

President's/BA Report— Isaac O. Tate

WANTED: TRANSIT OPERATORS

WARNING: DANGEROUS & TOXIC WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT



Your Union continues to meet with the Employer in some instances marathon meetings, to try and identify not only ways to help recruit new Operator trainees, but how to keep the Operators we have. The agency wants (needs) to recruit Operators and has proposed different ideas in trying to do so. But your Union has another problem with this approach. If the agency is successful in recruiting, what is it they are willing to change to keep our new members? What is the agency willing to do to retain the present Operators? So far, **nothing**.

Will the agency continue down the path of hiring management and supervisory personnel with no Transit Operator background or experience whatsoever? Will the agency continue the hiring of individuals who have no knowledge whatsoever of the duties of Operators nor the realization as part of these duties and decisions that Operators make are not “black and white” every working day but fall in the category of “gray areas”? Will the agency continue the hiring and promotion of individuals in

Management positions that lack, no, have no idea whatsoever how to counsel an Operator because they have no “real life” experience? Will the agency continue hiring Managers who administer violations based on “black and white” rules because it’s easy “braindead” managing wherein their thought process need not be any deeper than what is written in the “disciplinary guidelines”? Will the agency continue hiring managers and supervisory personnel that either can’t, won’t or lack the backbone or necessary skills as managers to manage or supervise Operators as “individuals”? Will the agency continue hiring managers and supervisory personnel that lack the experience or wherewithal to take into consideration past records, job performance or service to the company? Will the agency continue to hire Managers and supervisory personnel who possess “limited skillset (s)” or are “consumed by fear” due to upper level directives or mandate(s) and lack the ability to differentiate and or understand the differences in experience and professionalism when arbitrarily treating a 2 year Operator the same as a 20 year Operator? Will the agency continue hiring manager (s) and supervisory personnel who don’t give a damn about Operator(s) in this agency? Will these managers and supervisory personnel with little or no conscious continue the practice of denigrating the Operator(s) upholding the agency mantra; “we can cut you down from “Hero to Zero” as fast as you can blink an eye?

But where does this come from?

Your Union's bet is Human Resources (HR). One only has to look at the disciplinary policies that were created in 2020 with the same parameters for workgroups "different as night and day", designed for maximum punishment/penalties.

Why, because there is a belief that this is the way one treats another deemed as "less human". If you

administer policies and maximum discipline, in their mind(s) that is all we can understand. The hell with morale. Wonder how that is working out for them? Well, the reality is at the present time pretty good. The agency is continuing to ride the "Covid is the reason for our shortcomings and inability to hire wave", although the same issues were occurring in 2018. I used to ask myself why would someone create a disciplinary policy that "limits or removes" the Manager or supervisory personnel's ability to counsel, or place limits on management or supervisory personnel in doing so? However I do now understand. For those of you who are not employees of Pierce Transit (PT) who read this newsletter be it members of the PT Board, members of other Locals, employees of other agencies or the general public, ever heard of an employee asking for help (safety or otherwise) from a manager and being told in the case of a video recording that if I see something wrong, I will have to discipline you. Wait what? Per the directive of (HR) integrity is frowned upon. And besides, if the individual offends again or recommit, said individual can be disciplined again (another kill). It is much the same as the person/people who wrote the policy, they don't understand the Operator's job, duties, or position. Over Union objections "counseling was removed and now we understand. The policy makers (HR) not having the ability or transit industry knowledge created policies "they understand" and can enforce that "remove" all the managerial skills and experience necessary for lower level managers and supervisory personnel to direct their subordinates and have "thrown them out the window". As Operators at one time we were supposed to be (HR)'s customers. Right. But in the (HR) customer business obviously they reserve the right to "refuse service to anyone". What truly seems to be lacking in their understanding is, if we treated customers on the road as (HR) does us, followed "black and white rules and guidelines", there wouldn't be any Operators, nor would there be customers. We're supposed to be (HR)s customers, what a crock.

