The President’s Report

by Lance F. Norton

A Disservice to our Membership

There are a few within our membership that are doing a disservice not only to the leadership of our Local but more importantly to our members. They are doing this by spreading misinformation regarding impending layoffs and Union concessions on wages. Prior to last month’s charter meeting late in the afternoon I received a call from an operator who said there were some people at his base telling drivers there would be layoffs this summer and the Union has agreed to give up our raise due this May. At the charter meeting I addressed this rumor as positively not true. I believe there were a few in attendance at that meeting responsible for spreading these lies. If anyone ever has questions about things you might be hearing, please know you should call the Union office. If any of the Union Officers are at meetings or in the case of myself or the Vice-President representing a member in a hearing or at meetings we’ll always get back to you.

As I was writing this article I received in today’s mail the newsletter from A.T.U. Local 689 in Washington D.C. In their newsletter the President of Local 689 writes in her column on two issues. I received permission from President Jackie Jeter of Local 689 to take excerpts from her column to reprint in mine. Although our two Locals are 3,000 miles apart the issues and concerns are the same. On layoffs President Jeter writes:

“The much rumored and anticipated position cuts have continued to cause quite a stir within our ranks. I have reported to you that Local 689 has not received a notification announcing the elimination of any Local 689 positions during this round. The majority of the 313 positions cut last week came from the elimination of open positions. According to upper management, they identified non-689 represented and Local 2 administrative positions and began laying them off. Our prayers are with those co-workers who lost their jobs. They have worked side by side with the members of Local 689 and we feel for them and their families during these turbulent times. Nobody can afford to lose their job. But don’t get relaxed 689; we can only say that today was not our day. I have been told that every effort will be made to keep each and every active member. I’ve been told that the fat will be trimmed from the 2010 budget.”

On President Jeter’s concerns regarding rumors and misinformation being spread by members within her local she writes:

“I want to stop for a moment and let you know that this is our sincere attempt to bring you the information necessary for you to make your decisions based on truthful and honest information. We do not lead with fear or selfish motives; I will not allow these troubled times to be exploited by those who are uninformed, unaware and unacquainted with the real meaning of unity. Unfortunately, we have people who have selfish motives in their actions and what they say.”

The problems and concerns we have here in Seattle area shared by many others across our great land. Be assured our Local will do everything in our power to protect each and every member’s job. Our Local throughout its 97 year history has faced many difficult times. We’ve gotten through those and we’ll get through these.

Regards to all...
Be Safe...

LFN
March 24, 2009

All officers were present.

The following business was conducted:

Motion by Rick Sepolen to accept Benefits Plan and Memorandum of Agreement as written.

Motion by Kenny McCormick to recommend pursing the grievance of Alan Freeman for the membership’s consideration for arbitration.

Motion by Neal Safrin that ATU Local 587 will endorse the ‘Mothers Leading the Way for Healthcare’ event that will take place on Saturday May 30th, 2009.

Motion by Kenny McCormick to recommend pursing the grievance of George Williams for the membership’s consideration for arbitration.

Motion by Michael Moore to send up to five members to the 2009 ATU Black Caucus May 14 – 17, 2009 paying airfare, hotel, registration, and per diem.

Motion by Paul Neil to pay $300.00 for a full page ad in the Souvenir Book for the 2009 Black Caucus.

Motion by Dee Wakenight to send up to two members to the Labor Law and Labor Arbitration seminar in Las Vegas, Nevada, June 22 -23, 2009 paying airfare, hotel, registration, and per diem.

Motion by Michael Shaen to send one member to the Bruce Pitman Foster funeral service paying airfare, hotel, and per diem.

Motion by Linda Anderson to donate $2.50 per member to our ATU International to aid in passing the Employee Free Choice Act as per our ATU International request.

The following business was addressed:

The membership voted to approve a motion by Glen Travis to have Local 587 purchase 2010 calendars, not to exceed the cost of $10,000.

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Among Topics to be Discussed: Grievance and arbitration update

King County Budget Update

Benefits Negotiation

Unfinished Business: None

Arbitration Update

1. Bill Wallace: Grieved Metro’s failure to observe the longstanding past practice of having a Local 587 member present when a vendor works on a Metro coach. Scheduled April 2009.


5. Michael Murphy: Grieved overtime not assigned pursuant to clear contract language. Grievance settled prior to arbitration.

6. Aaron Lewis: Grieved Metro’s failure to apply wage progression pursuant to clear contract language. Union withdrew arbitration.


CORRECTION

The March edition of the News Review incorrectly reported the coming Primary Election will be held May 14, 2006 and General Election June 04, 2006. The actual dates of the coming elections are as follows: Primary Election will be held May 14, 2009 and General Election June 04, 2009.
ATU Presents Donation Check to Unite Here Local 8

President Norton and Financial Secretary Paul Neil presenting, on behalf of the members of Local 587, a check in the amount of $1,500.00 to Richard F. Sawyer Secretary Treasurer/Principal Officer of Unite Here Local 8 to assist their members and families devastated by the tragic apartment fire in SeaTac. (See letter below).

Dear Brothers, Sisters, and Friends of labor,

We are reaching out to you to ask for your support and generosity at a time of most urgent need. Recently there was a fire in SeaTac and tragically fifteen out of the 45 apartments were burned to the ground. The majority of the complex is filled with low wage immigrant union members.

Unfortunately, seven of the fifteen units were Unite Here Local 8 members. One member and her husband perished, another will be in Harborview for many months due to the burns she suffered and the others lost everything. While they have temporary housing they do not have the resources to start up again and need our help.

Please let these people know that they are part of a family that helps each other. Your financial contribution will help bring light to their dark moment. The Puget Sound Labor Agency has agreed to manage the contributions for other. Your financial contribution will help bring light to their dark moment.

