

Warning strikes in Germany's public transport: Break the control of the Verdi union bureaucracy! Build independent action committees!

Transport Workers Action Committee

2 February 2026

On Monday, around 100,000 bus, train and tram drivers in 150 municipal transport companies across Germany are paralysing local public transit.

In all 16 federal states, Verdi is negotiating with the Municipal Employers' Associations (KAV) on the framework contracts that regulate working conditions. In Bavaria, Brandenburg, Saarland, Thuringia and at Hamburger Hochbahn, negotiations on wages and salaries are also taking place.

Verdi is reacting to the growing anger among public transit workers over unbearable working conditions and low wages by holding "warning strikes." In Bavaria, where wages are particularly low, just as in Berlin and Saarland, Verdi has made wage demands of €68.75 in addition to the reduction of the weekly working time from 38.5 to 35 hours, which the employers' side quantifies at 17 to 27 percent plus 9.1 percent for the reduction in working hours. Magdalena Weigel, board member of Nuremberg's VAG public transport corporation and chief negotiator on the employers' side in Bavaria, has already rejected this as "unrealistic." She proposes a 5 percent wage increase in two stages for the next two years, some minor cosmetic corrections and the "possibility for employees to voluntarily increase working time to 42 hours."

In Berlin, the employers themselves rejected Verdi's laughable demands. While in 2024, Verdi had demanded a 10-minute turnaround time at the terminus before driving off again, it is now satisfied with "six minutes without exception." The state of working conditions in Berlin can be seen in the demand to limit the maximum shift length of split shifts to 12 (!) hours.

The Verdi apparatus—forced by transit workers' anger

over the unbearable working conditions and low wages that Verdi has prescribed in recent years—has put forward demands that it never intends to enforce. We can be sure that the Verdi negotiators will agree to one sell-out after another with the respective employers in the coming negotiations. The most recent example is the contract in Berlin from last year. Here, Verdi had demanded at least €750 more per month, based on a survey of the workforce. By agreeing to arbitration, not even a third of the wage demand was subsequently imposed on transit workers in the capital by Verdi and Berlin's local operator BVG.

In Bavaria, Brandenburg, Saarland, Thuringia and Hamburg, cuts in real wages are being agreed. Every percent more in wages is paid for with dirty deals like the extension of working hours. Given the already low wages, the "voluntary nature" of such deals is not worth the paper it is written on. Working conditions nationwide are not being improved, but worsened, and the risk of accidents increased.

The union leadership, in which members of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Left Party primarily call the shots, has no intention of improving working conditions and increasing wages appropriately. The contract bargaining in all federal states, including the city-states, sees members of the SPD, Christian Democratic Union (CDU), Greens and Left Party, and frequently even union members, often sitting opposite each other on both sides of the negotiations. Lucrative posts in municipal transit companies usually go to local politicians and not infrequently to "deserving" union officials, works council or staff council members. Verdi boss Frank Werneke himself has been a member of the SPD for decades and

supports the government's rearmament and war policy.

The Verdi apparatus agrees with the representatives of the municipal employers that hundreds of billions must be poured into rearmament and war and that the money must be saved elsewhere for this purpose, including from us bus and train drivers. Various studies demonstrate that the financial requirement for a nationwide functioning public transport system will rise to almost €60 billion annually by 2030. Instead, one austerity programme after another is decided and enforced.

The Verdi bureaucrats fear one thing above all: that our anger develops into a rebellion against their domination and we take control of the dispute into our own hands. That would be the first step in opposing the conversion of society to a war economy and the bleeding dry of public services, including public transport.

And exactly that is necessary.

Therefore, the Transport Workers Action Committee calls on transit workers nationwide to organise themselves in local action committees independently of Verdi and to network in order to prepare a serious fight for better working conditions and wages.

We propose the following non-negotiable demands:

- 30-hour week with no loss of pay and automatic adjustment to regional costs of living
- €30 minimum hourly wage in public transport nationwide
- Maximum 8 hour shift length, abolition of split shifts, mandatory rest periods—at least 12 hours—and genuine breaks
- No extensions of working hours, not even “voluntary” ones—for the protection of drivers and passengers
- No staff cuts, immediate hiring offensive to relieve the burden;
- No privatisation; public investment instead of billions for rearmament—money for public transport, not for war.

These demands are the minimum to enable dignified working and living conditions in major cities.

These demands cannot be enforced with, but only against the Verdi apparatus. We reject any cronyism with the Municipal Employers' Association, state governments and administrations in the municipalities, city-states and the federal government. The interests of working people must be placed unreservedly above the rearmament and war policies of the government and its union lackeys.

Preparations for a real strike must therefore be made immediately. The current nationwide warning strike shows what power we have. But under the control of Verdi, it serves only to vent our anger and then sideline

us.

We cannot let ourselves be divided and must build contacts with colleagues in other sectors who are also being made to pay for militarisation with job cuts and wage reductions. In particular, we must coordinate with public sector workers in the federal states. Verdi is currently in contract bargaining negotiations for them as well. Here too, strikes are carefully isolated from one another and deliberately kept small, intended to absorb workers' anger.

Part of such a reorientation must be close international cooperation. All problems take on an international form nowadays. Workers everywhere in the world face the same or similar problems.

For example, bus transport in the Greater Paris area is to be privatised by the end of 2026. Around 19,000 bus drivers and technicians are to be forced to switch to private operating companies—at significantly worse wages, longer working hours and with the loss of central achievements such as protection against dismissal, holiday regulations and social security.

In Chicago, more than 40 percent of public transport faces being broken up because the deficit of \$700 to \$730 million is no longer being covered by the state government. The consequence will be the destruction of thousands of jobs as well as the destruction of public transport.

In Minneapolis and the entire US, a strong movement is currently developing against Trump and his ICE Gestapo. Workers are discussing a general strike against the fascist in the White House. These questions are coming to a head all over the world and we can only defend our rights if we fight together. Therefore, we from the Transport Workers Action Committee stand in close political cooperation with the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC).

We call on all employees and beyond: Build independent action committees in your depots with trustworthy colleagues. Link up with the Transport Workers Action Committee in Berlin. Contact us via WhatsApp at +491748402566 and register via the following form to build the Transport Workers Action Committee.



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