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**ATU**

**LOCAL 587**

# News Review

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**VOL. XXV, NO. 8**

## *The President's Report*

# Transit Security

*by President Lance Norton*



Lance F. Norton

**I** WAS INVITED TO ATTEND THE National Transit Industry Labor/Management Safety and Security Conference in Washington D.C., hosted by the Amalgamated Transit Union, the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) and the Federal Transportation Administration — DOT.

Invitations were extended to the Presidents/Business Representatives of approximately forty A.T.U. Locals throughout the United States, and the top manager for their corresponding transit agencies (or their designee). Jim Jacobson, Metro/King County Deputy General Manager, attended on behalf of King County Metro.

The theme of this conference was the role and benefits of labor/management partnerships in improving the safety and security programs in the transit workplace. There were many issues presented, some that I consider cause for major concern, and I will be reporting on those in the months to come. The subject of transit security is extensive, and in light of today's intense focus on anti-terrorism efforts, I want to share as much of this information with the membership as possible.

This month I will focus on the International's outlining of the

problem and the recommendations being made on behalf of all its members. What follows are excerpts from the A.T.U. Briefing Paper on transit security in the U.S. and Canada.

### **The Problem:**

According to the most recent records of the U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) Office of Intelligence and Security, in 1998, attacks against transportation and transportation infrastructures accounted for 42 % of all international terrorist attacks reported by the U.S. State Department. The Transportation Research Board found that 34 % of the violent acts against transportation target rail and buses.

Public transportation is an ideal target for terrorism and other serious violent crimes. Transit systems, in particular, are attractive targets because they bring together large masses of people, are easily accessible, open to the pub-

lic and there is little to no security, with no obvious checkpoints like those at airports to inspect passengers and parcels.

Transit operators, too, are often the victims of violent crimes as they are forced to deal on a daily basis with passengers who become angry over bus fares, delays, crowded vehicles and for various other reasons. Clearly, such crimes result not only in harm to the operator but also seriously impair the ability of that operator to safely transport passengers to their chosen destinations.

### **Recent Actions by the U.S. Government:**

...[I]n the U.S., the government acted quickly to address airport security after September 11<sup>th</sup>, through increased funding and government oversight, and funding for rail and port security soon

*continued on page 6*

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## The Month at a Glance

### Business of the Membership

At the July 2002 cycle of membership meetings, the following business was conducted:

- Motion made at the June JTA meeting to contribute \$500.00 to the Jefferson Transit Employees Association to help provide awards for the first bus rodeo held since I-695, was finalized at the July Morning meeting. Motion approved.
- Arbitration request for

Patricia McWilliam's was approved by the membership.

The following members were July pot draw winners: Edward Taylor Jr. at the Charter meeting, Frank Tanner at the morning meeting, Troy McKelvey at JTA. CTS pot draw winner was Jay Winters. Rolling CTS pot draw of \$175.00 was lost by Al Crampton. Next month's pot will be \$200.00.

### Tentative Agenda

#### Membership Meetings:

**CHARTER MEETING**  
Thursday, August 1, 2002  
8:00 p.m.  
IBEW Hall Auditorium  
2700 1st Ave., Seattle, WA

**MORNING MEETING**  
Friday, August 2, 2002  
10:30 a.m.  
IBEW Hall Auditorium  
2700 1st Ave., Seattle, WA

**JEFFERSON TRANSIT**  
Monday, August 5, 2002  
8:00 p.m.  
Port Townsend Rec Center  
Port Townsend, WA

**CLALLAM TRANSIT**  
Tuesday, August 6, 2002  
7:00 p.m.  
Vern Burton Memorial  
Building, Port Angeles, WA

#### Among topics to be discussed:

Among topics to be discussed: Transit Security Conference, MV Transit problems, grievance and arbitration updates.

Newly appointed Executive Board Officer for First Line Supervisors, Paul Neil, will be installed into office.

#### Unfinished Business:

No unfinished business for August.

### ARBITRATION UPDATE

- Kenny McCormick:** Grieved failure to follow FLSA requirements for travel time for board/report/ATL operators. Schedule pending. Potential resolutions being discussed.
- Willie Fallis:** Grieved termination due to violation of retention agreement. Arbitration held April 24 and 25, 2002. Decision pending.
- Surrional Frank Tanner:** Grieved termination due to customer complaint and allegation of physical contact. Arbitration held July 17 and 18, 2002. Decision pending.
- Patricia McWilliams:** Grieved termination due to suspended license. Arbitration approved by the membership at the July cycle of meetings. Schedule pending.

### Executive Board Report

July 23, 2002

The following officers were present: President Lance Norton, Vice President Glen Travis, Financial Secretary Paul Griffin, Recording Secretary Jennie Gil, Linda Anderson, Marc Auerbach, Paul Bachtel, John Bellinger, Lisa Carter, Chris Daniels, Katherine Eckhardt, Ninus Hopkins, Dan Linville, Joe Mangiameli, Mike Rochon, Brian Sherlock, Dee Wakenight, Shirley Walker, Mike Whitehead.

John Farrell was on vacation.

The following business was conducted:

- Motion by Dan Linville that Local 587 pay the registration,

lodging and customary per diem for any of the CSIM members who wish to attend the CISM Washington State Training Conference.

