

Next Stop: Automated System

Monica Menner

On July 26, 2007, The Honourable Alvin B. Rosenberg, Judge for the Human Rights Tribunal hearing in the *Lepofsky vs. TTC* case made an Interim Order which in part stated:

[6] It is clear, and I so find, that the failure of the TTC to announce all bus and streetcar stops is a *prima facie* breach of the Code. The Complainant and other visibly impaired passengers are entitled to be accommodated under the Code. I also find that the most appropriate accommodation available is to have *all* stops on both the streetcar line and the bus line regularly and consistently announced in clear terms.

ORDER

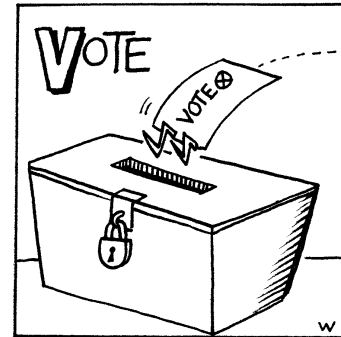
(1) The TTC Drivers shall announce *all* surface stops clearly and consistently.

The implementation plan shall include:

changes to its policies to provide that failure of employees to do as directed may result in serious sanctions including dismissal.

In October 2007, the Human Rights Commission requested all transit services across Ontario to immediately take steps toward audible announcement of all stops. The OHRC goes on to say: A simple verbal call-out is made by the driver or vehicle operator, often with amplification using a PA system, to ensure

(See *Automated System* on page 3)



STRIKE VOTE:

**Sunday Feb. 1st, 2009
Vote at 11am and 5pm.**

Location:

Lions Arena,
20 Rittenhouse Rd., Kitchener

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<http://news.therecord.com/Opinions/article/476591>

Opinions - Calling Out Bus Stops is Not Necessary

Nichole Sotzek, Waterloo

I am a visually impaired person, and I rely heavily on city transit to travel around the city. To be honest, **I am fully against bus drivers calling out every single stop.** Keep in mind, I actually am visually impaired and this is meant to help people such as myself.

(See *Not Necessary* on page 4)

INSIDE THIS INFORMER

Next Stop: Automated System 01
 Strike Vote Feb. 1st 02
 Not Necessary 03
 More Compassion Needed 05
 Letter to The Editor 06
 Vocal Cords 07
 SmartDriver Training 09
 Ski-A-Thon: Feb. 24 11
 Letter to Human Rights 12
 Exercise 12
 GRT vs. GPS 13
 Elvira's Corner 14
 Scheduling Report 14
 Women's Advocate 15
 Int. Women's Day: Mar. 6 15
 Environmental Issues 16
 Tight Run Times 17
 Picked Up in Passing 19
 New Drivers 19
 Union Works 20



This edition published by John A. McDonald

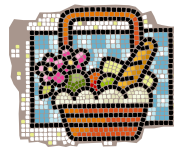
Comments to
caw4304@rogers.com
 (cell 519-241-5623)

The April edition will be published by John Mac Kay:
Submissions to:
informer@caw4304.ca
 (always send submissions here)

Next Submission Deadline is Mar. 20th, 2009

Bereavements:

- Bahtiar Mahmutov
- Bernie Schubert
- Bob Proulx
- Brad Sweiger
- Elizabeth Gibbins
- Florence Resendes
- Jeff Summerfield
- John Proulx
- Pedro Sousa
- Sheldon Martin
- Steve Thompson



Fruit Baskets:

(Some donations to charity in lieu)

- Janice Schultz
- John Mac Kay
- Linda Yandt
- Maarit Isolehto
- Pam George
- Peter Hewitt
- Philip Mayberry
- Reto Swaniga
- Russ Davis
- Scott Desjardins
- Susan Purchase

Attend your Union meetings:
Feb. 18, 2009
11am & 8pm
 (3rd Wed., monthly)

Full colour edition of *The Informer* is available online at caw4304.ca/informer

Contributors

Local 4304 members helping out with this issue were:

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- Paul Eckmier
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Policy Statement

The Informer is a publication of CAW Local 4304 and is intended to educate and inform the members. The views expressed are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the CAW or Local 4304. The Newsletter Committee reserves the right to edit for clarity and fact. Material of a sexist, racist or defamatory nature will not be printed.

(Automated System from page 1)
greater audibility.

Mississauga Transit filed a complaint with the Ministry of Labour, and on April 9, 2008, Mississauga Transit was ordered by the Ministry of Labour in a 5-page report to discontinue the use of hand-held microphones, and properly place microphones where drivers would not have to lean forward. They were also required to conduct a formal review, determining whether the increased tasks would cause drivers to experience overload.

In December 2008, our Stop Announcement Policy, along with 4-page itineraries, was dropped into our laps by management. We were expected to do this without any training, equipment upgrades, or sensible answers to our safety-related questions. It took a work refusal to get senior management to grudgingly agree to look at our health and safety concerns. And the key factor in their decision was the Ministry of Labour Order for Mississauga. What the Ministry of Labour deemed to be unsafe in Mississauga is also unsafe in Waterloo Region!

