The nominations are over and we now proceed to our local’s election cycle. Some years back (and not all that many) our by-laws required candidates for union office shall have attended at least six (6) regular union meetings each year during the twenty-four (24) months prior to and including the nomination meeting. As you can see, this meant anyone seeking office should have shown a minimal interest in the affairs of their Local Union.

In our monthly union meeting cycle, we have four meetings: The Charter meeting on Thursday night, Friday morning, then after the weekend we meet on Monday night in Port Townsend and Tuesday night in Port Angeles. If you worked days, you came to the evening meeting. If you worked swing or grave, you came to the morning meeting, if you couldn’t make either, there were still two more meetings that you could sign in and attend. Remember, this was not a requirement for all twelve meetings each year for the two years preceding an election. It was only six each year that one was required to attend.

There is additional language in our International Constitution Section 14.2 Title: Eligibility for L.U. Office which reads: Any meeting attendance requirement applied pursuant to this section shall not operate to render a member ineligible due to a confinement on account of sickness or injury or due to service in the uniformed military services of the United States or Canada. The duration of which would have prevented him or her from attending the required number of meetings, and/or where the members attendance was prevented by absence because such members regular work schedule prevents attendance on the required amount of meeting days. Documentation supporting any such request(s) for credit for a missed meeting must be provided by the member to the local union not more than ten (10) days following the meeting for which he or she seeks an attendance credit or in the case of one or more absences resulting in the members service in the uniformed military services, not more than ten (10) days after the member returns to work.

My point in all this is as I said earlier, when we had attendance requirements, in almost all cases, a candidate for office, to some degree, showed enough interest in the union to attend union meetings; not all, just half at the very least. The normal progression, as a union representative at least what was accepted at one time, was Shop Steward; possibly then Chief Shop Steward, then Executive Board Officer. If the member made it that far and if he or she choose to run for a full time officer position the membership has had an opportunity to evaluate how that person performed as a steward or as an Executive Board Officer.

The reason we no longer have the meeting attendance requirements is because of The Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA). That act states if a union represents employees in the private sector the union cannot have meeting attendance requirements. It’s more complicated than that but in essence that’s what it comes down to. Our International suggested all Locals within the ATU who represent any private sector property remove that requirement from our by-laws. If you don’t and it’s challenged, continued on page 8
April 28, 2009

All officers were present except Executive Board Officer Neal Safrin who was on vacation; and, Minority Affairs Office Ray Campbell and Executive Board Officer Dee Wakenight who were working Full-Time pick.

The following business was conducted:

Motion by Ninus Hopkins to recommend pursuing the grievance of Nick Malkow for the membership’s consideration for arbitration.

Motion by Michael Shea to recommend pursuing the grievance of Jeff Stambaugh for the membership’s consideration for arbitration.

Motion by Paul Neil to recommend pursuing the grievance of Dan Linville for the membership’s consideration for arbitration.

At the April 2009 cycle of membership meetings the following business was addressed:

The membership voted to pursue the grievance of Alan Freeman to arbitration.

The membership voted to pursue the grievance of George Williams to arbitration.

The membership voted to approve the amendment to Article III, Sections 2 of the bylaws of Local 587.

The membership voted to approve a motion by Rick Sepolen to send one member to the APTA conference in Los Angeles, CA. paying travel, lodging, hotel and per diem.

The following members were April Trivia winners: James Wells at the Charter meeting, Al DeStart at the Morning meeting, Greg Prescott at the JTA meeting, Sue Baxter at the CTS Meeting. CTS rolling pot draw of $75.00 was lost by Sandy Fanger-Ross. Next month’s rolling pot will be $100.00.

Among Topics to be Discussed:
Grievance and arbitration update
Short Term Disability insurance
VEBA update

Unfinished Business: None

April Trivia Question Winner

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

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?

Correct answer: The average death rate per 100 million passengers for Transit Buses is 0.01

In Loving Memory...

“A dying man needs to die, as a sleepy man needs to sleep, and there comes a time when it is wrong, as well as useless, to resist”

— Stewart Alsop


Carolyn Sue Clark: Active member passed away April 10, 2009. Sister Clark joined Local 587 July 01, 2000 and was working as an employee of Seattle Personal Transit at the time of her passing.


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

Letters to the editor

Incomplete, contradictory, or unprintable material must include printed names, signatures, work ID numbers, addresses and telephone numbers that can be verified during working hours. Letters that cannot be validated will not be published. All articles/letters are subject to editing and should be limited to 1000 words or less. Not all letters can be published due to space limitations. Cut-off is the 15th of each month. Any submission from a member of Local 587 to the News Review deemed unprintable by the Recording Secretary shall be forwarded to the Executive Board for final decision to publish. Send letters to: Paul J. Bachtel, Editor c/o ATU Local 587

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Published monthly in Seattle. Official publication of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 587, AFL-CIO, representing employees of Metro/King County, Clallam Transit, Jefferson Transit, Seattle Personal Transit, Clallam Paratransit, and JTY Transit.

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Tell it to Washington

Submitted by Paul J. Bachtel

Support Transit Workers, Agencies in Crisis
Mass transit ridership has never been higher. But the dire economy has caused huge shortfalls in state and local budgets. As a result, transit agencies across the country are considering cutting services, increasing fares and laying off workers. For example, St. Louis’s Metro just laid off 550 workers, Cleveland’s RTA is planning to cut 300, and thousands of workers are at risk in California. New York City’s MTA just raised fares by 25%, cut service to more than 35 bus routes, and will eliminate 1,100 jobs. We must allow public transit agencies to use federal dollars for operating assistance. Please write to Congress to ask for its support.

Dear [Official’s Name],

Despite record ridership, mass transit systems across America are in crisis. When the cost of gas spiked last summer, ridership soared and high volumes have continued ever since. But the weak economy is causing huge shortages in state and local revenues. Transit agencies need help to meet demand and avoid layoffs.

Please support allowing public transit systems to use federal funds for operating assistance. This will avoid service cuts and save thousands of good paying transit jobs - as well as the jobs of those who rely on mass transit to get to work.

St. Louis’s Metro just laid off 550 employees and plans to eliminate a significant portion of its bus service. Cleveland’s RTA plans to cut 300 jobs. WMATA in Washington, DC is considering slashing over 400 jobs. MTA board members in New York City called the situation a “disaster” for commuters as they recently voted to increase fares by 25%, cut 35 bus routes, and eliminated 1,100 jobs. And in California, literally thousands of workers are at risk of being laid off and massive service cuts are imminent.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act included funds for transit capital projects, but not operating assistance. New buses aren’t going to expand capacity if there are no employees to drive them.

