



For Immediate Release
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Blue & Yellow Line Shutdown Contractors Cause Chaos

(Forestville, MD) June 11th, 2019 – We are now two weeks into the Blue and Yellow Line shutdowns and commuters, local businesses, and transit workers are still secondary considerations by WMATA to the needs of private contractors.

“I said back in March of this year that WMATA track workers opposed the shutdown plan for being a poorly thought through scheme to do five years of maintenance in less than one year. We thought that the whole shutdown was designed just so WMATA’s private contractors could make money. There is no reason that this maintenance can’t be done during off-hours over a longer period of time, unless your goal is to make sure that your private contractors turn a profit.” said President and Business Agent Raymond Jackson.

Members and Staff of ATU Local 689 will be surveying transit riders and local businesses during morning rush hour commutes in order to gather feedback and information to share with WMATA and the media. We hope to speak with riders about the importance of fighting back against WMATA’s privatization schemes that lead to debacles like this one.

Timeline of Incidents:

- Prior to the shutdown, WMATA declined ATU Local 689’s request to be included on one of the Shutdown planning calls.
- On May 28th, a privately contracted bus operator took a wrong turn and the shuttle bound for downtown DC ended up across the river in Anacostia. We wish to emphasize that this is not the fault of that operator, but demonstrates how WMATA’s bottom of the barrel contracts encourage companies to not properly train their employees on their routes.
- On May 29th, our own members reported that regular WMATA buses and operators were pulled off of their normal routes to work on lines for the Yellow and Blue Line shutdowns. This meant that WMATA bus operators were sent to go subsidize the work of private contractors that had been paid for these services. WMATA bus operators were sent to work on bus routes they were never trained on, while stranding their regular passengers out in the 90°F heat for upwards of an hour with no notice.
- On June 7th, our members reported that bus operators were reassigned to Blue and Yellow line shutdown routes, but were not compensated for travel time for their reassignments. This is just another example where this shutdown subsidizes the profits of private contractors on the backs of workers. Additionally, these reassigned buses are no longer available for the rest of the riding public and put passengers throughout the rest of the system at risk of long wait times.
- On June 11th, WMATA issued an alert announcing that Yellow Line replacement shuttles were delayed due to the very traffic that the shutdown has created.

ATU Local 689 would like to ask the riding public who they believe benefits from a 106-day long shutdown when so many other rail systems are fully capable of limiting their maintenance hours to the weekends.

Our members are tired of picking up the slack for private contractors. These contractors are being treated better than WMATA’s own employees. These additional shutdown routes should have been offered to WMATA’s own workers from the beginning.

We call on WMATA to fully restore Blue and Yellow line service and reassign track maintenance to off-peak hours. We believe this is the only way to not permanently destroy rider confidence in the system.

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Amalgamated Transit Union Local 689 is comprised of more than 13,000 members 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.