- Motion by Joe Mangiameli to send two people to the Public Transportation Conference in Wenatchee, Sept 16 through 18, 2002, paying lost time, transportation, registration and lodging and per diem.

- Motion by Dan Linville to amend the COPE Committee's recommendations to add an endorsement for LaBorde, scratch the endorsement to Knighton, and adopt the rest of the recommendation.

### Upcoming at ATU...

**AUGUST 8** – Part-time restriction forms due in at the window. NO LATE FORMS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

**AUGUST 12 through 16**– Part-time Operator preview, Central/Atlantic Base, upstairs in the quiet room, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

**AUGUST 13 through 18**– Full-time Operator preview, Central/Atlantic Base, upstairs in the classroom, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

**AUGUST 17, 18, 24, 25**– Part-time pick Operator, Central Atlantic Base, upstairs in the quiet room. Please make sure you check the seniority list for your pick time, you may enter the room twenty minutes ahead of your pick time. On the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>, please allow extra travel time for the Mariner traffic.

**AUGUST 19 through 29**– Full-time Operator pick, Central/Atlantic Base, upstairs in the classroom. Please make sure you check the seniority list for your pick time, you may

enter the room twenty minutes ahead of your pick time.

**AUGUST 19 through 22** – Washington State Labor Council Convention, Spokane, WA.

**AUGUST 27** – Executive Board meeting.

**AUGUST 29** – Facilities Maintenance pick, locations to be posted.

**SEPTEMBER 2** – King County Labor Council Labor Day celebration, Woodland Park Shelters 1, 2 and 3, 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

**SEPTEMBER 14** - First day of new Facilities Maintenance shakeup.

**SEPTEMBER 24** – Executive Board meeting.

**SEPTEMBER 28** – First day of Fall Shakeup for Operations and Vehicle Maintenance.

**SEPTEMBER 27 though 29** – ATU Latino Caucus Conference, Allentown, PA.

#### ATU LOCAL 587

### News Review

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#### WEINGARTEN RIGHTS STATEMENT

*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.*

#### Letters to the editor

Letters/contributions must include signatures, work ID number, addresses and telephone numbers that can be verified during office hours. Letters that cannot be validated will not be published. All articles/letters are subject to editing and should be limited to 350 words or less. Not all letters can be published due to space limitations. Cut off date is the 15th of each month.

Send letters to:

**Jennie Gil, Editor**  
c/o ATU Local 587  
News Review  
2700 First Avenue, Rm 204  
Seattle, WA 98121

# A Solution to the Health Care Crisis

By Marc Auerbach, Executive Board Officer

**O**UR HEALTH CARE SYSTEM IS broken. We spend more per capita on health care than any other industrialized nation, but the United States is the only one that does not cover all its residents. About 40 million Americans have no medical insurance.

Those of us lucky enough to be covered through our jobs are starting to feel the pain of this dysfunctional system. King County's medical costs have skyrocketed from \$410 each month per employee in 1996, to \$783 per employee currently. And starting next year County employees will bear some of the burden through higher co-pays and deductibles. All around the country workers are facing the same problem and being forced to choose between wage increases and protecting their health care benefits.

The trends are clear: 1) Health care costs are rising faster than Ken Lay's legal bills; 2) Employers will do everything in their power to pass increased medical costs along to workers; 3) Managed care, which was supposed to control health care inflation, has been a dismal failure. Unless you are an insurance company executive or a pharmaceutical CEO, the current system stinks.

And it's all totally unnecessary. For the same amount of money we currently spend the United States could provide comprehensive medical coverage for every resident. How? Cut out the insurance companies and institute a National Single Payer Health Insurance plan. The concept is relatively simple, and most industrialized countries have some version of single-payer.

Single-payer is a national (or perhaps state) health insurance system with the government as insurer. Health care providers would remain private. Consumers would have total freedom of choice with regard to doctors and other providers, and all medical care would be covered – for everyone.

Wouldn't that cost a lot? Actually, most people and businesses would actually pay the same or less than we do now.

How can that be? Under the current system we pay a premium for the bloated administrative costs required by our patchwork private insurance system. We pay a premium for profits for the health care and insurance industries. And we pay a premium to the pharmaceutical companies because individual plans do not have the clout to negotiate reasonable prices with the drug industry. Single-payer eliminates those and other unnecessary costs and funnels the

savings into comprehensive coverage for all.

The Labor Party (a new political party initiated by unions and labor activists) and a group of doctors called Physicians for a National Health Program (PNHP) have both issued detailed proposals for financing and implementing a single-payer plan. The plans differ somewhat with regard to their financing mechanisms. But both plans prove that single-payer is a practical and necessary alternative to the current system of private insurance.

If this is such a great idea, why won't Congress just do it? Well,

the insurance industry, the drug companies, and those portions of the health care-industry that are now owned by Wall Street investors have enormous power and they want to preserve the status quo at any cost (to us). Most politicians are either in the pocket of these special interests, or afraid to take them on directly.

Many commentators and even health care activists say we have to be content with "incremental" reforms because we are not powerful enough to take on Wall Street and the insurance industry. But I think we no longer have a choice. There is simply no other answer to the health

care crisis. Without single payer we will face a worsening crisis and a terrible dilemma at the bargaining table: we will have to choose between health care and decent wages.

