

INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

June 11, 2021



Staff who will participate in an upcoming online Pride conversation include, from left to right, Transit Supervisor Heidi Wrenson, Operator Marissa Higgins and Assistant Director of Field Operations David Hanson. The conversation also includes Metropolitan Council Member Robert Lilligren and Transit Information Representative Nathan Bakken, and will be hosted by local comedian Tane Danger, host of an online video series, "Hey Where Does This Bus Go?" Watch for the conversation on Metro Transit's Facebook page on Wednesday, June 23. Pride Month is a celebration of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) community. To commemorate, operators can display "Ride With Pride" on the overhead display using PR Code 15.

Frontline staff invited to transit safety discussions

Frontline employees are invited to provide their perspective on transit-related safety issues at a series of upcoming sessions. Each session will include a short introduction and time to ask questions and provide feedback. The sessions will be led by Michelle Fure, the project manager in the Metropolitan Council Communications Department, with help from staff from the Citizens League team, which is leading public engagement efforts. Feedback will be summarized for the effort; no individual contributors will be identified.

Collected feedback will inform a more in-depth Met Council review of the Metro Transit Police Department's policies and practices beginning later this year. The Met Council oversees MTPD. The perspective of frontline staff – including bus and train operators and public facility workers – is being sought because they have valuable first-hand experiences, given their interactions with the public and police.

The upcoming sessions will be held in driver's rooms or break rooms on:

- Monday, June 21, 2 to 3 p.m., Nicollet
- Tuesday, June 22, 2 to 3 p.m., Heywood
- Wednesday, June 23, 1 to 2 p.m., Hiawatha Operations & Maintenance Facility
- Thursday, June 24, 2 to 3 p.m., Ruter
- Friday, June 25, 1 to 2 p.m., Lowertown Operations & Maintenance Facility
- Monday, June 28, 2 to 3 p.m., East
- Tuesday, June 29, 2 to 3 p.m., South
- Wednesday, June 30, 1 to 2 p.m., Transfer Road

Employees who would like to attend must do so on their own time. Staff who cannot attend an in-person event can provide feedback through Transit Safety & Security Committee representatives.

Thank you for making inclusion a part of our shared identity

From General Manager Wes Kooistra

A few years ago, Metro Transit transitioned what was then known as our Everyday Equity team into what we now know as the Equity & Inclusion Team.



There was a purpose to this change. Today, we are equally committed to advancing equity and practicing inclusivity on our system and in our workplace. These goals are co-dependent, not mutually exclusive.

Our commitment to inclusion is on display this month as we invite staff to participate in several educational events centered on Juneteenth and Pride Month. We are also continuing a series of conversations designed to create a safe space for staff to have candid dialogues about racism.

These and other similar efforts are a reminder that we have room to learn, both as individuals and as an organization.

Thank you to those who are organizing, leading, and participating in these important conversations. It may not always seem as though we are making significant progress. This is an important symbol of your commitment to your peers and your community.

While our commitment to inclusion is especially visible this month, this work does not begin or end in June.

In recent months, we've focused attention on staff for Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month and sent greetings to those who celebrate Ramadan, a month of fasting, prayer and reflection celebrated by Muslims here and across the world.

Through the end of the year, we will take time to recognize Somali Independence Day (July 1), National Hispanic American Heritage Month (September 15–October 15), Blind Awareness Month (October), and many other events focused on heritage and identity.

We recognize and celebrate these events in acknowledgment of the diversity of our organization and the communities we serve.

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This continued sharing of information can only lead to deeper and more meaningful connections to our co-workers, our customers, and our community. After a difficult, and in many ways traumatic year, these connections can be a powerful antidote.

Efforts to acknowledge our diversity are largely being led by members of our Equity & Inclusion Team and Employee Resource Groups, including the Pride ERG, which serves as a resource and networking group for LGBTQ staff.

If you are interested in learning more or want to participate in supporting this work, I urge you to reach out to staff who are involved in these groups; contact information is listed below.

And thank you to all those who are already putting in the hard but necessary work to make inclusivity a part of our shared identity.

Learn more

To learn more about the Pride ERG, email david.hanson@metrotransit.org. To learn more about upcoming Pride and Juneteenth events, contact sarah.berres@metrotransit.org.

Electric bus demonstrations held June 14-18

Beginning Monday, June 14, a 40-foot electric bus made by Gillig will visit Metro Transit garages for demonstrations. Employees are invited to tour the bus and ride along in a test drive if schedule permits. A Gillig representative will be on-site to answer questions and a Gillig staff member will operate the bus.

The bus will be at the following locations from 8 a.m. to noon on the following dates:

- Monday, June 14: South
- Tuesday, June 15: Heywood
- Wednesday, June 16: East Metro
- Thursday, June 17: Nicollet
- Friday, June 18: Overhaul Base

On Monday, June 14, the bus will be at Ruter from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Asst. Manager Sam Caron retires with 33 years of service

In 1988, Sam Caron began at Metro Transit as a part-time police officer, splitting his time as a Sergeant with the Saint Paul Police Department. When he retired from the force, he started in the Transit Control Center (TCC) and discovered he could create a new career in transit.



CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

"Keep up the great work everyone!"

I'm from Anoka and take bus and light rail to and from downtown Minneapolis. The drivers are nice and on time. It's been a pleasant experience. I've ridden for 7 years, and the service continues to evolve and improve. Keep up the great work everyone!

After working in the TCC, Caron served as a Transit Supervisor. In 2009, he became an assistant transportation manager at Nicollet, then moved to East Metro, where he ends his career. "I really enjoyed all my jobs," Caron said. "They were complex and always challenging, due to technology or simply what's happening in the world. But I especially enjoyed working with operators every day."

In retirement, Caron plans to golf, work on some home remodeling projects, and spend quality time with family and friends.

Read more at metrotransit.org/greatpeople

Congratulations to these employees who retired in May

Richard White, Manager, Fleet Services, 3 years

David Chiabotti, Track Maintainer, 5 years

David Sims, Train Operator, 6 years

Steven Bestland, Operator, East Metro, 7 years

Amber Gerdes, Operator, East Metro, 7 years

Sandra Cagaoan, Principal Administrative Specialist, 9 years

Richard Hauser, Mechanic Technician, Overhaul Base, 11 years

Anthony Hines, Capt., Transit Police, 13 years

Robert LeMay, Mechanic Technician, Overhaul Base, 14 years

Ray Norvoll, Mechanic Technician, Nicollet, 15 years

William Johnson, Operator, Heywood, 19 years

Donald Hills, Operator, Ruter, 19 years

Marlene Ekstrand, Principal Administrative Specialist, 24 years

Margaret Stephens, Operator, Ruter, 31 years

Laurie Novak, Mechanic Technician, Overhaul Base, 33 years

Christy Bailly, Director, Bus Transportation, 40 years

Congratulations to these employees who celebrated work anniversaries in May

25 years

Charles Finn, Operator-East Metro

David Tolbert, Operator-Ruter

20 years

Thai Chang, Helper-East Metro



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