

# INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

December 31, 2021



## Three from South retire after 30+ years of service

Three longstanding employees, who together have more than 100 years of service, are retiring next week from South Garage.

- Maintenance Manager **Keith Stein** is retiring with 41 years of service. Stein began his career as a cleaner at the old Nicollet Garage and worked as a helper, fueler and senior mechanic before becoming a supervisor and manager. In retirement, Stein plans to spend time traveling, golfing, fishing and shooting trap.
- Mechanic **Charles "Chuck" Rawson** is retiring with 31 years of service. Rawson started as a cleaner at Shingle Creek and, after a stint at the old Snelling Garage, spent most of his career at South as an HVAC technician. In retirement, Rawson said he hoped to spend more time traveling.
- Assistant Transportation Manager **Ken Benzel** is retiring with 30 years of service. Benzel began as a part-time operator and later transferred to light rail as one of the first rail supervisors, where he helped train the first group of operators. In retirement, Benzel plans to spend more time hunting, fishing, traveling, and hopes to earn his pilot's license again.

If you or someone you know is retiring with more than 30 years of service, please email [drew.kerr@metrotransit.org](mailto:drew.kerr@metrotransit.org) about the Great People recognition program.

## COVID-19: No change to isolation policy, get tested

The CDC has shortened its recommended isolation period for people who test positive from 10 days to 5 days, based on evidence that suggests the likelihood of transmission declines after a few days. The Council's policy, requiring employees who test positive to stay away from worksites for 10 calendar days, remains in effect.

As a reminder, public health officials recommend getting tested 5 to 7 days after gathering with people outside your household.

Free testing is available at HealthPartners locations throughout the region. To make an appointment, visit [healthpartners.com](https://healthpartners.com) and use the employer code 10397. Testing will not be available at HealthPartners sites on Monday, Jan. 1.

Some community testing sites will be closed over New Years while others have expanded their hours. Learn more at [mn.gov/covid19/get-tested](https://mn.gov/covid19/get-tested).

## Sharing hope for 2022

*From General Manager Wes Kooistra*

This week, we lost a valued member of the Metro Transit team.



John Humphrey was a trusted colleague, a generous spirit, and a committed leader. For many, he was a close friend.

In experiencing this loss, I am reminded that relationships are everything.

Relationships develop and grow from our shared experiences. They are what connect us to each other. I know that my grief is in great part a sorrow over the loss of that sharing.

I hope through the losses we have all experienced and grieved in 2021, we wholly appreciate the value of our sharing relationships, and we work to renew and deepen our connections with each other in the year ahead.

There is so much about this troubling time that works to separate us physically and emotionally.

It is in these times that we are required to be more intentional in our efforts to nurture our personal and professional relationships and to actively support one another. I know I must do much more of this in my leadership role, but we can all be leaders in this way.

On the other side of grief lies the promise and joy of growing and sharing relationships. That promise and joy is my hope for all of us in 2022.

## In memoriam: John Humphrey, Deputy COO-Rail

John Humphrey, who began as a bus operator nearly 33 years ago, passed away this week.



John was among Metro Transit's first train operators. After serving in rail supervisory and management roles, he became deputy chief operating officer-rail in 2014. Co-workers remember John for his persistent smile, generosity, and leadership.

"He had such a depth of experience in the organization," remembered **Adam**

**Harrington**, director of service development. “He had an understanding of the operator and customer experience that was invaluable as a leader.”

John is survived by his wife Kim, six children and five grandchildren. Additional information about John’s life and career will be shared at a later time. Services are pending.

#### Support available

Free counseling is available through Sand Creek. Call 1-888-243-5744 or visit [SandCreekEAP.com](http://SandCreekEAP.com) (company code: metcouncil).



Celebrate Black History Month by sharing your talent

The Black History Month Committee is inviting employees to participate in an online talent contest to help celebrate Black History Month.

To participate, employees are invited to submit short videos showing their talents, like singing. Videos should be submitted as soon as possible.

Videos can be uploaded to YouTube or shared through OneDrive with **Traci Williamson** ([traci.williamson@metrotransit.org](mailto:traci.williamson@metrotransit.org)) and **Drew Kerr** ([drew.kerr@metrotransit.org](mailto:drew.kerr@metrotransit.org)).

The videos will be shared during online events hosted by the Black History Month Committee every Friday in February, which is Black History Month. Attendees will have a chance to vote for their favorites, and multiple rounds of voting will occur if there are enough entries. Invitations to February’s events will be sent soon.

For more information, contact committee members **Traci Williamson**, **Devona Love** or **Demetre Muhammad**.

#### CUSTOMERS TELL Us How We’re DOING

### East Metro bus operator helps reunite lost child

When an 8-year-old boarded his Route 21 bus alone and cold, East Metro Operator **Greg Johnson** didn’t hesitate to act. “I couldn’t let this kid off the bus – you could tell something was wrong,” he said.

But when Johnson called for help, the child became distraught. “I could tell the child was trying to regulate their fear, the only way they knew how,” he said. “They needed time to work it out.”

When Metro Transit police officers **Soonem Teng** and **Heather Schumacher** arrived, Johnson told them the child would need to be treated delicately. When the child calmed down, police reunited them with their mother.

Johnson doesn’t know why the child came onboard, but is glad he was able to help. “I hope whatever caused this situation gets better for this kid,” Johnson said.

#### Complete Employee Engagement Survey by January 7

Employees are encouraged to complete the Employee Engagement & Satisfaction Survey by Friday, Jan. 7. 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

To take the survey, scan this QR code. Paper copies are also available in breakrooms.



### Congratulations to...

**Bruce Otiso**, who will begin as assistant manager-BRT operations on January 1. During his 22-year career at Metro Transit, Bruce has served as a bus operator, train operator and transit supervisor.

**Trinity Jensen**, who was recently promoted to supply chain supervisor. Trinity began as a bus operator in 1996 and has spent the past 20 years in Material Management, working in nearly every stockroom.

**Kristen Fritz**, who was recently promoted to rail senior supervisor. After a decade as a Minnesota State Trooper, Fritz joined Metro Transit as a rail supervisor in 2019.



The Insights newsletter is published weekly. For more information, visit Insights on MetNet. A link can be found on the homepage. Feedback and story ideas can be sent to [insights@metrotransit.org](mailto:insights@metrotransit.org).