure you our member has *no fault* in the assault whatsoever. In fact he handled the situation, protecting himself with courage and professionalism better than I think I could have if I were in his place. We are very proud of him and the other drivers who helped save him from what could have been so much worse. We also thank the two supervisors who finally were able to stop the assault. I can't help but think what could have happened.

What can we say? It is a true reminder that we are vulnerable in our jobs as a transit driver. In truth, we are vulnerable everywhere we go these days. I have been asked where our transit police were at the time of the assault. I am currently researching that issue.

I have spoken to our driver several times since the assault and continue to be in contact with him should he need anything at all from us. We have sent flowers to aid in his slow recovery at home. Please keep him in your thoughts and prayers.

Happy New Year to you all. Be Safe.

Kathleen M. Custer, President



## Commentary by John Sainz, Recording Secretary

It's a brand new year. With a brand new year comes hope. My primary hope is that my fellow officers and I will finally get you folks at CT a good contract in short order. Considering we're such "heroes" in our CEO's eyes, this should be accomplished without further delay. We shall see. It hasn't been for lack of effort on our part. We thank you for your patience and support.

Let me touch on the important subject of restroom breaks yet again. Most transit agencies, ours included, claim Drivers can take such breaks whenever necessary., even if it makes you late. Try telling that to the angry passengers who are already running late because our runtimes continue to be unrealistic. I, frankly, don't care. If I need a break, I'll take one. While I do notify Dispatch of stopping for "Driver Maintenance", I sometimes feel like saying "Mommy, I have to go potty" Asking or notifying shouldn't be necessary. Breaks should be built into turnaround time, not just on paper, but in reality. Real breaks are included in the list of items we're keeping alive in negotiations. **Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards require employers to make toilet facilities available so that employees can use them when they need to do so. Mobile crews, which includes Bus Drivers, must be able to leave their work location 'immediately' for a nearby toilet facility. These employees should be provided equivalent to that provided to employees at fixed work sites (see 29 CFR 1910[c][1][i]), as interpreted by OSHA's Interpretive Memorandum of April 6, 1998).** Trust me, folks. I'm not letting this issue go.

In Solidarity,  
John



### Union Activism in the Obama Age

by Patrick Fitzgerald, Executive Board Officer, Senior Services

The November election has presented an opportunity to Unions and activists across the nation. A labor-friendly administration is about to take office and initial indications are very positive. During the recent closure of Republic Doors and Windows members of Local 1110 of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America staged a sit-in to protest their loss of severance and earned vacation pay. President-Elect Obama weighed in on the side of the laid-off workers and the situation was rapidly resolved. In other news meat-packers in North Carolina voted to unionize after a 15-year campaign by the United Food and Commercial Workers of America. These positive developments couldn't come at a better time.

Political assaults on union workers became newsworthy during attempts by the big-three auto-makers to obtain federal bridge loans to help re-tool the industry. Several Senators from "right-to-work" states lambasted the plan as a bailout to "overpaid" Union Workers. Of course, none of the same Senators objected to a previous bailout of white-collar financial executives whose exorbitant salaries and bonuses have bankrupted the national financial sector. Saner heads prevailed and the Federal government agreed to help retain US jobs in a critical industry. Encouraging signs of future success continue.

The Obama transition team just announced its nominee for Labor Secretary. She is Rep. Hilda Solis, D-CA. She has been a strong advocate for organized labor. She grew up in a Union household headed by her father, a Teamster Shop Steward. She inherits a de-fanged department run aground by outgoing Secretary Elaine Chao, wife of conservative, anti-Union Senator Mitch McConnell R-KY. Secretary-elect Solis has her work cut out for her re-invigorating Labor oversight at a critical juncture in our Nation's history.

The future is looking up for Organized Labor. With the economy tightening and job uncertainty increasing the safety and security of union solidarity become more appealing. As members we must continue our support of job creation, job protection, labor organizing and fiduciary responsibility. The time is ripe for our numbers to increase. Let not this opportunity pass.



### Hello Fellow DART Drivers

by Randy Ekstrand, Executive Board Officer, Senior Services

If you are reading this you deserve a big "Way To Go", you survived the storm. More importantly, you survived 2008.

A few months ago I talked about loyalty to your Union co-workers. I bring it up because the subject came up in negotiations. You will be asked to vote on the contract. Remember, it's your contract. Your actions will affect not only you, but your co-workers as well. If you don't vote, don't gripe.

Regarding your actions affecting others, I have had more than one passenger tell me "that's not what the other drivers do" or "You're the only one that does that?". Most of the time, it's because another driver did something they know they're not supposed to do. The reasons given are: 1) I want to be a nice guy; 2) I don't want the passenger mad at me for "doing my job". A prime example occurred during the recent snowstorm. If you picked someone in an area that was getting worse as you were there, you then put another driver on the spot when they have to return that passenger. Just because your bus had tire chains, doesn't mean all of the buses had chains.

The last thing I want to say is **CONGRATULATIONS** to all Dispatchers, CSR's, Schedulers and Drivers for an **OUTSTANDING** job under adverse conditions.



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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 Charter Meetings\***

**Sunday February 15, 2009 @ 1:00 P.M.  
(2810 Lombard, Everett)**

**Sunday February 15, 2009 @ 5:30 P.M.  
(IBEW Hall, 3049 S. 36th, Tacoma)**

**Tuesday February 17, 2009 @ 10:00  
A.M.  
(2810 Lombard, Everett)**

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**PLEASE UPDATE YOUR INFO FOR OUR RECORDS**

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Our Local has sent flowers to the family of CT Operator **Ashok Sareen**, to the family of **Thomas Cable**, FT Everett Coach Operator **Robert Ambrose**, CT Operator **A.J. Grewal**, and to CT Instructor **Gil Pehrson**.

**Amalgamated Transit Union**

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