

AFSCME Mechanics Cite Lack of Parts to Repair Air Conditioning On Detroit City Buses

DETROIT -- Albert Garrett, President of Michigan Council 25 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), AFL-CIO, and Leamon Wilson, President of AFSCME Local 312, Detroit Department of Transportation, issued the following statement regarding the recent problems with air conditioning aboard DDOT buses:

"Before the City bought these buses, AFSCME wrote a letter to [former] Mayor Dennis Archer, detailing the defects of which we were aware, and urging that the City not buy this model. The administration ignored our letter and bought 100 of the buses anyway," stated Wilson. "Now ten to fifteen percent of the new coaches are out of service for warranty work at any given time.

"There is a long list of replacement parts we need to keep these coaches in service, and the City has not supplied us the parts. For the air conditioning or climate control, the circuit boards have been burning out right and left because of a design defect. Until this week, we have been completely out of replacement boards. Without the parts, we can't make the repairs," continued Wilson. "Besides the circuit boards, the air conditioning compressors have been going bad at an unheard of rate, and we can't get the parts. We've been transferring compressors from older buses, and adjusting the new system to work with the old compressor. That takes more time, and it's not the way we'd prefer to do it, but the City hasn't given us the newer parts we need.

"There are also problems with the Nova series: we need condensers and unloader valves. The valve is a small, simple part that could be replaced in a half-hour or so -- if only we had new ones available," added Wilson. "To complicate matters, the City did not start the air conditioning campaign on time this year. AFSCME Local 312 has sent communications and has telephoned Clarice Allen, Director of DDOT, but to date there has been no response.

"We're not being allowed to finish the repairs; the coaches are run straight out the door without completing the work they need. We can fix the problems if we're given the parts and the time to do the work -- and we want to get the job done, if the administration will allow us to do it," concluded Wilson.

"If we're ever going to turn this City around, management and the Union must work together," stated Garrett. "It doesn't make sense to leave things undone and ignore the warnings that arise from the expertise and experience of the workers, the members of our Union. We need to sit down together, the City and the Union, and work out the issues so we can get on with the job -- providing the best possible service to the public."

Albert Garrett also serves as Vice President of AFSCME International. Michigan AFSCME Council 25 represents more than 65,000 public workers across Michigan. AFSCME International represents 1.4 million public workers nationwide.

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