The President’s Report
by Lance F. Norton

587 Members Ratify Two Labor Agreements!

On Sunday December 17th the Officers of 587 held two contract meetings in Port Angeles. At 2 P.M. our members employed at Clallam Transit voted by 85% to accept a new 3 year contract. Some highlights of the new contract included 3.25% wage increase the first year and 3% increases in years two and three, employer funding of a Health Savings Account, improvements to their existing VEBA, increases in boot, tool and clothing allowances for maintenance.

At 5 P.M. our members employed at Paratransit Services headquartered in Bremerton but operating out of Port Angeles unanimously approved a new 3 year contract. The new contract provides a 3.5% wage increase the first year and a COLA for years two and three with a 2% minimum and a 4% max based on 95% of the C.P.I. and an additional week of vacation for employees with over 20 years service bringing them up to 5 weeks vacation.

I wish to thank our Full Time Officers, Vice President Kenny McCormick, Financial Secretary Paul Neil, Recording Secretary Paul Bachtel, and Executive Board Officer Joe Mangiameli, Shop Stewards at Clallam Transit Jack Jester, Scott Gossard, and Bob Eash and at Paratransit Services Shop Steward Ed Stanard. A very special thanks to International Vice President Ron Heintzman for his invaluable assistance in Paratransit Negotiations.

In 2007 we’ll be negotiating new labor agreements with MV Transportation and Metro. The MV talks begin late in January and Metro this coming summer.

Regards to all… Be Safe.

Lance F. Norton, President/Business Representative
Local 587
At the December 2006 cycle of membership meetings the following business was addressed:

- The membership voted to approve the proposed bylaw change to Article 04, Section 07 (a).
- The membership voted to approve the proposed bylaw change to Article 15.
- The membership voted to approve the proposed bylaw change to Article 16.
- The membership voted to pursue the grievance of David Moore to arbitration.

The following members were December pot draw winners: Kim Rochon at the Charter meeting, Wes Moorehead at the morning meeting, Greg Prescott at the JTA meeting, Claudia Girard at the CTS meeting, Rolling pot draw of $125.00 was lost by Steve Waugaman. Next month’s rolling pot will be $150.00.

The following members were holiday turkey draw winners: Rick Sepolen, Alan Huston, Lori McNamara, John Bouie, Michael Moore, Linda Averill, Jim Hermanson, Dee Wakenholt, Dobbie Boyington and Paul Griffin at the charter meeting, Chuck Lane, Osvaldo Fernandez, Andrea R. Butler, Warren Yee and Le K at the morning meeting - Alice Lane, Carol Headley and Tony McKelvey at the JTA meeting - Ken Milliser, Alison Probert, Martin Berle, Terecia Acorn, Barb Dixon, Juanita Rapids, Kevin Erickson, Claudia Girard, Kyle Parrish, and Abby Ostoff at the Clallam County meeting. Vanessa Hess, Barb Rossner, Mariela Thompson, Norma Zier and Johnny M. Wade at the Retirees Christmas Luncheon.

Tentative Agenda Membership Meetings:

CHARTER MEETING
Thursday, January 4, 2007
8:00 p.m.
The Labor Temple, Hall #8
2800 1st Ave., Seattle, WA

JEFFERSON TRANSIT
Monday, January 8, 2007
7:00 p.m.
Port Townsend Rec Center
Port Townsend, WA

CLALLAM TRANSIT
Tuesday, January 9, 2007
7:00 p.m.
Vern Burton Memorial Building
Port Angeles, WA

Among topics to be discussed: Grievance and arbitration update…

Unfinished Business:

- Motion By Elaine Monzon on behalf of Sister La Tonya Plummer and in the best interests of the entire membership of ATU Local 587 make a motion that the Immigration Rights Resolution is submitted to the ATU International for review and the resolution be removed from Local 587 Records and Files because of the legality of the resolution declaring union hall to be used as a sanctuary for illegal immigrants.

- Motion by Chuck Lare, Where as KC Metro year after year places operators life in jeopardy during snow days. Where as KC Metro year after year fails to change their policy. Where as our Union has the options to negotiate memorandum of agreements, file complaints with Washington State Department of Labor and Industries, file a suit of gross negligence and identify this as an issue for future negotiations. Therefore, let it be resolved that the Executive Board return to the membership in the next sixty days with a strategy to reduce life threatening treatment of operators on snow days.

All officers were present except Minority Affairs Officer Ray Campbell and Executive Board Officer Michael Moore who were on vacation.

The following business was conducted:

- Motion by Paul Bachtel that Local 587 endorse the following resolution to amend the ATU International Constitution and General Laws as follows:

  Pursuant to Section 6.16 of the Constitution and General Laws Local 587 proposes the following resolution for the consideration of the membership at the Fifty-fifth Convention of the Amalgamated Transit Union.

  Where as defined benefit retirement plans that pay a fixed benefit after a fixed length of service without actuarial reductions are being replaced by defined benefit and defined contribution retirement plans that are actuarially reduced for early retirement and individual retirement accounts that do not pay a fixed benefit.

  Where as members of the Amalgamated Transit Union are leaving service without pension from active service to avoid actuarial reductions and are therefore not allowed to continue membership in retiree chapters pursuant to Section 21.13.

