



Amalgamated Transit Union Local #1576

November 2009

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Website:
www.atu1576.org



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

A hot topic of discussion this time of year, and at Community Transit are the changes we will be experiencing in 2010 with regard to the PEBB medical insurance co-pays and deductibles. I've heard a lot of well-justified disappointment about the changes and wanted to make clear how and why these changes were made. Who's really to blame here? The Insurance companies!

All employees of Community Transit have been part of the Public Employees Benefit Board (PEBB) since 2003. This was done in part because of a law that was implemented requiring public employers to have a plan in place enabling a person who retired to have health insurance at a group rate. There are only three options that have this capability in order to comply, PEBB, WCIF and Assoc. of WA Cities.

The PEBB Board has nine members who are appointed by the Governor, seven of whom are voting members. The Board, created within the Washington State Health Care Authority, votes to approve eligibility requirements for participants and approves premium contributions and benefits levels for all participating health insurance plans. The PEBB design the benefit and eligibility packages to purchase insurance coverage for 318,000 members and such insurance coverage is purchased through competitive bids for the members who participate in PEBB.

As with any insurance plan, we can experience a change in the benefit levels, such as variations of co-pays, deductibles etc. At Community Transit, the changes we will be seeing in 2010 are made by the insurance companies under PEBB, not the Union or CT. In early October PEBB notified all participants in the "pool" of the changes that they will be making, based on what PEBB negotiated with the insurance companies. As such, neither the Union nor CT has the ability to negotiate with PEBB or the insurance company's about such changes.

What is offered by PEBB is what we have to take.

The advantage to being with PEBB is that the likelihood of rate changes are more moderate than with dealing directly with an insurance company where the "experience levels" or the utilization of the insurance is primarily taken into account. PEBB is negotiating for a group of 300,000+ people where they are able to keep rates down. We've seen this to be true with PEBB, since we've experienced very little change with regard to our benefits levels over the last several years. CT could look for other options but, remember they are limited to the law I explained above. And, the odds of getting better rates and benefits outside of a "pool", my guess, will not be as favorable.

Unfortunately, the timing of this notification from PEBB came on the heels of labor negotiations between the Union and CT, and the recent contract ratification. The Union negotiated with CT 100% employer paid medical insurance for another three years, but because the PEBB sets the benefit levels, the Union doesn't have the ability to negotiate that.

With our other properties, Senior Services and First Transit, plans are negotiated directly with the insurance companies but the benefit levels may vary depending on the employee utilization of the plan, experience level (how much employees use the services) and the employee group size. We are actively negotiating with First Transit in Tacoma regarding changes to the insurance plan, and will be entering into the same with Senior Services.

We know changes can and will happen to insurance plans no matter what plan we are under, whether PEBB or not. It's a never ending battle trying to maintain reasonable health care insurance at a low cost and, some say there's hope for the future with the Public Option. That's for you to decide. (continued on Back Page)

Financial Secretary/Treasurer's Report by Patty Ceis

To CT Sisters and Brothers

What a relief that we finally got through CT contract negotiations! I feel a little like I'm in shock without that hanging out there.

As I'm sure you're aware by now, we expect the retro wage checks to be issued the day after Thanksgiving. Because the Local's established dues formula is based on our hourly wage and we're getting an increase in our wages for work done over the last 2 years, in that same check you'll see a deduction for retro dues. These will range from \$7.80 to \$33.35, depending on your hourly wage rate and the amount it increased. If you see a larger amount then you've probably been out of work recently and owe some back dues. These deductions should bring everyone up to date.

As always, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

In solidarity,
Patty Ceis
Financial Secretary/Treasurer

“Outstanding leaders appeal to the hearts of their followers -not their minds”

Washington State Check Off Authorization Card To My Employer

Effective immediately, I hereby authorize and direct you to deduct from my pay as your employee the sum of \$ _____ Dollars per month to remit that amount to the Amalgamated Transit Union Committee on Political Education (ATU-COPE), located in Washington, D.C.