The system is corrupt and broken. We need to build a massive, national movement for fundamental health care reform. Organized labor can spearhead such a movement. The choice is clear. But will we rise to the occasion?

(You can find more information and the single-payer proposals mentioned above online at: [www.igc.org/lpa](http://www.igc.org/lpa) and [www.pnhp.org](http://www.pnhp.org)).

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# Letters to the Editor...

## The Burdens of ADA

Dear Editor:

On April 1<sup>st</sup> of this year, I was injured in an auto accident enroute to my Access Transportation employer — MV Transit. As a result of the accident, my car was totaled, I sustained a broken wrist and my employer notified me that light duty was not available during my recovery. This all felt like “three strikes and I was out”. But I soon discovered the Metro could get me safely from the hospital to my home in Ballard for a mere \$1.50, so this began my reliance on public transportation.

I look at riding Metro as an adventure. Every trip is a little bit different. Although the route number is the same, the operator, style of driving, time and direction of travel all contribute to a whole new experience. For the most part, it's been a positive journey of discovering how the bus system works.

It is very evident that the operator's job involves an excessive amount of attention to detail. I commend them for pulling it all off safely and professionally. However, I have mixed feelings about the newly imposed ADA stop announcement program.

I have personally benefited from the announcements as a “Rookie rider”. My stress level goes up when my view of the cross streets are blocked when in unfamiliar neighborhoods, and the driver's announcements assures me of where we are prior to my stop. This is greatly appreciated.

As an Access driver, I see a conflict between safety and the ADA policy. Multitasking best describes what we all do and safety has always been the number one priority amongst those tasks, with very little room for compromise. Yet these stop announcements require compro-

mise to occur. Reading anything while driving is an unsafe act, which is ticketable as “Inattention to driving”.

This mandatory change in “job description” is creating a much larger liability issue for Metro and me the rookie rider. Someone should look into this, as I will be looking out for my rights as a rider who knows that **Metro is knowingly subjecting all operators and riders to unsafe conditions.**

I wonder what OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) and the Washington State Labor and Industries would have to say about this issue.

Dobbie Boyington #3172  
Shop Steward  
MV Transportation

## On Pride or Prejudice

I thank Brian Sherlock for his letter to the editor titled ‘Pride or Prejudice.’ It was right on.

The total lack of communications in Metro Facilities has created an atmosphere of dissension between the workers. We wonder what type of experience certain chiefs, supervisors and managers actually had before being placed in these positions. We in Facilities understand in a very practical way how communications is an important factor in keeping the bases functioning and for us to do our jobs properly.

Some workers in our department don't have the necessary/proper equipment to do the work required. Certain individuals in management don't understand these basic needs when requested by the worker and act like it's coming out of their pocket.

Those managers need to grasp the meaning of the word ‘com-

munication.’ So for the communication impaired here is the definition: 1. The act of communicating; transmission; 2. The exchange of thoughts, messages, or information, as by speech, signals, or writing etc. Another word management needs to learn is accountability, ex: answerable, capable of being explained.

The vast majority of us take pride in our work and actively want to be able to make Metro a great transportation company. Not just for the Facilities department but for other departments as well. It gets harder, if not impossible to do a good job, when those in authority tell half-truths, skirt the issues and indulge in personal power trips.

Management are public servants and have to act accordingly. Nothing will change until those in management weed out their own disrespectful peers. My advice to all employees is ‘quit being Lemmings’, don't follow the people in management over the cliff. Speak up and make yourself be heard. Ask your superiors questions on why they made that decision, i.e., why was this person placed in this position or any other job related issue. A quote from Charlton Heston: “Find the courage to question authority.”

Bottom line people, you can change things, but you have to speak up and stand up for what is equal and fair. Take a look around since last fall and can you say that more of your civil rights are being given back to you? No, quite the opposite. I encourage reading the union handout on the history of the union, and if that doesn't spark a voice out of you, then good luck little lemmings.

Thank you,  
Linda Zettlemoyer  
Facilities

PS - Maybe the Union can print in the ATU News Review excerpts from the handbook.

## The Seattle Times

**Editor's Note:** the following letter was submitted to the Seattle Times by Sister Linda Averill, who asked that it also be printed here.

Dear Editor,

So, a front-page story about a “Summer of strikes,” (7/14) states that “the last thing the nation needs is a strike, let alone four of them.” Was this a lead written by the same Seattle Times management who tried to bust one of their unions last year? While it is true that a summer of labor actions might not be good for the bosses, it will benefit **all** workers, unionized and unorganized alike.

It is clear that the corporations are trying to make working people pay for the down side of capitalism's boom-bust cycle by going after our wages, health benefits, and pensions. Workers already paid for the “up” side of the cycle during the so-called roarin' '90s when real wages stagnated, housing and healthcare costs soared, and CEO salaries hit the stratosphere.

It is heartening to see these unions stand up to Boeing, the shipping magnates, and baseball barons. Their members are simply fighting for the right to live decently by demanding a greater share of the profits that they created with their labor. In doing so, they are paving the way for other workers to do the same.

That is why if they go on strike, I will join their picket line. Their fight is my fight.

