



AMALGAMATED TRANSIT UNION

Division 757

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May 31, 2017

Dear Union Members, Transit Riders, and the Greater Portland Community,

Amalgamated Transit Union Local 757 leadership wishes to express our deepest sympathy for the victims and survivors of the brutal white supremacist assault that occurred on public transit in Portland on Friday, May 26, 2017.

Transit riders Rick Best and Taliesin Myrddin Namkai-Meche sacrificed their lives to protect two young women of color from the escalating racist and anti-Muslim abuse of a known Portland fascist. A third brave individual, Micah David-Cole Fletcher, was also severely injured while intervening but is thankfully recovering at home after a few nights in the hospital. These three heroes, the two young women of color who were the original targets of the assault, and the scores of traumatized witnesses aboard the train that day will never be forgotten by their union brothers and sisters at ATU 757.

Donations are being made to the individuals most impacted by this horrific tragedy to help them cover medical and other expenses, and union leadership will continue to strengthen our relationships with anti-racist, anti-fascist organizations throughout Oregon to ensure that all people feel welcome and safe aboard public transit in our state.

In addition to our support for victims and survivors, we also wish to express our strong opposition to the reactionary proposal from TriMet management and others to increase the presence of armed police officers aboard our transit system in the wake of this horrific tragedy. Consistent with testimony we provided to the TriMet Board of Directors just two days prior to the attack, we remain committed to a demilitarized, decriminalized public transit system. As the men and women who operate, maintain, and know Portland's public transit system the best, we are confident that alternatives to militarization are the wise and just response to transit safety concerns.

This summer, ATU 757 is celebrating 100 years as the organized voice of transit workers in the Portland region. One of the many things our century of experience has taught us is that armed police officers aboard transit vehicles intimidate the public, reduce ridership, and provide little more than expensive security theatre. Police rarely respond to transit emergencies in a timely

manner because of the size and complexity of our transit system, and they must frequently respond to non-transit related situations in the community. Until or unless TriMet becomes a fare-free system, we advocate for a return to well-trained "Fare Inspectors and Educators" aboard buses and trains who can deescalate and/or assess the proper response to dangerous situations, while also providing riders with information and support about our transit system. This is and always has been far less expensive and far more effective than expanding the police presence on transit, but TriMet has moved away from this model for over a decade now. We must all work together to reverse this trend.

ATU 757 also advocates for the immediate return of the Rider Advocate program. This program recruited and paid individuals from low-income communities and communities of color to ride our buses and trains as liaisons between operators, fare inspectors, riders, and even police. This program provided not only good jobs for community members, but familiar and respected faces aboard our buses and trains that made the entire system safer and more pleasant for workers and riders alike.

Finally, ATU 757 leadership is in solidarity with the many labor unions and other community groups that will rally in downtown Portland on June 4, in opposition to the growth of "alt-right" fascism in our community. ATU 757 members who are working on June 4 should be patient and prepared for any service disruptions that result from this rally. If you have any questions about the union's position on this or any related matter, please contact the ATU 757 Public Policy Coordinator, Jared Franz, at jaredf@atu757.org or 503-232-9144.

In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shirley Block". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Shirley Block
President-Business Representative