

INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

May 14, 2021



Metro Transit's newest light rail vehicle, LRV 301, went into revenue service this week in preparation for its eventual debut on the METRO Green Line Extension. This is the first of 27 new light rail vehicles that will join the fleet ahead of the Green Line Extension's scheduled opening. The Siemens-made vehicles will be compatible with vehicles made by the same company for the METRO Green Line but include several new features, including a redesigned seating arrangement that provides more space for wheelchair users.

Facilitated discussions continue the conversation about race, racism

Staff have several upcoming opportunities to participate in discussions about race and racism, part of a continued effort to build an inclusive culture at Metro Transit.

The "Beginning Conversations on Race" series, facilitated by members of the Equity & Inclusion Team and Equity & Inclusion Coordinator **Rachel Cagle**, will kick-off on Thursday, May 27. The series will include four, one-hour sessions, each beginning at noon, and are open to all Metro Transit staff. The series includes:

- Thursday, May 27: Setting the Stage
- Thursday, June 3: Economic Repercussions of Race
- Thursday, June 10: Whiteness as the Dominant Culture
- Thursday, June 17: Action through Allyship

WebEx invites will be sent to all staff. Please accept the invite if you plan to attend and you will be emailed the necessary resources and discussion questions to prep for the session. If you don't have a Metro Transit email account, email rachel.cagle@metrotransit.org.

Other upcoming events include:

- Monday, May 17, 12:30 p.m.: Advancing Women in Transit (AWT) Presents: Roundtable Reflections on George Floyd, Race & Transit. Email jennifer.kochaver@metrotransit.org.
- Monday, May 24, 11 a.m., and Tuesday, June 1, 11 a.m.: Discussions about the economic and health costs of racism with Jamil Stamschror-Lott, a mental health clinician and co-CEO of Creative Kuponya. Email fitforlife@metc.state.mn.us
- Tuesday, May 25, 2 p.m.: Talking to Young Children About Race and Racism with Erin Walsh, Co-founder, Spark & Stitch Institute. Email Contact fitforlife@metc.state.mn.us

Pandemic's lessons shape our future

From General Manager Wes Kooistra

For more than a year, we've done everything we can to slow the spread of COVID-19. Our decisions and actions have looked beyond our own interests and focused on helping our region manage an unimaginable crisis. Thank you for rising to the incredible challenges we have faced.



Today, the rapid rise in the number of people who have been vaccinated is resulting in declines in COVID cases in Minnesota and across the nation.

Gov. Walz is now relaxing statewide COVID-19 restrictions, including lifting the limits on public gatherings effective May 28. The statewide mask requirement will be lifted by July 1 although, under federal order, riders must wear masks on transit until September 13.

Planning efforts by both private and public sectors that point toward reimagining business operations in the post-pandemic environment are accelerating. This is also true for Metro Transit.

Minnesota's measurable progress in fighting the pandemic allows us to rethink our capacity limits. It also informs our service planning and helps us better anticipate when and how to actively promote transit use.

We are planning near-term and long-term strategies for a changing workplace.

From June through Labor Day, employee work locations will generally not change. For those working from home, some exceptions for changes will be made that take into account position responsibilities, limitations of the "home office" environment, and other unique circumstances that may require an employee working remotely to return to the office.

We will manage the immediate workplace needs, but our workplace planning will need to focus on the long-term needs of Metro Transit.

We are also focused on the many challenges we face in emerging from the pandemic as a stronger and better service provider.

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Today, we are providing between 80,000 and 90,000 rides a day, less than half the number we provided before the pandemic. We plan to develop and offer service designs and service environments that will bring back riders who have left us and encourage new riders to try transit. We plan to make the most of this opportunity and time afforded us through the federal financial relief to become a service provider that is even more responsive to the needs of our riders.

In part, that will mean offering faster and more reliable service like we provide on BRT and LRT routes. It means doing all we can to provide clean, safe and welcoming environments on our vehicles and at our facilities. And it means serving the needs of the many riders who need transit for mobility. While express ridership has declined sharply during the pandemic, our experience over the past fourteen months has proven how important transit is to the essential workers who are clearly the engine of our region.

Today, we have the opportunity to reimagine our services to better meet what riders need, want, and expect.

And by improving the quality and value of our services, we will hold a strong place in defining transit's future.

Route 63 joining High Frequency Network, Woodbury service expanding in June

In June, Route 63 will join the High Frequency Network and a new route providing all-day service to jobs, services, housing and retail in Woodbury will be introduced.

As a part of the High Frequency Network, Route 63 trips will operate every 15 minutes throughout the day, Monday through Saturday. Currently, trips operate every 20 to 30 minutes.

The service improvements build on work done last fall along the Route 63 corridor, including the installation of new bus shelters and concrete pads that improve accessibility.

The new Route 63 schedule will take effect on Saturday, June 12, as part of a series of scheduled service changes. Other minor adjustments will be made to several other routes on that date, but service levels will remain about the same as they are now through at least August.

When the schedule changes take effect, Route 63 will operate only between the METRO Green Line's Westgate Station and the Sun Ray Transit Center.

East of Sun Ray, a new route, Route 323, will provide daily, half-hour service to destinations

CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

"A big thank you!"

Heywood Operator **John Stephens** recently received a commendation from a customer who appreciated his help with a fare product.

He was so wonderful. He helped me figure out my TAP (Transit Assistance Program) card. I've got a brain tumor, and this isn't always easy for me. John walked me through it, and I wanted to make sure someone knew just how helpful he was. A big thank you to John!

Susan N.

like the Woodwinds Health Campus, Valley Creek Mall, and the Woodbury Village Shopping Center.

Route 323 customers will be able to transfer to and from several other routes at the Sun Ray Transit Center, including Route 63. At the Woodbury Theatre Park & Ride, Route 323 customers will be able to transfer to and from Route 353 with express service to downtown St. Paul and downtown Minneapolis.

Congratulations to these employees who celebrated their retirements in April

Kenneth Dzwonkowski, Supervisor-Rail Maintenance QA and Training, 6 years

Phillip White, Train Operator, 7 years

Matthew Hankins, Operator-Heywood, 11 years

Robert Henrich, Mechanic Technician, 12 years

Robert Gross, Operator-East Metro, 14 years

Loretta Englund, Operator-South, 15 years

Michael Carter, Operator-East Metro, 17 years

Rudy Cogshell, Operator-Nicollet, 20 years

Jesse Roberts, Operator-Heywood, 20 years

Bradford Benner, Operator-East Metro, 27 years

Brad Stark, Mechanic Technician, 35 years

Jeffrey Kimpton, Facilities Technician, 46 years

Congratulations to these employees who celebrated work anniversaries in April

30 years

Allan Daley, Operator-Nicollet

Tommy Bellfield, Rail Dispatcher

20 years

Barbara Knutson, Transit Information Center Representative



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