



In Transit January/February 2010

A Newsletter for King County Metro Transit Employees



*From the desk
of the General
Manager*

New opportunities on the horizon

Happy New Year, everyone! I hope you all had a safe and happy holiday season.

We start 2010 with a new budget, with **Dow Constantine** as the new King County Executive, and with new initiatives on the horizon. I look forward to working with Executive Constantine to help create the enhanced culture of performance that he envisions and to pursue new opportunities. But before we look ahead, I'd like to reflect on 2009.

Despite an unprecedented sales-tax revenue shortfall in 2009, and projected substantial shortfalls in 2010 and 2011, Metro was still expected to meet the ongoing demand for our many vital public transportation services. Thanks to you—Metro's dedicated staff—we provided those services in an exemplary manner. We were there for our existing and new customers, and can proudly point to many accomplishments. Here are some of the things we did:

- Started joint bus-rail operations in the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel and extended Link light rail operation to Sea-Tac International Airport.
- Implemented ORCA, the regional fare collection system.
- Hosted the American Public Transportation Association's (APTA) Bus and Paratransit Conference and

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Construction of the new Central/Atlantic Base operations building will start this year.

Metro's 'central campus' — a decade of transformation

With the recent opening of Metro's remodeled Ryerson Base, the 10-year transformation of the "central campus" at the south end of downtown Seattle is approaching its final act. The improvement program involving Ryerson, Atlantic, and Central bases has been a success story that benefits Metro's employees and customers as well as the environment.

The remodeled Ryerson Base formally opened Nov. 12. The renovation, begun in 2006, relieves overcrowding and updates major building systems. Ryerson now features an expanded dispatch area; all-new lighting, heating, and cooling systems; a new elevator; expanded employee amenities; and renovated wash and fuel facilities.

The Ryerson project also incorporates strong sustainability components and is expected to receive Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification. The heating and ventilation units, lighting, and boilers were replaced with high-efficiency models, and plumbing fixtures were replaced with low-flow units. To provide more natural lighting, skylights in the operations building reach through the upper flooring system to bring daylight to the first floor.

Key Design and Construction team members for the Ryerson renovation included Resident Engineer **Jim Carlson**, Project Manager **Ron Moattar**, and Site

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General Manager

- the International Bus Roadeo/Bus Rapid Transit Conference.
- Received an APTA award for our safety record and dedication to safety improvements.
- Celebrated carrying Metro's "3 Billionth Passenger."
- Integrated bus services with Link light rail service (which involved 25 bus routes).
- Remodeled the Revenue Processing Center and Ryerson Base, completed the Redmond Park-and-Ride garage, opened the award-winning Burien Transit Center (see page 4), and completed the Brickyard Park-and-Ride expansion.
- Completed the RapidRide facility design and purchased 20 RapidRide buses.
- Purchased 93 40-foot hybrid-electric Orion buses from Daimler Buses North America using federal stimulus funding, with an option to buy 400 more over the next five years.
- Expanded Metro Transit Police coverage to 24/7 service provided entirely by King County transit deputies.
- Underwent numerous audits, including a County Council performance audit, a state construction audit, and a federal Transportation Security Administration homeland security audit.
- Developed and enhanced emergency response plans for adverse weather, pandemic flu, and floods and also held all-hazard incident command system training.
- Developed and upgraded our public communication tools for both emergency and non-emergency conditions, including color-coded maps showing snow service levels, new snow route maps, e-mail and text message alerts, many improvements to Metro Online, and use of social media such as Twitter and blogs.
- Held a Transit Applications and Data Workshop to encourage a wide range of individuals and organizations to develop new computer applications using Metro data. (story at right)

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Metro reaches out to 'app' developers



Panelists at Metro's Transit Applications and Data Workshop were, left to right, Steve Krippner, Tim Moore, and Beth Somerfield from Metro and Bibiana McHugh from Portland's TriMet.

