

# INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

December 30, 2020



New real-time displays that promise to be more reliable were recently installed at some of the busiest bus stops in downtown Minneapolis. In all, 36 new LED displays were placed along the Marq2 Corridor, where customers board dozens of express and limited stop routes. The new displays replace 10-year-old signs that were among the first ever installed by Metro Transit. As part of the upgrade, the new displays were also connected to fiber optic lines that will be more reliable than previous cellular connections. "Customers will not only see sleeker looking signs, but better performance," Transit Information Manager **Ben Rajkowski** said.

## What to know this week

**Protect others, your license and your career by celebrating responsibly:** On New Year's Eve and throughout the year, protect yourself, others and your job by designating a sober driver or finding a safe ride if you've been drinking. Remember: employees who are convicted of driving while impaired (DWI) cannot work as an operator at Metro Transit for 10 years. Minnesota's legal alcohol-concentration driving limit is 0.08, but motorists can be arrested for DWI at lower levels. Due to the pandemic, no free rides will be provided on transit this New Year's Eve. To slow the spread of COVID-19, Minnesotans are encouraged to avoid gathering in large groups outside their household.

**Funding available for wellness, equity programming:** Initiatives that will help create a workplace where all employees have access to quality wellness options are eligible for funding through the annual Fit For Life Mini-Grant Program. Employees are invited to submit grant applications by Jan. 29, 2021. Applications will be reviewed by a committee and awarded based on need and potential impact. Grant funding could go toward things like onsite worksite gardens, fitness equipment, multicultural cooking classes, racial trauma stress support or other programming that supports health equity, diversity and inclusion. Wellness Champions or grant writers will be responsible for implementing programs that receive funding. Up to \$3,000 can be requested through each application. To apply for a mini-grant, contact the Wellness Champion at your work location.

**New warehouse opens in Roseville:** Material Management has opened a new warehouse in Roseville to store light rail supplies. More room was needed because existing storage areas were at capacity. The new 20,000-square-foot storage space is more than twice the size of the storage area at the Hiawatha Operations & Maintenance Facility. It is currently being outfitted with 16-foot tall pallet racks, drawers and a small office space. The space is on Walnut Street, just five miles north of Material Management's main offices and storage area at the Overhaul Base.

## Reflections on a challenging but rewarding year

From General Manager Wes Kooistra

This wasn't the kind of year any of us had hoped for.



At work, the COVID-19 pandemic, civil unrest and calls for better advancing racial equity commanded much of our immediate attention and response. This has been a time of significant disruption to both our work and our personal lives, and we had to manage both at once.

It wasn't always easy, but I believe we made important progress and are ending the year as a stronger and more resilient organization. I hope you, too, are proud of what you accomplished and are greeting 2021 with newfound confidence in our organization's ability to meet every challenge.

This year, we clearly demonstrated the importance of working together. I can't say enough about the collective efforts of each our departments to successfully respond to the unprecedented circumstances of 2020. In recognition of all your work, I invited several agency leaders to offer their reflections on the year that was and their hopes for the year ahead.

I hope their words offer insight, inspiration, and reward for a job well done. Perhaps after reading this you will spend a few minutes of your own time reflecting on all the good work you did and where you hope to go from here. Thank you so much for all you accomplished. It is truly remarkable.

*General Manager Wes Kooistra*

**Vince Pellegrin, Chief Operating Officer**

The year 2020 reminds me of the quote, "Fall seven times, get up eight." As I look back on my 40-year career in transit, never has the word "tenacity" had such clear meaning. Operations and maintenance staff showed incredible toughness and made things happen that aren't in any of our job descriptions. Leaders could be found at all levels. From what I've seen, I know we will be able to meet whatever challenges we face as our recovery continues.

