

# INSIGHTS

Metro Transit's weekly employee newsletter

March 29, 2024



## Operator's situational awareness ensures safe outcome on the Blue Line

Congratulations to train operator Hassan Ilmi, who won an Awarding Accomplishment for preventing a serious incident on the Blue Line.

Ilmi's watchful eye helped prevent a potentially dangerous incident. While operating on the METRO Blue Line on January 29, he saw someone riding on the coupler of the train. Ilmi swiftly reported the situation to the Rail Control Center. His quick actions and vigilance ensured the prompt removal of the individual and prevented any harm. "I'm grateful for this award," Ilmi said. "My family is also very proud of me."

Briefly: This week's news and notes

**Update: Shift premium pay:** On Feb. 28 the Metropolitan Council approved the new ATU Labor Agreement which includes the new shift premiums for work conducted in the range of 8 p.m. to 7 a.m. The updated rates for impacted employees, including backpay to March 2, are expected to be complete for the next pay date of April 12. See Bulletin No. 26, Article 32 of the ATU Labor Agreement, or speak to your manager for details.

**Routes 6, 17, 23, 114 and 612 in the Uptown area will move from Hennepin to Lyndale starting Monday due to construction:** Along with the reconstruction in the corridor and a bypass of the Uptown Transit Station, this construction is being done to minimize customer and business impacts and in anticipation of the upcoming METRO E Line (opening in late 2025). Learn more about [metrotransit.org/news](https://metrotransit.org/news).

**First Quarter 2 Town Hall coming April 10:** The first Employee Town Hall of Quarter 2 will be held at North Loop Garage, room 104 on Wednesday, April 10 from 11 to noon. As with past town halls, the first half will focus on info and updates from leadership and the second half will focus on questions and comments from staff. The event will be hybrid and recorded. Speak to your manager for more info or reach out to Lindsey Geyer at [lindsey.geyer@metrotransit.org](mailto:lindsey.geyer@metrotransit.org).

**De-escalation training coming in April:** The Instruction Center's annual De-escalation Training is open for registration. This training will help staff recognize the indicators of aggressive behavior and apply verbal de-escalation techniques to help manage the situation. Contact a coordinator or [dan.stoffer@metrotransit.org](mailto:dan.stoffer@metrotransit.org) for more information.

## Special events give us an opportunity to shine

From General Manager  
Lesley Kandaras

Each day, we help people get to and from school, work, medical appointments, grocery stores, and so many more destinations.



And as the weather turns warmer (hopefully), we will be helping more people get to and from several events and gatherings. By train and by bus, we can safely get hundreds of people on their way to or from large events in short order.

Next Thursday, we'll carry Twins fans to and from Target Field for opening day, including the first of many special Twins trips we'll offer on the Northstar Commuter Rail Line this season.

The Saints season begins on Friday, and on Saturday we'll serve concertgoers headed to U.S. Bank Stadium and Target Center, and United fans headed to Allianz Field in St. Paul.

In general, it's worth recognizing how events like these provide unique opportunities to showcase transit to people who might not have any other reason to ride with us. In our most-recent regional survey, we found that nearly 8 of 10 respondents would consider taking transit to a big event.

Looking further ahead, plans to expand State Fair Express Bus service are in the works, and we are preparing now to make sure we're ready for big events like Twin Cities Pride that will bring thousands of people together.

Because warmer months are our only window to complete rail maintenance and for partners to undertake road construction, we're also making sure we're doing what we can to limit the impacts from these projects.

Ultimately, our goal is to showcase our ability to provide a high-quality transit experience to anyone and everyone who gets on board for any reason.

Thank you in advance to all the operators, supervisors, ambassadors, transit police and others who help us do that on big event days and on every day in between.

Know Your Operator: Jean O.

Jean O. is a trailblazer.

This year, she will be the first woman from Metro Transit to compete in the International Bus Rodeo. She also was the first woman to win the Metro Transit rodeo in 2023, and the first woman to compete at state in 2014.



