

587

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SPECIAL ASSAULT EDITION

ASSAULT COMMITTEE UPDATE

by Juanita Gartman and
William Robinson

The question is often asked, "What is the Union Assault Committee doing?" This article is an attempt to answer that question.

September 1986

The first meeting of Assault Committee hopefuls was held on September 9th. The purpose of this meeting was to draft a proposal to the union executive board outlining our objectives and asking for union sanction.

October 1986

The committee was sanctioned by the union at the regular monthly membership meeting. The Assault Committee composed a survey of the membership and a letter to other major transit unions regarding security measures in force in their areas.

The Assault Committee approached Metro management, via Frank Magan, regarding a joint meeting to discuss the problem of assaults on drivers. The committee was turned down on several occasions.

Metro was told of the planned union survey, and within days base chiefs were downtown at night with a verbal questionnaire from Metro for selected drivers.

November 1986

The union survey went out to the membership on the 11th.

Responses to our letter of inquiry to other transit unions started to trickle in.

Metro had a change of heart regarding meeting with the Union Assault Committee after extensive press coverage of Dean Gibson's brutal assault on Thanksgiving eve and the subsequent assault of Martha Holly less than a week later.

Open meetings between management and all union members were set for December 11th to coincide with the public release of information gathered from the union survey.

Committee members with the volunteer help of Robert Brawnwart, owner of Academic Text Processing Co., compiled statistical data from survey results.

One extra late night D-car shift was added during move-up for first-line supervisors.

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UPDATE continued**December 1986**

The open meetings of the union membership and representatives from management took place in three sessions on December 11th. The response from drivers, first-line supervisors and maintenance personnel was overwhelming. Hundreds of suggestions and proposals for improving security were presented.

Metro and the union formed a task force of union and management personnel to meet on a regular biweekly basis to address security-related problems. The first meeting took place on December 23rd. Management submitted an eighteen-point security action plan. Point number six stated that Metro will "add UPO [Undercover Police Officer] and service supervisory coverage on problem days, such as the last day of school, before Christmas and New Year's Eve."

At 8:00 p.m. on New Year's Eve, members of the Union Assault Committee were informed that UPO coverage had not been provided as promised and the coordinators' office verified that UPO coverage consisted entirely of one car manned by Frank Magan and a volunteer UPO. The Assault Committee notified the press and Metro took responsibility for this "security mixup," stating that the request for police officers to work New Year's Eve "got lost in the mail."

An extra coordinator was added between the hours of 9:00 p.m. and midnight. The Seattle Police Department agreed to provide "moving intercept" when possible.

January 1987

A radio check was done in response to complaints from the Union Assault Committee regarding malfunctioning radios. Metro found that less than three percent were defective and felt that this number was not large enough to warrant further action on their part.

A "fare avoidance" survey using special non-payment of fare coupons was done on Routes 43 and 150 from January 19th to January 25th. Metro found that on Route 150 they had 531 partial payment of fares and 83 full non-payment

of fares and that on Route 43 they received 519 partial payments and 322 full non-payments during this time.

The Union Assault Committee took exception to, and asked for a rewrite and clarification of, the "Assault Prevention Program" as outlined in "The Book", section 5B1. The Assault Committee had no input into this section and disagreed with some of the procedures mentioned.

At the Security Task Force meeting on January 13th, Frank Magan stated that while the number of assaults of bus drivers in 1985 and 1986 stayed the same, the number of assaults in Seattle has risen by 35 percent.

February 1987

The positions of a day and night chief were added to the coordinators' office. Abdul Alidina and A.D. Clark were selected for these positions.

Management proposed a pass reform to reduce the number of passes and simplify the existing fare structure.

A fare reduction proposal for youth, which would have raised fares for the elderly and handicapped, got thumbs down from the public and was shelved for the time-being, with help coming from the Union Assault Committee in publicizing the proposal.

Drivers turned out for a trial of one of Dean Gibson's assailants. A phone-tree established by the Union Assault Committee helped to spread the word of the time and place of the trial.

