On Monday, March 12th, 2007 in South Park, Seattle, Washington an amazing thing happened. Quoting A.T.U. International Vice President Ron Heintzman, “I haven’t seen it before in almost 30 years of negotiating contracts and I may never see it again.”

The “it” Ron was talking about was a unanimous vote of acceptance of a contract proposal. With an 80 Yes and 0 No vote, Local 587’s members employed at MV Transportation accepted an outstanding new six year labor agreement.

Ron explained to me, “no matter how good the contract proposal is, no matter how hard the negotiating Committee fought to improve the new contract, no matter how proud and satisfied the Local’s leadership is with the proposal being submitted for ratification there will always be No Votes.”

I know we’ve all heard some members say, “I don’t care how good the contract offer is, I’ve never voted yes on a contract offer and I am not voting yes now.”

From the surveys that we sent out to our members at MV the overwhelming response was (1). Better wages. (2). Less costly health care. (3). Separate personal time of (P.T.O.) into vacation and sick leave.

Unlike fixed route service, paratransit service provides transportation to the disabled and the elderly that are mobility impaired and not quite up to riding the bus. Our Paratransit operators assist those individuals by pushing their wheelchairs, lifting a passenger into a seat and sometimes helping them from the front door of their residence to the bus and from the bus to their front door. In essence our operators are caregivers and escorts to their passengers. They must require extraordinary patience in dealing with the customers that require special needs.

Paratransit Service Operators (also known as Dial-a-Ride, Access, Special Transit, Demand Response, Senior Services) in addition to their many skills in assisting those they serve must also drive their buses safely on streets and roads to locations well off the main arterials to as close to the front door for their

“...and work together as a team, you can accomplish good things!”

–Ron Heintzman- International Vice President

continued on page 8
Tentative Agenda

Membership Meetings:

CHARTER MEETING
Thursday, April 5, 2007
7:00 p.m.
The Labor Temple, Hall #8
2800 1st Ave., Seattle, WA

MORNING MEETING
Friday, April 6, 2007
10:30 a.m.
The Labor Temple, Hall #6
2800 1st Ave., Seattle, WA

CLALLAM TRANSIT
Tuesday, April 10, 2007
7:00 p.m.
Vern Burton Memorial Building
Port Angeles, WA

Among Topics to be Discussed:
• Grievance and arbitration update.
• MV Transportation contract settlement and ratification.
• Election of Kermit C. Gipson Jr. to Executive Board Officer/Vehicle Maintenance position 3.

Unfinished Business:
None

Arbitration Update

1. Charles Gibson: Member employed at Seattle Personal Transit grieved termination for alleged negligent driving. Scheduled in April.


3. Richard Paddon: Grieved management performing bargaining unit work. Arbitration began in February with additional dates scheduled in May and June.

4. David Moore: Member employed at Seattle Personal Transit grieved termination for an accumulation of alleged minor preventable accidents. Scheduled in April.

In Loving Memory...

Although it’s difficult to see beyond the sorrow, May looking back in memory help comfort you tomorrow...

—Author Unknown

Letters to the editor
Letters/Contributions must include printed names, signatures, work ID numbers, addresses and phone 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
2800 1st Avenue, Suite 230
Seattle, WA 98121

WEB SITE: http://www.atu587.com

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OFFICERS OF LOCAL 587:
KEVIN MCGUIRE: President
PARIS BURTON: Vice President
GREG WALKER: Secretaryt

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

For grievances:
Brother Daniel: 206-488-4848
587102

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Warning? Letter of Expectation?

In late 2005 Metro began sending letters to members addressing their recent attendance history and reminding them that their ability to work on a regular basis is a condition of continued employment. These letters inform members of Metro’s expectations for continued employment and warn them that if they are unable to work regularly, they will be separated/terminated from employment with King County Metro. These letters contain a complete breakdown year by year of the number of days each member has worked in the most recent years. The number of days is then broken down as a percentage of time worked each preceding calendar year. Finally, the member is given an overall percent of time worked for a period of time up to ten years.

Recently members have been contacting the Union office wanting to know “Can they do this?” and to grieve the “Expectation Letter” they have received from Metro regarding their attendance and possible separation/termination. The short answer is yes, Metro may notify you that your attendance needs to improve, why it needs to improve, what Metro’s expectations are, and what the consequences are if attendance doesn’t improve.

The most frequently asked question — “Is Metro serious?” Yes! We had one member who only worked 23% of the time in the last ten years. This member was notified of a pending termination and decided to resign rather than be terminated. Another member that spent considerable time on Workers Compensation during a five-year period for various injuries was also issued a letter of expectation. If you have received a Letter of Expectation or know of anyone who has, let me be the first to tell you, Metro is very serious.

This may seem harsh or wrong for an employer to fire an employee for inability to work after being hurt on the job. “Is it against the law?” The answer is no, but there are laws that protect workers. Do you need to move to another job inside King County Metro? Do you need to continue to work regularly, or if your health will not allow you to continue to work regularly, or if you’re injured or re-injured on the job, and what skills you may have that you can use and what you can do that do not require manual labor? Metro may continue to separate and terminate anyone who is able to work.

For those that may have received a letter: It is a REMINDER of Metro’s EXPECTATIONS of your ability to work regularly and why, as well as a WARNING that if you don’t, you will no longer be employed by King County Metro. In other words, YOU have been put on notice, and may want to start taking the steps to insure that you stay employed.

If you are continuously being injured or re-injured on the job, or if your health will not allow you to continue to work regularly, you may want to consider looking for another position inside King County Metro, BEFORE you are medically separated or terminated. Contact Disability Services and find out how the Job Search Program works, and what skills you may need to move to another job inside King County Metro.