Please support jobs by supporting mass transit.

Sincerely,

[Your name will appear here.]

On BetterGet, go to http://www.atu587.com and click on the link to http://www.congressweb.com/cweb4/index.cfm?orgcode=ttd&hotissue=54 and edit and send your message via e-mail. http://www.atu587.com/ also has a link to help you identify to whom you are addressing your letter (your legislators).

Attention Part-Time Operators

By Dee Wakenight, Executive Board officer

With the new benefits plan there is still more to know. At the August pick there will be representatives from benefits and retirement present to answer eligibility questions. They will have the information from the county as to eligibility, changes, options, also they should have available a letter from the county stating what YOUR status is.

Picking a 4-hour trip at the August pick will give you benefits for the 3 year duration of the benefits package, 2010–2012.

Pros Vote Pro Transit

Arbitration Update

1. Bill Wallace: Grieved Metro’s failure to observe the longstanding past practice of having a local S87 member present when a vendor works on a Metro coach. Scheduled April 2009.


4. Iordan Tchernev: Grieved termination for alleged gross misconduct. Arbitration concluded, awaiting decision.


7. Alan Freeman: Grieved termination for alleged gross misconduct. Schedule pending.

8. George Williams: Grieved Metro’s failure to abide by layoff recall language in unilaterally imposing furlough days. Schedule pending.

In last month’s issue under ARBITRATION UPDATE the following was reported... Ehsanollah Zarghami: Grieved refusal to honor assignment of overtime. Union withdrew grievance with settlement.

I wish to make it clear that although Brother Zarghami understood and did not disagree with my reason for withdrawing this case form Arbitration. Brother Zarghami has requested that I inform our membership that as a matter of principal he has refused to accept the settlement of four (4) hours overtime.

LFN
In the aftermath of the winter snow storms, we saw multiple letters from high-profile individuals thanking King County Metro Transit Employees for their hard work. Our County Executive, County Council members, and General Manager all went out of their way to ensure that we employees were aware of their written gratitude and appreciation for the work we put in under unusual and extreme circumstances. In the March/April edition of In Transit (KC Metro’s newsletter for transit employees), General Manager Kevin Desmond (stopping short of an actual “thank you”) pointed out that the incredible improvements in vehicle maintenance performance, reduction in accidents, and high passenger satisfaction rate “deserve recognition.”

I’m sorry if I sound ungrateful, but I have a hard time feeling as though management and the Council are truly thankful for, or truly recognize, the hard work put in by Local 587 members. Lately, I’ve been hearing the line from North Base. I’ve gotten reports of untenable choices in working conditions. And it’s “business as usual” when it comes to how Metro lets our passengers behave.

Provide Respectful and Reasonable Discipline
Discipline has been growing outrageously of late. I’ve been told that Human Resources is on a self-declared mission to “clean up the rabble.” Based on recent disciplinary action, their definition of discipline seems to withhold ride for drivers of 18 years with virtually problem-free records. Despite this driver’s record, Metro assumed the worst of him and handed him discipline that outraged the entire union office. My impression of late is that discipline is no longer a matter of what is fair or reasonable, but instead a matter of what HR thinks they can get away with. Outlandish discipline is the norm and then Shop Stewards must argue down punishment. The result is employees feeling “lucky” that they “only” got a reduced sentence, and being less inclined to gripe the excessive discipline. I’ve even begun to suspect that Metro is attempting workforce attrition through discipline to minimize possible future layoffs. If you want evidence of how far Metro is trying to push the envelope, take a look at how many grievances Metro is “accidentally” forfeiting, settling, or giving up on in appeal. And drivers are not going to put up with the problems caused by setting the fare default for “two-zone”. To avoid those problems and minimize complaints, drivers will override the default fare during peak service, setting it to “one-zone” at all times. The problem with this is that Metro needs the fare default set properly in order to get accurate data from the system, as well as to ensure proper money is withdrawn from ORCA card holders’ accounts. Metro has invested millions in ORCA, and will be dedicated to making it work. When management realizes they aren’t getting the data or money they expected, they’ll have a choice to make.

I see three options. First is that management will be forced to accept ORCA not doing what they hoped. Only could this two political embarrassment to allow, I don’t think they’ll give up easily. The second option is to attempt to force drivers, probably through threat of discipline, into setting the fare default properly. The problem with this option is that it creates many more fare “discussions”, which get called in as CAO complaints about arguing fare. The public will not be happy, they’ll blame the drivers, and Metro will lose good chance Local 587 will be forced to publicly point the finger at management in order to defend drivers against discipline. (As you can tell, I have few qualms about Local 587 taking this course of action.)

The third option, of course, is for management to change the fare system. Obviously, this is the option I and most other drivers support. Holding drivers responsible for figuring out how to make ORCA work with our fare system does not demonstrate a “thankful” attitude by management.

Don’t Force a Fight to Include Comfort Stations in Park and Ride Projects
I understand that Metro has limitations when it comes to building comfort stations, and in some instances must instead rent a portable unit. I’ve submitted proposals for permanent structures, and have gained understanding of the process from the response and from discussions with the Construction Coordination group. My understanding is that there is little reason, other than money, not to build a Comfort Station at a Park and Ride. As a stand-alone construction project, I acknowledge it can be a bit costly. It makes much more sense to include such construction as part of a project already taking place at the same location.

So, when a Park and Ride lot is under remodeling and expansion, such as happening at the Brickyard Park and Ride, we should not take advantage of the opportunity to build a comfort station at that location? It seems that Metro decided to eliminate the building of a Comfort Station from the construction plans there in order to save $50,000, and instead planned to continue to rent a portable unit. This was despite reports of continued problems with that portable unit, such as lack of proper upkeep, drivers being locked out by non-Metro locks, waps nests, and the unit periodically being tipped over. This was despite confirmed that portable units do not adequately meet the needs of all our drivers. Wouldn’t Metro at least want to give us a reasonable chance to wash our hands before handing over transfers to the public?

With intervention and appeal by Providence, Metro is in a budget crisis, and Metro is trying to save money where it can. But Metro just got done spending money on their “3 Billion Served” campaign, which was ridiculed by local media for its wasteful spending (http://www.kabcnews.com/opinion/kenschram/42272442.html) Even if that money wasn’t put towards a Comfort Station, how does Metro justify that order of priorities? Putting shameless self promotion above driver needs in the work environment does not demonstrate a “thankful” attitude by management. Neither does forcing Local 587 to fight management on such no-brainer issues. (Thanks to East Base Shop Steward Carey Watson for much of the information on this, and for the petition drive to help change Metro’s decision).

