



Teamster Carhauleders in it for the Long Haul

**On June 12,
Teamster Carhauleders
Ratified Their
Most Lucrative
National Contract in
Union History.**

This is their story.

Going into negotiations, Teamster carhauleders knew they would have to take a more aggressive stance to win a strong national contract. Following years of declining membership and a substandard deal in 2015, it was time to rebuild a core Teamster industry. Fortunately, Carhaul Director Avral Thompson had spent years building a rank-and-file network of working carhauleders, uniting members against contract givebacks in 2015. This spring, Thompson's time had come to launch a member-focused contract campaign to chart a new course for the industry.

"Long before our administration began, we had already built a solid foundation from the grassroots," Thompson said. "We knew it would be a lot of work, but we came in knowing what needed to be done. Our team knew the industry inside out. Everyone was up to the task."

Immediately after taking office, Thompson revamped the Carhaul Division and got straight to work on the 2022-2025 National Master Automobile Transporters Agreement (NMATA). He had already been laying the groundwork for negotiations, and he long knew the key to their success would rely on the members who had dedicated their working lives to the industry.

Alongside General Secretary-Treasurer Fred Zuckerman and Assistant Carhaul Director Jeff Brylski, Thompson assembled a negotiating team unlike any other in the union's history—a mix of local leaders and rank-and-filers to provide real-life, first-hand experience to let the companies know how the contract affects them on the job.

"Avral had a vision and a mission right from the start. He vowed to put rank-and-filers first, and he delivered. This was a top-notch team with decades of



experience from across the country," Brylski said. "Ultimately, they made the difference in these negotiations and this agreement is proof of what is possible when members' voices are heard."

At the two-person meeting in April, the negotiating committee announced they would not be extending the contract, making the deadline for a new agreement May 31 at midnight. In his remarks to local leaders, General President Sean M. O'Brien made it clear this was non-negotiable and would have serious repercussions.

"We have 30 days to get this done," O'Brien said. "If we don't have a contract by May 31, our members won't be on the roads hauling, they'll be on the streets striking."

The General Secretary-Treasurer, who also served on the ne-

gotiating committee and played a key role in the bargaining process, outlined the vision for negotiations and drove home the need for locals to keep members engaged in the fight.

"Carhaul Teamsters have sacrificed a lot over the years, and they are more excited and united than ever to win a strong contract. They see the new direction our union is headed, and they want to be a part of it. Their activism and enthusiasm will be critical as we chart a new course for this industry," Zuckerman said.

Bold Proposals

In the lead-up to negotiations, Thompson and his team listened to members' input for proposals and encouraged them to stay engaged throughout the process. In return, the committee

promised honest, transparent communication with the membership and vowed to be unwavering in their demands to the employers.

On April 27, the committee kicked off negotiations in Orange Beach, Ala., meeting with representatives from Jack Cooper, RCS, Cassens and Active USA to exchange initial contract proposals on national language items.

"Our committee is made up of many faces—both local leaders and rank-and-file members—who have dedicated their lives to this industry. This committee believes, and you should believe, that union carhauleders deserve better. Our proposals are very bold, but they are also very serious," Thompson told the companies. "The proposals we present today are from our

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—MCKINLEY ARCHIE
Local 89 Chief Steward

members. They are united behind these proposals and determined to be successful in these negotiations. As I distribute and explain each one, before you say we can't afford to do it, ask yourself: Can you afford not to?"

Negotiations picked up in May in Romulus, Mich. With less than a month until the May 31 expiration date, the committee quickly began to cover more ground to address each proposal.

"Every proposal had the additional backing of actual examples of how workers are impacted by certain language in the con-



tract," said McKinley Archie, a Local 89 chief steward who works at Jack Cooper Truckaway in Louisville, Ky. "We drive the trucks, we traverse these roads, we stay in the designated hotels—everything outlined in the NMATA has a direct result on us. Being able to speak on the issues made a huge difference."

"It was eye-opening," Thompson said. "There were countless times when a rank-and-file member of the committee would give an example of something and the room would go silent, because the employers couldn't argue with the realities of the job."

"We proved a lot of points and covered a lot of ground," Archie said. "It wasn't always easy, and at times it got messy. Negotiating is a lot like making sausage."

Memorial Day Marathon

With Memorial Day weekend approaching, negotiations went into overdrive. Thompson announced the committee would stay in negotiations through the holiday weekend, refusing to go home until a deal had been reached.

Throughout the weekend, Thompson and Brylski put out video updates. Every evening, sometimes still at the table with papers in hand, the committee would recap negotiations for the day and the progress being made. By Sunday night, it was clear that a tentative agreement was close, but it would be down to the wire.

"This agreement is going to be monumental," Thompson told members as they prepared for the final day of negotiations.

News came Monday evening, a few hours to midnight. It was official: the union had secured the most lucrative national carhaul contract in Teamster history. The oldest national master agreement in the union had been rebuilt—by the members, for the members.

Back on the Map

On July 12, the 2022-2025 NMATA was ratified by 63-37 percent margin, with more than 50 percent voter turnout.

"This contract is epic—the best contract that Teamster car haulers have ever seen," said Frank Martinez, a chief steward at Local 745 working at Active USA who served on the negotiating committee.

"This is the richest carhaul agreement in the history of the Teamsters Union. We secured annual pay increases that cover hourly wages, mileages, zone rates, flat

rates—everything—retroactive to June 1, 2022."

In addition to annual wage increases, the tentative agreement includes countless improvements, including: work rule improvements; maintenance of benefits, health and welfare and pension; MLK Day as a paid holiday; increases to other monetary items, such as lead premium, shift premium, boot allowance, and border crossing; increases to the cost-of-living allowance (COLA); and any driver who has pulled four or more legs on any trip shall be paid the full rate or applicable zone rate whichever is greater on all legs.

"Over the years, our rates had become stagnant. With this contract, we were able to reset the standard. We stood up for the members, and this contract reflects our dedication to the job and to the union," Archie said. "This is a contract we can all be proud of."

In addition to improvements to pay and working conditions, the 2022-2025 NMATA establishes a national organizing model for the Teamsters to build union density in the carhaul industry. For long-time rank-and-filers, the importance of building union density in the industry has been made clear after years of decline.

"The toll has been noticeable. It's one of the main reasons we have had to fight so hard over the past decade," Dave Trigona, an 18-year car hauler at Cassens Transport and chief steward at Local 299 in Detroit. "Prior to the new NMATA being reached, we were at risk. Now, we have the opportunity to rebuild, and I urge every Teamster carhaul member to help out in any way they can. It's up to us to share the benefits of being in a union and the value of working under a strong NMATA once again."

TEAMSTER WOMEN AT UNITED WIN AVIATION MAINTENANCE AWARD

Team Chix Fix, an all-woman crew of Teamster aircraft mechanics from United Airlines, won the Peer Award at the Aviation Maintenance Conference (AMC) in Dallas this spring. AMC is a national competition where five-member teams compete in maintenance-related events challenging the skill and knowledge required of aviation technicians. The Peer award is given to the team that demonstrates the most spirit throughout the competition; it is the only award at the AMC that is voted on by every team that participates.

"Congratulations to these Teamster women for demonstrating incredible professionalism, work ethic and passion at the AMC," said Joe Ferreira, Teamsters Airline Division Director. "It's an honor to represent these members."

"In 2018 we were the first all-female commercial aviation team in the AMC," said Yolanda Gong, a Line Technician from Denver and member of Team Chix Fix. "This year I saw many all-women teams, so I definitely think we're doing something right."