President’s Roundup

By Shirley Block

TriMet insists on treating our members like they are INMATES. I was told in my Labor/Management meeting on April 30, 2019, that they are going to be moving forward with putting ID numbers on the uniforms. It will be part of the logo patch and there won’t be any additional costs for future uniforms. Does TriMet really think this makes an operator feel good about this just because they are told that this addition won’t cost them? Does TriMet really think this makes it okay? Saying that it won’t cost the operator is a lie, too, because the cost is coming out of their uniform allowance.

We received three reports of operator assaults during the last week of April and first week of May. I stress this over and over; PLEASE don’t try to collect fares. I was told most of these assaults are around some type of fare issue.

On May 13, TriMet informed ATU about the Assault and Homicide Task Force that they have been working on for the past few months. TriMet had failed to do the research on assaults and how to handle them. They simply have a list of things that they’ve “written down.” Our members have been assaulted for years, and this is the first time that TriMet has taken action. This is not enough. We want to see results, and we need to know when we can expect to see them. TriMet has been working on this issue for months, and it is time for them to take action.

TriMet came to the ATU office on Monday, May 13, to inform us that they are going to be moving forward with putting ID numbers on the uniforms. It will be part of the logo patch and there won’t be any additional costs for future uniforms. Does TriMet really think this makes an operator feel good about this just because they are told that this addition won’t cost them? Does TriMet really think this makes it okay? Saying that it won’t cost the operator is a lie, too, because the cost is coming out of their uniform allowance.

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We found out after negotiations that MTR wasn’t truthful at the table about the amount of money they have in their contract for operations. The members unanimously voted NO on the contract. Not a single yes. MTR is making money on the backs of our members. They didn’t bring the wages up to a livable wage. They have the maintenance man working in unsafe conditions and most of the time he works by himself for his entire shift. Suppose he is by himself and he is seriously injured? How long will it take for someone to find him and get him help? They tell us a manager will check on him when there is one at the yard. Are you kidding me? They could do some aggressive recruiting to hire a much-needed bus washer.

If you want people to ride public transit, you need to keep those buses clean!

Vice President’s Report

ATU meets with Labor Commissioner

By Jonathan Hunt

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

What if your job didn’t have a bathroom; where would you go? It’s something most people don’t even have to think about, but bathroom access is a serious workplace issue for transit operators. ATU leaders nationwide have been tackling this problem head-on for many years.

It was a very sad day in transit history when TriMet bus operator Diane Boothe was said to have been in a hurry to take a restroom break when she was crushed to death by her bus on Nov. 2, 2004. Boothe was an active union member and a participant in the union’s “Take A Break” campaign. In her memory, ATU drivers donned yellow drop-shaped pins, symbolizing their demand to be given an opportunity to take restroom breaks without inconveniencing their passengers.

Hundreds of bus drivers surveyed by the Union report that an inability to take restroom breaks is a serious problem. It is one of those issues we can never let up on!

In an effort to bring more understanding to this issue, ATU International has created a 12-page comic book that lifts the lid, pardon the pun, on just how unpredictable and difficult it can be to find relief while driving a bus on a tight schedule.

Please access the comic book, download and share it at: https://www.atu757.org/the-right-to-pee/

In May 2018, our Local partnered with Portland Jobs with Justice to hold a hearing for the Portland-area Workers’ Rights Board to highlight labor and human rights abuses in TriMet’s LIFT paratransit service. I’d like to point out that LIFT is operated by an outside contractor, First Transit, which is a multinational corporation based in Scotland. The testimony by both riders and drivers was shocking. It’s a must read!

You can access the Workers’ Rights Board’s full report at the following link: https://portlandjobswithjustice.files.wordpress.com/2018/07/final-report_wrb-paratransit.pdf

Through testimony, the Board heard about a model that sets the Gold Standard for how paratransit should operate. C-VAN, the in-house service operated by C-TRAN in Vancouver, is a great place to find real solutions and not just talk.

