

...View from the driver's seat

From Page 1

for that? I wouldn't say it's any more unsafe than being anywhere else in public. I think you're as safe riding a bus as going to the mall or a movie theater. We certainly do our best to keep people safe while we're driving them somewhere. I think when you have a stabbing on the MAX, or you hear about operators getting assaulted, it gives the false illusion that it's unsafe to ride transit. I think there's room for improvement on safety in transit, but as a general rule, I don't think it's any more unsafe than anywhere else.

Many of your blog posts are about everyday gripes. What are the three most annoying things a bus driver deals with? People who are unprepared to ride the bus. They stand at a bus stop waiting for a bus looking at their phone, and when the bus gets there, they're fumbling in their pockets. That wastes a lot of time. Be prepared. Get on board with the fare in your hand, like the sign on the door says. Another thing: traffic. You know, there's a yield sign on the back of the bus. ORS 811.167

says you must yield to a transit vehicle that is trying to re-enter a traffic lane when it has its yield light blinking. People routinely don't do that. Number three: Transit management should be our partner, not our enemy.

What would you say about your union to people who are unfamiliar with it? This has been my first union job. I depend heavily on the union when I have to meet with management. They're in our corner. They're the very first people I turn to when I have a question about the contract or any part of the job. I trust my union. They're always working on getting us better terms in our contract. The unions are in our corner, and in the past 40 years, they've been under attack by big money, because unions want a bigger chunk for the people who do the work in the world versus the people who sit in their big leather chairs and look down and pull the puppet strings on the politicians. There's plenty of room for more unions. More people should turn to unions so their jobs are protected. Everyone who does a blue collar job is one or two paychecks from the street. It's hard making a liv-

ing out there, and you need protection. Unions are the only ones who give a damn about you. Management and corporations really don't care about the individual; they care about the bottom line.

If you found yourself face-to-face with TriMet management, what would you tell them about what they're doing right or wrong? What they're doing wrong is treating us like an adversary. We're the ones who do the work out here. They should be supporting us in any way possible instead of making life more difficult. There used to be big signs in the garages that said 'safety first.' They took them down. Now they're pushing schedule. But to be fair, I'd like to say that lately I've seen a trend toward more positive things. I'd say they're finally waking up to our safety needs as operators, operator assault issues.

As a TriMet bus operator, you're a public employee. Do you see yourself as a public servant? Yes, my friend [and fellow driver] Tom Horton likes to say we're shepherds of the public safety. Any bus operator

in the world plays a very important part in their community's economy. We take Portland to work and drive them home again. We see things happening on the road and tell dispatch to alert emergency services. We play a much more vital role in the community than we get credit for.

You write that you love your job. What do you like most about it? I love dealing with the people of Portland. They're one of the most diverse populaces I've ever come in contact with. I love the friendliness of most people. On the way out of the bus almost every passenger says thank you for the ride. I like the scenery of Portland. I like to say my office has six wheels and a beautiful view. I've always enjoyed working with people, and I've made a lot of friends in this job, both operators and passengers. I love driving that big old beast around town every day.

—Don McIntosh

THE BOOK

Just Drive: Life in the Bus Lane is available at Broadway Books in Portland, or online via amazon.com

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

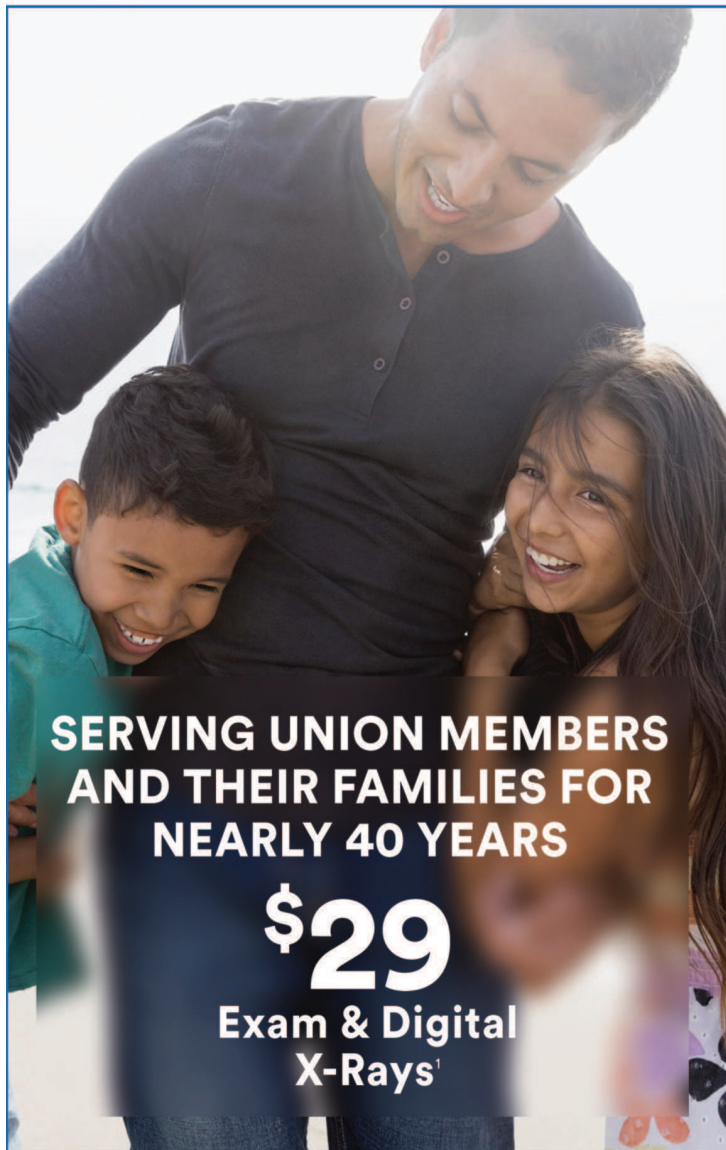
No more 'buddies': Nurses hail new Tuality contract

Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) reports that a newly ratified nurse union contract at Tuality Community Hospital breaks new ground: It's the first time an Oregon hospital has committed to use dedicated "break relief" nurses to give other nurses their rest and meal breaks without leaving patients unattended.

The new program replaces a "buddy system" method of giving breaks in which a nurse's patients are added to another nurse's load for the duration of the break. In the buddy system, patients are down one nurse when nurses take their legally-mandated meal and rest breaks. By contrast, Tuality's new system maintains the same level of patient care throughout a shift.

ONA has been campaigning against the buddy system at hospitals throughout Oregon, arguing that assigning a nurse to care for twice as many patients can increase the risk of patient infections and missed care, and violate hospital staffing plans. At St. Charles Hospital in Bend, ONA nurses filed a staffing complaint based on buddy system abuses in 2017 that resulted in an investigation by the Oregon Health Authority — and a state mandate that the hospital change its staffing plans.

The new union contract, ratified overwhelmingly in a Feb. 13 vote, covers about 200 nurses at the hospital Tuality Community Hospital, a nonprofit 167-bed facility in Hillsboro. The contract also raises wages 4.5 percent over the life of the agreement, and expands staff training. It runs through March 31, 2020. Nurses' previous contract with Tuality expired Dec. 31, 2017.



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