

Make the oligarchs pay for transit and other public needs! Build rank-and-file committees to defend transit and other social rights!

Socialist Equality Party, Chicago branch
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Join the fight to build a new movement of the working class. To learn more about rank-and-file committees, visit wsws.org/workers.

The Socialist Equality Party calls for expropriation of the corporate oligarchy to pay for the deepest funding crisis in the history of the Chicago Transit Authority. We call on workers to build a mass movement, independent of the two corporate parties and their lackeys in the union bureaucracy, for a massive redistribution of wealth and against corporate dictatorship.

In contrast to the Democrats and Republicans, who say workers must accept massive cuts, we insist that workers have the *inalienable social right* to transportation, as well as education, healthcare and other public services needed to live decently in a modern society.

The CTA is preparing what the agency itself is calling “doomsday” cuts that affect the trains, buses and paratransit services that millions in Chicago depend upon. The budget is to be slashed by 40 percent to close a funding shortfall between \$700 million and \$1 billion.

The agency announced last week if funding gaps are not closed, the system could stop running at 9 p.m. nightly, impacting shift workers especially and crippling social life by making it harder to leave the neighborhood in the evenings. The impact of this manufactured crisis will be to deepen social inequality by slashing operating costs for the city as a whole, and further segregating urban life.

Cuts have already been enacted affecting those who have the greatest need—elderly and disabled riders. WGN News reports the available paratransit rides allowed per month has been cut back from 240 down to 30—a reduction from four round trips per day, all the way down to one, singular ride.”

Particularly affected will be Chicago Public Schools students, who account for 13 percent of CTA riders. This figure itself is because CPS has slashed school bus services so deeply that not even students with disabilities are guaranteed a bus ride to school.

In every city across America, basic public health and job safety protections are being clawed back. Long-term

joblessness and hunger are increasing, driven in part by rising prices. School funding is being slashed to the bone, vital programs like Medicaid and food assistance are being dismantled and entire federal departments are being gutted or shut completely while greater sums than ever before flow to the military and to the superrich via tax cuts.

• **Philadelphia:** SEPTA has already axed 20 percent of its service with warnings of further cuts if no funding fix is passed. Other city agencies are reallocating capital funds to avert deeper, longer-term slashes.

• **Pittsburgh:** Pittsburgh Regional Transit plans 35 percent service cuts, eliminating 41 of 100 bus routes, longer wait times throughout, and entire suburbs losing transit access. Service would end earlier in the evening and frequency would drop sharply, increasing traffic and congestion throughout the city.

• **San Francisco and the Bay Area:** Deep service cuts are being discussed or phased in. BART may close stations and limit train service to once an hour. Muni faces 50 percent reduction in frequency on many lines.

• **Dallas:** Dallas Area Rapid Transit, which serves hundreds of thousands of riders each day in 2025, is considering the most drastic service cuts in its history without any additional federal or state funding.

Crowning all of this is Donald Trump’s plans to overthrow the US Constitution and establish a fascist dictatorship in America. Through Trump, the political structure of the country is being brought into alignment with the massive levels of inequality and exploitation in American society, which can no longer be reconciled with democracy.

The Trump administration has sent hundreds of heavily armed ICE Gestapo into Chicago and other cities and continues to threaten a national guard incursion, having declared war on the city in a recent social media post.

There is bipartisan consensus that the working class must pay for the crisis of American capitalism. This is why the Democratic Party, the other party of American big business, refuses to lift a finger against Trump. In US cities, it is Democrats who are organizing the slashing of schools, transit and other public services.

Essential services slashed as Wall Street reaches record highs

The claim that there is “no money” in Chicago or other cities to pay for transit is absurd. This broader Chicagoland region has 24 billionaires and over 120,000 millionaires, according to Henley & Partners. The “structural deficits” are a consequence of massive tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy, and giveaways to big business.

The state of Illinois is now home to some 30 billionaires, among them the members of the Walton (Walmart), Uihlein (Uihlein Corporation) and Pritzker (Hyatt Hotels) families—the latter dynasty providing the state governor, JB Pritzker.

Close to 17 percent, or \$2.1 billion of the city’s budget this year is devoted solely to servicing debt. This is money from working class taxpayers paid directly to the largest financial institutions in the world.

Due to rising rents and food prices, 25 percent of people in the Chicago area face food insecurity. In the last five years, groceries prices rose 20 percent and rent has increased 27 percent, according to Greater Chicago Food Depository. They expect 400,000 families in the state to require food assistance.

Chicago is a picture of America. In the last 10 months alone, the 10 wealthiest individuals in the US saw their combined wealth soar by \$703 billion, or 41 percent, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. The bottom half of the country takes in only 13 percent of the national income, while the top 1 percent takes over 20 percent.

Independent organizations to defend social and democratic rights are essential

The right to public transit is a class question. It requires a new, independent strategy to mobilize the working class independent of the Democratic Party, as well as the pro-corporate union bureaucracy, to challenge the unquestioned power of the American oligarchy. It must be connected with the broader fight against the Trump government and end the threat of fascism in America.

The trade union apparatus is working feverishly to contain social anger and lower workers’ expectations. In Chicago, the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) and SMART-TD have worked to block independent worker action and channel opposition back into the dead end of appealing to the Democratic politicians orchestrating the cuts and collaborating with Trump at every opportunity.

Rather than mobilize transit workers and the millions of riders who depend on them in a united struggle, the unions organized press conferences and lobbying trips to the state capital, begging lawmakers to “do the right thing.”

This mirrors the betrayal of Chicago teachers last spring by the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU). The CTU officials sold teachers a contract they claimed would “Trump-proof” the schools and protect immigrant families, only for Mayor Johnson to immediately announce a budget crisis that rendered the deal worthless.

To prepare a fight, workers must have organizations which they genuinely, democratically control. This means building rank-and-file committees, excluding union officials. Power must be transferred from the well-appointed offices of the union tops to the workers on the floor and on job sites, who can make decisions on strategy, policy and actions.

A similar change must take place in the whole society. Only through a fight by the working class to break the power of the rich is it possible to defend democratic and social rights. Workers taking this critical step will inspire and unify all the different forces of protest in a single massive social movement against the oligarchic government.

We propose the following program for a Chicago Transit Workers Rank-and-Fee Committee:

- Fund the CTA, SEPTA, and transit agencies nationwide to world-class standards. The money exists; it must be taken from the bloated Pentagon budget and the trillions handed to Wall Street.

- No service cuts or fare hikes! Expand service, especially in underserved communities.

- No cuts to Chicago Public Schools! Restore school bus service! Rehire laid off teachers and paraprofessionals and restore crossing guards and school maintenance positions! Free transit for CPS students!

- No to privatization! Full public ownership and democratic control of transit. Massive public investment!

- End government repression! Disband ICE and boot federal agents out of our cities!

If you agree with this, contact the SEP today to begin building it. The time to organize is now.



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wsws.org/contact