

HANDYDART WORKERS SET AUG 25 6 PM DEADLINE FOR FULL STRIKE

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Vancouver – More than 600 Metro Vancouver HandyDART workers represented by Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1724 will engage in a full work stoppage to begin August 26, unless they reach a tentative agreement before then with Transdev, their employer.

The Union has been in contract negotiations with Transdev, the French company contracted by Translink to operate the service, since November 2023. On June 27, Union members voted to authorize strike action by 95%, with 87% of active members participating in the strike vote overall.

“We started a series of escalating job actions in early July with the hope that Transdev would come to see reason and avoid a strike,” said Local 1724 President Joe McCann. “Instead of negotiating however, Transdev has stonewalled in bargaining, and even threatened payroll disruptions against members who refused overtime to protest the company’s behavior. Enough is enough.”

Since July 3, HandyDART workers have engaged in partial work withdrawals as part of a steady ramp up of job actions: these have included refusals to wear uniforms, collect fares, work overtime, fill out certain kinds of paperwork, and doing work off the clock.

President McCann noted that contract talks are just as much about ensuring a sustainable future for HandyDART for riders as for workers. “Our fight is about more than just a union contract. This is a question about the future of accessibility in Metro Vancouver: do we want to live in a place where everyone, including seniors and those with disabilities, have access to affordable transit? Or will we allow French multinational corporations to continue siphoning millions of dollars in our taxpayer money, while transit service for vulnerable Vancouver residents flounders due to extreme staffing shortages?”

The Union says that staffing shortages and high turnover (which is more than double that of the rest of Translink) arise from poor compensation in comparison to other transit jobs in the region. HandyDART drivers in the Fraser Valley earn 16% more than Metro Vancouver HandyDART drivers; and Coast Mountain drivers earn 30% more.

Rider complaints about Transdev have caused a wave of public criticism over the last year, with many Mayors and City Councils openly calling for Translink to fire Transdev and bring the service in-house in order to improve safety and public accountability. Six mayors currently sitting on Translink’s Mayors’ Council of Regional Transportation have called for HandyDART to be operated directly by Translink, and the city councils of

Burnaby, North Vancouver, Maple Ridge, Langley City, and Langley Township have all passed resolutions calling for the same.

“Transdev has failed hundreds of workers and thousands of riders that need specialized transit to vital medical care, to see loved ones, and to attend day programs. Perhaps Transdev cares little about this impending work stoppage because they’re based abroad and only care about their bottom line, but we once again are calling on Translink to step in and direct their contractor to bargain a fair deal,” said McCann.

If Metro Vancouver HandyDART workers were to go on strike, this would be the third major transit work stoppage in BC against Transdev in less than two years.