Get your paperwork in order. Keep copies for your records, and don’t leave it to your medical provider to send in your documents. Notify the Union office of your situation (you may qualify for reduced hours or even early retirement). If you have questions, call or come by.

Just remember in the meantime, Metro may continue to separate and terminate anyone unable to work regularly.

In Solidarity,

Kenny McCormick,
Vice President / Assistant Business Representative

### WORK SITE VISITS

Kenny McCormick, Vice President, will be visiting various work sites during the month of April. Below is a list of times, dates and locations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Site Description</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 5th</td>
<td>MV Trans</td>
<td>4:00 am – 7:00 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 12th</td>
<td>SPT</td>
<td>5:00 am – 7:00 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 18th</td>
<td>East Base</td>
<td>4:45 am – 6:30 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 18th</td>
<td>Bellevue Base</td>
<td>6:45 am – 8:30 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 19th</td>
<td>South Base</td>
<td>4:45 am – 7:00 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 25th</td>
<td>Central/Atlantic/NVR</td>
<td>1:00 pm – 2:30 pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ENTRY FEE $60.00 INCLUDES:

- TEE PRIZES, RAFFLE PRIZES AND A STEAK DINNER
- AUCTION ON GOLF PACKAGES (includes golf for four and carts)
- SEMIARMOY GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB
- LOOMIS TRAIL GOLF CLUB
- #1 PUBLIC COURSE IN WASHINGTON STATE
- #1 PUBLIC COURSE IN UNITED STATES
- HOME STEAD GOLF RESORT AND MORE
- ALL PROCEEDS FROM THE AUCTION WILL GO DIRECTLY TO THE COLLEGE FUND FOR CARL OWENS GRANDKIDS EDUCATION

Deadline for entry form:
JULY 1ST AT 5:00 PM

If you have questions or concerns, or would like to donate an item to be auctioned please contact Dave White 360-794-0946 or dwhite@meraa.com

Merlin Smith will be the honored guest this year

Sponsored by MERA and ATU Local 587

By Kenny McCormick
I

n my last article, I reported on the
top management of VM ig-
noring lethal hazards, ignoring
the enormous liability associated
with them and failing repeatedly,
year after year, to honor clear agree-
ments on our number one issue…
safety. This refusal to cooperate
and meet the needs and priorities
of the County has led to open harass-
ment of bizarre proportions, poor
moral in VM and failure to maintain
minimum standards established by
industry, equipment manufacturers
and King County.

A long-standing example is the
huge cost to the health of our Opera-
tors and Equipment Service Workers
as the manufacturer recommends
and the previous head of
safety repeatedly requested. Due
to poor design, the USOC seats need
to have the padding upon which
we sit replaced every 6 months or
less. However, for years they have
been allowed to deteriorate 6 to 8
times longer than the manufacturer
specifies, causing an unconscionable
number of injuries. In a recent Union
poll, over half of all operators com-
plained of pain, numbness or injury
due to the seats. The costs in L&I,
medical services and time loss don’t
come from the VM budget, so the fis-
cal and health burdens are ignored.
I want to be extremely clear on the
fact that our excellent Mechanics
and Upholsterers are absolutely not
the problem; it is top
VM management who is refusing to
include the serv-
ing as the manufac-
turer specifies and
both conscience and
fiscal responsibility
demand.

Another example is the
remarkable
song and dance we
have received in
trying to get Gil-
ligs to simply track
straight. Roughly
90% pull hard to the
right due to exces-
summer tire wear.
This forces the
operator to apply
roughly 4½ pounds
to the steering wheel
day long to keep
the coach rolling
straight down the
road. This obviously
causes an additional
large number of un-
necessary injuries and medical costs.
Our highly skilled mechanics have
long known that switching the front
tires side to side usually resolves
the problem. However, when the
issue was brought repeatedly to base
safety meetings, VM management
said that since other bases also had
the problem, it would not be possible
to have our mechanics simply fix it
with more frequent tire rotation; it
would have to be referred to Fleet
Engineering. After many, many
months, the response finally came
back that the problem was caused
by uneven tire wear. This is exactly
what our world class mechanics had
said eons earlier. So, we are now
back to where we started, when our
mechanics have explained the solu-
tion and management can’t manage
its implementation.

Another comedic sequence of
events began at a base safety meet-
ing, after many months of
reporting this systemic problem
and getting no action, I offered a list
of coaches with bad steering to the VM
manager in attendance. He refused
it, saying that I would need to fill
out a work order on each coach and
a single list would not do. Despite
this costing Metro two hours pay
for the same information, I did ex-
dactly what he said and filled out 24
work orders. When I turned them
in, I was told that the work orders
would not be accepted, and only
the coach I drove that day would
be repaired. It was never suggested
that so much as a rejected work
order involved a coach that didn’t
have a significant problem. Ever
optimistic that we could find a way
to get these to our mechanics, for
each subsequent day when I drove
a coach which had this problem, I
turned in a work order and kept a
spreadsheet of all my coaches, the
ones with problems and any work
orders. Coach 3500 was one that I
had turned in on the day I drove it.
When I was assigned it a second
time, it had the same problems I
had turned in before so I wrote it
up again and requested the previous
work order and any action taken.
The base Supervisor of VM told me
that “an individual request such as
that would not be honorary” and that
I would have to go to an Operations
Chief (who has nothing to do with
care) to get an answer on this
VM issue. After several days and an
e-mail exchange asking if all bases
would be following this new policy,
I got the coach repair history. The
two work orders had disappeared
and no repairs had been done. It is
ironic that at the most recent base
safety meeting the VM base super-
visor involved had chided another
manager for saying that some senior
Operators have the feeling that their
maintenance concerns sometimes
get ignored.