Sincerely,  
Linda Averill, #8816  
Atlantic Base

### SEND IN YOUR OPINIONS

Letters/contributions must include signatures, work ID number, addresses and telephone numbers that can be verified during office hours. Letters that cannot be validated will not be published. All articles/letters are subject to editing and should be limited to 350 words or less. Not all letters can be published due to space limitations. Cut off date is the 15th of each month. Send letters to:

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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*

## IN LOVING MEMORY...

*As a well spent day brings happy sleep, so life well used brings happy death.*

— Leonardo DaVinci

**John Jackson**, passed away July 16, of a heart attack. Brother Jackson joined Local 587 in November of 1998 as a Part-time Operator, going full-time in March of 2001. John participated in his union

as a shop steward. He was an active member out of Ryerson Base at the time of his passing, and leaves a wife, five children and a good number of friends and coworkers who will miss him greatly.

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

# Guest Editorial...

**Editor's Note:** *Sister Ileen Weber was recently selected for the George Turner Award, given to drivers who show exemplary service to the disabled community. She made the decision to turn down this award for the reasons outlined below, and asked that the newsletter publish her letter to North Base Chief Harold Mann.*

Harold Mann, Chairman  
Selection Committee  
The Turner Award

Harold,

This letter is to inform you that I have decided to return The George Turner Award for service to the disabled community. I intend to make public my decision to return the award by forwarding a copy of this letter to the editor of the Local 587 News Review. This is the only way I feel I can make a clear statement challenging management to reconsider its disastrous policy of writing performance reports for non-compliance of its new ADA rule to call out designated stops.

My apologies to the Northwest Chapter-Paralyzed Veterans of America. They are to be applauded for their effort to recognize Metro drivers and our service to the disabled community. However, because Metro's management philosophy has taken a unfortunate turn toward punitive enforcement of rules, I feel it is more important that I not cooperate with management by accepting this award.

I did not understand how bad things had gotten until I arrived at the base on July 3 to report for work. I had two pieces of paper in my mail — stabled together. One was a letter inviting me to a luncheon as a recent recipient of the Turner Award, and the second was a notice of a performance report being written for non-compliance of the ADA rule.

I do not know how many stops I did or did not call out on the day a Metro manager rode my mid-morning inbound trip on the 307 because I was too busy trying to keep a run on schedule that daily is 5 to 15 minutes late, loading and unloading wheelchairs, bikes and senior citizens. Place this day against my record of many, many commendations from abled and disabled passengers, many other unreported acts of service to the disabled community, 20 years without a preventable accident (which, by the way, I didn't accomplish by reading while I drive), a Meritorious Achievement Award, Operator of the Month twice, and I think management ought to wonder about the direction of their punitive policies.

Since Metro hasn't figured out

how to keep copies of commendations in our personnel files, let me give you but a few samples from my file of 35 unsolicited commendations over the past 22 years, specifically those from disabled passengers or passengers with limited abilities:

From a passenger on the Rt 130: *"I have been catching the 8:52am route 130 express from the Burién Park & Ride. I recently asked the driver for [her] identity so as to send this letter of commendation. I believe this person is the most sensitive to meet[ing] the needs of her passengers, that I have ever encountered."*

From Rt 377: *"Driver was very courteous, very cooperative, and pointed out different stops that customer could use and also pointed out that this route went all the way to the Resource Center for the Handicapped — further than just Fircrest where customer goes. Also pointed out different ways Metro could serve the customer. Customer states this driver is among Metro's finest..."*

From the Rt 5: *"Customer calls to commend driver for excellent and accommodating service. Customer says driver announced each stop and transfer point, etc."*

From the Rt 74: *"Customer commends the driver of this trip. Driver was kind, gentle, safe driver with good P/R."*

From the Rt 301: *"Caller says ...driver is very conscientious and careful. She is always cheerful and she announces streets and last stop downtown. Caller says she is just wonderful."*

From the Rt 355/16: *"Operator is commended for her excellent service to our customers with special needs."*

This was the commendation that got me the Turner Award: *"I want you to know how much I appreciate my current morning bus driver... She is reliable, on time, and makes an effort to help her riders. I am partially sighted and she always tells me if she has to pull forward at my stop if a bus is behind her. She lets me know if she will be away on vacation so that we should get to the bus stop early because of the new driver. She always reminds me of where the bus stops in case of snow. She helps people who need assistance in determining where to stop who are new to the area. I have told her that I wish she could be my bus driver for the next ten years because she is so reliable and courteous. I hope you realize what an outstanding driver she is. I have ridden the bus for over ten years and she is one of the best I have had."*

Recent articles in the Local

587 News Review by Operators Paul Bachtel (April 02) and Hal Hirabayashi (July 02), accurately express my criticisms of this policy; I will not repeat them here. I refer you to those articles for specific concerns of operators. And I refer you to Brian Sherlock's letter to the editor (July 02) expressing concerns I share about punitive management philosophy.

The significant increase of late in PR's written says as much or more about management's shortcomings than it does about drivers. I've focused my comments on the ADA non-compliance PR's, but I'm also concerned about the changing culture I observe at Metro which is demonstrated by the use of radar almost daily in the tunnel, driver's being written up for running ahead of schedule forcing us to hold at stops before major time points while our passengers fume at lost transfers, the spacing rule,

etc. The negative effect on driver morale of this new culture at Metro is almost palpable.

