

APRIL 2005

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ATU

LOCAL 587

# News Review



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VOL. XXVIII, NO. 4

## The President's Report

# Transit Operator Health Issues

By Lance F. Norton

Local 587 officers have been attempting to work with Metro/King County managers on Metro's concern over sick leave usage and management's attempts over the last year to implement policies and disciplinary measures regarding what they consider to be excessive sick leave usage. Your officers are

very concerned with the direction management is intending on moving. I am therefore devoting my column this month to information ATU Presidents obtained in our recent Legislative Conference at International headquarters in Washington DC. This information was compiled and published by the Northwest Labor Press, out of Portland, Oregon.

Outlined below is a set of summaries of studies conducted by medical researchers on health hazards found among transit employees. I am including the studies pertinent to each condition/health hazard so anyone interested can do further research on their own. Some of the studies were conducted in American cities, some in other countries. The work of providing public transit service, however, is pretty much the same worldwide. In light of the federal regulations for CDL holders regarding diabetes and diabetes waivers, and Metro/King County's current stance to

*Outlined below is a set of summaries of studies conducted by medical researchers on health hazards found among transit employees.*



Lance F. Norton

fall under these guidelines as opposed to the state regulations, pay close attention to the report on the studies of diabetes among transit personnel.

### Bus Operators Health Issues: A guide for physicians

#### • Back Disorders

Bus drivers experience low back pain (LBP) more frequently

than the referents. Bus drivers experienced pain in the lumbar, cervical and thoracic regions of the spine at a 66.4%, 50.8%, and 28.1% rate, respectively, compared to the referents' percentages of 44.8%, 26.9%, and 10.4%, respectively. Significantly higher rates of degenerative disorders of the spine, and herniated discs were also found. One study concluded

*continued on page 6*

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# The Month at a Glance

## Executive Board Report

March 29, 2005

All officers were present except for Paul Neil who was excused for personal reasons.

The following business was conducted:

- Motion by Brian Sherlock to authorize up to \$10,000 to authorize sending CISM team members to the 2005 conference in Portland, OR, June 2 through 5, 2005, paying for registration, lodging, a travel allowance and per diem.

- Motion by Marc Auerbach to take Brother Al Azen's termination grievance to arbitration.

- Motion by Paul Bachtel to take Brother Al Soto's termination grievance to arbitration.

- Motion by Ray Campbell to send eleven Minority Affairs Committee members at \$75 each for registration to the Black Caucus.

- Motion by Alan Huston to allocate up to \$1500 for the rental of an office for use by officers of Local 587 at the Midway Business Park in Port Angeles.

- Motion by Chris Daniels to accept the 2005 budget as presented and amended by the Budget Committee.

## Business of the Membership

At the March 2005 cycle of membership meetings the following business was conducted:

- The following resolution was approved by the members.

WHEREAS, Metro management's sudden and dramatic reduction in part-time work paying at least four hours threatens the economic security and health care benefits of a large portion of our members and their families, and, WHEREAS, a strong union response to this attack on one group of our members will strengthen the unity of our Local and help to deter future management efforts to shift their budget problems on to the backs of our members;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that ATU 587 opposes management's efforts to fund County Council-mandated service expansions at the expense of our Part-time Operators; and,

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the members of ATU 587 request the officers to make significant improvements in benefits security for Part-time Operators a condition of any settlement to the current benefits negotiations with King County, and,

FINALLY BE IT RESOLVED that the members of ATU 587 commend Sister Lori McInnis for her effective efforts to defend the wages and benefits of our members.

The following members were March pot draw winners: Dee Jackson at the Charter meeting, Mike Driscoll at the Morning meeting, Darrel Finley at the JTA meeting. CTS pot draw winner was Anita Messner. CTS rolling pot draw of \$75.00 was lost by Casey Rudd. Next month's rolling pot will be \$100.00.

## ARBITRATION UPDATE

- Kenny McCormick:** Grieved failure to follow FLSA requirements for travel time for board/report/ATL operators. Grievance being held in abeyance while issue pursued in court.
- Vince Lee:** Grieved improper procedure for upgrade to temporary position. Arbitration postponed, settlement discussions in progress.
- Ron Griffin:** Grieved improper separation from the position of Equipment Service Worker. Arbitrator ruled in favor of the grievant. Grievance final. Welcome back to work Brother Griffin.
- Roberson et.al.:** Body shop and Upholstery shop personnel grieved work done out of classification. Arbitration held December 1 and 2, 2004, and February 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, 2005. Decision pending.
- Bill Clifford:** Grieved Part Time Operators assigned to do special work. Settlement discussions in progress.
- Harold Stanback:** Grieved improper separation from the position of Transit Operator. Arbitration held November 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, 2004. Decision pending.
- Michael Gendron:** Grieved termination for attendance issues and failure to respond to request for information. Continuance requested and granted. Further scheduling pending.
- Robert Delgado:** Grieved termination for violation of attendance probation. Arbitration scheduled for May 2 and 3, 2005.
- Edward Young:** Grieved termination for severe preventable accident. Arbitration postponed until July. Settlement offered and under consideration.
- Greg Mothersbaugh:** Grieved improper payment of administrative leave. Schedule pending.
- Francilla Freeman:** Grieved termination due to unverified sick leave. Schedule pending.
- Jim Hermanson:** Grieved alleged ADA violation, being relieved of duty for six months more than required by state CDL regulations. Schedule pending.

## Tentative Agenda

### Membership Meetings:

#### CHARTER MEETING

Thursday, April 7, 2005

8:00 p.m.

The Labor Temple, Hall #8  
2800 1st Ave., Seattle, WA

#### JEFFERSON TRANSIT

Monday, April 11, 2005

7:00 p.m.

Port Townsend Rec Center  
Port Townsend, WA

#### MORNING MEETING

Friday, April 8, 2005

10:30 a.m.

The Labor Temple, Hall #6  
2800 1st Ave., Seattle, WA

#### CLALLAM TRANSIT

Tuesday, April 12, 2005

7:00 p.m.

Vern Burton Memorial Building  
Port Angeles, WA

### Among topics to be discussed:

Grievance and arbitration update, SPT negotiations, Joint Safety and Security meeting updates, proposed changes in policies for Metro/King County members, presentation of the annual budget.

### Unfinished business

There is no unfinished business for April.

### ATU LOCAL 587

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### WEINGARTEN RIGHTS STATEMENT

*I request to have a union representative present on my behalf during this meeting because I believe it may lead to disciplinary action taken against me. If I am denied my right to have a union representative present, I will refuse to answer accusational questions and any I believe may lead to discipline.*

### Letters to the editor

Letters/contributions must include signatures, work ID number, addresses and telephone numbers that can be verified during office hours. Letters that cannot be validated will not be published. All articles/letters are subject to editing and should be limited to 350 words or less. Not all letters can be published due to space limitations. Cut off date is the 15th of each month.

Send letters to:

Jennie Gil, Editor

c/o ATU Local 587

News Review

2815 Second Avenue, Suite 230  
Seattle, WA 98121

# ATU Local 587 Members Give to Tsunami Relief

Dick Frederick,  
Executive Director  
Northwest Medical Teams  
Washington Office

Dear Mr. Frederick:

It is with great pleasure that I present the enclosed check in the amount of \$4,000 to Northwest Medical Teams International, Inc. for its tsunami relief efforts. The check represents donations collected by members of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 587, which includes King County Metro Transit employees.

The desire to provide assistance is very characteristic of ATU Local 587 members. That is because they care about our community and the world community. I was humbled by their generosity when they gave this check to me.

I continue to be touched by the generosity of county employees to help people in times of need. This effort by ATU Local 587 has been no exception. Together, they came together to help the world.

Again, I am pleased to present this donation on behalf of ATU Local 587 and I thank you for your organization's involvement in the tsunami relief effort.

Sincerely,  
Ron Sims,  
King County Executive

Dear [Executive] Sims:

What a wonderful surprise to receive the generous contribution in the amount of \$4,000 from the

members of the ATU Local 587 and the King County Metro Transit Employees. This gracious gift will be used to support the tsunami relief effort in South Asia.

We greatly appreciate your willingness to partner with us in this awesome team effort to bring hope to the unfortunate families impacted by this disaster. Gifts by supportive folks like you have helped us to send seventy-five vol-

unteers to the affected countries to date and \$27 million worth of medical supplies to help ease the suffering.

It is a genuine source of inspiration to us to witness the generosity of members of this community in responding to this unprecedented calamity and reaching out to help in such a meaningful way. We are truly privileged to be able to make a difference for those in crisis as a

result of this incredible outpouring of support.

On behalf of all of us at Northwest Medical Teams, we thank you for your involvement through this unselfish and tangible gesture of kindness.

Gratefully,  
Dick Frederick,  
Executive Director  
Northwest Medical Teams  
Washington Office.