It is saddening to watch this
penny wise and pound foolish
managerial culture squander fiscal
and intellectual resources while
eroding employee moral and our
primary obligation… Safety. This
is, however, the natural outcome
of placing personal control and turf
issues ahead of agency priorities. It
is my belief that this situation will
improve because our other top man-
ger the approach
does not work. They place Metro
needs above their ego issues and
see that cooperation, professional-
ism and mutual respect are the tools
required to meet our obligations.
Our new “Sick Days” Policy

By Alex D. La Barba

To begin with, it is very exciting to see new ideas emerge from the bargaining process, ideas that offer new opportunities for the benefit of the workforce...

Good and Bad Pain

By Chuck Lare

One of the best kept secrets is that Metro now has under contract with PreCare, a Physical Therapist to help us with not only our physical aches and pains but also early screening and preventative education to assist in limiting the risks that are inherent to working as a driver. Ms. Danielle Vernon PT, an experienced orthopedic Physical Therapist has been contracted with Metro through her company, PreCare, since January 22, 2007. She will be available 6 hours per work at each of the following bases: North, Bellevue/East, Central/Atlantic and eventually Ryerson. In addition to the 6 hours per base of free preventative education, she will be providing on-site physical therapy sessions for members who have an open injury claim with a physician’s referral. It is important to note that all of these services are free to all metro employees.

The preventative education portion involves a one-on-one consultation that is geared towards the employee’s needs. She is skilled with ergonomic understanding of office set-ups and our buses. She is also open to suggestions on how to set up an exercise program or even to make your exercise program more efficient. She is experienced in the set-up of the body and has had great success going with drivers out to their buses to identify variable that might be contributing to driving-related injuries. In just the short time I spent with Ms. Vernon, I learned that some stretching pains can be good and are an indication that you need to do more of it. In my case my bad elbow pain is now disappearing with a little stretching and a better understanding of where that pain came from. Unfortunately, Ms. Vernon tells me that the effects of stretching are usually only good for an hour and a half before the muscle takes on its original shape. That means we need to set our watches for every hour to be reminded it is time to set-tee-ee if we are going to make any permanent flexibility changes.

Ms. Vernon hopes to not only treat injuries but also improve our understanding and help lobby Base Chiefs for better exercise areas. Hopefully we can gain that support for more stretching areas and understanding which exercises are most beneficial for staving off bus driving pains. Ms. Vernon realizes Drivers' schedules can be very erratic and therefore she has chosen to have flexible hours so that she can try to accommodate your schedule. Contact her at dvern@precareinc.com or call, 206-715-0293. Now that that is a growing threat to keep pushing out the date of retirement, we may need to be physically prepared to cope with the pain of driving, well into our 70’s. Physical Therapy can be the ticket to a better understanding of our bodies and help the baby boomer generation keep driving healthy and pain-free.

Upcoming at Local 587

APRIL05 Charter meeting
APRIL06 Morning meeting
APRIL09 Jefferson Transit Authority meeting
APRIL10 Clallam County meeting
APRIL24 Executive Board meeting

KC Metro Transit Operator Pick Dates

Preview for KC Metro Part-time operators
April 23 through 27, 2007
Central/Atlantic Base - second floor
8:00 am to 4:00 pm

Pick for KC Metro Part-time operators
April 28, 29 & May 5, 6, 2007
Central/Atlantic Base - second floor

Preview for KC Metro Full-time operators
April 21 through 27, 2007
Central/Atlantic Base - second floor
8:00 am to 4:00 pm

Pick for KC Metro Full-time operators
April 30 through May 04 and
May 07 through 10, 2007
Central/Atlantic Base - second floor
Letters to the Editor…

Adopt-a-Stop
Dear Editor,

After reading the letter from Joe Kadushin in the February newsletter, I was very pleased to see that someone besides me had actually noticed the Adopt-a-Stop cans.

Let me make a very specific definition: the Adopt-a-Stop program only occurs at unsheltered zones. In the Facilities Maintenance division, we have about 1,300 sheltered zones. A rough estimate is about 5 unsheltered zones to every sheltered one. Several years ago, in response to customer concerns about garbage at the zones, the Adopt-a-Stop program began.

When a person requests a adoption of a location, they are put in touch with Gary Ogden. Gary researches the location and its history, confirms that the adopter lives nearby (it is preferred that the zone is on their property, it gives them a sense of pride) and then sends the information to the Facilities Maintenance department, where it generally ends up on my to-do list. There are currently over 500 zones that are being maintained in this fashion.

Facilities Maintenance is a relatively small division; we have just over 150 employees, with 18 different job classifications. Utility Laborers and Maintenance Workers clean the shelters, and there are over 30 people in those classifications. They also clean the Comfort Stations, so be nice to them. They have a tough job at best, and disgusting at its worst.

I agree with Joe that the small trashcans promote clean neighborhood feelings and are a good idea. They don’t take away any work from our members; they are community builders. However he is quite correct; if they aren’t maintained, they need to be reported and measures taken.

Lisa Carter
Facilities Maintenance

Earned Vacation
Currently, when operators move from part-time to full-time they retain only one-third of their years of vacation seniority used to calculate the number of earned vacation days. If an operator has fifteen years of part-time seniority then becomes full-time those fifteen years of seniority will be counted as five years seniority toward earned vacation days.

A few contracts back it used to be zero years of part-time seniority were counted toward full-time vacation accrual. At that time management’s argument was “you are starting a new job.” The argument was bogus as management carried over an operator’s accident record, CAO complaints and commendations and sick leave accruals into this “new job.”

