



In Transit January/February 2012

A Newsletter for King County Metro Transit Employees



*From the desk
of the General
Manager*

2012 technology project plans

Customer information technology is high on my list of priorities for this year. We'll complete two major tech projects, make substantial progress on others, and launch new initiatives to enhance communications with our customers and the public.

We expect to complete the On-Board Systems/Communications Center System project and the fleet-wide Transit Radio System/Automatic Vehicle Location replacement project this year. At press time, about 650 buses have the new systems installed, and the on-board system vendor is providing software updates to correct some glitches and improve the system's functioning.

A monumental effort has already gone into these projects, and I thank those who have overcome obstacles along the way and remained focused on the end products.

Technology applications make communicating with our customers easier, more efficient, and more effective. This year we'll be introducing new applications and systems and replacing or upgrading existing ones that are becoming obsolete.

We completed a comprehensive technology strategy plan last September, entitled "A Strategy for Customer
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Vehicle Maintenance employees hit the information highway

Employees at our Vehicle Maintenance (VM) shops are more tech-savvy than you might think. Mechanics and electronic technicians routinely use laptops and other sophisticated tools to troubleshoot complex vehicle electronic systems, and the future will bring even more diagnostic software to shop floors.

Also, VM currently uses several different software systems to record information such as the repair history of a bus, parts availability, and whether the engine oil is topped off when a bus is fueled. But most VM employees don't have work email accounts or access to computers, which limits their ability to get job-related information.

The VM Base Automation project is streamlining and enhancing work processes and making more information available to employees through increased computer access. The project is leveraging existing technology and resources at its pilot locations, Non-Revenue Vehicles (NRV) and North Base VM shops, where computers are being installed in each maintenance stall and employees are receiving email accounts and direct access to the Internet, the county's intranet, and VM software applications.

Mechanics at NRV are already using vendors' web-based tech support to help them diagnose problems. Soon, they'll be able to update vehicle operating software and laptop diagnostics in the same way, ensuring
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Lead Mechanic Ken Peterson uses a laptop computer in the NRV maintenance shop.

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General Manager

Information Systems Technology.” It addresses our current technology challenges, describes preferred solutions and priorities, and lays out an implementation strategy that will work far into the future. This plan will be posted soon on Metro’s website.

Our vision is to establish a service platform that provides users—both internal and external—with access to regional transportation information via several communication platforms. We want to provide information that is accurate, consistent, and timely, and services that are integrated, useful, and effective, with a manageable maintenance strategy that can adapt to changing technologies and data flows.

Achieving this vision will take time. Some projects may not be completed until 2016, while some are already finished or underway. Completed projects include the integration of new GPS-based location information into our legacy Automated Vehicle Location data stream and sustaining the University of Washington’s OneBusAway application (see page 4). Projects underway and/or ongoing include deploying real-time information signs as new RapidRide services are introduced and enhancing our website (including establishing a mobile version of it).

In 2012 and beyond, we expect to replace the current Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system and make real-time bus location data publicly available and compatible with Google’s real-time data specification. We’ll also be working to improve our online trip planner to incorporate interactive mapping features; replace the software we use to generate our timetable brochures and bus shelter schedule strips; and upgrade the IVR to provide automated trip planning over the phone.

Technology will be a focus this year in other Metro arenas as well. See page 1 for a look at a Vehicle Maintenance technology initiative that will improve workflow and troubleshooting in our shops.

– Kevin Desmond, General Manager

VM beams over headlamp retrofits

Low-beam headlamp failures have been on the rise in recent years, largely due to the use of low-beam headlamps as daytime running lights. Metro replaces about 4,200 of these lamps each year, which works out to more than three per bus. Many of these replacements involve service calls and delays. In contrast, Metro replaces fewer than 200 high-beam lamps per year.

