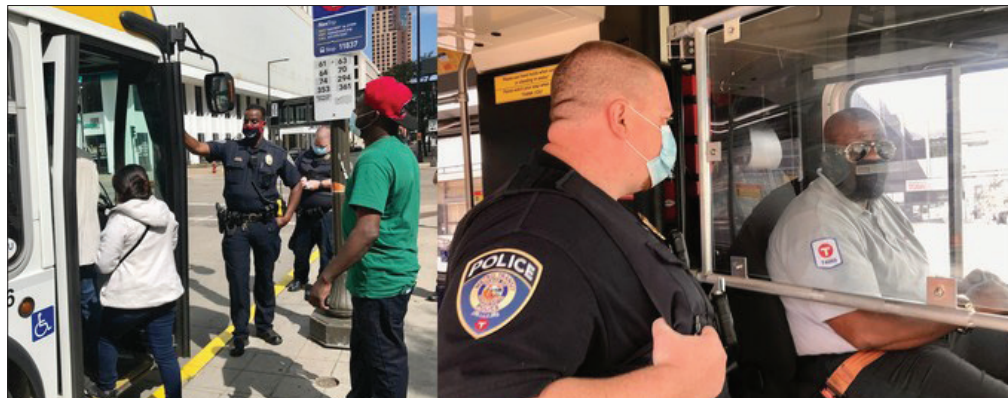


INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

September 25, 2020



Since this summer, the Transit Response Unit (TRU) team has been using data to proactively address customer and operator concerns like disorderly conduct, smoking, drinking, and other inappropriate behaviors. The TRU team is a Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD) unit comprised of up to seven officers and a sergeant who interact and ride with customers in identified trouble areas. On any given day or week, these officers could be anywhere in the seven-county system. During August, the team made 31 arrests, and in one week, they rode 154 trains and performed 247 bus operator checks.

What to know this week

September is Recovery Month: This month, the millions of Americans in recovery from substance use disorder (SUD) celebrate their freedom from one of the most misunderstood medical conditions in the world today. Recovery is the ongoing support after rehab to help make healthy life changes like diet and exercise. Without resources for recovery, the chronic affliction of substance use disorder will likely return. If you or anyone you know is experiencing a need to seek 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, sandcreekeap.com.

Everyday Resilience workshop on Sept. 30: These online workshops offer a multi-dimensional approach to address emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual well-being. 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 session: Wednesday, Sept. 30, from 12 – 1 pm. To reserve your spot, email FitForLife@metc.state.mn.us.

Network Next needs help with in-person surveys: Network Next seeks help to conduct in-person surveys to help better represent all customers. Network Next is a 20-year plan to inform the future of transit and identify the next generation of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridors. To participate, contact jae.halverson@metrotransit.org. Staff desiring to participate during work hours will need to check with their supervisor.

Help start an LGBTQIA-focused Employee Resource Group: An Employee Resource Group (ERG) is an organizationally supported group of employees sharing a common characteristic or interest (e.g., gender, ethnicity or race, sexual orientation, generation, special interest) or allies of that group. Staff interested in leading, supporting, or joining an LGBTQIA-focused ERG are invited to attend an upcoming virtual session: Tuesday, Sept. 29, at 1pm. Contact sarah.beres@metrotransit.org.

Flu Clinics scheduled in 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.

A Celebration of our Outstanding Operators

From General Manager Wes Kooistra

For the past 37 years, we have celebrated operators for their commitment to safety, customer service, and reliability through our Outstanding Operator program.



This year, COVID-19 precautions led us to cancel the annual Ovarations awards brunch where operators who have repeatedly earned Outstanding Operator status are recognized. We hope to restore this tradition when it is safe to do so, perhaps as early as next year.

While we are unable to gather as we have in the past, it remains important to honor the operators who would have been applauded at this year's event.

Had the Ovarations brunch been held, more than 30 bus and train operators who have earned Outstanding Operator status for 5, 10, 15, 20 years or more would have been celebrated for reaching these remarkable milestones.

We would also have recognized East Metro Operator **David Micklin**, who is believed to be among just a few operators to earn Outstanding Operator status for 30 years, and a group of 13 operators who achieved 25 years of safe driving in 2019.

It has been an annual highlight and a true honor to personally thank operators like this during my time as general manager and during my time as regional administrator.

I very much regret that I cannot offer my congratulations in person, but I want to use this opportunity to extend my sincere appreciation and admiration to this year's honorees, and to the 268 other operators who achieved Outstanding Operator status last year.

Simply put: the invaluable service you provide is the foundation for everything we do. Thank you.

Long-serving and dedicated operators have always been essential to our success. But they are especially vital now, as we confront so many changes and

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challenges
at once.

As the past few months have demonstrated, we must respond to this pandemic with new ideas and an ability to adapt quickly. We will be called to be even more flexible and responsive in the months and years ahead.

While our operating environment is changing rapidly, we must remain rooted in the values that have defined our organization for the past century, and which are embodied by our Outstanding Operators.

It is these values – safety, reliability and customer service – that will set us apart in whatever new reality emerges from this pandemic.

