

INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

August 7, 2020



Preparations for an expansion of the Operations & Maintenance Facility continued this week, above left, as light rail vehicles that will be used on the Green Line Extension were worked on inside the facility, above right. The Operations & Maintenance Facility, just east of the Blue Line's Franklin Avenue Station, is being expanded to provide more room for an expanded light rail vehicle fleet. The Metropolitan Council said this week that the Green Line Extension was moving closer to obtaining a federal funding grant, and that officials would seek alternatives to using a freight rail corridor for an extension of the METRO Blue Line.

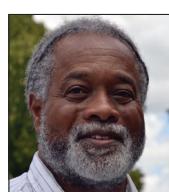
Several long-serving employees celebrate their retirements

Several long-serving employees have celebrated their retirements in recent weeks, including:

Bob Boyle, who retired with 44 years of service. Boyle began his career as a cleaner at the old Snelling Garage, and later worked as a technician at the Nicollet, South and Heywood garages, and in the Body Shop at the Overhaul Base. Boyle was among the first group of technicians to join light rail in 2002, and later became the shop foreperson. "After 44 years, it's going to be a big change," he said.



Gene Hayes, who retired with 39 years of service. Hayes spent 30 years at the Heywood Garage, and retired as the garage's highest-seniority driver. He was honored as a 25-year safe operator and spent several years on routes 7, 9 and 10. Hayes said he always enjoyed interacting with customers and especially looked forward to the challenge of driving in winter weather. "Every day was a new challenge," he said. "I never got comfortable – I just got more aware something could happen."



Jory Ackerman, who retired with 30 years of service. After 15 years as a bus operator, Ackerman became one of 13 operators who were trained to support an expansion of the Hiawatha Light Rail Transit line in 2004. While light rail was very rules-oriented, Ackerman said he found operating the train to be "very relaxing." In retirement, he looks forward to "living out the dream of becoming a beach bum with no responsibility, no rules, and no briefings."



See a list of other employees who retired in July on the next page, and read more about Metro Transit's longest-serving retirees at metrotransit.org/greatpeople.

Shared purpose, commitment evident across the organization

From Brian Funk, Deputy Chief of Operations-Bus



When we started the year, I was focused on bus operator recruitment and security, fleet planning and improvements to our Heywood Garage. Today, my days are largely consumed by our response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

And with good reason: More than 50 of our colleagues have tested positive for COVID-19, and the number of new cases in our state is on the rise. Here and across the world, people are asking what more can be done to protect public health while maintaining essential services like transit.

We have come a long way in the four months since health officials declared this a pandemic. But we still have a lot to learn, and a long road ahead. As the saying goes, this is a marathon, not a sprint.

What has been made clear over the past four months, however, is that our operators, maintenance staff and employees across the organization will not back down from this challenge. Our latest success came last weekend, when we returned to front-door boarding after installing custom protective shields across the fleet.

I had the opportunity to get back behind the wheel last week as we fine-tuned the barriers in partnership with training, safety and union leadership. While experiences like this are helpful, the reality is I do not spend my days in the driver's seat or in the shop.

I do, however, greatly admire all the work that's being done and am fully committed to supporting front-line staff. This same commitment can be found across all departments and at all levels of the organization.

Moving forward, we will continue to show our support by carefully monitoring and responding to local conditions, remaining vigilant and adopting best practices.

continued on next page

In practice, that means distributing tens of thousands of face masks, providing enough service to limit overcrowding, using the best disinfecting measures available and making COVID-19 testing and leave available to those who need it. We're also testing new products, including a promising disinfection system for onboard HVAC units.

Our focus on physical and mental well-being is as important as it's ever been, too, and I encourage staff to review and use the resources that are available, including Sand Creek, Fit for Life and Peer Support.

While we face a long recovery, I am proud of what we've been able to accomplish and have never been more honored to be a part of this organization.

As we move forward, I want to again express my sincere appreciation not only for all the work that is being done, but for the way we are looking out for one another and the communities we serve. From my perspective, we are truly In This Together.

In This Together: Hector Barcenas Rivera, Ruter Stockkeeper

Across the organization, Metro Transit employees' work has been changed by the COVID-19 pandemic. These "In This Together" Q&As illustrate how employees are adapting both on and off the clock.



How has the pandemic affected your day-to-day work?

Things were a little bit challenging at the beginning when wipes, masks and gloves were in short supply. We have more options now, and are seeing more of the things we need coming in every day. For me, I just need to keep an eye on my stock and make sure that if anything is depleting faster than usual I replenish it in time so I don't run out.

What's it like working through a pandemic?

I've been here about 18 months, and previously worked part-time washing and fueling buses at First Transit. While I was doing that job, I started seeing the importance of public transit to people from all walks of life. Now, everything has changed but people are still relying on public transportation. To me, it's even more important now.

When I go to the store, I also think about all the people who are doing the best they can to bring things to the shelf. Right now, we're all going through one challenge after another. But as

CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING "What an absolute delight"

East Metro Operator **Scott Orr** has received several recent commendations, including this one from a Route 71 customer.

My bus driver this afternoon was a delight. He thanked every person getting on board for wearing a mask, called out the street names as we approached and announced the next stops well in advance. As we were crossing the river, he even suggested we enjoy a beautiful view of downtown. What an absolute delight, it really made my afternoon!

AJ Decker, St. Paul

humans, I think we'll learn to see things in a different way and rise up – different but stronger.

How has your life changed outside of work?

To be able to take care of my family, everyone I work with and all those who depend on transit, I have to take care of myself. I'm washing my hands often, wearing a mask everywhere I go and only going out for necessary things, like trips to the grocery store.

On Sundays, I stay home with my family, watch movies, walk the dog and relax. I have two daughters, 18 and 21, and it's like going back to when they were little – everybody is home and spending time together.

Now available: Online scheduling for COVID-19 testing

Employees can now schedule a free COVID-19 test online through HealthPartners.

To make an appointment at a drive-up testing location, visit healthpartners.com, sign in as a guest or with your HealthPartners account and select "Start my screening." After answering several questions, you will be prompted to enter a five-digit employee code. Enter 10397.

Drive-up testing sites should be used by employees who are experiencing symptoms, such as cough, shortness of breath, a fever, muscle or body aches, vomiting, diarrhea, or new loss of taste or smell.

Employees who are not experiencing symptoms may schedule a test at the Heywood Well@Work Clinic by calling 952-967-7468.

Congratulations to these employees who retired in July

Frank Stumpf, Transportation Manager-East Metro, 34 years of service

Timothy Daniel, #9478, Operator, Ruter, 26 years of service

Charles Karver, #6826, Operator, Ruter, 21 years of service

Steve Book, #5963, Mechanic Technician, Overhaul Base, 21 years of service

Roger Rust, #67250, Operator, East Metro, 13 years of service

Stephen Butler, #2448, Operator, East Metro, 10 years of service

Brian Conover, #70336, Operator, East Metro, 9 years of service

Douglas John, #72493, Operator, South, 8 years of service

Dan DeVries, #73310, Operator, Ruter, 7 years of service

Robyn Macklin, #73331, Operator, East Metro, 7 years of service



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