

CIP SUB-COMMITTEE (RE: MTA)

January 22, 2001

7:00 PM

Chairman Pariseau called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Pariseau, Levasseur, Clancy

Messrs: M. Berry, D. Clay, J. Webster, Commissioner Manseau,
Commissioner Boisvert, Commissioner Trisciani, William Cantwell,
Aldermen Pinard, Lopez, Gatsas, Vaillancourt, M. Hobson

Chairman Pariseau addressed Item 3 of the agenda:

Copy of a communication from Mark Berry and other users of the MTA expressing their displeasure with recent unexpected cancellations of bus routes.

Alderman Clancy asked is Mark Berry here tonight. Could you please come to a microphone? Tell us exactly what happened. You have been working down at Summit Packaging for a number of years and you have been getting the bus for how long? Daily?

Mr. Berry answered yes, daily five days a week.

Alderman Clancy stated tell us what happened.

Mr. Berry replied we are going to go back to July.

Alderman Pariseau stated no. Let's address the letter that we got dated January 16. We don't have to go back to July.

Mr. Berry replied that is fine. What would you like to address, Sir?

Alderman Pariseau responded the reason for your letter. The bus was late, I guess.

Mr. Berry replied no. The bus never showed up. If you look at the letter, Sir, you will see that the bus never showed up. On the times that it did show up, it was

late. I contracted myself out for a second job figuring I could make my connection to that second job, which would be the Bedford Mall. It never happened.

Alderman Clancy asked how did you get to work.

Mr. Berry answered I paid cab fare at \$10.

Alderman Clancy asked how many other people are with you to get the bus.

Mr. Berry answered during the time I wrote that first letter there were four people. Now it stands at nine. You have a ridership of nine people coming from Summit Packaging.

Alderman Clancy asked how many of those people took a cab.

Mr. Berry answered I took a cab. I don't know how many other people took a cab. I held a second job. My interest was to get to my second job.

Alderman Clancy asked since then, have you taken the bus.

Mr. Berry answered I take a bus every day. My main job is at Summit Packaging. I have to be there at 7:30 AM. I leave at 3:30 PM.

Alderman Clancy asked so there was only one time the bus didn't show up, right.

Mr. Berry answered no. There have been five times that bus that at 3:30 PM when we are leaving work has not shown up. Three of those times were in the last four months.

Alderman Clancy asked did anybody ever explain to you the reason why.

Mr. Berry answered I heard from a bus driver who I won't identify in all fairness that it was an executive decision. That is the way it was put to me. It is not just me here. We are not talking about just me. We are talking about everybody else who relies on that run. The 89 year old grandmother that wants to get home. Would you feel comfortable about that? I wouldn't feel comfortable about it. My grandmother waiting for a bus that is never going to show up? It is not just about me. Yes, I get hurt by it. I will live. So, another bus will show up a half an hour later but what about the elderly people who are hanging around waiting for a bus that never shows up? It doesn't show up and they get confused and some of them stand there and they panic. That is not fair. So, it is not just me.

Alderman Levasseur stated I would like to hear from Mr. Webster if I could on that question concerning the executive decision. Is that okay?

Chairman Pariseau stated I think we should hear from Don Clay.

Alderman Levasseur asked is it appropriate for me to ask you that question, Mr. Webster or should I be asking the Superintendent.

Mr. Webster answered I think any decision for the cancellation of that 3 PM Airport run was my decision to make.

Alderman Levasseur asked did you make that decision, Mr. Webster.

Mr. Webster answered yes. I think the very first one was on October 24, which we appeared at the CIP Committee to explain. Again, it was because we were one driver short to drive a school bus.

Alderman Levasseur asked subsequent to that date, Mr. Webster, did you make three more decisions to cancel that run.

Mr. Webster answered two more. One I believe was on December 12 and then the following Tuesday. Again, on those days both myself and Pat Gola and a staff member that normally ends their day at 12:30 PM all were out driving a school bus and we were still short.

Alderman Levasseur asked when you make these executive decisions, Mr. Webster, tell us what the process is for you making that decision.

Mr. Webster answered basically we have a driver that as a break at 1:20 PM and comes back and does the 3 PM Airport run. So, when a driver calls in sick in the afternoon that we have more runs than we have drivers, then we look around and say is there anyway we can do a cut and paste on the existing school runs and try to maybe double up on some of the schools or do something like that, but it just comes down to numbers.

Alderman Levasseur asked how do you prioritize. I would think that the Airport would be way up on your priority list since you are getting a lot of planes coming in. Do you have a special process that you go through to prioritize?

Mr. Webster answered it is the only run out there that is backed up a half an hour later. In other words, there is a 3 PM Airport leaving downtown and there is also a 3:30 PM Airport leaving downtown.

Alderman Levasseur asked so if you miss the 3 PM one there definitely is the 3:30 PM one.

Mr. Webster answered yes there is.

Alderman Levasseur asked so on those three particular occasions there was a bus coming in at 3:30 PM.

Mr. Webster answered yes, there was.

Alderman Levasseur asked so there was just a half an hour difference.