The Assault Committee asked the executive board to approve a \$1000.00 reward for the arrest and conviction of anyone assaulting a bus driver.

Management was asked by the committee for space on board the coaches to display the "wanted posters" for the suspects in the assault of operator Gary Gjerset. Some management personnel were receptive to the idea, but Transit Director Ron Tober vetoed it because of marketing concerns.

On February 18th, Metro's new increased MPA (Metro Police Agent) program went into effect. Drivers were promised ten officers per day in mobile units (unmarked cars), with two agents per

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UPDATE continued

car working staggered shifts from 1:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m.

On the 20th of February, 23 union members gathered at the Alaska Junction in West Seattle at 5:30 a.m. to put reward posters on the buses. While response from drivers and the public was positive and enthusiastic, response from Metro management was not.

March 1987

The second step of the Fare Avoidance Project went into effect on March 4th through March 6th. Two MPAs rode Route 43 buses in the University District from 2:00 to 6:00 p.m. but issued only one warning.

Members of the base security committees were announced, and the first meetings were held.

Steve Grissom, manager of service control, announced that he is ready to establish meetings between operators and coordinators to exchange information that may be helpful for the new radio training program.

On March 7th, operator Don Melton was viciously attacked and brutally beaten by a passenger at Northgate. On March 10th, the union and the Assault Committee decided to call a press conference for Friday, March 13th at Harborview Medical Center to once again go public with requests for increased security and extended hours of MPA coverage.

The union ordered 3000 blood-red buttons saying "Stop Assaults Now" for Metro employees to wear while working to help heighten public awareness and to show solidarity throughout the system.

Requests and Recommendations from the Assault Committee

The Assault Committee recommends that drivers be sure to request a coach change if they have a defective radio and notify the union office if they don't receive one.

We recommend that drivers who feel uncomfortable with a situation on a coach, which they feel may jeopardize their safety or the safety of their passengers, should call the coordinator for assistance.

No driver should ever awaken a sleeping passenger without backup from a supervisor or police.

When you have a passenger express concern and/or dissatisfaction with security on the coaches, please suggest that they direct their comments to Metro by calling or writing either the Exchange Building or the Metro Council.

We plan to continue the show of support that Dean Gibson had when he testified during the trial of his assailant. If you are subpoenaed, let the union office or one of the Assault Committee members know when and where - you don't have to go alone!

We have to be able to justify proposals that we make to management, so if you have a security-related incident on your coach, let us know by calling one of us or by sending a copy of your incident report to the union office addressed to the Assault Committee. Information is the best line of defense we have.

Remember that the Union Assault Committee is your committee. We are working in many areas to improve working conditions and security for all of us. Your feelings, views, inquiries and suggestions are actively solicited and appreciated, so let us hear from you. ■

**Show your solidarity
by wearing this button**



The union survey

by Megan Gorman

The recent brutal assault on our friend and union brother Don Melton, an 11-year veteran, is yet another horrible example of an assault problem that is mushrooming daily. An assault problem that, contrary to popular belief, is not confined to certain routes or areas of the Central Business District (CBD).

More than one-third of the drivers responding to the union assault survey in December have been physically assaulted. The proportion of assaulted drivers was similar at **every base** with the exception of Bellevue Annex (primarily a part-time base).

Since that survey was taken, numerous assaults have occurred. In January of this year, 7 assaults were reported to the union. In February, 8 were reported after the union protested strongly management's decision to only list 4 assaults that "resulted in serious bodily harm" in the base operations bulletin for that month.

If these first two months are any indication, assaults will greatly surpass the 68 assaults recorded in 1986 by Frank Magan, Metro's security coordinator. The 1986 figures do not include spitting assaults.

Facts and figures concerning assaults continue to be a prime area of dispute between the union and Metro management. Management has conceded there is an assault problem. In a December report to the Metro Council on bus operator security, Ron Tober, Metro's director of transit, wrote that the number of assaults resulting in injury was up in 1986 compared to 1985 and that "assaults on bus operators is **not** just a late night phenomena."

