



For Immediate Release

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Blue and Yellow Line Shutdown Leaves Passengers Stranded and In Danger: Local 689 Bus Operators Pulled Off Regular Routes to Subsidize the Work of Contractors

(Forestville, Maryland) May 29th, 2019 - We have just been informed by ATU Local 689 members and transit riders that WMATA buses and operators are being pulled off of their regular routes to work on lines for the Yellow and Blue Line shutdowns.

Passengers have been stranded at their stops waiting for upwards of an hour for buses that WMATA reassigned to service the shutdown. These operators that have been reassigned have not been properly trained on these new lines. Passengers are being subjected to temperatures of over 90°F for over an hour while they wait for their regular routes.

“It puts passengers and our operators at risk. WMATA’s disregard for safety in pursuit of cost-savings is appalling.” said ATU Local 689 President and Business Agent Raymond Jackson.

Passengers have even called into WMATA Central Control complaining that their contractor driven bus was lost and off-route. Unfortunately, WMATA Central Control was unable to locate these coach replacement shuttles due to the fact that they are not integrated into the bus tracking system. Additionally, Police called in to WMATA Control complaining about coach buses that broke down, but when WMATA called the contractors they could not get a response.

WMATA recently held a conference call on planning for the upcoming shutdown that President Raymond Jackson requested to have a member participate on. This request was ignored by WMATA. We were reassured repeatedly by WMATA that their shutdown plan would cause minimal disruptions and would not involve reassigning operators from regular routes.

ATU Local 689 believes that this entire debacle is the result of the poor management of General Manager Paul Wiedefeld. We believe that issues like this are the inevitable result of attempts to privatize and contract out work that would be best handled by the hardworking, well-trained workers of Local 689. In the past Local 689 has been commended for its service to the WMATA system by taking on extra work, servicing additional events like All-Star Weekend, the Cherry Blossom Festival, past service shutdowns and bus bridges.

A Local 689 DASH Bus Operator sent us this, "It's a mess. The saving grace that's kept it from being a disaster so far has been that a lot of people were either out of town or seem to have been avoiding service but we'll see as people's routines settle in."

We call on WMATA to return all operators to their regular routes immediately.

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Amalgamated Transit Union Local 689 is comprised of more than 13,000 members and retirees performing occupations within the many skilled transportation crafts for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), MetroAccess, DASH, and the DC Streetcar. A member of the Amalgamated Transit Union (AFL-CIO/CLC), the largest labor organization representing transit workers in the United States and Canada, Local 689 was established on January 19, 1916. For more information please visit our website at atulocal689.org.