

INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

March 11, 2022



Safe operators celebrated at South, Nicollet garages

Multiple operators have been celebrated recently with safe driving awards.

Above, operators **Rodney Smith**, center left, and **Hussein Mohamed**, center right, were joined last week by safety staff and garage management at South Garage. Rodney received a 42-year safe driving award, becoming just the second known operator to reach that milestone. Hussein received a 20-year safe driving award.



Other operators who have been recognized in recent weeks include, from left to right:

- **Ron Williams**, Nicollet 26 years
- **Brendan Weiss**, Nicollet, 26 years, and **Joseph Flascher**, Nicollet, 20 years
- **Tony Taylor**, Nicollet 22 years
- **David Peterson**, South 20 years

Save the Dates: Bus Rodeo

The Metro Transit Bus Rodeo returns this summer, at a new location. The annual skills competition will be held June 20-25 near the Mall of America. Operators who are interested in competing should speak with a safety specialist or garage coordinator. Top finishers will go on to compete in the Minnesota State Bus Rodeo, which will be held in Austin, Minn. July 15-16.

Decision to close Ruter was hard but necessary

From General Manager Wes Kooistra

This week, staff at the Ruter Garage were informed that the facility will be taken out of active use as a bus garage when the new Minneapolis bus garage opens a year from now.



I know that for many this was not easy news to receive – employees at Ruter chose to work there for many reasons, including feeling part of its community of employees.

The decision to close Ruter was not taken lightly. But this is the right business choice for our organization.

Since the start of the pandemic, we have reduced service by about 20%. This means we have fewer buses on the street every day, and fewer operators reporting to our garages.

We hope service will be restored as our ridership and our workforce recover over time. But based on our five-year projected ridership and service levels, the opening of the new Minneapolis bus garage will provide the capacity we need without utilizing Ruter.

Designed with direct input from staff, the new Minneapolis garage will be a modern, state-of-the-art facility. Its welcoming features include natural lighting, indoor and outdoor gathering spaces, a fitness room, and a mothers' room.

The new garage is also key to our planned transition to electric buses and is in an ideal location to support the local and Bus Rapid Transit services that are seeing our strongest ridership.

Ruter will be retained and repurposed for other needs.

Potential reuses will be better defined this year as we look at all our long-range facility needs. For now, it's safe to say this extra space could give us needed flexibility to store equipment and buses that are either stored outdoors or can crowd other sites.

Making the best use of our available space is part of a broader, continuous

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effort to make sure all our support facilities are operating effectively, and that all our employees have safe and welcoming spaces where they can do their best work.

New hoists, bus washes and fueling stations have or will soon be installed at many locations. At Nicollet Garage, we are renovating the maintenance offices and break areas. Mothers' rooms are being created at many of our support facilities.

There is excitement behind these plans. Still, we know that changes of this magnitude can be disruptive.

We want to support you through this transition and sharing your questions and concerns is an important part of this process. We are committed to sharing additional details as know more. Thank you for your patience as the details of transition plans are worked out and shared.

What will the new Minneapolis bus garage be named?

During design and construction, the garage being built just north of Heywood Garage has largely been referred to as the "new Minneapolis Bus Garage." The garage has not yet been officially named, and a couple of options remain under consideration.

In general, Metro Transit uses geography to name public and support facilities (i.e. the I-35W & Lake Street Station, South Garage and Chicago-Lake Transit Center). The new garage will also use a geographic term in its name. More information will be shared soon.

Annual aerosol training classes scheduled

Annual aerosol training classes will be held at the Metro Transit Police and Office Facility later this month.

Any bus or train operator who wants to carry aerosol for self-defense purposes must attend an initial certification course and be recertified every two years.

Operators will also learn conflict management skills and techniques they can use whether or not they get certified to carry aerosol.

Attendance is voluntary and must be done on an employee's own time. This year's classes will be held on the following dates:

- Tuesday, March 22, 9 a.m., noon
- Thursday, March 24, noon, 7 p.m.
- Saturday, March 26, 8 a.m.
- Tuesday, March 29, noon

Operators should contact their garage coordinator to register. Space is limited.

CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

"I honestly cannot sing her praises enough"

Heywood Operator **Mary Adway** recently received a commendation for her onboard demeanor.

This driver is AMAZING!!! I honestly cannot sing her praises enough. She always greets us with a smile and cheer. She's patient and understanding, and always very efficient.

On three separate occasions, I've heard her give new riders detailed instructions on where to get off and where to walk to reach their destination. She's always willing to lend an ear to anyone and is such a pleasant conversationalist. You can tell she genuinely cares about people.

*This care is demonstrated in her attention to even the smallest details – like when I got off at 5th street, I'm usually the only one remaining on the bus. The first time I got off, she asked me where it'd be easiest for me to get off. And she's never forgotten. It's a little thing and obviously, I could just walk the extra distance, no problem. But she **remembers and cares anyways. ** Honestly, I know of no one who better exemplifies customer service and personal accountability.*

Nicolle S.

Congratulations to these employees who retired in February

- Rita Miller, Service Development Administrator, 47 years
- Robin Betland, Mechanic Technician, Overhaul Base, 42 years
- John McConnell, Helper, Overhaul Base, 34 years
- Robert Patkoff, Relief Mark-Up Dispatcher-South, 32 years
- Debbie Serrine, Helper, Overhaul Base, 27 years
- David Steen, Coordinator-Material Management, 16 years
- Ronald Carlson, Operator-Heywood, 15 years
- Jerome Benzo, Train Operator, 14 years
- Paul Wilson, Technician-Heywood, 14 years
- Loren Rydlund, Technician-Overhaul Base, 14 years
- Neal Rambeck, Electro Mechanical Technician, 13 years
- Gary Johnson, Electro Mechanical Technician, 13 years
- Terry Chacos, Signals Technician, 10 years
- Diane White, Principal Administrative Specialist-Transit Police, 5 years

Congratulations to these employees who celebrated work anniversaries in February

25 years

- Kelci Stones, Market Development Supervisor

20 years

- Abdulqadir Ahmed, Revenue Collections Supervisor
- Lorna Sheehan, LRT Helper
- Judith Jackson, Operator-Heywood
- Joseph Kalina, Transit Control Center Supervisor



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