Conclusion
I’m having a very hard time maintaining a cooperative approach towards dealing with workers and other issues. I’ve been thanked by North Base management for being reasonable and level headed in our dealings. But as I told them after a recent disciplinary hearing, why am I bothering? At the slightest display of reasonable concern, I am greeted like expendable liabilities, rather than respected employees with intelligence and the ability to contribute towards making our agency successful. Meanwhile, Metro turns on a fake smile to the public with words of “recognition” and “thanks”.

I’d rather not have to respond in kind in a more public forum. I still think a cooperative approach is the best way to go. But I am a strong advocate of truth, and public façades very much rub me the wrong way. My natural inclination is to say what needs to be said. If Metro and King County are not willing to thank us in action, please, stop with the words.
Metro’s Budget Shortfall. How Will It Affect Us?

By Linda Anderson, Executive Board Officer

B y now most everyone knows that King County is facing a big budget deficit. Metro in particular needs $171 million this year, and $164 million in 2010, and $124 million in 2011. The question that is still up in the air is how that will affect service and how it will affect us at ATU 587.

Good question! Right now, the County’s Regional Transit Commit- tee, which is called the King Street Center, is going to make some decisions about what to do. Which I believe is called the Legislature and the Federal police, and so on. Metro was also hop- ping the Legislature and the Federal government would help them out. The Federal Stimulus package gave them $50 million for non-operating uses. To their credit, they almost fixed the problem with some additional cutting. Then the economy crashed.

When that happened, new revenue projections showed that now people are not buying as much stuff and so the sales tax revenue, which is what mostly funds Metro, is way down. The whole state is affected, from state revenue going down to the cities and counties, so nobody can turn to anyone else in government because they are all broke. Nobody wants to raise taxes, either, when people are getting laid off.

So far, at this point, Metro is not coming to the union looking for major concessions, furloughs, noth- ing. They are under pressure to do so. The County’s Regional Transit Committee, the Seattle Times editorial column, criticizing our high health benefits package. Metro’s general manager is suggesting the transit department to preserve core functions such as bus driving and vehicle maintenance. But if there are no big new revenue sources, Metro could conceivably need to come to ATU to discuss temporary- ly reducing the frequency of some support functions that could affect special classifications and facilities maintenance. Nothing like that has been decided, and ATU has not been approached about this.

Unfortunately, Metro’s projections show that the budget gap does not fix itself if the recession ends. There is no automatic “catch-up” in the next few years after this recession is over. The projections, which are regularly revised as the year changes, show a $141 deficit in 2012, and $155 in 2013. This gap will narrow if sales tax revenue goes back up, but the deficit does not go away. We will not be able to keep spending at the current service level and then make it back up later. Ser- vice cuts are almost certain, without a huge pile of new revenue coming in every year for a while. In fact the projected gap grows wider every year, which is why it is important for the City to get things moving.

The third scenario would focus the most service on the high-ridership corridors and emphasize getting people to major job centers via major arterials. Peak and off-peak would be cut more evenly, and the ratio of peak to off-peak would stay similar to what it is now. This is more effi- cient service than the first scenario, maybe not as efficient as the second. This scenario would allow cities to proceed with their plans for jobs centers, transit-oriented growth, and less like the work at South at Base. Transit operators, it allows them to use full timers more and part timers less, giving them more bang for healthcare benefit buck. It could mean more straight-through work and combos with 4 hours on each end, and maybe less than single- Transi- Metro has already stopped taking applications for part time operators. The work would look more like the service at Atlantic Avenue, and less like the work at Base South.

The second scenario reduces service mainly in the peak hours, in order to preserve mid-day and night service. A good reason to consider this is that most low-income jobs (70 percent) start and quit in the off-peak, and these people are more likely to depend on the bus. The peak hour service would have to be cut back, but buses, and people might be passed up a lot more often. But then, a lot of commuters could drive their cars if they had to. This is the most efficient service scenario. It allows most of the buses in the fleet to be used all day with less deadheading and a smaller fleet. For transit operators, it allows Metro to use full timers more and part timers less, giving them more bang for healthcare benefit buck. It could mean more straight-through work and combos with 4 hours on each end, and maybe less than single- Transi- Metro has already stopped taking applications for part time operators. The work would look more like the service at Atlantic Avenue, and less like the work at South Base.

The first scenario would cut mid-day service by quite a bit, and cut peak service only a little. This is the least efficient—fleets size stays the same throughout the year, Transit-dependent riders would be hurt greatly. Some of them would have to get off the bus and walk, people would be annoyed with and jealous of the big guy, Seattle. Seattle has by far the largest amount of Metro service—62 percent. The rest of the County has 17 percent, 3 percent, and 20 percent for south KC, and 17 percent from the east sub-area. But whenever the service is eventually added back in, it is considered “new” and must come back in at the rate of only 20 percent for Seattle, and 40 percent each for south and east subareas. This would mean that Seattle service is generally more crowded already. Service throughout the entire county would be affected because Seattle is the trunk of the system. And many transit dependent people live in Seattle specifically because of the bus service.

“However, if service is merely “sus- pended”, these rules will not apply. Service could be restored to what it was before it was cut. None of this is set in stone, and nothing has been decided yet. It will be interesting to see what is resolved.”

The next step for the RTC and Metro is to see if there are cuts that all three scenarios would have in common. Any one of the same cuts would be reduced under all the sce- narios, that might be the logical place to start. In any case, if you currently enjoy driving routes that carry few passengers right now, enjoy it while you can. Even if those routes do not get scaled back, they will almost certainly get more crowded. On the other hand, if you drive the 36, you can’t get more crowded, so business as usual?

Please stay alert for opportunities this summer to weigh in at commu- nity meetings. Some of the same cuts would be made under all the sce- narios, that might be the logical place to start. In any case, if you currently enjoy driving routes that carry few passengers right now, enjoy it while you can. Even if those routes do not get scaled back, they will almost certainly get more crowded. On the other hand, if you drive the 36, you can’t get more crowded, so business as usual?

If you are interested in follow- ing this more closely, I encourage you to go on the King County home page and go to the Council and then the Council Committees. Check the Regional Transit Committee agen- das, meetings and archives. You can listen and watch the meetings on your computer live, or later, at your convenience. They are also broad- cast on TV—check the website for the schedule. Live meetings are at 5:00 pm on the fourth Wednesday of each month, but occasionally the date is moved, so call 296-1000 to double- check. All meetings are open to the public. For more information on RT meeting dates are held in the King County Courthouse, tenth floor, at Third and James in Seattle.
When Do We Get Our ORCA Cards?