President Norton and Vice President Travis present King County Executive Ron Sims with a check on behalf of the membership for \$4,000 for the Northwest Medical Teams to provide relief for the Tsunami victims. The donation was approved by the Executive Board at the January Executive Board meeting and approved at the February cycle of membership meetings.

## IN LOVING MEMORY...

*Only those are fit to live who do not fear to die; and none are fit to die who have shrunk from the joy of life and the duty of life. Both life and death are parts of the same Great Adventure.*

— Theodore Roosevelt

**Larry Bach**, retired Transit Operator, passed away March 11, 2005. Brother Bach joined Local 587 in February of 1961 as a Transit Operator. His role as stand-in for Santa Clause every Christmas at the Retiree Christmas luncheon was legendary. He will be missed.

**Harry Winston**, retired Transit Operator, passed away February 28th, 2005. Brother Winston joined Local 587 in September of 1950. He was a 50-year member. No further information available.

**Perry Hedahl**, On-Call Rider Information Specialist, passed

away suddenly on February 14, 2005. Brother Hedahl joined Local 587 in March of 2004, and was an active member in Rider Information. His coworkers found him a delight to work with, he will be missed.

**Constance Dizmang**, former Part-time Transit Operator, passed away February 2, 2005. Sister Dizmang joined Local 587 as a Part-time Transit Operator September 15, 1980. She left Metro/King County in November of 2001 due to health issues. She is survived by husband, Brother Scott Dizmang, Equipment Service Worker currently working out of Ryerson Base. Please offer your

condolences to Brother Dizmang when you see him around. She will be dearly missed.

**Patricia VanKirk**, North Base Chief, passed away suddenly of a cerebral aneurysm while vacationing in Mexico with family. No date was given, the base was notified March 22, 2005. Patricia joined Local 587 in December of 1982 as a Part-time Transit Operator, and went full-time in November of 1993. She made First Line in February of 1998, and was promoted to Base Chief in May of 2001. Patricia was 54 at the time of her passing. Those who worked with her describe her as a wonderful,



Patricia VanKirk

caring person, she was greatly loved and will be missed.

Please notify the union office of any member's passing so that this information may be shared with the rest of our union family.

## Guest Editorial ...

# A Response to the Fare Evasion Issue

Dear Editor:

This letter is in response to the concerns about fare evasion being discussed in the 587 newsletter.

I would like to start out with some observations.

As an Operator for over 12 years, I think I made about every mistake in the book, and a few of my own creation. I like to think that I managed to make most of them only a couple of times, but that may be wishful thinking. What I was successful at was avoiding being hit (more than once) or slapped (more than once) or spit on. I always knew that I did not want that to happen.

As a First Line Supervisor, I had the chance to respond to quite a few assaults and fare evasions. My observation, and I know that there are always exceptions, was that virtually all the assaults I responded to were fare related. That is, the Operator simply did not follow the policy of "press 3, give them a transfer if requested and write up repeat offenders" (currently Section 6, paragraph 19-G "Refusal to Pay Fare" of The Book). I define "refusal to pay fare" as anyone who tells me they are short, asks to ride for free or otherwise indicates 1) they know what the fare is, and 2) they don't want to pay it.

As a Part-timer, I realized that even politely mentioning the fare once could earn me a tense and ugly moment. That was not what I wanted. So I quit discussing the fare. I tried to get my chief to tell me it was OK to not discuss the fare, but that was back when the policy was "inform the customer once of the fare" and my chief would not give me official permission to "not mention it at all". Now the policy has changed and you do not have to discuss the fare. At all. If they indicate that they don't have the fare, the policy clearly states to just "press key 3" (as per paragraph 19-G).

Now I know a lot of us really want the passengers to 'do their job' properly. "Pay or not ride". What that attitude earned me was a guy telling me that he was going to hit me on the head with his empty Snapple bottle. I know I didn't want that, so I backpedaled very quickly and did not get hit. I did not tell him what he should do. I

*Only in America do people give the poor, the foolish, and the indigent such a hard time.*

gave up discussing the fare.

If we look at some of the costs involved however, we may discover why it just isn't worth it (to Metro).

- Let's say someone doesn't pay the proper fare. Let's say the **average** non-payment of all passengers who don't pay the proper fare is 75 cents per incident. If you get whacked in the head, Metro typically pays you to take three days off (about \$600). You receive a visit to a hospital (at least \$100). A Supervisor gets paid to create reports, maybe at overtime. Another driver gets paid to take your place. Some one has to pay the police to respond, let's say the police cost a measly \$75 for two guys to respond and do paperwork. Those **minimum** "incident and response costs" add up to about \$775 if someone gets relieved on the road. Minimum. How many "behavioral corrections" does it take to pay for one of those incidents? 75 cents squeezed out of some potential non-payer, times 1000 incidents = \$750. So you have to be successful in convincing someone to pay the fare (who wouldn't otherwise) about 1000 times to pay for each driver assault of that type. I doubt any of us are that successful at changing any passenger's behavior. It is not worth it. Don't waste your time, don't risk your health. Don't risk getting whacked just for the opportunity to tell someone what they should do. They already know.

### Some alternatives

Only in America do people give the poor, the foolish, and the drug addicted such a hard time. When I travel to 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> world nations I have observed the following: I never saw a fare dispute. I observed that the bus drivers must

pay the government to operate each trip. The government does not subsidize any bus routes; the driver/owner pays all operating costs plus a trip fee to the government. The operators will bargain with waiting passengers, instead of risk losing them to some other bus. They will promise less than full fare in order to get them on the bus, because then the bus driver gets the dime. Gasoline is \$4.00 per gallon, local van and bus fare may be .20 cents. That .20 cents per passenger must pay for all permits, wages and fuel. It takes a lot of people at .20 cents each to pay for the gasoline, the conductor, the permits and the machine. If there was room on the vehicle, they tried to get them to ride, full fare or not, they wanted the money. They wanted that twenty cents, or the ten cents.

Even on the overland bus routes (think Greyhound), most of the people do not pay the posted full fare. Me, the tourist, pays full fare and reserves a seat. There are only 7 people on the bus as it begins to pull out. When the bus reaches the gate, there is a mob waiting who could not afford to pay counter price. The driver stops in the street outside the gate and each person pays what they can afford. There is an interesting honesty going on. One guy with a chicken rides in the luggage compartment underneath. None of them pay "full fare". The operators need as much money as they can get. He has four guys sharing one bench seat in the cab with him, and two on the front seat floor! Everybody rides. I reserve another ride on a deluxe bus with a TV and uniformed (with ties) drivers and conductors. Someone is in my assigned seat. He sees me look at my seat and my ticket, and he gets up to stand. He did

not pay full fare. He is riding the super-clean, deluxe, TV equipped bus to the same place I am. Five guys get on the same bus. There are only 6 tourists on board. The 5 guys don't pay. They pull out instruments and play music and sing. They pass the hat, all the natives chip in. The 5 guys buy 5 bus tickets. I don't think the tickets are full fare. There is no fare dispute. Only in America do people give the poor, the foolish, and the indigent such a hard time.

Food for thought. All the overland routes I've had rides on felt professional. No speeding. Smooth steady ride. No risk taking. Slow. Making the equipment last. Prolonging their career. I have to say that of all the nations I've observed (except the USA), the van and bus drivers always have a conductor. I wish Metro would hire conductors. It would alleviate the driver of so much entanglement with the passengers, make the trip go more quickly and safely, and I imagine the passengers would be happier to be assisted by a conductor who actually had the time to help them sort out their problems. It won't happen at Metro unless political conditions change. It's a wage thing. Your high wages currently equals no conductor. Just remember, nobody is paying you to have a fare dispute. Good luck.

John Reardon  
First Line Supervisor



# So Long, Otilie

By Atlantic Base Shop Steward Bill Clifford

I attended a great funeral last month. Actually, it was a memorial service for Otilie Markholt, who passed away last Thanksgiving at the age of 88. But it seemed more like a labor rally.

Otilie was valedictorian of West Seattle High School, '33, and went on the University of Washington. The conservative UW didn't suit her; she joined the Socialists in 1934, then in 1935 she moved on to the Communist Party and married Bob Dombroff, a former Wobbly, a sailor and also a CP member. The CP didn't please her much more than the UW had, and she dropped her membership in 1936.

And found the love of her life: labor activism. She and Bob were enthusiastic participants in the great organizing effort on the West Coast docks in the mid- to late 1930s. From there she went on to work for a series of Tacoma labor leaders, where she gathered the material that enabled her to express her love for organized labor. She saved meeting minutes, memoirs of labor veterans, flyers, union charters, photographs, anything and everything that explains how we got where we are. It was Otilie's firm conviction that the trade union movement was what built the American middle class; her mission in life was to share that conviction with the all comers, but especially union members and students.