In June 2010, Fleet Engineering began in-service testing of LED low-beam headlamps, in both the four-by-six-inch rectangular shape and the 90-mm round shape used on newer buses. A year of testing saw no electrical failures of the lamps, and operators said they provided better visibility.

In light of these results, Vehicle Maintenance began retrofitting Metro’s newer bus fleets (starting with the 2600) at Atlantic and Central bases with LED low-beam headlamps in December 2011, and plans to do so at other bases as well. LED lamps are more expensive than incandescent ones, but they have a design life of more than 10 years, so the return on investment is viable for the newer fleets. Older buses will continue to use sealed beam lamps. The current inventory of sealed beam lamps and all useable lamps removed during the LED retrofit process will be used on the older fleet groups.

Materials Management is establishing a vendor contract for LED lamps, and change orders are in the works requiring LED low beams as original equipment on new buses.



Mechanic Kenny Montana installs an LED headlamp.



A new LED low-beam lamp (mounted in bus, on right) installed next to a regular high-beam lamp.

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VM employees access information highway

that Metro always has the most up-to-date information on a given vehicle. More automotive manufacturers are developing this type of diagnostic software and tech support, and base automation will allow employees to take full advantage of these developments.

A hoped-for added bonus would be an increase in information sharing between VM and Base Operations—for example, providing real-time coach assignment information to operators.



Performance corner

RapidRide A Line—rider satisfaction after one year

Metro introduced its first RapidRide service, the A Line, in October 2010. Replacing the former Route 174, the A Line runs between the Tukwila International Boulevard Link station and the Federal Way Transit Center on Pacific Highway South/International Boulevard.

Surveys done at three months and one year after launch show that overall rider satisfaction with the A Line has been high since the service began. At three months (January 2011) it was at 84 percent, and nine months later (October 2011) it was virtually unchanged at 85 percent. Both numbers are significantly higher than the 51-percent overall rider satisfaction with Route 174 (see chart).

In the surveys, we asked riders about 38 specific service elements. They reported significantly greater satisfaction with all service elements than the ratings given for Route 174 one year earlier. The highest rating from the one-year survey was for “having three doors for loading and unloading” (89 percent); the lowest rating was for “protection from the weather” (47 percent).

Although overall satisfaction remained the same, riders were generally less satisfied with specific service elements in October than they were the previous January. Only satisfaction with electronic real-time information signs went up (77 percent vs. 70 percent), reflecting the full activation of real-time information signs along the route during that period.

The largest decrease in satisfaction was with being able to get a seat, which fell from 82 percent in January to 69 percent in October—probably due to increased ridership on the A Line.

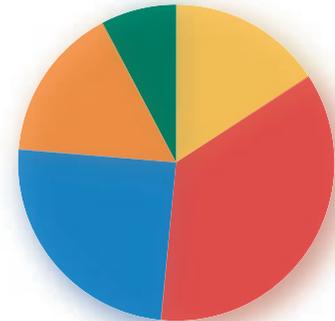
Rising rider expectations probably contributed to the second largest decline in satisfaction—with how often the bus runs on weekends, which declined from 71 percent in January to 63 percent in October—since there was no change in weekend service levels.

Rider satisfaction with other service elements declined between three and six percent, which may simply reflect that the newness of the A Line is wearing off.

Information captured by the surveys also included the fact that more than one in five riders (22 percent) say they use the A Line’s free Wi-Fi service almost every time they ride, and another 19 percent use it at least once a month. Also, more A Line riders are now using the ORCA card for fare payment (78 percent in October vs. 69 percent in January).

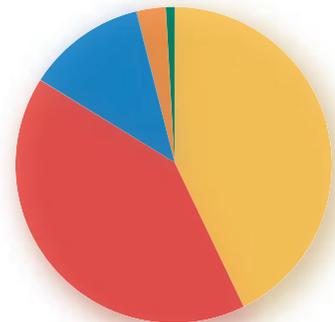
Metro will continue conducting “before and after” surveys as we roll out the rest of our RapidRide lines, both to monitor rider satisfaction and to identify strengths that can be used to improve our services.