Article 12, Section 8, Transit Pass: Implementation

Dear Editor,

Several operators have recently come to me with concerns and anxieties regarding the upcoming ORCA implementation. Some have even suggested that they might quit to avoid the grief caused by this new system. Hang in there. If you have any problems with this new system, it’s likely that we all will be having problems. You won’t be alone, it will be system wide so you won’t be singled out as a ‘bad’ bus driver by the public. Also keep in mind that because of the recession and the inherent ORCA problems, this is probably our best chance to implement a flat fare system.

Please, anyone who is considering quitting due to pressure or job stress, don’t quit. Contact one of the free support agencies King County provides, take care of your mental health, and consider the ORCA system problems. The public is interested in safe and reliable service. Consider taking a vacation, or get some time off. As a last resort take a leave of absence. That way if you do leave, there will be a job waiting for you if you want it back. I knew an operator who was making minor mistakes under stress. They were on the verge of being terminated. They considered quitting, I was able to suggest to them that maybe their subconscious mind was telling them to take a break, and maybe that was causing the mental lapses that resulted in all the minor infractions. They took a leave of absence, took a short leave and were able to return to work refreshed. The last I heard, they were doing great, no more mistakes. Be good to yourself, your brothers and Sisters, we care about you.

Bruce Tiebout

Thanks for Strike Assistance

Dear Brother Norton:

On behalf of the Members of ATU Local 279, I would like to take this opportunity to express to you and the Members of ATU Local 587 our sincere gratitude and appreciation of the Strike Assistance provided to the members of this Local during our recent Strike Action.

It was a grueling fifty-one day Strike with weather conditions on some days being very difficult because of extreme cold and snow but the members of this Local fought through it. I’m sure at times, my Members felt very isolated from the rest of this City given the media Union bashing, etc., but they were able to persevere to the conclusion of the fight for their rights.

Your kind support went a long way to help with the feeling of isolation my Members were experiencing and for that I thank you. Please convey our sincere appreciation to the Members of ATU Local 587. It goes without saying, that the assistance of our ATU family helped to provide a much needed morale boost. It also demonstrated the power and need of solidarity.

In Solidarity,
Andrew Cornellier
President, Business Agent
ATU Local 279, Ottawa, Ontario

For Free Speech

Election Committee Members,

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank and applaud those members of the Election Committee that supported the idea that our union must allow free speech by those who choose to seek elected office.

Thank you very, very much!!

For those of you who advocated or otherwise supported censoring Karen Rispoli and incidentally violating Federal law, SHAME ON YOU!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Sincerely,
Clinton Devoss

Employee Events

A metro employee really enjoy the annual events that we have such as the Metro Roadao and the barbeque. I think this is such a great opportunity to get to know your co-workers and have a little fun too. I have participated in both events and am really surprised that the Metro Roadao doesn’t get more drivers entering. I think it is a great way to test your skills, learn new skills and have a great time. I have entered the last couple of years and while I still kill small cones, I see my driving skills sharpening after each event. After the first event, I finally knew what a pivot point was! I have been telling all of the new operators that this is something that they should do no matter how new they are because they will learn something, get to know other drivers, have a barbeque lunch and get a new hat too. You never know, you could win and go to nationals which is here this year but is usually out of town so you get a great trip too.

Gloria Mingori
Ryerson Base

Sending Your Opinions

Letters to the Editor... May 2009

I heard, they were doing great, no return to work refreshed. The last years ago, the salaries for these workers are subject to adjustment and should be limited to 1000 words or less. Not all letters can be published due to space limitations. Cut off is the 15th of each month. Any submission from a member of a division according to the County salary data by individual group. There are three Transit Chiefs, one Transit Supervisor, and one Administrative Supervisor in support of the Custodial Facilities Maintenance division.

County salary data by individual group for 2007 (located at http://Bloom.web:8080) indicates that two years ago, the salaries for these managers were as follows:

Supervisor: $107,575.13
Chief #1: $120,509.02
Chief #2: $99,895.77
Chief #3: $69,691.66

Now with figures like these (and a further examination of Metro management structure and salaries shows many millions of dollars), it seems pretty hard to argue that Metro is not top-heavy or that upper management salaries are not inflated. The following is an attempt to supervise Custodial Facilities Maintenance at a cost to the County of almost a million dollars. Mind you this is just to SUPERVISE the custodial staff - these costs don’t even include the costs of supplies, transportation, or custodial personnel and their benefits. Given that the

Notices 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

Trimming Budgets

Dear Editor,

Recent talks of possible service cuts and even potential layoffs within the County have motivated many of our leaders to seek new sources of funding, as well as areas within the budget to “trim the fat”. As we all examine the tough decisions that were made, we can’t do this a good time for us all to look within and ask ourselves — is Metro making the best use of increasingly limited funding in the fund of demanding need for services?

Recently at the prompting of a friend of mine who runs to the high end of the definition of “fiscal conserv-ative”, I took a look at some of the pay curves and when he confronted me with a specific example — I was at a loss to defend or even explain the expenditure. The example was found within Metro’s Custodial Facilities Maintenance division. The description of this division according to the County web site:

“The Custodial Services group does all the custodial maintenance at the Transit bases this would include cleaning toilets, sweeping bus shelters, feeding garbage & maintaining receptacles and servicing of Comfort Stations. This group provides the Custodians who clean the bus tunnel also.”

Now unquestionably this is an important division covering a lot of territory, many structures, and a significant number of hard-working employees. These are the folks that keep our comfort stations and keep things neat and safe for the public. Looking at the number of managers and their salaries for this division however, should provide pause for anyone - not just the under informed everyday taxpayer.

According to the division description (found at http://direcory.kingcounty.gov/GroupDetail.aspx?GroupID=20510 ) there are three Transit Chiefs, one Transit Supervisor, and one Administrative Supervisor in support of the Custodial Facilities Maintenance division.

Paul J. Bachtel
News Review Editor
c/o ATU Local 587
2815 Second Avenue, Suite 230
Seattle, WA 98121
Metro's Custodial Services Group, I

May 4, 1886, Chicago anarchists hold a peaceful meeting in Haymarket Square to demand an end to police violence against workers. As the rally breaks up, police attack the stragglers.