Which is what brought her to my high school in suburban Tacoma in the fall of 1970. At the time she was president of the Office Workers (now OPEIU), Local 23, in Tacoma and she was also working on reestablishing the Industrial Workers of the World in Tacoma. (If you don't know, the IWW/Wobblies is a syndicalist--as

opposed to a trade-union-based-labor organization which has been pretty well throttled in the United States. In 1970, the US government still listed the IWW as a subversive organization. This year is the 100th anniversary of the

founding of the IWW.) That was the sum total of my high school introduction to organized labor. It was an interesting hour.

So interesting that, 35 years later, three of my former classmates came to last night's memorial, too. It should not have surprised me that two current students of the Tacoma School of the Arts performed a song they wrote in Otilie's honor. Another group of students who first met her last May have dedicated a \$2000 scholarship in her name. Otilie reached people because she talked to them straight. She didn't teach down to students, she didn't suck up to authority.

If you wonder what possesses me to write all the things I do for this newsletter, Otilie would be a big part of the answer. She believed that working people could and should stand up for their own interests and write their own history.

(With idiosyncratic consistency, she resigned from the board of the Tacoma Urban League because she believed that African Americans should similarly run their own organizations without the taint of white paternalism.) Although I ran into Otilie only occasionally since the early 1970s, I think I can remember nearly every conversation we ever had. She didn't waste words and she didn't suffer fools.

The memorial was attended by a who's-who of local labor and social activists. Tacoma Mayor Bill Baarsma read a proclamation declaring January 30 to be "Otilie Markholt Day." A similar declaration came from ex-Governor Gary Locke. There were also letters from Governor Christine Gregoire and from the International President of OPEIU, Otilie's union. State Representative Steve

Conway (D-District 29) gave a nice speech. The highlight for many was a barnburner from Ohio Congressman and ex-Presidential candidate Dennis Kucinich. Otilie had no love for politician's but she made an exception for Kucinich.

**Although she was critical of many things about organized labor... she absolutely supported the AFL's general direction, believing that whatever lapses we have made can be corrected by the active participation of our members.**



May 9, 2004: 88-year-old local historian and active labor leader Otilie Markholt received a standing ovation for her remarks about the necessity of learning our labor history so that we do not repeat it.

For my money, talks by Tacoma's ex-Mayor Harold Moss and by Tacoma Urban League head Tom Dixon spoke most clearly to who Otilie was.

As her son Bob testified, Otilie was honest. As several generations of her descendents explained, labor was her first love; though she may not have been the classic mother or grandmother, she was their great friend and teacher.

Otilie retired, but she never quit. She bused regularly to the Tacoma Labor Temple to gather and organize material for her histories and to educate the officers of her favorite locals. Among the published histories she left us are Maritime Solidarity, an extremely detailed account of the 1930s dock strikes perhaps best left to the attention of scholars, and To Live in Dignity, stories of the early days of Tacoma's local unions. Its account of the 1916 streetcar strike that founded ATU Local 758 should set your heart to thumping.

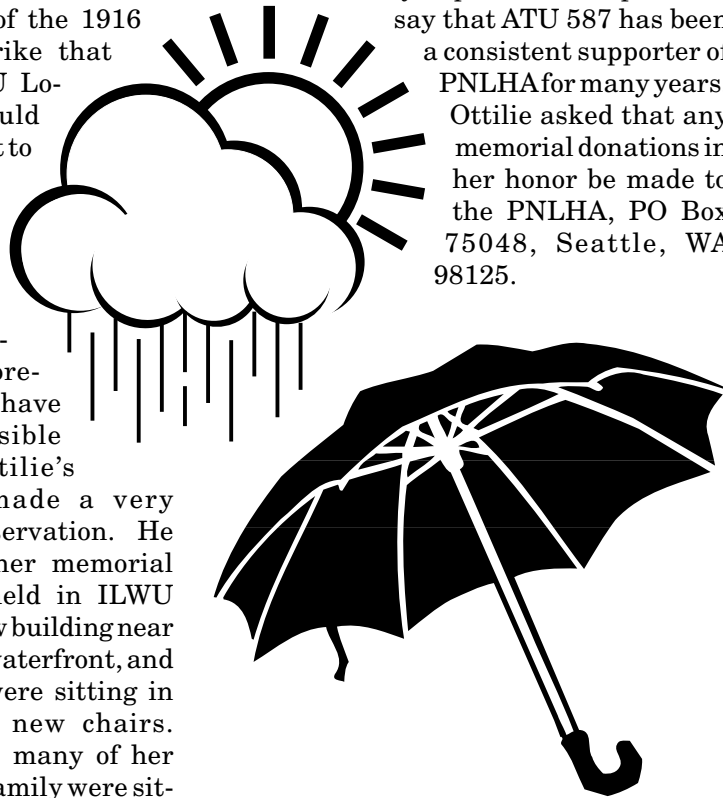
One of historians, Ron Magden, whose The Working Longshoreman would have been impossible without Otilie's research, made a very poignant observation. He noted that her memorial was being held in ILWU Local 23's new building near the Tacoma waterfront, and most of us were sitting in comfortable new chairs. But in back, many of her friends and family were sit-

ting on long white wooden benches from the old Longshore hall in downtown Tacoma. The Longshoreman bought those benches on February 25, 1916, the day Otilie was born. You could say we rest on the efforts of those who have gone before us.

The last time I spoke to Otilie, she was riding our ATU bus to the Paul Robeson rally in Blaine a couple of years ago. Although she was critical of many things about organized labor (see comments re: honesty above), she absolutely supported the AFL's general direction, believing that whatever lapses we have made can be corrected by the active participation of our members. She certainly gave her share for 70 years.

Among Otilie's projects was the Pacific Northwest Labor History Association, where she served in many capacities. I'm proud to

say that ATU 587 has been a consistent supporter of PNLHA for many years. Otilie asked that any memorial donations in her honor be made to the PNLHA, PO Box 75048, Seattle, WA 98125.



# Letters to the Editor...

## Do-gooder Legislation

Dear Editor:

Until this last February, it was illegal in the state of Washington to slander a woman. This ancient law, a remnant of cavalier times, was finally erased from our state constitution. The vote to overturn it was almost unanimous. The dissenter? The representative from Spokane. His comments, "If we are to strike down every unused law, we would waste our valuable time in triviality." On the surface his statement seems sensible enough. But, it uncovers a methodology and attitude coming not only from Olympia but all the way up to the Federal Agencies. What they seem to be saying is, "Our job is not the maintenance of a viable and streamlined Constitution, the important thing to do is to pass laws. We won't waste the taxpayers money keeping it real."

People in this country are breaking laws everyday. The reason is simple: these laws and/or regulations are stupid, not well thought out, and impractical to enforce. This is the paradox in which a society of free and rational thinkers have to live, and battle, with the bureaucrats that are trying to protect us from ourselves.

Take, for example, the seat belt ordinance laid upon the bus drivers.

This piece of regulation is a logical progression from the point of view of the safety "experts", starting with elbow and kneepads, bike and motorcycle helmets, to the automobile seat belt. The only problem is that a bus is not a skateboard, motorcycle, or car, and the forces that act upon it are not comparable in any way shape or form. So why have they imposed this on bus drivers? Good intentions and ignorance, I say.

Did anyone speak with drivers regarding this issue? Was evidence to the table that accidents were going to be prevented by it? Only by relating our condition to that

of truckers and long distance bus drivers were they able to justify their actions.

Apples and oranges I say. Drivers that spend 90% or more of their time on freeways and at high speeds cannot possibly be compared to our circumstances. Our drivers do not fall off the seat or fly through the windshield, but unlike them, we do get assaulted and more often than Metro would like to admit.

In my 20 years of driving I have been involved in head-on and rear-end collisions, I have been assaulted many times. I base my statements on personal experience and actual observation.

When I am confronted by a deranged passenger standing over me, the last thing that I want is to be tied to the seat by a seatbelt. Un-clip the belt you say. Not so fast! This simple action on your part may actually trigger an attack upon you. So, what to do? Just sit tied to your seat and hope for the best. This is the irrational option that the legislature has forced us into.

I have been to the state capitol and spoken with various representatives and one thing that I have noticed is, every one of them is provided with a nice cozy reclining seat that actually rolls freely on wheels. That seems to me like hazardous set up, anyone could accidentally fall backwards and seriously injure themselves. I would like to propose a law that would require our state legislators to wear a helmet while sitting on their cushy reclining seats.

Do I have hard core scientific evidence and the testimony of those involved? No. But, I do care for their safety and I am moved by good intentions, that, my friends, seems to be all that is needed to pass legislation in our state.

