



NEWS RELEASE

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Transportation Labor Leaders: Time to Reform Amtrak

Most Amtrak Workers Now in Their 8th Year Without a Wage Increase

Washington, D.C. – Amtrak must stop trying to solve its financial woes on the “backs of the company’s 20,000 employees,” transportation labor leaders declared in a new six-point Amtrak reform plank designed to address chronic under-funding, unmet safety and security needs, a history of poor management decisions, and a rogue Board of Directors.

“You get what you pay for,” Edward Wytkind, President of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD) said of the lack of long-term planning and investment made in Amtrak. “We continue to nickel and dime Amtrak and its workers and set them up for failure. This must stop.”

Congress will reauthorize spending and programs for Amtrak this year. It must abandon the status quo, reject the Bush Administration’s privatization agenda, and instead, invest in building a strong passenger rail system in America, transportation labor leaders said.

“We are heartened to hear key transportation leaders in Congress beginning to talk about the need to fix Amtrak’s long-term financing needs but also insisting that Amtrak’s neglected workforce receive long overdue wage increases competitive with the rest of the industry,” Wytkind said following yesterday’s biannual meeting of the organization’s Executive Committee. “The cost of doing business includes treating and paying workers fairly.”

Other nations around the world invest billions in passenger rail because they know that a robust economy is dependent on a strong transportation system and infrastructure. Meanwhile, Amtrak juggles deferred maintenance, unmet security needs, outdated cars and equipment, and fails to compensate its employees fairly.

Highlights of the TTD Amtrak reform plan include:

- Congress must pass a long-term authorization bill that provides at least \$2 billion per year, to be fully funded by appropriators.
- Labor-management relations must be reformed. Amtrak must stop withholding reasonable wage increases by blaming unpredictable federal financing for the carrier. Most Amtrak employees are entering their eighth year with no general wage increase.
- A new Board of Directors should be created with members – including a voice for employees – who actually believe in maintaining and strengthening a national Amtrak

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system. Board members who pursue self-destructive policies for Amtrak do not serve in the interest of the company, its workers or the 25 million passengers who depend on Amtrak service.

- After 30 years of under-funding, Amtrak has taken on substantial debt that should be paid down with federal assistance.
- The way Amtrak security costs are paid must be reformed. Specific expenses associated with the defense against terrorism should be borne by the Department of Homeland Security.
- To ensure independent oversight, the Inspector General of Amtrak should be separated from the company. It should not work as an extension of Amtrak management as it does today.

Wytkind, who testified before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development on Feb. 28, was encouraged by Senatorial support for a better funding plan for Amtrak than what the Bush Administration proposed for FY 2008. The White House has continually proposed break-up schemes and budgets for Amtrak that would all but shut down the carrier.

“Momentum is building in Congress to do the right thing for passenger rail in America,” Wytkind said. “Transportation Labor will oppose this Administration’s proposals to destroy Amtrak as we know it and will demand better treatment of Amtrak’s employees.”

The full policy statement is available at www.ttd.org.

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TTD represents 32 member unions in the aviation, rail, transit, trucking, highway, longshore, maritime and related industries. For more information, visit www.ttd.org.