

# “We all should unite”: New York bus drivers speak out in support of Long Island Rail Road strike

Sandy English, Elliott Murtaugh, Alden Woodson  
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Late Monday night, the five unions representing Long Island Rail Road workers and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) reached a deal to end the powerful three-day strike—the first LIRR walkout in 32 years. No terms of the agreement were immediately disclosed. The unions are ordering their approximately 3,500 members back on the job without any clear understanding of what was agreed to, let alone an opportunity to vote on it.

Every indication is that this deal is a sellout and must be opposed. Governor Kathy Hochul, who previously slandered strikers as “reckless” and sought to pit workers and riders against them, gloated on X about the deal: “Tonight, the MTA reached a fair deal with the five LIRR unions that delivers raises for workers while protecting riders and taxpayers.”

The strike by approximately 3,500 LIRR workers has paralyzed the traffic of about 950 trains across its network serving roughly 250,000 daily riders. No trains operated since Friday. Service is set to resume in phases starting at noon on Tuesday.

The strike, followed years of fruitless negotiations with the MTA, the state agency which operates the LIRR and MetroNorth commuter lines, as well as subway and bus service in New York City, over wages and healthcare costs. Workers have seen their incomes eroded through inflation, and a range of other issues are pressing on the workers, ranging from healthcare to sick leave.

Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) Mayor Zohran Mamdani—who was elected last November on a wave of social anger against inequality, promising free buses and taxes on the rich—has still not given even verbal support to the strikers, much less visited the

picket lines.

In a statement Monday night, the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) urged LIRR workers to “demand the immediate, full and public disclosure of every term of the agreement that has been negotiated in their name.” It continued: “the strike has demonstrated the enormous strength of the working class in the capital of global finance capital, New York City.”

A joint walkout by LIRR and New York subway and bus workers “backed by the active sympathy of nurses, teachers, municipal employees, and the broader working class across the region would have shut down the financial capital of American capitalism.”

The WSWs spoke to transit workers at the East New York Bus Depot about the strike.

“Get these people back what they want,” a bus driver said. “Meet the demands so we could move forward, because it’s just not fair. I think what they’re aiming for, they should get it. That’s it. Bottom line.

“We all should unite collectively. Do what we need to do to get done because that’s the only way it’s going to get done. And we collectively do it, you know, as a whole and stand on it and be consistent and mean it. You know, we move the city. The city don’t move us.”

The contract for 40,000 bus and subway drivers in Transport Workers Union Local 100 also expired Saturday, the same day the strike began. Asked what he was looking for in the new contract, the driver stressed the health and safety issues. The bus facility, he said, has had problems with asbestos exposure among other things, and on the buses themselves a number of drivers have been subject to assaults.

“It’s time to lock in. Time to stick together, unify,

unite. Don't settle for less and fight for what's ours."

Another bus driver said of the LIRR strikers, "They deserve their demands. I feel like the bus operators also should go on strike. And I'm hearing that since I'm on probation [for being a new hire], and if I commit to the terms, I could possibly be fired. I don't think that's right at all.

"I'm definitely supportive of my brothers here at the MTA and the union. I feel like we deserve it. We work hard. We do a lot. We deal with a lot of people, and I feel like we need more than what they are giving us."

On the TWU contract, he said the key issues for him include "definitely, a raise. I feel like we deserve more. I feel like we shouldn't have to pay for tolls when we're crossing the bridges, because a lot of us can't live here in our own city that we work in, because we can't afford it. Also they only allow us 30 minutes of swing time, which is lunch. I feel like we should get a minimum of at least an hour. Shifts are usually between 8 and 12 hours."

The WSWS noted that Mamdani won on a program of affordability and making buses free, and that MTA police were present at that very moment taking people off buses and issuing citations. The worker responded, "Mamdani speaks a lot but doesn't do a lot. I feel like he should be doing a lot more, especially for our city workers.

"They have all this money to support the war, but us that are here actually working and busting our butts, we can't even afford to live in a regular building here in our own city. The rent is high, food is high, everything is so high, and I feel like they should be supporting us more than they're supporting a war that really has no meaning, killing people."

Other bus drivers were emphatic about the need for unity and that the MTA's offers fall far short. One driver told the WSWS: "They are offering us 68 cents for [a pay] increase. That is no good, and they want to take something away from us in addition. They want to take away our medical coverage. I don't accept that. We want to get improved wages and health coverage, not less. I would be in favor of bringing us on strike together with the LIRR strike. Think what we could do."

A driver of 26 years added, "It is well needed for transit workers to join the LIRR strike." Another spoke to LIRR workers directly: "Hold the fort. Don't give

up until they give you what you want."



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