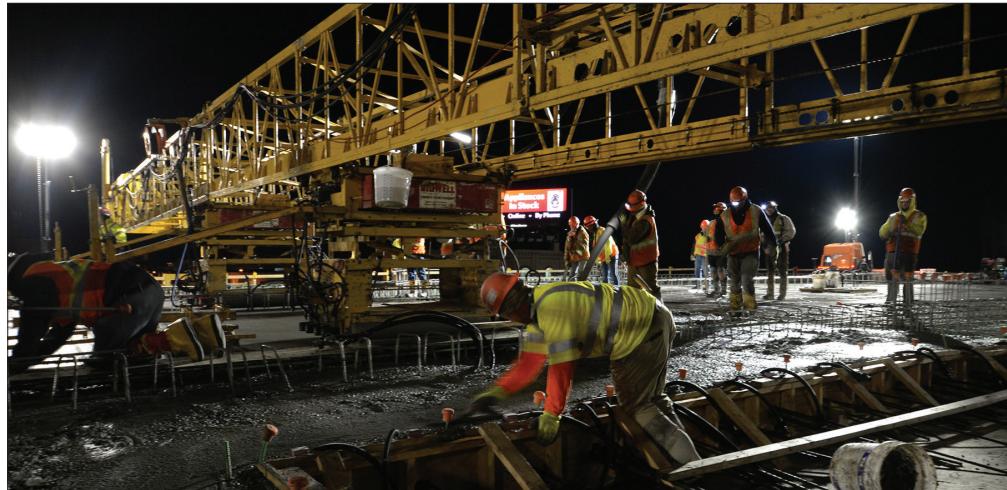


INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

April 24, 2020



A new transit station at I-35W and Lake Street moved closer to reality last week as crews poured a new bridge deck. At the freeway level, the new station will be served by the METRO Orange Line and I-35W express routes. The Orange Line is a new Bus Rapid Transit line that will provide frequent, all-day service between downtown Minneapolis and Burnsville. Service is expected to begin in late 2021. This week, the ramp from southbound I-35W to westbound I-494 closed to allow for construction of another Orange Line feature – a new transitway under I-494. The transitway will allow Orange Line buses to bypass traffic, improving travel times in the corridor. Until the ramp re-opens in a few months, traffic will be detoured to westbound Highway 62 to southbound Highway 100; transit is not impacted by the detour.

COVID-19 Developments: April 20-24

Four COVID-19 cases confirmed among staff: Four cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed among Metropolitan Council employees, three of whom work at Metro Transit. The first two Metro Transit cases involved staff at Heywood Garage; the third confirmed case, reported this week, involves a Metro Transit police officer. None of the Metro Transit employees who have confirmed cases of COVID-19 had contact with the public while on the job that would have led to risks of transmission. As a reminder, all employees should stay home if sick. If you believe you have been exposed to or infected with COVID-19, contact your medical provider and supervisor immediately.

Buses being disinfected daily: Bus Maintenance is now disinfecting every bus before it enters service. The enhanced cleaning efforts had been occurring less frequently until the end of last week. Entrance and exit touch points are being wiped down with disinfectant wipes, and a disinfectant mist is sprayed throughout the inside of the vehicle daily. In addition, all buses receive an in-depth wipe-down with disinfectant wipes weekly. Operators may take a few disinfectant wipes to wipe down the driver's area at the start of their shift.

Target Field Station lit blue in recognition of Metro Transit staff: Lights at Target Field Station went blue on Tuesday, April 21, to show support for Metro Transit's on-site essential staff. In addition, the large video screen at the station featured Metro Transit's "In This Together" logo. Similar "Light it Blue" efforts have been undertaken across the country as public shows of support for healthcare workers and other frontline staff aiding in the response to the coronavirus.

A message worth repeating:
Thank you, thank you,
thank you

From General Manager Wes Kooistra

Today, our focus continues to be on providing transit service during this pandemic. How do we deliver service in a manner that minimizes risks to our riders and our employees, and how do we adjust service levels to align with our workforce capacity?



In recent days, we have suspended light rail services from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m., limited the number of passengers on buses, issued messages strongly encouraging riders to cover their nose and mouth, continued distributing masks to our employees, and published an opinion piece in the Star Tribune that called out the great work of our front line employees and encouraged riders to help us do our part to prevent the transmission of the virus and save lives.