Now that management acknowledges years of part-time seniority should carry over for purposes of vacation accrual they claim such years should be calculated at one-third since they are years earned while in the part-time operator classification.

Such a count is petty and reflects badly on management’s fairness to its employees. When an operator puts in the years of seniority necessary to earn vacation it is unjust to deny that vacation simply because an operator is changing work classification.

This denial of earned vacation happens only when changing classification from part to full-time transit operator. There is no loss of vacation when moving from full-time operator to a supervisor classification. And, by the way, when a supervisor is hired as a base chief to join Local 17 their direction accrual is calculated by the number of years worked as a supervisor, full-time operator and part-time operator.

New contract negotiations are beginning. Now is the time to rectify this injustice of discounting earned vacation days when moving from part to full-time classification. When you have earned your vacation management should not be able to take it away.

By Eckhardt, Katherine

Passenger Commendations
Dear Editor,

In short this would mirror the commendations drivers receive from passengers. In this case, drivers would write commendations about our riders. These commendations could then be posted inside the bus along with other public service announcements.

Passengercommendations would provide operators with an opportunity to say “you are appreciated” to the riders who we feel should receive a little extra acknowledgement.

As for the passengers, knowing that operators have taken the time and effort to express their gratitude will improve driver-customer relations, serve as examples for other riders to model, and ultimately lead to an improved transit experience for all of us.

Sometimes it is the little things we do that mean the most.

Sincerely,
Joe Kadushin
Byronson Base

SEND IN YOUR OPINIONS
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NOTICE TO ALL READERS
Views and opinions expressed in News Review articles are those of the authors and not necessarily the official position of Local 587

Operator Rest Breaks
I want to comment on the recent Vice Presidents article in this paper with regard to the subject of schedules, and in particular, the call to submit documents directly to the Vice President on weekend schedules.

I must admit that I at first took offence to the proposition of the Vice President requesting Operators send weekend schedule problems to him. After all, while we Senior Schedule Planners do our work within the constraints of Management edicts, and with the budgets we are given, we ARE still Local 587 members. And we all were drivers earlier in our career.

On further consideration, however, as a frustrated schedule maker (with a wife who is still a driver who lives with the bad schedules we produce) I can understand his wanting to “get the Union involved.” In fact I can respect the willingness to make the extra effort on behalf of our Union Brothers and Sisters.

I would, however, like to see the membership made aware of some details about the process of getting schedules corrected.

First, on the timeliness of fixing schedule problems, I would note that few people who work outside our department realize exactly what our time constraints are. The idea of fixing weekend work by June 07’ should be great, but getting the responses in time is not likely. We are past our deadlines for requesting how to implement such work and the deadline for getting the actual work completed will have passed by the time it is published. This is discounting the time needed to research any problem reported.

I think the Vice President was informed by management that our limitations on manpower and coaches are so severe that we wouldn’t probably have to start with weekends first. This underestimates how bad weekdays are and how much we can still do, even inside the current limitations. With a five year backlog of problems, none of the Senior Schedule Planners got enough of the allocated hours for June to address anything close to all of the weekday problems that they listed as needing to be fixed.

Certain problems can’t be fixed without more coaches or Operators, but MAYBE I can expect that it will be a while before we are down to fixing lower priority weekend problems before weekday problems, except where the problem is severe enough to warrant being fixed first. Any hours expended on weekends are then not available for weekdays.

Keep in mind, however, that the restrictions of no added coaches and no additional Operators should continue for some time on weekday work. So any info gleaned about weekend schedule problems will still be helpful in the long run. But I would hate to see any more Operators discouraged by thinking something will be fixed immediately when, in reality, it can’t be fixed that fast.

Second, I worry about Operator
Part-time Work Reductions and Vacation Shortages

Many part-time operators - especially the 46% of us who have been here for 5 years or longer, have seen significant erosion during the last couple of years in the quality of work offered at the shake-up (pick). Many of us have noticed a decimation of the longer (over 5 hours) straight through a.m. and p.m. work.

Many of us, in part because of the decimation of the quality of work currently offered to us, are seriously considering promoting to full-time operator. However, in addition to taking a nose dive from the top of the part-time seniority list to the bottom of the full-time seniority list, when we become full-time operators under the current contract, we also suffer the loss of about two thirds of the vacation accrual rate we have earned through our years of service as a part-time operator.

This means, for example, that someone who is currently accruing the equivalent of 6 weeks of vacation time per year as a part-time operator could be dropped to the accrual rate of only two to three weeks of vacation per year as a new full-time operator. What is particularly offensive about this current contract requirement is that no other job classification suffers the same fate. Full-time operator’s who become First Line Supervisor’s, retain their vacation accrual rate. First Line Supervisor’s who become Base Chief’s earn vacation accruals based on all years of service including part-time years of service. This is due to the fact that the labor agreement between our Local 17 Base Chief’s and King County Metro does not limit vacation accruals based on one third credit for part-time years of service.

Contract negotiations will be starting very soon. Now is the chance for us to try to advocate for changes. A few of us “long-term” part-time operators are in the process of looking at what specific recommendations we can make to the negotiation team for the upcoming contract to address these problems. But we need your help!

The union will soon be distributing surveys for suggestions on what to ask for in the new contract. All those part-time operators who would like to see more available work over 4 hours (so more of us could get benefits), and/or more straight through pick options to offset all of those dual trip tickers, please let our union officers and e-board members know by filling out those surveys and turning them in!

All of those part-time operators who are planning to go full-time and would like to do so without having to lose your vacation accrual rate that you have earned by your years of service as a part-time operator please let our union officers and e-board members know by filling out those surveys and turning them in!