Thank you so much, in advance, for your support.

In Solidarity,
Richard F. Sawyer
Secretary Treasurer
Principal Officer

Historical Highlights for April 2009
Submitted by Bill Clifford

April 4, 1968, Dr Martin Luther King Jr assassinated in Memphis while supporting the Sanitation Workers’ Strike.

April 8, 1912, ATU 587 chartered

April 20, 1914, Colorado National Guard and mine guards burn tent camp of miners striking John D Rockefeller’s coal mines near Trinidad Colorado. Two women, eleven children and three miners were killed. The women and children suffocated beneath their burning tent. Strike leader, Louis Tikas and two other miners were captured and found shot to death shortly later. Their bodies were left by the railroad tracks by the militia who refused to let them be removed for three days. The railroad workers local, whose members supported the miners, were finally able to bury the bodies.

The Colorado unions urged their members to arm themselves and the United Mine Workers issued weapons. Ten days of guerilla warfare resulted in the much destruction around the mines and another 36 deaths. The number of people killed during the whole affair, which lasted about one year, was somewhere between 69 and 199. The striking miners were eventually starved out, without gaining recognition or any other demands.

However, federal hearings and investigations resulted in many mining reforms including the prohibition of child labor and institution of the 8-hour day. Rockefeller hired labor relations experts who convinced him to improve working conditions and mine safety. The UMW bought the site of the Ludlow tent camp in 1916 and maintains a memorial there. In January of 2009, the National Park Service listed the Ludlow Massacre memorial as a National Historical Site.

Metro to host International Conferences and Bus Roadeo in May

Metro will be the proud host of the American Public Transportation Association’s Annual Bus & Paratransit Conference and International Bus Roadeo and the concurrent Bus Rapid Transit Conference May 1-6. More than 1500 transit professionals are expected to attend North America’s largest and most comprehensive learning experience for the bus and paratransit industry. The conference includes dozens of sessions on topics affecting transit; technical tours offering a behind-the-scenes look at Metro, and the ever-popular bus display and bus products and services showcase.

On Sunday May 3, Metro will host the International Bus Roadeo at the Safety and Training Center in Tukwila. More than 200 bus operators and mechanics from transit systems across North America are expected to participate in competitions that showcase their skills in safe driving and vehicle maintenance. Metro will be represented in the Bus Operators competition by Harold Lemmon and in the Mechanics’ Competition by Bryan Stites, Jerry McKenna and Jim Stack. Be sure to go out the Training Center on May 3 to show your support for these fine competitors.

Metro will be sending out information soon on how you can volunteer to help—how you can attend the educational sessions offered the conferences.

April Trivia Question

Public transit is one of the safest methods of passenger travel, according to the National Safety Council. What is the average death rate per 100 million passengers?

E-mail your answer to pbachlefreese@atu587.com

The first person to submit the correct answer will receive honorable mention in the next edition of the News Review.

March Trivia Question Winner

William Lee, Mechanic — North Base 2nd Shift was the first person to correctly answer the March trivia question

March Trivia Question: “If all the Americans who take transit decided to drive instead, their cars would circle the Earth with a line of traffic how many miles long?”

Correct answer: 23,000 miles
In accordance with Article III, Section 2 pertaining to bylaw proposals, the following bylaw proposal will be published in the News Review, and will be voted upon at through the April cycle of Union meetings.

ARTICLE III
CURRENT LANGUAGE:

Section 2. Executive Board

(a) Members of the Executive Board shall be elected from the membership within their respective departments as follows: Eight Transit Operators, from which a representative will be appointed to each operational base; three members from the Vehicle Maintenance Department; one member from the Facilities Maintenance Department; one member from the Supervisors Department; one member from the Communications Department; one member from the organized units within King County and outside the King County/Metro bargaining unit; one member from the organized units outside King County and outside King County/Metro; and one Minority Affairs Officer from the membership at large.

(b) Employees in the Transit Operations Department shall consist of the following: Full-Time Transit Operator, Part-Time Transit Operator, Waterfront Streetcar Conductors, the Operations Security Liaison, and Revenue Coordinator working for King County/Metro.

(c) Employees in the Vehicle Maintenance Department shall consist of all job classifications listed under Vehicle Maintenance Employees in the current labor agreement with King County/Metro.

(d) Employees in the Facilities Maintenance Department shall consist of all job classifications listed under Facilities Maintenance Employees in the current labor agreement with Metro.

(e) Employees in the Supervisors Department shall consist of all job classifications listed under Supervisors and Schedule Section in the current labor agreement with King County/Metro.

(f) Employees in the Special Classifications Department shall consist of all job classifications listed under Rider Information Specialists, Customer Service Office Employees, and employees listed in Special Classifications with the exception of the Operations Security Liaison, as listed in the current respective labor agreements with King County/Metro.

(g) Any member of the Executive Board, who in the future receives a promotion or demotion, must resign from the Executive Board within 60 days, if their new job title does not qualify them for Section 2(a). Vacancies occurring on the Board shall be filled for the un-expired term by a majority vote of the remaining members pending the next regular election. A notice must be posted within five days of the vacancy, and remain posted for at least ten days. At the next scheduled meeting of the Executive Board, names submitted for the vacancy will be reviewed and an appointment will be made to take effect at the next Charter membership meeting.

(h) If a vacancy occurs for any reason in the following elected positions: President/ Business Representative, Vice President/Assistant Business Representative, Financial Secretary/Treasurer or Recording Secretary, a special election will be held to fill the unexpired term. The special election will be held in compliance with Article XII of these Bylaws and Section 14 of the Constitution and General Laws of the Amalgamated Transit Union.