  Be it therefore resolved Local 587 proposes the following amendment to the first paragraph of Section 21.13 of the Constitution and General Laws:

  21.13 Retention of Membership; Retirees.

  Member’s retiring on pension from active service and member’s retiring on vacation from active service that leave employment vested in their pension plan and who continue in good standing will be entitled to the following rights and benefits:

    • Motion by Joe Mangiameli to continue the present pay structure and formula of the four full-time officers.

    • Motion by Rick Sepolen to send up to ten (10) people to the W.S.L.C. Lobby Day in Olympia on February 22, 2007, and to pay thirty dollar ($30.00) registration and fifteen dollar ($15.00) C.O.P.E. donation fees; lost wages and transportation.

    • Motion by Paul Neil to increase our monthly dues in accordance with our bylaws for public transit employees $1.70 to $51.50 per month.

In Loving Memory…

While I thought that I was learning how to live, I have been learning how to die.

— Leonardo da Vinci

Michael W. Donahue: Joined Local 587 July 01, 1993, retired June 01, 2004 and passed away November 24, 2006 following a long illness.


Please notify the union office of any member’s passing so that this information may be shared with the rest of our union family.
In December’s News Review, an opinion piece, “Immigrant Reform” on page 3, makes several false assertions about the ‘Immigrant Rights Resolution’ that was written by OWLS (Organized Workers for Labor Solidarity), and overwhelmingly approved by the membership at November ATU meetings. This reply is to address some of the issues raised by the author.

First, the article enumerated several complaints about the process, including that the immigrant rights resolution came to the union floor as a “complete surprise.” But this resolution was published in the September News Review, two months prior to the union meeting. An article in November further explained the resolution’s importance and urged members to come to the meeting and support it.

The complaint that it should have gone to the Executive Board first is also without merit. Our bylaws require this step only when money is involved. Nor are members required to hand distribute or mail the resolutions or motions to all members, as the author suggests. Such a requirement, if it did exist, would be a tremendous burden and kill initiatives by rank-and-file union members.

Our bylaws hold the membership as the highest decision-making body with the ultimate right to set policy, and with the exception of elections and contract votes, union meetings are where decisions are made. We publicized the resolution precisely to ensure the membership had a chance to seriously consider it. And at the meeting, members overwhelmingly adopted it after hearing both sides debated.

The opinion piece goes on to say that opening the borders and granting amnesty to undocumented workers will breed terrorism, disease and crime. “Many come ill with disease and parasites and spread them into our food and water supplies,” the article asserts. This perpetuates the racist stereotypes of undocumented immigrants that perpetuates the racist stereotypes of undocumented immigrants that the author. By demonizing workers without papers, anti-immigrant forces hope to numb us against such repulsive acts as the December raids by ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) at Swift meatpacking plants in the Midwest. Several hundred workers, most of them members of the United Food and Commercial Workers, were rounded up and hauled to detention centers like cattle—or deported without due process. Families were broken up, while the employer wasn’t penalized. ICE raids, which are on the rise, are especially targeting darker-skinned workers, even though many of them are here legally. In this sense, the attack on immigrants is racist, contrary to the author’s assertion.

If raids and repressive laws are allowed to go forth with no opposition, it will instill fear in undocumented workers so that they are less likely to speak up, organize for labor rights, or press for higher wages. How labor responds to what is happening is a do-or-die question. Will we stand by while a huge sector of the U.S. workforce is terrorized, criminalized, and driven underground? Does that benefit the rest of us? The AFL-CIO, Washington State Labor Council, and OWLS thinks not. That’s why OWLS spent time developing concrete demands that labor could fight for that would help counter this attack, including language from the 1999 WSLC Immigrant Rights Resolution urging affiliates to declare their labor halls a sanctuary for immigrant workers facing persecution from the INS (ICE).

There are around 11 million undocumented workers in this country. Many, like the ones at Swift meatpacking, are union members or involved in organizing campaigns. Yes, many are trying to pursue the American Dream, as the author observes. And there is nothing wrong with that. Many are also trying to feed their families. Many are “illegal” because they don’t have the money, contacts, access to lawyers, or right country of origin to immigrate legally. Many are here because anti-labor “free trade” agreements, pushed by Republicans and Democrats, have devastated their homelands.

The U.S. chamber of commerce would like nothing more than for U.S. workers to go along with the stereotypes and targeting of undocumented workers. Their goal is to get Congress to pass “guest worker” legislation that would create a pool of super-exploited workers for U.S. sweatshops, hotels, and fields, who have no right to unionize or enjoy other labor protections. Over time, such a situation will also drive down the wages and benefits for all U.S. workers, native-born and immigrant alike. Abolishing the police state measures, raids, militarized borders, and other repressive laws will free undocumented workers from fear, enable them to get medical treatment, gain jobs without false ID, organize into unions, and fight for better wages. Rather than letting the business class and their politicians divide the working class, as they try to pit citizens, legal immigrants, and undocumented immigrant workers against one another, it is in the interest of all workers to unite and fight for full and equal rights for immigrants as well as higher wages, healthcare and pensions for all workers. We can all be proud of the position our union has taken. It continues our tradition of living up to labor’s motto, an injury to one is an injury to all.

We can all be proud of the position our union has taken.
Fremont Public Association (FPA) is a private non-profit social service outfit whose Transportation Division, called Seattle Personal Transit (SPT), contracts with King Co. Metro (along with two for-profit national corporations) to provide Access services for eligible persons. Something less than a hundred ATU 587 members are SPT operators. FPA is changing its name to something less confusing—Solid Ground—at the start of 2007.