Thanks again to those on the frontlines of this work and thanks to all our other employees who are supporting our operations during this difficult time. I repeat this thanks in every column because I feel appreciation every day.

Thanks too to all those who are working from home and are experiencing the isolation of social distancing. Working in isolation is difficult; it is hard to feel connected. Know that we value you and we value the important work that is occurring in your homes that keeps Metro Transit moving forward, and its employees safe. We are social beings and our work benefits from social interaction. We do miss each other.

Though we still focus on daily operational challenges, it is also time for us to start charting our future. Our vision is to reach well beyond recovery and build a stronger and better regional transit system. We intend to approach this work with ambition and optimism.

Many expect service demand and service expectations to be changed for years to come. Metro Transit can position itself to not only respond to these changes, but to influence transit

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demand in our region. We can be on the leading edge of transit service design in the new norm.

Ahead of us is an opportunity to build a different and better transit system. We will build upon our strengths, and we will thoughtfully correct weaknesses and shortcomings. We are prepared to welcome new ideas, new approaches, and new partnerships that improve transit service.

We recognize that this is not a short walk; it is a journey. There is much to learn about our new service environment and how it may evolve over time, but we will start now. We will learn as we go, and we will be agile in responding to what we discover along the way.

Work like this is only accomplished in partnership with many others – with policy makers, with customers, with our many stakeholders and with each other. This is truly work that will require the engagement of all our departments and employees.

So even in this most difficult time, I ask that you consider the many opportunities ahead and begin to imagine a stronger and better regional transit system.

Transit Information staff rally to make, donate masks

Until a few weeks ago, Transit Information Center Representative **Melinda Love**, right, barely knew how to sew.

She's a lot more comfortable using her sewing machine now.

That's because Love is spending the time between taking calls at home sewing masks that she offers to operators and other Metro Transit employees who are on the frontlines.

"It's been a learning curve, but it's been fun," Love said this week.

Love isn't alone. When the coronavirus pandemic started to take hold, she sent a note to her managers offering to make and donate masks. That message was circulated among TIC staff, and several others began contributing.

So far, more than 60 masks have been donated by Love and fellow TIC representatives **Brian Pirila** and **Cathy Taylor** and Mailroom Clerk **Tyra Iverson**. Love's mother has also been enlisted to help.

Before moving to the TIC, Love spent about nine months as an operator at the Heywood Garage. That experience helped motivate her to contribute, even if it meant spending 8 hours to finish her first mask.

CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

"I appreciate the smile every time I get (well got) on the bus"

Ruter Operator **Rich Makizza** received the following commendation this week from a Route 5 customer who looks forward to seeing him again.

I wanted to commend the driver that (used) to pick me up to go to work. I have been at home for six weeks per Gov. Walz's stay-at-home orders but want him to know I appreciate the smile every time I get (well got) on the bus and the happy, 'Hey.' He even noticed the days I took my car and gave me a welcoming nod when I came back. I hope you are well. Someday, I will be happy to see the reliable number 5 pulling up for my last stretch into work again.

*Corrine Kokke
Minneapolis*

"Operators have a lot to deal with even without a pandemic," she said. "Now, I can't even imagine. My heart goes out to them."

While all on-site essential staff have been provided two face coverings, Love said she and others will continue to chip in to meet whatever demand remains.

To help prevent the spread of the coronavirus, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention encourages the use of face coverings in public setting where social distancing is difficult.

Passengers here and across the country are being strongly encouraged to wear masks whenever they ride transit.

Those who'd like to contribute completed masks or supplies are invited to contact Love at Melinda.love@metrotransit.org.



Learn more about coping with COVID-19

Employees are invited to hear from a Sand Creek counselor during a one-hour, call-in session on Friday, April 24. Counsel Brad McNaught will talk about self-care, coping strategies and staying connected during the coronavirus pandemic. The session will begin at 2 p.m. To join the call, dial 1-855-282-6330 and use the access code 966 883 062. The meeting password is zFWCxNdY327.

Sand Creek offers a host of free services to employees, including a 24-hour crisis hotline. For more information call 888-243-5744 or visit sandcreekeap.com (to create a new account, click the "My Life Expert Login" button on the home page and use the company code metcouncil).



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