

INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

February 4, 2022



Service Development Administrator **Rita Miller** retired this week with 47 years of service. Miller began her career as a clerk typist at the Old Snelling Garage and later served at the Overhaul Base and Instruction Center. In retirement, she plans to spend more time with her grandchildren.

History Highlight: Earliest Black transit employees

Historical records suggest the first Black streetcar employee was likely Sylvester Carter, who began as a car cleaner at the North Side Station in 1937; the first Black streetcar motorman is believed to be Claude Mason, who was hired in 1945.



According to a 1945 front-page article in the Minneapolis Spokesman, Mason graduated Central High School and "went into training as a streetcar operator after he was laid off at the Twin Cities Ordnance plant where he drove an ammunition truck." Carter, the newspaper reported, also served as a mechanic's helper, switchman, repairman and as a substitute conductor.

Among the few other early Black operators was William Massie, who began in 1947 and retired with 37 years of service. Massie lived just a few blocks off University Avenue and, after streetcars were retired, drove the Route 16A on University Avenue.

"The thing that was exciting to me was that he'd bring the bus home for lunch and park it right in front of the house," his daughter Sue Massie said. "All the neighbors thought it was cool."

William Massie's son, Dale Massie, retired from Metro Transit in 2018 after 30 years of service.

Communications and the Equity & Inclusion Team are interested in learning more about Black history at Metro Transit and its predecessors. If you have more information to share, please email rachel.cagle@metrotransit.org.

Metro Transit celebrates Black History Month

The Black History Month Committee will host two live events later this month to celebrate Black History and share music videos submitted by staff. The events will be held on:

- Friday, Feb. 18, noon to 1 p.m.
- Friday, Feb. 25, noon to 1 p.m.

In addition to the talent contest, the events will feature a singing of the Black National Anthem, an introduction to the BIPOC Employee Resource Group (ERG) and giveaways. For more information, please email traci.williamson@metrotransit.org.

Reflecting on our past to create a better future

From General Manager Wes Kooistra

Today is Transit Equity Day, which commemorates Rosa Parks' birthday and the role transit can play in helping our communities become more fair and just. February is also Black History Month, a time to honor the contributions of Black Americans.



To commemorate these occasions, our Equity & Inclusion Team created posters honoring Parks and other brave Black women who were arrested for refusing to give up their seats that will appear on buses throughout the day.

The team will also be sharing more of our own Black history as part of a larger campaign to connect our past to our present.

I want to thank the Equity & Inclusion Team for leading us in this important work. But this is work we all must share.

We cannot change the past. But we can learn from it. Today is an opportunity to reflect on transit's historic role in furthering racial and economic disparities, as well as its current and potential influence in reducing disparities that still exist.

We have come a long way from that courageous moment when Rosa Parks refused to surrender her seat to a white passenger, but there is still much more to do to better connect people to opportunities. My thanks to all of you who work every day to identify and address improvements that are needed to deliver a fair and just service to our riders.

Cautious optimism on COVID-19

As we've learned over the past two years, it's impossible to predict where the pandemic will go next. But the decline we've seen in cases over the past week is encouraging.

I want to repeat my appreciation for all those who worked so hard over the past month to manage and work through a rapid rise in cases, especially our operations team who responded remarkably well while we were so short-staffed.

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I also want to thank all those who are supporting our continued response efforts.

This week, we began piloting a new rapid testing program at our garages and other transportation facilities that will save people from having to seek testing elsewhere if they are exposed or are returning to work after testing positive.

In some cases, this effort will allow us to proactively screen individuals whose work requires them to be together for longer periods of time.

Our Engineering & Facilities team is also making great strides toward creating safer and more flexible workspaces that will support a wider return to office, including the renovation of the former Heywood driver's room into a shared workspace.

We must continue to move ahead cautiously. But we can all take hope in the fact that things are moving in the right direction.

Support for transit expansion continues

The recently announced changes to the Green Line Extension's budget and timeline have understandably raised a lot of questions. But the past week has also been a reminder of how much support there is for this project and other plans to expand our transit network.

Among the strongest shows of support came from Gov. Tim Walz, whose supplemental budget proposal includes \$200 million for the Blue Line Extension. This represents the largest contribution the state could make at this point. This most recent proposal comes in addition to the Governor's bonding recommendation of \$60 million that will support the continued expansion of the Arterial Bus Rapid Transit network.

I look forward to seeing the Blue Line Extension project advance in the coming year, beginning with the identification of a revised community-supported route that will bring light rail service to north Minneapolis and the northwest metro. Thank you to the project team who continues to involve community members at every step along the way.

If you haven't followed closely, I encourage you to review the latest route and station plans and to follow along as we work toward a recommendation later this year.

Now hiring: Transit Supervisors, Fare Collections Specialists

Applications are being accepted this month for two positions that are open only to current employees:

CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

"She's that good!"

Transit Information Center representative **Jacqueline Crushshon** recently received a commendation for her customer service.

I got some assistance, and I won't be able to say enough about her. She is so patient and understanding. It's very clear she has a mastery of transit information! She's that good!

Jim L.

- Street Operations is accepting applications for Transit Supervisor through Wednesday, Feb. 9. There are three current openings that will be filled immediately; other qualified applicants will go on an eligibility list for future openings.
- Revenue Operations is accepting applications for Fare Collections Specialist through Monday, Feb. 14. There is currently one open, floating position that will serve all garages; schedule details will be discussed during the interview process. An eligibility list will be maintained for future openings.

Dozens of summer internships open to degree-seeking students and recent graduates were also posted this week. Applications will be accepted through February 28. Interns will begin in late-May and serve through mid-August.

For more information, visit metro council.org/employment.

Congratulations and thank you to...

- Ruter Operator **Sarah Pollard** and **Metro Transit police**, who recently worked with United Twin Cities to distribute dozens of blankets, hand warmers and comfort food to customers at the Brooklyn Center Transit Center.
- **Bus Maintenance**, for recently completing the installation of operator barriers on the active fleet of more than 600 buses. Technicians at the Overhaul Base, supported by staff at each garage, began installing the barriers in 2018. All new buses are coming equipped with barriers.
- **Operators at Ruter Garage**, who recently had 2 consecutive weeks without a responsible collision.
- **Train Operators**, who went the entire month of January without running through red signals or work zones. Before last month, train operators went three months in the summer of 2021, and four months in the summer of 2020 without overruns.

