

INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

March 12, 2021



Clockwise from top left are: Nicollet Operator Sophia Ali, Heywood Operator Kou Yang, Train Operator Sarah Gibson and Train Operator Ismail Jama. Each of these operators was recently profiled as part of the Know Your Operator series, and their stories can be read at metrotransit.org/ridersalmanac. On Thursday, March 18, Metro Transit will join agencies across the country in celebrating Transit Driver Appreciation Day. To recognize operators for their service, customers and staff are being encouraged to submit commendations, say thank you as they ride and share their support on social media.

Frontline, public transit workers are now eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. We are prepared to help you get vaccinated. Here's what you need to know right now.

We are making plans to provide COVID-19 vaccines at two Metro Transit/Met Council locations – one in the west metro and one in the east metro – in the next couple of weeks. As soon as these opportunities are scheduled, we will inform you directly by text phone or email.

Please review and update your contact information on file through Employee Self Service (ESS). For login and password help, contact the ServiceDesk at servicedesk@metc.state.mn.us or call 651-602-1498.

In the meantime:

- Sign up for vaccine notifications through the state's Vaccine Connector at VaccineConnector.mn.gov.
- If your health care provider contacts you about making an appointment, or if you have another opportunity to get vaccinated, you can and should do that.
- Occasionally, government partners inform us that they have extra vaccine doses if we have employees who can use them. To receive notifications about unplanned vaccination opportunities, all employees are also invited to email their name and preferred contact information to vaccines@metrotransit.org.

Remember: You will still need to wear a mask and practice social distancing after being vaccinated.

Customers, community and collaboration are at the center of our trial response

From Police Chief Eddie Frizell and Deputy Chief of Operations- Bus Brian Funk



As leaders of our respective departments, it is our responsibility to make sure our employees feel safe and have all the tools they need to do their jobs with confidence.

As the trial of former officer Derek Chauvin gets underway in downtown Minneapolis, achieving those goals means doing everything we can to support each other's work, as well as the work of all the other departments at Metro Transit. And that is what we are doing.

Together, we are helping lead a team of representatives from the Metro Transit Police Department, Bus and Rail Operations, Facilities and Communications to prepare for and respond to any unplanned activities that may arise over the course of the trial.

We have also spent the past six months working with our local and state public safety partners, and are a part of the unified command that will respond to any possible unrest.

As we have stated before, our goal is to protect our employees, riders and property while continuing to provide essential services.

We want to thank all those who are engaged in these ongoing efforts and to recognize all those who are being asked to put these plans into action, including our operators, transit and rail supervisors, police officers and others. By working together, we are putting ourselves in the strongest position we can to prevent potential harm while continuing to provide the services our customers rely on.

To be clear, we believe peace and justice can prevail in the coming weeks. We also hope these proceedings begin to heal the racial trauma that too many of our customers, staff and community members are feeling.

To ensure we are contributing to a

continued on next page

positive outcome, police officers have been reminded of their roles in protecting First Amendment rights and of their duty to intercede if they see excessive force at the hands of another police officer.

On the operations side, we are prepared to adapt but are committed to offering as much regular service as possible to avoid creating confusion for customers and operators.

And we have committed to frequent communication with staff and customers, including daily email updates to all employees, text and email service alerts and regular appearances on Spanish, Hmong and Somali radio stations.

The opening days of the trial have shown us that peaceful protests and transit service can co-exist, and we believe these efforts will help preserve that balance in the weeks ahead.

But we cannot do this alone. As we move forward, we would like to encourage everyone at Metro Transit to consider themselves a part of this shared effort. In practice, that means:

- Staying informed so we can share reliable and consistent information with our customers, co-workers and community;
- Providing feedback on our response efforts and asking questions when more information is needed;
- Looking out for each other and offering support if you feel comfortable doing so.

We know these coming weeks will not always be easy, especially for those who identify as Black, Indigenous and People of Color and who are coping with the added stress of racial trauma.

But we also know that together we can and will emerge from this experience as a stronger, wiser and more responsive organization. Thank you for being a part of that journey.

Planned purchase of new 60-foot buses advances

The Metropolitan Council is considering a recommendation to purchase 143 60-foot New Flyer biodiesel buses that will replace older buses and expand the fleet over the coming years. About a third of the new buses will be used on future Bus Rapid Transit lines and the remainder will be used on regular routes.

Current battery storage limitations and charging equipment needs made battery electric buses incompatible for long BRT corridors. In addition, there continue to be challenges with existing

CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

"He puts my mind at ease..."

Ruter Operator Antonio Cooper recently received a commendation for his onboard presence.

Antonio, my driver, is quite simply the best! Friendly, professional, and a calm demeanor that puts my mind at ease after a hectic day. He changed my whole thought process from bad to good. Thank you!

Robert

charging equipment that was installed at the Heywood Garage. Chargers have been temporarily taken out of service until the manufacturer is able to address concerns with the equipment.

Metro Transit is still committed to incorporating more electric buses in the future and is actively exploring funding opportunities to do so.

What are the plans for 38th & Chicago?

The intersection of 38th Street and Chicago Avenue, where George Floyd was killed, continues to be used as a sacred space for racial healing. While the area is closed, Route 5 and Route 23 are on detour.

The City of Minneapolis is working on an interim plan to reopen the area to transit and vehicle traffic. As part of that process, officials have committed to preserving public art and a memorial that has been erected at the site.

Construction on the D Line, a Bus Rapid Transit service that will replace Route 5, will begin soon but the construction contract does not include a station at this location. Metro Transit will coordinate with the city to build a METRO D Line station at 38th and Chicago at a later time.

Congratulations to these employees who retired in February

- Richard Bledsoe, Operator-Heywood, 40 years
- Keith Gordon, Operator-Heywood, 17 years
- Donald Mead, Facilities Technician, 27 years
- Mary Vasterling, Transit Supervisor, 24 years
- Topee Jackson, Operator-East Metro, 31 years
- Jody Theisen, Janitor, 40 years
- Anne Anderson, LRT Helper, 31 years
- Michael Zimmerman, Operator, South, 31 years
- Lisle Vickerman, Revenue Equip Electronic Tech, 25 years



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.