Route 174



- Very satisfied **16%**
- Satisfied **35%**
- Dissatisfied **16%**
- Very dissatisfied **8%**
- No opinion **25%**

A Line
(Oct. 2011)



- Very satisfied **43%**
- Satisfied **41%**
- Dissatisfied **3%**
- Very dissatisfied **1%**
- No opinion **12%**

SHORT SHOTS IN TRANSIT

News briefs in and around the Transit Division



Operator Russell Dial ties a red ribbon onto a bus to help raise awareness about the dangers of drunk driving.

■ **Metro “ties one on” for safety** — More people die due to drunk driving between Thanksgiving and New Year’s Day than any other time of the year. To raise awareness, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Metro, and a number of law enforcement agencies and first responders put red ribbons on their vehicles over the holidays to remind drivers not to drink and drive during the holiday season—and every day.

■ **McLaughlin remembered** — Thirteen years ago, operator **Mark McLaughlin** was shot and killed by a passenger while driving a full bus across the Aurora Bridge. On Nov. 25, ATU-587 and Metro representatives placed a wreath at his grave and held a small ceremony at McLaughlin’s last worksite, North Base Operations. This annual remembrance allows us to reflect on the loss of a friend and on the risks transit operators face, and to renew our commitment to operator and passenger safety. Security enhancements since McLaughlin’s death include the creation of a full-time, dedicated Metro Transit Police

unit that replaced a force of part-time, off-duty police officers from various police departments; implementation of an enforceable Metro Transit Code of Conduct; and increased contact between service supervisors and operators. We continue working toward our goal of zero assaults on operators and customers.

■ **Ivar would be proud** — On Nov. 29, a unique “customer” turned up at the King Street Center Metro Pass and Ticket Sales office: staff members found a live octopus on the floor. After gently bagging it with salad tongs, they took it to the waterfront but couldn’t find a way to get it safely to the water. So, thinking about cats being rescued from trees, they took their charge to the Seattle Fire Department station near Colman Dock and requested assistance. “The fireman looked at me as if I was crazy and said, ‘Are you kidding me?’” said Lead Customer Service Coordinator Mark Konecny. “I told him ‘no,’ and as I opened the bag to show him, the octopus started to climb out.” The surprised fireman promised to put the animal safely in the water.



Many in this area find OneBusAway a go-to tool for using transit.

■ **OneBusAway lives on** — In partnership with Sound Transit and Pierce Transit, Metro has entered into a 13-month contract with the University of Washington to support the OneBusAway real-time bus arrival information service. The service was

in danger of disappearing because its creator, a former PhD student at the UW, has graduated and now works for Google in Zurich, Switzerland. Each agency contributed \$50,000 to cover the app’s costs. Used by more than 50,000 transit riders each day, OneBusAway (www.onebusaway.org) can be accessed on the Web, by phone, and via smartphone apps.



Upholsterer Greg Beall rebuilds a bus driver’s chair at the component supply center.

■ **Upholstery Shop keeps busy** — Vehicle Maintenance’s Upholstery Shop, at the Component Supply Center on the South Base Campus, has its work cut out for it. The demand for repairs to both passenger and driver seats is unrelenting. Each month, the shop rebuilds about 37 driver seats and re-covers more than a hundred vandalized passenger seats. The shop also handles the seat inserts for the South Lake Union Streetcar

and repairs the bellows on articulated coaches, as well as many miscellaneous items that go unnoticed by Metro customers.

■ **VM artist in residence — Gerald Padama**

a sheet metal worker at the VM Central Base Body Shop, has an artistic bent. He creates sculptures out of bits and pieces of metal and wood for presentation to co-workers on special occasions. **Fiona Frisch** received a crown when she became the “Queen of Steam;” **Elie Kourdahi** received a sculpture representing his goals and desires when he left Central Base VM for North Base VM. Retirees have received plaques or sculptures representing their hobbies or a significant memory — **Mike Berry** got a comical Flintstones car; **Gary Karpenko**, a plaque with a picture of a wrecker; and **Gary Irby**, a small fishing boat.



