

INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

July 16, 2021



Public Facility Workers **Chang Vang**, left, and **Julie Mickus**, right, have been helping to maintain the Lake Street, Franklin Avenue, Nicollet Mall and Warehouse District stations for the past 16 months. Despite the job's many challenges, they remain dedicated to providing customers the best experience possible. "I look at this from a stranger's point of view and think, 'If I were to come here to take transit, what would I want to see?'" Mickus said. "That's what motivates me." Read more about their efforts at metrotransit.org/ridersalmanac

What to know this week

Operator hiring event will be held Saturday, July 17: A one-day bus operator hiring event will be held at the Instruction Center from 9 a.m. to noon on Saturday, July 17. Job seekers who attend the event can submit their applications and interview in one visit. Employees can earn a \$600 bonus for referring successful bus operator candidates. For more information, visit metrotransit.org/drive.

New Flyer demonstrations: Representatives from New Flyer will be demonstrating their new electric bus next week. The bus will be at Heywood on Monday, South and Ruter on Tuesday, East Metro on Wednesday, Nicollet on Thursday and the Overhaul Base on Friday. Technicians, operators and other garage staff are invited to stop by and learn more. Metro Transit plans to buy eight electric buses from Proterra and begin using them on core local routes beginning in 2023. New Flyer electric buses are expected to begin operating on the METRO C Line again next month (the buses have been out of service amid repairs to charging equipment).

B Line station plans advance: Plans for the METRO B Line, which will substantially improve service in the Route 21 corridor, moved forward this week when the Council authorized the release of a plan with recommended station locations for public comment. Staff will spend the next month continuing to collect input on the 33 proposed station locations and present a final plan for Council adoption this fall. While developing the recommended plan, staff received more than 600 comments from individuals or groups. Construction on the B Line is scheduled to begin in 2023.

Resource group for staff with disabilities planned: A new Employee Resource Group (ERG) for staff with disabilities, disability advocates and supporters is being organized. Staff who are interested in participating are invited to contact sarah.berres@metrotransit.org. ERGs are Council-supported groups that bring people together to serve as a resource for each other and the organization. Other ERGs include Advancing Women in Transit (AWT) and the Pride ERG.

To maintain safety, we must build trust and build our team

From Police Chief Eddie Frizell

To maintain a safe and secure transit system, we must have community trust, strong partnerships, and a sincere commitment to listening and learning. We also need to have the right people in the right places.



To build our team, we are embarking on a significant recruitment and hiring effort that will help our department proactively address safety concerns and create the kind of environment riders and frontline staff deserve.

All of us at Metro Transit and the Metropolitan Council recognize how important this mission has always been, and the critical role it plays in our effort to emerge from the pandemic as a stronger, better service provider.

In practice, our recruitment and hiring efforts are aimed at:

- Building a team of up to 70 part-time Community Services Officers (CSOs) and expanding their duties to include validating fares, educating riders, and working alongside police officers as they grow into law enforcement careers.
- Dedicating 11 staff – a team of sworn officers and civilians – to monitoring surveillance cameras in real time so officers can spend more time spotting and guiding responses to problems on light rail vehicles, light rail stations and other busy boarding areas.
- Recruiting and hiring an additional 10 police officers so we are better equipped to patrol and respond to serious incidents.

I am grateful for the investments that are being made in our department, and optimistic that these additional resources will meaningfully improve the experience our customers and frontline staff have while on transit.

But I am also aware that pledging to expand our department is a beginning and not an end.

As we build our team, we must clearly articulate our values and emphasize them
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throughout the recruitment, hiring and training process.

We must continue to strengthen partnerships with service providers and other organizations that are committed to addressing the root causes of criminal behavior and other issues that require police attention, including homelessness and mental illness.

And we must remain open to new ideas and new approaches from the communities we serve.

While I am eager for our department to grow, I also want to commend all the officers and support staff from across the organization whose work has set the stage for our next chapter.

We've come an incredibly long way for such a relatively young department, and I couldn't be prouder to serve as Metro Transit's police chief.

Addressing the challenges in front of us won't be easy. But, together, I know our department, Metro Transit, and the Council can build on this strong foundation and continue moving in the right direction.

Bus operators compete in MPTA's Bus Rodeo

Several Metro Transit bus operators competed in the Minnesota Public Transit Association's Bus Rodeo, held July 9-10 in St. Cloud.

East Metro Operator **Todd Pfeilsticker**, below, took second place in the statewide competition. Other competitors included **Eduardo Espinoza**, South; **Jeanne O'Neill**, Nicollet; and **Kenneth Schmoll**, East Metro.

Planning for the next Metro Transit Bus Rodeo is ongoing. MPTA's 2022 Bus Rodeo will be held July 15-16 in Austin, Minn.

The American Public Transportation Association plans to host its next International Bus Rodeo in 2023 in Minneapolis/St. Paul.



CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

"He gives 110%"

East Metro Bus Operator **Lee Vang** recently received a commendation for going above and beyond for this customer.

Lee is the young coach operator. He goes the extra mile. He gives 110%. Quite charming, friendly, and simply adorable. Metro Transit, thank you for hiring the very best.

Isabel M.

New technology will improve operator controls, real-time information Technology bus operators use to communicate with the Transit Control Center, manage onboard announcements and monitor schedule adherence is getting an upgrade.

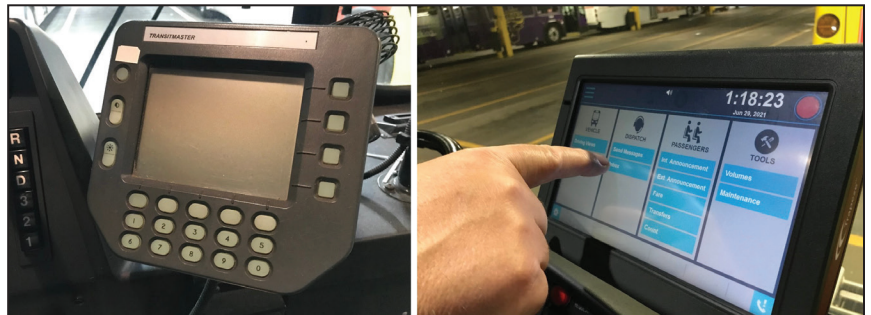
New touchscreen devices, known as Intelligent Vehicle Logic Units, will be installed on more than 450 buses by early next year and phased in as older buses are replaced. Operator training will occur as the new devices are installed.

Business Systems Analyst **Richard Paulson** described the new technology as a "game changer." "It improves the reliability of information about the status of the bus, and it improves operator safety with a simpler interface," Paulson said.

Data reliability will improve because the devices operate on a cellular network, which is faster than radio-based system that's been historically used.

The new technology should also be easier to maintain, said **Gary Nyberg**, manager of bus technology systems.

"Right now, there are five versions of this device on buses and some of these units are 20 years old," Nyberg said. "The older they get, the more difficult it gets to service the units as parts become scarce."



Condolences to friends, family members and union brothers and sisters mourning the loss of ATU Local 1005 Vice President Doni Jones, who passed away on Sunday, July 4. Doni joined Metro Transit in November 2006 and spent most of his career at East Metro, where he was an operator and relief dispatcher. He served on the Local 1005's executive board for nearly seven years and founded the chapter's Black caucus in 2017. Funeral services will be held today, Friday, July 16. Donations to Doni's family can be made through ATU Local 1005. As always, free grief support is available through Sand Creek. For more information, call 888-243-5744.



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