Just as Mississauga Transit complied with this Order, the Region of Waterloo will now have to pay the costs (costs which could have been used to implement an automated system) to ensure the safety of their workers. They will have to hire an Ergonomist and Voice Therapist to assess the hazards of manually calling stops. On the voice issue, senior management has told our Executive that we only have to announce in a normal voice. However, in CNIB's publication of Vision – 2008, the following was stated:

“The rulings give riders with vision loss the ability to sit where they like on the bus, the freedom to learn the route as they go, the ability to relax or read on the bus, the independence to change their minds and get off at a different stop, and the ability to arrive at their destination on time – all of the rights other transit

riders enjoy,” emphasizes Lesley MacDonald.

Considering the noise levels on our buses, the position of the drivers facing towards the windshield, passenger seating, which is approximately 6 feet behind the driver, we would be talking to ourselves, as it is impossible for the driver to be heard under these conditions. Senior Management has now been asked to get clarification from the OHRC on what they mean by ‘audible.’

We are certainly in the spotlight, and there is a lot of media coverage as a result of our determination to stand together on this issue. Our president, Rick Lonergan, has been on 570 News, as well as on CTV, speaking on our behalf. As a result, other transit properties are picking up on our issues, and are now speaking out on their problems with this directive.

With this media attention, we have been subjected to criticism, and I have to say one of the most moronic comments out there is: ***“At least TRY to call out the stops.”*** What moron is going to attempt to perform an unsafe act? To those morons, I say: ***“GO TRY THIS”***:



(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

For those members of the public who have been supportive, and the drivers who are participating in the media and not performing this unsafe act, I say THANK YOU.

This IS a major health and safety issue. It is not an argument between the sighted and sight impaired. It is an argument with the Human Rights Commission. And now that this Region expects drivers (HUMAN BEINGS) to take the place of a machine until they decide to spend money on an automated system, it is now an argument with the Region.

If the Region can find \$25 million in a time of recession to implement rapid transit and hire a Rapid Transit Director at \$100,000 - \$127,000 salary per year (NOT A NECESSITY), then they can certainly implement an automated system (A NECESSITY) for the visually and hearing impaired. We are NOT machines. **We ARE human, and we are not going to put ourselves and the public at risk by manually calling out stops.**

ⁱ **Lepofsky v. TTC, 2007 HRTO 23 (CanLII)**

ⁱⁱ <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/resources/news/transitthank>

ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/resources/discussion_consultation/transitreport?page=transitreport-Transit.html

^{iv} **MOL Order link:** <http://caw4304.ca/chiefstewardnorth/MOL.pdf>

^v <http://74.125.95.132/search?q=cache:IMrBv3f5PwQJ:www.cnib.ca/en/about/publications/newsletters/vision/2008/CNIB-Vision-Spring-2008.doc+lepofsky+vs+ttc&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=7>

(**Not Necessary** from page 1)

I'm originally from London, and as of this past summer the London Transit buses were programmed to automatically call out each stop. When it came to a stop and opened its doors, it would announce the bus number, name, and direction. It was quite annoying, and very rarely accurate. Soon after it was installed, the bus speakers wore out and people relied on the marquee (similar to that on the iXpress), which is not useful for the visually impaired.



Nichole Sotzek

I don't see the point in the drivers calling out the stops. Whenever I have needed to go to a certain place, or get off around an area, all of the bus drivers have been extremely helpful in letting me know how to get there and when to get off.

Calling out every single stop would get annoying for everyone, and in all honesty, the bus can get quite noisy, making it impossible to hear the bus driver even if he or she did yell.



Management Must Show More Compassion

Klaus Biemann

Political Education

Human Rights Commissioner Barbara Hall's demand that all bus stops be called out manually by GRT operators poses a serious threat to our rights within the workplace. Hall's demands, if implemented, would place an unacceptable burden on every operator that in my opinion would bring stress levels to the breaking point. This we cannot allow, and we will not allow, to happen. Our Local will fight "tooth and nail" to ensure that Management will not impose Hall's unrealistic edict.

Through individual efforts, and through the tireless efforts of our Union Executives, we have sent a loud and clear message to Human Rights through e-mails and through the news media, that we will resist any implementation of manual call-outs as outlined in Management's recent memo to our operators. To date, other transit properties in Ontario have noticed our efforts and are re-thinking their original positions.

The memo itself, through its aggressive and uncompromising tone, is a slap in the face to us. For Management to demand compliance under threat of disciplinary action demonstrates a total lack of sensitivity to operators' concerns, and personally is an affront to me. **I don't like being threatened.** To be told in this memo that monitors will be

stationed on buses to ensure compliance is an insult to my intelligence. Personally, the last time I was dictated to, as in this memo, was in grade school.

I'm also angered by the fact that the threats - the "you will do" - outlined in this recent memo has unnecessarily stressed many of our newer operators. Now they are being confronted with the prospect of not only having to learn the many routes while at the same time concentrating on driving defensively that this job requires, but having to "memorize" every bus stop and manually call them out as well. All this under the threat of disciplinary action if not complied with, while at the same time being told that monitors will be "watching" you. I personally cannot think of a more stressful situation that anyone could create, particularly for our newer operators.
Totally stupid...

I believe Management could have handled this differently through the application of a little bit of diplomacy and compassion. The "you will.....or else" is definitely **not the way to treat your employees.**



YOU HAVE TO ADMIT THEIR NEW INCOME TAX FORM IS A MODEL OF SIMPLICITY:
"1) HOW MUCH DID YOU MAKE LAST YEAR? 2) MAIL IT IN."