In an effort to develop our own statistics and information about assaults, the union commissioned a survey of the membership in November. The response was tremendous. 452 surveys were returned and compiled and the final results

are now in. Most surveys contained many thoughtful comments, which have been indexed and are available for reading at the union office. Some of these comments are represented here. Clearly drivers have been thinking for some time about assaults and their aftermath.

Survey Highlights

- 1 out of every 3 drivers responding to the survey have been assaulted.
- 2 out of every 3 drivers have been threatened with bodily harm.
- Only 28% did **not** worry about the possibility of assault and most of them were part-time operators.
- 83% of the full-time female operators reported being sexually harassed. (At Central Base, which also had the greatest number of female operators who answered the survey, 85% of the full-time female respondents reported being sexually harassed.)
- Mercer Base operators had a much greater chance of being spit on than operators at other bases. 54% of Mercer Base female and 49% of the male operators reported being spit on compared to 36% of the females and 39% of the males at the other bases.
- Getting the most operator votes for "worst routes" were Routes 3, 6, 7, 42, 48 and 107.

In rating "Response to Assault," operators were most satisfied with the response of the SPD and service supervisors. In both instances, 71% were satisfied. Operators were least satisfied with the response of base chiefs, Metro Police Agents and the union. ■

Summary of final results of union assault survey

I. GENERAL

	No.	Percent
Total Response	452	100%
Full-time drivers	299	66%
Part-time drivers	145	32%
Didn't indicate	8	2%

Of the 299 full-time drivers, 61% were day operators, 31% were night operators and 8% didn't indicate. 44% were regular operators and 15% worked the board. Other categories were tripper operators or not listed.

26 responses (5.75%) were discarded because they did not list gender or listed multiple bases. The rest of the survey is based on the base total of 426 responses.

Response by Bases

	No.	Percent
Bellevue	18	4%
Central	165	39%
East	72	17%
Mercer	99	23%
South	72	17%

II. SAFETY AND SECURITY (Actual questions and responses)

• Do you worry about possibility of assault?

	Yes	No
Total Response	72%	28%*

*Of this 28%, 52% were part-time drivers.

Response by Base

	Yes	No
Bellevue	67%	33%
Central	78%	22%
East	56%	44%
Mercer	73%	27%
South	71%	29%

One driver wrote: "I worry that we really are sitting ducks out there."

• Have you been threatened with bodily harm? (100% responded to this question.)

	Yes	No
Total Response	62%	38%

Response by Base

	Yes	No
Central	65%	35%
East	61%	39%
Mercer	72%	28%
South	55%	45%
Bellevue	11%	89%

It is difficult to draw strong conclusions from the Bellevue Annex data since so few (6% of the total) answered the survey. East base drivers apparently worry less about being assaulted and, in fact, according to the survey were less likely than Mercer or Central Base drivers to be threatened with bodily harm; however, South Base had the lowest rate of all.

• Have you been physically assaulted? (97% responded to this question.)

	Yes	No
Total	34%	66%

By sex

Males	36%	64%
Females	32%	68%

By Base

	Yes	No
Bellevue	6%	94%
Central	36%	64%
East	30%	70%
Mercer	39%	61%
South	35%	65%

Many drivers said they didn't report an assault: "I was assaulted 8 years ago. I didn't report it but now conditions are much worse. Bums, drunks, drugs, gangs, etc."

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RESULTS continued

• Have you ever been sexually harassed? (99.5% responded to this question.)

Breakdown by sex

	Yes	No
Male	12%	88%
Female	68%	32%

Further breakdown of female response

	Yes	No
Full-time	83%	17%
Part-time	52%	48%

Female by Base

Bellevue	43%	57%
Central	69%	31%
East	67%	33%
Mercer	71%	29%
South	73%	21%

The largest number of female respondents were from Central Base, constituting 44% of the female response. 85% of the full-time women at Central reported being sexually harassed. 44% of the part-time women complained of sexual harassment.

