

# AMALGAMATED TRANSIT UNION DISPATCH



## Striking Local 689 Loudoun County Transit Workers Are Holding the Line

Today marks ten days that our Local **689**-Washington, DC, members working for Loudoun County Transit private contractor Keolis will have been on strike. The 130 workers who operate, maintain, and dispatch buses went on strike last Wednesday, January 11, at 3 a.m. From the very beginning, our members have been strong and united against Keolis, a French multinational corporation and one of the largest public transit operators in the U.S. Low wages are at the center of the strike, forcing many of our members to move out of the county, with Loudoun County being one of the country's most expensive places to live, Keolis underbid the contract to operate bus service, severely impacting our Local 689 members who keep the system moving. On the second day of the strike, the company put their 'last, best, and final' offer on the table, resulting in our members walking out of negotiations after an insulting proposal that fails to address our issues. Our members are standing strong and biding their time on the picket line until they get what they're due.

[WATCH VIDEO](#)

## Our Denver, CO, Local 1001 Demands Action with Train Operators Exposed to Meth, Fentanyl on Daily Basis



Our Local **1001**-Denver, CO, members working for RTD have been sounding the alarm about drug use on their buses and trains for years. Now that various public buildings have been found to be contaminated as well, including public libraries and civic centers, their plea for enforcement is getting louder. Operators say this is a huge problem affecting service, with at least one report from a whistleblower saying a vehicle was abandoned after a driver came in secondhand contact with drugs and had to be driven home by a supervisor.

"I can just tell they are fed up because they can't get any help," said the whistleblower, pointing out that operators are being exposed to meth and fentanyl use on a daily basis. "Upon reporting that, they are told to air out their train and let them know if they can't continue." Local Vice President Ronald Short says that ever since Union Station has been cleaned up, drug use has moved onto trains and buses. "Fentanyl, meth, marijuana, a whole gambit of different drugs," said Short. "We've had several train operators on the W line that were exposed as well as bus operators." The Local is pushing for RTD and special forces to step up to deal with the illegal behavior affecting the health of passengers and our operators.

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## International President Costa in Phoenix, AZ, for ATU Northwest Conference Board



ATU International President John Costa and International Executive Vice President Yvette Trujillo recently travelled to Phoenix, AZ, to attend the ATU Northwest Conference Board meeting chaired by Local **1433**-Phoenix, AZ, President Bob Bean. Costa addressed the Locals in attendance about the successes and the challenges of the last year and what's on the horizon for the ATU in the year ahead. He discussed the strikes our Union has undertaken, including the current strike in Loudoun County, Virginia, our Union's initiatives

on apprenticeships and workforce development, training to prepare our members for the transition to zero emission buses, contract fights, our push for protections to combat the epidemic of attacks on our members, and other important issues. Also in attendance addressing attendees were International Vice Presidents Jim Lindsay, John Callahan, and Art Aguilar, along with International Representative Michael Cornelius.

## Our Local 714-Portland, ME, Brother Chris Varian Helps Save Overdose Victim's Life



A little after noon on December 8, our Local **714**-Portland, ME, member Chris Varian noticed something was wrong at the back of his bus. It was the last round on the inbound bus for the drug treatment clinic, and he had just picked up several patients. As he was stopped waiting for a large family to board, he noticed that one of the men from the clinic was pacing around nervously. After they finally boarded, he was alerted to someone overdosing on the bus. Varian immediately unbuckled his seat belt and rushed to the back of the

bus., finding a man collapsed unconscious with his lips turning blue. After calling in the emergency to dispatch, he went to the back of the bus, lifted the man's head, and began administering chest compressions. "I wasn't able to give mouth-to-mouth because I was concerned about getting exposed to fentanyl, and I didn't think I had a breathing apparatus for him." After pumping and pumping on the roughly 240-pound man, Varian instructed one of the man's friends to take over while he went back to the front of the bus to check in with the dispatcher. With an emergency medical crew on the way, he returned to the unconscious man. One of the man's friends had administered the opioid overdose reversal drug naloxone. As he continued CPR, suddenly, the naloxone began to take effect. "Taking a life is one thing, but bringing someone back from the depths is pretty intense," said Varian. Soon the paramedics arrived. Varian says he is now putting together an emergency CPR kit with a breathing apparatus because overdoses are happening so frequently these days. We applaud Brother Varian's swift and compassionate actions that helped save a man's life.

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## In Wake of Multiple Incidents of Guns Pointed at Bus Operators, Our Edmonton, AB, Local 569 Demands More Power for Transit Peace Officers



Our Local **569**-Edmonton, AB, is sounding the alarm about safety on the Edmonton Transit Service after bus operators had guns pointed at them on two separate occasions in ten days. "It's a very traumatic experience for an operator, I can tell you. It's not an easy day to go home from an incident like that, particularly when a firearm is pointed at you," said Local President Steve Bradshaw. "The drivers are traumatized, but they're recovering. They're strong individuals, and they're coming along. They've had a little bit of time off, and they're getting the

appropriate support." The city has approved funding for additional transit peace officers, but the Local wants to see more powers granted to them. "They don't have authority to enforce, for example, the mental health act, they need to be able to do that," said Bradshaw. "They need to be able to make arrests for outstanding warrants. They can't do that."

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## Gen Z Is Most Pro-Union Generation



Despite the steady decline in union membership, there has been a rise in Americans who approve of labor unions, up from 64% to 71%, higher than ever since 1965. The rising approval rating is highest among young workers, including millennials and Gen Z. Strikes and organizing at companies like Starbucks, Amazon, and major universities have been led by teens and people in their 20s on the frontlines. "Gen Z is the most pro-union generation alive in America today and is more supportive than Gen Xers, and baby boomers were at our age," said Aurelia Glass, a researcher and

member of Gen Z at the Center for American Progress. One of the significant drivers for young people supporting organized labor is simple economics. Not being able to afford necessities like rent, health insurance, or student loan payments are all motivations to join a union. Although Millennials and Gen Z are the most educated generations, they're finding the chances of higher incomes, more career opportunities, and ever owning a home simply out of reach. "You don't have to accept your working conditions that you're unhappy with," said Zach Goldberg about the struggles of his generation. "You have the power to change them. And the way that you do that — which I think is very profound and powerful — is just to talk to your co-workers about it and get everyone to collectively come together and build power against the boss."

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## Local Presidents Polish Skills at President's Refresher Training



This week, more than 60 Local Presidents took part in a Local President's Refresher Training on Roberts Rules and Running Meetings. International President John Costa kicked off the training by thanking the Local leaders for their commitment and dedication to our members and our Union over the past few challenging years. Costa talked about the ongoing strike of our more than 130 members at Local **689**-Washington, DC, working for Loudoun County Transit contractor Keolis, and how our Union is fighting back against our

transit agencies contracting out to these private transit companies. International Executive Vice President Yvette Trujillo also attended the training. Conducted by Jim Slaughter, an expert parliamentarian who works with several National and International Unions, the training provides both new and experienced Local Presidents the opportunity to refresh their skills for running union meetings, both at the executive board and membership level.