It really is the squeaky wheel that gets the grease, and we won’t get what we need unless we let them know what we want and how important it is to us.

In addition to filling out the survey form, you can also contact the e-board members from your base, or our two e-board representatives who happen to be part-time operators. They are: Linda Anderson and Lisa Thompson.

By Alana Sorem

Seattle Chapter of The Latino Caucus

will meet

Thursday April 5, 2007
7:15 p.m.
The Labor Temple
Hall #8
2800 First Avenue
All members welcome!
President’s Report, continued

P ersonnel is a major concern of this committee. A number of issues came to our attention during the course of the year. We plan to address these issues throughout the year.

On a number of occasions, we saw the need for better communication among the various levels of management. It is important to ensure that there is a clear understanding of the responsibilities and expectations of each level.

We also saw the need for better training in the use of computers and other technological tools. This is important to ensure that all employees have the skills they need to perform their jobs effectively.

Finally, we saw the need for better coordination among the various departments. It is important to ensure that all departments are working together to achieve the goals of the company.

We believe that these issues can be addressed through better communication, training, and coordination. We will continue to work on these issues throughout the year.

Reflection and Reassembly

As we reflect on the past year, we are proud of the progress we have made. We have addressed a number of important issues and have made significant improvements in the workplace.

We are also looking forward to the future. We believe that we can continue to make progress in the year to come.

We would like to thank everyone for their support and encouragement. We are grateful for the opportunity to work with you.

Lance F. Norton
Local 587
Dear Brothers and Sisters
This is the fourth of four articles I have written to you. I have attempted to share with you some principles and tools that I hope would be helpful. Unfortunately it is just a drop in the bucket. When you would like to know more about the things I have written in these four articles, or want copies, you can write me at Atlantic Base, at Metro King County, Seattle.

As a bus driver in Seattle, I share with you, an extremely high stress job. Our job is sometimes dangerous, not only physically, but psychologically. If we cannot find ways to relieve this stress, we will die early, not only physically, but also, emotionally.

Indeed, many of our members don’t live much longer than retirement, and some don’t even make it that far. How can we work together to make this experience happier and less stressful?

I am aware that there are some of you that don’t like the mention of such things as prayer or any mention of God or religious beliefs in the (News Review). It is not my intention to offend anyone, to promote any religion or convince anyone of the existence of God. I also don’t write to be political. You can choose to accept or not accept anything that is written in this or any publication. I do, however, write these things out of love, and hopefully be helpful to my fellow workers.

We are a very diverse work force, more so in many other parts of the country and the world. This gives us a unique opportunity to show the world how we can work together. We can still produce such a wonderful service for the people who ride our Metro Buses, even though we are so different. We at King County have this wonderful variety of people that are so many colors, races, genders, religions, political beliefs, and ages. This gives us a chance to use our collective knowledge. We can take from this diverse group of people, what good each of us has to offer, each one being special in their own way.

In the morning I drive on Jackson Street towards Twelfth Avenue, where I see huge flocks of birds flying all together. Changing course, they move left and right, and up and down, without bumping into each other. Who’s in charge? I can’t tell. How do they coordinate their dance in the air? They are so many, yet they move as one. It’s as though they are all tuned in to each other and suddenly all hand hand some wires. Too me it’s amazing. It reminds me of stop skipping in downtown Seattle. People riding their bikes, dodging bicycles, cars, and pedestrians, moving in and out of bus stops, like playing leapfrog. Somehow, at 11:00 a.m. when it doesn’t seem safe, it is because someone is trying to think only of themselves instead of going with the flow; they end up block- ing traffic and the whole machine comes to a stop.

WHEN WE THINK OF OURSELVES AS SEPARATE, WE BECOME ALONE IN THE WORLD. TOGETHER WE CAN MOVE MOUNTAINS.

We are all connected, even though we may be very different from one another. We are not just part of a team; we are a very important part of our community. Each one of us is part of the whole, like cells of a body. Some cells regenerate and heal, giving the body its life. Other cells are like angry, cancerous deceases, eating away at the body. Together we make up the body; one body that works together.

The collective consciousness can be defined as a group of individu- als having shared responsibilities, having a quality, a state of aware- ness, or concern for some social or political cause. OUR ABILITY TO WORK TOGETHER AND LIFT EACH OTHER UP IS WHAT GIVES US OUR POWER COLLECTIVELY. Together we can have a strong effect on the rest of the world. How we as a group think, behave, and treat one another affects what our public, affects everything around us.

Senator Barack Obama wrote about the need to stir the collect- ive consciousness. He spoke of the having a common set of values that bind us together despite our differences, a running thread of hope that makes our improbable experiment in democracy work. He also speaks about our differ- ences and says that any assertion of shared ideals or common values might seem hopelessly naïve, if not downright dangerous; yet he says that we have a choice.

If we are to survive in a violent and angry world, we need to stir the collective consciousness by think- ing together in a positive manner. Together we can have an effect on the world. I will give you some examples of how people all think- ing the same way can produce big results, in both positive and nega- tive ways.

When 9-11 happened, the country was so shocked that our government didn’t have any problem stirring people up with fear of terrorism, using rhetoric like patriotism, de- mocracy, and such. People across the country were easily convinced, to accept things like the Patriot Act (look at how it is named), and the war on terror (more rhetoric). The whole country suddenly was thinking with the same fear. We did go to war and many people have died since. Before, we killed in the name of anti-communism, now it is in the name of war on terror. Just by changing how people think, you can produce big results.

