

## ***Speak Out Now! at AC Transit 2/8/21***

### **Threat of Action Reverses Front Door Boarding at VTA**

A small but important victory was won by VTA workers and community allies to protect the health and safety of the operators. Like everywhere else, COVID cases have been rising in San Jose. ATU Local 265, which represents many VTA workers, reported that there were only 14 COVID cases from March through August. But since then, one worker died, and 164 tested positive, with 69 cases in January alone. Clearly there's a link between front-door boarding and COVID cases!

Early in the pandemic, VTA was the first transit agency in the Bay Area to institute fare free, rear-door boarding to protect the operators from exposure. But, like other agencies, management resumed front-door boarding and fare collections in August.

After the recent surge some people took action. People from local 265 and many other community groups sent a collective letter to VTA management demanding the reinstatement of rear door boarding and planned to hold a "drive-in rally" to protest. Low and behold all it took was a little pressure for management to change their tune. They decided to honor the safety of the workers and the rally was called off!

This should be a good lesson for us!

### **New Union Term – The Expectations Should Be On Us All!**

A whole new round of union officers were voted in for this current term. Although there's some confusion on the vote tally, which should be sorted out for everyone to be clear on, many have expectations that we are turning over a new leaf.

Undoubtedly, people have been disappointed with the erosion of the quality of the job over time. Some have been disappointed about a lack of union meetings and a noticeable response to the pandemic.

Yes, it's time for change! But if we want to see something different from those we voted for, let's put in work alongside them!

### **Budget Crisis - Delayed For Now?**

The pandemic has led to an economic fallout that has jeopardized funding for all public services, especially public transit. While federal stimulus packages have provided important financial relief and more is expected soon, they haven't come close to addressing the deep crisis that public transit systems face. For example, MUNI's director has described their situation as worse than the Great Depression! According to the APTA, an organization of transit agencies nationwide, nearly one of every four agencies may lay off employees.

Although AC Transit has not been hit the hardest, that doesn't mean that AC is in the clear. Hours and service have been cut back and it's not clear when they might be restored. Given that AC gets most of their funding from various taxes, what will the future mean if the recession deepens?

We may be wondering whether we might be in harm's way if and when a budget axe comes down, and it's difficult to say right now. This is also a time when billionaires in the US have seen their wealth grow by over \$1 TRILLION since the start of the pandemic! When we take a look at the extreme wealth that has been generated from our sacrifices, why should we be expected to give up anything?

