



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Washington D.C. – July 26, 2018: Video attached shows a contracted bridge bus operator for the Red Line shutdown at Ft. Totten talking on his cell phone (an “electronic device”) in the 8 o’clock hour this morning.

The Metro Electronic Device Policy (attached) 5.02(1) reads, “Unless specifically permitted in this section, individuals operating rail vehicles are prohibited from using an electronic device...Individuals operating revenue vehicles are also prohibited from wearing or carrying electronic devices on their person. Electronic devices, including hands-free devices, must be in a bag or purse and must be in the OFF position (not “silent” or “vibrate”).” The policy goes on to state, “Failure to adhere to this Policy/Instruction regarding using an electronic device will result in discipline as follows: (a) first offense: discharge.”

ATU Local 689 has taken 16 electronic device policy discharges in front of an independent arbitrator with the belief that the unique circumstances should not have risen to discharge. Among them was a bus operator who had a phone on his person (not using it) because his wife was in her 9th month of a difficult pregnancy that had the potential to be a medical emergency. The arbitrator still held up the Metro’s decision to terminate. Local 689 has lost every case taken to an arbitrator for violation of the policy.

This video is another reminder of the failures of privatization and the general manager’s real agenda to attack the union and leave the public unprotected. Privatization has led to relaxed safety standards in transit systems around the country. The union firmly believes that the expansion of privatization at Metro is the wrong direction for the system and the tax-paying public, who want and deserve a safe ride every time they take Metro. The union strongly believes if Metro is enforcing a zero-tolerance policy on electronic devices, a carve-out for private contractors is unacceptable and dangerous to the riding public.

ATU Local 689 is calling on Metro to utilize its workforce first as a cost-saving measure and to protect the riding public. Failure to do so will present, again, that the leadership of Metro headed by Paul Wiedefeld, is not committed to a safe ride for Metro’s passengers.

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