

# INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

October 1, 2021



Several bus operators were celebrated this week for completing the Bus Operator Apprenticeship Program. The program is a partnership between the ATU Local 1005 and Metro Transit and involves ride-alongs, group meetings and mentoring. Among the graduates was South Operator **Barkhad Omar**, who spent more than 17 years as a school bus driver. He said he joined Metro Transit because he wanted to build and be recognized for his skills. "This is what I came here for, to show that I'm a good student, a good professional," he said. For more information about the mentorship program, email [alec.johnson@metrotransit.org](mailto:alec.johnson@metrotransit.org).

## Leadership Academy applications will be accepted November 1-15

Frontline employees who want to earn supervisory experience are encouraged to apply for the Leadership Academy in November.

Employees who are accepted into the Leadership Academy program will spend six months working alongside mentors in full-time acting supervisory roles and take online and instructor-led classes. By completing the program, participants earn the equivalent of one year of supervisory experience that can be used to meet minimum qualifications for Metropolitan Council job openings.

Applications will be accepted from November 1 to November 15. The first group of participants will begin in March 2022, and the following groups will begin in September 2022, March 2023, and September 2023. Applications received this fall will be used to fill all openings through the end of 2023.

A complete list of positions that will be in the program will be included when the job posting goes live in November. Among the positions that are expected to be included:

- Assistant Transportation Manager-Bus
- Transit Control Center Supervisor
- Transit Supervisor
- Bus Maintenance Supervisor

Applicants will be asked to indicate the two positions they would most like to serve in, and to provide a short explanation of their interest.

Leadership Academy participants must have at least two years of experience in an ATU position or have at least two years of work experience in a professional/technical firstline position.

For more information, email [walt.joy@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:walt.joy@metc.state.mn.us).

A word of appreciation as we enter another new chapter in our pandemic response

From Acting Chief Operating Officer Brian Funk

We've come a long way since COVID-19 vaccines became available six months ago.



More than two-thirds of our employees have been fully vaccinated and vaccines are freely available at locations across the region, including our own Well@Work clinics.

With continued support from all staff, we've maintained safe workplaces and kept our services running under challenging circumstances.

And ridership has steadily risen as more people head back to offices, classes and events.

Today, we're entering another new chapter in our effort to put the worst of this pandemic behind us.

Beginning October 11, employees must have a proof of vaccination on file or get tested on a weekly basis to report for on-site work. Nearly half of you have taken this step, and I want to thank you for helping set the stage for a smooth transition.

If you've been fully vaccinated and have not yet entered your information, this is the time to do so. If you're having any difficulties, please let us know how we can help.

If you cannot be vaccinated or are choosing not to do so right now, this is also the time to prepare to get into a testing routine. To meet the first deadline, you will need to be tested by midnight on Thursday, Oct. 7.

Here, too, we stand ready to offer whatever support is needed, including providing test kits with convenient options for completing them on-time.

Many of you have raised important and thoughtful questions about our vaccination and testing requirement, along with many other issues related to our pandemic response.

I want to thank you for raising your voices so we can continue to improve on

*continued on next page*

our efforts to help everyone feel safe coming to work. We may not always have perfect or immediate answers, but we're doing the best we can to respond to a situation that remains incredibly dynamic.

I also want to thank you for the perseverance you continue to display as we face this pandemic, an operator shortage, and other challenges.

Of course, we'd all like to forget about the need to distance ourselves, wear masks, monitor for symptoms and sanitize shared workspaces. We'd also like a clearer picture of what happens next.

Unfortunately, those necessary precautions and the uncertainty that surrounds us will be with us a while longer.

Whether you're working on-site, in the field, or at home, whether you're vaccinated or not, I hope you're seeing the sincerity in our effort to respect everyone's choices while upholding our commitment to serving our community.

I hope you are also still seeing some light at the end of this long tunnel.

As the general manager has said, we cannot expect to return to our pre-pandemic norm. But we can and should feel optimistic that the direction we're heading in is the right one for each other, our customers, and our region.

Thank you for your support as we continue on this path.

---

## Aerosol certification classes underway

The Instruction Center is hosting aerosol certification classes on several dates this month. Any bus or train operator who wants to carry aerosol for self-defense purposes while on duty must be certified every two years.

Upcoming classes will be held at the Instruction Center on:

- Tuesday, Oct. 5: 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., and noon to 2:30pm
- Wednesday, Oct. 6: noon to 2:30 p.m.
- Saturday, Oct. 9: 8 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

To register, contact a garage or rail coordinator.

### CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

## "Please know you are deeply appreciated"

Ruter Operator **Joseph Oladipo** received the following commendation from a Route 5 customer who appreciates his handling of the federal mask requirement.

*Our driver deserves thanks for enforcing the mask mandate on the bus. It is truly commendable that he is risking his health and safety to keep his riders safe. I'm sorry you have to deal with this. Please know you are deeply appreciated. Thank you for all you do!*

Reminder: Submit your proof of vaccination or prepare for weekly testing

As a reminder, employees reporting for on-site work should submit their proof of vaccination by the end of the day Monday, Oct. 4, to be exempt from weekly COVID-19 testing requirements that take effect on Monday, Oct. 11. To submit your proof of vaccination:

- On a desktop or mobile device, visit [pspess.metc.state.mn.us](https://pspess.metc.state.mn.us) and login to Employee Self Service using your employee ID and password.
- Once logged in, click Self Service, Personal Information and METC Vaccination Card.
- You will be prompted to upload an image or .pdf of your vaccination card or immunization record.

For questions about ESS, email [ESS.HRIS@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:ESS.HRIS@metc.state.mn.us).

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

Employees who have submitted and had their proof of vaccination validated by Friday, Nov. 26, will receive \$150 on their Friday, Dec. 10 paycheck.

Employees who have not had their proof of vaccination verified before the testing requirement takes effect must complete tests by 11:59 p.m. each Thursday to report to work the following week (beginning Saturday). Employees may report to work while awaiting test results. The first testing deadline is 11:59 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 7.

Employees may provide proof of vaccination at any time to remove themselves from the testing requirement.

Employees should explore testing options available through HealthPartners and at community testing sites.

A limited supply of mail-in test kits will also be made available at stockrooms and distributed through managers and supervisors upon request. Employees who plan to utilize this option should create a Health Vault account at [app.vaulthealth.com](https://app.vaulthealth.com).