Fraternally  
Brother Alexander La Barba  
#3922

## ST Transfers

ATTENTION ALL METRO DRIVERS, AND CSO STAFF

Some of you are making life more difficult for us driving Sound Transit (ST) work by giving customers wrong information on ST fares. Please read the ST Transit Guide, pages 5-14. If after reading these pages, you are still uncertain, seek guidance from Training or your (CPA, lawyer, therapist).

ALL METRO TRANSFERS on ST are worth a one-zone fare (adults - \$1.25; youth - \$.75; reduced fare - .50) A Metro transfer cannot be good for more than one zone, no matter how many holes you punch or what fare the customer puts in your Metro farebox!!!

Metro to ST transfer values and ST fares have become the most common subject of East Base security incident reports. This incompatibility is embarrassing to passengers as they struggle to understand the matrix of exchange values. Customers don't like that! Or the delays of service! It makes ST and Metro look inept and bumbling. These are not perceptions that either organization wants to give passengers (voters).

Bill Duroe  
East Base Driver

## Metro Double Standard

Dear Editor:

Oh what a company we work for!!! Metro management seems to look the other way when our passengers break rules and laws over and over; such as non-payment of fare, excessive foul language, or disruptive behavior. 'Just write it up and carry on' is their mantra. AND, I am sure most of you can recount many mistakes made by your immediate supervisors or managers; such as not informing us of reroutes or zone closures, not correcting safety issues, forgetting details for committee meetings, not following through on paper work etc. I understand that we all make mistakes and I am willing to accept that. Aaahhh, but better not be a Metro Transit Operator!! We must be robots of perfection or expect to be disciplined for minor offenses.

I was recently threatened with a 2-day suspension because I forgot to sign in on the second half of my combo, even though I did do the work. I had two other unrelated offenses in Category 19. As I looked into it, I was shocked at the discipline policy Metro has for drivers. I have worked for Metro for over 25 years. I have a good record. It

was beyond my comprehension how this could be, and how our Union has allowed this policy to be in place for years.

How many of you realize you could take out the wrong bus (PR), forget to sign in (PR), not have your Book one time (PR), and fail to report when operating late (PR) all in one year, that you face a 2-day suspension. Then, if you drop a bet at a friendly poker game at the base, bye bye, you can be fired! These are all PR's in Category 19, "Failure to WILLFULLY follow a Metro directive or procedure."

It is beyond me how forgetting to sign in or accidentally taking the wrong bus is WILLFUL behavior. It can be, but most often is simply a mistake. Or how about this scenario; failing to collect proper fares or not checking validity of transfers or other Metro passes. Both PR's can result in you being fired if you fail to do it five times in a year. Those are in Category 23 of Section 2, Transit Operation Procedures. And don't get into a fare dispute four times in a year or you face a 2-day suspension. Another fare dispute in that same year and, bye bye, you can be FIRED (Category 13). Yes, WHAT a company we work for!! Oh dear; could I get fired for saying this??? Category 19-10: "Making derogatory comments concerning Metro equipment and/or management policy in public" could result in a PR!

...I thought the whole idea of progressive discipline was that the first offense, called an "oral reminder", was to remind you that, say, gambling was not allowed on Metro property. And then if you did it again it would go into a written record. A third offense would threaten suspension. But to gamble once, then forget to sign in once, then later take the wrong bus, and guess what, if you fail to sign in or take the wrong bus again in a year you are subject to a 2-day suspension. It ain't right. I am going to pressure our Union to fix this in our next negotiation. I believe the same or VERY similar violations can build on each other. But not totally unrelated mistakes or violations; they should stand by themselves.

It is my belief that the Mechanics and Transit Operators are the essential backbone of Metro Transit and therefore the Managers should be doing everything they can to build us up and encourage us so we can go out and do our job with a good attitude. Instead I feel they do everything they can to squash any enthusiasm or positive motivation by their absurd and unrealistic discipline policy.

Ruth Wilson, #3927  
North Base

### SEND IN YOUR OPINIONS

Letters/contributions must include signatures, work ID number, addresses and telephone numbers that can be verified during office hours. Letters that cannot be validated will not be published. All articles/letters are subject to editing and should be limited to 350 words or less. Not all letters can be published due to space limitations. Cut off date is the 15th of each month. Send letters to:

Jennie Gil  
News Review Editor  
c/o ATU Local 587  
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Suite 230  
Seattle, WA 98121

### NOTICE TO ALL READERS

*Views and opinions expressed in News Review articles are those of the authors and not necessarily the official position of Local 587*

# Letters to the Editor...

## Biodiesel

Dear Editor:

I'd like to thank King County Metro and Seattle City Light for advancing their recent joint biodiesel pilot program. By the end of the year all of our coaches will be fueled with a mixture of 5% biodiesel and 95% ultra-low sulfur diesel. That's good news, because biodiesel could one day save our jobs!

Why? Because we are approaching the peak of global oil production. (In fact, according to oil expert and investment banker Matthew Simmons we are already there). After the peak, supply will not be able to keep up with global demand, and prices will escalate.

How much oil is left? According to Princeton University geophysicist Kenneth Deffeyes, by 2019 90% of all available oil on the planet will be depleted. (See the February 2005 article, The End of Oil? at [www.technologyreview.com](http://www.technologyreview.com).) Of course, that date is only an estimate. No one knows exactly when all the oil will be gone.

In any event, the coming decades will be marked by intense global competition and warfare to secure the last few drops of this one-time gift from nature. More ominously, our whole global economy is based on economic growth. With no cheap energy available to fuel growth our already precarious economy could fall into deep decline. Once we're on the downside of the energy curve, we will be in uncharted territory.

That's why experimenting with biodiesel is a step in the right direction: we can wean ourselves away from foreign oil and grow the crops needed for biodiesel right in our backyard. (Any oil-bearing seed will do, such as mustard or rape seed. But oil from algae could be several times more productive.)

In fact, the most far-sighted option may be for the county to gradually step-up to 100% biodiesel in the next, say, 10 years. (Biodiesel will soon be comparable in price to regular diesel, perhaps by next year.) If we do that, we'd be best to foster a local or state-wide biodiesel industry. Better yet, to guarantee supply at cost price, the county could even buy agricultural lands for that purpose. (Maybe we could welcome farmers into our union one day!)

Do we have other options? Hydrogen-powered buses would be expensive, and the storage and distribution of hydrogen remains problematic. Besides, the production of hydrogen is energy intensive. Compressed Natural Gas buses may provide us with some breathing room while we switch to renewables, but the natural gas will eventually run out too,

and we'd be contributing to global warming in the meantime. In any case, we need to have contingency plans in place to run our fleet when the oil runs out or becomes prohibitively expensive. And that could come sooner rather than later. Union members should be part of that discussion.

For more information on the KCM biodiesel project, you can google "King County biodiesel". For more information on fossil fuel depletion and what we can do about it, I'd recommend Richard Heinberg's book *Powerdown* ([www.powerdown.us](http://www.powerdown.us)).

Colin Wright, #3642  
North Base

## Toxic Flame Retardants and Worker Safety

Dear Editor,

Toxic Flame Retardants and Worker Safety

There is a new hot issue in town — toxic flame retardants building up in the environment, wildlife, and people, as well as in women's breast milk. There are worker safety issues and broader public health concerns related to these chemicals.

This issue is of particular concern to our Upholsterers and Administrative Assistants, but affects all of us. Sybil Diver from the Toxic Free Legacy Coalition provided the following information:

*"Toxic flame retardants (or PBDEs) are persistent toxic chemicals used as flame retardants in numerous consumer products including televisions, computers, furniture, and carpet. These toxic flame retardants — chemical cousins of the now-banned PCBs — have been linked to memory, and learning problems at low levels in studies on laboratory animals. PBDEs are not used in children's pajamas.*

*Occupational studies have shown elevated levels of toxic flame retardants in workers exposed to these chemicals in the work place. But it turns out that these chemicals are turning up more widely — in the environment, in the workplace, and in people's homes. PBDEs appear to be leaching out of everyday consumer products, so people may be exposed to these chemicals in the indoor environments, as well as through the food chain.*

*Legislation has been proposed to phase out toxic flame retardants in Washington state. This legislation would not affect fire safety standards. Rather, it would require manufacturers to replace these*

*chemicals with safer substitutes. Many companies, including Ikea, Panasonic, Sony, NEC, and others have eliminated PBDEs from their products, while continuing to meet fire safety standards.*

*Numerous community groups and major medical associations, including the Washington State Medical Association, Washington State Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Washington Academy of Family Physicians, Washington State Public Health Association, and Washington State Nurses Association, are supporting PBDE phase-out."*

Local 587 has been asked to support the legislative effort to ban PDBEs from the state of Washington. I will present a motion at the May membership meetings which will ask for 587's non-financial support for this measure. The Toxic Free Legacy Coalition sees this as part of a long-term alliance of labor and the environmental movement, but for now we are only looking at this one important and viable step to protect the environment

and to improve our working conditions. You can review information resources on this issue at [www.flameretardants.org](http://www.flameretardants.org) and [www.bantoxics.org](http://www.bantoxics.org) or you can contact me directly at [mriscovado@earthlink.net](mailto:mriscovado@earthlink.net).