In the ensuing melee someone throws a bomb, killing several police officers. With this as a provocation, Chicago police arrest 8 prominent anarchist labor organizers on conspiracy charges, even though several were not even at the rally.

During the ensuing trial it becomes clear that the alleged conspirators are being tried for their beliefs and that Chicago industrialists had funded a campaign to eliminate anarchist influence. Five of the anarchists are hanged. Louis Lingg, the probable bomber, blows his own head off with a blasting cap smuggled into his cell. This affair outrages much of the world’s workers and ignites the 8-hour day movement. The remaining two anarchists are eventually pardoned by Illinois Governor Peter Altgelt. The Haymarket Martyrs are honored throughout the world on May 1, International Labor Day.

May 9, 1892, 45 miners die in Roslyn, WA, coal mine

May 9, 1934, West Coast International Longshoremen’s Association strike

May 9, 2009, Full moon—be careful out there

May 13, 1893, Western Federation of Miners organized. WFM eventually becomes the core of the Industrial Workers of the World and brings Big Bill Heywood to the forefront of the labor movement.

May 15, 1919, Winnipeg General Strike

Metro Employees Recreational Activities Association

MERAA’s Annual Kentucky Derby Day

May 2, 2009

$25.00 per person (limited availability)


All sales are final and non-refundable.

Event Schedule:
11:30 am . . . . . Event Begins & No-host Bar Opens
12:30 pm . . . . . Handicapper Available
1:00 pm . . . . . First Race
1:30 pm . . . . . Buffet Served (until 3:30 pm)

Spring Crudite and Cheese Displays

With Buttermilk Ranch and Benedictrine Dips Mellasses Glazed Pit Ham Carved Sirloin of Beef with Henry Bain Sauce Chilled Shrimp w/ Creole Cocktail Sauce Fried Catfish w/ Tartar sauce Fried Chicken with Country Gravy Red Bliss Potatoes w/ Bacon and Onions Buttered Vegetable Medley Spinach and Strawberry Salad w/ Poppy Seed Dressing Emerald Green Salad with Assorted Dressings Southern Macaroni, Ham and Pea Salad Seasonal Fruit Tray Rolls and Butter Peach and Berry Shortcakes Assorted Desserts

7:00 pm . . . Conclusion

Contact your MERAA Rep for Tickets

Or Call the MERAA Hotline at (206) 684-1978

Visit us at www.MERAA.org

VEBA

To the Editor,

RE: VEBA 501(c)(9) article in April 2009 News Review

On the issue of whether or not we as a group want to form and participate in a VEBA Trust, I would like to relay the following:

My mother-in-law was a retired member of the Public School Employee’s Union as she had a career as a school bus driver. When she passed away in February of 2008, her VEBA benefits were passed on to her daughter, my wife. As was stated in the aforementioned article, benefits are for “members, their dependents or named beneficiaries” if they have remaining benefits at the time of their death.

My wife and I received a letter yesterday (April 6th, 2009) stating “On August 4th, 2006, the IRS issued a Revenue Ruling 2006-36 which will require the VEBA Trust to discontinue providing reimbursements to heirs for expenses incurred on or after July 1st, 2009.”

In other words, with less than three months’ warning, our benefit (which is money my mother-in-law paid in from her own pocket) becomes “use or lose.” This would also mean that for any monies we as individuals would pay into a potential VEBA Trust, any unused monies would revert to the trust at our death and be lost to our heirs.

For this reason, I will be voting NO on any proposal for ATU 587 to form/join/participate in a VEBA.

Mark S. Cook, East Base
The Oath of Obligation

By Dee Wakenight, Executive Board officer

 hopefully most of us have gone to a union meeting and heard the question from the chair of the meeting, “are there any present who have not taken the oath of obligation?” The brave soul raises a hand and is instructed to go with (whom ever is assigned) into the outer hall and take the oath of obligation. How many of us truly understand what we said when we took the oath? Why not revisit the words that we said in the now famous “repeat after me” format with which we are all familiar.

I, (state your name), in the presence of God and the members of this Union, do solemnly promise and pledge (without any reservation or evasion) to support the Constitution and General Laws of the Amalgamated Transit Union. I will keep my self in good standing by paying all dues, fines and assessments required. I will work to promote the best interests of this Union and encourage my fellow workers to become members of the same. I will not take the place of any member of this organization, or any other union worker who may be on strike or locked out. I will not reveal any of the private business to anyone not entitled to know the same. I will not engage in activity evidencing gross disloyalty nor indulge in behavior unbecoming a member, and will not knowingly wrong a member or see one wronged if in my power to prevent it. I will not appeal to any legal authority in matters pertaining to this Union until I have exhausted all means of redress provided by its laws. I will be considerate of others in word and action, and will never discriminate against a fellow worker on account of race, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, citizenship, or national origin. I also promise to promote the cause of trade union principals and defend freedom of thought, whether expressed by tongue or pen, with all the power at my command.

I understand there is nothing in this obligation that will in any way interfere with my political and religious rights or that will be in any way inconsistent with my duties arising from any of the relations of life.

This obligation I take upon my honor, and solemnly promise to keep the same, as long as I remain a member of this Union.

This is from “RITUAL” and Form OF Initiation Amalgamated Transit Union AFL-CIO and CLC including Installation of Officers Revised and adopted…. 1995

Especially now in the “silly seasons” WE need to remember our oath of obligation, and give it the conviction of the intention.

Proud To Be ATU
180,000 Strong

President’s Report, continued

you’ll lose. We did because along with three public sector contracts (King County Metro, Clallam Transit and Jefferson Transit), we represent employees at Solid Ground (SPT) and Clallam Para-transit. There was great resistance from many locals to drop the attendance requirements and even to this day some have still not done so. Eventually they’ll have to.

So now we come to our current election. Here are some interesting facts (or at least I think they are). Local 587 currently has 4,105 active members. There are sixty-eight (68) members or 2.79% of our membership seeking election to twenty-two (22) ballot positions. If the meeting attendance requirements were still in our by-laws (attend six (6) meetings each year for the two years preceding an election) of the 68 candidates, approximately 24 or 35% would be eligible to run for office.

I know that each candidate for each position sincerely believes they can help this union and its members. If they didn’t, I am sure they wouldn’t be running for office. I urge you to examine the candidates and their credentials closely.

Look to see how they have served the union in the past, in whatever capacity. One need not hold office to make a contribution to the union; service comes in many forms. If you have questions about the dedication, motivation, or competency of any candidate, don’t hesitate to ask those who might know them better — whether fellow members, shop stewards, or past or current officers.

