



Local 1277

News

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President's report

Driverless Mass Transit: A Dangerous Way to Go

Is automation completely taking over the world? Are we people going to be sidelined in the coming generations? Automation seems to be the new craze, the “new future”. Automated check-out lines, automated banking, automated production lines, automated this, automated that.

Now, so-called “futurists” are pushing and experimenting with the Next Big Thing in automation: a field that could well negatively impact us: *automated—driverless—mass transit*.

Really?

Driverless city buses packed with people, trying to navigate crowded streets, driverless commuter trains, on busy tracks, carrying hundreds of people during rush hour, even automated planes filled with passengers, flying miles over our heads? We’ve already seen driverless cars road tested—with *very mixed results*. That’s already bad enough, *but driverless mass transit, with hundreds of thousands of lives on the line every day in cities across this country and around the world?*

Really?

Let’s step back and think about this. The possibilities of automated, driverless mass transit are—today—far too untested and potentially dangerous to think about. *Of course*, there are tens of thousands of good jobs—unionized and non-union—at stake, some within ATU Local 1277’s units. *Of course*, that is our principal concern—maintaining jobs and safeguarding the futures of working people and families.

But this matter goes beyond even the top priority of keeping jobs. There’s the danger to the mass-transit-dependent public, the people that we, as transit professionals, are duty-bound to serve and safeguard.

Driverless mass transit simply isn’t safe. Not now. Maybe not for a good while, if ever. Going beyond the shaky trials of automated cars, the early experiments with driverless buses and trains have shown that replacing trained, quick-thinking human operators is nothing more than a pipe dream for now.

As far back as 2013, the Chinese experimented with self-driving buses. How has that worked out? Well, it is no “Brave New World” over there: they are still plagued with safety problems. Of course, with their closed political and social system, we have no idea how bad the situation may really be.



But, in a far more open society, in a country that has for decades been at the forefront of computers and automation—Japan—there is a record of a failure to automate mass transit. Earlier this year, in Tokyo, a city of some 20 million people on the go, *a driverless commuter train* suddenly, without any warning to the riders packed into it, went into *reverse*. It crashed, injuring dozens of people.

Here’s the not-so-optimistic kicker: the train was guided/overseen by three specialists at a regional HQ. *They could do nothing to stop the reversal, crash and injuries! Put another way: human supervisors had no control over an automated commuter train loaded with people before it was too late!*

The robots were beyond human supervision and control. Do we really want that potential chaos and danger to riders in our cities?



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A final note that no one pushing automated cars, buses, train and planes seems to think about: *driverless vehicles—on our streets, on rail, in the air—are potential runaways, even potential bombs. What prevents sick, evil hackers from seizing control of a driverless vehicle and guiding it into unimaginable destruction? What stops your familiar commuter bus or train—or that plane in flight—from becoming a tool of mass killing instead of one of mass transit?*

Automation is all well and good—in some professions, doing any number of dangerous, backbreaking jobs. No one denies that. *But in our vital profession, shepherding hundreds of thousands of people every day, in all our cities, automated, driverless vehicles, is nowhere near a good idea!*

It Just Never Ends

They're at it again in Washington, D.C. A couple of weeks ago, another secretary was named to fill a major cabinet position—one that greatly affect us on the job: head of the United States Department of Labor.

This latest “gift” from Trump to unions, working people and families is Eugene Scalia. He is replacing ousted Labor Secretary Alex Acosta, who resigned under fire over his connection to someone involved in a personal scandal.

Acosta certainly was no friend to labor—he went out of his way to try to dismantle as many of the progressive and much-needed worksite reforms set in place by the pro-union Obama Administration as he could. With the White House's blessing, he worked diligently—and wrongly—to repeal numerous jobsite safety regulations and union rights.

Now along comes Scalia, *the son of the late, very-conservative Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia*. You can just imagine how he was brought up, with respect to unions and the needs of working families! I don't think you'll be surprised to learn that he is considered by friends and colleagues to be a hardline conservative, someone who has spent his entire career pushing hard for the interests of big business over those of the men and women he supposedly was hired to protect.

In fact, as a partner in a big pro-corporate Washington, D.C. law firm, he actively worked to block an important, much-needed regulation proposed by then-President Clinton that would have protected workers from repetitive stress injuries (the Ergonomics Rule). *Simply put, this man is an outspoken, lifetime enemy of organized labor and the millions of people it represents.*

Big surprise, huh? *A man who has spent his life opposing organized labor and regulatory oversight when it comes to workers' rights and jobsite safety will now be running the federal department that is supposed to safeguard your rights and protections! The fox guarding the henhouse, anyone?*

It's just another day at the—corporate America—office in Washington, D.C. As if we need yet another reason to get actively involved in next year's Presidential election in order to get a pro-working families man or woman back in the White House!

