



"Freedom Through Organization"

LOCAL 85

AMALGAMATED TRANSIT UNION

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April 15, 2024

Katharine Eagan Kelleman, CEO
Port Authority of Allegheny County
345 Sixth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Re: ATU Local 85 & Port Authority of Allegheny County

Dear Ms. Kelleman:

Local 85 has always taken pride in our efforts to maintain a clear and healthy line of communication with Port Authority leadership. As you know, in any effective relationship-especially one where we jointly serve thousands of constituents- honest and sometimes critical communication is essential to the success of the mission. This letter is intended in that continued spirit. There are several recent issues at PRT that we feel need immediate attention.

First, as you are aware, the incline has been shut down for over 38 weeks due to inept subcontractors. As a result, PRT is losing significant revenue and businesses on Mt Washington are losing customers, not to mention the frustrated riders who are clearly pursuing other transportation options because they simply cannot rely on our system anymore. This is an embarrassment to the entire mission, to say nothing of the fact that morale is at an all-time low. The incline rehabilitation costs have soared to an estimated 8 million dollars yet it is still not operating efficiently in nearly a year. Who is being held responsible for this? Who made the decision to hire these contractors? Why was there zero communication with Local 85 leadership and members who maintain and operate the incline daily? We have repeatedly stressed the importance of including Local 85 leadership in the planning and development of our enterprise, but as often as we reach out, we get ignored.

To try and solve, or perhaps "disguise" this problem, PRT management elected to wrap our non-revenue passenger vans and label them "Mon Incline Shuttle". A head scratcher to say the least. This necessarily led to more cost and more waste because whoever made this decision never considered the ADA implications. Yet again, before making such ill-conceived decisions, not one call was ever placed to this office for suggestions, ideas, or solutions. Predictably, the van idea fell flat and as a result PRT was forced to go back to using buses to shuttle the Mon incline riders. This lasted only a short time because PRT's Board of Directors approved the purchase of new passenger vans equipped with wheelchair apparatus, which necessarily cost more money- an estimated \$250,000.00! Again, not one person from PRT contacted Local 85 for input until after the fact. The entire operation is cratering- how many times can one entity step on a rake and not learn its lesson. Given the current state of affairs at PRT and the consistent managerial gaffes, our joint mission of persuading Harrisburg for dedicated funding becomes harder by the day.

The current debacle at the incline is just one example. It is clear PRT is losing revenue daily yet proceeds as if there isn't a care in the world about who will be qualified to maintain and operate the vans. Moreover, while we fought tooth and nail to bring back our members fired over the COVID 19 vaccine, we

learned that PRT's board of directors approved a \$54,000.00 bonus for you. This is mind boggling. There should be a high alert on the frivolous expenditures happening at PRT and the County must get involved ASAP and start holding managers accountable. Instead of being held accountable, we learned that managers who work from home have received promotions and bonuses. This is precisely the irresponsible decision making the public uses against PRT to condemn such waste. For these reasons, we have copied the County Executive's Office on this correspondence. You need to do better. If such decisions were made by rank-and-file employees, they would be fired on the spot.

Another example involves PRT's newly acquired articulated electric buses. As you are aware, there has been little, if any, training for the 40 foot electric buses that arrived several *years ago* and now the articulated buses are on the horizon. To date, our members have received shamefully inadequate safety and skill training. This includes supervisors, operators & maintenance members- it simply cannot be tolerated any longer. Furthermore, and as you are aware, we agreed to a new maintenance job classification called Master Technician (Group 7) which would primarily work on the electric buses. Not one of these positions has been posted on a pick or vacancy notice since agreed upon. Why not? For this reason alone, this serves as notice that Local 85 deems the electric buses unsafe for our instruction department, operators and maintenance department given inadequate training and safety protocol. These vehicles should be taken out of service immediately and not placed into service until our members have been given the appropriate training. The safety of the public, riders and members is at stake.

Micro Transit is yet another issue that continues to rear its head, yet Local 85 has been left in the dark by PRT. We have become aware that PRT may receive grant money to implement a Micro Transit program. If this is accurate, this letter serves as notice that any work performed in association with the provision of Micro Transit is exclusive to Local 85 members under our current contractual relationships.

As always, Local 85 leadership welcomes the opportunity to meet with PRT to address and resolve these issues. They must be addressed and fixed. We want to help you, so let's do it together. Please let me know your earliest availability to discuss these most important matters.

Sincerely,



Ross Nicótero, President
ATU Local 85

cc: PRT Board of Directors
Sara Innamorato
Mike Cetra
Mike Heidkamp
Don Rivetti
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