



Forestville, MD - February 1, 2019 – *Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689 President Raymond Jackson released the following statement to mark Transit Equity Day and honor the 106th birthday of Rosa Park:*

“February 4, 2019, marks the 106th birthday of visionary leader Rosa Parks, affectionately known as the “Mother of the Civil Rights Movement.” To honor this day, ATU Local 689 has joined with Labor Network for Sustainability and a broad coalition of organizations for Transit Equity Day, a day to call for increased investment in public transportation.

“It is no coincidence that Mrs. Parks’ act on Montgomery public transit served as the springboard for the Civil Rights Movement. At its core, access to reliable, affordable, safe public transportation is a civil right. Public transit has and still gives access to economic opportunity that drives working families into the middle class.

“In the Washington D.C. metro area, we have seen upward mobility fall under attack in the Metro system through acts including privatization, cutting service and raising fares. All while leading the public to believe these acts are necessary because workers are overpaid and providing transit to all is too expensive.

“Suggesting that paying transit workers fairly or that serving impoverished communities is the reason for our transit system's challenges is wrong. The deterioration of our Metro transit system has been a conscious decision to limit the upward mobility that created a thriving middle class in our community. These decisions undermine the progress that leaders like Rosa Parks fought to gain.

“In our region, instead of investing in public transit that benefits the public and pays workers a good wage, we have seen millions of dollars wasted on private contractors. Most recently, Metro handed over the entire operation of the Cinder Bed Road bus garage in Virginia to a private contractor based out of France. Allowing a private contractor from outside of our region to manage Metro buses has never been done, and takes prosperity and equity out of our community.

“Around the country, there are countless examples of transit systems failing with private contractors who put profits ahead of the public by raising prices, cutting safety corners, and eliminating service. As we commit to public transit as a civil right on this day, we must fight against privatization because it hurts the riding public that needs access to transit the most.

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“For more than 100 years, ATU Local 689 has advocated for safe, affordable and liable transit in this region. Our union firmly believes everyone deserves to live in a community where people are treated with respect regardless of their race, religion, sexual orientation, or class. We also deserve a society where workers have dignity on the job, and everyone has access to opportunity.

“We should follow Rosa Parks’ example and use Transit Equity Day to ensure that public transit will always put the public first. Our re-commitment is the greatest way we can honor Rosa Parks’ legacy.”

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