

Governor intervenes to block OC bus strike

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A potential Orange County bus strike was averted for a week after Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said it would endanger public welfare.

As many as 1,100 drivers had been prepared to walk off the job Tuesday after their contract expired.

However, the governor intervened on Monday. He barred any job action for a week while a three-member board investigates the wage dispute between the Orange County Transportation Authority and Teamsters Local 952.

A strike would "significantly disrupt public transportation services and endanger the public health, safety or welfare for residents of the greater Orange County area," he said in a letter to the three-member board he appointed to investigate the wage dispute.

The panel was told to submit a report by May 8 and bus service for more than 200,000 daily customers will continue during the investigation, said Paul Taylor, a transit authority director.

"We intend to honor the governor's action," said Donna Metcalfe, a union spokeswoman.

The drivers' union has rejected the county's contract offer of a 13-percent increase in wages and benefits over three years.

Transit workers last walked off the job in the mid-1980s.