Mr. Webster answered a half an hour or 35 minutes depending on the traffic on South Willow Street. Where the alternative was we run the 3 PM Airport and two schools don't get picked up until somebody completes their regular school run, possibly around 3 PM or 3:05 PM. They would have to go back to McLaughlin or Green Acres or McLaughlin and Highland Goffs Falls. There would be two schools affected and probably 50 students per bus.

Alderman Levasseur stated so either way you are going to get smacked upside the head so you have to make the decision of the students over the adults and the adults would have to wait an extra half an hour.

Mr. Webster replied absolutely. In this case, we knew that we had nine to ten to twelve adults that would be able to be picked up a half an hour later. They were at work and they were going to be going home as opposed to two schools that were going to be running with 55 students, a middle school and an elementary school. Again, everybody was...you know we have some morale problems because of our mandatory overtime and we have been canceling people's days off over the last couple of weeks in order to accomplish our schedule and it is still not enough until we address the underlying issue of how do we hire and obtain enough school bus operators to fulfill our contractual obligations. As we said in December when we were here I can't promise you that it won't happen again. If you tell me which call you would rather get, that would be easier.

Alderman Levasseur asked how many bus drivers are you short right now.

Mr. Webster answered 15 to 20 school operators.

Alderman Levasseur asked so when you say bus drivers for school, those bus drivers are also transferred to City buses to pick up.

Mr. Webster answered no. These are part-time school bus drivers. What is happening now is we have full-time transit operators actually effectively covering some of the school operation.

Alderman Levasseur asked how many are you short on the bus routes. Not the school routes, but the City routes.

Mr. Webster answered on transit drivers we have one driver out on long-term disability. We always have some people out on vacation and days off, but effectively we have 26 full-time drivers and one is out long-term.

Alderman Levasseur stated so your shortage is not on the City side, it is on the School side.

Mr. Webster replied that is correct.

Alderman Levasseur asked if you are only short one person for the City side how come you still have that problem with the City side. I want to make sure that we don't mix the two issues. I mean you are short on the School side, but you are not short on the City side but you still had to make a decision to be short on the City side.

Mr. Webster answered right. We have never had to cancel City routes because of a shortage of transit operators. There are times where during the school side when we have eight, nine or ten people going out in the afternoon on the transit side to cover if a driver is running late on the City route and they ask for another bus to get them caught back up, sometimes it takes longer than normal but as long as transit operations is covering a lot of the school routes to get the school kids home, I don't expect that to change. Again, I think we are a company very much like a lot of companies throughout the country. We have insufficient people willing to drive part-time school buses and we are competing pretty much with full-time jobs and a low unemployment rate. We are losing people. We have had three or four people give their notice. One is going to become a nurse. They are going to college. A couple of people are moving out to Pembroke. Another person just gave their notice because they are going full-time. If you try to be in competition with part-time wages and benefits and competition with full-time, you are going to lose. We are like a lot of other bus companies.

Alderman Levasseur asked will you be saying again right in front of this committee that it is possible that there will be other times in the City that you will have to make these same decisions.

Mr. Webster answered absolutely unless you are telling me that you would rather get the calls from the parents of the school children because they were an hour late. That issue would be in default with our contract with the School Department. In one case, you have a City bus route that is supposed to be out there and we take that job very seriously. On the other hand, we have a contractual obligation to get the students home within a certain amount of time after they get out of school. If I have to make the decision as an Administrator to take middle school kids and elementary school kids and put them ahead of adults at a job with all of the ramifications and they pay taxes, I don't see any other way I would be shirking my responsibility if I didn't chose the school kids.

Alderman Clancy stated I agree with you as far as the school kids over the adults, yes, but my contention is this is going to happen time and time again and there has to be something done to rectify it.

Mr. Webster replied we are trying everything. I have been here 23 years. I have been with the MTA since 1977 and going back to the years as a driver and three plus years as an administrator, I have never seen it this bad. The underlying factor is there are not enough drivers to cover on a day-to-day when you have five or six people call in sick and a lot of times now what we are doing is we are hiring people that are taking their children on the bus so it is not necessarily that they are sick, but their children are sick so they can't come in to work, which is understandable. We have done more things...we have spent more money for advertising. We are holding job fairs at some of the malls. We have a school bus out there and we are dedicating a driver that is a safety driving instructor to show people the safety and how their kids can be safe on the bus. At the same time, are you willing to maybe become a driver? We have a booth set-up every Tuesday morning at the unemployment office trying to get people who are looking for a job. We have advertised in the *Union Leader*. We are offering a \$500 sign on bonus. I think we have gone the extra mile but there are only a certain amount of people. You are competing with a real tight job market with low unemployment and everybody needs a driver or everybody needs an employee. Unfortunately, we have some things that we are trying to do working with the School Department if you read the paper in wanting to try to present a plan and some ideas that will hopefully save us some drivers and save them some money but until we get the okay on that...in the afternoon we have been able to link a couple of jobs but that is not guaranteed yet. Again, I can't tell you day to day who is going to call in sick. Today, I didn't have to drive so everything was fine, but I drove this morning.