Letter to the Editor at The Record

Phyllis Hoch

Editor's Note: This is a copy of the letter that operator Hoch sent to the local newspaper

I am a driver for Grand River Transit (14yrs). I am deeply opposed to calling out bus stops. I would challenge Barbara Hall (Human Rights) to join me on my bus and call out the stops. However, one day of this would not in any way compare to doing it on a daily basis for days, weeks and years while safely operating a vehicle with life's most precious cargo.

Our most important mandate by the Ministry of Transportation, who has the ultimate say on our licensing, is THE SAFETY OF THE PASSENGER! You have hundreds of bus operators within Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge, as well as across the country opposing this responsibility due to safety of the passengers within, as well as the driver's right to a safe and unharmed work environment. It is common knowledge that the driver, sitting at the front of a bus, which does not have much protection ahead of the front axle, would be the first person injured upon impact, were a traffic accident to occur. Anything that detracts us from operating our vehicle safely at all times puts us at risk as well as our passengers.

Yes, calling out a bus stop every 45 to 50 seconds of every driving hour for 50 weeks a year would cause trauma to anyone's voice box. An editorial that appeared in the Kitchener Record, was written by "Dick Miller". In it, he said that drivers talk on their cell phones, yell out the window at passing cars that are rude, and also said there are lots of people who are unemployed who'd be happy to "sit on their butts, and call out street names"... I'm sure there is an insinuation there, that we do little else but sit on our butts. Dick (the writer of this letter) is welcome to come, sit on his butt, and do that for me anytime



he wishes. However, I for one have a very quiet voice and need to face the windshield to drive the bus; therefore my voice does not carry to the people even directly behind me. Many times I am asked to repeat myself when giving directions to passengers.

We are required to do mirror checks every 5 to 10 seconds, give instructions to passengers, negotiate payment, use a wired-in radio to contact dispatch or other buses to ensure connections, watch all traffic around us every second of our driving time, be prepared for traffic light changes, weather, road conditions, detours, unruly passengers, change transfer times every 15 minutes, follow a minute-by-minute schedule while ensuring we are within legal speed limits, continually check gauges and operating conditions of the vehicle, negotiate train tracks, open and close doors, and arrive and depart bus stops regularly and safely. There are over 35 bus routes that we need to be prepared to handle, if that is where our work sign-up takes us.

If I were to ever deny ANY handicapped person assistance, then I would think they have an issue with Human Rights. I have always and will always, as do my fellow operators, bend over backwards for seniors, blind, deaf, those with Downs Syndrome or other difficulties, including

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)
short-term use of crutches, back injuries, etc., as well as making any paying customer comfortable in their use of Grand River Transit buses. I have a deep respect for all who ride public transit, and especially those who find life a little more challenging.



I am extending my thanks to the blind passenger who was so gracious in acknowledging that drivers are helpful. We do our best in a very stressful job that requires constant alertness to an ever changing environment.

I think the Region needs to swiftly re-think the safety of this issue, as they are now doing.

There are many passengers who nap on their hour-long trip to work, read, or chat with each other, who are also deeply opposed to any form of automated voice calling out every 45 seconds. It would be extremely intrusive on an environment that we strive to keep orderly and enjoyable. The use of personal radios has never been allowed on buses for that very reason. One person's enjoyment would be an invasion on another person's quiet.

I would ask Dick, and people like him, who have expressed that we are sitting behind the wheel of a bus, basically doing nothing, to re-think, and feel free to come, observe the on-going, fast-paced actions of the driver every day of their career, and then learn to express his appreciation for our skills in an educated fashion. I would be more than willing to pay his fare.

Vocal Cords? Give Me a Break!

Monica Menner



Once upon a time, people couldn't believe that sitting at a desk all day could injure anyone. What pitiful excuses for already overpaid office workers who do nothing all day but toss paper airplanes through the office! Today, we have all kinds of ergonomically-friendly office equipment to

prevent the very injuries these office workers were complaining about.

Along with technology came new health and safety concerns, one of them being carpal tunnel syndrome. Research was conducted, studies were documented, and new devices were created to reduce risks. One such device made available to the public was 'speech recognition technology.' As a result, users of this technology began to experience what singers and teachers knew all along, that they were damaging their voice. This set off a whole new area of research and documented studies.

These studies found that people can develop repetitive strain injuries of their vocal cords from using speech recognition products, in much the same way that people get injuries from typing too much. Constant repetitive tasks, such as talking or typing, can weaken muscles, sometimes resulting in a limited range of motion. When you overuse your larynx, it doesn't close, and you begin to strain the muscles in your neck to get them to close.

Warning signs were identified to determine vocal cord problems, and those experiencing these warning signs were advised to seek medical treatment. Warning signs identified included: **CHRONIC HOARSENESS:** A dry, scratchy

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)
throat or tickle you feel along the back of your windpipe could be your first sign of trouble.

NAGGING COUGH: This often begins as a mild cough, and then turns into violent spasms that are difficult to get under control. These bouts can result in swollen and irritated vocal cords.

FATIGUE WHEN SPEAKING: When your vocal cords are worn out, varying the pitch of your voice becomes difficult, and you find yourself straining to get the words out. You may lose the ability to project or raise your voice. This symptom develops gradually, and it is more common in the later stages of vocal cord damage.

CONSTANT THROAT CLEARING: If you're constantly clearing your throat, take note: Clearing mucus from the larynx actually causes more irritation because it causes the vocal cords to bang together unnecessarily.

