

INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

December 9, 2022



'TAP super-champions' recognized for outreach work

At the beginning of the pandemic, **Andrea Kiepe** needed a way to safely promote the Transit Assistance Program, or TAP, which allows income-qualified riders to board any bus or train, any time, for \$1.

As the program's coordinator, she scheduled twice-weekly outreach events at busy boarding areas and, to her surprise, people from several departments stepped forward to help. Seeing the enthusiasm, the effort has continued ever since.

"We've been able to keep this going in a way that just wouldn't have been possible without dozens and dozens of people helping," Andrea said.

This week, employees who have been especially helpful were celebrated for their efforts at a casual lunchtime get-together. Those who were recognized as TAP 'super champions,' are pictured above with Andrea, far left. From left to right, they are:

- **Richard Angelini**, among several service center representatives who routinely help people enroll in TAP
- **Tenille Warren**, senior commuter programs specialist
- **Traci Williamson**, fare collections supervisor
- **Jamie Holt**, mechanic technician

The ongoing outreach work, along with Marketing efforts and partnerships with service providers across the region, is making a difference. More than 10,000 people are currently enrolled in TAP and nearly 837,000 TAP rides have been taken through the end of October, up 8% compared to the same time last year.

Staff-supported outreach events will resume in early 2023, and Andrea hopes that even more staff get involved as word continues to spread.

"It's a very tangible and rewarding way to see the impact we can have on people," Andrea said. "So many times, people will say, 'I've been meaning to do this, thank you for being here.'"

Warming spaces open: People who are unsheltered can now find temporary refuge at winter warming spaces in Ramsey and Hennepin counties. In Ramsey County, a free shuttle service will be provided from 9 p.m. to 6:30 a.m. every night. Information about the warming spaces and routes serving these locations is being made available at boarding areas and online. Learn more about the Ramsey County warming spaces at ramseycounty.us, and learn more about Hennepin County warming spaces at hennepin.us.

Improving conditions on a growing system will take all hands

From Lesley Kandaras, Chief of Staff

When developing Metro Transit's Safety & Security Action Plan, we asked employees and riders how we could help them feel safer using transit. We heard a lot about the importance of having a well-regulated system where officers or other Metro Transit staff are visible and nearby.



But having a strong official presence on transit, we heard, is just part of improving perceptions of public safety on transit.

Customers told us that the conditions on our system also affect their sense of safety. They feel safer when our vehicles appear clean. They feel safer when our boarding areas are well-kept and lighted.

Keeping our system clean, especially in winter, is a daunting task largely led by facilities and vehicle maintenance. Together, these employees do a commendable job under very challenging circumstances.

And their responsibilities will only grow as we introduce new services like the METRO D Line, which brought more than 60 new shelters and two-dozen new buses into our system. At each new boarding location, there are trash bins to empty, boarding areas to keep clear of snow, and equipment like on-demand heaters and lights to maintain.

So, what are we doing to deliver what our customers are asking for today, and how can we expect to continue doing so as our system grows in the coming years?

Growing and supporting our teams of public facilities workers, facilities technicians, helpers, and cleaners is a one part of the answer.

But our maintenance staff cannot and should not be expected to do this alone.

As outlined in our Safety & Security Action Plan, which is part of Metro Transit's Strategic Plan, several other

continued on next page

steps are being taken to improve conditions on transit, and in turn the experience our customers have when they ride. These include:

- The introduction of security officers. At the Franklin Avenue Station, reports of property damage and vandalism have declined since security officers began working there in September. Based on this initial improvement, we are working to expand security officer presence to the Lake Street/Midtown Station and hope in the next year to bring security officers to other sites.
- Expanding our Adopt-A-Stop program. Since this program was revived almost a year ago, around 100 people, including many of our own employees, have come forward to help us keep an eye on boarding areas, removing litter, reporting damage, and in some cases even shoveling snow.
- Responding to troubled boarding areas. By listening to customers, employees, and community members, and reviewing police data, we can identify locations where we need to step in. For example, the interior waiting area at the Chicago-Lake Transit Center was recently closed for thorough cleaning; we have now re-opened a smaller and easier-to-maintain indoor space. Elsewhere, shelters have been temporarily removed or relocated to interrupt illegal behavior.
- Expanding the use of public art. At the Lake Street/Midtown Station and many other locations, we have hired local public artists to create murals or other artwork that we've seen effectively deter vandalism. We will continue to use this approach in 2023 and beyond.
- Updating and communicating about our Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct sets forward the expectations we have of customers while on our system. We are reviewing and updating our language and will work with the Metropolitan Council to establish the Code of Conduct as Council policy. Once the policy is adopted, we will ensure the rules are visible and well-known to everyone riding our system.

Clearly, a lot of work is being done by staff from many departments. Just as clearly, there is also much more to do. As we work together to improve conditions on transit, I want to thank all those who developed and are now advancing Metro Transit's Safety & Security Action Plan. These efforts do not go unnoticed.

Chief of Staff Lesley Kandaras is the executive sponsor of the Strategic Plan's goal of providing a safe, welcoming, and comfortable service.

CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

"Safe and calm driver"

East Metro Operator **Henry Steward** received a commendation for his customer service.

Driver was quite upstanding. He was nice to wait for me to board. I was a little late getting to the bus stop. Moreover, he stopped a fight on Arcade and Magnolia, honking his horn and telling the men, "You better not!" Safe and calm driver. Many thanks.

Shari M

Know Your Operator: Marva Wagner, Heywood Garage

Marva Wagner felt stuck in her career until she found Metro Transit.

"I worked my way up to assistant manager of an eye care store," Wagner said. "But after multiple times of being blocked from working into a general manager position, I knew I wasn't valued."



So she sought out other career opportunities. She rediscovered Metro Transit while attending the People of Color Career Fair.

"I had some family who worked there when the buses were red and the uniforms were green," she said. "But this organization looked very different."

She was impressed by the diversity of people who were working at the event, by the amount of support applicants were provided throughout the application process.

"It took me a few times to earn my CDL, but when I did, it was like Christmas," she said.

Four years after joining Metro Transit, Wagner said she feels appreciated and is interested in building a career here. Another blessing: the chance to work on the METRO D Line.

"It's faster and better for my Route 5 customers – good working people," she said. "It's also great for operators because we don't have to worry about a farebox and can interact with people more."

Bus operators: Apply to become a mentor by January 13

Experienced bus operators interested in supporting new hires are invited to apply for mentorship roles by Friday, Jan. 13.



Mentors should have at least three years of experience, among other qualifications, and be prepared to regularly meet with newly hired operators during their first year on the job.

Applications forms are available at garages. For more information, email lee.estis@metrotransit.org.



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