If a vacancy occurs within 90 days of the normal expiration of the term of office in the position of President/Business Representative, the Vice President/Assistant Business Representative shall preside and perform all duties pertaining to the office of the President until the regular general election is held. If a vacancy occurs within 90 days of the normal expiration of the term of office in the position of Vice President/Assistant Business Representative, Financial Secretary/Treasurer or Recording Secretary, the Executive Board shall meet prior to the next regular Union meeting and select a member of the Executive Board to fill the unexpired term. The appointment must be approved by a majority vote of the members in attendance at the next regular meeting of the Local.

PROPOSED NEW LANGUAGE:

Section 2. Executive Board

(a) Members of the Executive Board shall be elected from the membership within their respective departments as follows: Eight Seven Transit Operators and One Rail Operator, from which a representative will be appointed to each operational base and Rail: three members from the Vehicle Maintenance Department; one member from the Facilities Maintenance Department; one member from the Supervisors Department; one member from the Special Classifications; one member from the organized units within King County and outside the King County/Metro bargaining unit; one member from the organized units outside King County and outside the King County/Metro bargaining unit; and one Minority Affairs Officer from the membership at large.

(b) Employees in the Transit Operations Department shall consist of the following: Full-Time Transit Operator, Part-Time Transit Operator, Waterfront Streetcar Conductors, the Operations Security Liaison, and Revenue Coordinator working for King County/Metro.

(c) Employees in the Rail Department shall consist of the following: Light Rail Operators, South Lake Union Streetcar Operator.

(d) Employees in the Vehicle Maintenance Department shall consist of all job classifications listed under Vehicle Maintenance Employees in the current labor agreement with King County/Metro.

(e) Employees in the Facilities Maintenance Department shall consist of all job classifications listed under Facilities Maintenance Employees in the current labor agreement with King County/Metro.

(f) Employees in the Supervisors Department shall consist of all job classifications listed under Supervisors and Schedule Section in the current labor agreement with King County/Metro.

(g) Employees in the Special Classifications Department shall consist of all job classifications listed under Rider Information Specialists, Customer Service Office Employees, and employees listed in Special Classifications with the exception of the Operations Security Liaison, as listed in the current respective labor agreements with King County/Metro.
A voluntary employee beneficiary association (VEBA) under the Internal Revenue Code section 501(c)(9) is an organization organized to pay life, sick, accident, and similar benefits to members or their dependents, or designated beneficiaries if no part of the net earnings of the association inures to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual. The organization must meet the following requirements:

- It must be a voluntary association of employees.
- The organization must provide for payment of life, sick, accident, or other similar benefits to members or their dependents or designated beneficiaries and substantially all of its operations are for this purpose; and
- Its earnings may not inure to the benefit of any private individual or shareholder other than through the payment of benefits described in (2) above.

Membership of a section 501(c)(9) organization must consist of individuals who are employees who have an employment-related common bond. This common bond may be a common employer (or affiliated employers), coverage under one or more collective bargaining agreements, membership in a labor union, or membership in one or more locals of a national or international labor union. An organization that is part of a plan will not be exempt unless the plan meets certain nondiscrimination requirements. However, if the organization is part of a plan maintained under a collective bargaining agreement between employee representatives and employers, and such plan was the subject of good faith bargaining between such employee representatives and employers, the plan need not meet such nondiscrimination requirements for the organization to qualify as tax exempt. For more information, see Voluntary Employees’ Beneficiary Associations.

An organization will not be treated as exempt under section 501(c)(9) unless it gives timely notice to the IRS that it is applying for recognition of such status. See When To File in the instructions to Form 1024 for more information.

Page Last Reviewed or Updated: January 07, 2009

This is a copy of an official IRS web page. We need to know exactly what a VEBA is, and what it is not, before it makes any sense to say we do or don’t want it. It may be necessary to read the above information more than once for it to begin to make sense. Most IRS stuff has that effect on most folks. From the above web page it is easy to gain much more information than can easily be digested.

When you click on the Voluntary Employees’ Benefit Associations link there is available a booklet, over 20 pages, discussing the history of VEBA, “F. Selected problems of Voluntary Employees’ Beneficiary Associations” which has been in existence since the Revenue Act of 1928.

“Any group of employees sharing an employment-related common bond may establish a VEBA. Also, an employer may, subject to certain fiduciary requirements, establish a VEBA on behalf of the employees. Funds in the possession of the VEBA are held in trust for the payment of benefits. Typical benefits are life, sick, accident, and medical benefits. Funds in the possession of the VEBA are not taxable, nor is interest earned on those funds usually taxable, however, the benefits provided to the employees may, or may not, be taxable depending upon the type of benefit… For those of us who are not fluent in IRS speak, here is the English version.

Everyone in a group; let’s say a Local Union like ATU 587, at a single employer, like MLK County, is either in the VEBA or not. The contributions are from you, using funds that would otherwise be paid as taxable wages.

Originally the County only allowed one source for funding the contributions to the VEBA, sick leave cash out. When you retire you do not get money, you get an account in the VEBA, if your "bargaining group was in the VEBA" there is no opt-out of the VEBA. Those groups who voted to join the VEBA and had a "sunset" clause (this shall remain in effect until...) need to vote again.

But wait there’s more. The County has decided to expand the funding sources for the VEBA for employees. For 2010 to when ever, the voters will have (3) choices for funding sources for the VEBA; sick leave, at 35% of total balance, to the VEBA account; 50% of your vacation balance.

$50.00 per month per employee, this would be $25.00 per payday. Also this option allows immediate access to funds for “Health Care Expenses” even while still employed.

Now we’ve got a decision to make. Do we as a group want to have a VEBA? What source or sources do we want to use to “self fund our VEBA”, we are able to choose #1 #2 #3 or any combination thereof.

Naturally there are expenses associated with having a fund available for medical expenses, both pre & post retirement.