Bill Clifford, #6389  
Atlantic Base

## Special Thanks

Dear Editor,

I recently resigned from RIO. Local 587 represented me in a grievance and negotiated a settlement so that I could resign on good terms. I would like to thank in particular [President] Lance Norton and [Executive Board Officer] Chris Daniels whose representation was excellent.

Thanks to all of you in ATU 587.

In solidarity,  
Galen P. Tyler

## UPCOMING AT LOCAL 587

APRIL 7 – Close First Line Supervisors/Special Classifications Shop Steward nominations.

APRIL 8 – New Shakeup begins for First Line Supervisors.

APRIL 21 – Shop Steward elections for First Line Supervisors/Special Classifications, if needed.

APRIL 22 – PART-TIME RESTRICTION FORMS DUE!!!! **No late forms will be accepted, please make sure to get your forms in to the base dispatcher.**

APRIL 25-29 – Part-time Pick Preview. Central/Atlantic Base upstairs quiet room, 8am-4pm. Check your Operations Bulletin for further information.

APRIL 26 – MAY 1 - Full-time Pick Preview. Atlantic/Central Base upstairs classrooms, 8:30am-4:40pm. Check your Operations Bulletin for further information.

APRIL 26 – Executive Board meeting.

APRIL 30, MAY 1, 7 & 8 – Part-Time Operator Pick. Central/Atlantic Base. Please consult your seniority list for your pick time. **Please remember to allow enough time to walk to pick from the Central/Atlantic/Ryerson parking garage.**

MAY 2-12 – Full-Time Operator Pick. Atlantic/Central Base. Please consult your seniority list for your pick time. **Please remember to allow enough time to walk to pick from the Central/Atlantic/Ryerson parking garage. OPERATORS PICKING WEDNESDAY, MAY 4, 2005, PLEASE FACTOR IN ADDITIONAL TRAVEL TIME DUE TO A 3:35PM MARINERS GAME.**

MAY 17-19 – Vehicle Maintenance Pick. Please consult your bulletin boards for information.

MAY 19 – Shop Steward nomination open for Transit Operators and Vehicle Maintenance.

MAY 21 – Vehicle Maintenance Transportation Bid (tentative). Please consult your bulletin boards for information.

MAY 24 – Executive Board meeting.

# Full-Time Transit Operator Pick Comparisons

By Executive Board Officer Bruce Tiebout

In previous articles I've been looking at the effect of Metro's change in the Part-Time Operator runcuts. Every action which changes the part-time pick also changes the full-time pick. This month, I analyzed the changes in the full-time pick for weekday assignments for Fall 2004 and Spring 2005. I looked at weekdays only because Part-Time Operators don't work weekends and a change in the part-time runcut shouldn't effect weekend work.

I began by entering 2,598 weekday assignment times into a pair of Excel spreadsheets, then analyzed

the differences between the week-day assignments. While the average length of night work increased by just under two minutes (8:30:01 to 8:31:59) from fall to spring, day work increased by over six minutes (8:27:24 to 8:33:28). Most of that increase came from longer combos and more of them. Last fall, there were 430 runs and 63 combos, for a total of 493. This spring, there are 420 runs and 81 combos, for a total of 501. While the length of runs increased less than two minutes (8:26:56 to 8:28:51), the length of combos increased a life-gutting 27 minutes (8:30:38 to 8:57:24). In

addition, the number of available overtime trippers increased to 100 more per week than required by the contract.

My previous articles analyzing the part-time runcut showed how Metro is decreasing the number of full benefit/four-hour assignments. Metro wants fewer Part-Time Operators qualifying for full benefits, and Metro wants more Full-Time Operators working more overtime. Overtime is cheaper than straight time. Overtime doesn't accrue vacation nor sick leave. Overtime cheapens the per/hour cost of benefits. There is no replacement cost

for overtime.

This summer, Metro will have the usual service cuts for schools, most notably UW service. Thus, the summer runcut shouldn't be used as an indication of Metro's intended direction with regards to part-time work. With the aforementioned goal of spreading benefit costs over more hours, and the proposed service increases due to the upcoming tunnel closure, the pick next August should be very interesting. Yes, Jim, it's "shoes for industry." But, we ain't dead yet.

	Combo	Night Combo	Runs	4/40	Night	Night 4/40	AM OT	PM OT	OT	Total Day	Total Night
<b>Totals</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>278</b>
Spring	725:29:00	16:23:00	3561:57:00	614:48:00	2355:48:00	471:53:00	62:42:00	66:49:00		4287:26:00	2372:11:00
	<b>8:57:24</b>	<b>8:11:30</b>	<b>8:28:51</b>	<b>10:14:48</b>	<b>8:32:08</b>	<b>10:15:30</b>	<b>1:41:41</b>	<b>1:45:30</b>		<b>8:33:28</b>	<b>8:31:59</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>493</b>	<b>274</b>
Fall	536:10:00	17:03	3633:00:00	591:56:00	2312:01:00	493:04:00	55:35:00	57:41:00		4169:10:00	2329:04:00
	<b>8:30:38</b>	<b>8:31:30</b>	<b>8:26:56</b>	<b>10:12:21</b>	<b>8:30:01</b>	<b>10:16:20</b>	<b>1:41:04</b>	<b>1:48:09</b>		<b>8:27:24</b>	<b>8:30:01</b>

## What's Happening in V.M.

By Mike Whitehead, Deb Stenoien & Jeff Stambaugh

If you haven't heard by now we have a new VM E-Board officer. After seven years John Bellinger resigned his position as VM E-Board officer. It has been a great privilege to work with him. All of you who know John know his honesty is true and sometimes brutal. His integrity is far superior to most and his passion to support the membership is inspirational. We will truly miss his union involvement.

Your new E-Board officer is Deb Stenoien. Deb is currently a mechanic on dayshift at North Base. Her career at Metro started with driving buses. She then went thru the Apprentice Training program to become a mechanic. She has been a long time shop steward. We look forward to working with Deborah.

It has been a few months since we have written an article and we do appreciate it when you members remind us we are behind, that reaffirms us you do read our articles. The two most asked questions are, "What's happening with the Sick Leave language" and "What is the status of the Technological Grievance."

As for sick leave the Union and Metro are continuing to meet

to go over data and options, this process is arduous at best. This committee is attempting to resolve the issue short of mediation. If resolution does not happen, we go to mediation, and then possibly to arbitration.

### Technological Change

We met with the Metro negotiation team of Dennis Pigeon, Steve Grissom and Dave Levin on March 23 to try once again to reach a settlement. A mediator from PERC (Public Employees Relations Committee) was brought in to try and facilitate a resolution. Unfortunately this did not happen. A few disappointing items came out of this, as well as a few positive things. On the positive side, Metro has seen our resolve to follow this through to resolution and that we won't sell our members short and go away. Second is that we have one more tentative meeting scheduled in the next few weeks. After that we should either have a resolution or be at a certified impasse which clears the way for arbitration.

Most of you are probably aware that Metro just went through a recruitment process for mechanics. The rumor is positions have been offered and somewhere between 2

and 4 mechanics will be joining us April 11th if all goes well.

### VMLMRC

As a new Board officer, Deborah has had a chance to attend a few VMLMRC meetings (Vehicle Maintenance Labor Management Relations Committee). We believe she is still reserving her opinion as to the process. The meetings are held monthly at various bases or at the Union Office. We do invite shop stewards and members to attend, just contact one of us. Some of the issues we have discussed this year are U.S. Drug and Alcohol Regulations, "Reasonable Suspicion" and what supervisors are trained on this subject, Mechanic job reduction, unsanitary coach definitions and procedure, MERRA holiday party in VM at Central Base, new personal-issue radios at CB and responsibilities thereof, letters of expectation, nepotism, start times, the Apprenticeship program, and Joint Safety. If any of you have a concern or other issue you want us to bring up please contact us. The VMLMRC committee meeting schedule for the remainder of the year is: at the Union Office April 7th, East Base May 5th, Union Office June 16th, Central Base July

14th, Union Office August 11th, Ryerson Base September 22nd, Union Office October 6th, Atlantic Base November 11th, and the Union Office December 15th.

In closing there is one subject we addressed in a few *News Review* issues last year that had members both in VM and Operations discouraged. That was the new Staff Parking at East Base. We would like to announce that the practice of designated staff parking has been discontinued. Speaking on behalf of a large number of members we want to THANK King County upper management for understanding and resolving the issue. Taking action on this matter has made a positive impact on employees at this work site. This action shows King County upper management is committed to fairness.

