

# TRANSIT WORKERS NEED STRONGER PROTECTIONS NOW!

April 6, 2020

TO: Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker and Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot:

CC: CTA President Dorval Carter; Metra CEO Jim Derwinski; Pace Executive Director Rocky Donahue

As of March 30, twelve CTA bus and train operators have tested positive for COVID-19. A Pace bus driver has also tested positive for COVID-19 as well as a Metra conductor. There are likely many more who have the virus, and we expect to hear more confirmations of operators testing positive in the coming days and weeks.

We would like information on the following questions:

1. What steps are being taken to contain and mitigate the spread of the virus among essential workers operating buses and trains and those working in transit garages?
2. What is offered to a worker who has tested positive?
3. What is being done at the facility (garage, bus or train) where a worker has tested positive and what is being done for other workers who have potentially been exposed?

We must protect transit workers who, like health care workers, are on the front lines of this crisis to save lives and keep our trains and buses running. As more transit workers test positive for COVID-19, there is much more than can and should be done to prioritize the health and safety of these essential workers.

In support of the demands of the transit operator unions ATU International, ATU241, and ATU 308, we call on Governor Pritzker, Mayor Lightfoot, CTA, Metra, and Pace to do the following:

- **Provide masks, gloves, and other necessary PPE for all transit workers to wear.**
- Immediately start compensating transit workers with hazard pay, meaning pay and a half for those who have been working through the beginning of the pandemic until now and moving forward.
- Maintain current levels of service to prevent crowding on trains and buses; keep riders and operators safe by ensuring social distancing.
- Allow back door boarding on all CTA and Pace buses. Even buses that do not allow for the operator to open the back door, riders should still be entering through the back door even if they have to open it themselves, with exception of riders with disabilities.
- Provide free bus fares to allow for social distancing for bus operators.
- Inspect the air filtration system on trains and buses with public health professionals to ensure the virus is not spreading through the air filter system.
- Share how frequently CTA buses and trains are being cleaned and what cleaning products are being used.
- Ensure the public receives updates on how many operators are testing positive for COVID-19.

**These are the concerns of the transit workers who are still on the front lines of this crisis.** It's because of their sacrifice — and putting themselves in danger — that allows essential workers to get to their jobs

and homes safely. We must take their demands and concerns seriously and support them as they make sacrifices for the greater good.

Without stronger protections, more operators will get sick or stop showing up for work for fear of getting themselves or their loved ones sick. Soon it could be impossible for agencies to maintain current levels of service so essential workers and others making necessary travel can get where they need to go.

**PPE to protect transit workers and riders is the most urgent and immediate need.**

The recently passed federal stimulus bill will provide much needed emergency operating assistance for Chicago area transit agencies to keep our trains and buses running and clean. A portion of those funds must be used to help cover the costs of these necessary steps to protect essential transit workers.

Sincerely,

**Operator Unions**

Ken Franklin, President, Amalgamated Transit Union 308

Keith Hill, President, Amalgamated Transit Union 241

**Elected Officials**

U.S. Congressman Jesus Chuy Garcia

Representative Thaddeus Jones

Ald. James Cappleman

Ald. Maria Hadden

Ald. Leslie Hairston

Ald. Daniel LaSpata

Ald. Roberto Maldonado

Ald. Carlos Ramirez-Rosa

Ald. Michael Rodriguez

Ald. Rossana Rodriguez-Sanchez

Ald. Byron Sigcho-Lopez

Ald. Andre Vasquez

**Civic and Community Organizations**

Active Transportation Alliance

Black Workers Matter

Clean Power Lake County

Chicago Federation of Labor

Chicago Jobs with Justice

Center for Neighborhood Technology

Food and Water Watch

Illinois Environmental Council

Little Village Environmental Justice Organization

Metropolitan Planning Council

Northwest Side Housing Center

Occupied Communities Against Deportations

Respiratory Health Association

Sierra Club Illinois

Warehouse Workers for Justice

Warrior Summit Coalition

Working Family Solidarity