Though some men reported sexual harassment, the figures are much higher for females, especially full-time female operators.

One woman wrote: "Often I do not report being sexually harassed or assaulted or spit on. What's the use?"

Others described harassment for dates, sexual remarks, being grabbed or touched by male passengers and men exposing themselves.

• Have you been racially harassed? (98% of the respondents answered this question.)

	Yes	No
Total	44%	56%

Response by Base

Bellevue	6%	94%
Central	46%	54%
East	26%	74%
Mercer	60%	40%
South	42%	58%

East base had the lowest incidence of reported racial harassment, while Mercer had the highest.

Why the Assault?

Many reasons for their assaults were given by the operators in their comments: behind schedule, refusing to drop off outside zones, not allowing a gas can on, trying to prevent vandalism or other policy enforcement.

But just as many commented that there was no reason:

- "On the spur of the moment, I was assaulted by a nut."
- "I could not rationalize why it happened to me."
- "I still can't figure out why it happened, or what I could have done to prevent it."

FIGURE 1

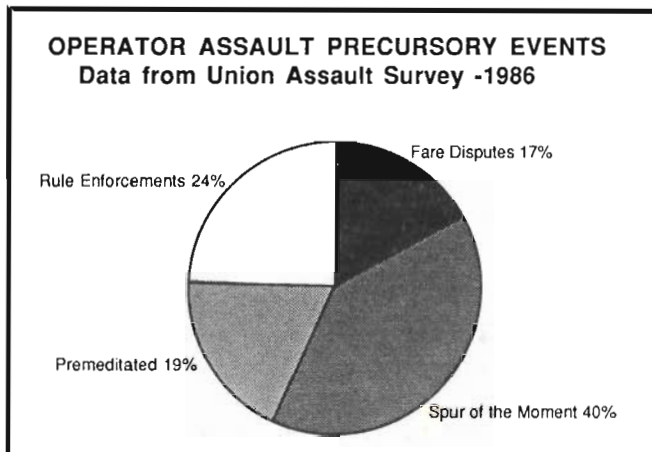
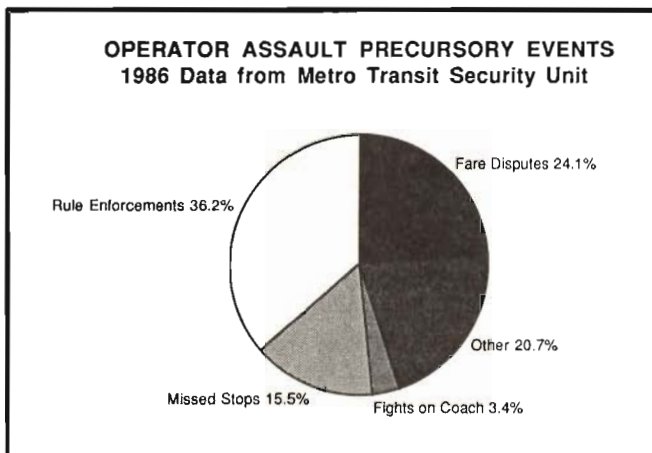


FIGURE 2



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RESULTS continued

The charts above represent numbers taken from the union survey and from Metro. The union survey happened to use two of the same categories as those used by Metro and it is interesting that the operators answering the survey did not report fare enforcements or fare disputes contributing to their assaults to the same degree that Metro did. Apparently most of the drivers felt assaults really had no cause and were unjustifiable.

Many drivers commented that unclear policy enforcement procedures set them up for assault: "The behaviors escalate until you must enforce policy.... After the assault the response is o.k., but before an assault their response leaves you unsupported, with no backing."

III. EFFECT OF ASSAULT

Of those reporting being assaulted, 202 responded to questions about the effects of their assaults.

- 33% lost time from work
- 67% lost no time

Of those who lost time, 64 respondents indicated actual time loss totaling 6,880 work hours for an average of 107.5 work hours per assaulted driver. One respondent left driving completely after the assault. Most respondents said they had been very adversely affected and a few were affected financially.

