

INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

February 11, 2022



Bus operators helped celebrate Transit Equity Day on Friday, Feb. 4, by reserving seats in honor of Rosa Parks, who was born on that day in 1913. Transit Equity Day is an annual commemoration of the continued effort to create more equitable communities through transit. Clockwise from left to right are, from Ruter Garage: **Sarah Pollard**, **Rich Makizza**, **America Williams**, **James Baker** and **Randy Webb**.

Operator hiring efforts expanding as need continues

Efforts to hire more bus operators continue, and some new strategies are being introduced to help in the recruitment effort.

- Beginning this month, advertisements promoting operator hiring will focus on the potential to grow and build a career at Metro Transit.
- Application preparation materials that can be offered to walk-in job seekers who visit the Instruction Center are being prepared with information about application assistance and CDL permit training.
- Applicants are being invited to text 612-444-1161 to communicate with Customer Relations and TIC staff about applying to become a bus operator.

Bus operator hiring events where job seekers can apply and interview in one day will also continue to be held at the Instruction Center every month. The next hiring events are:

- Saturday, Feb. 12, 9 a.m. to noon
- Wednesday, Feb. 16, 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

All employees are encouraged to support operator recruitment efforts by sharing information with their networks. Business cards with hiring information can be obtained through **Kim Littlejohn** in Bus Transportation.

As a reminder, employees who refer successful operator candidates will receive a \$600 bonus.

Currently, there are around 1,160 bus operators, about 30 short of the ideal number based on current schedules.

Service changes that will take effect on Saturday, March 26, will reduce the number of operators needed to provide regular service but more operators will be needed to expand service and account for attrition.

New structure will strengthen our shared mission

From Brian Funk, Chief Operating Officer

Over my 20 years at Metro Transit, I've been fortunate to hold different roles in bus and rail transportation. As a deputy and interim chief operating officer, I've also gotten to know more about our maintenance departments.



What I've learned from all these experiences is that the people directly responsible for our service have a lot in common.

Operators and maintenance staff are all skilled workers with a focus on safe, clean and reliable service. Supervisors who work on the street, along our rail lines and in our control centers are all talented communicators and problem solvers. And management staff across operations are all committed to helping their employees succeed.

To better reflect and strengthen these shared missions, we are reorganizing our operations divisions. Under the new organizational structure, employees will be grouped by the focus of their work as opposed to a structure grouped by mode.

In practice, that means all bus and rail maintenance staff will be led by a new deputy chief operating officer-maintenance and that all bus and rail transportation staff will be led by a new deputy chief operating officer-transportation.

The new organizational structure will become effective when these new positions are filled in the coming months through a nationwide talent search.

For nearly everyone in operations, no immediate change will be felt – your roles and responsibilities, work locations and supervisor or manager will all stay the same.

Over time, though, this change will produce better outcomes for our staff, our organization, and our customers by:

- Providing employees more exposure and access to diverse career pathways.
- Strengthening our workforce through coordinated recruitment and training efforts.

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- Creating new opportunities to share resources and knowledge, helping us address customer priorities more effectively.

I recognize change can be difficult. But if the pandemic has taught us anything it is that we must be open to new ways of doing business. Continued workforce challenges, a growing network of BRT and LRT lines, and new technology will make it even more important to be nimble moving forward.

So, thank you in advance for supporting and engaging in the work that lies ahead. And as always, I welcome your questions and feedback. Please contact me directly if you'd like to discuss these changes in more detail.

Setting the foundation for bus fleet's future

Earlier this week, the Council adopted a plan that will help guide our efforts to create a more sustainable bus fleet. This plan has also been submitted to state lawmakers whose support will help us in this work.

I want to thank all those who helped create our Zero Emission Bus Transition Plan, including staff in Engineering & Facilities, Bus Maintenance and Service Development.

This is an important milestone. But it is a beginning, not an end. Moving forward, we will be called to carefully evaluate the types of buses and equipment we buy, to educate ourselves on operation and maintenance best practices, to use low-emission buses where they're needed the most and to secure funding to support this important initiative.

Thank you to all those who helped set the foundation on which all this future work will rest.

Know Your Operator: Andre Williams

Andre Williams is at Metro Transit to help people. "I've gone through some things," Williams said. "Why not share what I've learned?"

Over the course of his young adult life, he's learned to work through tragedy. As a 13-year-old in Memphis, Tenn., he was in a car accident that took the lives of his father and his two sisters.

Today, he tries to help anyone onboard his bus experiencing any issue, small or large.

"It's more than just getting people from point A to point B," he said. "Every day, I pick up a person who might need a little encouragement."

Recently, a distressed customer felt they had nowhere to go and that no one loved them. A few kind words made all the difference. "By the end

CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

"Safe, professional, and courteous"

Heywood Operator **Brian Logan** recently received a commendation for noticing this customer in need.

I was not paying attention to the exact time of the scheduled stop at Penn and Plymouth and found myself running to try and catch the bus. The driver was somehow aware of me sprinting and graciously opened the door for me. If I would have missed this bus, it would have been my fault. Because of this kind bus driver, I got to work on time! For as long as I've ridden with this driver, he's always been very safe, professional, and courteous.

Bill D.

of our conversation, I could see something lift off of them," Williams said.

Being an operator is very different from his previous 20-year career working overnight at a semiconductor company. The 12-hour shifts were process and not people-oriented.

"When I started my career with transit, my daughters were shocked," he said. "They told me that I never talk."

After 7 years of service, he says he's found a new family at Nicollet Garage and plans to retire here. "It's a great job where I can punch in and punch out then spend time with my friends and family," Williams said.

Congratulations to these employees who retired in January

Thomas Sabourin, Dispatcher, Heywood, 43 years
 Daniel Schafer, Technician, Nicollet, 41 years
 Charles Rawson, Technician, South, 41 years
 Arthur Shelton, Operator, South, 41 years
 Keith Stein, Maintenance Manager, South, 41 years
 James Underwood, Operator, East Metro, 37 years
 Harry Mandik, Train Operator, 35 years
 Kelly McKee, Operator, East Metro, 34 years
 Ken Benzel, Assistant Transportation Manager, 30 years
 Kevin Funchie, Helper, Nicollet, 29 years
 Jerry Fredine, Train Operator, 25 years
 Reyford Hayes, Operator, Heywood, 24 years
 Caroline Boekhoff, Operator, Nicollet, 23 years
 Daniel Costello, Operator, South, 22 years
 Kevin Funchie, Helper, Nicollet, 19 years
 Tyra Iverson, Clerical Assistant, 17 years
 Kari Sachs, Operator, Nicollet, 17 years
 Sharon Williams, Operator, Heywood, 15 years
 William Long, Technician, Nicollet, 14 years
 David Payne, Operator, East Metro, 14 years
 Michael McGinley, Head Stockkeeper, 12 years
 Thomas Johnston, Operator, East Metro, 9 years
 Edward Lee, Operator, South, 6 years
 Sharon Stoneman, Transit Information Representative, 6 years