Chairman Pariseau asked what is the full complement of school bus drivers.

Mr. Webster answered right now we have roughly 60+ depending on who is out sick.

Chairman Pariseau replied no I mean a full complement.

Mr. Webster responded 80.

Chairman Pariseau asked and you currently have 60.

Mr. Webster answered 60 or 65. We are about 15 to 20 short. I know that some people their last day is Friday so we have anywhere from 60 to 65 depending on whether you add or deduct the people who have already said they were leaving for a full-time job.

Chairman Pariseau asked how many of those that you currently have are making double runs if you will on a daily basis. Any?

Mr. Webster answered for example today we had a couple that did a run that they were able to at a high school. After they do their regular runs, they do like maybe a McLaughlin and a Green Acres and then they went over and did a Memorial run or something of that nature. In the afternoon it isn't just a matter of doubling up anyone. All of the schools get out pretty much within a half hour so it doesn't help us if we are short one driver at McLaughlin and Green Acres you can't double that one up and put them all on the same bus. It can't be done. In the morning what we proposed to the school is to start a little bit earlier and now they can do three schools instead of two. They can do back to back middle schools and then an elementary. They can do a Southside, Southside, Green Acres or a McLaughlin, McLaughlin, Green Acres, which will save you one driver because you have one driver that is just doing one run. In the case of what happened all three times the Airport bus was cancelled, we were two schools short. The driver that went out did two schools and the only solution to that is to call both of those schools and say as soon as we get done one full run we will go back there and do the other full run, which means that if you have a school getting out at 2 PM and they are not getting back to 3:30 PM you are an hour or an hour and a half late for those two schools.

Alderman Pinard stated I have a few questions. Mr. Webster, last year how many drivers quit the MTA?

Mr. Webster replied I don't have a number off hand.

Alderman Pinard asked does your clerk have the number. He is right there. The reason I ask that question is it seems that there is more to what you say as to why

the drivers are leaving. Now I have been getting calls since last week and I know...shake your head all you want. Excuse me but enough is enough. How come the bus at McLaughlin last week was an hour and a half late picking up the kids?

Mr. Webster answered I am not aware that it was, Alderman.

Alderman Pinard asked how come on Friday Mr. Rist had to transport 18 or 19 kids to West High School because there was no bus there.

Mr. Webster answered I am not aware that that happened. This is the first I have heard of it.

Alderman Pinard stated you are the Superintendent. You are supposed to know what is going on, right? Why don't you check on that tomorrow?

Mr. Webster replied I will. This is the first I have heard of it.

Alderman Pinard responded that is possible but you know I would take their word before I would take yours. I am sorry.

Alderman Gatsas stated a couple of things you said disturbed me a little bit. Let's talk about the mandatory overtime. Do you have mandatory overtime in place?

Mr. Webster replied yes.

Alderman Gatsas asked have you checked whether that is legal.

Mr. Webster answered I have talked to the Labor Department and they don't have any rules against it. It is allowed under our collective bargaining agreement.

Alderman Gatsas asked mandatory.

Mr. Webster answered it is under the emergency rule of the collective bargaining agreement.

Alderman Gatsas stated there is a difference between emergency and mandatory.

Mr. Webster replied they are mostly the same thing, Alderman. If I were defining an emergency, if I have a bus run to cover and no driver to fill it and I am out there driving, I designate that as an emergency unless you would rather say that you don't think getting the school children to or from school is an emergency.

Alderman Gatsas responded well it could be an emergency or poor planning, but we will leave it as an emergency. The next question. Children on buses. Bus driver's children. Can you explain that to me?

Mr. Webster stated one of the things is that most bus companies in the area and it is an advertising tool, you have a bus driver that has non-school aged children and they can't afford to take a job because the daycare costs are high so they allow them to go onto a bus with an approved car seat seatbelted in. We have two that go on the bus with their mother. The advertising tool is when there is no school they can stay home with the kids and the kids can come along with them. It is just something that we, along with other bus companies nationwide allow.

Alderman Gatsas asked is it covered under liability.

Mr. Webster answered sure. We have insurance.

Alderman Lopez stated the situation that you are in in the management aspect of it, I am wondering if what you just explained between the choice of a City bus...you might have to take that individual and put them on a school bus because you have to take care of the kid and I can understand that. Hearing everything that you said, I am wondering if anybody has a solution to this other than more people for the bus company so they can have enough drivers. Is that the only problem we have here? We can't get people unless all of the Aldermen here want to volunteer. Why is everybody here? Just for that one commercial bus that didn't pick up one individual and was cancelled or is there something else?

Mr. Webster replied I can only answer that in the hiring we have done and the people who have left school bus driving, 99.9% of the reasons I get are they are moving on to full-time jobs or they are moving out of the area. There is no doubt that any time you have people being compelled to work on their day off and people compelled to work in the morning it is an unpopular position. As a manager, I don't like to have to do it but unless someone can tell me how I can cover that work...

