



On The Move

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MOVING FORWARD WITH CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS AND STRIKE PREPARATIONS

While negotiations are underway for new City, Suburban and Frontier contracts, all signs indicate that strike preparations are key to accomplishing the Union's objectives at the bargaining table, including an increase in wages and pensions, benefit improvements, and progress on non-economic issues relating to unjust discipline, due process, unfair use of surveillance cameras, and the protection of seniority rights when picking work, vacations, and in transfers and promotions.

As previously reported, SEPTA management is both hostile to the concerns of our members and seems incapable of working constructively to negotiate over contract issues important to our members. SEPTA management's philosophy is that it's "our way or the highway." This does not bode well for negotiating a new contract on schedule and without a strike. Take the issue of pension benefits, *for example*. SEPTA wants to "save money" by **doing away with our pension plan**, a benefit our members fought to achieve over many decades. Yet, here is SEPTA's pension proposal:

Revise Article VII of the contract to reduce the Authority's pension expenditures, including but not limited to the following: increase employees' paid-in pension contributions; **freeze the accrual of benefits for current participants in the pension plan** [if you have twenty years on the job, your pension benefits are capped at twenty years, any additional benefits would be based on your future contributions to a 401k type plan] and **close the plan to new hires**; provide that all current employees and new hires will participate in a new and less costly plan, such as a defined contribution 401k type plan.

In other words, SEPTA wants to eliminate our defined benefit pension that currently pays \$2,500 a month after 30 years of service and replace it with a 401k type plan for all TWU members from this point forward. At the same time, SEPTA managers will continue to receive an **uncapped** monthly pension benefit, based on the full amount of their annual earnings, along with a 10% match on their contributions to a 401(k) type plan! The Union will never agree to any such reduction in pension benefits. As President Willie Brown told SEPTA at the bargaining table, the Authority's chances of getting such outrageous concessions are "**as likely as a fish drowning.**" Instead, Local 234 is determined to raise the monthly pension benefit for future retirees.

In addition, SEPTA wants to "save money" by cutting retiree health care coverage, eliminating two paid holidays, reducing swing-run, vacation and travel allowance, while having our members pay for all increases in the cost of health care.

BUILDING SOLIDARITY BETWEEN UNIONS REPRESENTING SEPTA WORKERS

Given SEPTA's total disregard for the well-being of our members and their families, Local 234 is now stepping up its preparations for a strike. Here's some of the things you need to know about the Local's preparations.

- On February 15, 2014, the Local hosted a summit of local unions representing SEPTA workers. The summit brought together the leaders of virtually every local representing SEPTA employees, including the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (the "BLET" representing the regional rail), the United Transportation Union, Local 1594, representing operators at Victory Avenue, IBEW Local 744, the Teamsters, the Brotherhood of Maintenance and Way and the Fraternal Order of Transit Police. A number of important points of agreement came out of the summit meeting:

- (1) TWU, Local 234 is the largest union representing SEPTA workers and the Local is in a good position to set the pattern for other SEPTA contracts;

- (2) *Coordinated action* by as many locals as possible is the most effective way to accomplish Local 234's goals at the bargaining table;

- (3) There are four SEPTA contracts that expire between now and April 7, 2014. In addition, the BLET contract already expired and the BLET wants to exercise its right to strike under the Railway Labor Act, but has to first go through a complicated mediation process;

- (4) If negotiations fail, the unions representing SEPTA workers may all be on strike at the same time, idling bus, trolley, train and regional rail service for the first time ever.

STRIKE PREPARATIONS UNDERWAY

- The union staff is reaching out to local merchants and supermarkets to make arrangements for discounted food and other essentials TWU members and their families may need.

- Discussions are underway with the credit union to insure that emergency loans will be available, if necessary.

- A Joint Executive Board meeting has been scheduled for March 10, 2014 at the Union Hall. President Willie Brown will update the section officers on the status of negotiations and the Board will discuss strike strategies and plans for mobilizing the membership.

**GET READY, WHEN THE TIME COMES
WE MAY HAVE TO ACT ON SHORT NOTICE**