

# **UNION COALITIONS REACH AMTRAK AGREEMENT**

## ***National Strike Averted***

(Washington, D.C., January 18, 2008) – A tentative agreement on new contract terms was reached today between Amtrak and union coalitions comprised of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division of the Teamsters Union (BMWED), the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen (BRS), the National Conference of Firemen and Oilers (SEIU), the American Train Dispatchers Association (ATDA), the Transportation Communications Union (TCU), the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW) and the Transport Workers Union (TWU).

“After eight long years, we finally have succeeded in reaching a contract with Amtrak,” said Joel Parker, Shop Craft Coalition spokesman and Vice President of the TCU. “It took a Presidential Emergency Board and the threat of a strike, but in the end we achieved a contract with back pay more than three times what Amtrak was offering, substantial wage increases and none of the concessions that Amtrak was demanding on work rules.”

Dan Pickett, chairman of the Passenger Rail Labor Coalition and president of the BRS, said, “I hope we never go through another eight years without an agreement. I think this is a great step forward and want to make sure that we get things accomplished in the field. We have a real morale problem with our members, because we had no contract for eight years. Therefore, we have to show that we can work together with Amtrak from this point forward.”

“With this agreement, Amtrak’s insistence that their employees be treated as second-class railroad workers has been rejected,” said Jedd Dodd, BMWED chairman of the Pennsylvania Federation, which represents many of Amtrak’s maintenance of way employees.

The tentative agreement’s terms closely follow recommendations of a Presidential Emergency Board created by President George W. Bush to investigate the prolonged contract dispute. Provisions include wage increases that average 35.2 percent over the life of the agreement, which is January 1, 2000 – December 31, 2009, or 3.1 percent compounded per year. Retroactive pay varies, but averages \$12,800, which will be paid in two installments.

Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), who was present at the tentative contract signing today, said, “It’s a great day for the country, the workers and the passengers. This agreement gives respect to the workers. Compromise is never easy and this agreement is important for our economic growth and stability.”

The tentative agreement is subject to membership ratification. Each union will hold separate and independent membership ratification votes.