Alderman Lopez interjected I can appreciate that because the buses have to go out. It is like being a letter carrier. The mail has to go out regardless of who takes it out. You do need more people. There is no question. You indicated you need 15 to 20 people. I don't know what and I don't mean this to be derogatory in any way but what does somebody want us to do about this is my point. If you don't have the people to drive the buses, decisions have to be made and the kids have to be picked up. Maybe you might take all of the commercial bus drivers and ship them over there and pick up all of the kids in schools if that is the case. That could happen, right?

Mr. Webster replied one of the reasons that we cancelled the 3 PM Airport run was that if we take another driver off of a route to go to a school run, it affects more than just the one trip. It affects generally if we took them off it would be a 1 PM to 3:30 PM so you might be looking at three City routes that wouldn't be run as opposed to one. That would be three buses that wouldn't be by...maybe that is a once an hour bus. In the case of...I will use just the Bedford Mall and the South Beech. You have a 2 PM and a 3 PM. One that leaves downtown and goes to the Bedford Mall and when it comes in it is the 3 PM South Beech. So, if you take both of those buses, there is no...you have to wait an hour before the next bus comes by so now you are disenfranchising two routes instead of one. It is not an easy decision. It is not a decision that I take lightly as an administrator. I hate it, but as much as I know the system I don't have an answer other than to pick up the phone and call the schools and say keep your kids in the gym we will be there when we get there.

Alderman Lopez stated they might do an exit interview of those employees who do leave if they don't already and find out if there are any concrete...

Chairman Pariseau asked, Mark, are there interviews being conducted for part-time employees.

Mr. Hobson answered not to my knowledge in a formal fashion. I believe informally they talk to the drivers. What I was going to suggest is that perhaps what we would like to do is take a look at their turnover rate, why they have a turnover rate and chart it and plot it, similar to what we do in the City on a monthly basis and perhaps we could also do some employee exit interview surveys and have those given to someone in a blind fashion, if you will, so the data can be collected. I would be happy to volunteer if you would like us to get together with their management and do that.

On motion of Alderman Clancy, duly seconded by Alderman Levasseur, it was voted to have the Human Resources Director get together with MTA management to discuss conducting employee exit interview surveys to collect data.

Chairman Pariseau stated the last time we were here and going through this process, it was recommended by this Committee that people from the MTA attend management programs and whatever. What is the status of that? Have they been participating in programs initiated by HR or others?

Mr. Hobson replied we have had a member...I believe it is the Assistant Superintendent that reports to John, has attended some of our Quality Management Meetings. We also have Mr. Cantwell and Mr. Webster beginning to participate in

the supervisory and management training programs that we have with our business partnership with the University of New Hampshire. Mr. Cantwell has attended one. We run them each month. Mr. Cantwell started in December and Mr. Webster is starting in February.

Mr. Webster stated I have been scheduled to attend two in February, two in March, two in April and I believe two in May.

Chairman Pariseau asked has Pat Gola been to any.

Mr. Hobson answered she has not been to the UNH meetings, but I know she has been to some Total Quality Management meetings. She has not been to the UNH program. Again, as we said at the last meeting, we are happy to offer this to the MTA.

Chairman Pariseau asked, Mr. Clay, have you attended any of these sessions.

Mr. Clay answered no.

Chairman Pariseau asked do you plan to.

Mr. Clay answered yes.

Chairman Pariseau stated let me know when you attend the first one because I want to go with you.

Mr. Webster stated if I could address one thing, Alderman. We are trying to contact some of the major employers at the Airport, such as Summit and Freudenberg NOK and Safety First so we can maybe have something in place if it becomes necessary for us to cancel a bus route so that the employees won't be out there waiting in the cold and they can notify their employees via whatever in-house means they have to say that the bus will be running a half an hour late and to expect the next one. Hopefully, it is a day by day thing and we won't have to cancel it.

Chairman Pariseau stated but cancel, that would be like canceling the 3 PM and picking them up at 3:30 PM.

Mr. Webster replied that is correct. We do have some people that are training right now going through the process. We have four part-time school bus operators. I would like to comment on one thing. When I was Union Secretary, the numbers really haven't changed so much. It was always kind of a revolving door. We would have a hiring period in September and they would train them

through the summer, they would hire them in September and then train them again in January, but they would stay the school year. What we are finding out now, especially in the last year, is that it seems like some of them we are training and they don't even go to work. You call them and say how come you didn't come to work and they tell you they have another job. We went through two or three in the last session where we trained people and I think we are the training facility. They get their CDLB and they end up driving for UPS or somebody else because it costs so much...\$4,000 or \$5,000 to get a CDLB but we train them and we pay them. I think what is happening is you are finding that the people you train are not even staying the school year and that has changed in the past year and a half.

Chairman Pariseau asked are you having people participating in your training sessions and then going to Goffstown or Ladlaw.

Mr. Webster answered generally we are finding that some of them either we were the one that they applied to because they wanted a job in the interim for whatever reason and then something better comes along and they don't go through it or some of them we start training and then we get a criminal records check that says they can't hold a bus license or we had a guy that went through his training and he is halfway through and we have nine pages of motor vehicle report so he couldn't drive. Again, you have low employment. We are competing with everybody else and it is very difficult to track the people paying them the wages that you are paying them to be a school bus driver.

