

INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

October 29, 2021



Revenue Operations Manager **Dennis Dworshak** and Lead Senior Electronic Revenue Equipment Technician **Chris Sagerer** showed off new ticket vending machines that are being installed at METRO Orange Line stations. The machines have several new features, including the ability to issue receipts that can be used to make future fare purchases if a customer uses cash and overpays (previously, no change was offered). The Orange Line opens on Saturday, Dec. 4.

What to know this week

COVID-19 recognition payment: All Council employees will receive a \$500 payment recognizing efforts to respond to the “unprecedented challenges” presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. The payment was unanimously approved by the Council this week and will appear on the November 12 paycheck.

Proof of vaccination: As a reminder, employees who have their proof of COVID-19 vaccination verified by Friday, Nov. 26, will receive a \$150 payment on their December 10 paycheck. Currently, the Council is not collecting COVID-19 vaccine booster information. Please do not attempt to upload booster information into Employee Self-Service (ESS) until further notice.

Update banking information in ESS: Employees who are customers of TCF Bank/Huntington Bank and who have been notified that their bank routing and/or bank account numbers have been changed should login to Employee Self Service (ESS) and update this information as soon as possible. For assistance with ESS, email ess.hris@metc.state.mn.us. As a reminder, all employees can join the Transit Operations Federal Credit Union, officed out of the Instruction Center, at 725 North 7th Street, Minneapolis. The credit union is open Tuesday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Appointments are not necessary. For more information, call 612-338-9985 or visit tofcu.org.

Free breast cancer screenings at Heywood: HealthPartners’ mobile mammography unit, “Mammo a-go-go,” will visit the Heywood Garage on Tuesday, Nov. 2, to provide employees access to free breast cancer screenings. Appointments can be made between 7 a.m. and 10 a.m. To schedule at 15-minute appointment, call 952-993-3700.

Sometimes providing a reliable service requires difficult choices

From General Manager Wes Kooistra

While the pandemic has reduced ridership, we’ve continued to keep buses and trains running so people can use transit to get where they need to go.



However, like many transit agencies and other transportation providers across the nation, we are facing a significant operator shortage. We are falling short of honoring our commitments to our customers because we do not have enough people to meet our schedules, and this is unacceptable.

Reliability is a bottom line for our riders, and it is a bottom line for Metro Transit.

Since March, we’ve been working hard to hire more operators. We’ve held multiple one-day hiring events and are planning more. We’ve streamlined the hiring process and provided on-site CDL training. We offer hiring and referral bonuses for successful hires. Today, we have 20 operators in training, but we are still about 80 operators short of what we need to meet our current schedules.

So, beginning December 4, when the next quarterly service changes go into effect, we are adjusting service to reduce our operator need by 60 operators. This represents about a 5% reduction in current systemwide service hours. This level of reduction is necessary to improve reliability to the standards we share with our customers.

Reducing service is never an easy decision. In planning the December 4 service changes, we’ve considered ridership levels, reliance on transit service, and the availability of alternative routes. Service reductions will be accomplished on selected routes through:

- Reduced frequency
- Reduced hours of service
- Route suspensions where other options are available

Detailed information about the routes that will be affected will be shared with our customers beginning next week.

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Of course, reducing service is never something we want to do. These changes will be inconvenient to many riders and even more difficult for others. But we also hear from many customers that they'd rather have a schedule they can count on than one that presents options that may not be fulfilled.

As we continue to work to overcome the considerable challenges of the pandemic and now the job market, I want to thank all of you for your work and your efforts to provide reliable service to our customers. This is another challenge to overcome, and we remain committed to provide a stronger and better service in the future.

Career Tracks: Peter Stumme, assistant transportation manager

Many people who work at Metro Transit take on new responsibilities and roles throughout their careers. *Career Tracks* highlights the paths employees have taken to their latest assignment and where they see themselves going next.



How did you begin your career at Metro Transit?

I had three young kids and was working four jobs to support them, which was exhausting. Metro Transit was offering good pay and benefits, so I decided to apply. After four years, I stopped working all my other jobs and became a full-time bus operator.

What were your career goals and what steps did you take to achieve them?

After ten years, I thought I'd retire as an operator. But, I got pulled aside and was encouraged to apply for the Leadership Academy. I thought: 'You know, you might be onto something!' I applied and got the chance to serve as an assistant transportation manager at South Garage. I learned so much, and I found that I really enjoyed the job and had a knack for it.

I went back to driving, applied for jobs but would freeze up in the interview. I practiced in front of a mirror, rehearsed with my sister, and eventually got jobs as a rail supervisor and Transit Control Center supervisor. This (assistant transportation manager) is the job I've been chasing for years, though. I'm glad I stuck with it and am incredibly happy I finally got it.

What advice do you have for others who want to take on more or different responsibilities?

Usually, the first or second time you won't get through. So, you have to have thick skin, and you have to keep trying if you really want something. It's also a good idea to network,

In memoriam: Joe Waldoch, LRT Helper

Joe Waldoch, who joined Metro Transit as a light rail helper in March, passed away on Wednesday, Oct. 20, following a battle with cancer.

Waldoch, 59, was remembered by co-workers for his strong work ethic. "He was there, working through the pain, and would rather be sent home than call in, knowing he had people there who depended on what he could accomplish in a shift," fellow helper Laura Chilson said.

Waldoch's wife of 24 years, Yvonne, said he was a "special person" who enjoyed fishing and gardening and eagerly volunteered in his hometown, Bloomington. "He didn't know the word 'no,'" she said. "He always said yes."

Waldoch is survived by his wife, three sons, three brothers and a sister. Services were held on Wednesday, Oct. 27, in Bloomington.



contact HR and start letting people know you're interested so your name gets repeated.

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. Applications will be accepted online from November 1 to November 15, and the next group of participants will begin in March 2022.

Employees who participate in the Leadership Academy spend six months working with mentors in full-time acting supervisory roles and take online and instructor-led classes. Graduates earn the equivalent of one year of supervisory experience that can be used to meet minimum qualifications for future job openings. Available positions include assistant transportation manager, transit supervisor, transit control center supervisor and bus maintenance supervisor.

Find the application at metrotransit.org/employment.

Technician Paul Poppie retires with 37+ years of service

Before starting at Metro Transit, Paul Poppie repaired tanks, trucks, and other equipment for the U.S. Army and earned a degree in diesel mechanics. So, when he landed his first job fueling buses at South Garage, he almost didn't make it past the first year. "I had a new, fully stocked toolbox and was thinking, 'I didn't go to school for this,'" Poppie said. It didn't take long to move up, though, and Poppie will retire next week after a 37-year career in transit.



Poppie spent most of his time at Nicollet, where he worked for more than 20 years, and has been a facilities technician for the past five years.

In retirement, Poppie plans to move to northern Minnesota and spend more time hunting, fishing and boating.



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