One might think that FPA would not be reticent in providing its employees benefits, especially those spelled out in a Labor Agreement with a Union. Such does not appear to be the case.

Article 5 Section D of our Labor Agreement says, “Full-Time Equivalent” (FTE) is defined as 35 or more hours normally scheduled per week. For the purpose of paying for medical/dental insurance, calculating leave, or payment of wages for holidays, the average hours at or above 35 hours per week is considered full-time.” Article 16 Section 2 says A, “The EMPLOYER shall contribute 100 percent of the medical/dental premium cost per month for each Employee who is scheduled for full-time equivalency (FTE) status.” And B, “The EMPLOYER shall pay a proportional amount of the medical/dental cost per month for each eligible Employee who works less than FTE status.” (Emphasis added) Similar proportionality provisions are included in the Articles addressing Vacation and Holidays payments.

FPA does cover 100 percent of medical/dental insurance for members who are scheduled for 35 or more hours per week. BUT, for members scheduled for less that 35 hours per week, 35 miraculously turns into 40. E.g., a member scheduled for 32 hours per week is “assigned” an FTE of 32/40 or 80 percent instead of 32/35 or 91.43 percent. Thus, that member must shell out in cash 20 percent of the cost of her/his medical/dental insurance instead of the 8.57 percent specified in the contract, the difference being some pretty big bucks. Vacation and Holiday pay is similarly reduced.

Rewind way back to Spring 2003, when SPT handed out to member operators a big packet of Procedures and Policies. This member noticed that in different sections, full-time was variously referred to as both 35 hrs/wk and 40 hrs/wk. A note was sent to Director of Human Resources at FPA to ask for clarification. FPA HR replied in writing on April 17 2003 saying in effect, “Oh, make it 40 hours per week is full time. That’s the way we do it at FPA.”

It wasn’t until almost a year later that this member happened to be informed by a Shop Steward that our Labor Agreement said that 35 hours per week is full-time. On March 2 2004, the member wrote a letter to the Executive Board Rep who took it to the VP. The Veep reportedly laughed and said something like, “we got them dead to rights.”

Thus begins the going on three year odyssey of this member’s efforts to get FPA to pay part-timers their benefits as specified in the Labor Agreements. At first, the aggrieved member didn’t consider the acts grievable since, having gone on for years, a grievance could be considered untimely. This member has amassed a fair-sized file of correspondences to Union Officers and various supporting documents, also having numerous face-to-face conversations with Officers and SPT Management.

Significantly, on the eve of the meeting, at which SPT members would vote to accept a new contract in August 2005, this member went to the ATU 587 VP with some concerns. After a tortuous, sometimes emotional six month negotiation, the Contract had evolved from a 17 page 2-1/2 by 5 inch document into a 35 page one. The VP was asked “Where is the language in the new Contract to prevent management from pulling a number out of the air in determining benefits for part-timers, as is their wont? What’s to prevent them from saying 24x7 is full time?” He replied, “The language we need is there.” He expressed his intention to present an ultimatum to FPA HR which, if not acted on in a timely manner, would result in the filing of an Unfair Labor Practices claim. Had that eventuated, this writer assumes it would not have been in secrecy.

Meanwhile, this member had become a Shop Steward. Upon the first iteration of benefits under the new Labor Agreement, Grievances were filed concerning Vacation and Holidays on January 26, 2006 and concerning med/dent on March 3, 2006. The time may be ripe for pursuing these grievances. The last two membership meetings have resulted in the approvals for arbitration of two SPT terminations. As explained by President Norton at the December meeting, FPA enjoys the pro bono representation of the prestigious expensive law firm of Preston, Gates and Ellis (which Gates is the father of a well-known software executive). As expressed by Pres Norton, Preston, Gates and Ellis might have second thoughts about their pro bono (free) work for FPA if they perceive themselves to be overloaded, especially if they lose these arbitrations, as seems rather likely. At any rate, this member for one would be very interested in hearing the legal argument that 35 is really 40.

One word used by President Norton to describe the treatment by FPA of its own employees is “abysmal.” This member, while admitting to no particular attachment to his job, is actively involved in spreading the word. Any support from ATU 587 for their poor little brothers and sisters at SPT would be appreciated.

### Special Thanks

Dear Lance

Just a note to say THANK YOU for the work you did which resulted in my regaining my original seniority.

From the first phone conversation with you last summer, I always had the impression that you cared about me, and wanted to see a result that was fair both to me, and to the rest of the membership of 587.

By the way, Brother Bachtel was very helpful in providing me information as my case was in process.

Kudos to both of you.

In Solidarity,

Tom Cannon

North Base

Dear Brother Bachtel

Just a note to say a big THANK YOU for all you did in regarding my reinstatement case. The outcome of which was very positive for me, as you know. I feel that I have been made whole, so to speak, after being out of work with illness. I have the impression that you kept the pressure on, and kept my case “on the radar” of the powers that be.

Also, you were very well informed regarding my case as it was in process, and were very informative to me. Also, you were prompt in returning my phone calls.

In solidarity,

Tom Cannon

North Base

( Editor’s note: At the December cycle of Union meetings the membership voted to approve an addition to Article 16 of our bylaws that will prevent KC Metro from taking seniority away from those members retired or reinstated within one-year following Non Disciplinary Medical Termination)
Seeing the Red

Alex LaBarba

I write this to inform our brothers and sisters about the hazards that the automated traffic signals are potentially apt to cause. I am speaking of the six camera enforced signals operating throughout the city of Seattle.

