

INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

September 24, 2021



Heywood Operator Fauto Cambi, who grew up in Ecuador, is among several employees who are celebrating National Hispanic/Latino Heritage Month, which continues through October 15. Cambi said he, his wife and their three children, celebrate their Ecuadorian culture by gathering at events to dance to Andean music and preparing traditional dishes. More stories about Hispanic/Latino employees can be found at metrotransit.org/ridersalmanac.

Provide your proof of vaccination to receive \$150

Employees who upload their proof of vaccination through Employee Self Service (ESS) by Friday, Nov. 26, will receive a \$150 payment. The payment will appear on a paystub after documentation has been received and confirmed by Human Resources. If you have already uploaded your proof of vaccination, the payment will appear on an upcoming paystub.

To submit your proof of vaccination, visit pspec.metc.state.mn.us and login to ESS using your employee ID and password. Once logged in, click Self Service, Personal Information and METC Vaccination Card. You will then be prompted to upload an image or .pdf of your vaccination card or immunization record. The process can be completed on a mobile device in a few minutes.

If you do not have access to your vaccination records, contact your healthcare provider, submit an immunization request through the Minnesota Department of Health or download the Docket app.

Beginning October 11, employees who have not submitted proof of vaccination will need to be tested weekly, and test negative, to report for on-site work. Additional details on the testing program specifics are coming soon.

For questions about the vaccination/testing requirement program, contact your supervisor or manager. For questions about ESS, email ESS.HRIS@metc.state.mn.us.

Attend an upcoming flu clinic

On-site employees can get free flu shots at several upcoming clinics. Clinics will be held next week at the Ruter, Heywood and East Metro garages, among other locations. Schedule information is posted at work sites. If you are insured, please bring your insurance card. Free flu shots are also available at the Council's Well@Work Clinics. Public health officials say this flu season could be severe and that anyone who is eligible should be vaccinated against both the flu and COVID-19. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says flu and COVID-19 vaccines can be administered at the same visit, without regard to timing.

Responding to a clear, compelling and continued call to focus on transit safety

From General Manager Wes Kooistra

This summer, we announced plans to significantly increase the official presence on transit by hiring additional Community Service Officers and police officers, and by hiring more staff to monitor our expanding network of real-time cameras.



Those plans remain a key component of our commitment to emerge from the pandemic as a stronger, better transit system. Past customer surveys show that feeling safe strongly relates to a rider's overall satisfaction with transit. As we work to increase ridership during and after the pandemic, improving perceptions of safety must be a cornerstone of our efforts.

The safety concerns we hear from our riders and frontline staff were echoed in the Citizens League engagement report provided to the Metropolitan Council earlier this month. As part of the police review initiated in June 2020, the Council contracted with this local nonprofit group to engage people about transit safety.

I appreciate the Citizens League's work to bring additional community voices into the conversation about improving transit safety. And I want to call attention to an important observation of the report: While we must continue to address fundamental security needs such as reducing assault, theft, and other criminal misconduct, we must also address perceptions of safety influenced by the conditions of our system. This includes cleaning and maintaining our vehicles and facilities. This also includes improving the reliability of our service.

What our riders observe and experience is important. Our riders share space with people they don't know, so they expect that our transit system shows evidence of being reasonably regulated.

Importantly, the Citizens League's engagement report calls out that opinions about safety – about what make people feel safe or comfortable – differ from one person to another often based on life

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experiences. This means we need to provide a system that feels safe, welcoming, and comfortable to all riders. This requires us to navigate thoughtfully and mindfully through the sensitivities of these diverse viewpoints.

This week, Police Chief **Eddie Frizell** and I provided Council Members an outline of the work we're doing and the additional steps we're taking to address fundamental security needs and the perception that transit can be unsafe.

Drawing on the themes of the Citizens League's report, we discussed how our actions toward providing reliable service, clean vehicles and well-maintained facilities, accurate transit information, and increased official presence are all part of creating a system that is widely seen as safe, welcoming, and comfortable.

We presented this information in part to help ground the next phase of the Council's police review work. Several Council Members are now meeting on a regular basis to discuss the themes that emerged from the Citizen League's work and to develop recommendations that will be brought to the full Council next year. I look forward to supporting their work and receiving their direction as we move forward.

I also want to thank all of you, the employees who are most familiar with the safety challenges we face. I want you to know that I recognize how difficult your jobs have become, and that I am personally committed to finding effective, sustainable solutions that lead to meaningful improvements.

So, I encourage you to continue following this conversation, to review the strategies to improve the customer experience and perceptions of safety detailed in our Strategic Plan and to share your input through groups like the Equity & Inclusion Team and Transit Safety & Security Committee.

A lot of good work is happening. But clearly we are being called to do more for our riders and employees. Thank you for your support as we respond to those calls.

Learn more about the Transit Police Working Group

The Metro Transit Police Work Group, a subset of Council Members, held its first meeting in August, and will meet every other week through February 2022, when recommendations to the Council will be made. Metro Transit staff is supporting this work by sharing research and information about current policies and procedures. Learn more at metro council.org.

CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

"This driver was so patient and kind"

East Metro Operator **Charlie Vang** recently received a commendation from a customer for their customer service.

I was trying to cross the street to catch the bus on Robert Street and the driver waited for me to cross and board the bus, even though the light turned green. On top of that, he told me which stop I needed to get off at and told me he'd park at an area where it was easier to get off. This driver was so patient and kind. I had a wonderful experience with him today. Thank you for going above and beyond!

Mary

AWT, Pride Employee Resource Groups seeking new leadership

Two Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are looking for new leaders that will begin serving in 2022.

Advancing Women in Transit (AWT) is seeking nominations for chair, vice chair, coordinator, and special events manager. The Pride ERG is looking to fill the same positions, except for special events manager.

Both AWT and Pride meet monthly, virtually. The chairs of each group help set the vision and strategic direction; vice chairs bring policy recommendations to agency leadership, and coordinators manage meeting logistics.

To nominate yourself or someone you think would be good for AWT leadership, email amina.wolf@metrotransit.org. For more information about Pride ERG leadership positions, email nia.colebrook@metc.state.mn.us.

ERGs for employees who identify as having a disability or as Black Indigenous or People of Color (BIPOC) are being organized. For more information on these groups, email sarah.berres@metrotransit.org.

What is an Employee Resource Group (ERG)?

An ERG is a Council-supported group of employees who share a common characteristic or interest, or allies of that group. Group members are a resource to one another and the organization. Employees can spend up to two paid hours a month participating in activities related to recognized ERGs, such as attending monthly meetings. Employees who would like to participate in an ERG should speak with their manager or supervisor.

Meet the Equity & Inclusion Team

Members of the Equity & Inclusion Unit and Equity & Inclusion Team will visit work sites and host virtual open houses over the coming months to introduce themselves, invite feedback on a shared definition of transit equity and discuss equity's role in the Strategic Plan. Virtual open houses will be held on:

Tuesday, Sept. 28, from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Thursday, Sept. 30, from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

For information about these or other planned events, contact a member of the Equity & Inclusion Team or email sarah.berres@metrotransit.org.