I'm all for it," he said, citing as an example One Bus Away, the popular Web site and smartphone application that tells users when the next bus is due at any given Metro stop.

A discussion panel included **Steve Krippner**, Transit GIS program manager, who spoke about Metro's past and current data provision efforts; **Tim Moore**, Transit IT application developer, who fielded technical questions related to transit data; **Beth Somerfield**, Metro Online's new webmaster, who described planned changes coming to Metro Online; and Bibiana McHugh from Portland's TriMet, who discussed that agency's challenges and successes with public/private Web and smartphone applications.

Breakout sessions identified key needs: as much transit data as possible, a more streamlined way to get that data, and support for private developers. Participants received a disc of Metro Transit's schedule data in Google Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) format, a rapidly emerging standard.

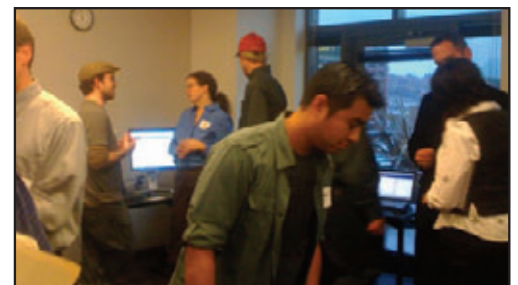
The workshop was warmly received by participants and praised by local transit tweeters and bloggers. Metro's effort to partner with developers is already yielding positive results—the number of developers using Metro Transit data has nearly doubled since the event. Metro is now working to create a developer resource center on Metro Online, to streamline the process of accessing its data, and to set up a developer alert system to signal data changes.

Notes from the workshop are posted online at www.kingcounty.gov/transportation/kcdot/MetroTransit/DataWorkshop.aspx

To see how the Seattle Transit Blog reported the event, visit <http://seattletransitblog.com/2009/10/23/king-county-metro-developer-workshop>.

To encourage the development of private software applications that benefit our customers, Metro hosted a workshop for transit application developers in October. About 50 people attended the event, which featured a keynote talk by General Manager **Kevin Desmond**.

Desmond said he sees a big payoff for both taxpayers and riders if Metro provides data to support useful rider tools for the public. "If you're interested in creating a new product to help our customers to better use our system,



Workshop participants chatted and demonstrated transit-related applications they've created.

A new, improved Ryerson Base

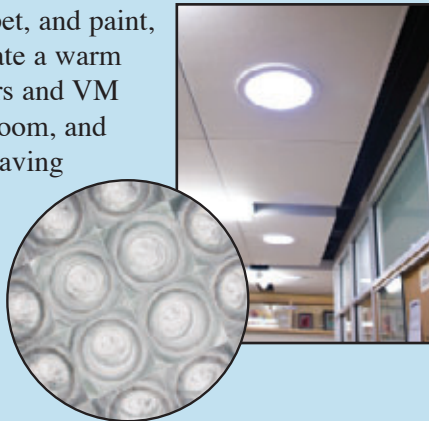
After 12 months working in trailers, the operators, Vehicle Maintenance employees, and staff members assigned to Ryerson Base moved back into their newly remodeled facility. Initial reactions included words like “huge,” “clean,” “modern,” and “functional,” and some said it will take time to get used to so much space. In fact, the only space added in the remodel was for chiefs’ offices in the front, or north, side of the building, so the dispatch area could be enlarged.



Ryerson Base reopened in November with a roomier dispatch area.

New windows, tile floors, skylights, carpet, and paint, coupled with light-colored furniture, create a warm and inviting work environment. Operators and VM employees share a new lunchroom, TV room, and workout area. The operators appreciate having lockers again, and everyone enjoys the modern vending machines that accept credit cards.

Skylights bring daylight to the first floor of the remodeled operations building at Ryerson Base.



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‘Central campus’

Inspector **John Whitney**. The construction contractor was Ebenal General, Inc.