Alderman Clancy asked how is your pay, John, in comparison to other cities around here.

Mr. Webster answered as far as the school bus operators, it is comparative. It is comparative but I heard some stories that there are some places like in Massachusetts that has offered a \$2,000 or \$3,000 sign on bonus and they haven't had an application for 40 days.

Alderman Clancy asked do you think you have a large turnover rate. What is the reason for your large turnover?

Mr. Webster answered there are people who are really underemployed full-time who come to us because they want a job. They get a part-time job and then a full-time job comes along that pays pension and sick pay and vacations and healthcare and they go there. I can name the people that I have known within this last month that have given their notice. One is going to college. She is going to become a nurse. Two of them are moving to Pembroke so they can't drive the distance and pay the daycare. One of them can't get nighttime daycare or something. Another one took a full-time job. Nothing because of the management style. It is not

management style down at the MTA. It is people that for whatever reason don't want to work part-time anymore or found something better, something that we can't offer them in the way of benefits and wages. I hear at times that healthcare is a very big issue to some people and they would like to be getting healthcare but it is probably the single most expensive line item that you can get as far as the labor costs.

Chairman Pariseau asked but those two from Pembroke, why can't they bring their children on the bus instead of paying daycare.

Mr. Webster answered they are in school. They are in school so they can't get anybody to baby-sit them while they wait. They have to drive them to school in Pembroke. They are both single mothers who are going to be sharing an apartment and because of the housing problem in Manchester they can't get an apartment in Manchester. They have to go to Pembroke in order to get it. There is a whole bunch of things that come into play here, but again I would be more than willing to sit down with Mark and go through the PCR's, which is a personnel record that we issue when somebody leaves. It is full-time, full-time, full-time, full-time, moved. We don't have people who leave by the standard of leaving the MTA to go and drive for somebody else. It does happen on occasion and in some other occasions it is factors other than management. Maybe we have had people go through the 13-week probation and they don't want to join the union. That happens occasionally.

Chairman Pariseau asked so they have to join the union.

Mr. Webster answered after the 13-week probationary period, yes, they have to join or become agency fee payer, not a member but they have to pay the equivalent of dues. That has not happened this year. It has happened since I have been Superintendent, but in a very selected few times.

Alderman Levasseur stated I have had some problems with the MTA on a couple of requests, but I have also had some good service from the MTA and had some of my requests fulfilled. One issue that I have and we have talked about it John, you have called me back three or four times and we have tried to resolve it. I have called you and you have helped me and I agree with you that the economy is really at that...the unemployment level is very low. I have an application process out for someone to come and work for me. It has been 40 days and I don't have anybody knocking my door down to make \$8-\$10 an hour either, but this really does look like a nasty divorce and I think one would be granted by a court for irreconcilable differences. Can we reconcile those differences or is there going to be a divorce? I mean you have a lot of unhappy people that keep coming back and they are the

same unhappy people each time. What have you been doing to rectify those irreconcilable differences?

Mr. Webster replied I think as long as the issues that remain where people feel that they can't control their own lives. I said it before to employees. I have said it to the union officers who represent the employees. Ours is supposed to be a voluntary system of overtime. That is the way the system and the contract are designed. I support that concept but if you tell me that as an administrator I am going to be sitting before you justifying why eight schools didn't get picked up...today a person who wanted the day off had to come in. Another person that wanted her day off today had to come in and three people this morning had to come in when they probably didn't want to come in. So, that is five. If I didn't have those five...I drove this morning. I am a Superintendent. I drove. Do you want five schools to call you complaining that a school bus is late? I would gather that you are going to have significantly more schools late than that and then you will have the parents and everything else. What alternative do I have as an Administrator? I take no pleasure in it.

Alderman Levasseur stated let's talk about the fact that you had to call in five people. You called those five people. Did you have to call more than five people to get five or did you get five?

Mr. Webster replied we got the five that were available.

Alderman Levasseur asked and they did come in.

Mr. Webster answered yes.

Alderman Levasseur asked did you find that to be a...that sounds to me like a good thing that you could call five people and they would come in.

Mr. Webster answered it wasn't to call them in. It was you have to come in.

Alderman Levasseur asked that is under their contract.

Mr. Webster answered our interpretation of it, yes. What happens is I need a combination every morning of eight. That is a combination of available people who are list drivers, which are on-call, they are covering the work that is out there, day off people and people...we have three people who have an early schedule. I need eight to insure that I have enough drivers just to get my morning school operation covered.

Alderman Levasseur stated so that would cause a conflict right then and there. The fact that you had to call in five people that like you said most likely wouldn't come in.

Mr. Webster replied absolutely.

Alderman Levasseur asked so is that one of those sticking points that is hurting your organization also.

Mr. Webster answered absolutely.

Alderman Levasseur stated let me ask you a question about your job and who is responsible for watching over your management crew. Is it the Commissioners of the MTA or is that this Committee or are you under the boss of the Mayor? Who is your boss?

Mr. Webster replied my boss is Don Clay, General Manager.

Alderman Levasseur asked and who is his boss.

Mr. Webster answered the Commissioners.