Regarding the **Preventable Accident Discipline Policy**. An accident is defined as; an unfortunate incident that happens "unexpectedly and unintentionally", typically resulting in damage Why is there a 10 day suspension? Nothing says more to an Operator (especially a senior Operator) involved in an "accident" as defined, that we don't give a damn about you or your family. We're going to make you suffer for 14 days so that it really sinks in as too how screwed up an employee you are. We're going to make you suffer for 14 days to give you time to continuously roll it over and over again within your head whether this agency really wants me as an employee? Should I take 20 years of seniority and go elsewhere? You may miss a house or car payment, not be able to address an emergent family situation or provide a necessity for a loved one, but they really don't care. Again why? You had an accident, and (HR) doesn't believe in accidents even though statistics/analytics illustrate the very high likelihood of a Transit Operator's involvement in an accident (minor, serious or severe) due to the exposure to the public in a large vehicle in highly congested pedestrian and high traffic corridors. But on the plus side, after having a "severe preventable occurrence" resulting in "permanent disabling injuries" it increases your chances of a "Safety Coordinator" position. So maybe (HR) thinks it's worth it.



Before ending this article, I just wanted to let you know this attitude has been simmering since about 2014 when the then Executive Director of Administration was hired from the Department of Corrections (DOC). This individual then proceeded to bring in his compadres Labor Relations Officer and then (HR) manager from the (DOC). None having any transit industry background whatsoever. So that's where we're at today. I remember on occasion talking to the then Executive Director Administration regarding member issues. His response "yeah but everybody in prison was innocent too". A prevalent attitude to this date.

Maybe having that kind of mindset is the path going forward for transit agencies. Maybe the incoming Chief Operating Officer (COO) has the same. His introductory letter was woefully lacking in interpersonal skillsets, mostly inanimate objects which seems to be his forte. Not surprising because.....

This takes me to the CEO's 4/15/22 "Friday Message" in which it states; Chief Financial Officer Chris Schuler provided the group with a projection of our agency's revenues and expenses, **with a focus on capital projects**. But we as represented hourly employees receive Operations revenue. **Yeah, we're still nothing.**

Intimidation vs Safety

It has come to your Union's attention that during the weekend(s) that Operators who have completed 8 hour assignments are being threatened when refusing to work additional and or, overtime hours. This particular subject was discussed during the Pierce Transit contractual discussions wherein it was declared repeatedly by the agency that this does not occur. If indeed you refuse extra work and are directed to falsify a "blue" sick leave slip, please contact this office immediately.

Contract Ratification– RiverCities Transit

On March 15, 2022 our City of Longview "public employer" (River Cities Transit) Transit Operators, overwhelmingly ratified their contractual agreement with only one (1) member voting "no". There was money, some new concepts introduced regarding vacations, long term absences coverage, Relief Dispatchers and additional floating holidays hours to name some of the improvements.

Now it is on to our "private employer" contract with **Paratransit Services – Bremerton**, (River Cities Lift Paratransit Operators and Dispatchers), which per their initial proposal (and believe me it doesn't change much as negotiations progress) is so far apart it is almost sickening. Paratransit Services runs a business that is to help the disabled, elderly and handicapped yet treats our members as third world citizens. Low wages, unaffordable or no benefits (it cost more to insure family than what they are paid monthly), they refuse to pay full-time Operators 40 hours per work week (stating they can use their own vacation or holiday pay) to bring their hours up to 40. We haven't sat down face to face yet and although the contract expired December 31, 2021 may not sit down face to face until late May or June.

Incidentally, Paratransit Services – Bremerton President/CEO Dave Baker was pulling down \$377,671 in 2021, and Christie ("we care for our employees") Sheffer, Executive VP/Chief Operating Officer was pulling down a little over \$200,000 in 2019 over and is probably now in the mid \$200,000 range. Doubt either took a pay cut over the last year or two. One last note, while my Union encourages me to sign up for the excellent Pierce Transit (457) deferred compensation program, my fellow members who work for Paratransit Services-Bremerton have a (403)(b) retirement plan in which a **17 year employee/member** has accrued approximately **\$4,800**. Pathetic.