NECK MUSCLES ACHE: Tightness in your neck can indicate that you're using your neck muscles to get your vocal cords to close. Because of their weakened state, your vocal cords stay open, resulting in a gravelly voice.

NORMAL VOICE PITCH IS LOWERED: The pitch of your voice slowly lowers, even when you're not using the software.

LOSS OF VOICE: This symptom occurs intermittently, but increases in frequency as the vocal cords lose their strength. Ultimately, you could completely lose the ability to speak, except for short periods at a time.

Unfortunately, documented research is often scattered and hard to find. Most studies are centered on specific professions and specific tasks. Awareness of specific issues is left under the radar of the general public. It is this lack of awareness that sparks ridicule, and holds us back from speaking out.

People like Jeff Allan on 570 News say, "Hey, what kind of excuse is this? We speak every day." What they have forgotten is their years of voice training, lessons on how to breathe properly, and how to project their voice. It is this training they take for granted. Their lack of



knowledge on what our job entails causes them to ridicule us for a legitimate health and safety concern. As bus drivers, voice use has never been a bona fide requirement of our job. We are not trained for the voice profession. Our work environment does not promote vocal care, and, as such, we are at greater risk of voice injury. There are enough legitimate studies out there to justify our position. **Don't let ignorance cause you to lose your voice.**

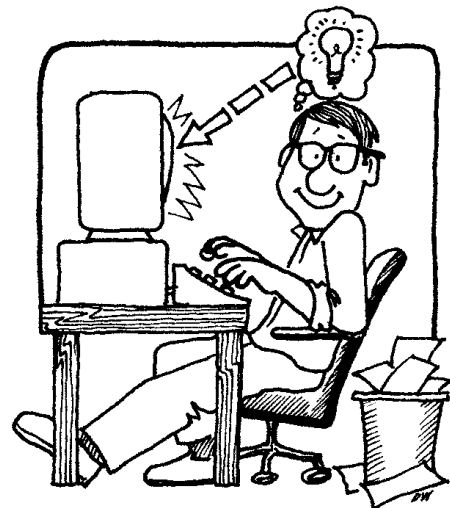
<http://archives.cnn.com/2000/TECH/computing/05/23/voice.saving.tips.idg/>

Submission Guidelines

All submissions to The Informer must be in electronic form and submitted as an attachment by email to informer@caw4304.ca

Submissions in **Microsoft Word** are preferred. Font is Times New Roman, size 12.5.

If you can, please attach a recent photo of the author, and other related photos. Do not compress your photos when emailing them.





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Klaus Biemann @ 573-9568 / Paul Eckmier @ 742-2482
 John A. McDonald @ 241-5623

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FOOD!

SmartDriver Training Program

Fernando Bralha



On Tuesday, January 20th 2009, I had the privilege of attending the **SmartDriver** Training Program in Kitchener at the Strasburg Garage. This was the first open-class training for regular full-

time operators. Previous courses were available only for supervisors and new drivers-in-training.

I really enjoyed attending this program, and I'd like to share a little about my experience.

Altogether, there were seven trainees: Dave Young (Halifax), and myself from Cambridge, and five drivers from Kitchener. The instructors, Sandra K. and Steve S., were both very well prepared and knowledgeable. They were able to answer all of our questions, and to guide us through discussions during the class time.

We've learned some techniques for fuel efficiency, emissions reduction, and ways to improve passenger comfort. I won't explain those techniques here, because I don't want to spoil the expectancy and surprise for those who have yet to attend the program. But I would like to say that I found such techniques very simple but highly efficient. They really work, and make a big difference, not just in the subjects mentioned above, but also in our driving habits. They help reduce stress, and provide us with the satisfaction of knowing that we are doing something good for everybody: for ourselves as a driver, for the passengers, for the GRT company, and, most importantly, for the environment.

As I said before, those techniques are simple. In

fact, they are surprisingly simple, and yet, at the same time, positively brilliant. They really make a difference, as you can see in the Report Summary on page 11.

Actually, most of us professional drivers, most of us already use those techniques. But, after attending the program, we become aware of them, and more conscious about those issues, so we can now use them more efficiently and achieve better results. In one word, we become a "SmartDriver."

Some drivers may be thinking, "*I've driven bus for 10, or 20, or even more years. I know everything about being a smart driver. I don't need training.*" To those drivers, I'd like to say that I believe we never lose anything by learning something new, or by just improving something good we already do. I believe also that we are never too old, too smart, or "professional enough" to resist attending a training session. It isn't a "waste of time." It is an investment of time and effort.

In the Group Average Report below, you can see some of the actual results we got before and after learning and better using the techniques. Compare the columns "Pre," "Post" and "Cumulative %." For example, check out the impressive improvements in our marks:

"Fuel Used: 15.3%"

"Idle Time: 41.7%"

"Service Brake Activations: 21.1%"

I'm surprised also with my personal results, especially for "Idle Time" where I got a mark of 58.8%. This probably means that I wasn't as efficient as my driver colleagues before the program, but now we are all at the same level!

Finally, I'd like to thank management for offering this program, and Sandra, Steve, and Bruce for giving us a clear, professional, and always friendly and fun training experience. And also, to John McDonald for the opportunity to share my training experience with you.

(Continued on page 11)

An Open Letter to Barbara Hall, Ontario Human Rights Commission

Editor's Note: This letter was also mailed to Premier Dalton McGuinty on Jan. 11th.