Gerald Padama with one of his creations.

■ **Joint terrorism training** — On Oct. 27, representatives from the Metro Transit Police unit and other Metro sections participated in a Transportation Security Administration-sponsored security training workshop and tabletop exercise. This event focused on regional response, communications,

and information sharing before, during, and after a series of terrorist-related events – national and regional terror threats, specific threats to Sounder trains, suspicious activity in Metro facilities, and terror-related arrests in Tacoma and Snohomish County.

■ **Ending the Ride Free Area**

— Free transit rides in downtown Seattle will end this fall after nearly four decades. To help minimize impacts on human service agency clients and residents of shelters and transitional housing in downtown Seattle, Metro has worked with the county’s Department of Community and Human Services and the Health Department to survey this population’s use of the Ride Free Area. Metro also hosted interagency discussions in December with Sound Transit, Community Transit, Pierce Transit, and the Seattle Department of Transportation to identify communication needs associated with the change. Preparations involve the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel, where Metro and Sound Transit have done pay-on-entry simulations to help us manage the transition with minimal disruption to rush-hour operations.

■ **New Service Development group formed**

— Service Development began reorganizing in December to add a new Long Range Planning and Performance Management work group. Led by newly promoted supervisor **Christina O’Claire**, the group includes several staff members from other Service Development work groups. Its purpose is to better align the Service Development Section to pursue implementation of Metro’s Strategic Plan for Public Transportation and service guidelines, and to centralize performance management responsibilities.



William Powell of Sales and Customer Services (right) gives a snow guide to a customer in November.

■ **Passenger appreciation** — On November 15, 16, and 17, staff members in three specially-marked Metro Vanpool vans stopped by bus shelters, park-and-rides, and transit centers during morning commute hours to let customers know we appreciate them. Volunteers handed out 2011 Metro Snow Guides, coupons for Tully’s coffee (provided free by Tully’s), Metro Transit Alert post-it-notes, and Hershey’s Kisses.

■ **Rideshare services expand at independent schools**

— Rideshare Operations has stepped up its game plan at independent schools with its SchoolPool program. On Dec. 9, faculty, staff, and students from University Prep, the Evergreen School, and Lakeside School gathered at Lakeside for an annual transportation meeting. The all-electric Nissan LEAF that Rideshare Operations is making available for urban commuting was enthusiastically received by students. Metro and the Evergreen School in Shoreline are developing a pilot transportation management program to reduce single-occupant vehicle trips by parents, faculty, and staff. The program encourages use of carpools, SchoolPool, walking, bicycling, and use of transit, vanpools, and Vanshare options.

KUDOS

IN TRANSIT

■ **Metro driver saves women on tracks** — On Oct. 28, an elderly blind woman and her companion were crossing railroad tracks on James Street when the crossing signal began to flash and sound. The two women froze in place on the tracks as the crossing gates came down. Seeing

the situation, South Base operator Larry Peterson parked his Route 183 bus, went to the tracks, and guided the women safely under the crossing



Larry Peterson

gates just before an Amtrak train rolled past. A witness said Peterson's quick action saved the women from being hit by the train. On Jan. 17, the Kent Police Department honored Peterson with a Citizen Life Saving Award.

■ **First-year report** — In December, Metro reported back to the Regional Transit Task Force on how we're addressing the recommendations the task force made in 2010. Our year-one progress report, "Moving Metro Forward," notes many achievements, including approval of our new strategic plan and service guidelines, adoption of the two-year Congestion Reduction Charge, our efforts to control costs and boost revenue, and steps taken to improve Metro's transparency and accountability to the public. The full report is available online at www.kingcounty.gov/metro/reports.