This authorization is voluntarily made by me, based upon my specific understanding that the signing of this Authorization Card and the making of these voluntary contributions are not conditions of membership in the Union, or of employment by my employer; that I may refuse to contribute without reprisal; and that I may contribute more or less and will not be favored or disadvantaged by the Union for doing so; and that the ATU-COPE is a Political Action Committee (PAC) connected with the Amalgamated Transit Union, which will use my contribution for political purposes, including but not limited to, making contributions to and expenditures for, candidates for federal, state and local offices and addressing federal, state and local political issues. This authorization shall remain in full force and effect until revoked by me in writing.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

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Authorized by the Amalgamated Transit Union on behalf of a fund-raising effort for the Amalgamated Transit Union Committee on Political Education (ATU-COPE). Contributions to the Amalgamated Transit Union COPE are not deductible as charitable contributions for Federal Income Tax purposes. No employer or labor organization may discriminate against an officer or employee in the terms of conditions of employment for (i) the failure to contribute to, (ii) the failure in any way to support or oppose, or (iii) in any way supporting or opposing a candidate.

Thrown Under The Bus by Pat Fitzgerald, Executive Board Officer, Senior Services

This topic has been discussed before, but one worth repeating. One of the basic tenants of Union membership is to “do no harm to a fellow member”. Some of our fellows forget this and cause avoidable grief and misery. Reporting a Co-Worker to Management for a perceived slight or personal disagreement is contrary to the spirit of solidarity. There are a few mandatory issues which must be dutifully reported to Management: gross safety violations, continuing derogatory or defamatory words or actions, criminal acts, threats, personal assaults and such. Some members have mandatory reporting requirements such as Dispatch reporting start/end times and policy or procedural violations. Hearsay, gossip, rumors, overheard words or conversations taken out of context, second and third person accounts of alleged incidents...these are not items to bring to Management's attention. Such unproven allegations most often lead to dissension, hostility, resentment and an enormous waste of time, money and effort. There are many pejorative words to describe an individual who informs on his Co-Workers: snitch, rat, fink, stool-pigeon, and these are only the G-rated monikers. The question remains how to address interpersonal conflicts and animosities without harming a Co-Worker. The best solution is to discuss the matter with your Shop Steward. If the Shop Steward is the problem, discuss the matter with another Steward or an EBoard Officer. If the EBoard Officer is the problem, contact the President of the Local.

Your Union Steward can help with conflict resolution in many ways. He can arrange a face-to-face between the Members in questions in order to “clear the air”. He can approach Management and arrange a non-punitive forum in which to discuss issues. He can approach the other Member in question and get their side of the story. The Steward will also support your decision to inform Management if the situation is serious enough. The Steward is an enormous asset who YOU elected. Remember Union Stewards and Officers are elected by the Membership to perform functions on your behalf. **(continued on Page 3)**

Commentary by John Sainz, Recording Secretary

Looking at the weather forecast for the next week and a half, I think it's safe to say Fall is here to stay. Time to change our driving habits to "Extra Safe" mode. Let me echo the words of First Transit Lakewood Executive Board Officer Laura Sandoval. With the weather getting cooler and wetter, it's time to increase our following distances and decrease our speed.

No matter what route you are driving SLOW DOWN. REMEMBER, SAFETY ALWAYS COMES IN FIRST IN IMPORTANCE, SCHEDULE COMES IN LAST. You are no good to our ridership, customers or guests (whatever your Management wishes to call them) if you wind up in an accident because some number cruncher says the schedule is perfectly OK. You are the one behind the wheel. I cannot possibly imagine an Arbitrator finding for the company should you be fired for failure to drive unsafely in an attempt to stay on schedule.

It's also time to bring up rest breaks again. You cannot be fired or disciplined for using the restroom. Again, I'm not suggesting you park the bus and take a 30 minute stroll then another 15 to eat. However, if you need to use the bathroom, do so. Carry finger food, if necessary, so you don't create health problems by not taking in needed nutrition and water. You can nibble on the way to and from the restroom. Get out of the seat at least long enough at the end of each trip to stretch and get the blood flowing back into your legs and feet.

