

## AMALGAMATED TRANSIT UNION LOCAL 689

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### **METRO WORKERS CALL FOR COOPERATION ON SAFETY AND LABOR ISSUES**

**Washington, DC-** Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689 leaders and members declared that they are Metro stakeholders too and called for a new partnership with the Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA) Board and management.

“We are vested stakeholders in Metro along with Metro riders, Board and management, our livelihoods and the future of our families are linked to Metro. The 11,000 members of ATU local 689 have an enormous stake in Metro’s success,” said ATU Local President Jackie L. Jeter.

The union organized a rally at WMATA headquarters today to urge the new WMATA Board and CEO to push the reset button on labor relations. “Metro workers are on the front lines of Metro every single day. Solving Metro’s critical safety and personal security issues will require the cooperation of all Metro stakeholders,” Jeter continued, “We recognize that there’s new management at WMATA and we hope to establish a cooperative relationship with them.”

Metro is still working to implement equipment and track repairs 20 months after the system’s worst crash on June 22, 2009. Personal safety is also an issue as crimes on Metro against passengers and attacks against Metrobus operators soared to their highest levels in 2010.

A recent employee survey conducted by WMATA CEO Richard Sarles revealed that most Metro employees see safety problems on a daily basis, but many fear retaliation for reporting problems. Union leaders said increased and better communication with management would encourage more workers to come forward.

“Working together to keep the public and workers safe is a goal we can all commit to,” Jeter said. Twenty-six Metro employees have died on the job in Metro’s 35 years of operation, five of them between June 2009 and January 2010.

Currently WMATA is in court challenging a final binding arbitration award handed down in November 2009 after former WMATA CEO John Catoe decided to challenge the award. Metro has spent \$1.3 million in legal fees so far.

Union officials call the legal challenge, expensive and distracting. “We need to be focused like a laser beam on improving public safety – not engaged in a costly and drawn out challenge to final binding arbitration. Metro should respect the process they set in place,” Jeter said, and then added, “Shortchanging Metro workers is really short-sighted.”

ATU members fear that WMATA’s refusal to honor a 2009 final binding arbitration award could lead to erosions of the union’s collective bargaining power. Pointing to events in Wisconsin, Indiana and Ohio, union activists say labor unions and public employees are at a crossroads, and are fighting to preserve hard-fought gains.

ATU represents Metrobus and Metrorail operators, station managers, mechanics and clerical workers employed by WMATA. ATU Local 689 members’ contract expired in June 2007.

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For more on ATU Local 689, go to [www.atulocal689.org](http://www.atulocal689.org).