

## **TCU calls out Amtrak over furloughs, insufficient funding request**

- May 27<sup>th</sup> 2020 -

*Statement from Bill DeCarlo, National Vice President & National Legislative Director, TCU/IAM:*

“While Amtrak has been fully aware of nearly-empty trains, and with revenue taking huge hits, somehow the company failed to ask Congress for help in the HEROES Act – a \$3 trillion package passed by the House just days ago.

Instead, Amtrak is asking for supplemental funding in its FY21 request, which wouldn’t arrive until October 1<sup>st</sup> at the earliest, and plans to furlough 20% of the workforce as well.

This is the same workforce who are proving to be the real heroes of this COVID-19 pandemic - hundreds of whom have tested positive for the virus. Amtrak is thanking them for their service by furloughing them, and dropping their health insurance when they need it most.

TCU and other rail unions are asking Congress to provide Amtrak with funding tied to the retention of workers and their benefits – as so many other hard-hit industries have sought and received. Amtrak’s unions will be stepping up where management has either failed or refused to seek adequate help in keeping themselves afloat during this pandemic.

We can only speculate as to the reason for Amtrak’s inaction, but the backdrop of Amtrak management’s long-sought plans and how they may realize those goals on the backend of this pandemic is increasingly clear: destroy the national passenger rail network, eliminate quality passenger services, and attack union workers’ jobs. Amtrak will seek to retain management positions, cut union-represented jobs, and likely outsource our members’ work on the back end when the pandemic abates. They are using the pandemic as a means to an end.

And unfortunately, like every transportation service worldwide, this pandemic has blown a gaping hole in Amtrak’s immediate budget. The difference is: while many essential transportation services are actively retaining people (i.e. transit agencies, transit operators) or Congress has specifically provided funding for worker retention (i.e. airlines), Amtrak is gearing up to furlough thousands while making a late and insufficient funding request to Congress.

TCU and other unions are calling on Congress to help Amtrak since they apparently can’t help themselves by providing funding to keep essential transportation services alive in rural America, and keep thousands of our hard-working heroes on the job.“