

1986-1989 Highlights

1986...

Governor Vic Atiyeh appointed seven new Board members to Tri-Met. The board appointees included Loren Wyss, an investment counselor and economist. Other members included Dan Mercer, Herbert Amerson, Edward Whelan, Lenore Allison, William Robertson Jr., and Joseph Barclay.

Union members wanted to be regarded as public employees under Oregon's collective bargaining law for public sector workers. Union leaders testified before a subcommittee in Salem that a lack of specific legislation making the publicly owned company subject to the Oregon Employment Relations Board's jurisdiction in labor-management relations was a major factor in the impasse that almost caused a strike a year earlier.

A problem arose with Boy Scouts voluntarily cleaning and painting bus shelters. An arbitrator ruled that the use of volunteers was a violation of the publicly owned bus system's contract with the Union. Management needed to ask the Union's permission before allowing volunteers to do work covered by the labor-management contract, the arbitrator ruled. There was nothing, however, to prevent the company from letting Scouts and other volunteers perform management chores in the District's executive suites.

Training began for the start of MAX. Tri-Met's light rail line went into full gear in September after a 3-day celebration along the 1-mile line. Brother Hugh Roberts was quoted as saying, "It's a nice system but the biggest bunch of baloney ever perpetrated on the people of Portland." Brother Ed Becker said, "For folks along the route, it's going to be very nice transportation. Also, property along the route will probably increase in value and there will be new development along the right of way."

When workers started laying out the MAX tracks there was concern over traffic delays and dust. In fact, the local residents gave the system a 50% approval rating. The company planners predicted that 3 million people would choose to take light rail in its first year. The system proved very popular. During its first year, MAX carried more than 7 million passengers, doubling its projected ridership. MAX also helped the company. As it glided through the east part of Portland, Tri-Met's approval rating went up to 65%. MAX was even more popular on the weekends. The Portland Rose Festival was only one of several local promotions that made MAX seem even more intelligent to have around. MAX's price tag was \$250 million. The next question was, "What about west side light rail, relieving commuter overloads between Washington County and downtown Portland?"

A national convention was held in Denver, and the discussion included Reagan Administration efforts to cut public transit funds. Five hundred delegates scored Reagan proposals to "privatize" mass transit services by conditioning federal funds on the percentage of operations contracted out to private firms and to cut transit funds by as much as 70 percent. The convention elected James La Sala to his first 3-year term as president.

Mel Schoppert was named first International vice president and general executive board member of the International Union.

1988...

Ron Heintzman defeated Rich Ries, Al Zullo, Rufus Fuller, Ed DeSantis and Liz Tuescher to become business representative. Wally Feist was elected over Tony Bryant, Art Jones and Greg Durham as financial secretary/treasurer. Andrea Dobson was elected president.

Emergency medical technicians, paramedics and dispatchers employed by Buck Medical Services, and bus operators and maintenance workers employed by Laidlaw Transit, Inc. became members of ATU Local 757.

Union officers began publishing "the Bulletin," a monthly Local publication that was carried in the *Labor Press* and sent to Local members beginning in August.

1989...

On February 1, a press conference was held to announce an impending strike by the Union against Buck Medical Services, Inc. According to Ron Heintzman, the Union's business agent, "Our backs are against the wall." The strike could affect 120 workers in two counties. Although the Union insisted that the strike was not only about money, leaders said the ambulance emergency medical technicians were the lowest paid in the country. A strike against Buck lasted approximately 40 hours.

The Union allowed Tri-Met to transfer its police to the Portland Police Bureau in May when a separate Tri-Met division was created within the Bureau.

The Union struck Care and Tualatin Valley Ambulance Company in November. A 4-week strike ensued involving some 40 employees. The company agreed to an increase in overtime pay, holiday pay, medical and dental insurance, and payroll deductions for union dues. Employees on strike included 26 paramedics. Members voted on the agreement in December.

It took 8 months of bargaining to ratify the first labor agreement with Laidlaw Transit. About 300 bus operators and mechanics were involved. Mechanics received up to \$1.10 per hour wage increases in the first year and annual cost-of-living increases and bonuses tied to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The bus operators' contract called for an immediate 25-cent-per-hour increase and increased hourly wages by over \$1.50 per hour at top operator rate.

Employees of Broadway Transportation, Inc. (later ATC Management Corp.) And Care Ambulance-Grants Pass became members of Local 757.

Local Union officers lowered membership union dues by an average of 8 percent, the first time dues had been lowered in the Local Union's history.

Highlights of the decade included a U.S. boycott of the Moscow Olympics to protest the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Mount St. Helens erupted in 1980. Iran freed its 52 American hostages a year later. Sally Ride was the first U.S. woman astronaut in space. Portlandia, the 38-foot copper statue on the Portland Building, was barged up

the Willamette River. Pioneer courthouse Square opened in 1984. The best selling board game was Trivial Pursuit. The space shuttle Challenger exploded in 1986, killing seven crew members. In 1988, fire spread through Yellowstone National Park. The worst U.S. oil spill involved 11 million gallons rom the Exxon Valdez. The Trailblazers finished second to the Detroit Pistons in the NBA finals in 1990, and the Oregon Convention Center opened.]