

INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

December 1, 2023



Looking for a way to provide experiential learning, Erick Kargerud-Smith, executive director of Saint Paul's KidsPark, began venturing out with students on transit nearly 10 years ago. Using transit, she said, has helped bring them closer to their community, built relationships with operators, and taught them that transit can bring independence.

Read the full story in the email version of Insights.

First-year ridership estimate shows METRO D Line is Metro Transit's busiest BRT line

On its first anniversary this weekend, METRO D Line BRT's estimated 2023 ridership is nearly 3.96 million and is easily Metro Transit's busiest BRT line.

The numbers are exciting even though D Line is in the Route 5 corridor, previously Metro Transit's highest ridership regular bus line.

"Based on existing demand, we knew this was going to be a strong BRT corridor. It really underscores that investing in fast, frequent, and convenient all-day service in our region's core can have a huge impact in the way our communities get around. Go D Line," Arterial Bus Rapid Transit Director Katie Roth said.

To date, D Line has more rides this year than the A Line, C Line, and Orange Line combined, Ridership & Revenue Analyst Mike Watters pointed out.

Here is the projected ridership for the other BRT Lines in the same time period:

- A Line – More than 1.20 million (actual estimate 1,201,190)
- C Line – More than 1.73 million (actual estimate 1,738,270)
- Orange Line – More than 400,000 (actual estimate 428,732)

With five BRT lines now in operation, plans call for 12 BRT lines total to be in operation by 2030. More than a quarter of the region's residents and nearly half of the region's BIPOC and low-income residents will be within a half-mile of a BRT line when the network is fully built out.

The next BRT lines scheduled to open are the METRO B Line on Lake Street and Marshall and Selby avenues (opening in 2025) and the METRO Gold Line along the I-94 corridor east of Saint Paul (opening in 2025).

Long-sought shift will help us build a culture of fare compliance

From General Manager
Lesley Kandaras



Fares are an important source of revenue for Metro Transit, so we offer a variety of products and programs that make fare payments more convenient and affordable.

Still, we need to continually remind people to pay their fares, especially as we expand our light rail and Bus Rapid Transit network and require more of our riders to pay before boarding.

To help ensure people are paying every time they ride, we are embarking on a new approach to encouraging fare compliance.

Beginning Monday morning, Community Service Officers – students on their way to becoming police officers – will ask riders for their proof of fare payment and issue administrative citations to those who haven't paid.

First-time violations will carry fines of up to \$35, which can be reduced in a variety of ways, while repeat offenders will face larger fines and be temporarily prohibited from using transit.

Monday marks an important milestone in publicly launching the Transit Rider Investment Program, or TRIP, that the state legislature passed earlier this year. The legislation requires us to issue administrative citations for fare non-payment and to have a team of unsworn personnel, known as TRIP Agents, take on this task.

We are starting these efforts next week with CSOs while we work to bring TRIP Agents on board early next year.

This is a long-sought shift not just in how we encourage fare compliance, but in how we support riders who expect us to be more visible than ever.

Once fully launched, TRIP Agents will inspect fares, issue administrative citations, share information about fare payment options and programs, help people navigate our system, connect

continued on next page

people to services, and remind people of the expectations put forward in our Code of Conduct.

We are optimistic that this new approach will have several benefits. Of note:

Misdemeanor citations issued by police officers and sent to the courts rarely resulted in paid fines. In contrast, we will now process citations in-house, giving us greater control over how they're tracked and resolved.

Penalties associated with administrative citations are more commensurate with the failure to pay a \$2 fare and can be used as an opportunity to encourage future compliance (fees can be reduced by purchasing fare products).

Instead of conducting fare checks as one of several essential duties, police officers will be able to focus on illegal behaviors. At the same time, having staff whose only responsibilities are fare compliance and customer support means they too can be more focused on their assigned role. We also know that some riders may be more comfortable with unsworn personnel, who will be advised to put their personal safety at the forefront of every interaction.

To be clear, we are not expecting dramatic or immediate changes. With around a dozen part-time CSOs, we will focus our initial efforts on light rail lines and only be able to interact with a small percentage of our ridership.

Still, this is an important step because we will learn from and expand on these efforts over the coming months.

Thank you to everyone who has helped bring us to this point, especially our CSOs, the police officers who are supporting them, and everyone in Bus, Rail and Revenue Operations and Marketing and Transit Information who has spent the last several months preparing for this shift.

These coordinated efforts provide hope that we are on the right path, and that this path will help lead us to a stronger culture of fare compliance.

Learn more about administrative citations on the Riders' Almanac blog.

Instruction Center staff recognized for persevering through 'treadmill of training'

Staff from the Instruction Center were recognized this week for persevering first through one of their busiest years ever.

Nearly 400 bus operators have been hired this year, each beginning their journey at Metro Transit with nearly a month's worth of training at the Instruction Center. Instructors teach

CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

"Knowledgeable operator and takes pride in their work"

North Loop Operator **Joseph Huber** recently received a commendation for their customer service.

Awesome driver. I really wanted to give a shoutout because they were attentive to customers in a very nice way. Great driver. Looking after people who had questions. Knowledgeable operator and takes pride in their work. Top notch and wonderful attitude. The rider who needed assistance was talking with the driver and they provided great info and was gracious and kind.

classes on safe driving, resiliency, and customer service, among other topics.

Amid all the activity, **Dan Stoffer** Interim Deputy Director, Garage Operations said the team has "displayed a sense of teamwork, dedication and positive energy to help each and every student succeed."

Read the full story in the email version of Insights.



Briefly: This week's news and notes

New Metro Transit app ticket color: Periwinkle is the new valid ticket color for Metro Transit ticket app users. The new color goes into effect Friday, Dec. 1 at 8:00 p.m. At that time, the aqua pulsing circle will no longer be valid. If you have questions, please reach out to your manager or see bulletin No. 89.

Attend the upcoming Deaf Culture training: The Minnesota Department of Human Services is hosting a Deaf Culture training on Wednesday, Dec. 6 from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. at the North Loop Garage, room 104. The training exposes attendees to challenges that impact people who are deaf, and shares communication strategies. For more information, contact **Rachel Cagle** at rachel.cagle@metrotransit.org.

Join E&I for a film screening: In honor of Native American Heritage Month, E&I and the Met Council's Cultural Embrace Committee invites you to a screening of the film, *Stories I Didn't Know*. The screening will be held on Tuesday, Dec. 12 from 4-6 p.m. at North Loop Garage, Room 104. For more information, contact **Rachel Cagle** at rachel.cagle@metrotransit.org.

Attend the final town hall of 2023: Hear from leadership at the final Employee Town Hall of the year. The event will take place from 9 to 10 a.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 13 at the Green Line O&M. Arrive early to chat with Metro Transit Police Officers at Coffee with Cops, beginning at 8 a.m. For more information, contact **Lindsey Geyer** at lindsey.geyer@metrotransit.org.

Join the all ERG potluck: Join staff from across all Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) at the all-ERG end-of-the-year potluck on Wednesday, Dec. 13 from noon to 1 p.m. The event will take place in the North Loop Garage, room 104. For more information, contact **Emily Bollensen** at emily.bollensen@metrotransit.org.



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.