Your Union is Your Professional Partner

*By John DiRito
Executive Board Member-at-Large*

Good morning, afternoon, and evening, brothers and sisters. I hope this newsletter finds you and your family well. As you know by now, in the past few months, I've tried to use this space to help explain to you both the importance of unions and our relationship with politics. I know—I can expect to hear an audible groan when I discuss this, but that doesn't diminish the importance of needed changes as we need constantly push forward.



As a proud ATU Local 1277 member, I often find myself asking, *how did we get to this point? How did we get to where education is an after-thought in government spending? Or that a state lottery would help fund our educational needs? Exactly when did it become o.k. for hard-working men and women to give corporate greed a pass on its immoral practices, where profit is put before the welfare of human life? When did it become o.k. for families to be forced to say, we can't make it on one income, so we'll have to work multiple jobs?*

All of these depressing questions/situations go directly **against** what unions stand for! Working multiple jobs just to get by? *No, never!* We constantly fight for living wages and benefits, and during every contract negotiation, we listen to our membership and bargain based on your most-pressing needs and goals.

Companies look at things differently. They'll do whatever it takes, regardless of how unsafe or unhealthy it is for their workers, to turn a profit and fatten their bottom line. Unions constantly fight for the safety and well-being of working families. We make sure our members—you—are protected from on-the-job dangers by, for example, bargaining for and ensuring that your Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is always there to keep you safe. What would happen to your family if you were suddenly unable to work because of a failure to have or use PPE? In most cases, it would be either highly inconvenient or flat-out catastrophic; either way, it would put an unnecessary strain on your loved ones.

Education—Political and Other



“Work hard and you will make it, regardless of your education.” I hope by now we **all** realize this age-old adage is about as relevant as holding on to Blue Chip stamps for their ‘value’ (and if you’re too young to remember what Blue Chip stamps were, ask an older colleague!). But either way, it emphasizes my point: *It’s just not true.* You can toil day and night, only making minimum wage and you will be no closer to becoming a millionaire than the day you were born. And heaven forbid you want to comfortably raise and support a family. You can forget about it!

Education, brothers and sisters: It is the key to our future—and your future. It is what will help your children survive the continual attacks on working people and families, and the economically disadvantaged. As parents, we want what’s best for our children, and to continue this relay (rat?) race that we’re a part of, we *need* them to move forward and succeed! So, I implore you: If you are just starting your career, or knee-deep in family struggles, *take any opportunities you can to broaden your education.* Find out if your employer offers tuition reimbursement; in many cases you will find there is some kind of assistance available!

By a timely coincidence, please see in this edition President Aguilar’s presentation of the excellent courses offered at Los Angeles’ Trade Tech, and his warm endorsement of their value.

Finally, before I get off my soapbox, and while we are touching on education, I want to remind you all that you have built-in protections just by being a part of our Union! Specifically, you have the absolute right to **union representation!** If any conversation with management can in any way lead to discipline, you have the right to representation (these are your valuable *Weingarten Rights*). Even if you agree you were in the wrong!

For example, if you call out sick, use a LC-233 day, or have a miss-out, *do not give up your right to representation!* We are having to fight cases where a member did not elect to have their Shop Steward or a Union officer present, and simply signed the document management presented to them. **No, no, no! Don’t ever do that!**

While many members may have a good rapport with management, you should know that it is *not* looking out for your best interests. In most cases, management is looking to make *its* job easier: “Just sign this. You don’t really need your Rep because you admit to calling out.” Of course you called out, but was it mitigatable? Were there reasons? Was there another alternative you could’ve used instead? Will you need to miss work going forward because of family care or health issues? These are all things your Shop Steward can help you answer, but they need to be there, they need to be aware of your situation. Do not just give up this right to representation we have fought hard for!

I currently have a case where a member was terminated over attendance issues. When looking into the facts of this case, I came to realize the member elected to *not* have their Shop Steward present. In asking the terminated member why they allowed management to hold the hearing without the Steward, and why they forfeited their time limits, the reply was, “I didn’t think it was that important.” When I inquired further about the ‘why’ the member called out, it turns out the situations could have been mitigated! That means we could have, instead of fighting for their job back, only been fighting to have their record cleared of chargeable offenses!

Education! Representation! Brothers and sisters, we have *earned* these rights. We have fought long and hard for them! *Please, stop giving them up simply to make management’s job easier!* Your family may not be able to survive the hardship of you being out of work.

A valuable, excellent opportunity!