Your vote is important both to you and the future of our Local. Before casting that vote, make sure you believe that the candidate you’ve chosen has demonstrated a capacity for leadership.

Before closing this lengthy article allow me to share my own experience of coming into this position of President. When I was elected in 2000, I had served many terms as an Executive Board Officer. I felt confident I had a pretty good grasp of the duties and responsibilities of the office of President. Well…let me tell you, I thought I knew! I felt for the first year I was the proverbial deer in the headlights. I had a lot of support from many people, and for that I’ll always be grateful.

Regards to all… Be Safe

LFN
The Vice President’s Report

By Kenny McCormick

Layoffs

King County may begin laying off workers, and the exact number has not been determined yet. When will the King County Black Caucus begin laying off employees? Local 587 has not been notified of any specific date for layoffs. There are rumors floating around at the work sites about the number of people being laid off but they are just that, rumors.

Members have been expressing their concerns about the possibility of being laid off and their concerns are understandable because of the current economy and the very poor prospects of finding work. Also, now is not the time to be terminated because there are too many people looking for work.

During recent worksite visits many members asked “when was this layoff language for Part-time Operators put into our contract?” I did a little research and discovered that the current language was implemented in the 1984 contract (Article 15 Section 2 on pg 76).

A few months ago I researched the language pertaining to former members retiring in the event of a layoff and I was surprised by what I found in Article 6 Section 2 on pg 38 of the current contract. Former members will have greater protection in our contract than some current members. You might say “how is that possible?” The language allows former members no matter how long they have been away to return to a former position with the seniority obtained prior to leaving Local 587.

In the event of layoffs this could displace a current dues paying member that has never left this Union. When I presented this information during these discussions, the majority of the members were very surprised because they could not understand how our contract gave greater protection for former members. I have read other Union contracts that allowed current members the right to return to a former classification within the bargaining unit.

Metro has not notified the Union that layoffs will occur for sure, nor has Metro given a time when it might happen. The possibility of layoffs is a reality and it may depend on funding, the number of members lost through attrition and a wide variety of other factors. There has not been a final decision on the number or when and if it will take place.

Until Metro notifies Local 587 anything you hear is just another rumor. We will keep you posted and continue to fight for you.

The Black Caucus is very important to the ATU and its rich history. It is my hope that the ATU locals around the country will continue to support the Black Caucus and all the other Caucuses and conventions that are held around the country because the knowledge gained is invaluable to our memberships.

Upcoming at Local 587

<table>
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<tr>
<th>MAY 07</th>
<th>Charter meeting</th>
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<tr>
<td>MAY 08</td>
<td>Morning meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAY 11</td>
<td>Jefferson Transit Authority meeting</td>
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<td>MAY 12</td>
<td>Clallam County meeting</td>
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<td>MAY 14</td>
<td>Local 587 Primary Election</td>
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<td>MAY 26</td>
<td>Executive Board meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAY 30</td>
<td>New Shake-up begins for King County Metro Full-Time Transit Operators and Vehicle Maintenance</td>
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<tr>
<td>JUNE 01</td>
<td>New Shake-up begins for King County Metro Part-Time Transit Operators</td>
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<tr>
<td>JUNE 04</td>
<td>Local 587 General Election</td>
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C. Other Agreements
1. Benefit eligibility for 2013 will be determined in the same manner as the benefit plan term 2010-2012, unless modified through negotiations.
2. Per previous policy, Metro will record all hours paid during the review period in order to determine the hours-worked threshold. Paid hours include hours worked and paid time off as a PTO.
   • No credit is given for hours paid as a PTO Trainee.
   • If the PTO is detailed out of classification during the review period, the hours paid in the out-of-class position will be excluded.
   • PTOs will receive credit for their assigned position for the first 30 days of unpaid Union Leave Accrual.
   • Cash outs and premium pay are not included.
   • No credit is given for job-injury time-loss.

5. Nothing in this Agreement alternates the rules determining eligibility for benefits while on approved leaves of absence.

New Plan Term Eligibility (January 1, 2010 – December 31, 2012)
1. If a Covered Employee receives 40 paid hours of work in any subsequent pick through 2012, s/he will receive full benefits beginning the first day of the month after s/he starts the 4:00 or more hours of work.
2. Alternatively, if a PTO receives 1,019 paid hours or more in the 26 pay periods ending with the pay period that includes either July 31, 2009 or July 31, 2010 or July 31, 2011, s/he will be eligible for fully-paid benefits effective the following January 1 through December 31, 2012.
3. All PTOs with 10 or more years of part-time seniority as of December 31, 2006, and who are eligible for full benefits shall remain eligible for full benefits through December 31, 2012.

C. Other Agreements
1. Benefit eligibility for 2013 will be determined in the same manner as the benefit plan term 2010-2012, unless modified through negotiations.
2. For the purposes of this agreement, a move-up is not considered to be a pick. In other words, a change in hours due to a move-up will not qualify an employee for fully-paid benefits.
3. Per previous policy, average pay time will be used to determine whether an assignment is 4/0 or more. Some assignments have significant adds or deletes scheduled during the shake-up. In these cases, the assignment will be designated an average pay-time for the shake-up. If the average pay time is different than the picked time, the average pay time will be noted on the pick postings.
4. Also per previous policy, Metro will record all hours paid during the review period in order to determine the 1019 hour threshold. Paid hours include hours worked and paid time off as a PTO.
   • No credit is given for hours paid as a PTO Trainee.
   • If the PTO is detailed out of classification during the review period, the hours paid in the out-of-class position will be included.
   • PTOs will receive credit for their assigned position for the first 30 days of unpaid Union Leave Accrual.
   • Cash outs and premium pay are not included.
   • No credit is given for job-injury time-loss.

5. Nothing in this Agreement alternates the rules determining eligibility for benefits while on approved leaves of absence.

SUBJECT: MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
Regardng Health Benefits for 2010 – 2012
For Represented Benefits-Eligible Employees By
Between King County and Unions Representing
King County Employees

Whereas, certain designated representatives of the County and the Unions signatory hereto have agreed to participate in discussions as members of the Joint Labor Management Insurance Committee ("JLMIC") for the purposes of reviewing, studying and making recommendations relative to the County’s existing medical, dental, vision and life insurance programs; and

Whereas, collective bargaining agreements between King County and the unions representing its employees, with the exception of the King County Police Officers Guild, contain language that is consistent with the recommendations of the JLMIC; and

Whereas, the County and the Unions have not agreed to changes that would negatively affect the terms of these agreements.