I think the saddest result of management's shortsightedness is the effect it will have on the Operator's desire to provide quality service. These punitive policies only serve to give management the false impression they are doing their job. If management believes in their mission "... to promote teamwork, job satisfaction, dignity and personal growth..." then they have failed, badly. In fact, the results will be the opposite: poor morale and poor service.

I have enclosed the Turner Award certificate, your letter of congratulations and the photographs taken at the award ceremony. Thanks, but no thanks.

Sincerely,  
Ileen Weber  
#4792, North Base

## You're Invited!

### 2002 Labor Day Celebration

presented by the  
**King County Labor Council**  
**Monday, September 2**  
**11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**  
**Woodland Park**  
**Shelters 1, 2 and 3**

**Free Admission!**

**Live Music \* Games \* Clowns**  
**Face Painting**  
**Hot Dogs \* Soda \* Ice Cream**  
**Raffle Prizes**  
**Exotic Animal Exhibit**

**For more information or to volunteer to help on the day of the picnic, Please call 206-441-8510**



## President's Report, Transit Security, continued from page 1

followed. Transit security did receive minimal attention when Congress passed a broad bill to address terrorism that included a provision making it a federal crime to assault a transit employee or to otherwise interfere with an operator's operation of transit vehicle. Aside from that provision, however, little has been done to improve the security of U.S. transit systems.

In an effort to address security issues across all transportation modes, the new Transportation Security Administration (TSA), created shortly after last fall's attacks, is seeking to require intrusive background checks for all transportation workers, including transit employees. The background checks would be required in order for any transit employee to receive a mandatory standardized transportation worker identification card (TWIC). The cards are intended to restrict and monitor access to secure areas, such as passenger boarding areas and maintenance worksites.

ATU Recommendations for Improving Transit Security:

- **Include Transit Labor in Dialogue, Planning and Implementation of Security Measures:** The U.S. and Canadian governments, as well as transit employers, must make a real effort to include transit labor in any discussions about security concerns and needs, especially during the planning and implementation process. Transit employees are on the front lines of this battle and can offer valuable information and assistance in addressing security matters.

- **Mandatory Security Plans for All Transit Agencies:** The U.S. and Canadian governments must make security plans mandatory for all transit systems, regardless of type of vehicle, size of the system or the population-served by the system. [Such plan should include protocol for]... among other things, who the driver should contact when a security situation develops, when the driver can refuse service to a passenger who poses a danger to the driver and/or passengers, when a driver should stop the vehicle, when passengers should be evacuated from the vehicle and how to report incidents after-the-fact. In addition, every transit system should engage in communications with local law enforcement and should provide authorities with route maps, schedules and descriptions so that they may respond quickly in an emergency situation.

- **Mandatory Expenditures on Security Measures:** In the U.S., the ATU is seeking to require that transit systems dedicate 1% of all federal grant funds to security measures, without exception.... This requirement would give [the federal] government the power to enforce security requirements, such as those suggested above.

- **Security Training for Transit Employees:** Both the U.S. and Canadian governments should implement security-training programs or expand existing programs, including those conducted

by the USDOT in conjunction with NTI, to include security training for transit employees. Currently, programs focus primarily on law enforcement and upper-level transit system employees. Since it is the transit operators themselves that are often on the front line when security breaches occur, these employees must be trained on how to respond in given situations. In addition, transit maintenance personnel should be trained to recognize explosive devices that may be attached to transit vehicles and any other type of vehicle tampering that could endanger the lives of those aboard a transit vehicle or in a transit station.

- **Support for Development, Advancement and Increased Usage of New Security Devices:** Government should actively support and encourage the development and advancement of new technologies and equipment that have security benefits, such as driver shields and low-floor buses. In the past, our members have sought to have buses equipped with driver shields, only to be unhappy with the restrictions the shields place upon the driver. New shields are currently being developed and tested to address these concerns. [Both]... governments should support these efforts. In addition, the increasing use of low-floor buses has helped to reduce violent attacks against bus operators. These buses place drivers up on a platform and away from passengers who are boarding or exiting the vehicle, thus resulting in fewer driver-passenger confrontations. The increased use of low-floor buses should be encouraged.

- **Protection of Existing Employees from Unnecessary Background Checks:** [T]he ATU has expressed its concerns to the USDOT about the new TWIC proposal. Specifically, the ATU argued that DOT must ensure that existing employees subject to the proposed criminal background checks are not deprived of their jobs simply because a past criminal conviction, for which the employee has served their time, is suddenly discovered.... We also stated our opposition to any proposal, which would require existing employees to pay for their own government-mandated background checks and TWIC, arguing that these costs should be borne by the employer and/or DOT. In order to protect the privacy of transportation employees, we proposed that, at least in the transit and over-the-road bus industries, where Commercial Drivers' Licenses (CDLs) are required to operate commercial passenger vehicles, the background checks should be required as a condition of getting a CDL, not when an employee applies for a job. This would ensure that the personal information obtained through such checks is not access by employers."

Transit security and safety will be a hot topic for a long time to come. One of the major concerns is that there seems to be more focus on monitoring the employ-

ees than on those we carry. The ATU International is closely involved in this effort on a national level. All of you must be a part of this effort locally, by paying attention to and participating in what is going on legislatively, by reading the In Transit and your own News Review for updates from the International and your officers, by participating in the

business of your union. We must be wary of programs and procedures that hamper rights and freedoms in the guise of national security, and at the same time we must insist on and help to develop and implement procedures that will keep each of us and our riding public safe.

