



NEWS

Labor Negotiations Update #1
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MTA BOARD ASKS GOVERNOR WILSON NOT TO INVOKE 60-DAY COOLING-OFF PROVISION; DECLARES THERE IS NO NEED FOR CRIPPLING TRANSIT STRIKE

Believing that they can still negotiate to a successful conclusion, the MTA Board of Directors has asked Governor Pete Wilson not to invoke a state statute which provides for a 60-day labor contract negotiation cooling-off period.

"A cooling-off period would be nothing but a stall tactic by the unions' leadership," said Larry Zarian, MTA Board first vice chair and a Glendale city councilman. "We want there to be serious negotiations now. There is absolutely no reason for this region to suffer the effects of a bus and train strike.

"We are asking the union leadership to negotiate around the clock to reach a settlement. The public expects and deserves nothing less."

"The MTA's three largest unions have voted to authorize their leadership to call a strike, yet that same leadership immediately asked the Governor to stop them from striking for 60 days," said Gordon Krischer, MTA's labor contracts negotiator. "We are not clear why they are asking the Governor to keep themselves from striking. That is their decision to make."

Contracts with the MTA's three major labor unions expired Thursday, June 30. The three major unions are the United Transportation Union (UTU), which represents almost 4,400 bus and train operators, the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), which represents more than 1,900 mechanics and maintenance workers, and the Transportation Communications Union (TCU), representing 600 clerks.

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"The MTA wants to reassure the public that we do not want a walkout to occur involving our union personnel," said Franklin White, MTA's CEO. "What we want are meaningful labor negotiations that lead to an affordable set of labor agreements.

"At the same time, it is very clear the MTA Board believes that there is no need to ask the Governor to take the actions necessary to invoke a cooling-off period because the negotiations can continue to a resolution satisfactory to all the parties at the table," White continued. "No one is forcing any union to strike. That is a decision the union makes itself.

"We believe the unions can, and we certainly hope they will, continue to bargain in good faith and that a walkout can be averted," White added.

A three-member panel appointed by Governor Wilson met with negotiators Wednesday and reported to the Governor their findings the same day. By law, the Governor has up to seven days to determine whether to ask the Attorney General to seek an injunction which would start a cooling-off period.

"We have presented the unions a fair contract offer," White continued. "We do ask that the unions' leadership recognize the economic reality facing the MTA -- we have a \$126 million deficit and we must obtain labor savings to balance it."

White noted that the MTA has announced a service contingency plan to go into effect should there be a walkout. The MTA intends to operate service on five bus lines immediately, increasing to 18 over time. The Authority also plans to operate up to 100 buses within 24 hours of a strike notice, gradually increasing that number to 250 depending upon need and the length of a walkout.

The MTA also intends to operate Red and Blue line service. The bus and train contingency services would operate on weekdays from 6 a.m. until 6 p.m. only.

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"We have received emergency authorization from the MTA Board to contract with private carriers and other municipal operators to provide additional services," White said. "We are negotiating with these other carriers to provide even more service.

"The needs of the riding public must come first," he added. "If the leadership of the unions representing our operators, mechanics and clerks call a strike, we are prepared to provide as much service as we possibly can to help people get to their jobs, shopping centers and make other essential trips."

Details of the routes to be served will be released in advertisements next week. The public is encouraged to monitor media outlets for information on these services.

Substitute bus and train operators will have received training required by state law and will be fully certified before they operate MTA equipment, the MTA's CEO said. Train service would be provided by management supervisory personnel. "More than 100 personnel are ready to be fielded," White continued. "We plan to have a pool of up to 500 personnel available to operate our buses and trains.

"On behalf of the hundreds of thousands of people who depend upon us for their transportation every day, we urge the unions to negotiate so we can resolve all outstanding issues," White said.

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