On April 29, a team from ATU 757 met with Labor Commissioner Val Hoyle on April 29 to discuss ongoing complaints being reported by workers at First Transit, a Scotland-based company under contract with TriMet to provide LIFT service.

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This month at Powell, two new disciplinary grievances were filed. It will probably be a month or so before they are both heard, because TriMet’s Labor Department is taking forever to respond to grievances or to get back to managers about any discipline.

We had a contract meeting that was open to all TriMet union members on May 4. During the eight-hour meeting we discussed the suggestions that have been made so far for negotiations. About 35 members showed up at the meeting. I hope that more people will attend future meetings to help us decide what we should ask for in our new contract.

I want to touch on accidents again. Right-side clearance remains at the top of the list, and it’s an easy one to avoid. Always check your mirror when turning and look ahead when pulling into a stop. Leave room so you don’t hit your mirror going in or out of the stop. It’s easy to avoid. You’re already looking those directions turning or at the stop.

This month at Powell, two new disciplinary grievances were filed. Many grievances have been to discipline, I will fight with all my soul! I want to encourage anyone who wants to step up and be a shop steward. This union is only as strong as those who are willing to make it better. As much as we all want to have leaders to run this union, every single one of you ARE this union! Speak, vote, and get involved!

We are looking for those who are available to help on August 4th for your Union Picnic at Blue Lake Park! I have been put in charge of the First Aid station. Help is needed staffing this and office booths. If you would like to get involved, just send me an email at atu757merlo@gmail.com or call 971-344-6461.

I would like to congratulate Mr. Alexander Scott on his promotion to Station Agent! He tried very hard to get this advancement! His Union Rep Fred Casey will make sure he has a quick and effective training. We all think he will do a fantastic job! Go get it, good sir! Starting this weekend, I will be on vacation for the next three weeks. That doesn’t mean I will be away completely. If you need help while I’m away, please call Gene Marsh at 360-907-3746. He is the Extra Board Liaison Officer and is a union officer. He will be spreading the meetings with shop steward Mark Harris. If there is a problem, give me a call and I will try to fix it. Grievances will be handled by myself as normal.

Keep up the good work you all do and remember to support each other. No one is alone here! In solidarity,

Happy Rails, friends!
Summer is fast approaching. Along with less school kiddos, we get Saturday Market, and the string of parades and festivals. Patience is always good, but often hard with some of the continual things we see from people doing crazy things around the train.

If what is happening outside of the cab stress us, we take a moment to get yourself calm. This goes along with what I continually say, when you are at the end of the line, NEVER “turn and burn.” ALWAYS get out of the cab, use the restroom, get some more water, and take a breath. Do not sacrifice your sanity for a bad trip or a bad schedule. Operating a train is hard enough without being in the right frame of mind. The other side is, if you continue to try to fix a bad run by breaking rules, sacrificing your body and mind, it will never get fixed. If it is a bad run, report it via the Rail Operator Gateway. If it is a bad trip, make sure you are ready to operate your train before you step into the cab.

GOOD NEWS!! The new call boards are moving forward! TriMet is starting to put up some of the new designs in the report areas. Make sure you take time to look at them.

Lastly, take a moment and mind your speed. This applies when you are operating your LRV and your personal vehicle. I have been having some conversations with more than one person that has received some pretty serious tickets in their personal vehicles. These tickets have the potential to impact your CDL. If you get a serious ticket, that is anything over 15 mph, and/or a ticket for reckless driving, call me so I can let you know what your options are. Better yet… don’t speed.

The SIP program is still off the rails, and as such, many grievances have been filed. Until TriMet understands that it cannot just implement things that directly lead to discipline, I will fight with all my soul!
Back from the other fun side of the wall. Be optimistic... you are only as old as you feel. Don't be pessimistic... and do not buy green bananas 'cuz you may not get to see them ripen.

There is so much to do in the City of Roses. I was at the Lake Theatre in Lake Oswego catching the Duffy Bishop Band. Ooolala! Great tunes! Waterfront Blues Festival is happening in July. Beer Fest as well. The Beatles Exhibit is coming to the Oregon Historical Society and is free to Multnomah County residents.