Plan expenses include: claims processing, printing, postage, legal fees, consulting, local servicing, auditing, etc. These costs are paid by a $1.50/month per account fee, plus an annualized fee of approximately 1.25%. The annualized fee is paid by a reduction to investment earnings or if there are no earnings, charged as a deduction to participant accounts.

Remember that this is for the entire group. Part-Time Transit Operators with a 2 hour 30 min. daily guarantee included. All ages, we are a very diverse work group. Do we want to have a sunset clause to re-vote every 1, 2, 3, years? How many folks have already made plans to spend the 35% sick leave cash out upon retirement?

This is only the beginning, we as a group need to investigate what this would really mean to all members of our entire group, ATU Local 587 employed at MLK County.

To VEBA, or not to VEBA, that is the question.

Safety is Legal????????

By Dee Wakenight, Executive Board Officer

April 2009

Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Association – 501(c)(9)

By Dee Wakenight, Executive Board Officer

...200 years have brought little change in the issues at stake or the basic need for unions.

A safety awareness committee summit there were a number of suggestions on how to reduce the number of passenger related injuries. We have all seen the signs on the busses telling passengers to “hold on” as the bus may start or stop suddenly. In this mental focus we, the attendees, brainstormed for other “campaign ideas” to possibly reduce the number of customer falling accidents. One suggestion, mine, was to put signs, stickers, whatever, into the shelters telling the waiting public “Don’t cross in front of the bus” “Have the fare ready” “Don’t chase the bus” “Don’t hang on the side of the bus while in motion”, you get the idea. Most attendees were quite positive that we had accomplished something for the greater good.

Years ago I had seen some of these stickers that were used when Metro went out to schools to educate children on how to ride the bus safely. What I had seen was an almost cartoon of children getting off a bus, one of the children was walking in front of the bus, there was a BIG red circle with a line through it. This means no. Sounds easy enough, it even makes sense, because it would address the multi-cultural society we have in greater MLK County. Many of our customers do not read English. Having these messages in the shelters would get the message across while intending customers are awaiting our arrival. Simple right, should not even be a problem? Months later when feedback arrived it was a surprise. The information delivered was that the jurisdictions where bus stops were located said it was illegal to put signs in our own shelters?

Are you as confused as I am? How can safety be illegal?
Benefits Negotiation

I submitted a question some months ago about how our medical benefit’s are decided upon thru the Joint Labor Management Insurance Committee (JLMIC) and why they are off cycle with our normal three year contract even though they are every bit as important.

As I recall along the way we agreed to join the JLMIC group which is made up of other County unions that wish to participate and each send representative’s to the table, the County also sends reprentatives. They make a proposal and it goes from there.

The time frame being off cycle with our normal three year contract dates back to the merger with the County, please correct me if I am wrong.

Can you run thru a few unclear parts of the JLMIC’s process for the member’s?

Does our union send officers and or others to the table just as would happen during the regular contract negotiations?

The County make’s an offer of medical carrier’s, deductible’s, max benefit’s etc, the union representaives in turn look it over and if they counter offer, question the numbers, maybe have research and comparisons, possibly even other carrier’s bids to counter the County with?

For round number’s let’s say 10 unions are participating, does each have a equal vote to accept or decline what the County offer’s and if so can the simple majority of 6 smaller unions decide the outcome for all. 10 can any one union hold out to negotiate better benefits or opt out if not satisfied?

The number’s for our medical benefits package in 2011 and 2012 are post at my work site (I am not sure if this is only a proposal or a done deal?). The numbers are a fair amount higher then we have been paying, if you take our dental for example it has been $2000.00 maxium per year and has been for 25 year’s + you can assure your crown, filling’s etc have gone up a great deal over that same time frame.

The County had pitched the healthy incentive program as the latest management cut, it was to be the answer to keep our portion of medical cost’s the same, yet they want us to pay a larger share and still jump thru the healthy incentive hoops on our own time I might add, in my opinion that makes the program a bust and the large amount of money they spend on it could be used towards our medical care.

I am well aware of rising health costs and our economy today; I hate to see us give up any benefit’s we, and those before us, have fought for.

Personally for me it is hard to get on board when they want us to accept a plan with King County WA, take further 7 or 8 days or as in this case pay more of our hard earned money out of pocket. It would be a different story if they didn’t run things they way they often do.

Cost seems to be no object until it comes time to negotiate pay and benefits and to that I say, share our King County share the waste.

In Response

Hi Dan,

At the time of this writing the proposed benefits package has yet to be accepted by Local 587. It will be debated at our next Executive Board meeting to be held March 24, 2009, and through the April cycle of Union meetings.

President Norton appointed Executive Board Officer Dee Wakenight and me to attend Joint Labor Management Insurance Committee (JLMIC) meetings. Local 587 is not bound to accept the terms and conditions of the county’s proposal. Top be specific, Article 12, Section 1, Paragraph B, page 61 of the collective bargaining agreement between King County Metro and Local 587 states, “…Benefits for 2010 will be the same unless modified by the Labor-Management Insurance Committee, in which case the UNICOM may negotiate alternative benefits.” I take this language to mean if we don’t like King County’s offer we can negotiate a different agreement, and if negotiation fails, we can submit the dispute to binding interest arbitration.

In regard to your question relating to what other alternatives have we considered: The answer is none! In the September 2008 edition of the News Review called upon President Norton to form a committee to research other alternatives. My call was unanswered.

I now call upon President Norton to conduct the following research:

Contract our International Union to obtain benefit levels provided to the same comparable transit properties we use in determining comparable wages.

Contract of lawyers and have them research what interest arbitration decisions that addressed benefit levels.

Form a committee to contract with health benefit providers, like MLK County, about 12,000 all eligible employees, and those retirees’ who choose to remain in the plan, to request bids for providing a similar benefit level.

