



At right, Division 8 Operator Duane Bitner prepares his bus to resume service on the Line 150 owls. Division 3 operators Laura Davila and Tony Cortez, above, and Guadalupe Vela, below, are happy to return to work.



Favorable Vote Reflects Operators' Desire to Return to Work

(Oct. 18) Some Metro Bus operators were said to be so anxious to return to work, they went to the LA Convention Center Tuesday evening, dropped their ballots into the box, then headed for their divisions.

And the vote - 92 percent in favor of a new three-year contract, according to a UTU spokesman - reflected the operators' enthusiasm for getting back to work after a 32-day strike, the third longest in MTA history.

"We had operators sitting in their buses at 7:30 this evening waiting for the word to roll," said Tom Jasmin, Bus Operations superintendent. At 8:55 p.m., he gave the order sending buses out for overnight "owl service."

"Welcome Back" trip

Division 3 Operator Betty James, who hosted Mayor Richard Riordan and MTA Transit Operations chief Tom Conner on an early-morning "welcome back" trip before continuing in service to Eagle Rock Plaza, was overjoyed to be back on the job.



Division 3 operator Betty James hosted Mayor Riordan's early morning ride.

"I was so happy to see everyone at Division 3...my friends, all my managers and bosses," she said. "My passengers were happy, too. They thanked me one-by-one as they got off the bus."

Earlier in the day, the MTA Board voted unanimously to approve the labor agreement. The long-awaited end to negotiations was announced during a 7 a.m. news conference. The Reverend Jesse Jackson - who mediated the final round of talks - was surrounded by Board members and negotiators for the MTA and UTU.

"It is extremely good news that our employees approved the fair deal we reached with the UTU leadership earlier today, and I thank our employees for their support," said CEO Julian Burke. "This agreement will go a long way toward ensuring the long-term financial viability of the MTA."

Closer to being competitive

"By the end of this three-year agreement, combined with future administrative cost-cutting measures being implemented by management," he continued, "this agency will be much closer toward being competitive with other local transportation providers."

The new three-year contract between the MTA and UTU includes these terms:

- An increase in base wages over three years, including quarterly wage adjustments;
- A 1% increase in take-home pay resulting from increased MTA pension contributions;
- Maintenance of health and welfare benefits, with increased MTA contributions, if necessary;
- A reduction in the MTA's earlier request for an increase in part-time operators, but which results in an increase of 50% more part-time positions over three years; and
- Slight modifications in scheduling rules that allow the MTA to make necessary savings in order to meet future service expansion goals.

Contract negotiations with the ATU and TCU are continuing.

'Welcome back' trip

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