Final improvements at the Atlantic/Central Base complex are next on the horizon, completing an upgrade process that began in 1999. The final element—a brand new operations building—is out to bid for construction to begin in spring 2010. The new building will accommodate operations for both bases as well as Service Quality and Training staff. The building will also provide a comfortable environment for some 1,100 bus drivers (the expanded complex will have the capacity to dispatch an additional 185 buses). The new building is designed to meet LEED Gold certification requirements. Sustainability features include planned landscaping, use of daylight, and highly efficient mechanical equipment.

The Atlantic/Central Base expansion project is managed by **Dave Crippen** and **Garrett Stronks** in Design and Construction, with significant input from Power and Facilities, Training, Service Development, and Operations staff members. The designer is Tetra Tech, Inc.

When all projects related to the “central campus” are completed, the work will have touched nearly every element of transit activity in the immediate area. Other notable components include the new Communications and Control Center and employee parking garage, and a new tire shop, steam-clean bay, fuel island, and renovated vehicle maintenance facility on the Atlantic/Central Base complex. Metro also expanded the transit yard and made street improvements on Sixth Avenue S along the west side of the complex, including an art fence funded by the Seattle Public Art program.

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General Manager

To everyone involved in these and other achievements, I extend my sincere appreciation for all your hard work during an exceptionally challenging year.

Looking ahead, I’d like to mention some key initiatives for the coming year. In 2010, Metro will:

- Continue enhancing Metro Online, RideShareOnline.com, and other customer communication services and tools.
- Begin installing new voice and data communication systems on buses. These will support improved automatic vehicle location using GPS, automatic trip and fare-set changes for ORCA, automatic stop announcements, and improved transit signal priority in designated corridors.
- Launch the RapidRide A Line, further integrate bus and Link services, add service to mitigate Alaskan Way Viaduct construction, and enhance service on State Route 520 in advance of the state’s tolling project.
- Advance transit construction projects, including the new Atlantic/Central Base operations building and the remodel of the existing Atlantic/Central operations building to accommodate the Metro Transit Police. Also focus on transit asset maintenance projects to improve or maintain existing facilities.
- Work with regional stakeholders to achieve consensus on the allocation of future transit services to prepare for potential transit funding proposals in the state legislature.
- Address the findings of audits done by the County Council and the state. Become more efficient in our processes and uses of resources.

We will be challenged to become even more efficient in the coming year, but the programs and services we offer the public will continue to advance, offering us the opportunity to demonstrate our considerable skills and creativity. I think we’ll also have some fun along the way.

–Kevin Desmond, General Manager

KUDOS IN TRANSIT

■ **Boon retires**—Vehicle Maintenance (VM) Manager **Jim Boon** retired on Jan. 15 after 27 years, with praise for Metro and his co-workers. “Knowing that we make a positive impact



Retired VM Manager Jim Boon

on others’ lives gives me a good feeling,” Boon said before departing. “Best of all, it is my good fortune to have met and worked with so many wonderful people. I will miss them.”

Boon became VM manager in April 1996. His previous responsibilities included managing VM’s business systems and running the Component Rebuilds Center. As VM manager, he worked on several key initiatives, including exploring the use of methanol-fueled buses, converting the fleet of Breda dual-mode buses into trolleys, and—perhaps most notably—the recent introduction of nearly 300 hybrid-electric buses into Metro’s fleet. His contributions to the transit industry have been recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (for his work on clean-bus technology) and by the Washington State Transportation Association, which gave him its Lifetime Achievement Award.

Metro will miss Boon’s historical knowledge, can-do attitude, analytical mind, and practical, good-humored nature.

Burien Transit Center wins award—The Burien Transit Center, which opened for service last May, received a 2009 Best Small Project award from



The new Burien Transit Center was recognized for construction and design excellence by *Northwest Construction* magazine.

Northwest Construction magazine, which recognizes construction and design excellence in Oregon, Washington, and Alaska. The 2009 competition included a record-breaking number of entries, with projects judged on teamwork and project management, safety, innovation, contribution to the community or industry, success in overcoming unique or difficult challenges, construction quality and craftsmanship, and function and aesthetic quality of the design.

