



On The Move

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The Fight for Safety and Security on the Job

The safety and security of Local 234 members has been a focus of the Union leadership for a long time. Our contract has extensive provisions covering safety on the job. Section 1102 of the agreement establishes a comprehensive safety program.

In July, 2022, the Local reached an agreement to have top SEPTA management make safety and security a day-to-day priority. Assaults against TWU members are now monitored, tracked and analyzed. Preventative measures are taken wherever feasible. Efforts are also underway to make transit security a top priority for the Governor and our incoming Mayor Parker.

The safety specialist program is a step in the battle for safety and security on the job as well. Under the program, the Union appointed six safety specialists to tackle safety issues around the property. A safety representative is assigned at all locations. You should see your rep on the job. If you have safety concerns, make sure you report it to your safety rep, and expect results.

Bullet Proof Partitions

Bullet proof partitions are in the works.

On Thursday, December 7, 2023, Local 234 met with a representative from *Custom Glass Solutions*, top SEPTA management and Transit Police Chief Charles Lawson to explore the acquisition of Transparent Armor Safety Barriers (bullet proof partitions that can withstand a 44-caliber bullet, plus some) to protect operators on all surface transportation vehicles.

Custom Glass, with a facility in Pennsylvania, designs and produces Transparent Armor that meets all Department of Transportation requirements for optical distortion and clarity. The spokesperson for Custom Glass outlined what Transparent Armor can do to enhance the security of our operators along with the riding public. We also discussed various partition options and specifications. The Union stressed the need for operator feedback on this safety measure.

SEPTA will now provide *Custom Glass* with a sample for each type of surface transit vehicle for designing the partitions. Custom Glass will evaluate the samples and produce a prototype of the Transparent Armor that can be installed on the entire fleet. If SEPTA procures the Transparent Armor from Custom Glass, a timeline for the phased production of the Amor will be developed. The installation of the Armor should be the work of bargaining unit employees.

Fish Fry Fundraiser for Brother Gribbin's Family a Success

Local 234 conducted a fundraiser in support of Brother Bernard Gribben's family last Friday. Gribbin was shot and killed on his bus route in Germantown on October 26. The commemorative event proved a great success. Hundreds of members, friends, family and associates attended. The event raised over \$10,000 for the family and added to our resolve to improve conditions for frontline union workers dealing with serious security threats every day.

2024 Contract Negotiations

Preparations are underway for 2024 contract negotiations. The Local is drafting its bargaining demands for 2024 based on the 2023 contract survey and issues that were left unresolved in 2023. If additional transit funding is approved by the state legislature, we will be in a strong position to address the wage and benefit issues important to our members. The funding issue will also impact the length of the 2024 contract.

Wages

Across the board wage increases to combat the rising cost of living will remain a top priority in 2024. Higher wages for certain job classifications are also on the agenda to keep SEPTA competitive in the local labor market.

Job Security

The Local will also make job security a priority. In the coming years, new buses, trolleys and trains will be introduced across the system. It is critical that bargaining unit members be trained on whatever new technology is employed so that our members can inspect, maintain and make all vehicle repairs. Advances in driverless vehicle technology may threaten the job security of our operators and, if so, steps must be taken to ensure that a trained operator maintains a role on all revenue service transportation vehicles.

The Pension Formula

The current formula for determining monthly pension benefits (94, prior to 2016, 100 per year of service since) needs to be updated. This can be accomplished by changing the amount of the pension credit for each year of employment service.

Deferred Pension Option

The deferred pension option allows members eligible to retire to freeze their pension benefit, stay on the job, and defer collecting pension payments until they stop working for SEPTA. At that point, the retiree receives a lump sum payment based on the amount deferred, plus interest, along with a regular monthly pension check. The beauty of the deferred retirement program is the retiree's receipt of a substantial lump sum payment, which often amounts to over \$100,000 in savings, depending on one's pension benefit and the length of time the member participates in the program, up to four years.

Facebook, a blessing and a curse

Facebook and other social media platforms can be a great way for union members to communicate. Facebook and other social media platforms can also be a source of misinformation and disinformation.

During the 2023 contract negotiations, some social media platforms became anti-union echo chambers, dividing the members at a critical time. As a result, the Local is working on a plan to combat misinformation on social media by improving the union's web page and fact-based social media communications with our members. While some members who spread misinformation on Facebook proudly identify themselves, others hide behind an alias to avoid accountability for the nonsense they post on Facebook. Yet, it's in everyone's interests to make decisions based on facts, not misinformation.