If a motion is made to accept the current proposal, I will vote against it, not because it’s a bad offer, but because I have no way of evaluating it.

Paul J. Bachtel
Recording Secretary

Brother Dan Boetcher
South Base maintenance

Thank you for your e-mail, President Norton has asked me to respond to your questions. Evidently, the numerous articles in our 587 News Review do not reach everyone with questions, so I shall clarify the points you have raised.

After the merger with King County, the Union and the County, both agreed that together we were a “larger pool” and as such would receive a better rate for our benefits. This “pool” covers all benefits eligible employees, and those retirees’ who choose to remain in the plan, at MLK County, about 12,000 all with the same benefits. Covering 12,000 employees means that the benefits plan dates match no one labor agreement. I know that the Sheriff’s office just recently joined the “regular” plan that covers all other employees, due to the size of the employee group, the only other option for them was “premium share” (that is where money comes out of your paycheck to help pay for the cost of the benefits).

The JLMIC is the method used to work collaboratively to guarantee the best possible outcome for employee benefits. With enough people working for the greater good, the outcome is better for everyone. Not everyone may agree, if there is one person at the table who does not agree they must continue to work for the greater good. With the budget deficit, declining revenue for the County, and the job of County Executive “up for election” it is difficult to predict the “best outcome”. We are doing our best with what we have.

According to the County benefit costs have fallen since the start of Healthy Incentives. Those employees who wish to make major changes to their lives have benefited from the coaching available through the healthy incentives program. How much “good” is there for someone who is, let’s say obese, to loose the weight, so no longer be an insulin dependent diabetic, and now is able to lead a fuller life?

What is posted at the work sites is the best sustainable package with out “premium share” that the JLMIC could obtain. Local 587 has not signed on to this package. Difficult choices are made at every meeting. Local 587 has been very active at the table in the JLMIC meetings. Some of the unions that participate in the JLMIC have “opt out” language. We are one of those. The problem with “opt out” is we would move from a group of about 12,000 to less than 4,000. For a plan similar to what we have in our plan the cost of the plan would be prohibitive. Anyone can go on-line and check the plans, cost associated, what’s covered and what is not covered. Any comparison of public sector employer covered benefits will shock you with the reality that is our current plan. Difficult as it may be to believe we have a very good plan, probably the best plan in the state of Washington.

There is a plan available that has no increase to the employee for the cost of the same. Local 587 has not right now. The Group Health plans have no change from current. Also I presume you missed the part where the story description said that the Dental coverage will increase to $2500.00.

The only other item I would like to cover is that Local 587 has not agreed to any COLA cuts, or further benefit cuts. The county’s’ choice has been to close downtown buildings certain days and those who work in those buildings get a furlough day.

Hope this has helped clarify most of your questions.

Dee Wakenight
Executive Board Officer
Local 587
Bus Driver South Base

Check Your Pay Statements

Dear Editor,

Despite being assured in a bulletin that start-timers would be paid 2:30 or the actual time of their canceled piece (whichever was greater) during Metro’s unpublished, out-of-the-blue partial holiday schedule on December 29-31, I discovered that I was not paid for these three days that I was available to work, but forced not to. I fear that other continued next page
Employee Free Choice Act

Protect the Rights of Employees to Freely Choose Union Representation

ATU Supports:

Passage of the Employee Free Choice Act, which would protect the rights of employees to freely choose union representation.

More working people than ever — some 57 million — say they would join a union if they had a chance, according to a survey from Peter D. Hart Research Associates. But employers routinely harass, intimidate and coerce workers who try to exercise their right to form a union at work.

The Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) would strengthen protections for workers’ freedom to choose by: (1) providing for majority verification (commonly known as card-check) as a means by which workers can freely express their choice whether or not to form a union, limiting interference from the employer; (2) creating meaningful penalties, including treble backpay awards and civil fines of up to $20,000, for employer violations of employee rights under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA); and (3) providing for first-contract mediation and arbitration supervised by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Services (FMCS).

Please visit the following links for additional information on the Employee Free Choice Act:

http://www aflcios.org/join-union/voiceatwork/efca

For the text of the EFCA visit:

http://atu.bluestatedigital.com/content/pages/efca

It is Time for Nominations!

The April Cycle of membership meetings will be the time for nominations for all ATU587 Union Officers. Russ Bates, our Election Committee Chair will be presiding over the nominations. He will make sure all nominations are conducted in accordance with our rules and regulations that were printed in the March 2009 News Review and are in your candidate packet. If you are planning on participating in the nomination process please familiarize yourself with the rules and deadlines. For example a member wishing to run for an office or delegate shall have had at least two continuous years of membership and be a member in good standing having paid initiation fees, dues and assessments in full. The rules for nominations have changed because of the new Bylaws that were passed in February. If you are planning on being a candidate, you might want to prepare your candidate statement early as they will be due in the Union office in hard copy by April 9th. IMPORTANT TO NOTE the candidate statements will be received only on these dates: April 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, & 9 during regular Union Office hours by a member of the election committee, who will give you a receipt for your submission.

Dates to remember:

Nominations: Charter Meeting Thursday April 2, 2009, 7:00PM

Morning Meeting Friday April 3, 2009 10:30AM

Jefferson Transit (in Port Townsend) Monday, April 6, 2009 7:00PM

Clallam Transit (in Port Angeles) Tuesday, April 7, 2009 7:00PM

Candidate Statement (Hard copy) due in Union Office no later than April 9th

Primary May 14, 2009

Ballots will be mailed out to member’s address on file as of April 10, 2009

General Election June 4, 2009

If you have questions you may contact the Election Committee by email, electioncommittee@atu587.com or call Election Committee at Union Office 206 448-8588

CONGRATULATIONS!!

