

INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

May 7, 2021



Beginning at 2 a.m. on Saturday, May 1, a team of public facilities workers made their way down University Avenue scrubbing and power washing METRO Green Line stations, including the Westgate Station, above. As temperatures have warmed up, crews have spent the last several weeks washing the street-facing sides of light rail stations and other busy boarding areas. In the coming weeks, water supplies will be turned on and attention will turn to platforms.

What to know this week

Federal mask requirement extended through Sept. 13: A federal mask requirement that applies to all forms of public transportation has been extended through September 13. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) announced the extension last week. Operators are encouraged to bring extra masks with them in case a customer has forgotten to bring one of their own. If a customer refuses to comply, operators should contact the Transit Control Center. Under state law, masks must also be worn inside public buildings, including all Metro Transit work sites.

Summer Student Pass sales begin May 10: Summer Student Passes that allow high schoolers to ride for a discount during the summer months will be made available to eligible schools in May. Students will not be able to purchase the passes directly from Metro Transit. Students who obtain a Summer Student Pass through their school may use them to take unlimited rides from June 1 through September 7.

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 Met 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.

Transit oriented development remains key to our growing region

From Lucy Galbraith, Director-Transit Oriented Development

By 2040, the Twin Cities region is expected to be home to more than 3.6 million people. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is harder to predict where they will all choose to live and work, and how those decisions will influence how they get around.



We do know, however, that we must collectively drive less to prevent a worsening of the climate crisis, and that we can address racial and economic disparities in part by concentrating housing and jobs near transit. Building near transit will also be key to rebuilding ridership as we recover from the pandemic.

To help achieve these goals, we must continue to support and celebrate Transit Oriented Development (TOD) throughout the region. As the leader of our TOD Office, I am proud to work with many staff and partners who are committed to doing just that.

Today, our office is working with communities across the metro to develop plans for the areas surrounding dozens of future light rail and bus rapid transit stations. We've identified several sites where publicly owned land can be used for TOD. And we continue to serve as a regional TOD resource by hosting events, promoting grant opportunities, and researching issues like sidewalk connections that shape whether and how people can access transit.

Our attention on TOD and the market forces that support it have already made an impression.

Between 2003 and 2019, more than a third of permitted development value occurred on the 3% of the region's land area located near high-frequency transit. Forty percent of multifamily units built since 2009 have been located along high-frequency transit.

While the pandemic has created some uncertainty, I am confident these trends will continue.

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The number of multifamily units planned along high-frequency transit is equal to all the units built since 2009, and TOD-friendly policies are setting the stage for even more activity.

Plans to reduce or eliminate the number of parking spaces required when new projects are built along transitways are being pursued in Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Inner-ring suburbs, including those that will be served by the METRO Orange Line and METRO Gold Line, are updating their zoning laws to encourage walkable, transit-oriented neighborhoods.

These actions and a steady stream of new projects are a reminder that, for all the disruption caused by the pandemic, our region will become increasingly welcoming to the growing number of people who want to meet their needs by walking, biking, and taking transit.

While this is a shared effort, TOD simply can't happen without quality transit and a thoughtful expansion of our network.

On behalf of the TOD office, I want to thank everyone throughout the organization who is working so hard to provide a product we can be proud of. It is only because of your hard work that our region is a place where TOD will continue to thrive.

Info sessions to provide insight on open positions

Hiring managers will share information about current openings during a pair of upcoming interactive online sessions.

The sessions are being offered to increase awareness of the openings and help employees understand the pathways to those positions. Such sessions will be held on the third Tuesday and Thursday of each month going forward. All sessions will be recorded and made available on the Equity & Inclusion MetNet page.

For information about accessing the events, email sarah.berres@metrotransit.org.

Tuesday, May 18, 1-1:30 p.m.

- Transit Information Data Coordinator – Presented by **Ben Rajkowski**, Manager-Transit Information
- Light Rail Vehicle Maintenance Training Supervisor – Presented by **Ona Pradhan**, Manager-Rail Training and Development

Thursday, May 20, 1-1:30 p.m.

- Assistant Director-Bus Maintenance – Presented by **Matt Dake**, Director of Bus Maintenance

CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

"This bus driver is awesome"

East Metro Operator **Vernon Hutchinson** recently impressed a Route 61 customer who appreciated his communication skills.

This bus driver is awesome. It's my first time taking his route and I truly feel safe and comfortable. He's communicating even though there's only three of us on his bus. I appreciate him and I hope to cross paths with him later.

Olson Whisper

Train operator Latina Laramée marks personal milestones this Mother's Day

For Mother's Day, Train Operator **Latina Laramée** can celebrate herself. A single mother, Laramée dropped out of high school at 16 to start working and became pregnant at 18.

She spent years working three jobs before earning her GED and landing a job as a bus operator. She recently earned an associate's degree in entrepreneurship and will soon earn a second associate's degree in business administration.

In the future, Laramée hopes to become a transit supervisor or an assistant transportation manager.

"It is tough when you don't have a support system as a single parent. But it's possible if you put your mind to it," she said. "I think my son appreciates that he has a mother who works hard."

Read more about Laramée at metrotransit.org/ridersalmanac.

Free classes available to new and expectant parents

New and expecting parents can access free classes through the Council's wellness program, Fit For Life. The classes are offered by Amma Parenting. Learn more at ammarenting.com/about/metropolitan-council-benefit.

Buses replacing Blue Line trains May 7 to May 9

Buses will replace METRO Blue Line trains between the 46th Street and Fort Snelling stations from 7 p.m. Friday, May 7, through 4 a.m. Sunday, May 9, to allow for scheduled maintenance, including track repair. During the disruptions, customers can board replacement buses near each affected station.



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.