

INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

February 25, 2022



Staff across the organization worked through a storm system that brought several inches of fresh snow, high winds and freezing temperatures to the region on Tuesday. Only a few buses had to be recovered and by late afternoon buses were largely running just a few minutes behind schedule. Read more about the storm response at metrotransit.org/ridersalmanac.

What to know this week

Black History Month celebration concludes today: The Black History Month Committee will host the finale of their two-part “Transit’s Got Talent” event today, Friday, Feb. 25, as Black History Month draws to an end. During today’s event, attendees will have a chance to vote on the three finalists who submitted music videos – South Dispatcher **Theodis Turner**, Train Operator **Karl Obermeyer** and Heywood Operator **Tameka Alamir**. Joining the festivities will be Walter “Q Bear” Banks, Jr., a longtime KMOJ DJ and operations manager. For more information, email traci.williamson@metrotransit.org.

Several Women’s Month events planned: Advancing Women in Transit (AWT) is hosting several events in March in celebration of Women’s Month. All employees are invited to attend; each event will run from noon to 1 p.m.

- On Tuesday, March 8, International Women’s Day, AWT will host a conversation about breaking the bias.
- On Tuesday, March 22, AWT will host a discussion about the history of women in transit.
- On Wednesday, March 30, AWT and Equity & Inclusion staff will partner with staff from LA Metro to host a panel discussion on gender policy in transit.

For more information on any these events, email AWT Chair **Ruby Daniels** at ruby.daniels@metrotransit.org.

Feedback sought on Route 22: Metro Transit is asking for input on how to improve service on Route 22 as part of the Better Bus Routes program. The program combines service and facility improvements like consolidating bus stops, installing new shelters and simplified routes. Feedback is being collected through March 23 and changes would take effect in late August. For more information, visit metrotransit.org/route-22.

To get where we want to go, Human Resources needs your help

From Marcy Syman, Director of Human Resources

Last year, we hired more than 330 people at Metro Transit, the majority of whom were brought on as bus operators and other frontline staff.



But just as many people retired or left for other jobs. And our workforce needs will only increase in the coming years as we expand and improve the services we provide.

Many of our departments are already experiencing difficulties from being short-staffed and are understandably worried about how they’ll meet future needs as the competition for workers intensifies.

So, in Human Resources we will be putting a lot of our attention this year on recruiting, hiring, retaining, and promoting talented people who reflect the communities we serve and who are committed to our public mission.

While Human Resources will lead this work, it is not ours alone. I encourage all of you to support these efforts by sharing your experiences and career opportunities with your personal and professional networks.

Your support can help us make meaningful progress in several other priority areas as well. To provide just a few examples of how you can help:

- Get involved in the shared effort to build a respectful and inclusive work culture. In practice, this could mean providing feedback through the Great Workplace Project, joining or supporting an Employee Resource Group, mentoring a colleague, or becoming a representative on the Equity & Inclusion Team. Whatever it is you chose to do, please know your participation benefits our entire organization.
- Help staff understand and appreciate all the career pathways that exist at the Council. We are actively exploring several new programs that will help frontline staff access new opportunities in management and skilled trades. Even

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if you aren't directly involved in these efforts, you can help by raising awareness of these programs and encouraging staff to participate. And if you want to build your career here, please take full advantage of these opportunities!

- Prioritizing employee wellness. We've all been through a lot over the past few years. And more changes are on the horizon as our workplace and our region recover and rebuild from the pandemic. All of us can preserve and enhance our wellbeing by participating in Council-sponsored wellness programs and by encouraging those around us to do the same.

Of course, the Human Resources workplan goes into much greater detail about the work we're doing to improve in many other areas, including our internship, disability management, affirmative action, and racial equity training programs.

As a department and as an organization, we are also committed to sharing the results of all this work. In the coming weeks, please look for more information about a new tool you can use to track the progress we're making in key areas like hiring.

Thank you for supporting us so we can support you, and in turn the region we're all here to serve.

Inform workplace improvements by participating in March focus groups

All employees are invited to participate in guided conversations that will help inform efforts to improve work culture.

- A total of 12 focus groups will be scheduled throughout March. Groups will meet both virtually and in-person, with COVID-19 protocols in place.
- Employees who participate will be paid their standard hourly wage for participating. Each session will last 90 minutes.
- Sessions will include six to ten people from different departments and be led by a consultant.
- Feedback will be summarized for leadership; employees will not be identified.
- Space is limited. If focus groups fill up, employees who cannot participate will be invited to complete an online survey.

For more information, email sarah.berres@metrotransit.org.

Engagement survey results coming soon

Responses to the recent Employee Engagement & Satisfaction Survey are now being reviewed. Survey results will be shared in the coming weeks. Thank you to all those who participated in this survey.

CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

"He was all-around jolly in spirit"

Operator **Lawrence Evans** recently received a commendation for his onboard demeanor.

I had a wonderful driver. He was friendly, used the annunciator and told us the Nicollet Mall stop was closed. He happily gave directions to passengers (including me). He was all-around jolly in spirit. Since I was on my way to a doctor's appointment and nervous, it was a nice treat to drive with such a kind person.

Linnae

Know Your Operator: Taj Khan, South Garage

In 1991, when **Taj Khan** traveled alone to Moorhead, Minn., from New York, a fellow Pakistani student met him at the bus depot to bring him to college.

Thirty years later, he found himself transporting Afghani refugees as a bus operator for Metro Transit. The special trip from the MSP Airport to a hotel was provided earlier this month at the request of the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Operators **Floyd Seres**, **Terrence Brown**, and **Hector Espinoza** also assisted.

"I know what it's like to travel to a place where you don't know anyone," Khan said. "Somebody helped me."

Growing up in Peshawar, Pakistan, near the border of Afghanistan, he learned a bit of Pashto at a young age from his nanny who watched him while his mother worked as a teacher. That experience helped him translate and welcome the refugees as they entered a new life in the United States.

"They're still in a bit of shock given all they've gone through," he said. "If I can assist, why not help?"

Khan didn't originally plan to be a bus operator. After years of working in restaurant management, an experience helping his daughter with autism board a bus led him to become a school bus driver.

"I wanted to give back and be a driver who helps kids and people with disabilities," Khan said.

This experience eventually led him to Metro Transit, where he's happy to help customers every day. "I get paid to do this," he said. "Sometimes we forget how lucky we are."



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.