



# NEWS

JUNE 21, 1994

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## **MTA STRIKE CONTINGENCY PLAN WOULD KEEP UP TO 250 BUSES, RED AND BLUE LINE TRAINS IN SERVICE IN CASE OF WORK STOPPAGE**

The MTA has formulated a contingency plan to prepare for any possible work stoppage that may occur, should MTA and the unions representing its operators, mechanics and clerks be unable to reach new contract agreements.

Three-year contract agreements with the United Transportation Union (UTU), which represents MTA's nearly 4,400 bus operators, the Amalgamated Transit Union, which represents more than 1,900 mechanics and service attendants, and the Transportation Communications Union, which represents more than 600 clerks, end on June 30. MTA has begun training non-contract employees and supervisors to operate and maintain buses as early as July 1, should the need arise.

MTA officials noted, however, in the unlikely event a strike occurred on July 1, state law provides for a 60-day "cooling off" period. Either MTA's Board of Directors or union officials may request Governor Pete Wilson to invoke what is known as the Lockyer provision, which would keep bus and train operators and mechanics at work at least until Aug. 31.

It is anticipated that the unions' leaders will seek strike authorization from their respective membership before July 1.

"We plan to train up to 500 substitute bus operators, and we are having discussions with municipal and private bus companies, because the needs of our riders must come first," said Franklin White, MTA's Chief Executive Officer. "We remain optimistic that we can reach agreements with our unions as we have in recent years, and avoid any strike. But we must be prepared in case there is a walkout."

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If necessary, MTA is prepared to serve as many riders as possible with a skeleton network of routes on 19 of MTA's busiest lines. The goal is to operate up to 50 buses during the first week, and gradually increase the number of buses in service to a maximum of 250. Contingency service would operate from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekdays only. The Blue Line and Red Line also would operate trains during those hours.

Substitute bus and train operators are receiving training required by state law. They will be fully licensed to operate MTA buses and trains, White said.

This is not the first time Los Angeles's major public transportation provider has had a strike contingency plan. A similar plan was formulated in 1988, but was never implemented because contract agreements were reached.

"Capping labor costs by freezing wages, changing work rules that increase the cost of service without improving quality or productivity, and bringing the MTA contribution to union health plans in line with industry practice are key management issues during negotiations," White said.

"We are facing a \$126 million operating deficit, and have already cut administrative positions, reduced outside contracts, and are seeking fare adjustments and service changes, as well as additional funding sources, to eliminate the deficit."

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