Emotional effects included loss of trust in the company, fear of the public and feelings of anger:

- "I felt completely on my own, that it's up to me to look out for myself, that the company won't help me."
- "Makes you start looking at everyone wondering if they are on booze or drugs and waiting for someone to work you over."
- "Became paranoid about saying anything to anyone on the bus."

- "I had a hunting knife waved in my face. He didn't stick me physically, but the mental effect was almost as bad. He threatened to slice me up, get me later, kill me, etc., etc."

Impact of assault on family and friends:

- "Felt violated, wanted revenge. Wife wanted me to give notice, children were scared."
- Therapy and stress, not comfortable around people, divorce."

After the assault, many drivers said they suffered **further victimization**:

- "It's always the victim's fault for getting assaulted."
- "It's always the driver's fault, apathy by the company, union, justice system."
- "The 'customer is always right' philosophy has gone too far if the assault victim is made to feel like the guilty party."

IV. RETURN TO WORK

When returning to work, drivers were **uncomfortable enforcing any of Metro's policies**:

- "I never question anything. I never see or hear anything that goes on on the bus."
- "Caught between a rock and a hard place. Can't enforce Metro policy without risk of assault or harassment."

A number of drivers had **worries about the assailants returning**: "I had to face the same route and same people on a nightly basis."

Others **wanted adequate training** before they returned to work after their assault.

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RESULTS continued

V. RESPONSE TO ASSAULT

There was no significant difference in response between males and females in most areas.

	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Not Satisfied</u>
Coordinator Service	63%	37%
Supervisor	71%	29%
Metro Police	43%	57%
SPD	71%	29%
Fire/Medic	64%	36%
Hospital	68%	32%
Union	34%	66%
Base		
Windowperson*	68%	32%

*No significant differences among bases. Females reported a better response than average; 75% were satisfied by the response of the windowperson.

	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Not Satisfied</u>
Base Chief	45%	55%
By Base		
Bellevue	92%	8%
Central	44%	56%
East	29%	71%
Mercer	39%	61%
South	27%	73%

Coordinators were the subject of many of the comments written in the survey. Though most respondents (63%) were happy with how the coordinator handled their assault, those who were unhappy were very unhappy. A few drivers had BO radios during their assaults. Respondents said coordinators asked too many questions before sending the police and that some coordinators didn't seem to care about the assault at all: "Some coordinators need to take confrontations seriously, respond more swiftly."

Supervisors and windowpeople had very high ratings for good response to assault: "Service supervisor acted sensitively."

Low marks were given to **Metro Police Agents** mainly for being absent or late to the scene:

- "About MPAs: We have a start, but they haven't been there when I need them."

- "Metro security is often not where the action is -- or where are they when we need them?"

Base chiefs and the union came in for their share of fire too:

- "Everytime a problem starts to unfold on the bus, I am afraid it will grow until I will have to go see a base chief and find out all the ways it was my fault."

- "Chief denied classification of assault, minimized."

- "No response from base chief. Metro never prosecuted assailants who were regular passengers and who rode again several times after the assault."

- "No contact or support of any kind from the union."

It is interesting to note that East Base had the highest level of dissatisfaction with the base chief response to the assault.

VI. METRO'S SECURITY PROGRAM

98% of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the present security program and would like to see improvement. At the time of the survey last fall, people frequently commented on the lack of visible security:

- "Understaffed, underfunded, unclear objectives."

- "Statistically, effective - practically, ineffective."

- "Mostly PR. Haven't seen a UPO on my coach in 5 years. I requested officers on certain routes and never saw them."

- "Why isn't it more preventative?"

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RESULTS continued

There seemed to be a consensus among the respondents about the need for more officers:

- "Full-time transit police to patrol and enforce laws on buses and at bus stops."
- "Insufficient number of agents and none on routes out in the county."
- "More UPOs; we're there to drive, not solve violent problems."
- "Metro should invest a little money for more security officers on routes and they'll probably have lots more money in the long-run by protecting their drivers."