But before we talk about them, let us discuss the forces that act upon a moving bus, forces that happen to be more complex than what any other vehicle on the road is forced to contend with. For example, even a semi may come to a stop by slamming the brakes while we bus drivers can not…. Our cargo is not tied down, because it happens to be made up of human beings, who also have the tendency to stand up while the bus is in motion, especially when their stop is coming up or because they want to approach the driver with a question. Or they are standing because the bus is full and no seating is available.

So…we’ve had to learn to feather the brakes a most unique maneuver endemic to our profession alone with the possible exception of truck drivers in the care of transporting nitroglycerin compounds (TNT).

This dynamic procedure that we perform hundreds of times in the course of a work day has one drawback, it elongates the total braking distance of the bus, so far as I am aware there is not a chart available that would define feathered braking. That is a fact…Let me ask you this…How many times have you had to safely proceed through an intersection by tapping your horn a couple of times? When the other option was to slam on the brakes and chance an onboard accident. Well…these things happen and they come with the territory. Let’s face it navigating our routes demand that we interpret the road, the signals and the time available to travel across the intersection in a split of a second and sometimes while slowing down because the next bus stop is across the street. This is not an easy operation people and we’ve performed it correctly a hundred times a day. But we are human after all and sometimes we err; and yet, very few accidents come of it. This is proof of our professionalism, our good luck and the fact that it actually takes a few seconds for the cross traffic to start to move. But now the stakes have been rearranged. An Orwellian nightmare lurks in designated intersections and we have to be aware and aware of what this little machine and the revenue hungry city bureaucrats are up to. They care not about our hard labor and distinct circumstances and tickets have been issued to drivers, four by my last count and more to come, of it be sure.

As far as METRO is concerned they are washing their hands and handing the tickets for the drivers to pay and sometimes the process takes so long that by the time a driver receives the citation there is only a few days left before it’s due date. I personally was confronted with one of these lights going amber on me in a moments notice while qualifying an operator on the route 44…Faced with the choice I did what anyone would do… I stopped that bus on a dime. My passengers were surprised, but this working man isn’t paying a penny to the coffers of our beloved city. Not while all I am doing is trying to provide the best service that I can to my community. That’s right… Honest work should not be unjustly punished.

So I went back to this particular intersection, 45th and Roosevelt, on my off day to do a little research I wanted to study it so it wouldn’t catch me by surprise again. And…what I’ve found out is that the signal runs many patterns not only in different directions but also in the same way of traffic, allow me to explain: If you are traveling south bound on Roosevelt the solid red signal will turn to about eleven flashes of the red hand and subsequently to either 5, 10 or 15 seconds of solid red hand prior to the standard 3 seconds of amber, that is if someone has pushed the walk button, if no one has, the flashing red hand will shift to 3 seconds of amber with no warning whatsoever. On the other hand if you are traveling west on 45th, the walk signal will turn to about 13 flashes of the red hand followed by either 10, 15 or 20 seconds of solid red hand before the 3 seconds of amber. So as you can see, it is just about impossible to predict these lights and interestingly enough while I was doing my research the flash of the overhead cameras went off no less than 8 times in 30 minutes (about 900 dollars worth of revenue).

These are facts on one intersection and I am sure that the other five will have idiosyncrasies of their own, the system needs to be standardized for and fairness sake and safety. And this general situation cannot be allowed to stand. We deserve traffic signals that are not an enigma each time we confront them, our job is already difficult enough for that. One suggestion is for the city to put the same type of lights as the ones that we use on the exit way in the Convention Place Station, these have a flashing numbered countdown that tells you exactly when the amber is coming on, accurate to the second. In the meantime I think that METRO should pick up the tab for these times, because they are obviously from traffic lights that do not meet our requirements as far as proper warning. Unless it is proven to be an extremely flagrant case, properly decided and reviewed with our union’s participation. Anyways this is my take on the matter. I would like to wish you all a safe driving experience out there, watch out for these photographic traps and have some fun while you work.

Happy New Year!
Thanks from Local 174

Dear Editor,

We just want to take this time to say Happy Holidays to all at 587 and to tell you that we love getting your newspaper! We are a small local of 50 members but it makes us feel almost equal in stature when we read the letters and the arbitration awards (we are forced to arbitrate fairly often) and all the comments your members send in. It's true that work problems are the same everywhere.

Thanks again and keep up the good work.

Patricia Caron, Pres./BA Local 174

Labor Neighbor Efforts Recognized

Dear Brother Safin,

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your hard work on behalf of the ATU as release staff to the Washington State Labor Neighbor political program. Without your efforts, help delivered a victory for Maria Cantwell and other union-endorsed candidates.

I know you also contributed a great deal of your time and energy to this program in addition to your release time. Your sacrifices are admirable and very much appreciated by this union.

I truly hope that you enjoyed this opportunity and that you will continue to be active in the ATU's political efforts in the years to come.