*"Equality is the public recognition, effectively expressed in institutions and manners, of the principle that an equal degree of attention is due to the needs of all human beings."*

—Simone Weil (1909–43)

Thanks Again...

REMEMBER VEHICLE MAINTENANCE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!





Jennie Gil

## The Recording Secretary's Report

# Is it REALLY pick time again???

By Recording Secretary Jennie Gil

**Warning:** To skip this article this time around could be hazardous to your pick. Full-time Operators have a new option for Group D. Part-time Operators must submit their restriction forms by April 22 in order to have them honored. Curious? Read on....

### TRANSIT OPERATOR PICK IS WHEN?

Part-time pick – April 30, May 1, 7 & 8.

Full-time pick – May 2 through 12.

Part-time preview – April 25 through 29

Full-Time preview – April 26 through May 1.

Please see your Operations Bulletin boards for the exact times. I never seem to get them right.

**IMPORTANT SCHEDULE NOTE:** Full-Time Operators picking on Wednesday, May 4th will need to factor in increased travel time due to an afternoon Mariners game (3:35pm).

### VACATION PICK

Part-Time Operators can pick vacation periods in Summer shakeup. Please bring your vacation dates with you. If you are Part-time and you pick a couple vacation periods with the intent to cancel one because you are unsure of your dates, it denies people below you a guaranteed slot they might have picked had you known your dates.

### ABSENTEE FORMS (both Part- and Full-time)

There are many reasons one cannot make it to pick. For that we have absentee pick forms. Some members fill out an absentee form as backup insurance, just in case. If you choose to do so, you will not be bound by your absentee pick form if you do show up. There are new absentee forms for Full-time and Group D. Please read your form carefully before filling it out and submitting it.

Absentee pick forms may be turned in at your base either by 7 a.m. on your pick day, or in the pick room during business hours (after preview starts), all the way up until two minutes prior to your pick time. Review the forms carefully before you submit them. Do not send them to the union office! We are not responsible for late or lost absentee or restriction forms!

### NO SHOW AND NO ABSENTEE FORM?

Operators who do not make it

to pick and have not submitted an absentee form have their work picked for them by the following process: Ten minutes prior to your scheduled pick time, your pick sheet is handed off to the Union representative, who will look up your current assignment. If your current assignment is open, at your designated pick time it will be picked for you. If not, and you are Part-time, the Union representative will look for a tripper that reports on or after your current report time and quits on or before your current quit time. You will be placed at your current base as long as it is still open, and if not, at the base geographically closest, if at all possible. If you are Full-time, we try our best to match as close as we can to what you currently are working.

Occasionally, there is no current pick information available and often there are no similar assignments left, especially further on down the seniority list. If there is time and an open phone line, the Union representative may attempt to call you. If we do not have your current address/phone number, and no current assignment for you, the Union representative has little recourse other than to pick an assignment completely at random.

For Part-time Operators, the tripper picked for you by the Union is sometimes substantially shorter than the tripper you could have picked yourself. It is in your best interest to show up and pick for yourself, or submit an absentee pick form.

### I CAN'T WORK THIS, YOU HAVE SCREWED UP MY LIFE!

Once the Union representative picks your assignment it might not be changed if you arrive late. If you arrive immediately after the Union has picked for you, AND, if the people who picked below you are still in the room, the pick may be stopped and your piece offered to those who picked behind you if you are so very opposed to working it. If this should occur, the pick still goes on around you and those with lesser seniority who did arrive on time will continue to pick. If, however, even one person below you that has already picked has left the room, your pick will not be altered for any reason. A second recourse for those who did not arrive in time to pick and find their union-picked work heinous is to hang tight till the next move up.

### DON'T CALL US ....

Cell phones are now so prevalent, our children do not know life

without them. Consequently, more members are electing to phone the pick room at their designated pick time, which works fine if pick is running on schedule and the ONE phone line in the pick room is not busy. But pick can be delayed for any number of reasons. If a delay occurs or the phone line is busy, picking by phone can be a nightmare.

PLEASE!! Don't try to pick by phone unless you absolutely have to. Come to the pick on time and in person, or submit an absentee pick form as mentioned above. We will not be responsible for the outcome if it is not favorable to you.

### IMPORTANT!

The contract states: "Selections made by the UNION will not be subject to the grievance/arbitration procedure." Your Union representatives are only human. In your absence they did the best they could given the circumstances they had to work with, and the Union will not be held liable for any picks made for someone who could not or did not show up to do their own pick.

### THE NEW FLEX GROUP D

The new contract has allowed for a second Group D option. The option we have enjoyed up to now allows a Full-time Operator to select a tripper in lieu of full-time work, but falling under the provisions and conditions of Part-time. That is called the Tripper Group D option. The new Flex Group D allows a Full-time Operator to select one of the following two options:

a) a Saturday combo at a base they designate (but had the seniority to pick in the last two shakeups) and a minimum of two peak time weekday periods to be assigned via the Extra Board, or,

b) a minimum of five peak time weekday periods to be assigned via the Extra Board.

The deadline to sign up and obtain your chief's approval for the Flex Group D option is fourteen days prior to the beginning of full-time pick, or Tax Day, April 15th.

### RESTRICTION FORMS (Part-Time Operators)

Restriction forms went to the bases March 28th. The deadline for turning in restriction forms is April 22nd. Absolutely no restriction forms will be accepted past this date. No if's, and's or but's!! Restrictions amount to usurping the seniority of those ahead of you who did not have the need to restrict, the Union takes the

deadline very seriously. Also know that if you submitted a restriction form and we reach lockout, you will be required to honor that restriction.

Lockout is when the number of restriction forms equals the number of available slots for either a.m. or p.m. system-wide. For example, 100 a.m. slots are available system-wide, 100 restriction forms on file, equals a.m. lockout. At that point, unless you had a restriction form submitted for that shakeup, you may not pick a.m. work, regardless of your seniority.

If something comes up after you submit your form that frees you from the need to be restricted, please contact the pick coordinator or call the Recording Secretary at the Union office and rescind your restriction form. You may rescind a form all the way up to that point where we go into lockout.

### PARKING WOES – DON'T FORGET!

The use of the new parking garage is in full swing. It is accessed off of 6th Avenue, just shy of Atlantic Street. There are still problems with the various systems that operate the garage. Allow enough time to circumnavigate the garage when you come to pick. Be sure to have your Metro ID with you. I am told that those coming for pick may find more space by parking on the uppermost level. Of course if the weather is crappy, ignore that advice.

### KUDOS

My thanks to OSS Coordinator Jay Sybert who, despite my unending calls and bad jokes, can sometimes still perform miracles. My thanks to my Executive Board Officers who staff both picks for helping me through my last minute rush to put on this party. And to the pending crew, who wait patiently to get the yea or nay that they have been selected. And lastly to those who just as patiently resubmit their name in the hopes of getting the honor to relinquish two weekends in a row for thirteen hours of grueling, intense and almost thankless work.

To this mix we add Ralph Keyport, newly promoted to being Metro's Overlord in the Operator pick process. Which really means that everyone else makes the process happens but he is ultimately blamed if it gets screwed up. He is saddled with working through the new Flex Group D implementation process with me.

Oh, and thanks to Hal, for just being, you know, Hal.

## President's Report, continued from page 1

that the higher prevalence of spinal problems could be attributed to biomechanical stresses associated with turning to the left while driving and to the right while loading and unloading passengers. Another added that those with exposures to whole body vibration of more than 4.5 years exhibited significantly more LBP symptoms. Vibrations between 8 to 10 Hertz caused higher risks than currently thought. The third study concludes that health effects of occupational exposure occur at levels below those indicated by the present standards and propose a lower limit.

Andrew, R. 1992. *Back Pain of Bus Drivers, Spine, 17:12*. Bovenzi, M. et al 1992. *Low Back Symptoms of Bus Drivers, Spine 17:1048-1059*. Bongers, P. et al 1992. *Back Disorders & Whole -Body Vibration, Clinical Biomechanics, : 185-186*.

### • Brain tumors

Odds ratios for brain tumors showed significant increased risk for those employed as drivers (Odds ratio 2.8). Authors conclude that there is an increased risk of developing brain tumors. Kaplan, S. et al 1997. *Occupational Risks for the Development of Brain Tumors, Journal of Medicine, 31: 15-30*.

### • Cancer

Highly significant excess rates of lung cancer, stomach cancer and rectal cancer were found among Geneva's professional drivers. One study found the incidence of morbidity ratio for bladder and skin cancer among urban bus drivers in Denmark significantly elevated, another found an increased risk of bladder cancer among employees in the bus, truck and taxi service industries in Scandinavian countries.