Transit Design and Construction staff members who worked on the project include **Paul Eng**, project engineer; **Elizabeth Morgan**, project manager; **Ron Smith**, project inspector; and **John Wright**, construction manager. INCA Engineers Inc. was the design firm and Pellco Construction the construction contractor. Sculpture and distinctive glass canopies and windscreens on the bus platforms were created by artist Julie Berger.

■ **Operator puts passengers first during fire**—On Dec. 10, East Base operator **John Abercrombie** was

driving Sound Transit Route 522 in downtown Seattle when a serious fire broke out near the rear axle of his bus. As flames and smoke engulfed both sides of the bus, he safely and efficiently evacuated all passengers. One passenger later wrote about the incident on the King 5 Web site, saying Abercrombie “did not leave the bus until ALL of the passengers had left, even while there were visible flames coming from the rear of the bus. After all the passengers were safely off the bus, he radioed the situation to your dispatch and then left the bus with the extinguisher trying to put out the fire. During the whole ordeal, he remained calm and in control. He deserves much praise for how he handled a very scary situation since there were several loud explosions.”

Operations Manager **Jim O’Rourke** also had praise for Abercrombie, whom he described as a veteran operator with more than 11 years of full-time service. “He has developed the skills to remain calm under pressure, and used those skills to take care of our customers to ensure their

safety,” O’Rourke said. “We are proud of John’s handling of this situation.”

That same day, two other East Base operators also experienced possible brake fires and acted quickly to evacuate their passengers safely. **Jake Coyle** noticed smoke while driving Route 982, and **Peter Scott** noticed smoke while driving Route 522. Kudos to all three of these East Base operators for their handling of these emergencies.



Ballard Streetcar #670, circa 1916.

■ **Metro planner wows Ballard Historical Society**—Metro Transportation Planner **Jana Wright** presented her report on the history of transportation in Ballard to some 70 attendees at a meeting of the Ballard Historical Society in October. Wright’s work had already caught the attention of the society, which decided to do its calendar on transportation. A report on the presentation is available on the Ballard News Tribune’s Web site at www.ballardnewstribune.com/2009/10/30/news/look-back-ballards-streetcars.

■ **DART driver saves life**—On Oct. 31, a passenger told **Jeff Pint**, a Metro contract DART (Dial-A-Ride Transit) driver, that her husband, a fellow passenger, was not breathing. Pint pulled the bus to the side of the road, called the Hopelink dispatch, and asked for an emergency service response. Then he performed CPR on the man until the emergency service unit arrived about 10 minutes later. As a result of Pint’s quick actions, his passenger is alive today. South King

Transit operators of the month

December 2009

Atlantic Base: **Nathan Vass**
Bellevue Base: **William Moran**
Central Base: **Keith Rodmyre**
East Base: **Peter Helfenstein**
North Base: **Andrew Walthers**
Ryerson Base: **Heywood Smiley**
South Base: **Ramiro Benitez**

January 2010

Atlantic Base: **Eric Hansen**
Central Base: **Joni Dorage**
Eastside Campus: **Liz Adum**
North Base: **Rosemary Bell**
Ryerson Base: **Adrienne Gentry**
South Base: **Pamela Bond**

County Fire and Rescue honored Pint for his actions with an award on Dec. 17.

■ **More Metro Health Heroes**—**Liesl Brooks**, a 10-year Metro operator, and **Ross Johnson**, a Vehicle Maintenance mechanic of 30-plus years, were named health heroes in the October and November issues of *Health Matters*, King County’s online health magazine for employees. Brooks kicked her 10-year smoking habit. By October, she was already six months smoke-free and described her fellow bus drivers as very supportive. “They congratulate me for quitting—give me thumbs up—and nobody smokes around me,” she said. Instead of smoking, she now enjoys walking, swimming, hiking with her family, reading, and singing. “I deal with stress now,” she added, “rather than masking it with a smoke break.”

