

# SEMTA faces 2 more contract talks

By Tom Henderson  
staff writer

The 35,000 passengers who ride SEMTA buses daily in metropolitan Detroit had transportation restored Wednesday morning following the ratification Tuesday night by Teamsters of a three-year contract.

But they may not be riding for long. The 139 mechanics and maintenance personnel who service the 200 large buses and 80 Connector dial-a-ride buses are represented by the United Auto Workers, and their contract expires Sept. 30.

"There is a feeling of gratification and happiness that the strike is over and a major load has been lifted from all our shoulders," said SEMTA spokesman Mike Neimann. "We are looking forward to the future, which, however, includes more union negotiations."

Neimann said negotiations with the UAW would begin in about two weeks.

Another contract must also be negotiated soon, he said. Earlier this year, SEMTA came to terms on three-year contracts with the Amalgamated Transit Union on two sepa-

rate contracts, one for its big-bus drivers and one for the 50 clerical workers it represents.

A contract for 35 dispatchers and supervisors, who are represented by the American Federation of State, Clerical and Municipal Employees, expires in January. AFSCME recently showed its willingness to man picket lines in a two-week strike with the City of Detroit.

FOR NOW, THOUGH, the full complement of large buses and dial-a-ride buses, which primarily serve the elderly and the handicapped, are back on the road, with full service resuming at 4 a.m. Wednesday.

"We've had a few drivers not report, but it hasn't been a substantial number," said Neimann.

The strike began last Thursday night when Teamster drivers voted down a contract proposal. Though Teamsters Local 247 represents just the dial-a-ride drivers, the big-bus drivers honored picket lines and shut down the three-county bus system.

The resumption of service followed a stormy strike meeting Tuesday night at Teamster headquarters on Trumbull, near Tiger Stadium.

Many of the 113 drivers expressed dissatisfaction with the contract, which called for just a nickel more than they refused five days earlier. And several dissidents were forcibly removed from the meeting.

But the 8 p.m. vote was ratified by a vote of 58-25.

THE CONTRACT calls for a raise of 65 cents over three years from the current level of \$9.75. There is a pay freeze the first with subsequent raises of 45 and 20 cents. The contract calls for another nine cents the third year if SEMTA can find another local revenue source.

The drivers of the large buses make \$12.60 an hour.

Neimann estimated the cost to SEMTA of the raises in three-year contract at \$250,000.

SEMTA also made concessions on vacations, shift scheduling, disciplinary rules and safety procedures. A

labor-management committee will be formed to hear complaints about the safety of the small buses.

"The workers had a lot more complaints about the buses, or at least expressed them, during the strike than they did while they were working," said Neimann. "The thinking was to have a lot more formal means of hearing their safety complaints."

A tentative agreement between Teamsters and SEMTA came after 12 hours of state-mediated talks ordered Monday by Wayne County Circuit Judge James Miles. The talks were halted late Monday and lawyers were to argue in Miles' courtroom Tuesday whether the drivers should be ordered back to work.

Instead, Miles called lawyers and negotiators into his chambers for further bargaining. The agreement was reached just before noon.

SOME BUSES did continue service. Five ATU drivers crossed picket lines Tuesday, with one of them driving the Pontiac to Detroit route because, he said, he didn't want to leave his passengers stranded.

In Wayne County, Nankin Transit, which operates a dial-a-ride, small-bus service under contract to SEMTA, continued to provide service for its 400 passengers a day.

The service was shut down for two hours, beginning at 11 a.m. Friday, when drivers walked out in support of SEMTA strikers, but were talked into going back to work two hours later, said manager Charlie Hunter.

His full complement of 11 drivers were at work Monday and Tuesday.

He said the walkout began when

several SEMTA drivers told his workers they shouldn't be driving. "I don't want to go into details about the harassment because it was minor," said Hunter.

He said his drivers are members of the UAW and operate under a no-strike contract.

"We certainly wouldn't want to leave the handicapped and elderly without transportation because SEMTA has a labor problem. Those people are lost without buses," he said.

Many of the 35,000 able-bodied who were without service would have claimed they were nearly as lost. For at least seven weeks, they can ride assured.

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## Red Cross warns of blood shortage

An extremely critical shortage of blood — the worst summer shortage in years — exists in southeastern Michigan, warns the Michigan Red Cross Blood Services, Southeastern Michigan Region.

Several area hospitals have postponed elective surgery and others are determining whether to proceed with elective surgery based upon the amount of blood the patient will require.

All blood types are needed, especially Type O negative and positive, and donors are urged to give blood this week.

Dr. A. William Shafer, Red Cross executive director, said the status of the blood supply is "frightening and alarming." Projections of blood collections for the next six weeks are bleak, he said.

According to the local Red Cross blood region, which serves hospitals in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Washtenaw and St. Clair counties, blood regions across the country are reporting severe shortages. Most report this is the worst summer blood shortage in years.

Contributing to the local shortage are a high rate of "no shows," donors who make appointments at blood drives or donor centers and fail to

keep the appointments. Also, several large industrial blood drives have either been cancelled or the number of donations was more than 45 percent under estimate.

In Oakland County, blood can be donated at the Bloomfield Donor Center, 2388 Franklin Road, corner of Square Lake Road; and in Oak Park at 25900 Greenfield in Kristen Tower.

Centers have evening hours for donor convenience and are open on Saturday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

For an appointment to donate blood at any donor centers in Oakland County, call 494-2800 or toll free, 1-800-552-5466.

Clubs, organizations or businesses that would like to sponsor a blood drive in the next six weeks are asked to call 494-2780.

Blood can be donated by anyone in good general health, between the ages of 17 through 70 years old who weighs a minimum of 110 pounds. Donating blood is relatively painless and takes less than an hour from registration to post-donation snack of juice and cookies. The actual procedure takes less than 10 minutes. Donating blood is safe. Needles used to collect blood are new and sterile. They are used once and discarded.

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