My friend The twelfth man, who are, the fans of the Seattle Se- ahawks. Even when their team is away playing a playoff game across the country; they can receive our energy. Our thoughts lift them up and give them power to win the game. As a group of people all thinking the same thing, we are collectively projecting our thoughts to our team. Ask the team if they have felt our presence. I have given you some tools to help us think positively and change how we think about the people we serve and about our own situa- tion. But what if we begin to think positively together as a group of people, in order to stir the collective consciousness to a more peaceful and kind awareness. Could we change how people see us as a group, not just as individuals? Could we even have an effect on how they treat us? Could we help reduce violence on our coaches and help reduce driver assaults, by changing how we treat people? Imagine that the people who ride our busses walk away from the experience and are thinking, “those Metro drivers are a wonderful group of people!”

Imagine a less stressful work environment and a mass transit system where people feel safe and are always treated right. Knowing they can depend on us, people will respond with more respec- t. If we can imagine it, then col- lectively, we can make it happen.

As a diverse group of people, we have an opportunity to collectively change the world just by changing how we think, together.

Thank you, I would like to leave you with a short poem by a man named THICH NHAT HANH.

BREATHING IN, I CALM MY BODY
BREATHING OUT, I SMILE
DWELLING IN THE PRESENT MOMENT
I KNOW THIS IS A WONDERFUL MOMENT

Que yas bien,
James Ybarra
Atlantic Base


d

In Search of Serotonin...

Part Four

By James Ybarra

When we think of ourselves as separate, we become alone in the world. Together we can move mountains.

Friday, April 27, 2007 is the date; Seattle Center is the location for this year’s Women in Trades Fair. It’s not just for Women/Girls anymore.

Metro King County will once again be a major player in this event aimed to educate/inform our future (yes, youth is our future) on the em- ployment opportunities available at Metro King County. As part of this years planning committee there is a great expectation for something bigger and better to show the variety of employment available.

This writing the plan in- cludes, a Hybrid Bus on display, bus shelters, tools, the opportunity for participants to “dress up” as trade and 17 of other/ large equipment on display. “Power” has a pole for climbing, for the hands on experience.

In past years Metro has had a major role in boosting attendance at this event, transporting hundreds of school children to / from the event. Unfortunately, this is now impos- sible according to Kevin Desmond.

Yes even Kevin is excited at the level of participation for this year. Those able to should stop by and check it out, see the public face that Metro King County is putting forth to the community. You never know who you will see there, and it is a lot of fun.

In past years, Local 587 has had the privilege of having award recipients no other ranks. Lisa Carter, south facilities carpenter has won an award. This year the awards ceremony will be held separately.

Come on down and share the wealth with our future. You never know you may even enjoy the day.

You may even enjoy the day.

By Executive Board Officer Dee Wakenight

Atlantic Base

April 2007

News Review
Wednesday's cutoff deadline passed with a few significant victories, including Senate passage of an amended Family Leave Insurance bill. But there were also some major disappointments, including the failure of the Worker Freedom Act to get a House vote. Some of the bills that missed cutoff and are technically considered dead can still be revived through extraordinary procedural means or by being incorporated into the budget. Those that won't be revived—particularly the Worker Freedom Act described below—will remain priorities for organized labor for next session and we look forward to working with Democratic leaders to make sure they get a vote in 2008. Following is a summary of some of the legislation supported by the Washington State Labor Council, and its status:

ALIVE:

**Bills that survived cutoff**

SB 5373 (Sponsor: Kohl-Welles) — These bills address employer Unemployment Insurance fraud and excess socialized costs. They would add a 2-cents-an-hour payroll tax, to be shared by employers and employees, to fund an employment organization loophole by requiring their clients to maintain their own UI experience ratings. SB 5373 passed the Senate 36-11 and will be heard in House Commerce & Labor at 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Mar. 20.

SB 5659 (Keiser) — This bill allows an employer to force workers to take their sick leave when they are “kept on salary” for purposes of workers’ compensation. “Kept on salary” status allows employers a premium break since no time-loss payments are recorded, and therefore the employer should pay the worker’s full salary not some portion of it. ESB 5676 passed the Senate 37-8 and will be heard in House Commerce & Labor at 8 a.m. Thursday, Mar. 22.

SB 5676 (Keiser) — Disallows an employer from forcing workers to take their sick leave when they are “kept on salary” for purposes of workers’ compensation. “Kept on salary” status allows employers a premium break since no time-loss payments are recorded, and therefore the employer should pay the worker’s full salary not some portion of it. ESB 5676 passed the Senate 37-8 and will be heard in House Commerce & Labor at 8 a.m. Thursday, Mar. 22.

SB 9290 (Kohl-Welles) and HB 2073 (Conway) — Establishing a pilot program for vocational rehabilitation reform in our workers’ compensation system. SB 9290 and the Senate 41-4 and will be heard in House Commerce & Labor at 8 a.m. Thursday, Mar. 22. HB 2073 passed the House 85-14.

SB 9292 (Kohl-Welles) — A measure to create a task force to study the impact of the underground economy in the construction industry in Washington state. The task force will investigate the impact of this illegal part of the economy on workers’ health and safety and employment standards as well as tax evasion from state obligations. SB 9292 passed the Senate 45-0 and has a public hearing today in House Commerce & Labor.

HB 1244 (Conway) — The Workers’ Compensation Hour Bank bill creates parity between injured construction workers and all other injured workers in Washington State by applying the 2000 Cockrell Supreme Court decision uniformly to all workers. If health care contributions to a worker’s hour bank stops during the Workers’ Compensation Act, or if work, then the value of that health care contribution is added to the worker’s time loss payment. HB 1244 passed the House 58-0 and is in the Senate Labor & Commerce Committee.