Johnson, who turned 60 in 2009, has never smoked, keeps physically active, and eats a healthy diet. From a young age, he made lifestyle choices that eventually became routine to him to maintain good health. In more than 30 years at Metro, he has only used three days of sick leave, and in spite of his physical job, has never had a workers’ compensation claim. “Ross is a health hero because he has taken all the steps in his life to live a healthy lifestyle and he is now reaping the rewards,” said **Cindy Lee**, manager of Benefits, Payroll and Retirement, who nominated Johnson as a health hero.

Read more about these and other health heroes online at www.kingcounty.gov/employees/HealthMatters (choose

“Newsletter” on the left, then follow the links at right to read past issues).

When prose just isn’t enough

Atlantic Base Operator **Dawna Bell** has received 28 commendations since becoming a part-time driver for Metro in 2006. In October, one of her regular customers put his appreciation into verse and shared it with us:

Donna drives the bus
by Johnny Firefly, 10-14-09

*Donna drives the bus,
black woman with blond hair,
she knows the power of uh smile
and uh kind word, so many
of the down and out, starving
for this, on uh dark wet
cold Seattle night, this bit
of sunshine called Donna
will take us through it
part way, and when
she’s around it ain’t so bad,
the world not so harsh and
lonely, we go so much further
than third avenue, we go to
where her smile comes from,
evree single time,
Donna drives the bus.*

SHORT SHOTS IN TRANSIT

News briefs in and around the Transit Division



Participating in emergency management training are, left to right, Sgt. Troy Olmsted, Metro Transit Police; Hamid Qassim, Sound Transit; Amanda Nightingale, Metro Link operations; and Julie Burrell, Metro paratransit/rideshare operations.

■ **Timely emergency management training** — Staff members from Metro, Sound Transit, Kitsap Transit, and Pierce Transit took part in a federally sponsored course on managing transit emergencies in October. Personnel from the various agencies' operations, transit police, safety, paratransit/rideshare, and vehicle maintenance sections participated. The course covered management techniques for both transit-specific and community disasters, and included a half-day transit emergency exercise. "Coupled with our ongoing incident command system training," said **Mike DeCapua**, Metro's homeland security program manager, "this course provided us with a timely refresher on how we can work effectively with other responders under ever-changing conditions to address a wide range of events—from terrorist acts to floods, snow emergencies, and more."

■ **Link extends to airport** — With Metro rail operators at the controls, Sound Transit and its regional partners celebrated the start of passenger service on the Link light rail extension to Sea-Tac International Airport on Dec. 19.

The 1.7-mile extension completes the line from downtown Seattle that opened July 18. Passengers can now cross a pedestrian bridge that connects the Link station to the fourth floor of the airport parking garage and use a new walkway to reach the airport terminal. Trains run every 7.5 to 15 minutes from 5 a.m. to 1 a.m. daily.



Celebrants welcome light rail to the SeaTac/Airport station.

■ **Santa guides historic fleet** — A record number of passengers joined Santa Claus on Dec. 12 to ride nine buses, ranging in vintage from 1955 to 1990, on the Metro Employees Historic Vehicle Association's (MEHVA) annual tour of some of Seattle's most dazzling holiday light displays. MEHVA volunteers and special support from South Base Vehicle Maintenance and the Metro Transit Police made the trip possible. Proceeds will support the maintenance, restoration, and operation of the historic fleet. For more information visit www.mehva.org; call the MEHVA Hotline, 206-684-1816; or write to MEHVA, c/o King County Metro Transit, CAB-TR-0350, 201 S Jackson St., Seattle WA 98104.