Metro's Security Budget Compared to Other Agencies

As reflected in this last comment, many people have voiced questions about funding levels for security at Metro. The union and the assault committee have been able to gather some information.

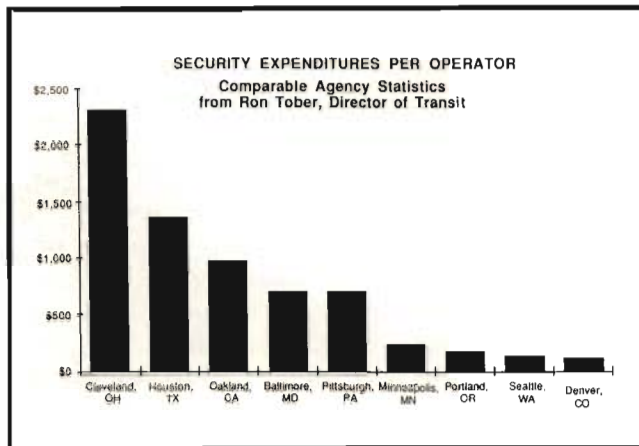
In a memo to Steve Grissom on January 21, 1987, Chuck Cox supplied the following information about the 1987 Metro Security budget:

Security Coordinator	\$ 37,392
MPA Salaries	273,676*
Wallace [Security]	15,253
Other (misc. supplies, etc.)	<u>35,982</u>
Total	\$362,303

*Annual budget for ten officers per day, working in two cars in the afternoon and three cars at night.

The information in Figure 3 is taken from "Bus Operator Security," a report by Ron Tober, director of transit.

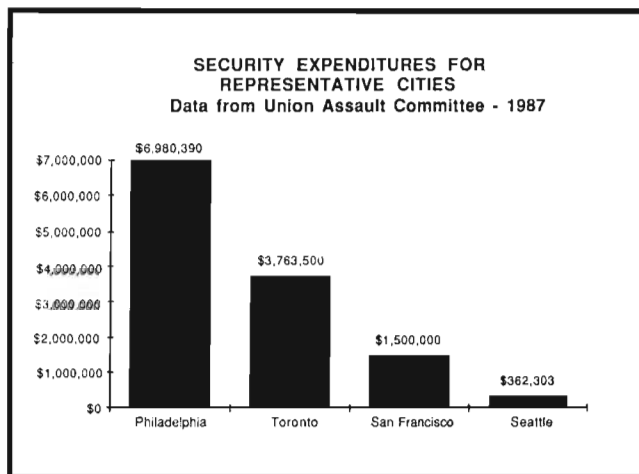
FIGURE 3



Of the transit systems that Ron Tober considers comparable to Seattle, only Denver spends less on security. Denver also had fewer assaults than Seattle in 1986 and 744 coaches on the road compared to Seattle's 1100. Of the cities listed, all but Minneapolis, Portland and Seattle have their own transit police departments. Seattle relies on off-duty SPD officers working overtime.

The Union Assault Committee has also been in communication with other properties and turned up additional figures relating to security expenditures. San Francisco's security is especially interesting because they have a special transit police detail operated by the SFPD. They have turned around an especially bad security situation that involved the deaths of two drivers a few years ago.

FIGURE 4



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RESULTS continued**Conclusion**

Information about the security budget, the number of assaults and numbers of UPOs (now called Metro Police Agents or MPAs) is slowly being shared with the union by management. In return, the union has presented this data and the comments from the union assault survey to management.

This process is still flawed and disagreements over the numbers occur often such as the reporting of 4 assaults instead of 8 for the month of January in the base operations bulletin.

Even when the numbers can be agreed on, the union and Metro draw different conclusions. Tober has said that his statistics indicate that the amount of money spent on security in other systems does not necessarily produce a reduction in assaults. The union's position is that security at Metro is seriously underfunded.