Alderman Levasseur asked do we have a Commissioner here. Can I speak to one, please? I would like to ask if they think Mr. Webster is doing a good job. I think I would like that on the record.

Chairman Pariseau asked does any Commissioner wish to address that issue.

Alderman Levasseur asked, Mr. Commissioner, you are in charge of the external and internal affairs of the management group of the MTA. Is that correct?

Commissioner Boisvert stated yes, I am.

Alderman Levasseur asked and how do you think the management group is doing.

Commissioner Boisvert answered I think they are doing a good job.

Alderman Levasseur asked can you give us a reason for that, Sir.

Commissioner Boisvert answered we have some problems with a couple of the employees, but I think management has bent over backwards trying to correct these problems. We have a contract and we have to follow that contract as it is

written and agreed upon. I think both Mr. Webster and Mr. Clay are doing a good job.

Alderman Levasseur asked have you seen any headway since the last time this Committee met.

Commissioner Boisvert answered yes, I have.

Alderman Levasseur asked do you think that the employees see any headway or do you think they don't.

Commissioner Boisvert answered we are working on a contract and we are working on an agreement. We are working with Human Resources now and we have these people who are going to be going to classes and so forth and going to seminars and hopefully things will get better. We are short of drivers and that is the whole ballgame. That is what is causing the problems. People are asked to work on their days off. I know that when I was working I worked five or six days a week and I liked to have a seventh day off if possible. These people work five days a week and their sixth day is supposed to be off but they have to work overtime to accommodate the routes and the school bus schedule.

Alderman Clancy stated tell me one thing that has been accomplished since the last time had a meeting. One thing.

Commissioner Boisvert asked in reference to what.

Alderman Clancy answered anything. Tell me one thing that has been accomplished since the last time we had a meeting.

Commissioner Boisvert stated as far as I am concerned, I think the management team has been attending the seminars.

Alderman Clancy replied they haven't attended yet. You just heard him say that.

Commissioner Boisvert stated John Webster has gone to some.

Alderman Clancy replied he hasn't gone at all. He is going in February. Tell me one thing they have accomplished since we had a meeting.

Commissioner Boisvert responded I don't know what you are talking about.

Alderman Clancy stated you are the Chairman of the Commission. Tell me one thing.

Commissioner Boisvert asked with regard to personnel or labor relations.

Alderman Clancy answered anything.

Commissioner Boisvert stated I think that personnel relations have improved. I think John and Don have cut down the grievances. The last time we came here you said we had 20 grievances. Now from what I know we only have about three grievances pending. I think that is a big improvement. I think there is better communication between management and the employees. I know there is between the Commission and the employees. Mr. Trisciani has joined us and he has been riding the bus and talking to the employees. I think there is a closeness there that has developed. I know that I have been talking with the employees here and there on and off. I get along with these people real good and I communicate well with them. I think that is an improvement. I think the Commissioners here are very much aware of some of the problems that we had the last time and all five of us are working on it for sure. We try to communicate well with the employees. Mr. Tierney has been out riding the buses and talking to the employees. Myself and Mr. Manseau attended one of their union meetings. We listened to them make their demands and their gripes. We have tried to correct them as best as we can. We can't do all of them, but we can do some of them and we have done that.

Alderman Clancy asked how about as far as the union contract.

Commissioner Boisvert answered that is pending.

Chairman Pariseau asked what is the full complement of your regular bus drivers.

Mr. Webster answered 26.

Alderman Pinard stated we have a lot of drivers here and we have the Vice President of the Union. Mr. Clay, since the last meeting has the morale at the MTA gone up or is it at the same level or is it going down?

Mr. Clay stated I have sat here and I have listened to a lot of talk here tonight. One way or another and until we can get part-time drivers to alleviate the problem we are going to have turmoil. Since the last time we met, we have been negotiating now for seven or eight months with the union. Hopefully, they have addressed the problems they had through their union contract. We have come to a point where they are going to take a vote on it; a second vote. What more can we do than that? If you are not going to bring your problems forward to the bargaining table, they are not going to get solved. Individuals running around trying to do something on their own going to whomever, whether it be the

Commissioners, the Mayor, the Aldermen, without going through their union people and coming through the contract like we have in the CBA, conditions of employment, you will follow the grievance procedure, we will never take care of the problems. We will never take care of the problem. The number one primary problem we have now is filling part-time positions and we are doing our best to do that. We have spent thousands of dollars to try to find people. If full-time people did not have to do overtime work, I would jump up and down for joy. I don't like the idea of them having to do it. I wouldn't want to do it, but we have a contract that we have to fulfill and they have to do both sides of it. I am sorry for that. If we get enough part-time operators, they will be relieved of those problems, those responsibilities. But we have the collective bargaining agreement. Bring your problems to the table and we will discuss them and negotiate. They did that. If they didn't bring some of the things they wanted to the table, I have no control over that.

Mr. Hobson stated a question or I will just throw this out for people to think about. As part of the Quality Management process in the City we will be conducting an employee satisfaction survey. We developed that internally and we have also worked with the different union groups to craft that document. Last I knew, the Transit Authority...I know that you had been attending some of their union meetings but the Commissioners had not done any type of a survey of employee satisfaction to sort of diagnose these issues.

