Cuts Threaten Our Livelihoods And Communities - We Must Come Together!

The complete failure of our government to properly respond to the pandemic has helped create an economic and budgetary crisis. Public transit agencies are now facing historic budget deficits and are preparing to make deeper cuts than during the great recession.

Transit agencies which usually rely heavily on fares and sales taxes to fund daily operations are seeing their income sources dry up. The Federal government gave Bay Area transit agencies a life line of $780 million in the CARES act. That money will be used up, and when it does the transit bosses plan to make up for it off of our backs.

At AC Transit - Management is preparing to cut service between 15-30% depending on budget projections. 20% cut is likely they say. Management is planning to save money by not replacing retiring workers and by spending 50% less on overtime since so many workers are off on COVID relief.

At BART - BART management has proposed $200 million in cuts, including a one year hiring freeze.

At MUNI - The updated budget for SF includes $200 million in cuts to MUNI. 40 out of 68 lines are to be cut for the next two years, likely permanently. The director of transportation said MUNI will not survive if 6 feet of separation is enforced.

These budget cuts are drastic, and are likely just the tip of the iceberg of what is to come. Public transportation is vital for any community. Not only does it provide a livelihood for many and it’s a huge lifeline for poor and working-class people, but with climate change looming down on us, it should be the main form of transit for us all. We must pay attention to what is going on, and build connections with our fellow transit workers and our riders. Only if we come together will we have the power to defend our interests.

Safety First?

The district is talking about the process of reverting back to front door entry, collecting fares and relaxing the passenger limit guidelines of social distancing as early as August. When we look at the huge spikes on COVID cases, why is this even up for discussion? Why is there any rush to push things back to “normal”, especially when we have seen multiple divisions shut down because of COVID cases?

The money from the farebox has always been minimal. This year, it’s expected to account for around 6% of the revenue. To add to the insanity, a recent staff report acknowledged that it takes almost as much resources to process cash fares as the money that is collected from them! Why go back to collecting the fares in the first place?

It’s also true that passengers have decreased during the pandemic, but this won’t always be the case as people are forced back to work. If anything, we need more buses on the road, not less, to be able to accommodate the proper social distancing guidelines!

We cannot look to the district to keep us safe and we can only look to ourselves!

Hold Up, We Need To Close This Yard!

As of last Sunday, every single division has been closed because of COVID infections. We, the workers who are ‘Essential’, all get the word last second. For some, we get the word while on the road, or pulling back into the yard once we reached the end of the line. For others, we get a call at the end of the weekend, to not come to work. In some situations, management has even tried to reopen the facilities hours after they are cleaned.

It would be fine if we knew that once someone was tested positive, all the steps were put into place and things moved rapidly. But in truth, management knows about who got infected and when, chooses a convenient time, and then decided to close things down. All the while, we never know the who, what or where the exposure came from. All we can do is sit and wait and hope that we don’t go home and bring an infection to our families. How much more do we have to take before we say ‘Hold Up! This ain’t how it should be done!’