Wishing you the happiest of holidays and a prosperous new year, I remain,

Fraternally,

Warren S. George
International President

2007 METRO Contract Proposals

Dear Editor,

Soon our elected leadership will be preparing for our next round of negotiations with METRO management. They will be armed with a list of “demands” that originated from the membership. Our union will send out questionnaires asking what the membership wants to see in the next contract. Upon receiving the surveys contract committees will sort through them and prioritize what the membership wants from the most frequent demand to the least. Then the full time officers will shorten the list even more and write a contract proposal based on the second list. That “first proposal” will be exchanged with METRO management and their list of contract proposals. Then the real negotiations begin as both parties try to find common ground and write proper language. The type of negotiations we do is called “waiver bargaining.” If you put it on the table you put it at risk. For example when you never ask “what time you willing to pay”. Rather we ask “how much increase in pay are you willing to pay”. That way there is no wage decrease. We are very careful in how we word these things.

Continuing, last negotiations we hit the mother lode. The outgoing, retiring, top management came to us with a proposal to extend the current labor agreement (save two issues) and it passed 88% even while we were taking advantage of our political participation in re-electing our County Executive. Further, the outgoing management wanted us to help “mature” the new management before they get into a full blown negotiation with our Union. As we all know the two issues left over from the last secession have dragged on and on even to the point of interest arbitration (that means contract arbitration). And they are still not settled and now it’s time to get back in the ring. At this round of negotiations those topics will not go so smoothly as the last.

We, the membership, have to respond to the surveys when they come out if any good ideas are going to be even considered. Waiting until the day before a vote is no time to have a brilliant idea. So let me make some suggestions on what to be asking for...

Last month I spoke about a Five Hour Assignment. This would dovetail nicely with full VACATION ACCRUAL. Let me explain. Suppose you are at the three week accrual rate and you work regular work with no overtime or time off for sickness or injury. You get three weeks paid vacation. Fair enough. But suppose you are off half the year for an industrial injury. You won’t, currently, accrue a full three weeks of paid vacation. Not fair. But suppose you come back to work and work lots and lots of overtime. Will you accrue more vacation credit? No! Management cannot have it both ways. By FULL VACATION ACCRUAL people who work overtime would accrue MORE vacation credit. Still at the “three week” rate but maybe you could take off four weeks, paid.

The subset is that even if you were off work (not on payroll status) for the full previous year, and did not work overtime upon returning, one could still take off three weeks, or whatever, even if it wasn’t paid time. Sometimes taking time off is more important than money.

Now the cincher. Suppose you work lots of overtime and accumulate lots of vacation credit and then for a shakeup pick a five hour assignment. Now you could do much like the part-time drivers currently do of either taking vacation at “minimum guarantee” or “tripper rate”. So while your accrual rate may have been “three week rate” and you worked lots of overtime you could possibly take off five or six weeks paid at the “five hour per day” payout rate. Cool? Huh? Of course if your years of service merit a greater accrual rate, this proposal only gets better.

Another issue that needs adjustment is the wage progression. Currently six years starting out at 70% of top. Not too long ago the wage progression started out at 90% of top step over THREE years. It didn’t break transit then and it won’t now. This proposal would enable METRO to better attract (bid) more employees to meet their labor shortage. Possibly even save operational expense of overtime.

And finally, EMPLOYER PAID RETIREE MEDICAL BENEFITS. Everybody knows what this means so I need discuss it no further.

There you have it, Brothers and Sisters, just say; Five hour assignment, full vacation accrual, compressed wage progression, and EMPLOYER PAID RETIREE MEDICAL BENEFITS. You have to write this on the surveys to send your own written demands to the union when the time comes or it simply won’t happen. It’s that time again and we are all in this together, equally.

Paul L. Griffin
South Base

Who’s Your Voice for Local 587?

I’ve always been one of the people who didn’t have time, was tired, didn’t care, and waited to see what happens. As a member have you wondered who spoke for you, who, what, why, where becomes a major factor.

But after observing several issues involving 587 and where our money goes. I can no longer sit back and continue to have a group of people to speak for me and make the decisions as to where my Union dues go to.

We are all in this together to unite as one and have a say as to where our dues go to and be involved more with important issues concerning Local 587.

Believe me it’s time to start getting involved. I can no longer talk until I’m blue in the face in why you should attend.

January 2007 

ATTU Local 587

News Review

Letters to the Editor...

SEND IN YOUR OPINIONS

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. No 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
News Review Editor
c/o ATU Local 587
2813 Second Avenue, Suite 230
Seattle, WA 98121

NOTICE TO ALL READERS

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

January 2007

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Letters to the Editor...

Those of you who have had a chance to meet me and have had conversations with me know I will go to hell and back to fight for our rights.

It's time to start getting involved; I personally invite all of you to attend the Local meetings once a month to be your own voice to speak for yourself. If you don't attend and take a stand, and things don't go the way you want it, you have no one to blame, but yourselves.

Be your own voice for Local 587,

LaTonya Plummer

In Our Best Interests

Dear Editor,

Brother Griffin writes as if he knows whereof he speaks. He speaks of “waiver bargaining” and “first proposals”. When you include the frequent use of “we”, you’d think he has spent long hours at the table negotiating our last two contracts.

On those few occasions where the then Financial Secretary showed up at the table, he never participated in negotiations, but told stories. Each time, the other Officers asked him not to return. How do I know? Because I was at the table negotiating the last two contracts. Outside of wages, most of the negotiation process revolved around the Union and management, collaboratively, trying to fix problems. We walked through the contract. We didn’t submit “first proposals.”

“Mentoring” the new management was not the reason ALL of the union contracts that were up in 2004 were extended. It is more likely that it was because of the King County Executive election.

