

# INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

September 11, 2020



This mother-daughter duo, **Kira and Kadejah Young**, are beginning their careers as mechanic technicians after recently graduating from the Metro Transit Training (MTT) program. MTT is a multi-phased, 34-month apprenticeship program that puts job seekers with little or no experience in diesel mechanics on a path toward full-time maintenance roles at Metro Transit. Read more about Kira and Kadejah on the next page.

## What to know this week

**Annual Bus Roadeo returns:** With pandemic precautions in place, the annual Bus Roadeo returns to the Como Avenue parking lot at the State Fairgrounds next week. Competitors can complete the course on Wednesday, Sept. 16, Thursday, Sept. 17, Friday, Sept. 18, and Saturday, Sept. 19. The competition begins at 8:30 a.m. each day. All operators and judges will be required to wear a face covering and maintain social distance. For more information, see a garage coordinator.

**Service changes in effect Sept. 12:** Service increases will take effect on many local bus routes and the METRO Blue and Green lines on Saturday, Sept. 12. More than 50 express bus routes and the Northstar Commuter Rail Line will continue to operate on reduced service schedules. During the week of August 31, bus ridership was down 63% compared to the last week of February, while the Blue Line was down 76% and the Green Line was down 72%. Ridership on these modes has grown since the start of the pandemic, however, and the increased service will support continued efforts to allow for social distancing. The next round of scheduled service changes will take effect in December.

**Pandemic parenting seminars:** As the school year begins, many parents face competing demands. Several short workshops are being offered to help parents learn how to focus, manage conflict and balance their work and dependent's learning. The next call-in session, Building Your Family's Stress Recovery Toolkit, will run from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 17. To register, e-mail [FitForLife@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:FitForLife@metc.state.mn.us).

**Flu Clinics scheduled for late September:** During the last two weeks of September, flu shot clinics will be available at many work sites. On-site employees do not need to schedule an appointment; simply stop by during a scheduled time. Look for posted schedules or inquire with a supervisor.

## Building strength from within

From General Manager Wes Kooistra

Much of the hiring we'd planned to do this year has been paused as we operate at a reduced service level and prepare for future budget challenges. We likely won't hire any more operators this year and are carefully reviewing every open position to determine whether it needs to be immediately filled.



Still, we have not lost sight of our future workforce needs.

Although recruitment efforts are largely on hold, we continue to support employees who want to advance their careers and help us navigate the difficult road ahead.

This week, a group of employees were recognized for completing the Leadership Academy, which allows front-line staff to assume temporary management roles and become qualified to apply for future supervisory positions.

In August, we extended full-time job offers to a group of 15 individuals who trained alongside technicians in Bus Maintenance while earning associate's degrees. Like previous participants in our Metro Transit Technician Training program, these individuals entered the field with little or no technician experience (in fact, one previously served as a bus operator).

The bus operator apprenticeship program, which matches new hires with senior operators, also continues with support from the Amalgamated Transit Union and other partners.

Human Resources is offering more online training programs and career development resources, too. Today, employees can attend the first of several online programs they are hosting to provide more information about the Council's hiring efforts.

The Advancing Women in Transit group also continues to be a tremendous resource for all staff, providing opportunities to network, learn more about the Council and develop skills.

We know that many of the people who will lead our organization in the future are already with us. Indeed, several of

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our current leaders started their careers as front-line staff.

We also know that we must do more to build diversity among managers and supervisors, and that we need to be deliberate about addressing barriers to career development.

Thank you to all those who are supporting this work and who are eager to build their careers here. Together, we can and will build a stronger, richer and more inclusive workforce that will help us persevere today and on the long road ahead.

### Attend the first “Ask HR” online event today (September 11)

Join Human Resources for the first in a series of “Ask HR” online sessions at 11 a.m. today, Friday, Sept. 11. Today’s session will focus on the Council’s recruitment and selection process, including a summary of anonymous comments that have been provided on the topic. HR staff will also address questions from participants and provide an opportunity to get involved in a specific improvement project. Future “Ask HR” sessions will address promotions, training and development opportunities and employee retention. For more information, contact **Paula Crane** at [paula.crane@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:paula.crane@metc.state.mn.us).

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Congratulations to these employees who celebrated work anniversaries in August

#### 45 years

Steve Jaeger, Manager-East Metro

#### 40 years

Arthur Shelton, Operator, South

Tim Maloy, Lead Revenue Mechanical Technician

Dan Syverson, Instructor-Rail

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Mother and daughter begin careers as mechanics together

After seeking jobs with her four-year college degree, **Kadejah Young** decided it was time for a career change.

“I knew I wanted to go back to school, but not for something I wouldn’t use,” Kadejah said.

Through her mother’s longtime employer, Metro Transit, she discovered a new career path through the Metro Transit Technician Program. This work-study program aims to train the next generation of transit mechanics.

“Transit’s been good to my family,” **Kira Young** said. “I’ve driven buses for years, but she’d come home and talk about parts of a bus I’ve never even heard of.”

CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE’RE DOING

### “He truly cares about getting us home safe and sound”

East Metro Operator **Djordje Virijevic** recently received the following commendation from a customer who will miss him as he moves to a new route for the upcoming service change.

*He greets everyone with a smile and shows he truly cares about getting us home safe and sound. Many riders are so comfortable they doze off knowing he’ll slow at their stop since he recognizes the regulars. He is very alert to other drivers on the road, and will beep the horn when he needs to, sometimes at the occasional strolling turkey or goose. (I’m sure they appreciate his kindness.) As he moves to another route, I am sad to see him go. He’s an asset to your company and I know he’ll succeed in any endeavor.*

Renee M.

Kadejah’s choice inspired Kira to pursue this career, too. Together, they earned associates degrees from Hennepin Technical College, a requirement to become a mechanic technician.

Kira had Kadejah when she was 19-years-old and has been working ever since. To take part in the program, she needed to take general courses in addition to her technical coursework.

“Sometimes when I was studying, I’d have a problem and Kadejah would be there to help me,” Kira said. “She was always supportive, telling me I can do this.”

During the program, the duo put in long hours working and attended classes between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. They were happy to sacrifice their social lives to work toward a career.

“It was intense, but worth it,” Kadejah said. “Even though I’ve graduated, this is a constant learning process, but we have mentors willing to help us out.”

After graduating in July, Kira earned her first advanced degree. Kadejah moved out of her mother’s house into one of her own. But they’ll be together again at East Metro as they begin their careers as mechanics.

“One day, I’m going to be your supervisor, mom, and I’ll enjoy calling you into the office,” Kadejah joked.

Thirteen other individuals graduated and completed the MTT program alongside Kadejah and Kira. Since 2015, 29 participants in the job training program have graduated and become full-time mechanics.

“The program has been extremely successful,” said Matt Dake, Director of Bus Maintenance. “Metro Transit needs highly skilled technicians, and eligible applicants need access to better paying jobs and opportunities.”



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