

Teamsters Local 848

MEDIA RELEASE

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PRESS CONTACT:

Barb Maynard, 323-351-9321 barb@actnowstrategies.com
(please note new email address for your records)

Bus driver fired for adjusting rear view mirrors

PASADENA, CA: Pasadena Transit driver Margarito Ayala was fired for doing Job #1: assuring the safety of his passengers.

A bus driver for Pasadena Transit, Ayala was terminated in early November for refusing to drive a bus without first having the driver's side mirror adjusted for safety.

Pasadena Transit bus mirrors aren't like car mirrors – it takes tools to properly adjust height. Margarito requested that maintenance workers at First Transit adjust his driver's side mirror. After the third time he made the request, he was fired.

As First Transit itself wrote as its reason for termination in a November 20 letter to Mr. Ayala (attached):

On November 6th, 9th, & 10th 2017, you stood down causing maintenance to have to come out and adjust the mirror causing a slowdown in service.

As a professional driver, always conscientious about passenger safety, Margarito 'stood down' until his bus was safe to drive. Margarito's professionalism and conscientiousness got him fired.

"I'm not a tall person, and when I get in the driver's seat after another driver has driven a bus, the driver's side mirror is usually adjusted too high to see traffic," said Ayala, who has a perfect driving record for the transit agency. "I'm not going to drive the bus if I can't see around me. It's unsafe for my passengers."

Officially – First Transit, the company that operates Pasadena Transit – fired Ayala because he "instigated a work slowdown or stoppage." In reality, First

Transit didn't approve that Ayala was acting out of concern for his passengers – ironic considering the First Transit slogan: "If you can't do it safely DON'T DO IT!" When Ayala didn't do 'it' because he couldn't do it safely, he was fired.

"First Transit is putting expedience ahead of passenger and driver safety," said Gordon Ament, Business Representative of Teamsters Local 848, which represents First Transit drivers at Pasadena Transit. "Margarito's case is evidence that they talk a good line about safety, but don't practice what they preach. Evidently, safety comes second at First Transit."

First Transit has a long history of similar safety-related incidents across the country. [In 2003](#) the company settled a wrongful death case in Houston, Texas after investigators found "failed to properly screen applicants, train drivers and investigate crashes," according to the Houston Chronicle. In 2013, a First Transit driver in Kirkland, near Seattle, [rammed a bus](#) into an SUV, killing two. [Just last year](#), auditors found *95 percent* of First Transit-operated Circulator buses in Washington, DC "had an unacceptable safety problem that should be addressed before allowing the vehicle to be in service."

"First Transit should rehire Margarito Ayala immediately, and this incident should be removed from his employment record," said Local 848's Eric Tate. "First Transit should develop and implement systems to adjust bus mirrors and make other essential safety adjustments, without delay. We need to make sure this never happens again. Passenger safety is at risk."

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