Thank you again to each of you who are among this year's honorees, and to the many other employees throughout the organization who have practiced these values throughout their careers.

In this Together: Maintenance
Clerk Jillene Isaac

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

Normally, I'm a maintenance clerk at South Garage, but this year I became an assistant transportation manager (ATM) for six months in the Leadership Academy program.



In March as the pandemic began, I began my new role at East Garage. By changing roles, my day-to-day work was different, but due to COVID, the role I stepped into evolved as well. Daily conference calls were part of the job to coordinate any changes that happened frequently in protocol or pandemic response. We were learning and adapting as we discovered more about the virus.

What's it like working through a pandemic?

I'm proud to have worked in this role during the pandemic because I was able to see and take part in a leadership role. When times are tough, great leadership is what keeps everything going. There were a lot of protocol changes, such as rear-door boarding and shields, to integrate and communicate to operators. And lots of changes inside the garage, too, including temperature taking, masks, and hand-washing protocols.

During my six months, there were a lot of questions and breaking information, so operators had concerns and needed someone to talk to and address any issues. As an ATM, part of the job is being like a counselor to operators when they have concerns or questions. I found that much of my job was spent talking to operators.

CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

"Your driver was amazing."

Nicollet Operator **John Edwards** recently received the following commendation from a customer who appreciated his help in finding the right bus.

While riding Route 17, I didn't realize it didn't go up Central Avenue. He asked me where I was going and even got out to help flag the Route 10 behind his bus to let me on. Your driver was amazing.

Jacob

With the September service change, I've returned to my role at South, but I am thankful for my time and experience at East Metro during the pandemic.

How has your life changed outside of work?

I've got two kids, one son in 11th grade and a daughter in her first year of college. Both are living at home, but going to school online. This has added a little stress as my son is on the autistic spectrum – I find myself having to check in with him while working to make sure he's staying on task. But, as a homebody, I found that the stay-at-home orders didn't bother me too much. It gave me time to work on my house and spend more time watching movies with my son – we love DC and Marvel films.

A new group of Leadership Academy participants begins this month and is the final group to complete OJE assignments from the 2018 Leadership Academy posting. A date for the next round of applications has not yet been established 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.

Congratulations to these Outstanding Operators!

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's Ovations brunch was canceled. If possible, a combined event recognizing 2019 and 2020 milestone operators will be held in 2021. While there will not be an event this year, operators will still receive certificates, pins and watches through their managers or safety specialists. Posters recognizing all milestone winners will also be posted.

Bus and train operators earn Outstanding Operator status by meeting certain attendance, safe driving and customer service requirements over two six-month periods. In 2019, 268 operators earned Outstanding Operator status. Operators who have earned Outstanding Operator status for 5, 10, 15, 20 or higher in 10-year increments and 25-year safe operators have historically been recognized at the Ovations brunch, along with operators who have achieved safe driving milestones.

Operators who achieved Outstanding Operator milestones this year are listed below:



The Insights newsletter is published weekly. For more information, visit Insights on MetNet. A link can be found on the homepage. Feedback and story ideas can be sent to insights@metrotransit.org.

5-Year Master Operators

- Dale Belt, East Metro
- Nathan Michaelson, East Metro
- Dale Richter, East Metro
- Neng Yang, East Metro
- Mark Davis, Heywood
- Alan Hinrichs, Heywood
- Terrence Boyce, Nicollet
- Abdirashiid Haji, Nicollet
- Mark Willegalle, Nicollet
- Anastasia Bloodsaw, Ruter
- Wayne Dalida, Ruter
- Timothy Hnida, Ruter
- Tara Hubbard, Ruter
- Charles Karver, Ruter
- Abdulahi Abdi, South
- Tsegaab Terfa, South
- Lafe Krick, Blue Line
- Yeheyes Argaw, Green Line
- Dereje Gonte, Green Line

10-Year Prestige Master Operators

- Robert Glynn, East Metro
- Kenneth Johnson, East Metro
- Michael Vermeersch, East Metro
- Xia Yang, East Metro
- Henry Bridges, Heywood
- Mary Adway, Heywood
- Hassan Ali, Blue Line
- Todd Bennett, Blue Line
- Shane Wilber, Green Line

15-Year Superior Master Operator

- Alan DeFrance, Nicollet

20-Year Elite Master Operators

- Bruce Kowalchuk, East Metro
- Tom Neng Vang, East Metro

30-Year Elite Operator

- David Micklin, East Metro

Congratulations to these 25-year safe operators

- Jerry Pratt, #9376, Nicollet
- Kenneth Phernetton, #6422, Nicollet
- Gregory Strombeck, #9138, South
- Scott Wohnoutka, #6224, South
- Thomas Carey, #8957, Heywood
- Robert Beadles, #8958, Heywood
- Timothy Daniel, #9478, Ruter
- Kenneth Johnson, #6375, East Metro
- Joanne Tyler, #9306, East Metro
- Kenneth Thomas, #6242, East Metro
- Diane Beilke, #6240, East Metro
- Richard Henke, #9382, East Metro
- Kelly McKee, #1139, East Metro