■ **Metro takes over park-and-ride** — Metro became the owner/operator of the South Sammamish Park-and-Ride on Dec. 3. The facility

was built by Sound Transit in 2006 at the intersection of 228th Avenue SE and Issaquah-Pine Lake Road in Sammamish. **Rand Juliano** of Design and Construction, who acted as lead negotiator on the transfer, said the park-and-ride "includes fantastic public art, has state-of-the-art design elements, and is in an area of incredible growth."



Artist Stewart Wong created the tribal-themed art adorning the South Sammamish Park-and-Ride shelter.

■ **Partnership brings elegance to downtown bus zones** — The eastbound bus stop at Pike Street and Fourth Avenue in downtown Seattle has had a dramatic makeover. The bus shelters are gone, replaced by long, deep canopies and lighting on the Joshua-Green Building and a few long benches. It has become a lovely place to catch a bus.

This transformation is the result of a collaborative effort. Metro Route Facility Planners **Dale Cummings** and **Jay Vavra** have been working with the City of Seattle's Department of Planning and Department of Transportation, developers, and building owners to encourage the incorporation of bus stop amenities in



The revamped bus waiting area (top) at Fourth Avenue and Pike Street in downtown Seattle has a more open feel, and more features for safety and access, than the old bus shelters (bottom).

building fronts next to bus zones.

The goal is to provide transparent and seamless access for pedestrians and transit customers while improving transit amenities. This “open” design also improves visibility and security.

Amenities typically include canopies, lighting, new benches and leaning rails. They are designed, owned and maintained by the building owners.

Cummings and Vavra have been working closely with stakeholders to make sure the improvements meet ADA requirements and protect transit customers from the weather.

Other downtown bus stops that have been improved are northbound Third Avenue/Madison (formally IDX), southbound Third Avenue/Union (Benaroya) and southbound Third Avenue/Pine (Columbia Sportswear/Macy Parking Garage). Improvements are underway at northbound Third Avenue/Pike (Century Square).

Route Facilities will continue looking for opportunities to transform downtown bus stops.

Snow guide produced on fast track

As part of Metro’s coordinated effort to be ready for bad weather before the start of winter, staff members in Service Planning and Service Quality combed through Metro’s entire route network, checking every snow route and revising them where needed. This massive job involved working with cities to find out which streets have priority for plowing, and sometimes visiting route locations to get first-hand knowledge of the areas.

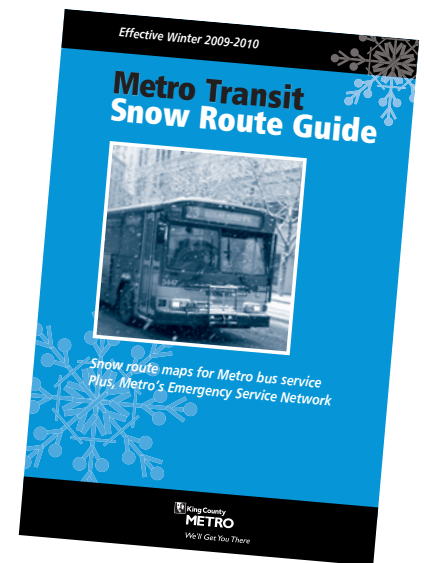
Snow routes are usually shown on route timetables, but the timetables for the September service change had to be printed before this effort was complete. So Metro had to find a way to communicate the new snow route information to our customers. One obvious tool for this was Metro Online, but not every customer has easy access to the Internet.

To reach those who don’t, Metro’s Marketing and Service Information staff designed, produced, and distributed a one-of-a-kind booklet with snow route maps for every Metro and Sound Transit route operated by Metro. In less than two months, the 220-page Snow Route Guide was on buses and in our customers’ hands.

One of the major tasks in producing the guide was changing all the timetable maps published for the September service change to include the new snow route information. That labor-intensive task was accomplished by four Service Quality supervisors—**Mike Callahan, Roland McVay, Jayson Peterson, and Chuck Willis**—and graphic designer **Judy Bass** in Information Production. These dedicated employees worked overtime for four weeks in October to get the job done.