I'll be very blunt and to the point. I've been with Grand River Transit as a bus operator for twenty years. I discovered very quickly that this is a most demanding job that not only requires a high degree of concentration and extensive use of "people skills," but multi-tasking is constantly the norm, not the exception, often approaching the levels experienced by air traffic controllers. I can make this assertion because of my familiarity with air traffic control.

You came down with an edict, not requesting input from operators on how the manual calling out of bus stops would impact already overloaded working schedules, but demanding instead compliance under threat of a fine. I suspect you know absolutely nothing about transit, yet you bring down an edict that will negatively affect many individuals - the bus operators, not to mention the many passengers that would regard the constant announcements of bus stops as not only an annoyance, but an irritating intrusion into their private thoughts.

For the "rights" of a very few, you are violating the rights of the many. In my opinion, that's not democracy in action. This edict smacks more of the act of a totalitarian regime, not one of responsible, democratic government. I must ask you - are your decisions based on legislative procedure? We have elected government that enacts laws through legislative procedure. Ultimately they are accountable to the citizenry through the process of election. Are you

accountable to anyone when you hand down your edicts?

Our excuses are not "poor" excuses as you recently stated. Our excuses are based on fact - the fact that the manual calling out of bus stops not only seriously affects our health, but poses a significant threat to public safety, at the same time, placing the sanctity of our licenses - our "meal ticket" - at risk. You find it "difficult to believe that calling out stops will have the kind of impact some people are alleging." If you had taken the time to obtain input from Ontario's transit systems on the consequences of manual call outs rather than handing down an edict of "you will..." perhaps then you wouldn't find it difficult at all to believe that calling out of stops has indeed a significant negative impact on not just a few, but on a very large cross-section of people who not only work for transit, but ride transit as well.

Klaus Biemann
Grand River Transit

Exercise. It does the body good.

Cheryl White

I know that to many of you, I just said a bad word. To others, you know that it's true.

I recently hurt myself. The doctor said that if I had continued at the gym, my injury wouldn't have been as severe as it was.

I'm not saying that we should all run out and join the gym, but get out of your seat every chance you get, stretch your legs, arms and neck as often as you can.

Everything that we do affects our body, not just the outside, but the inside as well.

There is a website called realage.com that I checked out a year-and-a-half ago. At that time, I was going to the gym, and was experiencing

(See *Exercise at bottom* of page 13)

GRT vs. GPS

Marty Bootsman



After listening to the Jeff Allan Show the other day on 570 NEWS, which discussed the calling out of bus stops by GRT drivers, I reviewed the issue with my brother--whose viewpoint was refreshingly unbiased and not at all influenced by the CAW or the Human Rights Commission.

After explaining to him the proposed \$7 million automated GPS system that will likely be installed on all GRT buses eventually, he casually and logically suggested:

"Why not simply provide each of the visually impaired riders with his or her *own* handheld GPS unit that could be carried around much like a cell phone or mp3 player? It could audibly inform the person where they are **at all times**--not just on the bus."

I was floored by the simplicity of his solution! The number of visually impaired riders whom I have encountered over the years could probably

(**Exercise** from page 12) much less stress. I was 38 at the time. When I went to the website, my real age was 36. I checked out the website a couple of weeks ago. I am now rated as 39, and because of everything that is happening in my life, it has aged me by 2-and-a-half years, making my real age 41-and-a-half!

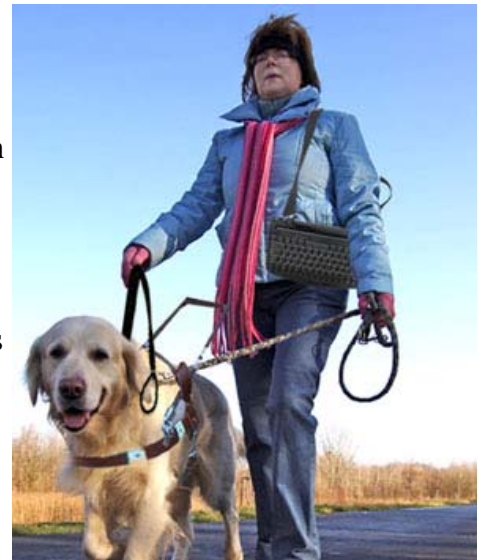
For me, it was an eye opener. I knew I was out of shape, but I didn't think I was that bad. I just aged myself by 5-and-a-half years!

We have to take care of ourselves, and it doesn't

be counted in the hundreds. So let's say that the Region or the CNIB [or whomever] provided each of the visually impaired riders with his or her own GPS--what would that cost? We are talking about a few thousand units costing a few hundred dollars per unit. For argument's sake, let's say we need 2000 units at \$400 each--that's about \$800,000 -- a far cry from \$7 million! And the visually impaired person would be far better served, since he or she could use the device **at all times**, not just on the bus.

That's where the solution lies--expediting the GPS service directly to the people who will benefit most, and bypassing those who would be burdened, both financially and practically. The clarity of logic in this case is 20/20!

Check out <http://www.freedomscientific.com/products/fs/streettalk-gps-product-page.asp>



matter at what age we start. A little bit is better than nothing at all. So start walking around your bus instead of sitting in that seat all day. Take your partner for a walk around the block. Make the time to do it, and your body will thank you.



