

Transit union hints at a strike

Wants raises for 35,000 workers

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The MTA and the public transit union Wednesday stuck to their opposing goals for a new workers contract, with the head of the labor organization hinting at a strike.

TWU Local 100 president John Samuelson demanded wage increases for his 35,000 members without offering concessions the MTA wants in exchange.

TWU members, who went on strike for three days in 2005, have been working without a contract for two years.

"We're certainly not looking for the stars. We're looking for raises that keep up with the cost of living," Samuelson said.

Samuelson said members were ready to "take whatever actions are necessary at this point to prevent the imposition" of a contract that will either keep wages flat or increase pay with concessions.

Later, when asked if that language includes a strike, a union



official said "that would include job action."

Joshua Freeman, a labor expert at CUNY, said transit riders need not worry about a strike because of a vague statement, though he noted the TWU's aggressive history and practice of slowdowns and "work-to-rule."

"They need to try to exert some pressure," Freeman said. "I think they're looking for whatever leverage they can."

MTA CEO Tom Prendergast said every wage increase of 1% would cost \$50 million. "Collective bargaining is best done at a table where both parties sit across the table and hammer out all the issues," he said.