In his proposals for the next contract, Brother Griffin pushes for what HE wants, not what is in the best interests of the greatest number of members while minimizing any harm to others. His Five Hour Assignment proposal is a slap in the face of seniority and the full dues paid by Part-Time Transit Operators.

Everything he proposes is so he can work less, then retire and get paid medical benefits. What about the dues paying members who don’t get employer paid medical benefits?

Bruce Tiebout, Member

2007 PICK SCHEDULES

KC METRO OPERATORS 2007 PICK SCHEDULE

Spring pick preview for KC Metro full-time operators – December 30, 31 & January 02 through 05 – Central/Atlantic Base 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Spring pick preview for KC Metro part-time operators – January 02 through 05 Central/Atlantic Base 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Spring pick for KC Metro part-time operators January 06 & 07 & 13 & 14
Spring pick for KC Metro full-time operators January 08 through 12 & 15 through 18
Spring pick for KC Metro full-time operators effective February 10, 2007
Summer pick for KC Metro part-time operators – April 28 & 29 & May 5 & 6
Summer pick for KC Metro full-time operators – April 30 through May 04 and May 7 through May 11
Summer pick for KC Metro operators effective June 02, 2007
Fall pick for KC Metro part-time operators – August 18 & 19 & 25 & 26
Fall pick for KC Metro full-time operators – August 20 through 24 and August 27 through 30
Fall pick for KC Metro operators effective September 22, 2007

KC METRO VEHICLE MAINTENANCE 2007 PICK SCHEDULE

Spring pick for KC Metro Vehicle Maintenance Leads – January 11
Spring pick for KC Metro Vehicle Maintenance January 23, 24 & 25
Vehicle Maintenance vacation pick January 29 through February 02 – (moved up from March)
Summer pick for KC Metro Vehicle Maintenance May 15, 16 & 17
Fall pick for KC Metro Vehicle Maintenance September 4, 5 & 6

KC METRO FACILITIES MAINTENANCE 2007 PICK SCHEDULE

Spring pick for KC Metro Facilities Maintenance February 22 - effective March 10
Fall pick for KC Metro Facilities Maintenance August 23 - effective September 08

KC METRO FIRST LINE SUPERVISOR 2007 TENTATIVE PICK SCHEDULE

Spring pick for KC Metro First Line Supervisor’s March 27, effective April 07
Fall pick for KC Metro First Line Supervisor’s September 25, effective October 06
One Mechanic’s Ruling

Richard Green

Dear Mr. Uptight...

Paul Griffin, Twenty Seven years with METRO

It’s That Time Again

Dee Wakenight

Did you get your salmon yet? Late in December, another salmon colored envelope was mailed to all benefits eligible employees and spouse/domestic partners employed at Metro King County. The information in the envelope, your personal access code, is the first step for the wellness assessment to be taken AND acted upon, for benefits levels for 2008, January, take the wellness assessment. This will automatically qualify you for the silver level of coverage for 2008. Shortly thereafter you should receive your personal action plan. When you follow your action plan, for the necessary duration, you will be informed of your achievement of gold status. Naturally Harris Health Trends will offer to continue the coaching calls for you if you desire this assistance with accomplishing your personal action. We all hope that year 2 will be smoother and less chaotic than our last experience with this process. Also we have done this once before and will not be surprised by the protocol. Each time we do something it gets easier, because we know what to expect.

If you have not received your assessment by Friday January 5, 2007 Call Benefits and Retirement Operations at 206-684-1556 or e-mail benefits@metrokc.org.

It’s that time again, another chance to have a positive impact on your health and we hope a healthy new year for all.

(Editor’s Note) HarrisHealth Trends has changed its name to Healthways.)
I

n his letter to the Editor in this issue and particularly the Oc-
tober issue of the News Review, Brother Paul Griffin suggests that there should be a bunch of straight-
through work available for Metro Transit Operators that is five hours long. Funny, that’s exactly the same thing about two-thirds of all Part Time Operators want. In fact, they
want it so much that they spend fifteen to twenty years working their way up a fairly s-c-k y Part Time seniority list hoping to get that work some
day.

But, incredibly, Brother Griffin makes the case that Full Timers
should have that work! They need that five-hour work as they get older, he says. I can certainly sympathize with that, because, well, I’m getting older, too, and I want that work, too. Hey, wait a minute—IT ALREADY IS MY WORK! Yoo-hoo, HEL-lo! That’s my work, and I’m, uh, like, working it already, Paul,—out here on the route five....It’s my work that I earned with my twenty-five
dozen years. Why isn’t there more straight-through five-hour work for Part Timers? We sure wish Metro
would cut more of it, but they keep cutting less and less of it! Get in the back of the line, Paul.

If there were a surplus of five hour work and we Part Timers had more of it than we really wanted maybe I wouldn’t object to Paul proposing we just up-and-out-of-the-blue, allowing heinous seniority and cross-classification violations, give
the choicest historically Part Time work to Full Timers. But there is
no surplus, there’s a huge shortage! If it’s so efficient as Paul states, to
cut five-hour pieces of work, then how come there is never enough of it, even at the cheaper Part Timers
rates?

About thirty years ago the Full Time Transit Operators in this Local
decided to create two categories of Operators with separate seniority lists. Maybe it was a good idea at the time, because it created the eight hour guarantee for Full Timers. Brother Griffin is apparently yearning to return to a supposedly
rosy time when Full Timers had no eight hour guarantee, and there
were no Part Timers. I don’t get it. Am I and the rest of the Part Timers supposed to “poof” disappear? Or are we supposed to all quit so that Full Timers can decide to work our
work? Or are we all going to a single seniority list?

