

Dear Chairman Walker –

My name is Robert Mancuso. I have been an employee of the UT Shuttle system for 19 years, through six subcontractors. The shuttle workers dissatisfaction with our current employer and Capital Metro is at an all time high. The current UT Shuttle provider (ATC) has fired a union president, is frivolously suing a former union president and is not bargaining in good faith for another contract with our union. Our last contract expired December 31, 2001. All of this while Capital Metro seemingly looks the other way and reaps the statistical benefits the UT Shuttle workers bring to Capital Metro. Also, to understand why we are upset with Capital Metro, one has to go back to before Capital Metro was involved with the UT Shuttle. Back then, UT subcontracted out directly to a shuttle provider (Laidlaw). We drove school busses with no AC and no wheelchair lifts. Our job was very different. UT had been charging wheelchair students a shuttle fee for 20 years although they could not ride the bus. Then an ADA student tried to get on a UT Shuttle, which she obviously could not do. This held up the central campus route for hours that day. UT was then threatened with an ADA lawsuit. While Capital Metro had been in existence for just a few years, the citizens of Austin were upset at Capital Metro because we were all paying a one-cent sales tax while the buses were relatively empty. Then someone at Capital Metro got the idea “if we take over the UT Shuttle we can substantially increase our ridership”. All of the shuttle workers at the time believed Capital Metro “staged this event”. This was when Capital Metro approached UT and offered buses with wheelchair lifts and AC for about what UT was currently paying for regular school buses. UT accepted. They received more comfortable buses with AC and wheelchair lifts thus avoiding an ADA lawsuit. But Capital Metro was the real beneficiary. Here is what they got:

- Substantially increased ridership.
- The buses now appeared full to citizens of Austin.
- More federal dollars from UT ridership.
- Lower cost per rider for the entire Capital Metro system.
 - Because the UT Shuttle workers have much less pay and benefits than their StarTran counterparts the cost per rider is significantly less than Metro’s fixed routes. When Capital Metro averages the UT cost per rider with their fixed routes we lower the overall cost per rider.

Now when Capital Metro compares their cost per rider to San Antonio VIA or Houston Metro, Capital Metro looks very efficient.

Capital Metro now subcontracts the UT Shuttle contract to the lowest bidder. When ATC bid on the previous UT Shuttle contract, ATC severely underbid by millions. Karen Rae, then the General Manager, said and I quote “that was a bad business decision on ATC’s part”, yet Capital Metro accepted the bid. Now all the UT Shuttle workers are suffering because of this! Whether Capital Metro knows it or not (and I think many do), Capital Metro has created a system of haves and have-nots. StarTran employees are the haves; UT Shuttle workers are the have-nots, despite how good we make Capital Metro look. The day after it snowed this year, about 50 UT Shuttle workers were prepared to walk off the job. Not only because many of us have not received a raise in three years, but also because we feel like we have been exploited by Capital Metro’s unfair system. At the last minute we decided to drive. I told Councilman Slusher that everyone at the UT Shuttle is a taxpayer and Austin citizen. There are about 250 workers at the UT Shuttle that are not happy with Capital Metro. Many workers over here are so frustrated they want to go on strike or go to the press with our story. We sincerely hope that the decision makers at Capital Metro will start treating the UT Shuttle workers more fairly. This can be accomplished by either taking the UT Shuttle in house and giving our workers comparable benefits or making sure the next subcontractor treats us more fairly.