

Presentation to the Golden Gate Bridge Board of Directors  
By Shane Weinstein, President, Amalgamated Transit Union Local #1575  
May 2025

### Introduction

Good morning, Directors. I'm Shane Weinstein, President of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1575, representing the frontline bus operators at Golden Gate Transit. I'm here to address a staffing and pension crisis that affects not only our workers, but also the sustainability of our entire transit system.

With the recent passage of AB 2561, pension transparency and sustainability are more important than ever. And yet, the bus division—our division—is the only group in the entire District operating at over a 20% vacancy rate. In fact, we are sitting at over 30%.

### Chronic Understaffing

The District has budgeted 280 bus operator positions for FY 24/25. Despite that, leadership confirmed just days ago in negotiations that they are capping staffing at 190 operators. Even that number is theoretical—because as recent data shows, actual staffing has remained in the 150s to 170s for the last two years.

Why budget for 280 if the District has no intention of filling more than 190?

### Consequences of the Vacancy Rate

Chronic understaffing is not just a logistics issue. It:

- Undermines service reliability.
- Leads to inhumane scheduling practices where 68% of operators are being required to perform 100% of the work.
- Creates long-term recruitment challenges.

Operators are willing to work—they want the hours—but the inhumane schedules really take a toll.

### Pension Health in Crisis

The ATU pension fund is currently funded by \$83 million out of \$185 million. That's a 45% funding level. There should be extremely loud alarm bells going off for the District.

This crisis is directly connected to vacancies. The pension is funded through employer and employee contributions. Every unfilled position represents a missed contribution. When you are short by over 100 operators, year after year, the math catches up.

### District's Narrative on Pension Spiking

General Manager Denis Mulligan has repeatedly stated that bus operators are "spiking" their pensions. Let me be clear:

You only spike a pension if you work your days off. And at Golden Gate Transit, day-off work has been required for decades simply to maintain service.

This is not a scheme by operators. It's a management failure to staff properly. If the District filled the 280 positions it budgets, there would be no need for day-off work, and no spiking.

#### Recent Negotiation Revelations

At our most recent bargaining session, District leadership confirmed:

- The staffing cap is firmly set at 190, despite the 280 positions in the budget.
- They believe the pension crisis can only be solved if bus operators contribute \$24 million over 30 years—\$800,000 annually—in the form of reduced benefits.

Why? Because of what they call an “early retiree subsidy.”

Their complaint: a 50-year-old and a 60-year-old retiree with the same years of service receive the same benefit. Mr. Mulligan believes the younger retiree should receive less because they may live longer.

Why should bus operators be forced to give up \$24 million in benefits when the District's failure to contribute and hire properly is what led to this pension crisis in the first place?

Just to be clear this is illegal. The "Golden Rule" still exists in California meaning that if you take away someone's benefit, you must replace it with something equitable or better. District leadership taking this type of position not only puts the plan in danger of being sued by the members who had their benefits cut, but it also puts the trustees on both sides in danger.

Since Mr. Mulligan became GM, not one time has the District paid the Actuarially Determined Contribution (ADC), couple this with depleted staffing, and we have ourselves a crisis.

#### Regional Wage Disparity and Its Impact

Another critical factor hindering recruitment is Golden Gate Transit's lower pay compared to neighboring transit agencies:

Transit Agency	Starting Hourly Rate	Top Hourly Rate
SamTrans	\$ 27.00	\$ 41.71
VTA	\$ 28.12	\$ 43.27
SFMTA / Muni	\$ 29.61	\$ 46.15
Golden Gate Transit	\$ 31.29	\$ 36.81

Golden Gate Transit operators are among the lowest paid at the top step. In a high-cost region like the Bay Area, prospective operators will understandably go where they can earn the most. This wage gap makes it even harder to hire and retain staff, especially when combined with the capped staffing and demands for benefit givebacks.

#### Key Questions for the Board

- Why are bus operators being asked to give up \$24 million in earned benefits?
- Why should we pay for a pension crisis caused by the District's own failure to contribute and staff properly?
- Would any of this be necessary if the District simply filled its budgeted positions?
- How does Golden Gate Transit expect to recruit competitively when it offers the lowest top pay among regional agencies?

This isn't just about math. It's about fairness, accountability, and the long-term viability of our system.

#### Call to Action

We are calling on this Board to:

- Fully staff to the 280 positions that have already been budgeted.
- Abandon this misguided demand that workers give back \$24 million in benefits.
- Raise operator wages to compete with regional transit agencies.
- Work with labor, not against it, to stabilize the system and protect the pension.

Golden Gate Transit cannot run without operators. It's time for leadership to treat this workforce as the essential foundation it is.

Thank you.

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# ATU Local 1575 – Presentation to the Golden Gate Bridge Board

May 2025 | Shane Weinstein,  
President

# Introduction

- ATU Local 1575 represents frontline Golden Gate Transit operators
- Only division in District with 30%+ vacancy rate
- AB 2561 highlights urgency around pension transparency and staffing

# Chronic Understaffing

- 280 positions budgeted for FY 24/25
- Staffing capped at 190 per District leadership
- Actual staffing remains in 150s–170s
- Why budget 280 if you won't fill them?

# Consequences of the Vacancy Rate

- Service reliability impacted
- 68% of operators doing 100% of the work
- Inhumane schedules taking a toll
- Recruitment worsens



# Pension Health in Crisis

- Pension funded at 45% – \$83M of \$185M
- Missed contributions from vacant positions
- Shortfall worsened yearly by staffing levels

# Pension Spiking Narrative

- Spiking only happens with day-off work
- Day-off work required to run service
- No day-off work needed if fully staffed
- This is a staffing problem, not operator abuse

# Recent Negotiation Revelations

- Staffing cap confirmed at 190
- District proposes \$24M benefit cuts over 30 years
- Citing 'early retiree subsidy' logic
- This violates California's 'Golden Rule' on pensions

# District's Role in the Crisis

- District hasn't paid Actuarially Determined Contribution (ADC)
- Staffing remains critically low
- District mismanagement caused pension collapse

# Regional Wage Disparity

- SamTrans: \$27–\$41.71/hr
  - VTA: \$28.12–\$43.27/hr
  - SFMTA: \$29.61–\$46.15/hr
  - GGT: \$31.29–\$36.81/hr
- Lowest top pay = poor recruitment & retention

# Key Questions for the Board

- Why demand \$24M from operators?
- Why not fill budgeted positions?
- Can we fix pensions without staffing properly?
- How can GGT compete with lowest top pay?

# Call to Action

- Fully staff the 280 budgeted positions
- Drop the \$24M benefit cut proposal
- Raise wages to compete regionally
- Partner with labor to protect our system

Golden Gate Transit Full-Time Operator End Balance (FY17-FY25 YTD)

