

# INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

June 25, 2021



Operators **Abdiaziz Hassan, Kirubael Gebremichael, Robert Lewis, Brandon Brown, Douglas Holmgren, Sondra Mister, Jordan Albert, and Yhori Luanglath** display their journeyworker certificates. Over the course of three events this week, a total of 38 operators received a journeyworker certificate issued by the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry. The certificate is the capstone to 13 months or more of training and field experience in the apprenticeship program. Since 2018, the mentorship component of the apprenticeship connected new-hire operators during four phases to mentors to help them succeed on the job. To date, 142 operators earned this certificate. Since May 17, groups of new-hire apprentices are starting this program every two weeks.

## What to know this week

**Chauvin sentencing today (June 25):** Former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin will be sentenced in Hennepin County Court today, Friday, June 25. There are no planned road closures or detours, and light rail trains will serve all stations. Supervisors will address any disruptions as they arise. Separately, Street Operations continues to monitor activity near the Uptown Transit Station, where there have been recent demonstrations and road closures. To avoid unplanned detours, buses are being preemptively moved off Hennepin Avenue to Lyndale Avenue between 31st Street and 26th/28th streets from 10 p.m. through 3 a.m. every Friday and Saturday night through the end of the summer.

**Bus operator hiring event on June 26:** The second of two one-day bus operator hiring events will be held at the Instruction Center from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, June 26. At the event, job seekers can submit their applications and complete an interview. Metro Transit is aiming to hire up to 70 full-time bus operators through this fall. To encourage applications, successful new hires can earn a \$1,000 bonus; employees who refer successful candidates can earn up to a \$600 bonus. For more information, visit [metrotransit.org/drive](https://metrotransit.org/drive).

**Facilities shifting to clear glass at shelters:** To lower costs and speed up broken glass repairs at waiting shelters and light rail stations, facilities will use clear glass instead of etched glass moving forward. Etched glass was historically used because it helps hide grime and scratches. Today, though, that glass is eight times as expensive as clear glass and harder to come by. Clear glass also provides a better view of what's happening in and around shelters. Clear glass will be phased in as repairs are made and used in any new shelter installations. Operators who would like to provide feedback or call attention to shelters in need of repair are encouraged to submit Operating Condition Reports through their garage coordinator.

## Shared commitment to equity needed to address disparities

From General Manager Wes Kooistra

The Twin Cities has some of the starkest disparities in the nation. Across the region, Black people are less likely to own a home and experience unemployment and poverty at higher rates than their white counterparts. Too often, people in our region also face challenges because of their genders, identities, or disabilities.



Our regional disparities came into sharper focus after the May 2020 murder of George Floyd and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

In response to Floyd's murder and the social unrest that followed, we renewed our commitment to supporting equity through our service delivery and business practices. We also recommitted ourselves to creating an equitable workplace where all employees can access opportunity.

As part of this commitment, I directed Metro Transit leaders to move forward on several equity action items and asked the Equity and Inclusion Team to gather ideas from across the organization for recommendations on how we could do better.

A year later, we are asking ourselves: How far have we come and what more must we do?

That question is answered in part through our 2021 Equity Progress Report, which is available on MetNet and will be distributed to work sites. For the purposes of this report, we focus primarily on four key areas:

1. Expanding access to opportunities through transit service
2. Improving transit accessibility and quality
3. Building and leveraging institutional strength to support regional equity
4. Fostering an equitable workplace

The report highlights work that was underway prior to June 2020 and other work that we've started since that time.

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As you will see, we have taken some important strides.

Equity considerations are becoming a larger focus of our service and facility planning efforts. We have expanded our Equity & Inclusion Team to help us set priorities and make decisions. We are strengthening relationships with the Metropolitan Council Equity Advisory Committee, a group of Council Members and residents that advise the Council's equity work. And we are being more deliberate about doing business with historically disadvantaged businesses.

Many other efforts are in progress, a sign that this work is constantly evolving and never truly finished.

As I have said before, it is not enough to say that we are committed to equity. Equity is not just a value or feeling – it must be reflected in everything we do as an organization and as an employer.

As we move forward, we will continue to celebrate our successes while being honest with ourselves, our riders and our partners about the work that remains. In part, that will mean regularly providing progress reports like the one we are sharing today.

While it is clear there is work to do, it is also clear that staff across our organization are eager to help us on our path.

Thank you to all those who are encouraging us to do better and advancing equity through their own work. We are joined by this shared mission to help create a workplace, a transit system and a region where opportunities are not limited by race, gender or abilities.

### Share your feedback

Employee feedback is a valuable part of the conversation about Metro Transit's efforts to become a more equitable service provider and employer. To offer your thoughts on the work that's been done and what lies ahead, please consider reaching out to a member of the Equity & Inclusion Team or email [sarah.berres@metrotransit.org](mailto:sarah.berres@metrotransit.org). Steps taken to address employee feedback will be tracked on the Equity & Inclusion Team's MetNet page.

CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

**"...they are appreciated."**

The **Rail Signals Department** recently received a commendation from a customer who appreciates their work to keep the trains moving.

*Thank you for fixing the broken gate arm at 46th & Hiawatha today. Someone was out right away and kept trains moving by moving the broken arm off the tracks to help prevent any further delays. I just wanted to let someone know how much they are appreciated.*

Tyler

Career Tracks: Dorothy Maki, Instructor

### How did you begin your career with Metro Transit?

When I was a little girl, I told my cousin Theresa, "When I grow up, I want to be a truck driver or a teacher." Flash forward, I became a school bus driver on a 5-speed stick shift. I loved driving but needed better wages and health-care than a small-town school bus company could give, so I headed to the Twin Cities. In 1990, I started as a part-time, weekends, and holidays operator at Metro Transit.

### What were your career goals and what steps did you take to achieve them?

Like all operators, the first goal is simple – get to work on time. With personal struggles and a car with bald tires, that wasn't always easy, but it was the best place to start. After ten years, I earned a relief dispatcher position. Six months later, I became a relief instructor and the following year I applied to be a full-time instructor. For nine years, I was in my ultimate job—a teacher and a driver! Then I took a giant step and was elected Vice President of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1005. All the trials, tribulations and successes prepared me for this important work. After 12 years of service, I've returned to instructing and driving. It's a wonderful place to finish out my career.

### What advice do you have for others who want to take on more or different responsibilities?

Become fearless and independent in whatever you do! There were many points in my life when I felt injustice, like when I was working through a divorce or lost my husband Brad Maki to cancer in 2007. Instead of giving into grief, it created a fearless and independent attitude in me. I hope that whatever issues you may face in your career and in life that you can use it to motivate your growth.

### Advancing Women in Transit: Catch Up and Dream

Advancing Women in Transit, an Employee Resource Group for female-identifying employees, is inviting employees to attend a Monday, June 28, session about dreaming big. The casual conversation will run from noon to 1 p.m. and delve into questions like, "If you could have anything, what is your dream workplace?" For more information about AWT or the June 28 event, email [Jennifer.kochaver@metrotransit.org](mailto:Jennifer.kochaver@metrotransit.org).



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