

UAW announces tentative agreement at Mack Trucks minutes before strike deadline, provoking outcry by workers

Marcus Day
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Work at Mack-Volvo? We want to hear from you: Fill out the form at the end to tell us what you think of the UAW's announcement of a tentative agreement, and to discuss joining a rank-and-file committee.

Minutes before a midnight contract expiration Sunday, the United Auto Workers announced it had reached a tentative agreement with Mack Trucks, the heavy-duty truck manufacturer owned by the Volvo Group. The decision to block a strike and announce a “last minute” deal was made in defiance of a 98 percent strike authorization vote in September, expressing the overwhelming sentiment among Mack workers for a fight to reverse previous UAW concessions, end the tier system, and win wage increases big enough to overcome years of eroding living standards.

In a two-sentence post on X (formerly Twitter) at 11:50 p.m., the UAW wrote: “BREAKING: Nearly 4,000 UAW members at Mack Truck in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Florida (UAW Region 8 & Region 9) have a tentative agreement! More details to come as members review the TA.”

The announcement of a deal at Mack comes at the same time as the administration of UAW President Shawn Fain is continuing its isolated, cynical “stand up strikes” at Ford, General Motors and Stellantis, which have had only a negligible impact on the companies’ production.

Fain has ordered the overwhelming majority of Big Three workers, 83 percent, to continue working without a contract, calling only limited strikes at facilities which do not impact the corporations’ main profit-making pick-up truck plants. The decision that the UAW would not call a strike at Mack was no doubt made out of concern that a walkout there would lend fuel to the growing calls by Big Three workers for an all-out strike across the auto industry.

“The UAW bureaucracy has kept workers in the dark for weeks on the details of its discussions with management,” Will Lehman, a worker at Mack Trucks and candidate for UAW president in last year’s elections, told the WSW.

“The rank and file have to resist efforts by the union apparatus to stampede us into accepting the agreement on the basis of limited ‘highlights’.”

“Mack workers are already demanding the distribution of the full contract, an important indication that workers are on guard against a sellout,” Lehman continued. “Every worker should demand that the full contract be released online, as well as all ‘letters of understanding,’ and that we be given adequate time to study it and discuss its terms at mass membership meetings.

“The UAW bureaucrats have the contract now and they should release it now, not the day of the vote or right before.”

There are already clear signs that the UAW’s deal with management is a complete betrayal of workers’ demands.

In its own statement on the agreement, Mack Trucks wrote, “The tentative agreement would deliver significantly increased wages and continue first-class benefits for Mack employees and their families. At the same time, it would *allow the company to successfully compete in the market*; invest in our people, plants and products; and be a sustainable employer [emphasis added].”

Just last Thursday, the UAW had released a letter to Mack workers stating management had “too many concessions on the table to list here” and was insisting on “attacking our job security language, rejected 401k increases, putting everyone into the pension plan, COLA, and all other demands that are important to our membership.” In a Facebook livestream Friday, UAW President Shawn Fain reiterated that Mack was “following the same tired playbook” and had “put a long list of concessions on the table.”

For the UAW to suggest that the company has completely reversed course in the four days since and is providing anything near what workers need, before a strike has even taken place, is absurd.

The UAW’s announcement of an agreement provoked an outcry by Mack workers on Facebook.

One worker commented that they had been informed that they would only be provided limited “highlights” of the contract before voting this weekend, writing, “I was told by my union rep that we won’t be given any details until Sunday when we vote and we will only be given highlights.”

“We the members have a right to see the contract in its entirety in advance so that we can vote properly. It is a binding contract that affects us all. How can we vote without seeing the contract in its entirety with our own eyes?

“We have to stand united in the fact that we are entitled to see the entire contract before the vote!”

Other workers denounced the UAW’s information blackout and voiced their view that the deal would inevitably be a sellout. “When will we know what they agreed to? There has been zero transparency so far,” one wrote.

Other comments included:

“That’s how the union does it, yell at the top of their lungs and then make back room deals that only helps them and not the little people.”

“There is zero way we get anything close to a decent contract if the Big Three hasn’t settled yet! We deserve better!!!!!!”

“The ‘agreement’ is a joke and the membership knows it. Thank you for selling us out yet again!!!”

A worker at the Mack Trucks plant in Hagerstown, Maryland, told the WSWS, “The workers here are pissed. They shut the furnaces down on Friday and had police at exits. We are all more and more ready to strike.

“They had told us to come to the union hall to make signs, then they canceled making signs and said they already made enough. So we all figured they already knew we weren’t striking, but they lied to us and said they knew nothing.”

Another Mack worker at the Macungie, Pennsylvania plant told the WSWS, “First of all waiting till pretty much the last minute was BS. People were scheduled to strike at midnight. Some live an hour away; their entire day was ruined!

“If the TA was reached why do we wait over the next couple of days to find out details?” The worker also questioned whether a full contract had even been worked out yet. “If any questions go unanswered today, and I’m sure there will be MANY, I would think not!”

Other workers have reported that they are being told the contract would be for five years, instead of the typical four-year agreement Mack workers had previously been on. If this is true, it is significant, since a four-year deal would have meant that Mack workers’ contract would expire in 2027, at roughly the same time as that of Volvo Trucks workers in southwest Virginia at the New River Valley plant. A five-year deal would mean instead that Mack workers’ contract would expire in a different year from both

Volvo and Big Three workers, further isolating them. (Volvo Trucks workers are employed by the same parent company and supply Mack Trucks but are kept on a separate contract by the UAW.)

During the last Mack contract cycle in 2019, the UAW rammed through a sellout deal which maintained the tier system and included a de facto cut to real wages, betraying a 12-day strike by Mack workers. The UAW’s agreement raised wages only 6 percent over four years—an average of 1.5 percent per year, far below inflation—as well as increased workers’ healthcare costs.

The bureaucracy forced through the contract in 2019 in a blatantly undemocratic manner, shutting down the strike before workers had even voted on the tentative agreement, and only providing workers with selective contract “highlights” to vote on.

In 2021, the UAW bureaucracy worked to isolate striking Volvo Trucks workers from workers at Mack. In an early indication of the growing rank-and-file rebellion, Volvo workers rejected three UAW-endorsed concessions contracts. During the strike, the UAW forced Mack workers to work on scab-made cabs from the strikebound New River Valley plant, despite calls by workers to refuse to handle the product in solidarity with their sister plant.

“The rank-and-file revolt against UAW-backed concessions is growing.” Lehman continued, “Already this year, Clarios battery workers voted down two UAW sellout contracts, and Lear Seating workers have recently voted down three.

“We need to have structures under the control of workers on the shop floor to organize this resistance and carry out a real fight for the needs of workers. I appeal to my brothers and sisters at Mack to join and build the Mack Trucks Workers Rank-and-File Committee and link up with the growing network of militant workers’ committees throughout the auto industry.”



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