Therefore, having bargained in good faith, the JLMIC hereby agrees to the following benefit plan design change for 2010-2012.

1. The terms of the 2007-2009 Memoranda of Agreement will remain in effect through December 31, 2012, with the following modifications. Those agreements are attached hereto.
Recording Secretary, continued

2. In-Network Out of Pocket Expense Levels. The following are the changes to KingCareRx benefits agreed to by the parties:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Drug Type</th>
<th>Retail (1 month supply)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generic</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred Brand</td>
<td>$30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-preferred Brand</td>
<td>$40</td>
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</tbody>
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Home delivery will continue to be two times retail for a 90-day supply.

3. Prescription Drug Coverage. The parties agree to the following schedule for Rx co-pays:

4. Rx Out of Pocket Maximum. The annual out of pocket maximum for prescription drugs will be $1,500 individual / $3,000 family.

5. Progressive Medication Program. The JLMIC agrees to adopt the progressive medication program (“PMP”) as described by Express Scripts in their August 5, 2008 presentation, except that the program will include the following therapy classes: NSAID, Statin, PPI, Hypnotics, Leukotrienes, ARB / ACE, Bisphosphonates, Nasal Steroids, SSRI and Other Antidepressants, Antivirals, Non-sedating Antihistamines, and Overactive Bladder. The PMP will include grandfathering of plan members currently taking drugs in one of the drug classes.

The following describes the PMP, according to the August 5, 2008 presentation.

Progressive Medication Program. PMP is a program especially for people who take prescription drugs regularly (maintenance medication) for ongoing conditions like pain and inflammation, high cholesterol, ulcer disease, sleep disorders, asthma, and high blood pressure. It helps members get an effective medicatio to treat their condition while keeping the costs for members and the plan as low as possible.

Front-Line and Backup Drugs. • Drugs are grouped according to copayment amounts.

- Front-line drugs - the first step - are generic drugs proven safe, effective and affordable. These drugs should be tried first because they provide the same health benefit as more expensive drugs, at a lower cost.
- Back-up drugs - Step 2 and Step 3 - are brand-name drugs such as those you see advertised on TV.

There are lower-cost brand drugs (Step 2) and high cost brand drugs (Step 3). Back-up drugs cost more than front-line drugs.

- The PMP is developed under the guidance and direction of independent, licensed doctors, pharmacists and other medical experts. Together these experts review the most current research and thousands of drugs tested and approved by the FDA for safety and effectiveness. Then they recommend appropriate prescription drugs for PMP.

Grandfathering. • Only members who have new, first time prescriptions for a drug that is in one of the designated PMP therapy classes are affected by this program.

- Members who are already taking second or third line back-up drugs continue getting their prescriptions without interruption (they will be “grandfathered” for the back-up drug.)

Pharmacy Process. • When a new prescription is presented to the pharmacist, the pharmacist will look to see what is covered.

- If the drug is not on the first-line list, the pharmacist will call the physician to discuss if the first-line drug is appropriate for the member.

- Most of the time, the pharmacist will reach the physician, and 1 of 2 things will happen:
  - The physician will write a new prescription for the lower cost front-line drug, or
  - The physician will complete the clinical criteria to allow the back-up second or third line drug.

- Occasionally, the pharmacist may not be able to reach the physician while the member is in the Pharmacy.

- In all cases the member will be able to leave the pharmacy with either a full month’s supply of an appropriate drug, or a small supply (five-day) of the prescribed medication to take while the prescription is being processed.

6. Dental. The JLMIC agrees to increase the maximum annual benefit for dental care to $2,500 per plan member.

7. Benefit Access Fee. The JLMIC agrees to increase the benefit access fee to $10.

8. Healthy Incentives. The JLMIC agrees to the continuation of the Healthy Incentives Program and the supportive environment necessary to make it effective.

9. Employee Education. In order to implement the memorandum of agreement, the County commits to provide resources to adequately implement and administer the benefits program agreed to herein.

10. Reopener. The parties may reopen by mutual agreement.

11. Further Study.

A. Total Agreement & Severability. A. Total Agreement. This agreement comprises the entire Agreement of the parties with respect to the matters covered herein, and no other agreement, statement or promise made by any party which is not included herein shall be binding on the parties. This Agreement may be modified or amended only by a written agreement.

B. Severability. The provisions of the Agreement are intended to be severable. If any term or provision of this Agreement is deemed illegal or invalid for any reason, such illegality shall not affect the validity of the remainder of this Agreement.

C. Term. This Agreement shall be in effect from January 1, 2010 through December 31, 2012.

These three MOAs are posted on our website at http://www.atu587.com/membership-benefits.html. Questions regarding qualification for full benefits for part-time employees and/or changes in terms and conditions of benefits should be addressed to the Recording Secretary.

The Martin Luther King Jr. County Labor Council Education Committee, UW Harry Bridges Labor Studies Program, AFGE 11th District and AFGE Local 3937

Present

A Discussion with Bill Fletcher, Jr.

Wednesday
May 20, 2009
5:00pm
Seattle Labor Temple, Hall 1
2800 First Ave

Co-author of Solidarity Divided (UC Press, 2008), Bill Fletcher, Jr. is co-founder of the Center for Labor Renewal, a columnist, and a long-time activist. He served as President of TransAfrica Forum and was former Executive Director and later Assistant to the President of the AFL-CIO. Candid, incisive, and accessible, Solidarity Divided is a critical examination of labor’s current crisis and a plan for a bold new way forward into the 21st century.

The American labor movement is split. Unions are in freefall. The economy is battering workers and their attempts to get a level playing field while Wall Street executives plunder the nation’s retirement savings. Can we do anything about it? Bill Fletcher has a plan! This dynamic labor activist will describe his ideas in a discussion on “Building a Labor Movement with Change We Can Believe In.” Bill will be available for book signings and Solidarity Divided will be available for purchase at this event.

Fletcher is hailed as a labor leader who’s not afraid to speak truth about the split in labor and the movement’s need to change its tactics to leverage power for working families. Don’t miss this event! It is FREE and open to the public.

For more information, call (206) 441-7102

Whatever happened to?

By Dee Wakenight, Executive Board officer

Many of us, drivers, were excited and pleased by the implementation of the lighted bus stops that the county did a couple of years back. At least for the south end service these were put in on the Route 180. They are wonderful.

When there is an intending passenger they push a big red button on the pole that holds the flag, and a really bright light flashes for 30 seconds to alert the driver that there is an intending customer at the stop.