Increased traffic density in urban areas leads to carbon monoxide exposure that is two to three times higher than non-traffic environments. A study of over 37,000 men and 2,251 urban drivers showed they had an excess risk of 31 to 64% for lung cancer after adjustment for socioeconomic factors. Smoking rates were deemed equal across the test subjects. Disproportionate mortality ratios (PMRs) for lung cancer, hematological and myelogenous cancers were found in another study. In a study done in Great Britain, significant excesses of mortality from stomach cancer, lung cancer, bronchitis, emphysema and asthma occurred in the lorry, coach and bus drivers.

Guberan, E. et al 1992. *Increased risk -for Cancer, British Journal of Industrial Medicine, 49: 337-334*. Netterstrom, B. 1988. *Cancer, International Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health 61: 217-221*. Jensen, O. et al 1987. *Bladder Cancer, Scandinavian Journal of Work..., 13: 129-134*. Hansen, J. et al 1998. *Increased risk of lung cancer among different types of professional drivers in Denmark. Occupational Environmental Medicine 55: 115-118*. Guidotti, T. 1992. *Morbidity, Occupational Medicine, 42: 125-128*. Balarajan, R. et al 1988. *General Morbidity, British Journal of Industrial Medicine, 45: 483-486*.

### • Heart disease

Multiple studies have found coronary heart disease and cardiovascular risk factors among busdrivers elevated, with an odds ratio of (OR) 3.0. High levels of job strain in the public transportation setting appear to increase urinary catecholamine activity, which in turn increases the risk for coronary heart disease. Two different studies found hospital admissions and death ratios for ischemic heart disease, as well as acute myocardial infarction, showed significant excess risks among bus drivers. One study concludes the increased risk is a result of increased job strain resulting from workplace demands and the degree of decision-making latitude or control experienced by the workers. A significant association was established between the incidence of myocardial infarction and increased urban work loads, increased work pace, and decreased social contact with colleagues. The most common medical problem among London bus drivers was reported to be cardiovascular

for the bus drivers relative to all three comparison groups. The authors conclude that bus drivers have significantly higher prevalence rates of hypertension.

Rogland, D. et al 1989. *Hypertension, American Association of Occupational Health Nurses Journal, 37: 71/74-79*

### • Diabetes Mellitus-Non insulin dependent

Study group consisted of managers, technical personnel, clerical workers and drivers. The highest incidence of NIDDM, 8.7 percent, occurred among transport workers, followed by clerical workers, 5.4 percent. **They suggest that NIDDM be considered a work-related disease.**

Morikawa, Y. et al 1997. *Development of Non-Insulin Dependent Diabetes Mellitus, American Journal of Industrial Medicine, 31:80-84*.

### • General health

The incidence of musculoskeletal disabilities among different occupations was examined in order to obtain a ranking of occupations with high and low levels of func-

conditions resulting in disability related to the back, tendons and joints (35%), mental disorders (35%) and cardiovascular diseases (12%). The authors state that driving city buses appears to be an occupation with high risks for poor health and well-being.

Kompier, M. et al 1990. *General Morbidity, Work and Stress, 4: 83-89*.

Respiratory and lung cancers which were determined to be 19% more common.

Paradis, G. et al 1989. *General Morbidity, International Journal of Epidemiology, 18:397-402*.

Ten illness factors were evaluated representing specific symptom clusters: musculoskeletal, distress, upper gastrointestinal tract, lower gastrointestinal tract, psychosomatic, cardiovascular, respiratory, auditory, head and renal. The authors conclude that among operators, jobs perceived to be high stress are predictive of highest morbidity. A significant correlation was found between the degree of occupational stress in all of the listed illnesses except renal illness. And one more study concluded that there is no significant gender difference in negative reaction to job stresses.

Borthwick, K. et al 1986. *General Morbidity, Trends in Ergonomics of Work, 1:151-160*. Rydstedt, L. et al 1998. *A longitudinal study of workload, health and well-being among male and female urban bus drivers. Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 71:35-45*.

### In Summary

Few other contemporary professions are as stressful as urban public bus operation. Occupational stressors have been considered an important factor in their high rate of health problems. Is it then fair to discipline employees for elevated absenteeism rates that studies show are related to the work itself? Wouldn't it be more effective to work on the root causes? Our members are retiring at earlier ages due to disabilities, and our Recording Secretary is kept busy attending medical termination meetings for members no longer able to do the job for any number of the above mentioned conditions, including those dealing with the aftermath of injuries suffered on the job.

Metro is taking the position that the high rate of absenteeism is costing them significant amounts of money. King County is putting much stock in their Healthy Incentives program in an effort to steer employees towards healthier living, which they contend will reduce their overall health care costs. And while that may hold true, it does nothing to address the stressors that are caused by our working conditions. So we will again go full circle. Our members will continue to suffer high rates of debilitating or life threatening conditions, they will continue to exhibit high rates of absenteeism, and continue to be shown the door. Status quo.

Be safe  
LFN

**Our members are retiring at earlier ages due to disabilities, and our Recording Secretary is kept busy attending medical termination meetings for members no longer able to do the job for any number of the above mentioned conditions, including those dealing with the aftermath of injuries suffered on the job.**

complications, which accounted for 25% of all forced medical retirements in 1983.

Carrere, S. et al 1991. *Cardiovascular disease, Journal of Occupational Psychology, 64: 305-316*. Hedberg, G. et al 1993. *Ischemic Heart Disease, Scandinavian Journal of Work, 19: 326-333*. Tuschese, F. et al 1992. *Ischemic Heart Disease, International Journal of Epidemiology, 21: 450-459*. Michaels, D. et al 1991. *Heart disease, International Journal of epidemiology, 20: 3-404*. Rosengren, A. et al 1991. *Coronary Heart Disease, International Journal of Epidemiology, 20:82-8*. Netterson, B. et al 1988. *Cardiovascular system, Scandinavian Journal of Work..., 14:231-238*.

Diamond, P. 1984. *Cardiovascular Complications, Travel Medicine International, 2: 164-166*. Hartvig, P. et al 1983. *Heart Disease, International Archives of Occupational And Environmental Health, 52: 353-360*.

### • Hypertension

The prevalence rates of hypertension were significantly elevated

tional disability. High disability occupations were bus drivers and farm workers.

Leigh, J. et al 1992. *Disability in Occupations, American Journal of Public Health, 82: 1517-1524*.

Evidence seems to implicate whole body vibration as a factor in the development of certain occupational diseases of bus drivers among which are a number of venous, bowel, respiratory, muscular and back disorders. Such disorders include varicose veins, varicocele, hemorrhoids, diverticulosis, appendicitis, inguinal hernia, displacement of intervertebral disc, ankylosis of the spine and vertebrogenic pain syndrome.

Altman, S. 1976. *NIOSH Vibration Project..., Job Safety and Health, pp. 15-20*. Gruber, G. et al 1974. *Musculoskeletal system, NIOSH, 75:1-72*. Wasserman, D. 1976. *General Morbidity, International Journal of Occupational Health and Safety, pp. 19-21*.

Bus drivers who had to leave their job for medical reasons did so at a younger age than other groups of civil servants. The main



Paul L. Griffin

## The Financial Secretary's Report

# Where Do Decisions Come From?

By Paul L. Griffin

Too often we stand back and say, "Where did that come from?" One example is the decision to blow up the Kingdome. A week after the implosion there were contractors onsite building and digging based upon engineering plans already in existence. Where did those decisions come from? The decision to replace the Kingdome had been made in 1992, many years before it came down. Sometimes, there are decisions made in the public sector that have great influence on ATU Local 587. Most of the time we are the last stakeholders to be included. Even worse, we are told what our participation will be.

One way to be part of the decision making process is to partake in face-to-face conversations with the decision makers. The decision makers usually are elected officials; elected officials that may be on our COPE radar screen. Other decision makers are top managers or representatives of public agencies or private employers. The process of decision-making is sometimes called "networking".

So what are the mechanics of

this "networking"? Successful networking is not exchanging e-mails and phone calls as part of a distraction filled day. Successful networking is born on a stage set away from the daily work and responsibilities. It's not at some big dinner or conference where everybody listens to the pontifications of a keynote speaker. Rather, the most successful "networking" happens during "study missions".

Study missions are opportunities for decision makers to get off the daily merry-go-round, free of distractions and concentrate in a no-stress environment conducive to free thinking. The fruit of these study missions might be years in the making but they start out in a casual atmosphere. Would it not be a good idea then to be included in these casual conversations from the get-go? From the get-go, friendships are born and informal communication becomes free flowing even after the study mission is formally concluded.

Such a study mission is going to happen in the near future. There will be at least sixty participants. They are going to a place where

they will learn other people's failures and successes and come back with insights so they do not make the same mistakes. It's part of cost effective, efficient, planning to achieve maximum value for the investment. Among the participants: Joni Earl, CEO of Sound Transit; Jean Godden, Seattle City Council; John Ladenburg, office of the Pierce County Executive; Bill McSherry, Strategy Advisor to the Puget Sound Regional council; Aaron Reardon, Snohomish County Executive; and Pat Thompson, Director of Legislation from the Washington State Council of County & City Employees.

