



# MetroTransit

## BULLETIN

Updated February 2, 2012 – 5:00 pm



### **HRM's Contract Negotiations with ATU**

HRM's contract with ATU Local 508, comprised of transit workers including Bus Operators, Ferry Crews, Fleet Mechanics, and others, expired on August 31, 2011. Negotiations have been ongoing since September 2011. A Conciliator was appointed in October 2011, however, an impasse was officially declared January 18, 2012, by the Minister of Labour after a report was filed by the Conciliator.

ATU Local 508's membership voted on January 22 to reject HRM's contract offer, which constitutes a vote to strike. The HRM Bargaining Team, the Union and the Conciliator resumed negotiations January 29 through February 1, as HRM's objective remains to get a timely agreement on a contract deal that will mean an efficient, reliable transit system for its customers and HRM citizens.

**HRM and ATU were unable to come to an agreement before the strike deadline of February 2; therefore ATU Local 508 members initiated a work stoppage at 1:35 a.m. today.**

### **How long will the work stoppage last?**

Unfortunately this is not a question we can answer at present.

### **What is preventing an agreement from being reached?**

Following the membership vote on January 22, ATU was clear that they did not want changes to their existing agreement with the city with respect to HRM having the ability to contract out and hire part-time transit operators. Therefore, HRM removed those items from their new proposal to the union on Monday, January 30.

At appr. 11:30 p.m., Feb.1, HRM called ATU Representatives back to the table with two proposed offers: one that included shift scheduling known as rostering along with a 6% wage increase over 3 years, and a second option without rostering and a wage increase of 3.5% over 3 years.

Rostering is a scheduling best practice in the transit industry which continues to respect operator seniority while creating better working conditions for more junior operators.

HRM proposes to limit shift picks to one-week blocks, rather than the current one day at a time, "cafeteria style" pick process in effect for three months at a time. The proposed week-long blocks to be selected by Operators would also be in effect for three months until the next shift pick period.

ATU Local 508's position is that they wish to maintain a "cafeteria style" pick system, meaning Operators would continue to choose each shift they will work during each week of the three month cycle.

**What has been ATU's response to HRM's proposals on rostering?**

ATU had advised HRM that they will not agree to rostering and have rejected HRM proposals that have included rostering.

**Does HRM have a proposal in their package to contract out?**

No. The employer did not originally table a proposal to contract out specific divisions or jobs. HRM originally tabled a proposal respecting changes to the existing contracting out language and this proposal was dropped on Sunday, January 29, 2012.

**Is HRM trying to replace existing Operators with part-time Operators?**

HRM dropped its proposals relating to the introduction of part-time Operators on Monday, January 30, 2012. However, it is important to note that the language originally tabled by HRM never included the conversion of existing full time Operators into part time Operators and had a cap on the number of part time Operators that could have been employed at any one time.

**What are HRM's biggest priorities in this round of contract negotiations with ATU?**

HRM's primary objective is to create a more sustainable, reliable, and efficient transit service for HRM citizens, without relying so heavily on revenue from fare boxes and tax rates. HRM needs to reduce the costs of certain aspects of the collective agreement. HRM is also committed to providing a fair and reasonable wage and benefit package for our employees.

**Is HRM trying to reduce the occurrence of overtime?**

Yes. HRM is committed to providing cost effective service to our citizens (the taxpayers) based on the efficient use of personnel resources. Reasonable overtime is still an

inherent part of the business, but the frequency and amount of overtime does need to be reduced.

**Will bus or ferry service continue during a work stoppage?**

Without our unionized employees, we do not have the resources to provide adequate service to the public on the fixed route bus and ferry services, community transit, MetroX, MetroLink, and Access-A-Bus (AAB). All of these services have now ceased operation until further notice.

**What about dialysis patients that use Access-A-Bus (AAB)?**

A contingency plan has been prepared for both ambulatory and non-ambulatory dialysis patients to continue to have their transportation needs met during a strike.

Customers with dialysis appointments today, February 2, were contacted directly by AAB management staff to provide confirmation of their new travel arrangements to ensure that their dialysis treatments are not disrupted.

Further communication will be forthcoming to any remaining AAB clients with dialysis appointments pending the duration of the strike.

**If I just purchased a bus pass, will I get my money back if a work stoppage begins?**

Metro Transit will provide information on how any unused portions of a bus pass will be honoured after the work stoppage occurs. It is impossible to determine this in advance without knowing its duration. Further information on how to claim a refund or extend disrupted use of a monthly pass will be communicated to customers via:

- » [halifax.ca/metrotransit](http://halifax.ca/metrotransit)
- » [@hfxtransit on Twitter](#)
- » [Transit Retail Outlets](#)
- » [490-4000](tel:490-4000)

### What if I have a UPass?

There are provisions in each UPass agreement that outlines how universities will be reimbursed for any unused portions of UPasses during a work stoppage. It is impossible to determine this in advance without knowing how long it might last.

Further information on how to make up for loss of service on a UPass will be provided through the participating UPass universities to their students [following the conclusion of the work stoppage](#).

### What travel alternatives are available during the work stoppage?

We recognize that our customers rely on us for daily travel to and from work/school. Carpooling is one alternative for travellers. The following Transit Park & Ride lots will be FREE for customer carpool parking in the event of a work stoppage:

#### Dartmouth

- » Maybank Field - Mic Mac Blvd
- » Portland Hills Terminal
- » Woodside Ferry Terminal

#### Halifax

- » Mumford Terminal (Near Walmart/ Tim Horton's)
- » Centennial Arena – Lacewood Dr
- » Exhibition Park
- » South Centre Mall – Spryfield

#### Sackville/Tantallon

- » Downsview Terminal
- » Cobequid Terminal
- » Sackville Terminal
- » Hubley Centre



HRM's Smart Trip ride matching program is another option for customers to consider.

Visit [www.hrsmarttrip.ca](http://www.hrsmarttrip.ca) for details on how to sign up as a driver or passenger.

### Alternative Travel Options

In addition to the HRM options described above, several websites, bulletin boards, and social media groups have been established online to connect riders and drivers travelling to and from the same locations. We encourage customers to also check with neighbours, family and friends for connections to carpools or other ride matching options for the duration of the work stoppage.

### Where can I get more information?

Local media outlets (newspapers, TV, radio, online news) will provide a lot of coverage during the work stoppage. We caution customers that sometimes the full views of either or both sides in the dispute are not always conveyed through the media.

Official sources of information for customers related to the work stoppage include:

- » [halifax.ca/metrotransit](http://halifax.ca/metrotransit)
- » [@hfxtransit](https://twitter.com/hfxtransit) on Twitter
- » 490-4000