Elvira's Corner

Pam Martin

Hi everyone!!
Pam Martin,
Operator 375,
(aka Elvira)
here. I'm part of
the New
Drivers'
Committee.
It's winter, and
the stress levels
are totally out of
sight! Are you trying to stay on time by rushing
to make connections with road conditions not
so good? Well, STOP! Slow down! We get
paid by the minute, not by the load. (LOL)



Let management deal with the times. It's their job, not ours. We can't get the times changed if we keep making that connection that we had to speed to make. It's your license, and your bread and butter, not the Region's. So the next time you have to rush to be on time, think how much unnecessary stress you are putting yourself through. If you are running late on a regular basis, on a particular run, but still making connections, it will be harder to get that run revised.

Calling another bus during rush hour also doesn't make sense, since a lot of the runs are on a 15-minute schedule.

And then there is the constant calling for information on the radio: *Where's this street? Does anyone know where this building is?* You should be asking the supervisor, not your fellow brothers and sisters. We have enough to do. Don't get me wrong. We all want to help each other, but the supervisors are put out there for a reason. Utilize them.

So I think I have rambled on enough for now. Have fun playing in traffic. I know I will!!! Wave at you later! KEEP SMILING! ☺

Scheduling Committee Report

Klaus Biemann

Chairperson, Scheduling Committee

As most of you are painfully aware, there continue to be serious ongoing issues in Scheduling that demand immediate attention. Specifically, the lack of decent running times continues to plague operators. At this time, efforts are being made between your Scheduling Committee and Upper Management, Human Resources, and the Scheduling Department, in a serious attempt to address this situation once and for all.

To date, your Scheduling Committee had a meeting with the above people in early December. On Friday, January 23, we had another meeting at Frederick Street in further ongoing attempts to resolve scheduling issues. Your Scheduling Committee is seeking shorter term interim solutions that can be implemented, perhaps as early as the Spring Sign-up, while our ultimate goal will continue to be permanent long-term solutions.

Your Scheduling Committee will do its utmost to ensure the following:

- Longer run times; eliminate the running over of 5 ½ hr. shifts due to road conditions, be it traffic or weather;
- Eliminate the cutting of run-times at the end of the day;
- Trimming deadhead times in order to fit the 5 ½ hr. requirement;
- Guarantee of a minimum of 20-minute lunch breaks;
- Factor in sufficient time for restroom breaks.
- Provision of adequate lay-over times so that operators may relieve themselves without having to run the 100-yard dash in order to get back to their buses within a decent time.

Your Scheduling Committee is here to work on your behalf. You can bet that we will do our level best to ensure that the above mentioned requirements will be met by Scheduling and Management.

Women's Advocate

Dot Feltmate

On average, two women are killed by their partner every month in Ontario. Another 1,000 incidents of spousal violence are reported to the police each month in Ontario. Many incidents of violence by a partner go unreported. I'd like to focus on family violence in the workplace and what you can do to help a co-worker who is abused.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP A CO-WORKER WHO IS BEING ABUSED?

DO

- Believe her (or him)
- Listen and affirm her feelings without judging
- Give clear messages that:
 - She is not to blame
 - She cannot change her partner's behaviour
 - She is not alone
 - She is not crazy
 - Spousal assault is a crime
 - She does not cause the violence
 - Apologies and flowers will not end the violence
- Talk to her about her options and her plan for her children's and her own safety
- Give her time to make her own decisions
- Respect her need for confidentiality
- If she is ready, help her get in touch with a shelter

An abused woman needs our support and encouragement in order to make informed decisions that are necessary for her and her children. There are some forms of advice that can be dangerous to give.



DON'T

- Tell her to go back to the situation and "give it another try"
- Tell her what to do, when to leave or when not to leave
- Suggest you try to talk to her partner to try and straighten things out
- Tell her to stay "for the sake of the children"
- Rescue her by trying to find quick solutions

NEED HELP?

1-866-863-0511 is the phone number for the Assaulted Women's Help-line, a 24 hour helpline in the Province of Ontario. They offer crisis counseling, emotional support, safety planning information and referral, and is available in 154 languages.

As your Union's Women's Advocate, I am also available for information and referral. I can be reached at **519-497-7073**, or by email womensadvocate@caw4304.ca



International Women's Day **Friday March 6th – Sunday March 8th**

In February there will be posting of events taking place within the Region of Waterloo to celebrate International Women's Day!

<http://www.isis.aust.com/iwd/stevens/>
<http://www.internationalwomensday.com/about.asp>

Environmental Issues

Laszlo Bori

This month, we are going to do math and look at a few facts. This article will be about the U.S.A. and the energy crisis. Just remember, when America farts, we smell it!

A very rich man, by the name of T. Boone Pickens, has spent \$54 million of his own money on advertising to help the environment, to make America green, to change the way America generates its power. He wants every car and truck to use CNG (compressed natural gas), and the entire country to replace its need for oil with wind generators. WHY??? Because he owns Clean Energy Fuels Corp., the only company in North America that has the ability to make and utilize equipment that can pump CNG into cars and trucks. He has fuelling stations from British Columbia to Mexico.



This corporation was the sole financial backer of California's Proposition 10. If passed, it would mean that the government would force a certain percentage of all vehicles to use CNG, making Mr. Pickens even wealthier. If it happens there, it will happen here.