With text provided by Service Information Chief **Gary Larson**, graphic designer **Brian Carr** fit all the pieces together. Marketing and Sales Specialist **John Steers** in Information Production negotiated the very tight production schedule and other details with the printer, while **Jack Woodworth** of the Component Supply Center directed Vehicle Maintenance crews at each base in the installation of special temporary racks to hold the guide on every bus.

If you haven’t seen the guide, you might want to pick one up and take a look. It offers not only detailed snow routes for each regular Metro route, but also information about Metro’s new Snow Route Map and snow area boundaries, a list of snow routes by area, and detailed information about Metro’s new Emergency Services Network of routes that Metro can activate in the event of an extremely severe, prolonged snowstorm.



Metro’s Snow Route Guide offers detailed maps of every snow route in our system.



ON THE MOVE

Transit Division retirements, promotions/job changes, new hires, and remembrances

Retirements

Design & Construction

Bob Isler, engineer VI–Nov. 30; 22+ years

Operations

Dennis Dalzell, operator (North Base)–Dec. 31; 19 years

Benjamin Renfrow, chief (South Base)–Jan. 29; 30+ years

Charlie Weeks, chief (Transit Control Center) Jan. 6; 37+ years

Vehicle Maintenance

Jim Boon, manager–Jan. 15; 27+ years

Scotty Conyne, supervisor (Ryerson Maintenance)–Jan. 29, 42+ years

Ed Cowart, equipment dispatcher–Dec. 30; 30+ years

Mike Uhren, mechanic–Dec. 31; 33+ years

Power and Facilities

Stan Asis, technical assistant (Power)–Jan. 26; 25 years

Promotions and Job Changes

Operations

Janice Berlin to chief (Transit Control Center) from first-line supervisor (trainer in Operations Training)

Mark Freitag to chief (Transit Control Center) from acting chief/first-line supervisor

Tim Wilson to operator (North Base); returns from over 1-year of military duty (sergeant) in Afghanistan

Power and Facilities

Robin Abille to supervisor of Building Systems and Maintenance from supervisor of Field Maintenance

Carry Elwell to administrative specialist III, Power Distribution from Building Maintenance unit

Peggy Meyer to supervisor of Field and Custodial Maintenance from supervisor of Custodial Maintenance

Shawn Sissom to administrative specialist III, Building Systems and Maintenance from Custodial Maintenance unit

Alina Tanzer now supervisor of Work Center and Tunnel Maintenance (acquired tunnel custodial function)

Rail

Bradley Kittredge to acting superintendent (Link Control Center) from signals and communications chief

Transit IT

Robert Trantina to applications developer master from applications developer senior (TLT)

Vehicle Maintenance

Mary Jensen to acting manager from supervisor of basic business systems (backfill for Jim Boon retirement)

Jeff Sattler to supervisor (Bellevue Base VM) from supervisor (Non-Revenue Vehicles)

Larry Ward to supervisor (Ryerson Base VM) from supervisor (Bellevue Base VM)

New Hires

Power and Facilities

Brad Hanson, radio maintenance specialist–Nov. 23

Rail

Ferron Flavors, rail laborer–Dec. 21

John Villagomez, rail service worker–Dec. 7

Service Development

Joan Lewis, administrator 1 (Manager’s Office; 18 year employee returns after 2 ½ years)–Nov. 30

Sales and Customer Services

Beth Somerfield, web developer-senior (Marketing and Service Information)–Sept. 14

Vehicle Maintenance

Harold Baldwin, mechanic–Oct. 5

Peter Madden, mechanic–Oct. 5

In Our Thoughts

Marion Price, mechanic (Vehicle Maintenance), passed away on Oct. 11

In Transit



We'll Get You There

10014/dot/comm/ac/jp



If you have any questions, comments or story ideas, send them to **In Transit**, KSC-TR-0824, or contact **Anna Clemenger**: 206-263-6482 or anna.clemenger@kingcounty.gov.

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