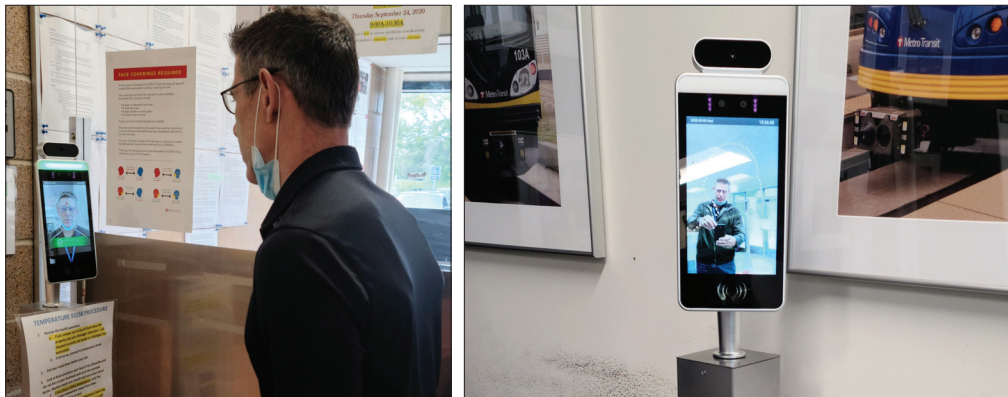


# INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

September 18, 2020



Employees will soon be able to take their own temperatures using an automatic temperature scanner, much like taking a "selfie" with a mobile device. Nicollet, Ruter, Heywood, South, East Metro, and Blue Line OMF have these kiosks. At sites awaiting them, a person will continue to administer a contact-less infrared temperature check. To use this automatic scanner, an employee answers a few health questions, then aligns their face in front of the camera, and the device takes a temperature using infrared. Transit is developing a process to self-serve the temperature check and inform staff when that goes into effect. Until then, a staff person will be on site to help with any questions.

## What to know this week

**Advancing Women in Transit hosts virtual event:** On Monday, Sept. 25, from 12:30-1:30 p.m., Lucy Galbraith hosts a seminar about women in transit as part of a lecture series from Advancing Women in Transit (AWT). Galbraith is the first Director of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) at Metro Transit. Galbraith will help explain TOD and how it connects with operations. For over 20 years, she has worked as a private consultant and in governments and nonprofits. To join via WebEx, use meeting number: 146 964 7505 and password 32EfsDExNr2. To join via phone, call 1-855-282-6330 and use password 32337339. Contact [jennifer.kochaver@metrotransit.org](mailto:jennifer.kochaver@metrotransit.org) with questions.

**September is Recovery Month:** This month, the millions of Americans in recovery from substance use disorder (SUD) celebrate their freedom from a misunderstood medical conditions. Recovery is the ongoing support after rehab to help make healthy life changes. If you or anyone you know needs help for SUD, SandCreek provides counseling and recovery services. To schedule a counseling session or other service, call Sand Creek at 1.888.243.5744 or fill out the intake form on their website, [sandcreekcap.com](http://sandcreekcap.com).

**Network Next needs help with in-person surveys** Network Next seeks help to conduct in-person surveys to help better represent all customers. Recent surveys continue to inform about how transit is even more of an essential service during this unprecedented year. Network Next is a 20-year plan to inform the future of transit and identify the next generation of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines. To participate, contact [jae.halverson@metrotransit.org](mailto:jae.halverson@metrotransit.org). Staff desiring to participate during work hours will need to check with their supervisor.

**Everyday Resilience workshops:** These online workshops offer a multi-dimensional approach to address emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual wellbeing. Explore how to be successful in a highly changing and fast-paced environment, identify and overcome obstacles, sustain energy levels, and get the most out of relationships. Upcoming sessions: Wednesday, Sept. 23 and 30 from 12 to 1 p.m. To reserve your spot, email [FitForLife@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:FitForLife@metc.state.mn.us).

## SWLRT full funding shows dedication to transit's future

From General Manager Wes Kooistra

In a year full of challenges for Metro Transit, we received great news on September 14. The Southwest LRT (Green Line Extension), a vital extension of our transit system, received its Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) from the Federal Transit Administration.



Not only does this bring to our region \$929 million in federal funding to match the nearly \$1.1 billion dollars in local funding, it is a confirmation of what we, as an organization, have been saying since the project's inception; this project provides critical access and mobility to our region and will contribute to the prosperity of our state well into the future.

In many ways, Southwest LRT (SWLRT) embodies Metro Transit's core values. When complete, it will unite people and communities, expand and enhance our existing transit infrastructure, and drive development, including affordable housing, along the alignment.

