

With 'Cooling Off' Period Nearing End, MTA Prepares for Possible Strike

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(August 29) With the "cooling off" period in the contract bargaining talks between the MTA and its three major unions set to end at 12:01 a.m., Sept. 5, the agency is gearing up for strike conditions.

In the event of a work stoppage, no Metro Rail service would be offered and only six Metro Bus lines operated by the MTA's existing bus contractors would be in service. LADOT and other municipal transit lines would be expected to increase service to handle heavier passenger loads, but won't be operating Metro Bus lines.

Some 600 non-contract employees, who have received special training over the past several weeks, would be assigned to augment reduced staffs at the operating divisions. Another 50 would work as customer information agents. All told, non-contract employees would fill a total of about 210, eight-hour shifts in a seven-day period.

Working since May

The MTA's 20-member Strike Contingency Task Force has been working since May to coordinate all aspects of the agency's response to the prospect of a work stoppage, according to Michelle Caldwell of the Office of the CEO.

The group has prepared an employee handbook for use during a strike. Five hundred will be printed and given to executive officers for distribution.

The handbook will include information on what to do in the event of a strike, whom to contact, parking arrangements, mail room hours and service, print shop hours and service and other details.

Should a work stoppage occur, employees assigned to augment Transit Operations would report to the operating divisions to fill in as office staffers and to handle such tasks as periodically starting bus engines to keep batteries charged. This is necessary, says Task Force leader Jon Hillmer, so buses will be immediately available for service.

Employees who need transportation to the operating divisions should make arrangements with the division transportation manager, Hillmer says. Each division will have vehicles available for carpool use by employees.

Some employees may find it necessary to drive their own vehicles to a temporarily assigned workplace. The MTA will reimburse these employees for the difference in mileage from their normal work locations. An employee who normally works at Headquarters, for example, but is assigned to an operating division for strike duty, would be reimbursed for the difference in mileage, if the total distance driven is more than the employee would normally drive to work.

MTA to validate parking

Employees who expect to drive to MTA Headquarters in the event of a strike would enter the parking structure through either of the parking lot entrances on the east and west sides of Vignes Street, south of Cesar Chavez. The MTA will validate parking tickets for employees who carpool to Headquarters.

The main pedestrian entrance will be through the Plaza doorway. Extra security will be posted at these and other building entrances, Hillmer

says.

The six Metro Bus lines the MTA plans to run in the event of a work stoppage are:

- **Line 21** - Wilshire Blvd. from Westwood to downtown LA
- **Line 30** - Pico Blvd. and East 1st St. from Pico/Rimpau Transit Center to East LA City College
- **Line 60** - Long Beach Blvd. from downtown LA to Long Beach
- **Line 204** - Vermont Ave. from Imperial Hwy. to Hollywood
- **Line 420** - San Fernando Valley to LA via Hollywood (from Van Nuys and Roscoe to downtown LA)
- **Line 888** - Generally follows the Metro Red Line route from Patsaouras Plaza to the Westlake/MacArthur Park.

"These preparations have taken several months to complete and have involved scores of employees," says Hillmer. "Hopefully, we can avoid a strike, altogether, and not have to put our preparations into practice."

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