



A bold voice for transportation workers

WORKER RIGHTS IN THE 2026 WORLD CUP – A TRANSPORTATION WORKER’S PERSPECTIVE

The 2018 FIFA Men’s World Cup attracted almost 3.6 billion viewers—more than half the world’s population—with the final game alone drawing an audience of 1.12 billion viewers worldwide. The Men’s World Cup routinely attracts more than 3 million attendees to stadiums in their host countries, and in total, attracted more than 5 million tourists to host cities across Russia in the most recent 2018 World Cup. If these numbers seem staggering, so too are the profits involved. In 2018, FIFA generated more than \$6.4 billion in revenue, with a significant portion of that coming from the World Cup.

Despite the wealth generated by the quadrennial event, FIFA has a shocking record of turning a blind eye to human rights abuses that often fall squarely on the shoulders of the workers who make these events possible. Russian workers, for example, faced unpaid wages and unsafe working conditions, as noted by Human Rights Watch. And stories of labor trafficking and unsafe working conditions that led to the deaths of more than 6,500 migrant workers in Qatar, host of the 2022 World Cup, have cast a grim shadow over the upcoming event.

Responding to international pressure, FIFA established human rights bid requirements for the 2026 World Cup, and in selecting the United States, Canada and Mexico for the 2026 event, ensured commitments to protect and promote labor and other human rights, including the right of workers to form and join unions and the right to organize and bargain collectively.

To ensure the World Cup meets this standard, TTD calls on FIFA and the potential host cities to commit to the following:

First, TTD echoes the call of the [AFL-CIO Executive Committee](#), who have made clear that workers involved in the 2026 World Cup must be able to fully and freely exercise their fundamental labor and other human rights, and that hosting rights be awarded on the strength of a city’s commitment to sustainable development and living wage jobs associated with the games.

Facilitating the movement of millions of tourists and game attendees must not be an opportunity to undermine workers through partnerships with companies like Uber and Lyft. These companies have spent hundreds of millions of dollars fighting to misclassify their workers as independent contractors, and in doing so, have undermined their basic rights to collectively bargain. [TTD has highlighted](#) the extent to which these companies seek profits at the expense of their workers—sometimes resulting in drivers making less than the federal minimum wage, and in some cases, as little as \$3.75 an hour.

Similarly, with viewership in the billions, TTD knows the temptation will exist for host cities to highlight themselves as centers of innovation for a global audience. In particular, TTD understands that this may take the form of various automated vehicle and automated shuttle demonstration projects. In nearly every case, promoters of these technologies take great measures to showcase the exciting promise of automation without taking meaningful policy steps into consideration on the serious impacts new technology can have on workers. Similar concerns about new zero-emission buses and the workforce impacts their implementation may have on workers are described in TTD’s proposed policy statement, *The Impacts of Zero Emission Buses on the Transportation Workforce*.

FIFA and the host cities under consideration must hold firm to the commitment to grow sustainable, publicly accessible, and affordable transportation services for their residents and tourists alike. Moreover, these services must provide good jobs, be subject to an ABC test to ensure workers are correctly classified as employees of the companies or transit agencies providing them, and must not face displacement as a result of the adoption of new technologies.

For the American host cities of the 2026 world cup, the opportunity to expand access to transportation services and to revitalize local infrastructure is clear. But FIFA and the competing cities must hold firm in their commitment to improve their infrastructure, grow access, and protect workers. Moreover, these protections must be the model followed by the 2028 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles. Anything less will be an affront to the working Americans who make such events —and their associated profits—possible for the organizations who host them.

Policy Statement No. S21-09
Adopted April 21, 2021