

INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

August 6, 2021



Metro Transit staff and police officers participated in several National Night Out activities on Tuesday, Aug. 3, including an event near U.S. Bank Stadium hosted by the Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association, top left, and another event in downtown St. Paul, below left. National Night Out is an annual event that was developed to encourage interaction between neighbors and law enforcement.

What to know this week

Masks required indoors: Following updated guidance from the state of Minnesota, anyone who is inside a Metro Transit facility must wear a face covering, regardless of vaccination status. Under a federal requirement, masks must always be worn on transit. Employees who are eligible and who have not yet been vaccinated are encouraged to do so as soon as possible. Free vaccines are available through the Council's Well@Work clinics. Residents who receive their first dose of the vaccine after July 30 can request a \$100 gift card at mn.gov/covid19/100.

Operator hiring events will be held August 17, 21: Two hiring events will be held later this month as efforts to bring on more bus operators continue. At each event, job seekers can submit their application and apply in one visit (applications may also be submitted online in advance). The events will run from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 17, and from 9 a.m. to noon on Saturday, Aug. 21, at the Instruction Center (725 North 7th Street, Minneapolis).

Mechanic Technician applications now being accepted: Bus Maintenance is creating an eligibility list to fill technician openings in 2021. Positions offered will be for second and third shift only. Minimum education and experience qualifications apply, and applicants must pass a hands-on performance test, an electrical circuit diagnostic troubleshooting test, and a written mechanical knowledge-based test. Applications for train operator, stockkeeper, Transit Control Center supervisor and LRT helper/cleaner are also being accepted now. To review all job openings and apply, visit metro council.org/careers.

Ridership continues to climb: Average weekday ridership rose for the third consecutive month in June, to just over 95,000 rides. In January, average weekday ridership was around 81,000 rides. More than 4.7 million rides have been provided through the end of June. The total is down compared to the same period last year, which included almost three months of pre-pandemic ridership. About two-thirds of trips are being taken on buses, similar to before the pandemic.

In uncertain times, commitment to customers remains essential

From General Manager
Wes Kooistra



Another rise in COVID-19 cases, lingering uncertainties about the future of our downtowns and ongoing workforce challenges are all making it harder to know what lies ahead.

Despite this uncertainty, our focus remains on valuing our customers.

The pandemic is not over, but we are already working to reintroduce ourselves to current and potential riders as a transit system that is committed to becoming stronger and better.

Since starting as General Manager two and half years ago, my priority has been to improve the customer experience. And in our current environment, this work is essential to growing ridership.

There are many factors that drive transit use that we can't influence – work location and schedules, parking availability and cost, congestion, and the response to the pandemic.

But we can influence what our customers experience when they ride.

Our commitment – our task – is to provide a service that is responsive to our riders' priorities and expectations.

This is an ongoing effort. It is about continuous improvement. We are making improvements today, and we will continue to listen and learn from the people we serve so we can be even better tomorrow.

By listening to our customers, we learn what they value. Our riders have repeatedly told us they expect a service that is welcoming, comfortable, and safe. They want a dependable service – one that is fast, reliable, and easy to use. They expect our buses, trains, and public facilities to be clean and well maintained.

So, we plan, work, and invest to meet these expectations and make our riders' experience better.

We want our riders to feel valued. And if we accomplish this, our ridership will grow.

Transit is a community service and we

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must strive to meet the needs of all community members. For some riders, our services are preferred; for many others, they are a necessary connection to opportunity. We do not take any of our riders for granted.

While we remain hopeful the pandemic will end soon, it is this steadfast commitment to our riders that will have the greatest influence on our future.

Stay tuned for State Fair updates:

Plans to offer express bus service to the Minnesota State Fair remain under review. Details are expected to be finalized and shared next week. The State Fair opens on Thursday, Aug. 26.

Fare discounts support broad effort to rebuild ridership

For the first time since 1993, regular route fares will cost \$1 in September and October.

The fare discount will apply to all regular route service, at all times of day, seven days a week, and be honored by all regional transit providers.

Customers who qualify for discounted rides through the Transit Assistance Program (TAP) or Limited Mobility programs, or as seniors, youths, or Medicaid recipients, will be able to ride for 50 cents in September and October.

Unlimited ride passes sold through employers and schools – Metropass, U Pass, College Pass and Student Pass – will also be half off from September through the end of the year. Those discounts are being offered in part to recognize that many workers and students are likely to continue riding less than usual in the coming months.

In addition to encouraging ridership, the promotions will help inform a 2022 review of Metro Transit's fare structure.

Buses replacing light rail trains August 5-9

Replacement buses will operate on portions of the Blue and Green lines this weekend to allow for construction.

Until 4 a.m. on Monday, Aug. 9, buses will replace Blue Line trains between the Target Field and 38th street stations, and Green Line trains between the Target Field and Stadium Village stations. Replacement buses began operating on Thursday, Aug. 5.

Maintenance work being conducted during this time includes improving signaling systems, bridge cleaning, new fiber optic cable installation, rail replacement, security fence installation and concrete work.

CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

"He is always upbeat"

Nicollet Operator **Roger Dahlin** recently received a commendation for having a positive attitude.

Roger is a wonderful driver. He is nice, funny, friendly, and very inspirational. He is an all-around great guy. He is always upbeat and has wonderful energy. He goes out of his way to make sure everyone leaves his bus feeling uplifted and loved. Please let him know to keep up the amazing work and that we greatly appreciate him.

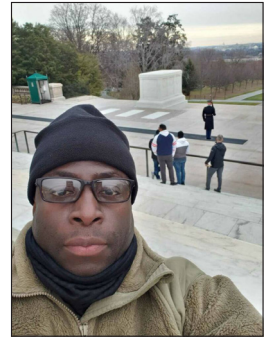
Jakobe I.

On the Clock/Off the Clock:

Vamilar Ngungkpan, Heywood Operator

How did you come to work at Metro Transit?

In 2012, my wife and I had two kids back to back so I needed a second income to support my family. I had a technician degree and a job as a medical device technician at a big research hospital, but it wasn't enough to support my growing family. A family member who worked at Metro Transit said I should apply to be a weekend bus operator. After two years working both jobs, I realized my part-time hourly wage at transit was better than my hourly wage at my full-time job of 12 years. So, I quit and decided to become a full-time operator.



What do you like the most about being "On the Clock"?

Driving allows you to experience new places, meet new people, and be helpful. The people onboard are mostly quiet and just want to get to where they're going. Sometimes, however, a person is having a bad day, and you can help them get through it. In 2018, I discovered that I could help other operators by becoming an instructor. I love the reaction on an operator's face when they realize something they thought was difficult isn't so difficult after all.

What are your favorite activities when you're "Off the Clock"?

As an immigrant from Liberia, I am grateful for the opportunities this country provides. My uncle served in the military, and he made an impression on me early on, so I knew I always wanted to join the National Guard. However, I would have to wait until 2009 when I became a resident. Over the last year, I've been called into active duty for the civil unrest and the inauguration in Washington D.C. As a driver, I often find myself behind the wheel for support and supply runs, or to transport fellow soldiers. This role also gives me the opportunity to use my technician skills – my specialty as a part of the 682nd Engineering Forward Support is equipment repair. Twelve years and a few active duty calls later, I'm extending my years of service. I'm thankful Metro Transit supports me when I need to be active, and that my family takes pride in my service.



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