HB 2010 (Haigh) — Creating responsible bidder criteria for public works contracts. This will improve public construction projects by providing consistency by ensuring bidders are licensed, certified and registered with the state, are providing workers’ compensation to their employees, and making contractors responsible for ensuring the same of subcontractors. HB 2010 passed the House 76-21 and will be heard in Senate Labor & Commerce at 3:30 p.m. Thursday, Mar. 22.

HB 2111 (Williams) — Abolish granting collective bargaining rights for adult family home providers. These are small business owners providing residential assisted living so elderly and disabled adults can live with dignity in a family-like atmosphere with as much independence as possible. Providers depend on state reimbursements that leave them underpaid. HB 2111 passed the House 80-16.

DEAD: Bills that failed to get a vote

**Worker Freedom Act (Sells)** — What began as the Aerospace Incentive Accountability Act eventually evolved into legislation covering all employers, giving workers the freedom to choose whether they want to attend their employers’ so-called “captive audience” meetings about unionization. Employers should not be forced — under threat of loss of their livelihoods — to attend meetings where they are subjected to indoctrination by their employer on issues unrelated to their work. To perform this new legislation, the Worker Freedom Act, would allow employers to conduct such meetings but would allow workers to walk away if they so choose. Although there was strong support for the concept of tying the $30 billion in aerospace tax breaks to some form of union neutrality among the Boeing contractors that receive the subsidy, some lawmakers were concerned about targeting a specific industry. But with time running out before Wednesday’s cutoff deadline, Democratic legislative leaders said they would try to keep the issue alive by passing a “intent-language” bill in the House, which would be amended with the Worker Freedom Act policy language in the Senate. Such procedural maneuvers, while messy, are without precedent, especially on bills of particular importance to legislative leaders. It is extremely doubtful that the passed form of the Worker Freedom Act (Worker Freedom Act) or HB 2238 (the intent bill) will be brought to the floor Wednesday for a vote. It is particularly disappointing knowing one of the workers who testified on an earlier version of the bill was fired by his company when he returned to his job. We will deal with this in the courts, but it’s symptomatic of the problems workers face when they try to organize or even speak in public about tactics employers use to defeat union organizing drives. We want to thank Rep. Mike Sells, the prime sponsor of the bill, and Rep. Tami Green for their efforts to get a floor vote on one of these bills. We will continue to work with them and with legislative leadership and the Governor on this issue.

SB 5772 (Kohl-Welles) and HB 1913 (Conway) — The Majority Rule bills for state employee union certification would have eliminated the cost and time associated with the regulatory practice of certifying unions. If a majority of the employees at a state agency sign a card indicating they want union representation, the union would be certified by the PERC. These companion bills died both without floor votes.

**Injured Workers Continue Right to file complaints** — Restructuring the Independent Medical Examination system to allow attending physicians to make decisions before sending an injured worker to an IME, stipulating qualifications for doctors serving on IMEs, and making it a time for physicians to comment on IME results. HB 1503 died in the House without a vote.

HB 1827 (Santos) — This would require that the governor submit, along with the biennial budget proposal, a tax expenditure report listing all tax expenditures ( exemp
tions) given out by the state and a recommendation on whether to continue those exemptions that are scheduled to sunset. This information is essential for legislators—and taxpayers—to make informed decisions about what our state’s budget priorities should be. HB 1827 died in the House without a vote.

HB 2019 (McDermott) — Requiring public initiative petitions to have signature declarations to be signed by petitioners in order for those petitions to be valid. This clarifies legislation previously enacted to enable state officials to identify and potentially prosecute people who commit fraud by deliberately falsifying declarations. HB 2019 died in the House without a vote.

HB 2106 (Kenney) — A bill to strengthen the ability of the Department of Labor and Industries to deny licenses to contractors with a record of serious legal violations, including instant mass layoff, and require sufficient bonding so that workers are not stranded in Washington state. HB 2106 died in the House without a vote, an IME, stipulating qualifications for doctors serving on IMEs, and making it a time for physicians to comment on IME results. HB 1503 died in the House without a vote. We will continue to work with them and with legislative leadership and the Governor on this issue.
By Paul J. Bachtel

Strike at the Union office – MV contract ratified – The Truth behind Harris Health Trends – King

Strike at the Union Office?

Members of Local 8 OPEIU employed by Welfare and Pension Administration Service (WPAS) have been picketing in front of the offices of Local 587. WPAS is located in the same office building as Local 587. WPAS is a third party administration processing retirement funds for many unions. The WPAS pickets are just informational and WPAS hasn’t asked our members not to cross their picket lines. If Local 8 strike and WPAS picket the union office building your officers may have a problem coming to work, stay tuned.

MV Contract Ratified:

On March 12, 2007 Local 587 members working for MV Transportation unanimously ratified a new 6-year labor agreement which includes improvements in vacation, sick leave, health benefits, wages and a revised joint labor management relations committee. MV and Seattle Personal Transit (SPT) drivers are Local 587 members operating Access Vans in King County. A third Access employer Veolia Transportation has yet to join our ranks. When crossing paths with MV and SPT drivers please remember to smile and greet them as union brothers and sisters. Hopefully Veolia drivers will see the writing on the wall, or in the MV labor agreement, and join MV and SPT drivers in unifying all King County Metro Access drivers under the umbrella of Local 587.

Harris Health Trends:

As the newest member representing Local 587’s interests on the Joint Labor Management Insurance Committee (JLMIC) decided to find out a little more about Harris Health Trends, our healthy incentives advisor. Employees of Harris Health Trends are currently attempting to form a union and meeting with opposition from their management. The next time you receive a phone call from Harris Health Trends be careful not to ask questions regarding their organizing effort. Harris Health Trends is reputed to harass union sympathizers and fire workers for attempting to organize. The Harris Health Trends Organizing Committee is broadcasting the following letter to labor unions representing employees whose employer contracts with Harris Health Trends.

