

INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

November 5, 2021



Managers have been out recognizing and thanking bus and train operators at several busy boarding areas over the past few weeks. In addition to handing out small gifts, managers have been speaking with people about career opportunities at Metro Transit. The last scheduled event was held Thursday morning in downtown Minneapolis. Thank you to the managers at Ruter who spearheaded this effort.

What to know this week

Leadership Academy applications due by November 15: Frontline employees who want to earn supervisory experience are encouraged to apply for the Leadership Academy. Applications will be accepted online through 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, Transit Information Center supervisor and bus service supervisor. Find the job posting and apply at metrotransit.org/employment (look for internal job openings in the top left menu).

Apply to become a train operator: Bus operators who are interested in transferring to light rail are invited to apply to become a train operator through Monday, Nov. 22. Operators who pass agility testing and an interview will go on an eligibility list according to seniority. Individuals on the eligibility list will be trained as positions open. To learn more and apply, visit metrotransit.org/employment.

Submit your operator mentorship application by December 3: Full-time bus operators with at least three years of experience are invited to support new hires by joining the Operator Mentorship Program. Mentor applications will be accepted through Friday, Dec. 3, and will be reviewed by a panel of ATU members and management. Paper forms will be available at each garage. Operators who are selected to serve as mentors are asked to meet regularly with mentees during their first year of service, ride with their mentees to observe and offer advice, and to attend meetings with fellow mentors and mentees and program organizers. All time spent mentoring will be paid at an operator's regular wage. For more information, contact Bus Operator Apprenticeship Coordinator Alec Johnson at alec.johnson@metrotransit.org or 612-349-7022.

Join the conversation about the future of our bus fleet

From Nick Thompson, Deputy General Manager-Capital Programs and Brian Funk, Acting Chief Operating Officer

Our Strategic Plan describes the actions we'll take to emerge from the pandemic as a stronger, better service provider. But even before the pandemic began, we were facing a climate crisis that demanded more attention.

And so, while we take meaningful and immediate steps to better serve our customers, we must also be thinking about how we can make our facilities and our fleet more sustainable in the years ahead.

To help us on our path, we are creating our agency's first Zero Emissions Bus Transition Plan.

This plan will be developed over the coming months with input from many stakeholders, including the technicians and operators who will ultimately be responsible for maintaining and operating any new technologies we adopt.

Thank you in advance for sharing your valuable perspectives as this plan is put together. Thank you also to the leadership in Engineering & Facilities, Bus Maintenance, Service Development and Community Outreach who are guiding this work.

You may be wondering why a plan like this is needed. One of the most important reasons is to build consensus around when, where and why we would use electric buses or other new zero emission technologies in the future.

Staff and community input, service plans, conversations with peer agencies and other data will all help inform the detailed plan that will be put forward early next year. But we have already established a set of primary considerations, including:

- **Technical viability.** Electric buses, batteries and charging equipment are all emerging technologies that manufacturers and transit agencies like ours are just beginning to learn about. So,

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many important questions remain, and we must move forward deliberately but carefully so we can continue to deliver reliable service.

- **Equity and environmental justice.** Many of the neighborhoods we serve are disproportionately impacted by air pollution. While electric buses are not, by themselves, a solution for air quality concerns they can be a part of a larger, regional effort to create healthier environments for all.
- **Cost.** Electric buses and chargers currently cost more than diesel buses. Federal grants and other partnerships can help cover the cost difference, but we must always consider what these investments mean to our own capital and operating budgets.

While this planning effort is underway, the work to integrate more electric buses into our fleet has already begun.

Our proposed Capital Improvement Plan calls for the purchase of eight 40-foot electric buses in 2022 and up to 70 electric buses in 2025. We are working to identify other funding sources that could allow us to buy more electric buses in the future, if the technology is ready.

To support this growing fleet, charging equipment is being installed at our new Minneapolis Bus Garage.

Of course, our first electric buses are already here. Unfortunately, issues with charging equipment have prevented their use for an extended period. But we believe they will be able to re-enter service before the end of the year, and we have gained valuable knowledge through this experience.

So, thank you again for participating in this important conversation and helping us embark on a necessary, exciting evolution of our bus fleet.

Share your perspective

To learn more and share your perspective, visit metrotransit.org/electric-buses or email carrie.desmond@metrotransit.org.

Know Your Operator: Malika Kifal, Ruter Garage

Fifteen years ago, when Malika Kifal (Mah-lee-ka Key-fall) immigrated from Morocco to Minnesota, she relied on transit for daily life.

"I've been outside walking to a stop or waiting in the cold or rain for a bus," Kifal said. "I know what it's like to be a customer."

After a few years as a school bus driver, her husband suggested applying at Metro Transit. She



CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

"He represents Metro Transit very well"

Nicollet Operator **Michael Gray** recently received a commendation from a customer for their customer service.

This driver went out of his way to accommodate me. I was still far away from the bus stop but was carrying bags of groceries and he waited for me to board. I really appreciated that and know drivers don't have to wait for people not at the bus stop. His actions meant that I didn't have to sit and wait another half hour in the heat with fresh food. He was kind and accommodating to other customers and drivers on the road. He represents Metro Transit very well.

Jane P

started part-time on weekends while driving a school bus. Two years later, she decided to go full-time.

"Driving a school bus is working paycheck-to-paycheck," she said. "There are long breaks in the summer and during holidays when you don't get paid."

Kifal is grateful for the consistent work, good pay, and benefits Metro Transit provides. It not only helps her live a more stable financial life with her husband and two boys, but also affords her time to be with her family.

"I've found some people can complain a lot," Kifal said. "I guess as an immigrant, I find myself being more grateful for opportunities."

She plans to work at Metro Transit until retirement, serving customers who rely on transit as she once did.

"On local routes, there's lots of interactions with customers who use transit to get groceries or have no other way to get around," she said. "I truly enjoy helping those people."

We're hiring!

Efforts to recruit and hire new bus operators are ongoing. One-day hiring events will be held at the Instruction Center on November 13 and November 16. Learn more at metrotransit.org/drive.

Help the Equity & Inclusion Team define transit equity

Members of the Equity & Inclusion Unit and Equity & Inclusion Team are looking for feedback from all employees to develop a shared definition of transit equity before the end of the year. To learn more, attend one of these upcoming one-hour virtual open house or visit with representatives at in-person event.

- Wednesday, Nov. 10, 10 a.m. to noon, Ruter, Heywood and Nicollet garages
- Monday, Nov. 15, 11:30 a.m. (virtual)
- Wednesday, Nov. 17, 6:30 p.m. (virtual)

For more information, email sarah.berres@metrotransit.org.



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