

# Transit Privatization Fact Sheet

*DC workers deserve family-sustaining wages and benefits*

DC is home to the nation's first street car, the first integrated public transit system due to the early fights of civil rights leaders like Sojourner Truth, WEB Dubois, and A. Philip Randolph, and a train system that was one of the original "Great Society" Public transit systems formed 40 years ago, that now serves hundreds of millions of people a year and employs thousands of transit workers. But today, instead of providing critical public sector work like they used to, DC Department of Transportation (DDOT) and WMATA are choosing to privatize growing swaths of public transportation in the city, including the DC Streetcar and DC Circulator.



WIN Leader and Circulator Driver, Kewana Battle-Mason, Speaking at the Downtown Transit Action in October 2017



WIN Leader and Streetcar Operator, Kenny White, Speaking at WIN's July 2017 Mayoral Action

The **DC Streetcar's** management and hiring is contracted out by DDOT to two separate corporations. The First, RDMT is an international transportation group headquartered in Paris and the second is Midtown Group, a temp agency in the US. This multi-tiered strategy has meant that DC Streetcar operators are paid \$10 less per hour than their MetroBus counterparts. In 2017 & 2018 strong organizing by ATU & WIN leaders won a contract with good wage increases and improvements to health care but no retirement. **DC Government should allocate funding in FY19 to ensure these workers have healthcare and retirement befitting a public employee.**

**By privatizing the Streetcar and Circulator, DDOT has held down the wages and benefits of a 90% African American workforce.**



WIN Leader and Circulator Driver, Tiny, Speaking outside Union Station in the Spring of 2016

These realities are also true for **Circulator Bus Drivers**. DDOT contracts out their hiring and management to the private multinational corporation, First Transit. Not only are circulator workers paid less for their hard work, but an audit revealed that First Transit had blatantly ignored the DC Paid Sick Leave Act, and even forced workers to violate District safety standards by taking out buses that did not pass pre-trip safety inspections. In fact, a 2015 safety audit of the DC Circulator found only 2, of the 42 buses inspected, fit to drive. In 2016, ATU Local 1764 Circulator workers, Metro IAF, & WIN leaders organized for, fought, and won a new 3-year contract to increase maximum wages, triple First Transit's contributions to employee 401(k) plans, and include language that will ensure drivers don't have to operate buses that do not meet safety standards. Now the DC Government is putting the contract out to bid again, and more private companies whose interest is profit will compete to provide the DC Circulator service. **DC Government should stop contracting out and bring the Circulator in house in FY19 w/ government healthcare and retirement benefits for the 200 operators and mechanics.**



Fall 2017 action with ATU workers and WIN leaders Outside the Streetcar Barn



WIN Leader Rev. Edmonds with ATU workers (Jonathan Winters, and ?) at the May 2017 MetroIAF Regional Action

In the fight for **WMATA** funding, there is a growing push for the privatization of the the entire system. The DC Streetcar and Circulator make it clear that privatization does little more than take from working people while giving to corporations at the expense of safety, living wages, and dignified employment.

It is imperative that DC, Maryland, and Virginia residents stop the privatization of WMATA and take out the middlemen who not only strip works of fair wages and benefits but deprive riders and the region of a reliable and cost effective system. This means intervening to

guarantee a fair return on work for the people who operate the streetcar, through fair wages, healthcare, retirement benefits and safe working conditions. It means calling a hearing to investigate the effectiveness and problems caused by the privatization of DC transit, and specifically investigating the double contraction of the DC Streetcar, and the fitness of RDMT and Midtown. **DC should 1) Block Privatization attempts, 2) Press for a WMATA Affordable Housing Policy, and 3) Push for a Hiring Commitment & Pipelines out of low-income communities**

