



# Newsletter

March 2026 - atu758.org

## President's Report

**Taking Care of Each Other: The Strength Behind Our Union** In transit, we move the public every single day through traffic, weather, long shifts, mechanical issues, and tight schedules. But what truly keeps this system running isn't just buses, trains, or equipment. It's *us*. A union is only as strong as the care we show for each individual member. Taking care of each other isn't just a slogan it's a responsibility.

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### Why It Matters

#### 1. An Injury to One Is an Injury to All

Whether you're an operator, technician, dispatcher, cleaner, or administrative support — when one member faces discipline, injury, harassment, or unsafe working conditions, it impacts us all. When we stand together:

- Discipline is fair.
- Investigations are challenged when improper.
- Safety concerns are elevated. Contracts are enforced. Solidarity isn't symbolic it protects jobs and livelihoods.

#### 2. Protecting Due Process and Fair Treatment

Every member deserves:

- Representation
- Respect
- A fair investigation
- Enforcement of the contract

If we ignore the mistreatment of one coworker because "it's not my issue," we weaken our collective power. Today it's someone else. Tomorrow it could be you.

#### 3. Mental and Physical Health in Transit

Transit work is demanding. Long hours, split shifts, confrontational passengers, high-stress environments, and safety risks take a toll. Looking out for each other means:

- Checking in on coworkers.
- Encouraging members to use sick leave when needed.
- Supporting those recovering from incidents.
- Not shaming someone for protecting their health.

Strong members make a strong union and strong members take care of themselves and each other.

#### 4. Ending Division Before It Starts

Management benefits when workers are divided, operators vs. technicians, senior vs. junior, day shift vs. night shift. We benefit when we remember:

- We are one bargaining unit.
- We fight for one contract.
- We win together.

Disagreements happen. Division is a choice.

#### 5. Supporting Fair and Reasonable Supervision

We have many great service supervisors who support our operators, who understand the realities of the job, and who use discretion with professionalism and fairness. Those supervisors help build morale and strengthen operations. We also understand that this is **Pierce Transit's policy**, and supervisors are doing their job by enforcing agency rules. We respect that role. However, enforcement should be measured, consistent, and grounded in progressive discipline.

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There are a very small few who believe it is acceptable to remove two days of pay from an operator's paycheck, pay that their family depends on every two weeks, over a rigid interpretation of a PED (Personal Electronic Device) policy. When a bus is safely secured, powered down, parked at a transit center, and the operator remains behind a safety barrier, using a phone briefly to make a call or send a quick text, the question becomes one of proportionality and fairness.

Safety must always come first. We all agree on that. But discipline must also fit the circumstances. A simple warning about cell phone use should be the first step, not a financial penalty that hurts a coworker and their family. Progressive discipline exists for a reason. Education and correction should come before punishment, especially when no safety risk to the public occurred. Excessive punishment over technical interpretations damages morale, erodes trust, and undermines the very safety culture it claims to protect. Taking care of each union member means:

- Ensuring discipline fits the circumstances.
- Defending due process.
- Protecting the financial stability of working families.
- Holding management accountable for consistent and fair application of policy.

We move this system safely every day. We deserve leadership that supports that mission, and accountability that is fair, balanced, and reasonable.

Solidarity isn't just something we talk about during negotiations. It is something we practice every day, by standing up for fairness, by protecting each other's livelihoods, and by refusing to let unreasonable treatment go unchallenged. When we protect each member, we protect the whole.

**In Solidarity,**

John Hoheusle, President ATU758

### *ATU 758 Vice President - Gerald Hardeman*

**-Union Perspective: Concerns Grow Over Pierce Transit's Heavy-Handed Discipline Policies-** Safety is a shared priority for both transit workers and the riding public. Operators represented by the union understand that the responsibility of transporting passengers safely is significant, and they take that responsibility seriously. However, many operators have raised concerns about what they view as an increasingly heavy-handed disciplinary approach by Pierce Transit management when it comes to safety policies.

**-Cell Phone Policy Leaves No Room for Context-** Pierce Transit maintains a strict rule prohibiting personal cell phone use while an operator is seated in the driver's seat. The intent of the policy—to prevent distracted driving—is something the union fully supports. No operator wants unsafe conditions on the road.

The concern from many members is not the rule itself, but the way it is enforced. According to operators, the agency applies discipline even in situations where the vehicle is not moving or where the phone interaction is brief and unrelated to driving. In practice, employees say there is little consideration for context or intent. The policy has effectively become a zero-tolerance standard that leaves little room for judgment or discussion.

Union members argue that safety rules should be enforced fairly, but they should also allow for reasonable discretion when circumstances warrant it.

**-Speeding and Red-Light Violations Under Intense Scrutiny-** Another area where operators report heightened pressure is in the monitoring of traffic violations such as speeding or red-light infractions. Pierce Transit regularly reviews incidents involving these violations, and discipline can follow quickly.

Operators acknowledge that these infractions must be addressed. However, many point out that driving a large transit coach in congested traffic conditions can present situations where split-second decisions are required. Tight schedules, heavy traffic, and unpredictable roadway conditions can create circumstances where operators must react quickly to maintain safety.

The union believes that these realities should be taken into account during investigations rather than applying rigid standards that treat every situation the same.

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*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.



**Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 758**

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**6923 Lakewood DR W B1 Tacoma, WA 98467-3221**

**Weingarten rights**

*This statement could save your job! "If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated I respectfully request that my shop steward be present at the meeting. Without Union representation present, I choose not to respond to any questions or statements."*

**UNION MEMBERSHIP MEETING NOTICE**

**Executive Board meeting -Thursday, April 2nd at 3:30pm (EB only)**

(ATU Local 758: 6923 Lakewood Dr. B-1, Lakewood, WA)

**Charter Meetings**

**Thursday, April 9th at 6:30 PM & Friday, April 10th at 10 AM**

(ATU Local 758: 6923 Lakewood Dr. B-1, Lakewood, WA)

**Wednesday, April 15th at 7:15 PM in Longview,**

(upstairs lunchroom: 254 Oregon Way, Longview WA)

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