



A bold voice for transportation workers

PUT AN END TO TRANSIT OPERATOR ASSAULTS AND BETTER PROTECT PASSENGERS AND PEDESTRIANS

Like most Americans, each day tens of thousands of bus operators will wake up and go to work. They will facilitate 34 million trips, carrying their fellow Americans to and from their jobs, school, the supermarket, or to see a family member or loved one. They will help create opportunity for a struggling family that is simply looking to make ends meet. They will help our aging neighbors get to and from routine medical treatments. They will take thousands of cars off the road and improve air quality in the neighborhoods where we live and work. Unacceptably, they will report to work under the threat of being assaulted and too often left totally unprotected in their workspace.

In the transportation sector, we have seen a shocking increase of assaults committed against front-line workers. TTD is actively engaged in pushing new federal protection for customer service agents at our nation's airports and separately for new rules and training mandates to mitigate assaults against Amtrak and commuter rail employees. Today, the Executive Committee renews our call for policies and strategies to protect transit bus drivers.

Stories involving transit operators being hit, spat on, and pelted with objects by passengers, or worse, being assaulted with a deadly weapon have become all too common on the nightly news. These dangerous conditions are exacerbated by the fact that bus drivers often work alone, which leaves them exposed to the worst abuses, often without the ability to identify witnesses to the crimes.

We know that this epidemic of violence is not improving. Assault data collected by the National Transportation Database clearly demonstrates a trend that continues to plague bus operators nationwide. Though even this data fails to demonstrate the true scope of the problem since it only narrowly records incidents that require medical assistance.

These assaults do not simply cause physical and emotional hardship for bus operators. The violence can quickly spread within the closed confines of a bus, putting passengers in harm's way and often resulting in additional injuries. Assaults that occur while a bus is moving may cause the driver to lose control of the vehicle, putting pedestrians, passengers and other vehicles in imminent danger.

In 2013, TTD's Executive Committee [called for federal action](#) to better protect transit operators while on the job. In 2015 TTD and our affiliated unions successfully fought for the inclusion of assault prevention language in the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. This language requires the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to publish a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) that establishes safety standards, practices, or protocols for protecting

transit operators from the risk of assault. Unfortunately, despite our calls for the FTA to expedite the NPRM soon after passage of the FAST Act, the previous administration did not take action and we now wait on the current administration to publish the NPRM nearly three years later.

Every day that goes by without federal action puts thousands of additional transit workers at risk. Thankfully, a bipartisan group of federal legislators shares our sense of urgency. Earlier this year Reps. Grace F. Napolitano (D-CA) and John Katko (R-NY) introduced the Bus Operator and Pedestrian Protection Act of 2018 (H.R. 6016) and Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) introduced companion legislation (S. 3215) in the Senate. This bill would require transit agencies, in cooperation with front-line employees, to develop a risk reduction plan using a data-driven analysis of an agency's bus operations. Based on the results of this analysis and the existence of current safety programs, agencies will be required to deploy strategies to reduce assaults, including the utilization of driver shields and de-escalation training.

We know that the interventions called for in this bill work. Retrofitted partitions on New York City buses – though not a perfect solution – have already led to a reduction in driver assaults. In Los Angeles, barriers and de-escalation training have shown significant promise in reducing the number of assaults on LA Metro bus operators.

As a general matter, we need to take steps to improve the design of buses to protect drivers, passengers and pedestrians from unnecessary risk. In addition to implementing assault mitigation strategies, the Bus Operator and Pedestrian Protection Act requires a risk analysis to be conducted on visual obstructions that create blind spots and to assess the ergonomic design of the operator workstation. Too many road users are put in harm's way because the design of the bus creates unnecessarily large blind spots the drivers cannot overcome, and the long-term health of the operator is often jeopardized by workstations that were not designed with their well-being in mind. Federal regulators, bus manufacturers, transit operators and transit unions should come together to address these problems and to retrofit and redesign buses accordingly.

This is not a novel or new concept. In Europe, for example, driver side doors are commonplace and have saved drivers' lives, and buses are designed with fewer obstructions in the operator's field of vision.

TTD calls on Members of Congress to co-sponsor H.R. 6016 and S. 3215, and to quickly pass this bill into law. Furthermore, federal regulators must do their part to implement protections already mandated by Congress and to shine a much needed light on the need to protect workers.

No worker should have to worry about long term physical problems caused by their occupation and no employer should allow employees to face these risks. The time has come for proactive common sense solutions to tackle these tough problems before anyone else is injured, killed, or faced with a serious health problem.

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