If necessary to necessitate job actions on behalf of our members in Longview, it will be a telling sign of what the leadership qualities are of members who want to be in leadership positions of this Local, and the willingness and sacrifice they will exert on behalf of this Local's members.

Sound Transit

We continue to enroll new members and new hires among our Link Light Rail Operator ranks, to include members who have left the Pierce Transit property. Why, because it is a workplace wherein individuals in Supervisory and Management positions have come from a background of transit system(s) and are knowledgeable about the positions within the Operator ranks. In our last round of negotiations we negotiated a Relief Supervisor position. Although many of our members have been promoted to the positions that are “non-represented”, what we did attain are individuals who are knowledgeable about the Operator positions and over (1/2) to (2/3) were Shop Stewards and Executive Board Officers. One of the more senior Supervisors was the first ATU Local 758 Executive Board Officer/Shop Steward on which we filed a grievance on their behalf leading to arbitration wherein we prevailed (won) on behalf of a “Light Rail Vehicle Operator”.

Why Do I Need A Shop Steward

The biggest reason you need a Shop Steward is when you are disciplined without one present, you help the Employer establish precedence. It's easy to understand. Your Union with its knowledge in regards to the administration of discipline by the Employer, knows the bar that has been set in the past as it relates to another member with the same offense. Without a Steward present, that bar can be raised. Example; the employer has always administered a “**written warning**” for a particular offense. Unless you are repeatedly reprimanded you may not and are probably not aware, that may not necessarily be true. So what happens, the Employer tells you for the same or similar alleged offense by another member/employee the penalty is a two (2) day suspension. You receive the two (2) day suspension saying nothing to the Union. Then another member goes in without representation, the Employer “smiles” and gives that individual a two (2) day suspension as well. Again, the Union did not know about it. A “two (2) day suspension” precedent has been set.

ATU Local 758 - Pierce Transit Joint Apprenticeship Program

Harry Morris – Lead Journey Level Mechanic

In March I attended a Zoom meeting which was the first American Transit Training and Apprenticeship Innovators Network (ATTAIN), Bus Maintenance Apprenticeship Committee Meeting. ATTAIN is a peer network for transit agencies interested in starting apprenticeship programs for the frontline workforce and those with established programs. It is sponsored by the International Transportation Learning Center (ITLC). Close to 100 people from agencies across the country registered to attend the meeting.

At the meeting, two programs were showcased as examples of successful Apprenticeship programs. One was the Utah Transit Authority/ATU Local 382 program and the second was the **ATU Local 758/Pierce Transit Joint Apprenticeship program**. Training Coordinator Brent Riffel and I were briefly interviewed about the program and the challenges we faced restarting a program that was stagnant for ten years. The greatest challenge we had was Covid. The program was re-started two years ago in the midst of the Covid pandemic proclamation. With technical schools suspending classroom instruction, we needed to find another way for our Apprentices to get the required 144 hours of classroom instruction they needed each year. The solution was online instruction provided by vendors and bus manufacturers. Another question that was asked was what are the benefits of an Apprenticeship program? There are many benefits of an Apprenticeship program. One example being that it provides a career path for someone with little mechanical experience, but has the aptitude to learn. For the agency, it provides skilled Union trained Journey Level Mechanics, a position that is hard to fill, and applicants hard to find.

One last very important point to be noted is the fact that without ATU Local 758, there would be no nationally recognized Bus Mechanic Apprenticeship program at Pierce Transit.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

FOR ATU LOCAL 758

RECREATION COMMITTEE

IF INTERESTED

PLEASE CONTACT

VONDA MARSHALL

253-376-8854

**PICNIC, GOLF TOURNAMENT &
HOLIDAY PARTY**



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Weingarten rights

This statement could save your job! "If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated I respectfully request that my shop steward be present at the meeting. Without Union representation present, I choose not to respond to any questions or statements."

UNION MEMBERSHIP MEETING NOTICE

Local 758 Union meetings will be held based on availability of IBEW Hall.

EMAIL ADDRESSES AND CONTACT NUMBERS

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