

Vice President's Report continues ...

-A Disciplinary System with Little Flexibility- A common concern among operators is that Pierce Transit's disciplinary process leaves little room for leniency or progressive problem-solving. Employees report that management often applies discipline strictly according to policy language without considering mitigating factors or an operator's overall safety record.

From the union's perspective, this approach can feel punitive rather than corrective. Many operators believe that coaching, retraining, or collaborative safety discussions could be more effective in improving outcomes than immediate disciplinary action.

-Balancing Safety and Fair Treatment- The union remains committed to promoting a strong safety culture across the system. Operators want safe roads just as much as passengers do. At the same time, union leadership believes that safety policies should be implemented in a way that balances accountability with fairness.

Transit operators perform a demanding job under constant pressure, navigating heavy vehicles through busy streets while ensuring passenger safety and staying on schedule. When issues arise, the union believes employees deserve a fair review process that considers the full context of what occurred.

Moving forward, union representatives hope to continue discussions with Pierce Transit management about how safety policies can be enforced in a way that protects the public while also respecting the professionalism and judgment of the operators behind the wheel.

Andrew Boring, ATU Local 758 Financial Secretary/Treasurer

Maximizing Your Deferred Compensation (457 Plan)

One of the biggest questions about retirement myself and many of the members of the union has been "Will I be financially ready when I am old enough to retire?". As good as PERS retirement is many people have realized that it just isn't enough by itself. This is where the 457 Plan comes in!

Pierce Transit will match dollar for dollar up to 4.25% of annual wages of represented employees who have completed probation and less than 10 years of service. The match increases to 5.25% from 10 to 14 years of service. Employees with more than 15 years of service will be matched up to 6% of annual wages!

Employees contribute by payroll deduction through 457 program manager Mission Square with a wide array of investment instruments.

For example, a new Transit Operator who makes \$69,800 may choose to defer 4.25% of their earnings spread throughout 26 pay periods, saving a total of \$2,924.27, and Pierce Transit would also contribute \$2,924.27. At year's end, the employee would have a total contribution of \$5,848.54, and could choose to direct these savings in one or more mutual funds or fixed savings options. There is no bi-weekly minimum required for participation; therefore, an employee could contribute as little as \$5 per week, for example, with a Pierce Transit match. Increasing, decreasing, stopping and starting contributions can be done without fees or penalties.

By taking advantage of the Pierce Transit match, employees receive an immediate 100% investment return on their savings.

One other huge benefit to participating in this program is that the employee's share reduces taxable income, thus lowering federal income tax. Also, the effect of compounding earnings on these investments can be substantial over a period of time.

In general, employees cannot withdraw their contributions until they leave employment with Pierce Transit with certain exceptions for loans and certain hardship conditions as defined by the IRS.

Since most Pierce Transit employees do not pay into Social Security, deferred compensation is a way to build a nest egg over their working years to supplement retirement income.