“I set the bar high for myself,” Jean said.

Before her big day in Portland, she’s getting plenty of practice and helpful tips from coworkers and former rodeo champions alike. She finds this kind of camaraderie at Metro Transit something unique.

“I’ve never had this at another job,” she said. “I know it’s cliché, but it’s true. We’re like family and we know what each other have gone through.”

Her last job before Metro Transit as a forklift operator had a bad work culture, bad benefits, and a dead-end career path.

“I wanted something different, and I knew I liked people,” Jean said. “Then I saw an ad for Metro Transit on TV.”

This new path not only led her to many rodeo firsts, but a career that feeds her need to help people.

“It’s easy to drive a bus,” Jean said. “It’s helping people that keeps me coming back.”

From transporting people during a crisis to helping a rider onboard to helping a vulnerable person get help, people are her daily focus. She hopes these interactions have a positive effect on the world.

“These days, there’s a lot of negativity out there,” she said. “I’m trying to do more positive things to be the change I want to see in the world.”

From the small daily interactions with customers and coworkers to trailblazing a path for women to follow, Jean O. is well on her way to being the change she wants to see.

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## Adopt-A-Stoppers take on LRT stations

Looking for a volunteer activity for your community organization, school group or alumni association? Metro Transit has a couple of dozen suggestions -- as in light rail stations available for adoption by neighbors who agree to pick up litter and report problems.

The Hamline-Midway Coalition, University of Minnesota marching band’s baritone horn section

CUSTOMERS TELL US HOW WE’RE DOING

## “Helping make the train safer”

Transit Rider Investment Program (TRIP) Agent Alec Moline recently received a commendation for their presence on the system.

*Alec and team boarded the train to check fares and came upon one woman who said she didn’t have one. They asked her to step off the train at the next station and pay for one. I was impressed by Alec and the rest of the team on how they handled the situation especially when other passengers started giving them a hard time for try to do their job. Alec said a few times, “We’re trying to hold everyone to the same standard.” I told the team as I got off the train that I appreciated them and the hard work they are doing. They are helping make the train safer because I’ve definitely noticed less drugs, less yelling and fighting, etc. since you’ve started checking fares again. Thank you.*

-Eric L

and some college alumni associations are among groups that have recently joined Adopt-A-Stop to tackle LRT stations. A few individuals also have taken on LRT stations all on their own.

One such individual, Nancy Ruhland of St. Paul, took to Facebook recently to encourage other civic-minded people to join her one-woman fight against grime in Minnesota’s capital city.

“I’ve officially adopted the 10th Street Light Rail station through Metro Transit’s Adopt-A-Stop program! I’ve been “fostering” this area for a while by picking up trash either while I’m waiting for a train, or just out for a walk, grabbing a pair of disposable gloves and a plastic grocery bag as I leave my home. When the bag is full, I just throw everything in a trash can. Once I started doing it somewhat regularly, it was easier and easier to maintain,” Ruhland said.

As director of organizing for the Hamline-Midway Coalition, Justin Lewandowski saw adopting the Snelling Avenue Station as a way of combatting litter and other problems since a corner pharmacy closed and Allianz Field opened. “It’s another thing we can do to get neighbors to not only advocate for change but participate by picking up trash,” he said. About a dozen people have already signed up to help him.

Other LRT adopters include UMN student Josh Pusch (and his band-mates) and multiple station adopter Hassan Barzani, who picks up litter at three light rail stations.

Metro Transit’s revived Adopt-A-Stop program has grown in the last couple of years from only a handful of “adopted” stops to 396 currently adopted by 189 adopters.

Learn more at [metrotransit.org/adopt-a-stop](https://metrotransit.org/adopt-a-stop).

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Celebrate service at this retirement celebration

- Joanne Tyler, operator, 31 years of service  
Friday, April 12, 1 p.m., East Metro Garage, operators’ room

To celebrate an employee milestone, please email [insights@metrotransit.org](mailto:insights@metrotransit.org)



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