

Oppose the sellout of the New Jersey Transit strike!

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New Jersey Transit and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) announced a tentative agreement Sunday to shut down the three-day strike by 450 train engineers. Although the full terms of the deal have not been released—let alone voted on—the BLET bureaucracy has ordered its members to return to work Monday morning in preparation for the resumption of train service on Tuesday.

What information is known so far, along with the manner in which the deal was reached, make clear that it is a colossal betrayal.

BLET officials have refused to release any details. BLET General Chairman Tom Haas stated only that the agreement “boosts hourly pay beyond the proposal rejected by our members last month and beyond where we were when NJ Transit’s managers walked away from the table Thursday evening.” It is evident from Haas’ words that the contract does not include the central demand for pay parity with other engineers in the region.

Haas also stated that the wage increases would not lead to “any significant budget issue or [require] a fare increase.” That is, the rotten deal workers rejected has been repackaged, with a slight wage bump offset by cuts elsewhere.

The union bureaucracy worked to isolate the strike from the start. Only two token pickets were set up, blocking any outreach to the broader working class. Other NJ Transit workers were kept on the job to offset suspended rail service. Meanwhile, the Amalgamated Transit Union signed a separate deal covering over 5,000 workers last week, further reinforcing the isolation.

The BLET’s decision to end the strike before allowing workers to review or vote on the agreement

constitutes a deliberate attempt to cut off the momentum of the strike and force through a ratification, without any discussion or review by the rank and file.

The agreement should be rejected! Rank-and-file workers should form a strike committee independent of the union apparatus to organize opposition to the contract, take control of the strike out of the hands of the BLET bureaucracy and link up with workers throughout the region. Workers should demand that no trains move until the full contract is released, its terms studied, and workers have had the opportunity to discuss and vote on it.

The move by the union apparatus to shut down the strike as quickly as possible was due precisely to the strength of the workers. In paralyzing one of the largest commuter rail networks in the US, engineers demonstrated the power of the working class and its potential to resist the relentless gutting of public transit and essential services.

The strike is part of a broader upsurge of working class struggle across the northeastern United States and beyond. In Connecticut, 3,000 workers at the military contractor Pratt and Whitney have been on strike for two weeks. Hospital workers in Rhode Island, nursing home workers in New York and General Dynamics workers in Connecticut are threatening to strike.

Even the corporate media, which tried from the outset to pit riders against engineers, was compelled to admit its widespread popular support. The *Wall Street Journal* acknowledged that “despite the disruption, many NJ Transit riders said they supported the union’s push for higher wages.”

Transit workers are on the front lines of a deepening infrastructure crisis affecting the entire working class. Decades of disinvestment have pushed mass transit

systems across the US toward collapse. Mass transit systems nationwide face a \$6 billion shortfall after COVID funds dried up under Biden. In Chicago, cuts of up to 40 percent loom. In New Jersey, the disaster at Newark Airport—from failed air traffic control systems and chronic understaffing to a potential measles outbreak—exposes the broader breakdown of public services.

The struggle of NJ Transit workers is, at its core, a political fight against both the Democrats and Republicans. Democratic Governor Phil Murphy, a former Goldman Sachs executive worth \$80 million, was directly involved in contract talks before and during the strike.

On the eve of the walkout, Murphy held a press conference to lecture engineers on their “obligations” to other workers and demanded they accept concessions. At the same time, Murphy applauded the 14 other NJ Transit unions that rammed through concessionary contracts with real wage cuts.

The Trump administration was also deeply involved in the negotiations. The deal was finalized through federal mediation overseen by the National Mediation Board, which Trump brought under direct presidential control in February.

Looming over the talks was the threat that Congress would outlaw the strike and impose a concessions-laden contract, as it did in 2022 to block a national freight rail strike, after the BLET and other unions staved off a strike demanded by workers. That experience proved that despite their internal disputes, both capitalist parties are united in defense of Wall Street’s interests.

In this strike, the BLET cynically thanked Congress for “allowing the process to work without interference”—i.e., for not formally outlawing the strike. But the BLET bureaucracy did the job for them, calling off the walkout and ordering workers back before a vote, effectively issuing an injunction in all but name.

The struggles of the working class are unfolding under unprecedented political and social crisis. Nearly four months into his second term, Donald Trump is moving rapidly to erect a presidential dictatorship—one directed above all at the working class.

His administration has launched a frontal assault on social infrastructure millions of people rely on, beginning with the firing of hundreds of thousands of

federal workers. Trump has dispatched Elon Musk, the world’s richest man, to dismantle regulatory agencies and implement trillions in social spending cuts. He has launched a fascist campaign against immigrants and opponents of the Gaza genocide. The administration is disappearing individuals into detention centers and even foreign prisons.

These repressive measures are a dress rehearsal for mass repression aimed at crushing domestic opposition—above all, in the working class.

Workers are not responding with passivity or despair, but with a growing will to fight back. There is a militant mood building across every sector of the working class. The trade union apparatuses—functioning as tools of corporate management and the capitalist state—can only hold back this movement for so long.

To prepare for the general confrontation that is coming, workers must form new organizations of struggle—rank-and-file committees, independent of the union bureaucracies. There is a powerful basis for NJ Transit engineers to win widespread support for a continued strike. A determined stand by any section of the working class could rapidly galvanize resistance throughout society.

A rebellion against this sellout contract must mark the beginning of a broader counteroffensive: the mobilization of all NJ Transit workers, together with educators, healthcare workers, federal workers and others, in a common fight to defend jobs and public infrastructure.

Such a movement must fight for the expropriation of the billionaires and major corporations, to place the economy under the democratic control of the working class and direct society’s vast resources to meet human need.



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