Scott Gossard

Clallam Transit

2008 “Employee of the Year”
Don’t Forget to Breathe
By Glen A. Travis/ Atlantic Base

It’s a tough world out there, what with the recession and the possibility of layoffs. Add on the inherent problems with the ORCA system and our drivers having to control a 30 ton vehicle on busy streets filled with drivers on cell phones, all while making stop announcements. As unemployment rises, a percentage of our passengers are going to be surlier and more confrontational than ever, and with responding with increased ire or even worse, that situation will only get worse on crowded buses.

Still, in this situation there may be advantages to be found. Don’t get me wrong, I’m still optimistic about our futures, but considering our present situation I’m going to be opportunistic, (in the positive sense of the word). Since some of our jobs might possibly be in jeopardy in the near future, I think that’s exactly the way my fellow operators need me to be.

I can certainly agree with the multitude of opinions expressed that criticize the new ORCA system. It is cumbersome, excessive and invasive.

(Do a Google search for ‘passive transponder threats’). But I have always believed that constructive criticism should be accompanied by creative solutions.

One solution to the criticism about the ORCA system being cumbersome, is something many Operators, myself included, have tried to have implemented for a long time; a single fare structure. We all know that a single fare structure would not only streamline passenger boarding, but improve security and ease fare enforcement. Several years ago people petitioned at all the bases. These garnered hundreds of signatures, and were forwarded to the Union for presentation to the County Council, but it was a no go. ORCA and the recession might change that all.

I doubt the ORCA system is going to be abandoned, so something is going to have to be done to make up for the potential boarding slowdowns it could cause. By virtue of its very shortcomings, ORCA may just help to necessitate a single fare structure just to keep coaches moving! Also, the extended ORCA log structure, just to keep coaches moving! Also, the extended ORCA log in procedures might be increasing the time allotted for coach set up from ten minutes to fifteen. Additionally, while ORCA may be a difficult system to operate, the more complicated our jobs become, the more irreplaceable Local 587 drivers become as well.

Help ourselves save our jobs!
With regards to the recession and possible layoffs, remember, service reductions equal traffic jams. The public demands safe and rapid transportation and that is to our advantage when it comes to protecting our jobs. Just as fortunes can be made during recessions through methods such as short selling stock, should we members of 587 turn this, and every situation to our mutual advantage.

As our Recycling initiative has pointed out in February’s newsletter, the general public doesn’t understand the difference between our Capital and Operating budgets. We have an unprecedented opportunity to cultivate public sentiment and sympathy in our favor. The only alternative is public anger via their sense of betrayal. “Service cuts when we voted for a sales tax increase to pay for buses?” (Adapted from the President’s article in February’s newsletter).

The public view of Metro and Local 587 is as a single entity, not two.
We face the wrath of a justifiably angry public for every mistake METRO has and could foreseeably make. Now I want to make it clear that I blame no one group or individual for the situation we are all in, but I cannot and will not sit still when there are things that I believe can be done to preserve our jobs and futures. I want John Q. Citizen to understand the situation drivers face due to the budgeting process, and believe that getting the word out via articles in the Local papers, the internet (blogs, etc) and postings are in the best interest of our drivers and our Local.

Grassroots movements and groundswells of public support, sentiment, and sympathy can go a long way towards determining where this states’ Governor and Legislature allocate necessary transit funding. Politicians don’t want to alienate voters, so let’s appeal to those voters. I would love to work with someone to achieve this worthy goal, but if no one is willing or able to do this, then I’m willing to do it myself. If the worst case scenario is realized, our jobs could be at stake. Anything I can do to help the “man on the street” understand the situation faced by Metro/Local 587 will put more pressure on our elected leaders to protect our jobs. Sometimes it’s as simple as that.
“VM Productions Presents”

Indiana Buckey and the Quest of the Golden Opportunity…

By VM Executive Board Officer Mike Whitehead

It’s up to you; do you want the credit you have earned?

By Dee Wakenight, Executive Board Officer

Help could be just a phone call away

By Dee Wakenight, Executive Board Officer

A long time ago in a galaxy far far away there was an evil empire. It is a story. On a cold winter night in January the maintenance came, from the far cold North and from the warmer South, they came from the mountains in the East and the coastal areas of the West...They came to change the law of the land at a place where heroes are made. And this place you ask, the January 2009 charter membership meetings Thursday night and Friday morning, and it was good to see a large turnout of support. It was impressive that the Operators as well as the Board Officers at the meeting supported the 2nd VP Maintenance bylaw that was before the membership. As the discussion on the motion addressing all of us yet addressing each to the membership he marched up. As he rose to speak he was not be denied it was apparent by his actions he would...it was a GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY...He chose to speak of and convert.

The 2nd VP Maintenance bylaw has passed and will be elected soon, and with this position comes a new level of representation not just in Maintenance but an additional Business Agent for this Local. For many years there has been a deep rooted feeling that this local prioritized the concerns of Operators over all other classifications, well times have changed and so has this local. Currently there are major transportation changes in our back yard, Sound Transit’s light rail, South Lake Union rail. Metro’s increased routes are but a few of the responsibilities that face this Local and it’s officers. This new position will add a third Business Officer that will be an asset to this Local in meeting the challenges ahead and repairing the damages of the past, “The Golden Opportunity”...

In addition, there was a collective sigh of relief from the ESW’s at the February Maintenance back, the CB Super Crew had been eliminated. From the beginning, this super crew has been problematic. The combining of AB ESW’s and CB ESW’s into one ginormous service crew and having them pretend there was one yard (when in reality there was two) resulted in a “Management Gone Wild” if you will. It was the topic of frustration at Picks and continued to be the last position filled by EWS’s. Over this period, five EWS’s were promoted, and demoted through the Lead ESW’s position before management removed it. Well after a lot of “where are you going to fix this” from a Shop Steward who will remain anonymous and your Board Officers continually bringing the issue to VMLRC’s meetings, and management also having their concerns, management did the right thing and split the crews back to AB and CB. So far, it is working and members are pleased, and that is a good thing.