All kidding aside, I want everyone to know that as a Transit Operator Representative on 587’s Executive Board, I am charged with representing ALL Transit Operators, including Full Timers. It is my un-
derstanding that the overwhelming majority of Full Timers do not want their eight hour guarantee messed with. I therefore will not allow anything to undermine that eight hour guarantee, and I am amazed and alarmed that a former Full
Time Officer of this Union persists in advocating taking historically Part Time work away from Part Timers and using it to undermine
the Full Time guarantee! If you want a five-hour board, fine, give
one to the Part Timers. Don’t think you can deny Part Timers a spot on the Full Time seniority list and then
after thirty years of being relegated in advocating taking historically Part Time work away from Part Timers and using it to undermine
the Full Time guarantee! If you want a five-hour board, fine, give
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after thirty years of being relegated
The Financial Secretary’s Report
By Paul Neil

Annual Dues Increase

The bylaws of Local 587 provide in Article VIII that “The dues for each member of Local 587 shall be based upon two times the average hourly wage for represented employees in effect on January 1st of each year. The average hourly wage shall be computed by adding the top hourly wage of the lowest and highest represented job classifications and dividing by two (2). Any increase in the dues based on this average hourly wage will be subject to the approval of the membership at the regular January union meetings.”

The lowest paid represented classification is Customer Service Representative employed by Clal Paratransit at $10.68/hr. and the highest paid represented classification is Senior Scheduler Planner employed by Metro at $40.81/hr. $5.10 is thus the new monthly dues rate for all members employed by public agencies. This represents an increase of $1.70/month or 3.42%. The Customer Service Representatives received a 3.5% increase effective 1/1/07 and Senior Schedulers received a 3.0% increase effective 10/21/06. Those members employed at the private paratransit properties will continue to pay the minimum dues (currently $42.60) set by the International ATU.

O
nce again it is time to discuss the Grievance Arbitration Assessment. This is an annual event as required by our ATU International Constitution and Local By-Laws. There is a separate presentation of all the Grievance/Worker's Compensation expenses itemized by member.

During 2006 we paid a total of $270,646.95 to our lawyers but only $168,182.51 is assessable. The other $102,464.44 was for non-assessable expenses such as the Vehicle Maintenance Technological Change interest arbitration at $68,479.02 and $20,303.97 in general legal consultations about grievances, etc.

As of the International Membership Report of December 2006 we had 3926 active members. Dividing and rounding to an even number the assessment per member to be taken in the year 2007 will be $42.84 compared to 2006 year’s assessment of $64.40.

This will be assessed in two pieces. The member employed by Metro the first half will be taken on the paycheck issued on January 1st and the second half will be taken December 13th. Each half will be $21.42. For those members working at the smaller transit properties the assessment will reflect their paycheck patterns.

For the sake of discussion the two Metro paydays when the assessment is taken are the “first payday following a five Friday month where the fifth Friday is preceded by a payday”. This sounds complicated, however, with twenty-six paydays on a bi-weekly schedule there are two that are out of phase. And this language describing the “free” paydays has served us well for a long time.

Grievance Arbitration Assessment For 2006
Paul B. Neil, Fin Sec/Treasurer

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<th>Jan – Dec 06</th>
<th>GROSS Payroll</th>
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<th>Worker’s Compensation</th>
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Worker’s Compensation, continued

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<td>Divided by 3926 members</td>
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The Recording Secretary’s Report

By Paul J. Bachtel

Editor’s Dismay

I’ve received a lot of negative feedback regarding a couple of recent articles published in the News Review and subsequent motions from the floor of our membership meetings. I believe it’s rather obvious a small minority of our members are writing and acting for political purposes.

Some of these political purposes are internal, such as a former union officer writing articles in an attempt to influence contract negotiations, and in my opinion for political gain. Other political purposes are external in that they don’t directly relate to the good and welfare of our membership. Some external groups see almost any social issue as directly related to organized labor. It’s not that I necessarily dispute their contentions; it’s that I don’t believe the majority of our membership appreciates the News Review being utilized for external political purposes that don’t directly relate to wages, benefits and working conditions. Ironically, those members acting for political purpose may in fact be damaging the very political cause they support.

I want you to know that when I receive submissions to the News Review I believe it to be politically motivated and not directly related to wages, benefits or working conditions I will, consistent with editorial policy, submit these Articles or Letters to the Editor to the Executive Board for review. Please understand the Executive Board has been extremely reluctant to censor submissions regardless of perceived political motivations. One of the costs of an open press is in having to wade through the muck to find worthwhile reading.

I invite you to join in expressing differing opinions by submitting your thoughts and ideas to the News Review on issues that directly relate to the good and welfare of our membership. Please send your Articles and/or Letters to the Editor, to phachtelrecsec@atu587.com.