In the current day and cover your a** atmosphere at the county it is difficult to imagine not anything which improves the riding experience for operators and the public will rise to the level of concern to get the necessary attention for completion of the project. Completion should mean system wide usage of the lights. What cost is goodwill? Drivers can pick up more people, because with the lights we can tell they are waiting for us to get them where they are going. Customers are not left waiting in horrible and dark conditions; it’s a win-win situation.

Often we take for granted those things that are new and make our work lives easier. It’s about time that we give some feedback to those who worked so hard on the project, and made it work well, to improve the system for, we, the drivers and the public.

Another one of those, what ever happened to projects, but this one works, imagine that?
News Review

May 2009

The View from the Buses

By Bob Morgan, Retired First-Line Supervisor

Well this month I would like to talk a little about two "Bills" 
# 1 Bill was Bill Horner. Bill was an imposing figure of a man, 6'4" if not more and around 250 lbs. My 1st experience was 3 weeks to my 1st shake-up @ Jefferson Base. I had pulled 4:00 AM report off the board and one of the things that happened in those days was the all nighter would run mail between bases. This morning around 4:06 or so we heard this roar up the road that sounded like a 700 coach; then all of a sudden hard braking. Horner came into the base and tossed the mail bag at Will Soper and took the other, bound out the door and left. Just then, then Bill Horner into the base looking a little shaken. Seems Harry would park near 9th/Madison (his relief point) and ride up the hill on the all nighter. He said Bill was doing at least 75 MPH down 14 Av S/B and then pulled the emergency brake, hit both doors open, and jammed then pulled the emergency brake, said the person got on his 7RB again. Bill said the person was bandaged from head to foot, and when Bill asked him what had happened the response was...man I did some bad drugs, and I'm not sure what happened. As they say... don't try this yourself!!

#2 Bill was good friend and co-worker Bill Hewitt. Bill was a holdover from Metropolitan Transit and after the merge to Metro was a 1st line until he retired in 2000. I first met Bill around 1977 as I was still driving, later Bill had the old P-15 shift @ 4/Main. Along with Bob "Animal" Johnson I would lay over at 4/Main daily prior to my final N/B trip on the old 8 Ravenna. Bill went into the Control Center in 1979 and stayed until his retirement. This was a mentor of you older operators may remember him from. The morning was Bill’s domain on first Ch 3 and, later Ch 4. What most people don’t know of this person was he was very hyper...his first comment of the day was always "who can we mess with today". This could either be an operator, a fellow 1st line or his favorite, a person in management. After the Control Center left the 2nd floor of the old Atlantic Base in 1979, the new location was the 2nd floor of the Exchange Building (also called the return building by Bill), virtually under Market St, most definitely in the basement if you will. No windows, bad lighting made for a bad work environment. Others working there at that time were Jim Rochon, Terry Hisson, and Dave Dellplain (later to be V.P. of SEIU). They all, along with a few others formed the ACME Moving company. They would go out after regular business hours to various floors in the building, and well, take various items from the offices of people in management to smooch up the working conditions in the Control Center. A leather couch, table with chairs, and plants fell to the "movers". Everything was free until one day they went up to the 3rd floor to Jim Burton's office (Superintendent) and with phony paperwork, took his nice clock off the wall. Yes with a minor search someone finely figured out where the clock would be, and sure enough it was in the Control Center, hung on the wall as if it had been there along. There are more things that happened with Bill, but space prevents the telling at this time, maybe later.

After the last issue I realized I hadn’t put my e-mail address out so other retiree’s can let me know of any going’s on, so here it is morganbobre@mcmast.net, just put From the Busses in the remark line so I don’t delete. As I write this, I just heard that John Sawney man, who retired in 2006 as the early hostler at N Base, passed away. Sad news as I talked a lot to her when I worked in the Control Center. Heard from Al Ramey that the February South End breakdusk in Burien was attended by 37 people, sorry I was still on the road as missed seeing Rudy Kollar and wife, along with George Criddle and Bernie (Burnyard) Fischer. I worked with all over the years and was sorry to miss the opportunity to visit. A note to all, the retiree picnic will be the Thurs June 25th, lower Woodland Park, shelter #6 next to the lawn bowling area. Get their early to help Dave Carter set up, otherwise he does most on his own, and he has a lot to do.

Thanks for reading and we’ll see you soon...from the busses.

There is an option for all members of Local 587 to "put some money" aside for medical expenses after retirement. Titled: Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Association, VEBA, the IRS defines a VEBA as "Any group of employees sharing an employment-related common bond may establish a VEBA." What this means to all of us is that we have a decision to make. DO WE WANT TO BE IN A VEBA OR NOT?

Basically, everyone represented by Local 587 employed at MLK County will be affected. BUT only when they retire from employment.

VEBA has no effect to those who are terminated, or quit. VEBA is only important when someone retires and is entitled to the 35% sick leave cash. Originally there was only one option for VEBA: 35% sick leave cash out. And EVERYBODY in the bargaining unit MUST participate. In lieu of receiving cash the amount of money is deposited into your VEBA account. As a medical savings account there are no taxes. So the county saves the money it would have had to pay the government in employer taxes on that income. Once the money is in the VEBA it may only be used for qualified medical expenses.

Now the county is offering another option for contribution to VEBA. Under consideration is depositing into your VEBA half of your vacation balance when you retire. Exemple: You have 500 hours of vacation upon retirement, you would be paid for 250 hours, and the other 250 hours would go into your VEBA account.

Now for the difficult part. Do we as a group want to do this?

There is NO opt-out. Everyone in Local 587 employed at MLK County will either be IN or OUT.

Do we want the 35% sick leave cash out option?

Do we want the ½ vacation balance?

Do we want both?

This is a deadline for the decision of how much or if any to be a VEBA. Information must reach Benefits & Retirement by July 31, 2009 to take effect by January 1, 2010. Please only vote yes or no, and then choose an option. Then tear this corner out of the NEWS REVIEW and send it to the Union office. The officers will hear your voice loud and clear.

This is an enormous change to the circumstances surrounding retirement. Before taking the time, money, and resources for a referendum vote of the membership, we will first have a non scientific straw poll to determine the level of interest among our members. If the membership votes to participate in a VEBA everybody WILL participate. This will also mean that when they retire they will not be able to buy that new truck or whatever else they have planned for the larger than usual “last pay check” from MLK County. Naturally the money in the VEBA may be used to purchase medical, dental, vision, etc available benefits from the county at the discounted rates for retirees and families. Go to the county’s web site, focus on employees, retiree/ COBRA benefits and you can see the current prices for these items.

So now the question is: to VEBA, or not to VEBA