

For Immediate Release
November 24, 2009

11th Anniversary of Bus Driver Shooting on the Aurora Bridge

Transit Union's Annual Memorial Will Be Held on Friday, November 27th at Mark McLaughlin's Gravesite and at Metro's North Base Operations

Seattle, WA- As in past years, the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 587 will pay tribute to their departed union brother by placing flowers at his grave on Friday, November 27th at 10am. Also at 10:00am, flowers will be placed at the memorial plaque at Metro Transit's North Base Operations. The public is welcome to attend these ceremonies.

On November 26, 1998, Metro Transit Operator Mark McLaughlin was shot and killed while driving his Metro bus over the Aurora Bridge on route 359. McLaughlin was driving his route when, without warning, a mentally ill passenger stood up and fatally shot him. The assailant then turned the gun on himself. The bus careened off the Aurora Bridge, falling some 50 feet and injuring 34 passengers. One of the passengers, 69-year-old Herman Liebelt, died the next day due to injuries suffered in the crash.

On December 7th 1998, following a procession of coaches up Fourth Av., public services were held for McLaughlin at the Key Arena. Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 587, the union that represents King County Metro transit workers, organized both the procession and the memorial service.

Several transit agency's from around the region sent coaches full of union members to pay their respects for their fallen brother and take part in the procession which contained more than 80 buses, coming from as far away as Portland, Oregon and Vancouver, British Columbia. Police officers, fire fighters and the public lined Fourth Avenue, saluting the procession. Two Seattle police officers on motorcycles led the procession to Key Arena, followed by Metro police cars, a tow truck and Metro bus No. 2106, which fellow Metro drivers had cleaned, repaired and decorated in honor of McLaughlin. That bus number was selected because it was also McLaughlin's Metro badge number.

Public officials who spoke at the Key Arena memorial service included former King County Executive Ron Sims, Senator Patty Murray, former King County Councilmember Greg Nickels and other elected officials. ATU Local 587 members, Metro officials, and friends of Mark also gave eulogies remembering McLaughlin as a spirited, fun-loving man whose life should be celebrated, not mourned. Mark McLaughlin was a father of two children. He had planned to wed the following spring, and his family was to grow by two more children, the children of his fiancée. He is remembered as a guy who loved hiking, fishing,

and the music of rock guitarist Jimi Hendrix. “All of Local 587’s members who work with the public are aware that what happened to Mark could have happened to any of us,” said Union President Paul Bachtel. “This union will always honor Mark and he will always be a part of us.”

ATU Local 587 was founded by drivers of Puget Sound’s electric streetcar fleet, including the regions first interurban line in 1912. The union currently represents more than 4130 transit workers in King, Jefferson and Clallam Counties.

For further information, contact

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