

STRIKE STORIES

By John Drayton

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Like the rest of our department, I was assigned to strike duty that emphasized keeping our idle buses operational.

Since our department's engineers and technical staff were all pretty familiar with buses, most of us expected to pitch in with routine maintenance activities, such as running buses each day to keep batteries charged. Everyone thought this would be a short term assignment, one or two weeks at most. Nobody wanted a strike, and many were apprehensive about the break from our normal responsibilities.

I was assigned to help support Maintenance Manager Mike Bottone at Division 7. Each morning we started up about a third of Division 7's fleet, roughly 70-80 buses, and we let these buses run for about 45 minutes. We got to the point that four of us could "fire off" all of these buses within 20-30 minutes.

After a short coffee break, we'd reverse the process, shutting off engines and turning off battery switches. During shut-down, we'd look for oil or coolant leaks and any other obvious problems.

After my morning shift at Division 7, I'd often drop in at Gateway or RRC to make sure that my other responsibilities were covered too (at least to some extent).

During my weeks at Division 7, I saw a number of Gateway staff who stopped by (or were volunteered) to help with our daily bus starting drill. When the strike finally ended, we were proud that Division 7 reported few problems starting enough buses to make that first day's roll-out.

[Back to 'Strike Stories'](#)