

INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

March 19, 2021



A new northbound METRO Orange Line station is being built at 98th Street and I-35W, in Bloomington. The Orange Line is a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line that will provide all-day, frequent service along the I-35W corridor between downtown Minneapolis and Burnsville. Service is expected to begin later this year. Orange Line stations will include real-time signs, on-demand heat, ticket vending machines and security cameras. Learn more at metrotransit.org/orange-line-project.

Take these steps to learn more about COVID-19 vaccine opportunities

Front-line employees who are now eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine should expect to be contacted by the end of next week about scheduling an appointment at Homeland Health's Mall of America vaccine clinic. To ensure you can be contacted, review and update your contact information on file through Employee Self Service.

If a vaccination appointment conflicts with your work schedule, please speak with a manager or supervisor. If you do not see any available appointments when you go to sign up, wait a short time and try again.

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.

To ensure you receive the latest information:

- Sign up for notifications at vaccineconnector.mn.gov.
- Confirm your contact information is correct at healthpartners.com.
- Email your name and preferred contact information to vaccines@metrotransit.org.

Minnesota is not requiring vaccinations, but they are strongly encouraged to help stop the pandemic.

Take precautions if you're traveling over spring break

Employees who plan to travel or whose dependents will return home during spring break are encouraged to take precautions to limit the chance of spreading or getting COVID-19. Public health officials continue to discourage discretionary travel. If you chose to travel, the CDC suggests getting tested 1-3 days before your trip and again 3-5 days after returning. Free, local Spring Break activities are being offered by both the Minneapolis and Saint Paul parks and recreation departments. Visit the Centers for Disease Control website for guidance at cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers.

Sharing our appreciation is more important than ever

From General Manager Wes Kooistra

Being a bus or train operator has always had its share of challenges. But no one could have predicted that in addition to providing safe and reliable service we'd also be asking our operators to serve on the frontlines of a global pandemic.



Yet for the past year, that's what our operators have been doing.

On Thursday, as we and other transit agencies celebrated Transit Driver Appreciation Day, I had the opportunity to personally thank many of our operators for providing a service that is essential because so many rely on transit for their travel.

Normally, these expressions of gratitude would come with a side of celebration. In past years, I've enjoyed sharing meals and conversation at our garages. Customers have also been invited to show their support when boarding, to send commendations, and to wave as operators pull into a station.

This year, of course, the pandemic makes large workplace gatherings impossible. Many of the familiar faces who would have said thanks spent their day working from home. I look forward to resuming and building on these traditions as soon as it is safe to do so, and I really look forward to greeting our operators with a handshake and without a mask.

While the pandemic continues to limit in-person interactions, I hope our operators still noticed and felt the appreciation we were able to offer.

In a video that will be shared at the garages, essential workers from area grocery stores, daycare centers and healthcare providers spoke about how much respect they have for the operators who got them where they needed to go over the last year.

In one example, a single mother of four said her car had broken down and that she needed transit to get to work and support her family. In another, a nurse practitioner talked about riding transit for more than 40 years and of the

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welcoming, safe environment she's enjoyed throughout the pandemic.

Messages of support also appeared on all our major league stadiums, light rail platforms and Bus Rapid Transit stations. On social media, we were joined by more than 40 transit agencies from across the country that participated in a collective show of support. Gov. Tim Walz proclaimed Thursday Transit Driver Appreciation Day in Minnesota.

Gestures like these always seem a little inadequate, and that is especially true this year. But behind these symbols is a genuine appreciation for a job well done.

As general manager, I know this appreciation must extend beyond a single day. I also know all our staff deserves to be recognized for their efforts, now more than ever.

As we move forward, I am committed to showing my support by being a strong and vocal advocate for transit and transit workers, by listening and responding to your concerns and by taking every opportunity I can to say thank you.

So again, I'd like to extend a special thanks this week to all the operators who have performed so admirably under difficult circumstances. It is an honor to be your general manager.

Reminder: POD classes resume in April

POD classes focused on mental health awareness and de-escalation will resume soon. The two-hour classes will be held on 42 dates in April and May, beginning at 9:15 a.m. and noon. Most operators will attend the classes virtually. All operators are required to attend and can sign up through their coordinator. Classes are led by trainers Russ Turner and Ray Young of the Training Institute.

Earn \$40 by completing health assessment by May 31

Eligible employees can earn a \$40 gift card by completing an online health assessment by May 31.

The assessment poses questions about nutrition, exercise, emotional health, life satisfaction, and sleep, and generates customized recommendations based on your results. Responses to the assessment are confidential and are only shared back with the Met Council as combined data for the organization.

All employees who have HealthPartners medical or dental coverage through the Metropolitan

CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

"I felt like he was in control"

East Metro Garage bus operator **Tyler Stoutenburg** recently received a commendation for driving as conditions dictate.

I would like to say thank you for driving very carefully on I-94 today. There was little loose snow, not bad, but I appreciate the careful driving. With the way he drove, I felt like he was in control the entire time. And, it didn't sacrifice time on this trip, either. We got to St. Paul safely and with plenty of time to spare. Thank you.

Trish

Council are invited to participate in the assessment and will receive a \$40 gift card for completing it before May 31.

To complete the assessment and access HealthPartners programs, visit healthpartners.com/wellbeing and log in with your HealthPartners account. For assistance, call HealthPartners at 800-311-1052.

Limited number of Twins fans will be allowed inside Target Field

Under new state guidelines, up to 10,000 fans will be allowed inside Target Field for Minnesota Twins home games. The Twins home opener will be held on Thursday, April 8. Fans and stadium employees who will use transit are being reminded of COVID-19 precautions, including a mask requirement. Staff will be at Target Field Station to help direct fans as needed. For more information about serving as a station ambassador, contact **Nick Gorell**. The Saint Paul Saints play their first home game on May 11 and will be allowed to host up to 2,100 fans at CHS Field. The general manager of the Minnesota State Fair said this week that he is "cautiously optimistic" the fair will be held this summer.

Congratulations to these employees who celebrated their work anniversaries in February

35 years

Randy Webb, Operator-Ruter

25 years

Carol Erickson, Revenue Processing Specialist

Craig Young, Operator-East Metro

20 years

Clarence Blackmon, Foreperson Electro Mech Tech

Rudy Cogshell, Operator-Nicollet

Christian Jubera, Operator-South

Joshua Daniels, Supervisor-Overhaul Base

Kirk Thompson, Operator-Nicollet

Ge Xiong, Operator-Ruter

Anastasia Bloodsaw, Operator-Ruter

Mary Jorgenson, Clerk-Materials Management



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