In a final note, the Union / Management “Alternative Work Schedules” Committee has formed and entered in to discussions. The first meeting was in late January with more meetings scheduled. While it is early in the process, it is the intent of your Union Representatives to come up with a product that will improve employee moral, be in the spirit of Commuter Trip Reduction laws and have a cost savings for the County. Your Union representatives who are committed to this body of work believe that if you are not here able, will keep the membership informed of the progress...

Help could be just a phone call away

By Dee Wakenight, Executive Board Officer

Are you worried about your job security? With all the news about “Budget Crisis” deficit, service cuts, threatened layoffs? There are so many questions and it seems that there is too little real information. You can make the difference for your job security. Actually it isn’t even too difficult for it to happen for all of us. How?

Take the time and contact your representatives in Olympia, 2 in the House of Representatives and your Senator, tell them that YOUR priority for the coming fiscal year is stable transit funding. When the funding is in place it will be possible for the affected jurisdictions to continue what they have been doing forever, continue and expand the service that everyone has come to rely on. Our jobs will become more secure, our lives and our family’s safe. It’s so simple, are you willing to get the help for us all that is only a phone call away?

It’s up to you; do you want the credit you have earned?

By Dee Wakenight, Executive Board Officer

Recently there have been questions by a number of members about how to get pension credit for time spent on Ltd. There are a number of steps to the process that you need to follow in a certain order for a good outcome. The most important is to do this as soon as possible, if you wait too long the cost of acquiring service credit increases until it becomes problematic.

First you need to contact the Department of Retirement Systems (DRS) in Olympia, either by telephone or on the internet. Tell them you would like to find out how much it will cost you to “Buy” your service credit for the time you have been injured on the job. They will ask you work and some other personal information; if you want the pension service credit give them the information.

Now you wait. It will feel like forever, but it takes from 4-6 weeks. They have to contact your employer to verify that indeed you are a pension eligible employee from the dates you gave them and indeed were hurt on the job.

Depending on how you contacted them and the information you provided they may, send you a letter, an e-mail, or call with the information and the cost to “buy” your pension service credit for the period of time that you were injured.

Now you have to decide, what’s it worth to you to have however many “extra pension service credit months” that if you did nothing you would never have. It’s up to you; do you want the credit you have earned?
The primary purpose of any Union is to improve the wages and working conditions of its members. One of the aspects of how ATU Local 587 is structured that has always impressed me is that the amount that members pay in dues is directly related to how Local 587 improves the wages of its members. Let us look at how that happens.

The rules for setting the monthly dues are set forth in Article VIII of the local’s bylaws which states: “The dues for each member of the Local shall be based upon two times the average hourly wage for represented employees in effect on January 1 of each year. (The average hourly wage shall be computed by adding the top hourly wage of the lowest and highest represented job classifications and then dividing this figure by two.) Any increase in the dues based on this average hourly wage will be subject to the approval of the membership at the regular January Union meetings.”

The beauty of this provision is two fold. First the dues amount is directly tied to what members are making or at least those in the highest and lowest paid classification. Secondly the dues are set to a pre-established formula which helps to remove the politics out of how much the dues are. If the union wants more dues money coming in then get members a raise! Despite rumors to the contrary, all members at King County will be receiving a 1% raise starting April 18. A posting showing all the new top step wage rates as well as all other steps has been sent out and should be posted on your local Union bulletin board.

There are two ways they go about getting them. One is through collective bargaining. The other is through political and social action. Let’s talk about them one at a time.

Collective bargaining is a rational, democratic and peaceful way to resolve conflict. In recent years, some 150,000 collective bargaining agreements have been made. Only two percent of them were affected by strikes. So in 98 percent of all cases, collective bargaining was successful. Not a bad record.

Back around the turn of the century, things were different. There were not very many unions then, and those that existed had a tough time of it. Employer resistance to collective bargaining was fierce and many times violent. There was no National Labor Relations Act then to give workers the right to organize and to promote collective bargaining. But workers persisted and the fledgling unions survived. Collective bargaining became the accepted way of regulating employer-employee disputes.

It took a lot of nerve for employers to stand up for their rights in those days. There were no job safety standards, paid vacations, sick leave or retirement plan. Hiring and firing, promotion and layoff policies were under the exclusive control of employers.

But they did it, and today we are enjoying the results. You can’t put a price tag on the human dignity individual workers feel when they stand up for their rights, either.

It hasn’t changed today. Every time the union-negotiated contract expires, the members have to assess the situation again. They look at their wages and compare them with current price levels; look at company profits; determine if pensions, health and medical care plans are adequate. These are the quantitative factors that go into wages and salaries at collective bargaining time.

The beauty of Article VIII

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I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU PICKED THIS FOR ME, MY LIFE IS OVER!

Once the Union representative picks your assignment it might not be changed if you arrive late. If you arrive immediately after the pick time has ended for your position, the Union representative will determine the number of available positions. Please be on time or submit an absentee pick form as mentioned above. We will not be responsible for the outcome if it is not favorable to you.

WHEN SIGNING AN ABSENTEE PICK FORM YOU ARE AGREEING TO THE FOLLOWING DISCLAIMER

"The Union offers the (Part-Time) Full-time absentee pick form as a courtesy to those members who are unable to pick in person. The Union representative will make his or her best effort to ensure the accuracy of your request, and to obtain the pick you desire. However, the Union will not be responsible for any errors, omissions, or failures with respect to your pick request. In particular, by your signature below, you acknowledge that you will hold the Union harmless with respect to any damages of any kind, whether lost income or otherwise, that you may suffer as a result of the Union's failure for any reason to obtain the pick you requested. You further acknowledge that the absentee pick made by the Union representative is final, binding, and not subject to the grievance/arbitration procedure."
A s some of you may know, the original editor for this piece was Retired Service Quality Chief John Love, however in late Aug he suffered a stroke that now is Alzheimer’s. As a result I was approached and volunteered to do this column for the SBX News Review. Paul Pioli will do a similar column for the City retiree’s in the ARSC paper.

