

# INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

November 12, 2021



The METRO Orange Line will open on Saturday, Dec. 4, bringing all-day, station-to-station service to the I-35W corridor between Burnsville and downtown Minneapolis. A key improvement, the I-35W & Lake Street Station, above, is already being served by local and express routes. Route training for the Orange Line and other finishing touches are underway.

## Stay vigilant: COVID-19 cases are at their highest levels of the year

The number of newly reported COVID-19 cases is at its highest level since December 2020, prompting public health officials to stress the importance of taking preventative measures. At Metro Transit, 23 cases have been reported over the past two weeks. As reminders:

- **Stay away from work if you don't feel well and get tested if you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.** To schedule a test, visit [healthpartners.com/covid-19/testing](https://healthpartners.com/covid-19/testing). If prompted, use employer code 10397. Appointments are readily available at locations throughout the region. Only schedule a test at the Well@Work clinic if you are not experiencing symptoms.
- **If you're inside a support facility and you're around other people, you should be wearing a mask.** It's really that simple.
- **Vaccines are safe, effective, and available.** Whether it's your first shot or your third, public health officials say vaccines provide a level of protection unlike any other defense against COVID-19. Free Pfizer vaccines and boosters are available at Well@Work clinics on Mondays and Thursdays.

**Remember:** To report for on-site work, employees must have their proof of COVID-19 vaccination verified or get tested by 11:59 p.m. each Thursday, and test negative, to report for work the following week, beginning Saturday.

**Join the Equity & Inclusion Team:** The Equity & Inclusion Team is seeking representatives from the Ruter, South, Heywood and Nicollet garages, and light rail. Applications will be accepted through November 30. Interested employees can learn more by attending virtual open houses on Monday, Nov. 15 (11:30 a.m.), and Wednesday, Nov. 17 (6:30 p.m) or by contacting [sarah.berres@metrotransit.org](mailto:sarah.berres@metrotransit.org).



Using your camera phone, scan this code to access the Equity & Inclusion application. No login is required.

## My heartfelt thanks for your many accomplishments

From General Manager Wes Kooistra

During this time of recognition, it is such a great privilege to recount your many accomplishments.



It is fair to assume that we all feel the pandemic has gone on far too long, and I want to especially call out the work and dedication of our essential on-site employees who have interfaced with the public throughout this time.

There are so many reasons to look forward with a commitment to emerge from the pandemic as a stronger, better transit service provider.

Our ridership is increasing. Today we are providing around 123,000 average weekday rides -- more than at any time since the start of the pandemic.

On December 4, we will celebrate the opening of the METRO Orange Line. Civil construction on the Green Line Extension is now 60% complete, and we are on the path to identifying the Blue Line Extension realignment. The METRO D Line is scheduled to open at the end of next year, and both the B and E lines are now fully funded.

Our optimism is anchored in the character of our employees who overcome obstacles every day to serve our riders. Across Metro Transit, our challenges have been met with resilience, innovation, and an impressive commitment to service.

There is no day off, and each day I am so thankful for all of you and your accomplishments.

You distributed more than one million masks, changed air filtration systems in our vehicles and facilities, applied new disinfecting protocols for our buses and trains, and installed hundreds of operator barriers.

You adjusted our schedules under unreasonably short notice and promptly and effectively communicated these changes with our customers and stakeholders. You executed a fare discount.

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You outfitted a fleet of vaccination buses that traveled across Minnesota so healthcare providers could serve hard-to-reach populations. You looked beyond our own daily challenges to the benefit of the entire state.

New vaccination requirements are being applied in our complex work environment of more 3,000 essential workers. Plastic seats have been installed in all our light rail vehicles. Under incredibly short notice, you expanded our Student Pass program to respond to schools needing our help.

Our police established a Real Time Information Center to take full advantage of real-time cameras installed in our trains and at our stations. The groundwork has been laid to expand this technology to our bus fleet.

Tremendous progress has been made on the new Minneapolis Bus Garage that is scheduled to open late next year. Improvements were made to the Heywood Garage and our Operations & Maintenance Facility on Franklin Avenue.

These are team efforts. Bus and rail operations, project offices, Service Development, Engineering and Facilities, Communications, Administration, Equity and Inclusion, Marketing and Transit Information, Strategic Initiatives, Finance, the Safety Department, the Metro Transit Police Department and more – we all work together to bring a ride to a customer.

Thank you! Through your efforts, you have given us reason to celebrate. Your resilience drives our optimism. I admire and your great work and solute your remarkable accomplishments.

### **Employee Recognition Event is November 15**

All Council employees are invited to the 2021 employee recognition event on Monday, Nov. 15, at 9 a.m. The annual event will be presented online. If you have not received an invite or would like to learn more, please email [paula.crane@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:paula.crane@metc.state.mn.us).

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### **Frontline FAQ: Orange Line bathrooms**

Operators, technicians and other frontline staff often wonder why things are the way they are. To help provide some answers, we're introducing a new and recurring Insights feature, Frontline FAQ, that will address questions from staff. Send your question to [insights@metrotransit.org](mailto:insights@metrotransit.org).

### **Why are there no restrooms at the Orange Line's Burnsville Heart of the City Station, the new route's southern terminus?**

The short answer: It's complicated.

The long answer: The property on which the station was built is privately owned. Transportation easements owned by MnDOT allow the site to be used for transportation purposes, but there is no current legal way to build a structure like a restroom on the site. Efforts to find a way to build a restroom on the site in the future are ongoing. In the meantime, operators are encouraged to use the Shell gas station, immediately south of the station area. On the north end of the line, in downtown Minneapolis, operators may use the Gateway Ramp on Washington Avenue, about a block from the layover at Washington and Third avenues. If, in an emergency, operators need to go off route they may contact the Transit Control Center.

Questions or concerns about restroom availability on any route can be directed to representatives of the Restroom Committee or Street Operations Manager **Antoinette Brasson**. Current Restroom Committee representatives are:

- Nicollet: Janea Scott
- Heywood: Vanessa Anderson
- Ruter: Nicole Pereira
- South: Carrie Dudrey
- East Metro: Kathryn Peters

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Congratulations to these employees who celebrated work anniversaries in October

#### **45 years**

- Melanie Benson, Operator-Nicollet

#### **30 years**

- Gregory Strombeck, Operator-South

#### **25 years**

- William Neuenfeldt, Coordinator-Material Management

#### **20 years**

- Mark Dawkins, Operator, East Metro
- Tyrone Lowe, Operator, Heywood
- Pamela Harris, Operator, South
- Shenghai Ly, Operator, East Metro
- Hussein Mohamed, Operator, South
- David Palm, Operator, East Metro
- Antonio Anorve, Operator, East Metro
- Xue Kong, Mechanic Technician, Heywood
- Gerald Snyder, Operator, East Metro
- Tsering Thongpatsang, Mechanic Technician, Heywood



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