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## Brian Funk, Deputy Chief of Operations-Bus

When future generations of transit employees look back on how the Operations teams at Metro Transit responded to a year unlike any other, I know they will be proud. Plans were developed, communicated, implemented, modified, re-developed and re-implemented time and time again as 2020 unfolded and situations changed. The teams took control and were determined not to let external forces dictate our response to unprecedented situations. My head is held high and I beam with pride when describing the work accomplished by our operators, mechanics, garage teams, supervisors and managers who did more to overcome adversity and challenges this year than most people will face in an entire career.

## Marilyn Porter, Director-Engineering & Facilities

The Engineering & Facilities Department always has a lot on its plate, and that was especially true this year. In response to the pandemic, department staff and our many partners went above and beyond to keep our support and public facilities clean and rolled out several protective measures, including barriers and hand sanitizer stations. This summer, staff also responded quickly to widespread property damage that occurred during the civil unrest following George Floyd's killing. At the same time, we advanced several key projects, like the Minneapolis Bus Garage and improvements to the Brooklyn Center Transit Center. A truly impressive effort by all involved!

## Lesley Kandaras, Chief of Staff

This year challenged staff who communicate and engage with employees, customers and the communities we serve. Customer Relations helped riders decipher service changes and COVID protocols. The Outreach & Engagement team found new ways to listen to and build relationships with community while remaining socially distant. Following the horrific homicide of George Floyd and civil unrest, the Equity & Inclusion staff and team gathered over 280 comments from employees about how we can advance equity and address systemic racism. These recommendations are shaping actions that will further embed equity and inclusion into our daily work for 2021 and beyond.

## John MacQueen, Director of Safety (acting)

This was a transitional year for the Safety Department as staff worked from home and the department's long-serving director and bus safety manager retired. Nevertheless, work continued. A significant achievement was the approval of new, federally mandated Agency Safety Plans for bus and light rail. We also saw a 25% improvement in

CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

## "Her actions probably saved two lives"

Blue Line Operator **Dawn Machovsky** was recently heralded by Rail Supervisor **Jim Clancy** for her response to a potentially dangerous situation.

*On November 29, two young people ran in front of a southbound Blue Line Train near the 50th Street Station and fell in the middle of the tracks. Dawn did a tremendous job using the emergency brake the instant she saw this, stopping just inches from these individuals. She should be commended for being alert and focused and for acting so swiftly when trouble arose. Her actions probably saved two lives today and this can never be taken for granted!*

our bus and customer accident rate, which fell to just over 3 accidents for every 100,000 miles we traveled, a 40% decline in rail collisions and a 50% reduction in serious safety and security incidents. We hope to build on these trends in 2021 and beyond.

Read more reflections on 2020 on MetNet.

## Three Material Management employees retiring in January

Material Management is bidding farewell to three employees, including two who worked at Metro Transit for more than 30 years.

Ruter Stockkeeper **David Hopwood**, left, **Chi Khang**, right, the Lead Stockkeeper at the Green Line Operations & Maintenance Facility, and **Karey Bradley**, the Head Stockkeeper at the Instruction Center, will each retire in January.



Hopwood retires with 32 years of service, Khang retires with 30 years of service and Bradley retires with 5 years of service (as well as 8 years of service with Environmental Services).

Stockkeeper applications are being accepted now. Stockkeepers pick, store and issue supplies and perform other inventory-related duties as assigned. A high school GED and prior inventory-related work experience are required.

For more information, visit [metrocouncil.org/employment](http://metrocouncil.org/employment).

## Aspects of COVID-19 leave will continue into 2021

Employees will continue to have access to the 80 hours of Emergency Sick Leave that remains in their banks in 2021. This is a continuation of the 80 hours each employee received in 2020, not additional leave. Employees can also continue to use FMLA for childcare leave (paid at 2/3 rate of pay after the first two weeks) for a maximum of 480 hours within a 12-month period. This extends the time to use that leave into 2021, it doesn't provide more hours. These benefits were scheduled to expire at the end of the year but will be extended while Minnesota is under a peacetime emergency or until a new federal law/guideline replaces this one. For more information, email [EmployeeResourceCenter@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:EmployeeResourceCenter@metc.state.mn.us).



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