Mr. Pickens wants to have wind generators and

turbines all over America to replace coal, oil and nuclear power plants. WHY??? Because he owns Mesa Power LP, a company producing the gigantic windmill generators. With hype on nature and global warming (where is Al Gore now?) and the fuel crisis, people would buy s... on a stick if they believed that it would save the environment!

Oklahoma has agreed to buy 2,000 units at a cost of \$300 million, or about \$150,000 each. We all know that the initial estimate is only about one-third of the true cost. These 410-foot high towers, with 148-foot blades, generate 3 megawatts of power, equivalent to 12,000 barrels of oil per year. Impressive, isn't it?? But wait. That means that each turbine, if functioning at optimum, without breakdowns or non-use due to no wind or high wind conditions, will generate 33 barrels of oil per day.

Since the U.S.A. uses about 21 million barrels of oil each day, the country as a whole would need to build 636,364 wind generators, plus 20% (127,273) for breakdown and maintenance, at a cost of \$114,545,550,000, provided that building and installation costs stay the same, and energy consumption doesn't increase.

We are doing the same here in Canada. There are areas of Canada where you can see hundreds of these monsters dotting the landscape. Take a drive along Hwy. 89 and you will see these giant turbines. If you look carefully, you will see that only a fraction of them are working at any one time. The question is, how much power is really being produced?

Now we come to electric cars. It's nothing new. The concept has been around since 1904. The big problem has always been the battery. It will not hold enough energy to make travelling by electric car practical. Since the energy crisis, the auto makers are trying to market these cars. They boast about how far they can't go! They claim the distance is 150 km, provided the radio, the lights, the A/C or any other electrical device is not used. It takes 12 hours to recharge the

(Continued on page 17)

(Continued from page 16)

battery. They do not talk about the cost of the car, or the cost of the battery, or how much one recharge costs, insurance, or how impractical the car really is.

The Canadian Government is investing millions into such a scheme. The idea being that if you want to travel, you can replace your dead battery with a fresh one at a local garage and carry on to the next garage. This company claims that they will only use wind generated electricity to recharge their batteries. Can you say, *Rip off, waste of tax dollars, stupidity?*

Just imagine going on vacation for a week to Muskoka. You leave Friday night and get to Toronto. You book into a hotel, and wait 12 hours for a recharge, provided there is an outlet close to the building. Then set off on Saturday and get to Orillia, where you have to stop for another recharge. On Sunday, you get to your destination, recharge, go for a short tour, and recharge. If the car breaks down, no one will be able to repair it, and a new battery will take days to get there. By Friday, the vacation is over, and a two-day trip home is ahead.

Yes, we do need other forms of energy, because oil and gas will eventually run out, **but why force consumers to pay for research and development?**

Building and using electric cars is a dead end, a lost cause. Auto makers should be looking at a way to make atomic engines that last for generations without the need to re-fuel.



"He's in charge of stimulating the economy."

Tight Run Times? Slow Down, Take a Break, Live Longer

(Reprinted with permission from the ATU magazine, In Transit, Jan. 2007)

One of the most common complaints that you hear from bus drivers across Canada is that of shortened run times. They say this is the one factor which has added the most stress to their job. The stress results from trying to keep a bus on time and make connections while coping with increased traffic, loading and unloading wheel chairs, increased ridership, inclement weather, construction, lift bridges, unruly passengers, etc.

This trend is not unique to Canada, however, as a survey published by the Transport & General Workers Union in Britain revealed that more than half those questioned gave long hours behind the wheel as the main cause of stress on the job. Drivers are often at the wheel for over five hours without a break and 83 percent said they often or sometimes feel excessively tired at work, especially halfway through a shift. One in five drivers said tight running times or running late is the most stressful part of the job. Sixty-six percent found running times at peak hours too fast or unachievable.

While no similar survey has been undertaken in Canada, there have been numerous similar accounts. Local President Steve MacNeil, 1189-Guelph, ON, says that tight run times are a major concern to his members: "Ninety drivers expressed their concerns at a special meeting at which management was under fire over the tightness of runs and the abuse they get from passengers for missing connections. Promises were made by

(Continued on page 18)

(Continued from page 17)

management, but their commitment did not last long. We are right back where we were before the meeting.”

Local President Keith Scott, **1505** says that in Winnipeg “the general running times were cut down and we have been arguing with the company that it should not only provide recovery time at the end of the lines, but realistic running times during the shift.”

Must Drivers Speed to Maintain Schedules?

Other union executives and members often complain that their schedules are so tight that drivers routinely have to drive over the speed limit in order to maintain them.

If it is the case that to maintain these absurdly scheduled runs drivers have to exceed speed limits or undertake any other measures which push the boundaries of legal and/or safe driving then the obvious solution is to drive in accordance with the laws and adhere to safe driving practices.

If all drivers did their routes within speed limits and were, as a result, late on tight runs then companies would have no choice but to add time to, or shorten, these runs. At the very least they would be required to adopt innovative strategies such as having vehicles operate in pairs with the lead vehicle providing an all-stop local service and the following vehicle being allowed to skip some stops as an express service. The adoption of such strategies and/or the addition of recovery time to runs will result in less stress and a healthier workplace for drivers.

The impact of these tight computer-generated runs on health is not restricted to stress. Drivers will often delay a restroom break which has resulted in them, as an occupational group, experiencing higher than normal rates for urinary tract infections, kidney failure, prostate problems, recurring back pain, and different types of cancer. This is why both the ATU International’s and

ATU-Canada’s Legislative Agenda’s for 2006 called for state, provincial and federal legislation requiring minimum restroom breaks for commercial motor vehicle operators. Such legislation has already been enacted in California.

