

INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

April 23, 2021

Doing our part to confront the climate crisis

From Marilyn Porter,
Director-Engineering & Facilities

Here and across the country, people are driving as much or more as they did before the pandemic began. Meanwhile, transit ridership is down by about two-thirds.



To combat climate change, those trends will need to be reversed as our region recovers in the coming years – the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Minnesota are cars, trucks and other vehicles.

As a department, Engineering & Facilities is supporting this shift by keeping the facilities our riders use clean, safe and inviting. We're also responsible for maintaining and improving the support facilities we need to keep our fleet in top shape.

Beyond that fundamental work, though, we are striving to help our entire organization do its part to address the climate crisis. This week, as we and others commemorate Earth Day, I'd like to thank my staff and all those throughout the organization who are supporting this work.

Here are just a few of the things we've been able to accomplish together:

- We've reduced our electricity use by converting nearly all the lights at our support and public facilities to energy-efficient LEDs, which use about 75% less energy.
- We've reduced our natural gas consumption by using temperature and ventilation controls more effectively, sealing building leaks and installing more efficient boiler controls.
- Through expanded recycling and composting efforts, we're diverting around a quarter of the material collected at support facilities from the waste stream.
- Charging infrastructure has been installed at many of our support facilities to support a growing fleet of electric non-revenue vehicles.

continued on next page



Technicians and operators from Nicollet Garage temporarily relocated to South Garage on Tuesday as a precautionary measure ahead of the Derek Chauvin verdict. On Wednesday morning, all Nicollet service pulled out of South, where managers, operators and dispatchers, top right, shared space. Nicollet is re-opening today, Friday, April 23.

Chauvin verdict brings mixture of relief, resolve

The verdict in the Derek Chauvin trial reverberated across the world. At Metro Transit, employees reacted with temporary relief and a renewed conviction to continue working toward a better future. Below is a small sampling of perspectives that were shared this week.

Everybody has value, deserves to be heard and treated with respect. There are so many components to this issue that it's hard to think about it clearly. I'm scared and sad for my kids because they are still under a microscope and being watched, and I feel sadness and anger over the lack of humanity. There is a lot of work to be done by everyone. If you want change, be the change. – **Patricia Parker**, Transit Service Center Representative

The verdict in some ways was a vindication of what Black America has experienced for years. There was no escaping what we all witnessed – the killing of George Floyd captured on camera. I am heartened by the outpouring of compassion by people from all walks of life who spoke up and showed up in opposition to this injustice. The pandemic caused me to pause on many different levels, but my contribution moving forward is to continue to show up and be present myself – one person can make a difference. – **Marilyn Porter**, Director of Engineering & Facilities

When it was announced, I was happy for George's family and children, but another side of me felt like we really shouldn't be celebrating because it was the right decision and not worthy of celebration...As the father of three Black sons, I have always worried. But today I am cautiously optimistic. This verdict helped release some of the frustration of all the past trials that didn't end the way I thought they should have. I think people in our country are tired of this type of behavior and ready for change. – **Demetairs Bell**, Assistant Manager-Street Operations

As with every senseless murder, justice can never be fully served by a jury's verdict. But even with all possible outcomes falling short of justice, this conviction serves our region with the best outcome available...Perhaps we can all feel a short moment of hope and relief while acknowledging that change will demand so much more time and work. – General Manager **Wes Kooistra**

- The new Minneapolis Bus Garage is designed to support electric buses and rooftop solar panels. Beneath the facility, an enormous tank will hold rainwater that would otherwise runoff into nearby waterways.

To build on these and other efforts, we are also working with key staff from other divisions to develop and support the Council's first-ever Climate Action Plan.

When finalized, this plan will unify actions across the Council so we can do an even better job of reducing our climate impact and preparing for the effects of changing climate, like more extreme weather events. Expect to hear more about this plan as it takes shape throughout the year.

Within Metro Transit, we have also identified sustainability as a high priority and will be making it a larger and more consistent focus of all our daily work.

Thank you to everyone who continues to support our response to the climate crisis. Together, we are making real and significant progress in the face of a tremendous challenge. Please keep it up.

Learn more about the Climate Action Plan

The Climate Action Plan (CAP) will help unify climate-related actions and commitments across all divisions. The plan is being developed by a cross-divisional team whose members are currently interviewing staff to document existing efforts. The plan is expected to be adopted by the Council early next year. To learn more, email jeff.freeman@metrotransit.org.

Wellness Coach Rena Alseth offering support on any schedule

Rena Alseth knows every person's wellness journey is different. To respect those differences, she offers personalized support on everything from nutrition to exercise to stress management.



"The kind of support I offer works really, really well because it can fit into any schedule and can cover whatever it is someone's working on," Rena said.

Rena has worked with many bus operators, police officers and staff over the years who have benefited from her one-on-one support. Today, she's eager to build on that past success while adapting to the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Employees who would like to visit with Rena are invited to schedule one or a series of phone or video calls, each lasting up to an hour, to discuss their challenges and goals. The conversations lead

CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

"I appreciate them all"

All Metro Transit operators are appreciated by this customer, who recently wrote to thank all of them for their service.

Please thank the drivers for showing up every day, doing a sometimes-thankless job, and getting me where I need to go. I appreciate them all.

Melissa S.

to personalized advice and can also be used to create customized workouts offered through an app.

Over time, Rena aims to build trust and accountability so the people she works with stay committed to incremental change. More than anything, though, she wants to be a resource and a sounding board for those looking for more support.

"Often times, people just need to vent and to be heard," she said. "I'm not a psychologist and I don't pretend to be one, but I can always listen to people talk about what's on their minds and be there to support them."

To learn more about working with Rena, call 612-240-8038 or email rena@coreachievement.net. Services are free, but appointments must occur on an employee's own time.

Gov. Walz, health officials celebrate vaccine bus

Gov. Tim Walz and other state leaders celebrated this week as buses specially equipped to bring COVID-19 vaccines to hard-to-reach populations began hitting the road. The buses were retrofitted by Metro Transit staff.

"Equity is a core value of Minnesota's COVID-19 vaccination strategy, and every single Minnesotan deserves safe and equitable access to the vaccine. Making the COVID-19 vaccine available to as many people as possible is essential to ending the pandemic," Walz said. "Our mobile vaccination units are ready to roll and will bring life-saving vaccine directly to communities that need them the most."

Focus communities for the mobile units include people of color, urban Native Americans, people with disabilities and unique health needs and people experiencing homelessness

Two mobile vaccination units began operating this week and another four will hit the road by the summer.

Note: There are no pending on-site COVID-19 clinics due to a lack of known demand. Employees who are seeking a vaccine opportunity and need assistance may email lisa.belland@metc.state.mn.us for help making an appointment.



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.