

THE DAILY CALLER

Cuomo Calls Transit Authority, Unions Back To Bargaining Table

By Connor D. Wolf
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New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo demanded Wednesday that union leaders and transit officials get back to the negotiation table after contract talks fell apart.

With the recent negotiation failing between Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) and Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) unions, Cuomo has urged the two sides to reach an agreement. The union has already threatened a massive strike starting next week, which is expected to cause serious transportation problems in New York and Long Island.

In the statement released by his office, Cuomo pleads, “The Long Island Rail Road is a critical transportation system for Long Island and New York City. We must do everything we can to prevent Long Islanders from being held hostage by a strike that would damage the regional economy and be highly disruptive for commuters.”

“Both the MTA and the LIRR unions need to put the interests of New Yorkers first by returning to the table today and working continuously to avoid a strike,” Cuomo added. Both sides are blaming the other side for what went wrong.

In a statement, United Transportation Union President Anthony Simon said the “MTA rejected the counter offer we presented last Thursday (July 10). It presented no counter proposal. It continues to insist that the unions agree to a contract worth less than the value of the compromise recommendations of two Presidential Emergency Boards.”

In response, the MTA Chairman and CEO Thomas F. Prendergast blamed the unions, explaining in a speech that the MTA tried “responding to what the union’s primary concerns were, which were a 17 percent pay raise over six years” along with “paying for some of their health care cost.”

However, the unions rejected MTA’s idea to get potential new employees to contribute more to paying for these new benefits.

Peter Van Doren, a senior fellow and transportation expert at the Cato Institute, told The Daily Caller News Foundation, “Freight railroad strikes are almost nonexistent now. There are many fewer employees than there used to be and they are much more productive and thus highly compensated.”

Van Doren explained, “In contrast passenger rail service is publicly owned. LIRR passengers peaked at about 90 million passengers per year in 1949 and is now around 80 million. Employment has been about 6,400 employees for years and thus productivity has

decreased and thus real costs per passenger have increased and disputes arise about how to pay the bills.”