



Press Release
For Immediate Release: August 29, 2024

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION UPDATE

SPRINGFIELD, MA: While the PVTA recognizes the commitment and dedication of the drivers and mechanics to keeping our communities moving, PVTA and its operating entities have a fiduciary responsibility to operate public transit service within the limits of the budget set by the PVTA Advisory Board, which reflects all available revenue sources including funds allocated by the Governor and the Legislature.

DGR Management Inc. (DGR), the company that oversees the fixed route service in the Greater Springfield area, has made a Best and Final offer to ATU Local 448, which is fair and reasonable. The union is refusing to meet to negotiate in good faith and avert a strike. While DGR is focused on meeting the needs of the drivers, mechanics and the community, ATU Local 448 focus is on an excessive 18% salary request.

If the Authority were to meet the union's demands, this will result in massive service cuts in the Greater Springfield area.

Yesterday, DGR Management continued reaching out to the union to discuss ways to avert a strike of the bus drivers and mechanics. Specifically, DGR worked through a federal mediator to offer the union a 1-year contract and get back to negotiations for year two and year three. The offer included:

- 5% wage increase retroactive to July 1, 2024; Top Bus Operator rate would be \$32.81. The salary adjustment of 5% is the most feasible within the fiscally constrained operating budget.
- An additional 5% on top of the regular hourly rate for all weekend hours worked.
- Changes to salary schedules that would allow drivers to reach the top hourly rate after two years of work rather than the current five years.
- Addition of vision insurance
- An additional floating holiday
- Increase in uniform allowance, tool allowance, short term disability and several other items that were of priority for the union during negotiations.

DGR currently provides:

- A very generous medical insurance plan for all members of ATU Local 448. The union employee pays 20% of the health insurance premium, there are no deductibles and co-pays are \$15.
- Ten paid holidays
- Seven personal days
- Vacation time up to six weeks depending on longevity

- Short term disability
- Allowance for uniforms, shoes, and tools
- Pension Plan

ATU Local 448 leadership turned down the offer immediately.

DGR Management continued working through the mediator to make a request of ATU Local 448 for a “deferment of union action” AND agreement of both parties to schedule negotiations at the convenience of ATU Local 448.

The federal mediator contacted DGR Management last evening and reported that ATU Local 448 held an emergency meeting of their Executive Board and turned down the opportunity to avert a strike and refuses to continue negotiations.

In addition to already agreed upon components, the ATU Local 448 is demanding an 18% wage increase over the three years of the contract:

- 12% increase retroactive to July 1, 2024; top operator rate would be \$35.00
- Additional 2.8% July 1, 2025; top operator rate would be \$36.00
- Additional 2.9% July 1, 2026; top operator rate would be \$37.00

DGR has bargained in good faith throughout the negotiation process and has remained dedicated and committed to seek an agreement with the union. PVTA does not have funding to meet an excessively large 12% wage increase in year 1 or an 18% increase over three years. Such increases will necessitate massive service cuts in the Greater Springfield area.

If the Union decides to strike, there will be no bus service in the Greater Springfield area which includes the communities of: Agawam, Chicopee, East Longmeadow, Holyoke (except Routes 41 & 48), Longmeadow, Ludlow, Springfield, West Springfield, Westfield and Wilbraham.

Public Transit services will continue in the Amherst, Northampton, Palmer and Ware areas, as will paratransit van services throughout the Pioneer Valley service area for seniors and those with disabilities.

PVTA is cognizant of the possible ramifications the strike will have on our riders. Our passengers rely on PVTA to get them to work, essential appointments, school and more. Most importantly, few have other options to meet their transportation needs. PVTA has drafted a letter to the Governor requesting assistance on alternative transportation methods.

PVTA encourages both parties to come together to continue negotiations that will result in a contract that is fair and sustainable with no negative impacts to riders or the Authority. As a public transit agency, our main mission is to ensure affordable, accessible transportation for all. Work stoppage by drivers and mechanics forces the Authority in a position to explore all available options to ensure passengers have access to transportation.

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About the PVTA

The PVTA is the largest regional transit authority in Massachusetts with 189 buses, 145 vans and 24 participating member communities. Additional information about the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority may be found at www.pvta.com or by calling 1-877-779-7882.