Education and Training: Your Keys To Career Advancement and Pride

By Art Aguilar - President, Local 1277

Once again, and for the most important of reasons, I am pleased to repeat myself and remind every ATU Local 1277 brother and sister that *education and training are the stepping stones to better, more rewarding—personally and financially—careers in your chosen field of work.*

Continuing its history of teaching and service, Los Angeles'—and organized labor's—famed Trade Tech is again offering a series of excellent classes this Fall, starting *August 26 and running until December 15.*

I strongly urge every Local 1277 member who wants to get ahead professionally, or who simply wants to expand his or her knowledge and better understanding of the trade-union movement, to consider signing up for this very valuable instruction.

Courses are generally divided between three-unit evening classes during the week and one-unit weekend classes. *Brothers and sisters, this is an excellent professional and personal education opportunity. I warmly encourage you to do as I did, and take advantage of these quality courses and experienced teachers!*

Labor Studies Classes Fall 2019

Must Pre-Enroll online a week before class starts

<http://college.lattc.edu/students/register-now/>

Fees: \$46/unit for California Residents

ASO Rep Fee: \$1 per semester

ASO Membership Fee: \$7 per semester

(optional but must opt out by 8/26/19)

Health Center: \$11 per semester

Checks Payable to: LATTCC

Max Mont Scholarships are available for Labor Studies classes

3-unit online classes

****LS 1 – U.S. Labor History – Class 21532**

Instructor: Ericka Willis

LS 8 – Labor in the Global Economy – Class 25537

Instructor: Ericka Willis

****LS 4 – Labor In America – Class 15594**

Instructor: Staff

LS 20 – Workers' Rights – Class 15617

Instructor: Josh Young

3-Unit Evening Off Campus Class

Start Date: August 26 - End Date: December 9

6:00 pm to 9:00 pm (Free Parking)

Mondays

LS 5 – Grievance and Arbitration – class 25536

Instructors: Tanya Akel and Jody Klipple

Location: L.A. County Federation of Labor,
2130 James Wood Blvd, Los Angeles, 90006

3-Unit Weekend Only OFF Campus Class

Saturday and Sundays, 8:30 am to 5:00 pm

Dates: November 23 & 24, December 7 & 8, and
December 14 & 15, 2019

LS 7 – Labor and Political Action – Class 25547

Instructor: Staff

Location: L.A. County Federation of Labor,
2130 James Wood Blvd, Los Angeles, 90006

3 Unit Day Class At Trade Tech

Start August 27th and Ends December 12th 2019

Time: 10:10 am to 11:35 am – Room TBA

Tuesdays & Thursdays

****LS 4 – Labor In America – Class 15589**

Instructor: Lou Siegel

3-Unit Evening Class at Trade Tech

Start August 29th and Ends December 12th 2019

6:00 pm to 9:10 pm – Room is TBA

Thursdays

****LS 21 – Working Class in Cinema – Class 21087**

Instructor: Mindy Chen

1-Unit Weekend Classes 8:30 am to 5:00 pm

**All Classes at Trade Tech Building B3, Room 309*

*Free parking in the Olive Street parking structure
between Washington Blvd and 21st Street.*

For weekend Labor Studies classes (only during class hours)

LS 105 – Grievance Handling Skills – Class 25540

September 7 & 14

Instructor: Lou Zigman

LS 123 – Steward Training – Class 25541

September 21 & 28

Instructor: Marcus Hatcher

LS 102 – Contract Negotiation Skills – Class 25543

October 5 & 12

Instructor: Joaquin Calderon

LS 127 – Workers' Compensation – Class 25544

October 19 & 26

Instructors: Scott Ford and Cheryl Wallach

LS 113 – Union Leadership Skills – Class 25545

November 2 & 9

Instructor: Jim Walker

****These classes meet the GE requirements at Trade Tech, CSU, and UC.**

Here are the upcoming Local 1277 membership meetings for August and September. Please make every attempt to attend the meeting for your unit. It's your Union, and we need your participation at our meetings! All members will receive credit for the meetings.

Tuesday, Aug 6:

Los Angeles area members:

Tuesday, Sept 3:

L.A. Building Trades Council, 1626 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles. Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Evening Session 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday, Aug 7:

Metrolink Unit members:

Wednesday, Sept 4:

Union Offices, 1744 North Main Street. Morning Session 11:00 a.m.

Wednesday, Aug 7:

Riverside area members:

Wednesday, Sept 4:

1074 E. La Cadena Dr., Riverside Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 3:00 p.m.

Thursday, Aug 8:

Palm Springs/SunLine members:

Thursday, Sept 5:

Cathedral City Branch Library, 33520 Date Palm Drive, Cathedral City Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 4:00 p.m.

Thursday, Aug 8:

Long Beach:

Thursday, Sept 5:

Machinist Hall, 319 W. Broadway, Long Beach Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 3:00 p.m.