Our Hero

Tony Woods

James E. Reese

I want to take this time to congratulate my co-worker Anthony (Tony) Woods for what he did to protect human lives from a life threatening situation on his bus. I have read all the letters written on this subject and came to the conclusion that I need to speak out. What I have to say may anger some, but if I don’t say it I’ll regret it for sometime to come. I have been driving for 10 and half years now, and through all of it I have heard the same fears many of you have. Yes, Metro has used tactics that resulted in scaring us into not getting out of our seat. Well now it is our turn to strike fear back into Metro respectfully, in the case of Gardner v Loomis 128 WN.2d931; 913 P. 2d 377: 1986 Wash. This case involved an employee named Kevin Gardner who was fired because he violated a company rule forbidding drivers’ leaving the trucks. The rule’s importance cannot be understated, and drivers do subject themselves to a greater risk of harm by leaving the driver’s compartment. Our holding merely forbids Loomis from firing Gardner when he broke the rule because he saw a woman who faced imminent life threatening harm, and he reasonably believed his intervention was necessary to save her life. Finally, by focusing on the narrow public policy encouraging citizens to save human lives from life threatening situations, we continue to protect employers from frivolous lawsuits.

So even if Metro fired Tony for his actions Gardner v. Loomis would be one of the cases the Union could cite in attempting to prevail in arbitration. Is this enough to instill fear back into Metro, maybe / maybe not? Let’s just hope we don’t have to go down that path. I do not encourage any of us to do what Tony did, but should one of us have to, remember you have the Union to stand behind you in fending off unwarranted discipline for protecting human lives from life threatening situations that may occur on the buses we drive everyday. Hope that by reading this it would put to rest all the fears we have had in the past.

WORK SITE VISITS

Paul Bachtel, Recording Secretary, will be visiting various work sites during the month of January. Below is a list of times, dates and locations.

Jan. 15th North Base
2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Operations Bull Pen
3:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
VM North

Jan. 19th Central/Atlantic
4:00 a.m. – 6:30 a.m.
Operations Bull Pen
6:30 a.m. - 7:00 a.m.
VM Central
7:00 a.m. - 7:30 a.m.
VM Atlantic

Jan. 26th South Base
4:00 a.m. – 6:30 a.m.
Operations Bull Pen
6:30 a.m. - 7:00 a.m.
South Base VM
7:00 a.m. – 7:30 a.m.
CSC
In Search of Serotonin...

Part One

James Ybarra, Atlantic Base

What kind of day do we intend on having! I'm going to have a marvelous day, how about you?

Red Light Cameras and the Burden of Arithmetic

Brian Sherlock

Red-light cameras have brought a long-standing problem to "light". Yellow lights are set to last roughly one second for every ten seconds of the speed limit. Virtually anyone with experience driving buses has recognized that there are circumstances in which it is impossible to respond to a yellow light without either entering on red or tossing passengers by hard braking. On one of those rare days from "stoplight hell" where I could not budge my way through a light, I ran the numbers in my head. At 30 mph, three seconds of warning are provided. Give one second for driver response, the standard for traffic engineers, and now the stop must occur in two seconds. Ignoring the delay from air brakes, this requires braking at times the rate which will cause passengers to slide on, or out of, the seats. For someone weighing 200 lbs., this is (22.5 ft/sec) / 32 ft/sec^2 = .7g = 140 lbs! That is beyond the braking capability of our fleet, some of which can only muster a bit over 2/3 of this much deceleration!

When this issue has arisen through the years, we are always told to look for walk lights going red. Although often possible, on my route, the 66, twenty percent of the stops have walk lights that are either not present or not visible. At those intersections, we are told to look for stale green lights. This is usually possible in between checking at least five mirrors every seven seconds and occasionally checking for cars and pedestrians out the wind shield. However, once you leave Mayberry, the workload goes up and for the dawn to dusk portion of rush-hour, there is simply too much to keep track of. We should be checking each parked car we were to light at the front wheel, are beginning to steer or if there is a driver inside. In our 30 mph example above, this is two per second.

This means we add checking 14 cars to the 5 mirrors every seven seconds. This simply doesn't work, and yet this is only a fraction of what we are held responsible for every day. How about keeping track of at least one car per direction at the intersection of two small streets and throw in a pedestrian or two? This is well beyond human capabilities.

Our capacity to track 'bogies' has been well studied and the limit is 7 ± 2. There will be extensive portions of our day behind the wheel where putting the distant traffic light on a list of five to nine items we can track means losing track of people at serious risk, should they not see us when we are too busy to see them.

I called traffic engineers for Seattle, King County and Washington State. They all recognized the problem and agreed. They pointed out that some European and Canadian signals blink the green prior to turning yellow to solve this very problem. They were all willing to meet with the Union and Metro to discuss the problem. I brought this to a Joint Safety meeting (where the General Manager and Division Managers of Metro meet with the Union President and his appointees) and a now-retired manager said, "Those are just numbers?" Can you imagine the laughter if we ever had the gall to say to that same manager that the disciplinary points leading to a termination were "just numbers"? His response would be humorous as well, if the consequences of red-light problems didn't include injuries or death. Rather than meet with the engineers who understand the numbers and consequences, a very nice motorcycle officer, who watches the camera videos, was brought in to a subsequent meeting. I have no doubt of his good intentions, but he stunned me with the very same response: "Those are all just numbers!" I have repeatedly suggested meeting with actual engineers who manage these issues for the public we are supposed to protect as "Job One," but have been politely asked to drop the issue.

I have had great hopes for improved cooperation after the nearly complete turnover of management in the last few years. That is why you have heard little from me for quite some time; I have avoided this kind of report to our members about their needs being ignored or the public being put at risk. While I continue to hope that we can develop "that vision thing" and celebrate cooperation and the triumphs of our collective skills, that optimism is fading fast. After all, how hard is it to see the "blinking" light?