Additionally, there will be many other elected officials and representatives from the private sector. These are people to whom we should be paying attention, they are the people who need to hear our message and concerns. Included in the study mission itinerary will be audiences with Peter Cassells, Labor Party and European Parliament; a round table on Regional Planning and Transportation; Andy Cullen on Government Transportation Strat-

egy; and John Henry, Director and CEO of the Dublin Transportation Office. These are subject matters that ATU Local 587 is interested in.

Will we be in attendance? Nope. What will we do? We will stand by until the study mission is long over and then when decisions come our way we will cherry pick the ones we think we can fight if we don't like them. We'll win some modifications and loose the argument on others. Either way we will put in more effort at a future date to assert ourselves than we would have put in to make our point and achieve cooperation in the decision process early on. At that stage of the game, the only ones who truly listen to us are elected officials we have supported through COPE or as individuals. Necessary but not sufficient.

So there you have it. Big, long range, decisions in our community come from decision makers getting together and studying other communities' success and applying the lessons learned locally. We should be there too.

## Persistence Pays On The Fast Track

By Paul L. Griffin

On October 24, 1988, the Seattle Post Intelligencer ran an article by O. Casey Corr titled "On the Fast Track to Light Rail." The opening line said it all: "The Puget Sound Region is approaching traffic gridlock!" The article goes on to discuss the pros and cons of light rail.

Major politicians were on board at that time to get light rail. The Mayor of Seattle, Washington State Legislature, Puget Sound Council of Governments, the Metro Council, King County Council members and the King County Executive all wanted rail. The article discussed the history and all the logical reasons for rail, sooner rather than later.

Then the article went on to discuss "good" reasons for killing light rail. Ridership projections were too optimistic, the cost per passenger was "excessive", fares on rail won't be high enough to pay for it, and the Federal Government subsidy was decreasing. Once again the

region degenerated into "analysis paralysis". Meanwhile the political chairs changed occupants and some "chairs" disappeared entirely. We got new decision makers. Now sixteen years later, rail is upon us and "we" are finally building something. There's no stopping light rail now. Good thing the whole project was on the fast track!

So let us now reflect on public transit. While some people ride public transit for entertainment or as tourists, the majority of riders ride for one of three reasons. To save time, save money, or as an act of desperation. Let's review the primary reasons the majority of riders take the bus.

Save time. Dedicated bus lanes, rail, express service, all save time. Even not having to hunt for a parking space saves time. Unless, of course, the bus is stuck in traffic with the motorized vehicles. Then walking is definitely faster.

Save money: Car operation costs money, in the form of gas, mainte-

nance, insurance, tags, etc. So does parking. But for some money is not the issue. Creature comfort is certainly better in a car as opposed to a bus. Trains, however, can be even better than a bus unless loaded to capacity.

And finally: An act of desperation. No driver license; too young; disabled; economically disadvantaged; DWI. All must take public transit to get anyplace.

But back to light rail. When traffic gridlock reaches total stoppage light rail will keep on moving. The trick with rail is to get past the critical point of getting from where they were to where they want to go. One mile of track does nothing. The bigger the system, the more riders. We know that to be true as seen in Portland. Three days after opening a new line the system has lots of new "regular" riders. Build it and they will come is as true as it ever was.

Will light rail eliminate "traffic gridlock" in Seattle? No. However,

smart people will make adjustments to avail themselves to light rail as it meets their needs. They will be saving time and money as they go past car occupants for whom saving time or money has little value. Car occupants will be causing their own gridlock. But they will not be desperate enough to try public transit until the loss of time and money from gridlock reaches sufficient magnitude for each potential rider.

So what did we learn about big public works projects on the "fast track?" Persistence pays - at least ten years of persistence if there is going to be success. Then all the politicians are closer to agreement and pointed in the same direction: that's called leadership blended with "follower-ship". The problem also has to get big enough that even the uninformed will bless a solution. For us, the gridlock problem finally got big enough that light rail received the blessing.

# The View from the Buses

By John D. Love

I received a note from Curtis and Sara Hicks with their plans for a annual trip to the Southwest. They will be making stops in California at Vandenburg, Port Heueneme, and Needles, then wander through Quartsite, Mesa and Gold Bend. There they will meet up with 16 or 17 rigs and move on to Rocky Point, Mexico, for a two week stay, just as they did last year. After that they will go on to Yuma and finally meander back to Seattle.

Charlie and Maggie Davis are settling into their new digs in Grants Pass, Oregon. They are enjoying their new grandchild in nearby Medford and enjoy receiving news from Seattle. I received a call from Lenora (Betty) Hall, widow of Joe Hall. Joe was the Operator's operator. Besides being a good driver he was a professional Caller and Teacher of square and round dancing. Betty also recalled some kind words for the late Bert Marriott.

I have heard from Joe Kramer, now living in Las Vegas, Nevada. Joe is operating charter coaches

out of Las Vegas. Since leaving Transit in 2000 he has operated charter coaches in about half of the states. He has been as far East as Philadelphia and in all of the Western states. Joe was searching for Bob Stewart. I do not have an address for Bob. If anyone out there knows where he is please let me know. The last I heard of him he and Evelyn were living in Las Vegas.

I want to welcome Dave Lutinen to the ranks of the retired. Dave's last day on the job was February 1, 2005 and he served 31 years on the job. I have received a note from Jim and Peggy Rochon via Lonnie Sewell, now living in Arizona. Jim says that he ran into Rodney Ray, and he is now living in Peoria, Arizona.

At our last luncheon at Andy's Diner I was pleased to see John Daniels in attendance. The attendance at the South end breakfast at Denny's in Burien continues to grow. The last one I attended accounted for about thirty retirees and several active members.

## Binnacle List

An e-mail from LaVaunne Bark informing me that Larry has had pneumonia and has had congestive heart failure. He is doing better except for a hoarse voice. They expect to be back in Seattle before the end of April. They send regards to all.

Anne Cameron has undergone heart surgery and is recovering in the Good Samaritan Hospital in Corvallis, Oregon. The latest report I have is that Anne is on the road to recovery.

## TAPS

I received word that Helen Nichols passed away on November 27, 2004. Helen was in the personnel office at Seattle Transit for years and will be remembered by all. She was 89 years old and retired April 1977. Also reported to have passed away was Theodore Mallory. Ted was 82 years old at his passing.

Mel LaBoyne passed away on the 2nd of January in Phoenix, Arizona due to an accident he had involving the Yuma Railroad

were Mel was a voluntary crewmember.

Kenneth E. Nelson's name is listed in the Memoriam in the "In Transit" magazine. Kenneth retired 6/5/78 and was 92 years old at his passing. I received word that Gordon (Swede) Reynolds passed away around January 27. Swede retired 3/26/83 and was 87 years old at his passing. Swede was my block man on the very first run that I picked on the #28-8th Ave NW in 1969.

Our sympathies go out to those families that have lost loved ones. We should remember that the survivors need support in their time of sorrow and we should extend that support to the best of our ability.

Keep in mind, if you have news you want to share with others E-Mail me at:

Dennerle1@juno.com

That's all for now.

John

## Part-time Survey

***Part-Time Operators: please fill out this survey and place it in the envelope on your union bulletin board or return it to the Union office.***



Name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

ID (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

**Note: Supplying your name and ID is optional but it will be very helpful to the Union as we follow up on the survey.**

1. I have been part-time for \_\_\_\_ years.

2. Check all that apply.

- I wish to stay part-time indefinitely.
- I wish to go full-time as soon as possible.
- I am satisfied with the hours I can pick.
- I would like to pick more hours than I am able to.
- In the last shakeup, I worked a dual tripper.
- In the last shakeup I did NOT work a dual tripper.
- For the current shakeup I picked a dual tripper in order to get at least four hours.
- I would not pick a dual tripper if I could pick a tripper of at least four hours.
- I would like more hours but I can't pick a dual tripper because of family/job/other obligations.

3. Rank the following items in order of importance to you, with 1 being the most important and 5 being the least important. If an item is not important to you at all do NOT rank it.

- Having enough hours.
- Having fully paid medical benefits for myself and family.
- Having straight-through work.
- Having work that does not interfere with my other job or other life commitments.
- Other (please explain briefly)

4. Check all that apply and fill in the blanks..

- I experienced a significant loss of hours for the current shakeup. Last shakeup I was able to pick \_\_\_\_\_ hours. For the current shakeup the longest work I could pick was \_\_\_\_\_ hours.
- In the past I have been able to qualify for full medical benefits.
- I fear that I might lose my eligibility for full medical benefits because I could not pick four hour work for the current shake-up.

5. If you believe you were negatively impacted by the reduction in four-hour work for the current shakeup, please comment on how this will affect you and/or your family.