John was one of my first bosses when I became an Intermittent Supervisor in 1980. He, along with Rodney Ray, saw that we got our assignments (their nicknames were 10 speed and brown shoes, taken from a TV show of the same name) sometimes for weeks at a time, and sometimes they would call on the radio while you were driving a route and say tomorrow report to do so and so, ah what a life, walking both sides of the fence, today I am a supervisor and tomorrow I’m a bus driver!

Later when the contract of 1980 was ratified, in the fall of 1981 (good a bus driver!). We all dropped the intermittent tag and became F/T supervi-sors. It was during this time I got asked to break in to the coordinators office, something I really wanted to do for a long time. As the years passed I would regularly work the all-night shift. It would happen in those days that when a supervisor would call in sick, they would call the control center, and then you would call on the call chief for the section affected. Now some of you may remember John’s voice as being a little on the higher octave side, however when calling him in the middle of the night you would get a real deep “hello”, and would ask for John, and the deep voice would say “this is John Love” and you would give him the info. Well one morning about 2 1/2 hours after I called him he went into service (Car 178) and the voice was really wound tight. The late Roger Holgerson was working the old 1-B-1 in the north end and asked John what was the matter and he replied that he put his understation on a little tighter than normal. The things we would do in those days for a little laugh. I’ll try to interject a few stories along with other thoughts in the future.

Now for some info...As I write this I’m in Yuma, Az. Also in these parts are Dan Sheppard, retired 1st line, along with retired operator’s Don Kneebone, Jim Vaugh, Don Gerard, Bernie Fisher, Ed Eyman and Kay Uhren. Jack O’Bryan my old boss in both the Control Center and later in Service Quality is just inside the Calif. border west of here. Had a quick lunch with retired 1st line Roger Cady and retired Supervisor of Safety Terry Compton on Mar 6th as they were headed to NE of San Diego for a yearly get together for Golf. This also includes former Base Opera-tions Supervisor JimPatrick and retired 1st Line Mark Hartman and retired North Base Supervi-sor Harold Mann. Current 1st line Supervisor Fred Olander rounds out the group.

If you could get an address book of all retiree’s you would find quite a few in the southwest, starting in Reno and through Las Vegas/Henderson Nev., to Arizona. Here in this state they are, as mentioned, here in Yuma, the entire metro Phoenix area, and east to Tucson. Oh and I shouldn’t forget a few in the Lk. Havasu area also.

On another note, received news that Dale and Linda Bartz are in the process of getting permits for a new house in the Philippines. As you read this, 2 new retiree’s are joining the fray here in Arizona, Ken Haven of Service Quality and Carol Neff, the Admin in the Control Center since the late 1970’s are leaving the 31st of March. Also my last boss at KC Metro, in the person of Nancy Wilson, is leaving the middle of April. Good luck and welcome to the good life.

Thanks for reading, and see you soon...from the busses.

The View from the Buses

By Bob Morgan, Retired 1st Line

Recording Secretary, continued

of preference. METRO will assign Operators to bases for each biweekly pay period, honoring preferences according to seniority. During the biweekly pay period the System Board Operator will assume the position on the board that s/he se-lected at pick and will be assigned work according to the assignment provisions of this Section.

FLEX GROUP D

The contract allows for a Flex-Group D option, in addition to the more familiar Tripper Group D. The Tripper Group D option allows a Full-Time Operator to select a Part-Time tripper in lieu of full-time work, but falling under the provisions and conditions of Part-Time. Flex-Group D allows a Full-Time Operator to select one of the following two options: a Saturday day combo at a base they designate (but had the seniority to pick in the last two shakesup) and a minimum of two peak time weekday periods to be assigned via the Extra Board, or, a minimum of five peak time weekday periods to be assigned via the Extra Board.

The deadline to sign up and ob-tain your flex’s approval for this option is fourteen days prior to the beginning of full-time pick, Friday, April 10th.

The Good, Bad & Unknown

By VM Executive Board Officer Jeff Stambaugh

VM Vacation Pick

W here to start; Well why not with the good …

We had an amazing 85 percent participation in this years pick….Incredible, now many of you can plan that prime time escape from the pressures of a modern transit system. Which leads us to the bad, with such a huge turnout and with some goofy limits on some of the smaller classifications, many of you were not able to get exactly what you wanted, and some of you, while not your first choice were able to find something open that would work for you. That leads us into the unknown… Unknown if that week in July you desperately need for the family reunion (or the escape from the family) will be available to you at base level. The light at the end of the tunnel is that when the Data Management Group is done with the discretionary board posting you will be able to walk up take a quick peek and see if that week is open. Discretionary Board? What is that and how does it work you ask.

In a perfect world how the board will work is that each week a new spreadsheet will be posted somewhere close to where the leave re-quests are kept so that you can walk up take a look and see who has what weeks off in what job class for the rest of the shake-up at your base (any “closed” week should be indicated by some sort of highlight/shading) and if there is any available weeks you should be able fill out your leave request and turn it in.

Your chief in turn should look at exactly what you just did and hap-pily sign your request.

I have not seen how this board will look but I do know how it should work.

As of this writing I do not have a due date but hopefully it will be up and in use soon.

This new system should elimi-nate that frustration over waiting to see “if I can get that time off”.

"In a moment of decision the best thing you can do is the right thing. The worst thing you can do is nothing."

—Theodore Roosevelt