



TWU LOCAL 100 IN THE NEWS

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DAILY NEWS

Transit workers deserve better: Ignoring its own mismanagement, MTA shifts budget blame to its employees

BY TONY UTANO

Transit workers know garbage when they see it. After all, we remove tons of it from the subway and bus system every day.

The contract demands that MTA Chairman Pat Foye wants to impose on transit workers are garbage.

They include attacking our health insurance, converting full-time jobs to part-time positions, and giving more work to expensive private contractors.

Are they out of their minds?

Do they think living in New York has gotten less expensive? Do they think it's cheaper to buy groceries, pay the rent, pay the mortgage or send your kids to college? Do people have part-time families that can be supported by part-time work?

For 85 years, transit workers and Transport Workers Union Local 100 have fought to establish a decent standard of living for the men and women who move millions of people a day. We're not going backwards. We will fight these demands together.

The MTA desperately wants riders to believe that bus and subway workers, and the contracts we negotiated with the MTA over the years, are to blame for its inability to close budget gaps. In reality, the problem has been gross mismanagement, as The New York Daily News has accurately reported many times.

As the paper reported this month: "Bad management caused the MTA to bust its overtime

budget last year, says a consultant who shot down allegations of widespread overtime abuse in the cash-strapped agency."

As it reported last month: "MTA foul-ups led to extensive delays and budget overruns in critical subway upgrades, new controller report says....The controller's reports said that several boneheaded moves by MTA officials were responsible for much of the delay."

And in June: "Decades of mismanagement forced the MTA into a costly cleanup of subway drains — a multi-million dollar repair job necessary to speed trains and improve service."

Mismanagement didn't start under Foye, but it continued under his watch. He was MTA president between August 2017 and April 2019, when he became chairman.

Foye recently claimed transit workers are taking too much time off and are needlessly driving up labor costs.

I don't know how he came up with the "availability" statistics he cited without explanation at an MTA board meeting, and I don't really trust them.

I do know, however, about the conditions under which Local 100 members work. We work under live train traffic and around electrified third rails. We work in the extreme cold and extreme heat. We breathe in diesel fumes in bus depots and steel dust in subway tunnels. And we suffer for it.

We move 7.8 million riders a day. That includes people who are sick themselves, sneezing

and coughing because they have some type of contagious virus. We get sick because of the environment we work in.

In the last two years, nearly 2,300 bus and subway workers were hurt in on-the-job accidents in the tunnels, repair shops, rail yards, bus depots and other parts of the system. Another 550 subway conductors, bus operators, train operators, and workers in other titles, were attacked and assaulted. Nearly 280 train crewmembers were traumatized because someone jumped, fell or was pushed in front of their subway train.

Transit workers were spit upon 358 times in those two years.

This is all according to the Transit Authority's own numbers.

TWU Local 100 members endure all of this while carrying an enormous responsibility. Whether we are operating a bus or a train, fixing decades-old signals and track, or maintaining train cars, the lives of millions of people are in our hands every day.

Foye is making a mistake.

Transit workers are angry. They are fed up. They are sick and tired of being assaulted on the job for wearing the MTA uniform. And they are disgusted at the MTA for dragging their reputations through the mud. It's a shameful and dangerous attempt to turn riders against workers.

You think you hate the MTA? You should try working for it.

*Utano is president of
Transport Workers Union Local 100.*