Commissioner Boisvert replied no we have not.

Mr. Hobson stated what I wanted to just put out there is that again we would be happy if the Commissioners and the management team wants it, we would be happy to share that survey with them and they could use that as a tool for their own assessment of what some of their employment issues are and then once the issues are diagnosed they could try to address them. As somebody said, we need to address these one by one. That is true and we can't address them until we know exactly what they are.

Mr. Clay replied we would be happy to work with you on that, Mark.

Alderman Gatsas asked, Mark, can you tell me how many Quality Management meetings there have been.

Mr. Hobson answered we meet twice a month for about seven months now.

Alderman Gatsas asked can somebody help me with when the last time we met here was for this particular problem.

Chairman Pariseau answered I believe it was in October.

Alderman Gatsas asked October or July. I think it was July and I believe that the two of you gentlemen were or I know that I was very adamant about getting you some help and I think the two of you spoke up and said that you would participate in anything that was offered. Now, Mark, correct me if I am wrong but has the Quality Management offer been made to the MTA?

Mr. Hobson answered yes.

Alderman Gatsas asked when was it made.

Mr. Hobson answered the night of the meeting that we had here.

Alderman Gatsas stated so in July and since July you have met twice a month.

Mr. Hobson answered yes, Sir.

Alderman Gatsas asked, gentlemen, tell me about your overtime. Did you have overtime that controlled the availability of you two gentlemen not being at those meetings?

Mr. Clay answered the last I knew when Pat...

Alderman Gatsas asked do you want me to refresh your memory with some minutes. Let me ask my question. Do you want me to refresh your memory with minutes that we can pull up on the computer?

Mr. Clay answered no, I do not.

Alderman Gatsas stated go ahead. I will listen to your statement now.

Mr. Clay stated it was my understanding when Pat was going to those meetings that they were almost over and that in the future there would be some more starting up. A whole new cycle.

Alderman Gatsas asked, Mark, who did you address the Quality Management letters to or the invitation. Wasn't it made to these two gentlemen?

Mr. Hobson answered the basic information about quality management was given to Mr. Clay.

Alderman Levasseur asked was it given that night, Mark, or was it sent to them subsequently.

Alderman Gatsas stated I find it irresponsible, absolutely irresponsible for you two people to sit there since July and neither one of you have made one attempt to go to any of those meetings that have taken place for the last seven months. That is irresponsible, especially when you know that there is a problem out there. There is nothing that you tried to address in the problem situation. I mean if you said jeez we went, we participated, we got some knowledge from that and we changed a couple of things I don't think we would be sitting here meeting. I find it irresponsible for employees of anyplace to send a letter and not sign it. I can tell you that I only read the last paragraph and I wouldn't read the rest of it because if you don't sign it, I don't believe there is any truth to it. So, if you have a letter and you are concerned with whatever conditions are going to be brought against you, then if you want to have a vote then sign the letter and participate. I find it irresponsible for you gentlemen to sit there and say we can't make it until February. I don't think anybody wants to be here.

Mr. Clay stated well as far as I know we are here tonight over a bus route that was cancelled. Am I correct in that, Mr. Chairman?

Alderman Clancy asked have you met with any of your employees in a one-on-one situation since last July. Has anybody tried to contact you? Did you call anybody in and ask them what do you think? Have you asked anybody on a one-on-one situation any questions?

Mr. Clay answered we talk with union representatives all the time and anybody who wants to come in and talk to me...and there has been some. Yes, I have. Have I called people in to specifically talk to them? No, I have not.

Alderman Clancy stated well sometimes it is nice to get the feel of what the people out there think. It is like going out into the ward and asking what people think. That is the same thing with the bus drivers. If you have 26 bus drivers, somebody must want to say well I have an idea or a suggestion. Somebody must have a good idea.

Mr. Clay replied well they do have ideas and we do listen to those ideas and some of them we put into effect. Others, we just can't.

Alderman Clancy stated I know, you are going to get good and bad. You must have some seasoned bus drivers down there that might have some input as to what is going on.

Mr. Clay replied we have a lot of seasoned drivers and we have some very, very good drivers. Good people. We do.

Alderman Levasseur asked didn't you guys institute some changes. I thought I remembered seeing those. Wasn't there some institution of some changes from Ms. Gazda on bus routes?

Mr. Clay answered yes.

Alderman Levasseur stated they were pretty big changes. That was a huge issue and you guys went back and changed a bunch of them didn't you?

Mr. Clay answered yes we did.

Alderman Pinard stated I am still waiting for my answer about the morale of the bus drivers. I will wait all night. I am just asking here because Mr. Clay came in when Mr. Boisvert was going to answer and I think that some of these drivers who are here tonight are not here to look at me. They are here to get answers and I think all they are getting right now is a snow job and I don't think it is fair. I don't think it is fair to the drivers, the City of Manchester or the kids who take the buses and have to wait. Something has to be done. I think we had a meeting last July and nothing has happened. They didn't go to the training like they were supposed to. They are laughing at us and I think it is about time that we wake up and take some steps. What the steps are, I have no idea.