Our Members at CT have no doubt seen the flyers about fare enforcement. Several of you have asked me what we're supposed to do. Follow the SOP and make a reasonable attempt to collect the fare by saying the fare is \$1.50 or whatever the correct amount is. If the individual still refuses to pay or pays less than the fare, don't argue. The company will not support you and you could wind up being assaulted or worse. All you are required to do after that is to press the underpayment key and continue your trip. Collection is the job of the Fare Ambassadors and or the Transit Police. Your job is to pick up and drop off your passengers safely and providing information as requested to the best of your ability.

On the subject of weather, we all know that if you wait five minutes, the weather around here will change. This time of the year that change is likely to be for the worse. Carry water and dry snacks such as granola bars or dried fruit. Any of you who have had the misfortune to slide off the road or find yourself stuck in a steep driveway or stranded at the base of the Main Street hill out of Edmonds or failing to make the suddenly icy trip up Terrace to try to turn left onto James in Seattle know the value of having munchies and water as hunger reaches the point where you think your stomach is trying to chew its way out. Also, dress for the season. I realize you can't carry your entire winter wardrobe, but you can layer your uniform items so if the heat goes out because the engine died, you can stay warm longer.

Lastly, I had planned to reprint the letter I'll be sending to U.S. Senators Murray and Cantwell and our seven members of the U.S. House of Representatives on the subject of Transit Security. That will come next month barring any earthshaking news beforehand. On the subject of Transit Operations funding, I'm sorry to report that Congress declined to pass a bill that would have made more funding available. Yes, national elections are still a year away. However, now is the time to use your voice. Let our elected officials know Transit Operators need better protection and Transit Agencies need operational funding. New buses are great, but useless without Operators and fuel. New maintenance buildings are wonderful, but, again, useless without Mechanics. All the new Call Centers and Customer Information Buildings, Facilities Maintenance vehicles and tools are useless without Personnel to operate them. Research, Get Completely Informed, Speak Up, Get Heard. Don't wait for someone else to do it. Think they don't hear you? Ask those Congressmen and women who faced the masses this past summer at Town Hall meetings. If we roar, they will listen.

In Solidarity,
John



Thrown Under The Bus (continued)

Utilize them more fully rather than relying on Management. You can always un-elect a Steward, but you can't fire Management.

There are other issues worth considering when reporting on a fellow Member. One is the rule of unintended consequences. The outcome you get is not always the outcome you desire. This may be good or bad, but once the words leave your mouth or pen it's often impossible to guess where a thing will end. Another consideration is rebound. If your allegation is proven false, it reflects poorly on your own judgment. An Employee who makes numerous unproven reports and allegations can in turn be punished for making false statements. The bottom line when informing on your fellow is: if it's criminal, or dangerous, file the report. If it's about a stupid or intemperate comment, perceived slight or insensitivity discuss it with your Steward. Another justifiable report is continuing bad behavior by a Co-Worker, this is after you have personally asked them to stop, or had the Steward tell them to stop. In a case such as this, Management needs to be involved.

The title of this article "Thrown Under the Bus" is slang term which goes by other names "Stabbed in the Back", "Bilged", "Undermined", "Sold Down the River". All have the same meaning, being done in by a friend or Co-Worker. Don't be that Co-Worker. Consider the ramifications of your action before you too hastily sell out a fellow Union Member.



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Upcoming Charter Meetings

Sunday, December 20, 2009

@ 1:00 P.M. (2810 Lombard, Everett)

Sunday, December 20, 2009

@ 5:30 P.M.

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

Tuesday, December 22, 2009

@ 10:00 A.M.

(2810 Lombard, Everett)

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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.”

If you are not receiving the **In Transit** Magazine, we probably don't have your correct information. Please take the time to fill out a form:

PLEASE UPDATE YOUR INFO FOR OUR RECORDS

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____

HOME PHONE: _____

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(President's Report continued)

In the meanwhile, the Union will continue to do the best we possibly can to protect your interests so that everyone can have affordable health care. I'm sure our employers share our concern when it comes to negotiating for their employee's health care so that they can maintain a healthy workforce and affordable premiums.

I'm hopeful I've been able to clear up some questions you've had regarding this controversial subject. If you have additional questions, please don't ever hesitate to contact me.

Regards to All, Be Safe.

Kathleen Custer
President/ Business Agent