No one should delay a trip to the bathroom irrespective of whether they’re running on time or 20 minutes late. An employer in retail or any other type of business would not expect their employees to forego a restroom break for hours on end. If a transit company cannot build enough time into runs to account for a bathroom break then they should be held accountable to the ridership.

Long Delays, Missed Connections

Indeed, outside of the drivers, they are the most adversely affected by tight run times in public transit. With many systems having their routes interlined a long delay on one route means that two or three others may also be delayed in succession as it has a domino effect. Subsequently, passengers will miss connections and experience long delays. MacNeil says that it’s been a real concern to the passengers in Guelph: “At one time we were telling passengers to call the Mayor and complain. This was working so well that management got on the bus radio and told drivers to stop telling the passengers to call the Mayor.” Local President Alan Burrows, **846**-St. Catharines, ON, says, “The schedule is more of a guide in our city and is not guaranteed. The public suffers when it takes them over an hour to go to work because of missed connections when it should really only take 20 minutes or so.”

Management’s predictable response to returning time to, or cutting the length of routes is that such measures cost money. But transit systems who pride themselves on the minutes they’ve shaved out of their schedules might ask themselves if they’re actually being “penny-wise and pound-foolish.” **It would seem as though the loss of passengers fed up with missed connections and long delays, as well as the expense of employee disability claims, could end up costing them much more.**

Picked up in Passing

John Mac Kay

Stay off the radio, please. As Monica has stated, we are killing ourselves by constantly calling on the radio for drivers to hold. Our schedules will not get any better if we do not help ourselves. This past Wednesday, at the Union meeting, our president and executive have asked all of us to stay off the radio in order to support ongoing grievances regarding these matters.

Fred Heidel asked me to remind you all that the Site Committee is looking for feedback for the Strasburg Gym. In the last article of The Informer, the committee asked for input for the gym, and they would like to hear from anyone who is interested regarding equipment, personal trainers, and joining the centre. Please contact Fred Heidel, or any of the members of the committee.

Report Card On Snow Clearing: The City of Waterloo at the beginning of winter was involved in a labour dispute with its outside workers. And as a Union we had to respect the outside worker refusal to work overtime, which meant most of Waterloo's bus stops were not cleaned. After the outside workers signed their new contract with the city, work began immediately on cleaning the stops. All shelters and stops are being cleaned

within forty-eight hours of a storm. The City of Kitchener got off to a slow start this winter, but picked it up as the winter progressed. Some phone calls from GRT staff helped. All bus shelters and stops are cleaned and salted within forty-eight hours of a storm. This winter, the City of Cambridge had not cleaned any of their bus shelters or stops until this week. The City has hired a contractor to start the work on cleaning the shelters and stops. Members of our Local have voiced their complaints regarding this safety hazard for the public. And at press time, we will see what actions the City will take to be more consistent to keep the shelters and stops safe for our ridership.

100% solidarity in a strike vote means you are supporting your Negotiating Committee 100%.

It does not mean you are voting to go on strike; it is needed to show our employer we are strong and united. Do not fall for the media play that we have to give up our right to a fair contract because of the economy. We work hard and are brothers and sisters of a unique occupation that most people do not understand. **Let's support our negotiators and show our support, and let them do what they do best.**



New Drivers: 1st row: Mike Sears, Lisa Mai, Joseph Ferneyhough
2nd row: Wendy Aitken, Brenda Henderson Fritch, Terri Kepic, Melissa McCraney

Photo by Dan Pope, New Operators' Committee



Union Works

Monica Menner

We have received a lot of media attention concerning the manual announcement of bus stops. Our executive would like to take this opportunity to thank the membership for their demonstration of solidarity and support concerning this issue. They will continue to push for an automated system.

Collective Bargaining dates have been set for **January 28th, 29th; February 10th, 11th, 12th, and 13th**. Current information on 2009 negotiations can be found on our CAW website at caw4304.ca/negotiations.

As management did not provide a Collective Agreement from our last contract settlement, there has been much misinformation concerning overtime pay, lieu days, family days, etc. If you notice pay discrepancies, or receive questionable information from supervisors, please confirm this information with a Union steward or executive member.

Our employer has taken action against cell phone users by issuing suspensions. Our executive is recommending we stay off our radio.
“Management is implementing a double

standard. Phone use is phone use - be it business or pleasure.”

Bus-to-bus communication for connections and information should be stopped. Calling for connections prevents your Scheduling Committee from fixing insufficient run times. Location or departure-time information should be directed to a supervisor; that is what they are there for.

Your scheduling committee has participated in two meetings with senior management and schedulers. We are working on solutions for tight running times, lack of sufficient breaks, and potential contract violations. The new technology on our buses has allowed schedulers to monitor end-to-end running times more closely. Please do not rush through sections of your runs to stay on time.

The Joint Violence Prevention Group is developing a Violent Incident Report Form for employees encountering verbal and physical assaults/abuse during the course of their day. A Violence Prevention Board containing available resources will be added to our Health and Safety Board. A Violence Prevention link will also be added to our CAW Website containing information on this group's development.



An employee has a legal right to say, "If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated, or cause an effect on my personal working conditions, I request that my Union representative be present at this meeting. Without representation present, I choose not to participate in this discussion."