[Received March 22, 2007 from the HHT Organizing Committee, Toledo, OH]

Paul,

Thank you for your support. I also wanted to share with you some of the underhandedness that Harris Health Trends, Inc. has been engaging in spread to King County. I was looking at the 2007 improvements that were presented to the powers that be in KC. I was scrutinizing my head at the blatant lies being spread:

1) HHT has tripled the number of coaches assigned to the Health Incentives Program
2) Extensive training
3) Computer testing
4) Quality assurance procedures
5) Max staffing during peak hours 6-9 pm

The truth is last year there were 41 advisors on the KC account and currently there are 49. My major wasn’t math in college, but I’m pretty sure this isn’t 3 times more. Besides, more advisors mean more expenses.

The issue of extensive training has been something we have been trying to push for, but HHT is more concerned with keeping us on the phones making money. My training for KC this year was looking at a packet of information in a 45 min. meeting. That was 3 months ago. Personally, I know more about the procedures for KC that the account manager does. In fact, this is the third account manager for KC. The other two have taken different positions.

Competency testing is simply a belfaced lie. There has NEVER been any testing done for advisors on KC or any other account.

The quality assurance procedures are non-existent. Over 6 months ago, our QA employee took a temporary position. To put it plainly, our staffing sucks. The peak hours are handled only by our office in Columbus, OH. Maybe half of the advisors on KC are working during that time slot. Many KC employees and spouses want calls on Saturday. Very few people work those hours and I just end up getting a dozen voice mail messages on Monday morning.

If I had to estimate what KC is spending on this program, I would say over $1 million. My estimates are very conservative using about 90% participation, which puts the cost of the telephonic program at about $800,000. I am not sure about the cost for individuals participating in the low-risk program. Perhaps the cost is at $225,000 and I’m guessing that 50% of the population is doing the logging online or paper like last year. Also, this doesn’t include the cost of calling us to ask questions. KC pays us to give answers to questions like, “what should I do, I haven’t received a call?” or “what are the web addresses for Colorful Choice and Route 66?”

This is the company that King County has chosen to administer the Health Incentives Program. Last March, I anonymously contacted Executive Sims to inform him about the going-ons at HHT. I explained how HHT was more concerned with making money than...
advising KC employees and spouses. Within two weeks, all the KC advisors were in mandatory meetings about contacting KC. Yet, it worked. Protocols were changed such as extending the deadline and cutting back on the number of calls. Now, we still have the same problems and they are getting worse. With the recent acquisition of our company by Healthways, Inc., the largest disease management in the nation, we are getting too big for our britches. When we are expected to be doing business with Pfizer, Inc. and other large companies, who is going to get the short end of the stick? That’s right, clients from smaller organizations such as King County.

You can stay informed with the continuing saga at the blog for the organizing committee: http://360.yahoo.com/hhtisgr8

You are welcome to share this with anybody. I have no problem with giving the facts to our employees and clients.

The HHT Organizing Committee Toledo, OH

Should this Union contemplate continuing an agreement with KC Metro for health benefits, contingent upon participation in a healthy incentives program the first question will be, is the health care incentive programs provider union?

King County Metro Benefits and Records:

My own experience with Harris Health Trends employees has been positive. The problems I’ve personally experienced are directly related to King County Metro’s Benefits and Records division. A few examples of my experiences:

1.) In August of 2006 I did not receive a letter stating my family’s color status or 2007 benefits level. I called Harris Health Trends and requested an e-mail clarifying my family’s benefit level. In minutes an email arrived clarifying my benefit level. Thank you employees of Harris Health Trends!

2.) In January of 2007 I did not receive the salmon colored envelope presumably containing information necessary to take the 2007 wellness assessment. I was able to log on using my 2006 name and password and took the wellness assessment.

3.) In January 2007 I sent KC Metro Benefits and Records an e-mail stating I had not received my salmon colored envelope. I received an auto reply stating Benefits and Records would reply in two business days. KC Metro Benefits and Records never replied.

4.) Late in January 2007 I sent KC Metro Benefits and Records another e-mail stating I had not received my salmon colored envelope. I again received an auto reply stating Benefits and Records would reply in two business days. KC Metro Benefits and Records never replied.

I invite each of you to write or call in your experience with either Harris Health Trends or King County Metro Benefits and Records. I’ll publish an ongoing list of member experiences in future News Review’s and bring your concerns to the attention of the JLMIC.

Sound Transit Operation and Maintenance Facility Opens

Light Rail Manager Austin Jenkins and President Lance Norton

These pictures are of the Grand Opening of the new Sound Transit Operation and Maintenance facility on Airport Way and Forest Street. The new Operations and Maintenance facility will be home to Link Light Rail.

O n Sunday March 04, 2007 all four of your full-time officers attended the Clallam Transit Employee of the year awards dinner in Port Angeles where Transit Operator Dave Whitley was named Clallam Transit System’s “Employee of the Year” for 2006 by General Manager Terry Weed. Weed made his selection from 14 employees nominated by 22 of their coworkers for outstanding performance. Weed stated Whitley possesses a high work standard and his professional and personable approach to his job, whether it was driving a bus, training a new hire, or running the dispatch office, made him the most qualified recipient of this award. On behalf of the officers and membership of Local 587 President Norton presented a plaque honoring Brother Whitley as Clallam Transit System’s “Employee of the Year” for 2006.