The "Number One" transit company in the nation can certainly go a long way towards providing leadership in protecting their operators and the riding public by increasing their MPAs to a level that is effective and by funding security appropriately. Only then should they rely on second-step measures such as training.

Metro can only benefit from visibly increased security. As one driver wrote: "It is important to promote a safer atmosphere. Safer image means more passengers and more service and jobs."

Special Thanks

The Union Assault Committee wishes to thank Robert Brawnwart of Academic Text Processing for his time and computer expertise in compiling the survey results. ■

Words to the wise

by Brad Smith

- Your flesh and bones are more important than any rule enforcement, policy or fare collection.
- Metro tells you time and again to "assess each situation and use your best judgment." However, experience is both the father and the mother of judgment. Be sure that all your "learning experiences" are **safe**. When in doubt, get assistance. If assistance is not immediately available, **do** what's necessary to stay healthy and whole. Always go home in as good shape as you were when you went to work.
- If a confrontation begins to develop, the important thing is to end it, not win it.
- Your most effective weapon is your brain.
- **Assume** that you are alone. All alone. Nobody is going to come out and help you collect that ten cent peak-hour surcharge or make that person stop eating that hamburger. Don't put yourself at risk. Let some things go.
- Just as every gun should be considered loaded, every sleeping passenger should be considered violent.
- "Who rides Metro? People just like you." For the most part that's true. Cut people the same kind of slack you'd want cut for yourself. ■

Local 587 assault committees

by Brad Smith

Tackling the problem of assaults has required lots of time, energy, thought, determination. And meetings. Lots and lots of meetings. From that process, a structure has evolved that we hope will provide an effective and positive way to channel the anger we all feel when one of our union sisters or brothers is assaulted. This article is about that structure.

At present, there are five main bodies which are addressing themselves to the problem of driver assaults: the Union Core Committee, the Union/Management Security Task Force, the Union Base Assault Committees, the Sexual Harassment Committee and the Union/Metro Security Committees.

1. The Union Core Committee

This group consists of those people (plus several others) who first went to the membership in October to get this whole effort started. It now meets under the chairmanship of Dan Linville. Among its various functions are: gathering information about assaults, planning and coordinating union action relating to this problem and meeting with management to voice Local 587 members' concerns about security and other assault-related matters.

The core group wrote, distributed and tabulated the assault survey. They wrote to other local unions to find out about assaults and security in other cities. Some members have developed valuable contacts with the media and law enforcement people and agencies. Others gather information by listening to scanners and soliciting information from fellow drivers.

They've helped with the leafletting at the West Seattle Junction, and Dan Linville's and Don Melton's press conference at Harborview. In the future, they want to help set up the union base committees and serve as a conduit for information among them and as a means of coordinating their efforts.

2. The Union/Management Security Task Force

This group meets twice a month and includes members of the core group and representatives of Metro. They've reviewed Metro's fare avoidance program and given feedback on the training program which the company hopes to put in place later this year. They've told Metro that we need more security and have tried to make them see the value of an expanded MPA program. And they've tried to get facts and figures from Metro about assaults.

3. Union Base Assault Committees

Operators from Central Base have gotten together to start a pilot program that other bases can use when they set up their own committees. These meetings are open to any interested member of Local 587. The Central Base Committee has identified these areas on which to focus:

- **Driver Support.** This includes efforts like making someone available to serve as a helper (with things like paperwork and post-assault procedures), advocate and friend.
- **Monitoring.** Reviewing incident reports and/or soliciting driver comments and concerns.
- **Investigation.** Reviewing areas of concern, i.e., comfort stations, open door policy, etc.
- **Information and involvement.** Maintaining a bulletin board on which assault information can be posted. Organizing groups of Local 587 members to attend assailants' trials. Political action through COPE and other avenues. Community outreach through schools, churches, youth organizations, etc.

4. The Union/Management Sexual Harassment Committee

This ad hoc committee of management and concerned women drivers has met twice to generate ideas about ways to provide a more sympathetic and supportive atmosphere in which women can report instances of sexual harassment.

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