LFN

# Scandalous Behavior

By Recording Secretary Jennie Gil

ONE OF THE FIRST LESSONS I had in creative writing was to capture my reading audience's attention right out of the gate. Hence the catchy title. So now that I have your attention, let me also say I continuously find that no matter how much information is put out on a subject, SOMEONE didn't read it, got "screwed over" for not knowing something of great importance, and then complained that they should have been told. Well, it is pick time once again. Whether this is a new process to you or you are an old hand at this, ignore the rest of this article at your own peril.

**Part-time pick commences August 17<sup>th</sup>**, Full-time on August 19<sup>th</sup>. At this time the schedule for the Vehicle Maintenance pick has not been released. Please watch your bulletin boards for information. Preview week is August 12 through 16 for Part-Time Operators, August 13 through 18 for Full-Time Operators. Any questions may be directed to pick personnel in the preview room, or you may contact me at (206) 448-8588, or send me your question through email at [gil@atu587.com](mailto:gil@atu587.com).

Remember to factor in any special events occurring at either of the two stadiums and plan to arrive early. As an insurance measure, it is always a good bet to submit an absentee pick form prior to pick. The absentee form will only be used if you do not report to the pick room in person.

**Part-Time Operators note:** August 17 and 18, the M's play at home, against the New York Yankees, no less. **BOTH GAMES ARE MID-DAY GAMES!!!** Saturday, August 24<sup>th</sup>, the Seattle Seahawks have a 7:00 p.m. game, which might affect those people picking after 3:00 p.m. **ALLOW ENOUGH TRAVEL TIME!!!!** The labor agreement provides for a Union representative to pick for any member who does not show up at their pick time. If you do not make it and do not care for what was picked for you, it is not grievable and you will still need to work it.

## Calling in

More operators are electing to phone the pick room at their des-

ignated pick time, which can work fine as long as the pick is running on schedule and the phone line is not busy. Problem is, pick can be delayed for any number of reasons, and if a delay occurs or if the phone line is busy, telephone picking can be a nightmare. Cell phones have exacerbated the problem with broken scratchy calls that further jam the single phone line available in the pick room.

**PLEASE!!** Don't try to pick by phone unless you absolutely have to. Come to the pick on time and in person, or submit an absentee pick form as mentioned above.

Vehicle Maintenance Executive Board Officers ask that phone calls during pick be for emergency purposes only. There are three locations for Vehicle Maintenance members to pick, the information will be posted within the next couple of weeks.

## Restriction forms (Part-Time Operators)

As a Part-Time Operator, you have the contractual right to restrict yourself to either a.m. or p.m. work. You do not get to restrict to base, route or report times. Restrictions amount to usurping the seniority of those ahead of you who did not have the need to restrict, so the Union takes these forms very seriously. **The deadline for restriction forms this shakeup is August 8<sup>th</sup>. NO EXCEPTIONS.** Also know that if you submitted a restriction form and we reach lockout, you will be required to honor that restriction.

Lockout is when there is the exact number of slots for either a.m. or p.m. as there are restriction forms. For example, if we have 100 a.m. slots available system-wide, and 100 restriction forms on file, we go into a.m. lockout. This would mean, in that scenario, that unless you had a restriction form submitted for that shakeup, **you may not pick a.m. work, regardless of your seniority.** If something comes up after you submit your form that frees you from needing to be restricted, you need to contact the pick coordinator or the Recording Secretary and rescind your restriction form. You may rescind a form

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Paul Griffin

**L**AST MONTH TWO NOTEWORTHY pieces of "literature" crossed my desk. One was informal, it was a letter written by a member of MV Transit, one of our Access service bargaining units. The second was the "Northwest Labor Press" issue of June 21, 2002, which carries on page 8 Part 1 of a series on the life history of ATU International Vice President Mel Schoppert. The correlation between this letter and the feature on Vice President Schoppert brings to mind the idea of going full circle. History is cyclical. Allow me to draw this circle out for you.

The letter from our member was angry in tone and content. It said, in part, "My union repre-

## The Financial Secretary's Report

# UNION 101: What and Why?

by Paul L. Griffin

sentative, I am feeling that as a union you do nothing for us. I can not get enough hours of work to pay my bills... Why do I pay you union dues?... Why indeed? There is no doubt in my mind that this member has every right to his anger, given who he works for. MV Transit came into town to take over the Laidlaw Access service contract last year and has been more trouble than we ever thought Laidlaw could be. Much time and effort is being invested by the officers in combat with MV management, sending many harsh letters, fighting (and winning) numerous grievances. Yet the work there has only just begun.

The article on International Vice President Schoppert carried an interview he'd done at some point. Mel became a bus driver in August 28, 1952, for the Portland Traction Company. In the interview Mel relates: "...And then the

only other union I ever knew of was when I joined the Amalgamated Transit Union, and to be honest with you, I was unhappy as hell. I didn't know what the union was. I went down ...[and]... paid my initiation fee of \$25, and I give the guy a bad time. His name was Gene Watson. He was the Financial Secretary. I give him a bad time you know: 'What the hell am I giving you \$25 for?' I didn't know nothing about a union. Absolutely nothing."

