

STATEMENT FROM YVONNE BRATHWAITE BURKE
Chair, MTA Board of Directors
September 16, 2000

The MTA calls upon the bus drivers' union to get our employees back to work and to get back to the bargaining table. That's what the MTA wants and that's what the public deserves. The MTA management is empowered to negotiate and is ready to resume negotiations immediately.

The MTA shares the public's outrage and frustration that the union has chosen to break off negotiations and leave Los Angeles' bus and rail riders stranded. The union walk out is unnecessary and terribly harmful to hundreds of thousands of poor and middle-class people who rely on public transportation to get to work, school, medical appointments and other essential needs.

It's time for the union to get serious about working with the MTA to find solutions and savings that will allow us to continue to expand our bus and rail service to meet the needs of our community. We have made multiple proposals to the union, all of which have been rejected, without any union alternatives proposed. It's time to get back to work.

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CHAIR, MTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS
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As many Los Angeles residents who depend on MTA buses and trains prepare to return to work or school on Monday, they face an unwelcome and unnecessary challenge: finding alternatives to public transportation. This problem is caused by one thing and one thing only – the bus drivers union walked out of negotiations with the MTA on Friday and called a strike, leaving hundreds of thousands of people stranded.

I am here with other members of the MTA Board to reiterate the MTA's call to the union to get our employees back to work and get back to the bargaining table. This strike is unnecessary, unreasonable and unconscionable. It should stop and it should stop now.

The bus drivers union is doing a terrible disservice to MTA customers, employees and all Los Angeles residents and taxpayers...

- By going out on strike and picketing our contractor sites, the union is refusing to allow even lifeline bus service to operate in our community. That leaves Los Angeles' poorest and most needy residents without any means of getting to work, school, doctor's appointments and other critical destinations. And, tomorrow, if this strike continues, all Los Angelenos will be impacted by what we expect to be a significant increase in traffic.
- By refusing to negotiate and rejecting the numerous contract proposals presented by the MTA – proposals that included wage increases, protection of benefits and a variety of ways of reducing MTA costs with minor impacts on employees – the union is thumbing its nose at the MTA and taxpayers, who understand that MTA must find efficiencies and cost savings in order to expand much-needed transportation services.
- By refusing to return to the bargaining table and refusing to offer any proposals, the bus drivers union is preventing us from reaching any possible solution to this crisis.

Today, I urge the bus drivers union to do three things:

- First, call an end to this strike. Stop holding our city's poor and middle-class residents hostage. Let the buses and trains run.
- Second, return to the bargaining table with a new commitment to find solutions and savings. The MTA must reduce its operating costs in order to continue to expand transit services to our community. We have already dramatically reduced overhead, but we need to find efficiencies in the labor costs covered by union contracts, which represent 70 percent of our operating costs.
- Third, immediately end your picketing at our contractor's sites and allow the MTA to operate the lifeline service that provides transportation to the poorest of the poor and the area's most needy residents.

We must find solutions and savings. We call on the unions to do just that.

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