It is estimated by 2035 employment is expected to grow to 80,900 within a half mile of SWLRT stations and 145,300 in downtown Minneapolis. Coupled with the expected 56 percent population growth along the line, it's easy to see why this project is so important.

The path of the SWLRT project hasn't always been easy, but with the hard work and dedication of Metro Transit, county and city staff, we have brought this project one step closer to the finish line.

So, what is this project going to look like going forward? As many of you know, construction began in earnest last year and has ramped up recently. There isn't a single mile of the 14.5-mile alignment where some sort of construction isn't occurring. Earth is moving, stations are being built, and tunnels are being dug. This work will continue until the planned service opening sometime in 2023.

This \$2 billion project is the largest public works project in the history of Minnesota. The FFGA has been completed and signed, but our work is just

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beginning. Construction will stretch into the next few years, and it will be important to stay connected and offer your input when you can. The website [www.swlrt.org](http://www.swlrt.org) is a great project resource as well as the construction update the SWLRT staff prepares every week which you can subscribe to on the website.

Finally, I would like to extend my deepest thanks to the Metro Transit staff who have worked tirelessly on this project. Many people's fingerprints can be found on this project, and I want you to know Metro Transit thanks you for your dedication, expertise, and hard work. Southwest LRT is a shining example of what we can accomplish when we work together and stay true to our values.

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Mentor program expands, innovates to connect operators

Facing many unknowns, the bus operator mentor program's regularly scheduled in-person gatherings stopped in March.

"Operators were starting to feel more isolated in a job that can already feel isolating," **Alec Johnson**, mentor coordinator, said. "We couldn't just wait. We have an obligation to keep this program going to help operators."

With pandemic protocol, the previous format of large in-person group meetings wouldn't work, so Johnson decided to host more meetings, but with smaller groups of six. Given the fluidity of pandemic schedules, he found the job became too complex to coordinate alone, so he requested his "dream team" of four mentors.

This August, **Lee Estis**, **Keith Howard**, **Stephan Majors**, and **Skye Saygbe** joined him to support the program's new approach which helped them triple the amount of connections in a short period of time. In two months, they hosted events attended by 210. In one month, they connected mentors and mentees with 85 ride-alongs.

"Whether it's a gathering or a ride-along, operators have lots of questions that you can help clear up," Estis said. "It's shocking how much misinformation is out there."

Events are aimed at being an open forum with certain topics, but a ride-along also provides an opportunity to not only help a new operator with the technical aspects of the job, but answer burning questions.

"Sometimes an operator learns about something on a piece of paper and they're supposed to interpret it themselves," Majors said. "Mentors can help answer questions and understand any policy changes."

CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

**"I always try to ride his bus."**

East Metro Operator **Kenneth Dolney** recently received the following commendation from a customer who appreciated the way he addressed the onboard mask requirement.

*I want to compliment the driver for informing customers about the mask requirement and dealing with several rude passengers on the route. He handled it firmly, but kindly. I take this route 5 days a week round trip and I have witnessed him do this on many occasions. Whenever I can, I always try to ride his bus because he wears a mask, uses the COVID shield, and continually informs customers about the mask requirement. A big kudos to him.*

*Briana D.*

Since 2018, the mentor program connected new-hire operators during four phases to support operators and help them succeed on the job.

"It's rewarding to connect new operators and to help fellow operators, many who haven't seen one another for months," Saygbe said.

The innovations to keep operators connected continues this October and November as 65 mentees who are part of this apprenticeship program will graduate in a similar fashion, in smaller groups.

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Congratulations to the latest group of Leadership Academy graduates

Several employees recently completed the Leadership Academy, which allows front-line staff to spend six-months working alongside a mentor in a supervisory position. Successful completion of the program provides participants the equivalent of one year's worth of supervisory experience, which is a minimum qualification for supervisory positions.

The graduates are listed first, along with their mentors and the role they filled while completing the program.

- Curt Morales, Jason Mooney, Rail Transit Supervisor
- Michael Schmidt, Annette Hammerlund, Assistant Transportation Manager, Ruter
- Jillian Isaac, Chang Yang, Assistant Transportation Manager, East Metro
- Kevin Schnyders, Ziyad Abdella, Assistant Transportation Manager, Nicollet
- Todd Churchward, Ken Ferguson, Assistant Transportation Manager, South
- James Sirba, Timothy Cahalan, Thomas Malecha, Carlos Gutierr, and Robert Darsow, Bus Maintenance Supervisor, Heywood

A new group of Leadership Academy participants begins this month. It is unclear when or if leadership applications will be accepted again, but those who are interested in learning more about the application process may contact Walt Joy. Employees who would like to learn more about the program's course requirements and how they can prepare by taking online or virtual, instructor-led courses may contact Lynne Leiss.



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