Thus began an epic page in our ATU history. It didn't take too long before management did something that got Mel riled up. So he went to a union meeting to fix the problem. And the first thing he found out was he didn't know how a union meeting was conducted. So he went to the school of hard knocks and took "Union 101". "Union 101" starts out with PARTICIPATION. Participation is where Mel started. Participation



International Vice President Mel Schoppert at a recent Northwest Conference, active in the ATU to the end.

is where all union activists started.

Mel became active in the Amalgamated Transit Union, first as a "hell raiser", then as Executive Board Officer, and then as Business Agent at Local 757. He was appointed International Vice President in 1972. For the rest of his life he served the ATU as an

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Jennie Gil

**Article 12, Section 1, Paragraph B: "All full-time Employees, part-time assigned and on-call Employees who are regularly scheduled to work half time or more, and their dependents will be covered by the medical, dental, vision, life, and long term disability plans developed by the Labor-Management Insurance Committee."**

**W**HILE THIS SOUNDS SIMPLISTIC enough, it has proven to be an administrative nightmare for the County and a headache for many employees. Not to mention how hard it is for me to explain. The chief administrative problem for the County has to do with having multiple "mini open enrollments" throughout the year. With the numerous changes in the upcoming County-wide open enrollment for 2003, there was a surge of inspiration to tackle the problem. Knowing that it would be easier to create a method that both sides could work with and explain, rather than one that would be worked out through much gnashing of teeth and rending of garments (not to mention multiple grievances), Metro asked for the

## The Recording Secretary's Report

# Part-Time Benefit Changes

By Recording Secretary Jennie Gil

Union's assistance in working out a simpler benefits eligibility procedure for Part-time Operators.

To begin with, there are three basic premises for benefits for Part-time Operators:

- All are initially qualified for Plan 1 (employee only, where the County pays 80% and the employee pays for any dependents if they so choose - some call this the part-time benefits).
- There are several methods to qualify for Plan 2 benefits (see below). Plan 2 is what is otherwise known as the full benefits, what is outlined above in Article 12, Section 1B.
- Once on Plan 2, if you fall below the eligibility level, you qualify for Plan 3. Plan 3, for the wholly confused (of which I was one until just recently, after multiple explanations), is the same as Plan 1, but with the life insurance/long term disability components added in, at the employee's cost. Per the life insurance provider's policy, one does not go on and off life insurance coverage at will, only during the open window of opportunity, therefore, once you qualify for it, you are given the option to choose to stay on it or wait sometimes as much as three years to get back on.

### Dessert first

The most important thing you must know about the new benefit eligibility process is that once

you qualify, you are **good for the remainder of the year**. The earlier you reach the qualification threshold each year, the longer you will have the full benefits guaranteed for that year. If you do not reach eligibility right away, there will still be several windows of opportunity as there is now, but once on, you will remain for the end of the year.

There will also be a transition period through the end of **this** year in order to get everyone in sync. The transition will be covered at the end of this article, so please wade through it patiently. There will also be a base bulletin available soon (if it is not out there already) to further explain whatever I hopelessly botch here.

### Becoming eligible

There will be two ways to qualify each year for full benefits as a Part-time Operator (heretofore known as a PTO): through an annual hours' review or through picked work.

The Annual Review: each year Metro will do an hours' review of 26 consecutive pay periods, ending with the pay period that includes July 31. For example, this year's review period will be from August 4, 2001, through August 2, 2002, inclusive. Any PTO who was employed less than the full year will be pro-rated by the number of full pay periods they were employed within the review period, with six being the cutoff num-

ber. That means you must have been qualified as a PTO for at least six full pay periods prior to August 2 in order to qualify for the annual review.

The hours paid will be divided by the number of complete pay periods the PTO was employed in that classification. If that number equals 39 or more, that PTO will be eligible for full benefits for the following calendar year. Hours for time worked and for paid time off will count; hours paid while detailed out of classification will count; hours paid as a trainee will not. PTO's will receive credit for their picked assignments for the first thirty days of unpaid Union Leave, as per contract.

By Picked Work: A PTO must have picked work for all three shakeups of the current year to be eligible for the review. Each assignment will have an average pay time designated, which for the most part will be that assignment's pay time as designated on the pick sheets. Some assignments, however, will have significant **scheduled** added or deleted pay time during the shakeup. In those cases, that assignment will have an **average pay time** for the shakeup. This is supposed to be posted on the pick sheets in the pick room for easy review. If the weighted average of the PTO's pay time for each shakeup this year is four hours or more, that PTO qualifies for full

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## Financial Secretary—UNION, What and Why?, continued from page 7

International Vice President.

Our member's angry letter states "...as a union you do nothing for us..." One of the things Mel learned when he signed up for "Union 101", was that in the most simplistic terms, a union is like "job insurance". You hope you never need it but are really glad it's there when you do. The "union representative" is only just that—REPRESENTATIVE. Which is to say the "union" is not one particular individual, but ALL OF US working for any particular employer where the terms of employment are set forth in a labor agreement.

Our member's letter outlines a couple of issues they are particularly angry about, one specifically being a complaint about the way the work is being assigned at MV Transit. The officers are aware of the problem and it is one of the top priority issues they are dealing with. But this cannot be done by the Union officers alone, it is going to require a long struggle involving all the members of that work group, with the backup and support of the rest of the membership. In short, it is going to require PARTICIPATION. Participation in the negotiation process, participation in the political arena, participation in the union as a whole.

