



AMALGAMATED TRANSIT UNION LOCAL 587

2815 Second Avenue, Suite 230
Seattle, Washington 98121
Telephone (206) 448-8588
Fax: (206) 448-4482
1-800-847-4696

AFFILIATED WITH
AFL-CIO
WASHINGTON STATE
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AMALGAMATED
TRANSIT UNION
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KING COUNTY
COALITION OF UNIONS

December 21, 2009

PLEASE POST



To: All 587 Members

From: President Paul J. Bachtel  ATU 587

PLEASE POST

PRESS RELEASE:

Clallam Para transit Services Refusal to Bargain in Good Faith May Force the Union to Strike

Little or no progress has been made in negotiations between Clallam Paratransit Services (CPS) and Local 587, which represents 20 paratransit drivers and 8 dispatchers and customer service representatives in Clallam County. CPS provides door-to-door transit service for disabled customers who are unable to use regular transit. The current labor contract expires December 31, 2009, but Paratransit Services has refused to either offer a proposal or to respond to union proposals. There is no procedure for requiring CPS to arbitrate a contract dispute, so a disrupting strike may be the union's only recourse. The paratransit employees and their union are committed to providing service to the public, and would only consider taking action if no progress is made at the bargaining table.

"We hope CPS will respond to the union's bargaining proposals, and to submit employer proposals," said the union's president and business agent, Paul Bachtel. "So far, CPS has refused to discuss proposals or even to work with the union to establish ground rules for negotiating." He added, "A strike is only a last resort if negotiations with Paratransit Services do not improve." There has never been a work action in the twelve years that the union has represented CPS drivers. Other paratransit services in Washington and Oregon have incurred strikes by other unions for refusing to bargain in good faith.

The CPS employees and their Union are asking the public to bring pressure upon the management of Clallam Paratransit Services to avoid a work action by bargaining in good faith. Those responsible may be reached at:

PAUL J. BACHTEL
President
Business Representative
president.bachtel@atu587.com

JRICK SEPOLEN
Vice President
Assistant Business Representative
vpjricksepolen@atu587.com

DON MAC ADAM
Vice President
Assistant Business Representative Maintenance
vpdonmacadam@atu587.com

PAUL B. NEIL
Financial Secretary
Treasurer
pneilfinsec@atu587.com

BRIAN L. SHERLOCK
Recording Secretary
Correspondent to "In Transit"
brian.sherlock@atu587.com

Para transit Services

4810 AutoCenterWay, Ste Z
Bremerton, WA 98312
(360) 377-7176 Fax: 360-824-7110

Clallam County Transit Authority Board

Chair, Laura Dubois, City of Sequim - 360-477-4884 - ldubois@ci.sequim.wa.us
Susan Lorenzen, City of Sequim - 360-683-7550 - slorenzen@ci.sequim.wa.us
Mike Chapman, County Commissioner - 360-417-2233 - chapman@co.clallam.wa.us
Gary Braun, Port Angeles - 360-417-4500 - gbraun@cityofpa.us
Pat Mansfield, City of Forks - (360) 374-5412 - info@forkswashington.org
Bryon Monohon, City of Forks - (360) 374-5412 - info@forkswashington.org

Transporting the disabled requires physical strength and skill, and a professional level of patience, kindness, and knowledge of the special needs of the disabled. Unlike public transit bus drivers, paratransit drivers are responsible for safely getting disabled passengers from their front doors to the vans, loading them, and securing them for the trip. Once the passengers reach their destinations, drivers must assist them further.

"We paratransit drivers are the only daily contact and friend of the some of our riders," said Ninus Hopkins, a 20-year paratransit driver and union representative for King County's paratransit drivers. "We are their lifeline to the doctor, the grocery store or any kind of help."

Despite these extraordinary job demands, CPS drivers are paid less than Clallam Transit's bus drivers. Thus, some CPS drivers are forced to rely on food stamps. The union is committed to changing this. "This is not what the public wants," said the union's president, Paul Bachtel. "People understand that the food stamps come out of the taxpayers' pockets. These drivers work hard to serve the public. They deserve the dignity of a fair wage to live on."

Local 587 of the Amalgamated Transit Union, was founded by drivers of Puget Sound's electric streetcar fleet in 1912. Local 587 currently represents more than 4130 transit workers in Clallam, Jefferson and King counties.

For further information, contact:
Paul Bachtel, President / Business Agent
Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 587
206-448-8588
president.bachtel@atu587.com

For more information about the services provided by paratransit, please see:
<http://www.clallamtransit.com/paratransit-services.html>

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PAUL J. BACHTEL
President
Business Representative
president.bachtel@atu587.com

JRICK SEPOLEN
Vice President
Assistant Business Representative
vpjrcksepolen@atu587.com

DON MAC ADAM
Vice President
Assistant Business Representative Maintenance
vpdonmacadam@atu587.com

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