Transportation is Essential

Public health experts across the world are not sparing any words. To decrease the amount of infections and deaths, everyone who can must stay home. And those who can’t, need to take serious precautions, like social distancing, using protective equipment, and disinfecting exposed surfaces.

BART’s attitude is different. Lakeside’s been able to check out and go home. No surprise there – most of them are not essential anyway.

In the stations, shops and trains? It’s business as usual. Protective equipment? When it shows up, it’s gone before you know it. Disinfection? Sometimes if you can find the supplies. Social distancing? Not if it’s in the crowded shops. This is insane! We should not be working in unsafe conditions.

Need to stay home to take care of family members? Have symptoms and need to isolate? Management tells us to just burn up our paid leave and figure it out!

BART is an essential service. But it can be reduced right now to keep people safe. And BART workers should have a say in organizing this. Shifts can be reduced and runs can be adjusted. Work can be more evenly distributed. And when any BART worker has to stay home right now – for any reason – there should be no cut in pay and it should not cut into our paid leave. Our lives are essential too.

No Shelter in the First Place

What does it mean to shelter in place when you have no shelter? For many people who live on the streets, the BART system is the only shelter available. And this only puts them, riders and BART workers at increased risk of infection.

Hotels, skyscrapers, convention centers are empty now. In Las Vegas, with thousands of empty hotel rooms, the city has ordered the homeless to sleep in a parking lot six feet apart. There are more than enough ways to house people safely – no one should have to sleep in BART stations.

Just Like BART

Front-line workers everywhere are being sent into work without necessary protection. Healthcare workers are treating infected patients and having to reuse masks. In Amazon and other warehouses, in auto plants and grocery stores and other workplaces, there have been increased infections due to unsafe conditions. All these companies care more about their bottom line rather than taking the smallest precautions to protect workers.

It’s no different at BART. Make no mistake, management cares more about keeping BART operational than our own health and safety. We don’t have to wait for them to understand that for BART to function we need to be healthy.

Workers across the country are beginning to find the ways to stand up and keep each other safe. It could be be the same here at BART.

Where’s the Essential Protection?

As essential workers, BART’s workforce is required to show up for work. But even before this crisis, departments and facilities have been without enough Utility and System Service Workers to clean the public areas and workspaces.

And now we’re regularly working in areas that haven’t been sanitized. And we’re lucky if we can even find the cleaning supplies. For most BART workers, there is still a huge lack of protective equipment. And many of us did not even have latex gloves or masks before all this happened. And there is still no plan to get supplies to those who need it.

This make no sense! We’re told we’re essential but not essential enough to get adequate protection.

ESSENTIAL WORKERS

Speak Out Online Townhall…
Covid-19: Workers from the Frontlines
Saturday, April 11 4pm (PDAT)
We can’t depend on those in power to protect us!
To join the event: www.speakoutsocialists.org