

INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

December 10, 2021



Employees in Bus Maintenance, including those at Nicollet Garage, above right, and Heywood Garage, above left, were celebrated at recognition events held this week. Maintenance staff have continued to go above-and-beyond this year, responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and setting new performance records. Systemwide, buses traveled an average of 8,879 miles between maintenance road calls in October, a new monthly record. East Metro and South each topped 10,000 miles between maintenance road calls in October, monthly records for those locations.

Help make Metro Transit a great place to work

Employees are encouraged to complete the Employee Engagement & Satisfaction Survey through December 31. Completing this survey will help leadership make deliberate organizational changes that:

- Ensure everyone's contributions are seen and valued
- Improve development opportunities for all staff
- Help managers become more effective leaders
- Build pride in our work

What you need to know about the survey:

- The survey can be completed in 5-10 minutes
- All responses are anonymous
- Survey results will be shared with staff early next year
- If you work in Bus Transportation, but are not an operator, please choose "Bus Administration" when completing the survey

Results from this survey and future focus groups will also inform the Great Workplace Project, a larger effort to identify action steps we'll take to improve work culture.

Paper copies of the survey are being distributed to worksites. To take an online version, scan this code using your camera phone.



Thank you for staying committed so we can all stay safe

From Brian Funk, Interim Chief Operating Officer

By now, all of us had hoped the pandemic would be less of a concern than it is today. Unfortunately, that's not where we're at.



Almost 90 COVID-19 cases were reported among staff in November, the second-highest monthly total since tracking began in March 2020. For weeks, Minnesota has had some of the highest new case counts and positive test rates in the nation. And unknowns about a new variant mean we all must be more careful.

These are difficult realities, and I want to acknowledge the fatigue I know we're all feeling as this pandemic drags on. Thank you for continuing to show up so we can help our customers and our region get through this safely.

I especially want to thank our frontline staff who are facing many pandemic-related challenges, including a worker shortage, the recently extended mask requirement, and a weary and frustrated public.

Our ability to keep moving forward in less-than-ideal circumstances is a testament to the teamwork, ingenuity and resolve that can be found across our organization. To cite just a few examples:

- Staff recently came together to package more than 90,000 masks that are being used to fill new mask holders installed in all our buses.
- In response to the Council's new COVID-19 vaccination and testing policy, managers provided countless hours of support so staff could get their information uploaded on time.
- Facilities staff have adapted workspaces for a wider return to office that started earlier this year.
- Our fleet of vaccination buses has traveled to every corner of the state to expand access, earning acclaim from state and public health partners.

Ongoing efforts to meet testing requirements, conduct contact tracing, reinforce safety protocols like mask mandates, and to sanitize our facilities and vehicles are also happening every day.

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Most impressively, this work is occurring as departments face staffing challenges and as we continue to adapt and improve our service. Just last week, we successfully opened our newest Bus Rapid Transit line, the METRO Orange Line, a feat that would be impressive under the best of conditions.

So, this message is first and foremost a thank you. But it is also a reminder that we cannot afford to let our guard down.

All of us must continue to do our part by considering vaccinations and boosters, monitoring our health, getting tested when needed and wearing masks as required.

Like winter clothing, these layers will combine to give us the protection we need to see our way through this pandemic.

And, like winter, this pandemic will eventually give way to a new and more hopeful season. Thank you for helping us get through this one so we can continue looking forward to all that lies ahead.

Rail Maintenance Supervisor Jack Shaw retires after 36 years of service

Rail Maintenance Supervisor, **Jack Shaw**, one of the first 12 technicians who transferred to light rail, retired in November after 36 years of service.



Shaw was an experienced Army mechanic when he began his career as a vault puller. He worked at several garages before joining light rail, where he enjoyed the variety and chance to learn new skills. “There were so few of us at rail that we were doing it all – changing tires on the trucks, electrical, hydraulics,” Shaw recalled. “The variety was really nice.”

After gaining experience, Shaw served as a foreman and supervisor. As body shop supervisor, he said one of his proudest accomplishments was reducing the time it took to restore heavily rusted light rail vehicles from more than 2,000 hours down to about 800 hours. During his tenure, body shop technicians also installed plastic seats across the fleet and replaced dozens of broken windows. Shaw was quick to share credit for that and other work. “I told the team, ‘I’m a tool. What do you need me to do to get your job done?’” he said.

During his time at Metro Transit, Shaw was deployed several times as a member of the National Guard, including to Iraq after 9/11. In retirement, Shaw plans to buy a motorhome and travel, staying at military bases down south.

CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE’RE DOING

“She is amazing!”

South Garage Bus Operator **Terese Blanchard** recently received a commendation for her onboard demeanor.

I’ve been riding with her multiple times a week since August, and she is amazing! She always greeted me and sent me off with a smile, regardless of if she had to deal with difficult passengers. Today, she told me it was her last week on this route. Her joy and warmth will be missed!

Megan

Congratulations to these employees who retired in November

- Paul Poppie, Facilities Technician, 37 years
- Craig Lund, Operator-East Metro, 20 years
- Jon Christopherson, Mechanic, Commuter Rail, 12 years

Transit Control Center welcomes new supervisors

The Transit Control Center has welcomed several new supervisors. They are (from left to right):



- **Camille Mitchell**, who previously served as a relief dispatcher and operator at the Heywood Garage. Mitchell graduated the Leadership Academy in 2020.
- **Adrian Cabassa**, who previously served as a relief dispatcher and operator at East Metro. Adrian graduated the Leadership Academy in 2020.
- **John Fleming**, who previously served as an operator at the Heywood Garage, and as a front desk supervisor at a downtown Minneapolis hotel.
- **Luis Lopez**, who previously worked at the Utah Transit Authority, in Salt Lake City, as a bus and train operator and operations supervisor.

In addition, **Kati Copeland** (far right, above), began as a TCC Communications Specialist. Copeland most recently worked as a customer correspondence specialist at Huntington Bank.

Partnership will allow people to ride without fares on New Year’s Eve

To encourage responsible celebrations, fares will not be collected on any route beginning at 6 p.m. on New Year’s Eve, Friday, Dec. 31. Fareboxes will be covered and no passes will be needed during the promotion. Fare collection will resume at 3 a.m. on New Year’s Day.

The last light rail trips depart at approximately 11:30 p.m. Nearly two dozen bus routes, including routes 3, 5 and the A Line and C Line, have trips that operate past midnight.

The New Year’s Eve promotion is a continuation of the decade-long program sponsored and paid for by Miller Lite. The partnership is supported by local law enforcement agencies.

Ridership has remained at or near average levels on past New Year’s Eves and is down this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.