

INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

July 9, 2021



Mechanic Technician **Dennis Conley** celebrated 45 years of service on Thursday, July 8, at the Ruter Garage. Conley began his career as a sweeper at the old Nicollet Garage and has worked at nearly every garage since then. Asked what's kept him coming back over the years, Conley simply said: "I just like the work." Conley is Metro Transit's second-longest serving active mechanic technician. He plans to retire early next year.

What to know this week

Operator hiring event will be held Saturday, July 17: A one-day operator hiring event will be held at the Instruction Center from 9 a.m. to noon on Saturday, July 17. Job seekers are encouraged to apply in advance, but can also submit their applications at the event. Interviews will also be conducted at the event. More than 40 bus operator applicants are now in the late stages of the hiring process as efforts to reach ideal operator staffing levels continue. Employees can earn a \$600 bonus for referring successful bus operator candidates. Learn more at metrotransit.org/drive.

Transition to new mobile ticketing app begins on July 16: A new version of Metro Transit's ticketing app will be introduced next week. Current app users will need to update and begin using the new app by Tuesday, July 20. Previously purchased mobile tickets will transfer to the new app, which will be available for download beginning the evening of Friday, July 16. Mobile tickets are displayed on a customer's device and shown to operators or police officers as proof of payment. A bulletin showing what the new ticket screen looks like will be issued.

New platforms help technicians access roof more safely: Bus Maintenance is introducing new roof access platforms that will help technicians safely get to the top of buses for maintenance and repairs. This new system is a rolling platform and ladder that a harnessed technician climbs to access the top of a bus. The new equipment will be especially useful to technicians working on hybrid and electric buses, which have roof-mounted electrical systems and batteries. Previously, technicians would access the roof from inside the bus through the roof hatch or by climbing a ladder and wearing a fall restraint harness. Each garage will receive at least one of the platforms in July or August. Technician training will follow.

Join the Yellow Ribbon Committee: Human Resources is seeking new members to join the "Beyond the Yellow Ribbon" committee, which organizes activities to support veterans and returning troops. The committee meets quarterly. For more information, please email nancy.jennings@metc.state.mn.us.

Coming together to make the most of our capital investments

From Nick Thompson, Deputy General Manager – Capital Programs

I've been involved in a lot of big transportation projects during my career, including the expansion of MnPASS lanes and the development of the St. Croix Crossing Bridge.



But as I step into a new role as the deputy general manager of Capital Programs at Metro Transit, I still find myself struck by, and excited by, the scale of what lies ahead.

The Green Line Extension is one of the largest and most complex construction projects in state history. We're building our largest service garage ever while preparing to support the transition to electric buses. And we are planning to have 15 Bus Rapid Transit lines in operation by 2040.

At the same time, we know we must do more to maintain our existing infrastructure, including an expansive network of bus shelters, Park & Rides, stations, and support facilities.

Combined, we expect to spend more than \$6 billion through our 2021-2026 Capital Improvement Plan, an historic and transformative investment that will shape how our region gets around for generations to come.

Proposed increases in federal transportation spending could lead to even greater investments in transit and transit-supportive infrastructure.

I am proud to take a leadership role in our shared effort to turn the ambitious vision that's been created into a reality. And it certainly will be a shared effort.

Within Capital Programs are five departments – BRT Projects, Engineering & Facilities, Transit Oriented Development, Asset Management and Transit Systems Development, which includes the Green Line Extension and Blue Line Extension project offices.

Certainly, staff in these departments are not unfamiliar to one another. Our charge moving forward is to work together even more closely so our projects are delivered

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efficiently and with the best possible outcomes.

We must also continue to do everything we can to serve as a trusted and reliable partner to the local, state, and federal partners who support our efforts and the many businesses we work with.

While this can be dynamic and challenging work, I know this organization is ready to seize the opportunities that lie ahead.

In my former role as the Metropolitan Council's Director of Transportation Services, I helped oversee the Council's contracted transit operations and its distribution of federal transportation funding, often to support transit projects.

While at the Minnesota Department of Transportation, I worked closely with transit partners to advance transit improvements on the I-35W corridor, work that will come full circle when the METRO Orange Line opens later this year.

My impression from these past experiences is that Metro Transit is full of professionals who are both eager and able to achieve great things.

I am also heartened by the commitment to make sustainability and equity a hallmarks of our capital projects, including a dedication to working with local minority- and women-owned businesses.

So, thank you to all those who have welcomed me and who will support Capital Programs in the years ahead. I look forward to working with you and encourage you to reach out with any thoughts and ideas you may have.

Know Your Operator: John Brown, East Metro

After 27 years working at a big box grocery store, **John Brown** decided it was time for a change. He had a degree in diesel mechanics, which led him to a company that maintained Transit Link vehicles.



After 14 years, the contract ended and he decided to take a turn at the wheel.

Brown started out as part-time operator in 2016, quickly went full-time and found a home at the East Metro Garage. He briefly served as a train operator, a stint that overlapped with the 2018 Super Bowl at U.S. Bank Stadium.

While Brown enjoys the pay and benefits, he says his fellow operators have given him the most reason to stay. On tough days, they offer a listening and experienced ear.

"Every day is an adventure," he said. "You have great days and some tough ones, but that's where other drivers help."

CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

"He has no idea how much he helps..."

Heywood Operator **John Fleming** recently received a commendation from a customer who truly appreciates getting a few extra blocks on the bus on his way to work.

I want to compliment a driver that I have every Wednesday on the 18, which I've been taking to work for months now. One morning, he asked how far I was walking after I got off the bus. After I told him I was going to Walmart, he started allowing me to stay on and drops me off closer to my destination. That small act of kindness truly makes my day. I have bad veins in my legs that will eventually require surgery, and those several blocks he saves me help so much. Drivers do not get enough credit for the good deeds they do. I appreciate him more than he knows and thank God that people out there still care about total strangers. Please thank him for taking care of me.

Sue V.

Now, Brown is paying it forward by mentoring newly hired bus operators and serving as a relief instructor. "When you're new, it's especially tough," he said. "I'm glad I can be there to help others when things just aren't going right. I'll always be there for anyone who needs help."

After a few careers over the decades, Brown believes he's finally found his home at Metro Transit, where he plans to work until he retires. "It gets better every year here at Metro Transit," he said.

This week, Metro Transit received a \$25,000 state grant to continue the Bus Operator Apprenticeship Program. The program partners newly hired operators with mentors during their first year on the job, along with other training. For more information, contact alec.johnson@metrotransit.org.

Congratulations to these employees who retired in June

- Terri Hollingsworth, Facilities Administrator, 12 years
- Clifton Brochman, Rail Maintenance Supervisor, 12 years
- Daryl Long, Electro Mechanical Technician, 15 years
- Eduardo Chavez, Operator, East Metro, 21 years
- Vince Pellegrin, Chief Operating Officer, 23 years
- Samuel Caron, Assist. Transportation Manager, East Metro, 33 years
- Peter Durant, Mechanic Technician-Ruter, 35 years

Congratulations to these employees who celebrated work anniversaries in June

- Lisa Benson, Schedule Coordinator, 30 years
- Adam Hernandez, Track Foreperson, 25 years
- Mark Jessee, Lead Stockkeeper, 20 years
- Bruce Carpenter, Rail Transit Supervisor, 20 years
- Matthew Walker, Senior Rail Transit Supervisor, 20 years



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