



# On The Move

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## SOLID 234 FIGHT FOR GOOD CONTRACT

A meeting of the “Solid 234” has been scheduled for Saturday, October 8, 2016 at 10:00 a.m. at the Union Hall. The “Solid 234” is a network of section officers, safety committee members and others who want to join the fight for a good contract by strengthening the Union’s leverage in negotiations with SEPTA, as the October 31, 2016 expiration deadline fast approaches.

The mission of the “Solid 234” is to educate, unify and organize the members, if we need to rumble over pension reform, health care and dignity on the job. All Local 234 members who are interested are encouraged to attend this important meeting. You’ll get the latest information on the status of the negotiations and the chance to be on the front lines in the contract fight.

### SEPTA Opens Assault on Our Medical Benefits

Health care is one of the most important benefits enjoyed by TWU members. Our HMO and PPO plans enable our families to receive excellent care with almost no out of pocket expenses. Our health benefits match or exceed the benefits of other public employees in the City and in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Over the years, we have sacrificed a lot to obtain top of the line health care coverage. **Now SEPTA wants to destroy the health benefits all of us hold dear.**

SEPTA is proposing huge savings that will cost us more and provide us with less. One SEPTA proposal is called the “**Consumer Directed Health Plan.**” While it may sound fancy, the Consumer Plan would be a financial disaster. Under the Plan, our members would have to pay an annual deductible of \$1,500 for single and \$3,000 for family coverage. After the *annual deductible*, we would be charged an Outpatient Hospital Copay of \$100 along with Office Copays.

SEPTA is also proposing a “**Base and Buy up Plan.**” Under the Base Plan, prescription copays, for example, would be \$11 for a generic, \$31 for a preferred brand and \$53 for non-preferred at retail, or \$22/\$62/\$106 for mail order. However, you can “*Buy Up*” to the current plan benefit of \$5/\$10/\$20 for a monthly cost of **1% of salary, plus \$352.19 for family coverage.**

Here’s another SEPTA brainchild. It’s called the “**Benchmark Plan Design.**” In other words reduce our coverage to the lowest common denominator. Office copays would increase to \$20/\$40; in-network deductibles would go from \$0 to \$1,000 for families; inpatient hospital copays from \$0 to \$250; outpatient from \$0 to \$100. SEPTA also wants to reduce HMO retiree coverage from 50 to 36 months.

We can’t give-up our health care coverage, it’s definitely something worth fighting over.

## **Contract Negotiations Pick up Steam**

Contract negotiations for new City, Suburban and Frontier TWU contracts are picking up steam. Several negotiating sessions have been held on the big economic issues, including pensions and health benefits (don't worry, wages have not been forgotten, they just come later in the process). Transportation and Maintenance subcommittees have been formed and a number of meetings have already been held.

**The Transportation Committee** is addressing the following issues: Increases in recovery and lunch times, improved working conditions and hours of work for slate operators, including the picking of a.m. or p.m. reports, job security for cashiers displaced by the new fare technology, unwarranted real-time surveillance, guarantee the right to transfer from one bus location to another ahead of new hires, operator assaults and the recording of telephone communications between operators and dispatchers to eliminate disputes about the nature and substance of operator call-outs, and more.

**The Maintenance Committee** is focused on improving vacation and day-off quotas, compensation for employees by-passed in the distribution of overtime, picking rights, calling out of the "sick book," worker participation in time studies and setting productivity goals, eliminating AWOL's for employees who call-in, but can't get-in during severe weather emergencies, the assignment of winter storm work utilizing "bobcat" type skid steer equipment to Construction Equipment Operators 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, penalizing the Authority for cross assigning employees between bargaining units without the Union's consent and the problems with the VMIS system when it is used to assess points under the attendance point system.

We will keep you updated, as the negotiations progress.

## **SEPTA wants to gut our sick leave, SAH Days and undermine FMLA**

SEPTA came to the bargaining table last week to complain about absenteeism. According to SEPTA, time off the job is a big problem that is leading to a lot of drafting and the assignment of overtime work to day-off people.

As a result, SEPTA wants to reduce our sick leave to no more than 36 days per year, force employees using FMLA to take vacation time and paid personals while on FMLA, and allow certain "good employees" to move up in seniority for picking work and vacations, even though they have less time on the job than those above them on the seniority list. These outrageous proposals, which assume that leave time is being abused, are non-starters.

After challenging the Authority's biased assumptions, the Union demanded that SEPTA produce documentation to substantiate their claims. We argued that if there was an issue with lost time, *the cause had to be determined* in order to fix the problem.

For example, if lost time is an issue for slate people than it could be that their grueling and erratic work hours, along with the stress of the job are causing the problem. If that's the case, SEPTA must address the issue of working conditions in order to fix the problem. That's why the Union is proposing stability and consistency in the hours of work and days off for slate operators.

# **WE MUST AND WE WILL!**