If you are bored in retirement... you need to volunteer. I just rode Sunday’s Parkways as a mobile bike helper. Repair questions, first aid, directions etc. Get exercise and be part of a great event. Everyone blended in harmony muy bueno!

Next month is NE. I also volunteer on a nature trail behind my Hillsdale home. Weeds, gravel path, etc. Give back to the community. It’s good for you and good for all! Todo bien!

Even when in Nayarit, Mexico, I volunteer recycling plastic. Wired bins are scattered around town to collect water bottles and other plastic. Twelve tons of plastic was recycled last year in our town!

Remember to join us for the ATU Retirees’ Picnic, which begins at 11:00 a.m. on July 10th at Woodstock Park. It’s a good time to catch up with yer ol’ cronies. Live to enjoy! Life is zooming by quickly! Enjoy the ride! Use that four-letter word more often!

CHEERS! SALUD! SLAINE! L’CHIAM! MABUHAY! PROST! KANPAI! TO YOUR HEALTH!

The following retirees are celebrating June birthdays:

Names in bold print/caps are our 50-year retirees — thank you for your service, sisters & brothers!

IN MEMORIAM: Michael Beamer; Vern Collins and Kenneth Olsen.

The ATU-757 Retired Members’ Chapter Meeting will be the Retiree’s Annual Picnic on Wednesday, July 10th at 11:00 a.m. at Woodstock Park.
Families can be affected by off-shift work schedules

By Mary Longoria
Sisters and Brothers,

I want to write a bit about the transportation industry and the experiences my family went through when my husband Jamie started working at TriMet. We were a young couple with two young kids, ages seven and five. We had both been laid off from Precision Castparts and were taking classes at Mt Hood Community College through the dislocated worker program. It was 1995 and TriMet was hiring. Jamie applied and was hired. TriMet had great benefits and paid a fair wage; with two kids, a mortgage, and bills coming in, the shifts really weren’t even considered. We knew they were a seniority-based union shop and in time, a day-shift position would eventually be available. We just didn’t really know how long that would be.

I must say, I wasn’t prepared for the emotional rollercoaster that was about to happen. I’m a strong person, I can handle being home alone with the kids at night until a better shift opens. We really had not thought about the affect it would have on the kids. It took a while before the strain of being home alone took hold to myself, the kids, and my husband.

As the kids grew older the question was always “is dad going to be here” for my game, my band performance, to play, to go to the park, anything? I think it was one of the most difficult questions to answer because it usually was “he’s working.” I worked days, so I could attend all the functions, but it certainly would have been nice to have “dad” with me for support. Sometimes it felt like I was a single parent.

Life goes on with or without a partner by your side. Baseball and softball games are played, first kisses, first dances, all kinds of firsts that are missed by the loved one who works a night shift, split shift, weekends, holidays. Transportation work is a family affair. It affects every person in the family nucleus, and what is sacrificed by each family member can never be recaptured.

After many years, we started having family meetings (I wish we would have started sooner) when we could have everyone together. It became a great way to release stress, let dad know that he was missed, exciting things that had happened, and what was coming up.

It was a tough road, but one I certainly wouldn’t change. We were able to take our kids to the doctor, go on vacations, get braces, and both kids had the opportunity to go to college.

My final thought is communication for us was the key. Try to have family meetings with everyone involved, kids or no kids. Be honest with each other about your frustrations about either being at home or being at work. Let the kids talk about what they are experiencing about missing the parent, aunt, uncle, whoever’s seat is empty at the table. If you have trouble, reach out to others. Some employers have assistance programs for their employees. Don’t be afraid to use it.

ATU and TriMet negotiated EAP coverage through Cascade Centers, Inc. You can contact them at 503-639-3009.

I want to thank my husband, Jamie, and all the other families that are affected by off-shift work. Their sacrifice is appreciated and without them there is no transportation for our community.