Alderman Levasseur replied I don't think they are laughing at us, Mr. Pinard. I think it is irresponsible to say that.

Alderman Pinard responded well maybe, but that is my feeling because this is the second time around.

Mr. Clay stated we are not laughing at anybody in this room.

Chairman Pariseau stated I think, Alderman Pinard, that you have to realize that this Committee and for that matter the full Board has no authority over the MTA. None. We can make suggestions like we did last July. We can make additional suggestions this evening, but we don't have any authority to mandate. When it comes time for the MTA budget approval, that is our only recourse. We can't mandate to anybody at the MTA.

Alderman Pinard replied I don't think it is mandating, Mr. Chairman. I think that as Mr. Gatsas said...I mean they are capable of doing a good job but for some reason they just like to I think buck the people who are working for them and I

think that if they can sit down and take the course that Mark is offering maybe there will be a change. I am sure that these people here will agree with me that this is another meeting wasted on their part because they are unhappy bus drivers. I am sorry if I hurt your feelings, but that is the way I feel.

Commissioner Boisvert stated to address Mr. Gatsas' remark about us not going by the wayside for our information with Human Resources, if you remember correctly Mr. Hobson after this meeting we had we made contact with you for our people to go these seminars and so forth and then there was a discussion where things were left in the lag because you were told that we could not take part in these seminars and these things because we were not a City department.

Alderman Gatsas stated that was prior to the July meeting.

Commissioner Boisvert replied that was after the July meeting, Mr. Gatsas, because after we had that meeting we went to Mr. Hobson and we made contact with them and he said that we were not a City department so we could not take part in those seminars and we tried to make our own arrangements. We struck out. We tried.

Mr. Hobson stated part of what Commissioner Boisvert is saying is true, but the piece I think that we need to add is that what took place...Alderman Gatsas is correct. Some of these discussions took place before the July meeting. Some of the discussions took place after the July meeting and the snag as Commissioner Boisvert was saying was that we went to the City Solicitor's Office to ask them exactly how could our policies in the Human Resources Department impact the Transit Authority's management. As you stated earlier, we do not have any...Human Resources has no control over the Transit Authority management. We can only act as a consultant and as a guide and that is what came out of that final meeting from the Solicitor's Office and the Mayor has directed us to offer to them on a daily basis whatever tools or resources we have. I cannot nor frankly can this Committee direct them to do anything in terms of management practices. We can suggest. That is what I have been told by the Solicitor's Office and I want to just be clear that we are more than happy to offer what we have and what we can as needed.

Chairman Pariseau stated would it be prudent of me, Mr. Clay, to ask that you make a sincere effort to attend and have your staff attend some of these management programs being offered to you by the City.

Mr. Clay replied we have begun, Mr. Chairman. I guarantee it. Mr. Hobson, do you have some time like maybe on Thursday when we could sit down and talk,

either you and I or Howard and I and see what your schedules are and what you have planned that we could participate in?

Mr. Hobson replied surely. I think one of the things that would work and this is just my opinion from some of the things I have heard from the employees, one of the things that would work is the quality management concept at the MTA, particularly with the full-timers. Most of their full-time people are loyal, long-time folk who have a lot of creativity and enthusiasm for what they do and I believe the quality management process would work. I also have to caution everybody to realize that if there have been issues that have going on through contract situations for years, they are not going to be changed overnight. There are strong feelings...we can just look back to our own history in 1995 when we had, for example AFSME went without a contract for three or four years. People get upset during those types of times and finally Mr. Webster is absolutely right. The economy is just incredible to find those types of positions, but I think we need to diagnose some of these issues a little bit deeper.

Alderman Lopez stated to the employees, I have been a union man for 20+ years and John Trisciani is a Commissioner who has also been a union man for a long time. There are problems; there is no question about it, but as I indicated the buses have to go out just like the mail has to go out and a lot of us don't like it, even on the other side of the coin. I would just like to add that since John Trisciani is a Commissioner and a union man, would he like to comment on anything since he represented the union for so long. Is there a problem or can things be worked out, John?

Commissioner Trisciani asked do you want the truth.

Alderman Lopez answered absolutely.

Commissioner Trisciani stated I think this meeting is a joke. I have been there for two and a half months and I have broken my back talking to everybody and working with everybody. There are things I don't like, but I don't think this is the place for me as a junior Commissioner to be airing my laundry. We have a meeting on Wednesday and that is where we as Commissioners should be airing our laundry. I will say one thing as far as the union goes. They also have to do their laundry out of the MTA. Believe me I have a lot of respect for all of you drivers, especially you regular drivers. You have broken your backs there to make it a success. I have talked to you about it and most of you know what my feelings are. You have to take your laundry off the buses and out of MTA. If it means getting reorganized, then get reorganized. There are things that have to be done. There is no question about it but again I will say that I will air my laundry at the Commissioner's meeting where it belongs.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, on motion of Alderman Clancy, duly seconded by Alderman Levasseur, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

Clerk of Committee