

# INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

January 28, 2022



## After 50 years of service, “happy people” keep longest-serving employee coming back

You don't stay at the same job for a half century without really liking your colleagues.

“It's the happy people,” said Revenue Processing Specialist **Ian Stevens**, who celebrated his 50th anniversary at Metro Transit this week.

Stevens is just the second Metro Transit employee to reach that milestone. The longest-serving Metro Transit employee is Sy Sharp, who retired in 2016 with 52 years of service – a record the 71-year-old Stevens may or may not break.

“When people ask, I say, ‘What I like about it is if I don't want to do it anymore, I don't have to,’” Stevens said.

It was Stevens' wife Micki who encouraged him to apply shortly after leaving the Army all those years ago. “I thought it was going to be party time, until 11 days later my wife said, ‘No, you're going to go get a job,’” Stevens said.

But sorting cash and coins, it turned out, was a natural fit for Stevens, who excelled at math in school. A good work-life balance, friendly co-workers to picnic and go bowling with and good benefits have also kept him coming back.

Today, Stevens is part of a six-person crew that works out of the Heywood Garage, sorting cash and coins deposited into fareboxes.

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## Dispatcher Bob Patkoff retires after 32 years of service

After 32 years of service, Dispatcher **Bob Patkoff** retired this week out of South Garage.

Patkoff began his career in transit in 1973, as a baggage handler for an interstate bus company out of Dallas, Texas. Working in interstate busing kept him away from home more than he wanted, though, and he eventually arrived in Minnesota where, in 1990, he started as a part-time operator. Patkoff has been a full-time dispatcher in bus and rail since 2002.

In retirement, he and his wife plan to be “snowbirds,” splitting their time between Minnesota and Oklahoma, the state he was raised and has family and friends.



## Big projects bring big challenges, big rewards

From Nick Thompson, Deputy General Manager-Capital Projects

The METRO Green Line Extension is the largest construction project in our state's history. So, it stands to reason that we'd encounter some unforeseen challenges on the path to its completion.



One of the biggest challenges we're facing is in Minneapolis, where the construction of a light rail tunnel is proving far more complicated than we'd anticipated.

The project has also expanded to include a barrier protection wall between light rail and freight rail tracks and a station in Eden Prairie that had been deferred during the design process.

This week, the Council accounted for these and other developments by authorizing staff to settle with a civil construction contractor working on the project. The \$210 million agreement will extend our construction timeline by up to 34 months.

The Green Line Extension is now expected to open in 2027, about four years later than planned. We also estimate that at least \$450 million in additional funding will need to be secured to complete the project.

This is difficult, disappointing news to deliver to you, to our partners and to all those who are eager to enjoy the benefits of this new service. The setbacks we've faced are especially felt by project office staff who are working tirelessly to keep this project moving forward.

As hard as this is, though, this is an important milestone in the life of this project. This settlement will set construction benchmarks and a dispute resolution process that together provide the clarity and assurance we need to move forward.

At Metro Transit, this adjusted timeline also means we'll have more opportunity to build the workforce we'll need to operate this service and other future additions to our transit network. Thank you in advance for everything you're doing to prepare for what lies ahead.

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It is also worth remembering that we didn't get where we are today without ambition and perseverance. Anyone who helped design, build, and open our first two light rail lines knows these projects are full of uncertainties, risks, and challenges.

But our region will face even bigger issues if we let today's difficulties disrupt our vision for creating a stronger network of light rail and Bus Rapid Transit lines that will benefit our region for generations.

When it opens, the Green Line Extension will give people more freedom to choose where they live, work and play, and create a healthier, more vibrant region for everyone to enjoy. Its positive effects, including new housing and trail improvements, are already being felt throughout the corridor.

So, thank you for keeping the faith that we are on the right path. And thank you for continuing to do the hard but necessary work that will get us and our region where we need to go.

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Awarding Accomplishment: Lance Wallace,  
Transit Supervisor

Transit Supervisor  
**Lance Wallace** wasn't quite sure what he was getting into when he volunteered to take the lead



on an effort to bring specially equipped vaccination buses everywhere from St. Paul's Hallie Q. Brown Community Center to International Falls.

But as he's done several times during his five years in Street Operations, he stepped up and took charge.

This week, he was recognized for doing so as part of the Awarding Accomplishment program. The program recognizes supervisors and frontline staff whose actions reflect a strong commitment to Metro Transit's Guiding Principles.

For several months last year, Wallace helped transport nurses and vaccines, worked with clinic hosts and MnDOT to park and store buses and partnered with garage and Transit Control Center staff to schedule operators. Wallace said it was gratifying to see the buses meeting the demand for vaccines.

"The earliest ones where we served more than 100 people a day were probably the most rewarding because it really felt like we were getting a lot done," he said.

CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

**"Thank you so much!"**

Bus operator **Hassan Johnson** recently received a commendation for his onboard demeanor.

*I don't ride often due to the pandemic, but I will when I need to see my doctor. This bus driver is the best driver I've ever had, and I've ridden with him many times. He makes sure people are wearing their masks properly and ensures elderly people take their time to safely sit down. He also keeps his calm when dealing with unruly customers. Thank you so much!*

Sharon L.

Wallace was nominated by Street Operations Manager **Antoinette Brasson**. In her nomination, Brasson said Wallace is always willing to take on special projects and to help his teammates. While traveling, he helped get other supervisors up to speed; and he recently developed the department's Standard Operating Procedure.

Wallace began his career 17 years ago as a bus operator. Today, he works overnight shifts, supporting operations across the region.

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#### COVID-19 reminders

- Due to high demand, employees should only schedule tests at Well@ Work clinics if they are experiencing symptoms. Appointments can be scheduled online at [healthpartners.com](https://healthpartners.com) or by calling 952-967-5474 (St. Paul) or 952-967-7468 (Heywood).
- On-site employees can request N95 and KN95 masks through a manager or supervisor. Public health officials are recommending the use of these masks in higher-risk settings because they offer the best protection against transmission.

#### Share your talents during Black History Month

The Black History Month Committee is still seeking employees to participate in an online talent contest to help celebrate Black History Month in February. To participate, employees should record and submit videos of their talents as soon as possible. Videos should be emailed to [traci.williamson@metrotransit.org](mailto:traci.williamson@metrotransit.org). Collected videos will be shared during virtual Black History Month events that will be held in February.

#### Health equity and radical healing session on January 31

Employees are invited to join an online session about the economic and health costs of racism, and how to respond to and heal from racial trauma, on Monday, Jan. 31. The session begins at 11 a.m. and will be led by Jamil Stamschror-Lott of Creative Kuponya. If you did not receive a calendar invite, please email [fitforlife@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:fitforlife@metc.state.mn.us) for more information.

#### Help finalize a BIPOC Employee Resource Group

All employees are invited to help finalize a new Employee Resource Group (ERG) that will serve as a resource for those interested in supporting and networking with staff who identify as Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC). The group is now finishing its charter, a step toward becoming a Council-recognized ERG that employees can devote paid time to participating in. For more information, email [victoria.dan@metrotransit.org](mailto:victoria.dan@metrotransit.org).