One form of participation is the grievance. A grievance is a written statement of the violations of the labor agreement. It is the responsibility of a member to write any such grievance. An-

other form of participation which we all are involved in, whether we like it or not, is union dues. Union members pay union dues so "the union" can perform the functions required by the membership. Talk's cheap — it takes money to buy whiskey. The labor agreements for all Local 587 bargaining units contain a clause that says paying dues is a condition of continued employment. A decision arrived at not by union representatives, but by the voting union membership. Participation.

Mel Schoppert started out angry at becoming a union member. He went on to spend nearly 49 years dedicated to the service of that union, working to represent all 180,000 members now under the ATU umbrella. I truly believe the anonymous author of the letter we received has the potential of being the next generation of "Mel's".

Clearly our member has the same "stuff" as Mel. He took the time to write his thoughts and post them. Now the challenge is to carry through, PARTICIPATE, and fix the problems he observes in the work place. Participate and the legacy of Mel Schoppert will carry on. Someday, perhaps, that



IVP Schoppert several years back giving one of his fiery speeches about participation and the benefits of union protection.

member too can look back and tell a story about how he got started in the union.

## Recording Secretary—Part-Time Benefit Changes, continued from page 7

benefits the following calendar year. The weighted average will be based on the number of pay periods in each shakeup.

PTO's who qualify either by the annual hours review or by picked work for the 3 shake-ups will be eligible for Plan 2 Benefits for the entire following calendar year.

### What if you didn't qualify?

If you did not qualify in either of the two above scenarios, all is not lost. Metro will conduct two 4-month work history reviews each year for PTO's on either Plan 1 or Plan 3. If the PTO has 338 paid hours between November 1 and the last day of the following February, inclusive, then they will qualify for full benefits for the remainder of that calendar year,

starting May 1. If the PTO has 338 hours between March 1 and June 30, inclusive, then they will qualify for full benefits for the remainder of that calendar year, starting September 1.

### Transitioning

In order to facilitate the transition from the current practice to the new one, we agreed to the following for this year only:

- Any PTO who qualified for full benefits this year for the period of April through July will remain on full benefits for the rest of this year.
- Any PTO who qualified for full benefits this year for the period of August through October will remain on full benefits for the rest of this year.

- Any PTO who picks an assignment with a weighted average of four hours or more in the upcoming shakeup, **or** who received pay for 338 hours during the April 1 through July 31, 2002 review period will be qualified for full benefits beginning October, through the end of this year.

I hope this works better than the current system. Please let me know (as I am sure you will), what you think. Plenty of feedback and discussion went into this effort. Any confusion in the explanation herein is the author's sole responsibility. Detailed information on the new criteria will be available at the window by July 29, and will also be available at the Pick room.

## Scandalous Behavior—Pick Tips, continued from page 6

all the way up to that point where we go into lockout.

### You couldn't make it?

The union has a long-standing policy to make a no-show pick based on your current assignment. This applies to Part-Time and Full-Time Operators as well as Vehicle Maintenance employees. For Operators, if you do not arrive by ten minutes prior to your scheduled pick time, your pick sheet is handed off to the union representative, who will look up your current assignment. The ten minute mark is used because it can take time to research an assignment. If your current assignment is open, it will be picked for you. If it is not open there are certain guidelines and restrictions used to pick for a no-show with no absentee pick form on file.

This is a critical issue for Part-time Operators, whose pay is based on hours worked and the potential for increasing hours worked increases with seniority. The union representative will usually select work that reports on or after your current report time and quits on or before your current quit time. You will be placed at your current base as long as it is still open, and if not, at the base closest, if at all possible. Due to these guidelines and restrictions,

often the tripper picked for you by the Union is substantially shorter than the tripper you could have picked yourself.

Occasionally there is no information available as to what you are currently working and often there are no similar assignments left, especially as we get on down the seniority list. If there is time and an open phone line, the union rep may attempt to call you, but if the pick sheets do not list your current address/phone number, and the current assignment sheets do not list your current assignment, the union representative has little recourse other than to pick an assignment completely at random.

Once the union rep picks your assignment it may not be changed if you arrive late. On occasion, if you arrive immediately after the union has picked for you, AND, if the people who have picked below you are still in the room, the pick may be stopped and your piece offered to those who picked behind you if you are so very opposed to working it. If this should occur, the pick still goes on around you and those with lesser seniority who did arrive on time will continue making their selections. If, however, even one person below you that has already picked has left the room, your pick will not be

altered for any reason. A second recourse for those who did not arrive in time to pick and find their union-picked work heinous is to hang tight till the next move up.

**Important!** Article 16, Section 5, Paragraph "E", on page 96 of the Labor Agreement, states in part: "Selections made by the UNION will not be subject to the

*grievance / arbitration procedure.*" Your union representatives are only human. In your absence they did the best they could given the circumstances they had to work with, and the union will not be held liable for any picks made for someone who could not or did not show up to do their own pick.

Hope to see you there....on time.



As a continued show of the fine caliber of members we have within Local 587, Atlantic Base Operator Tom Floyd, #3959, proudly displays his Boys and Girls Club Volunteer of the Year award he recently received. Congratulations, Tom! You do us all proud.