■ **New vanpools up in 2011** — Rideshare Operations launched 271 new vanpools in 2011. This is only the second time the total for a single calendar year has climbed so high (2008 saw a total of 304). At year-end, there were 1,228 commuter vans in revenue service, up 14 percent over 2010. Last year also saw a 9-percent increase in ridership, with a total of more than 3 million trips.

■ **Turner Awards Central Base duo** — Central Base operators **Spencer Nesbitt** and **John Hagan** were recently honored by the Northwest Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America and Metro's Elderly/Disabled Committee as the second- and third-quarter winners (respectively) of the George Turner Award. The award honors employees who show extraordinary sensitivity toward customers who are elderly and/or disabled.



Ernie Butler, seated at left, congratulates Turner Award winners Spencer Nesbitt (left) and John Hagan (right, shaking hands with Butler) while Jim O'Rourke and Kevin Desmond look on. Butler is with the Northwest Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America.



Linda Eaves shows off toys donated by employees for needy children.

■ **Employees donate toys for needy kids** — Metro Sales and Customer Services and the Department of Transportation sponsored a second successful holiday Toys for Tots drive in December. **Linda Eaves**, administrative specialist with Sales and Customer Services, volunteered to coordinate with the Marine Corps to place a donation barrel in the eighth-floor lobby of King Street Center. "People enjoy the opportunity to give," Eaves said. The barrel collected more than 90 new, unwrapped toys for needy children.

■ **City Light writes Metro a check** — The effort to improve energy efficiency at our bus bases scored a win in October when we received a rebate check for \$52,799 from Seattle City Light for energy-saving improvements at Ryerson Base. City Light and Puget Sound Energy offer financial incentives for reducing energy use. The Ryerson project

included air-quality monitoring equipment to control ventilation in vehicle maintenance areas, which is expected to save 264,000 kWh per year and reduce annual greenhouse gas emissions by nearly 160 metric tons. The incremental cost of the improvement was \$111,000, but with an estimated payback of 3.7 years, Metro's return on investment should be about 27 percent. Six more Metro projects are in development that could potentially garner \$600,000 in future rebates. By year's end, City Light had returned \$180,664 to Metro in rebates for all projects.

■ **Musicians and foodies give back** — Service Development's musical and cooking talents helped feed the hungry during the 2011 Combined Charities Campaign. The group organized five lunchtime benefit concerts in the King Street Center lobby, raising \$873 for Northwest Harvest. Food and drink sales raised another \$1,021.75. Musicians who donated their time and talents were \$4 Shoe, The Gibson Girls, harpist/Gaelic singer Judith Cummings, The Transporters, and Los Gatos.

■ **More Husky football riders** — In 2010, Metro's UW Husky Football service carried 143,780 people to six home games, including three big-draw games (against Syracuse, Nebraska, and Stanford). Last year our 2011 total turned out to be even larger at 151,039. There's no chance of a three-year trend, though—in 2012, all Husky home games will be at Century Link field while Husky stadium is rebuilt.

■ **Rideshare Operations moves to King Street** — Halloween brought both treats and tricks to Rideshare Operations staff members, who moved from their long-time Yesler Building digs to the King Street Center that day. The treats—new computers with Windows 7 and Office 2010 software—included the

“trick” of needing to adapt quickly to the new technology. Kudos to IT staffers who made the move as “trick-free” as possible, and to Rideshare employees for their patience during the transition.



Pat Engrissei celebrates his final trip before retiring. Engrissei spent two-and-a-half decades driving full-time on Vashon Island. Photo by Natalie Johnson, courtesy of the Vashon-Maury Island Beachcomber.

■ **Vashon operator retires** — Central Base staffers, family members, and friends converged at the Vashon Dock on Jan. 6 to celebrate the retirement of **Leonard “Pat” Engrissei**, who spent more than a quarter of a century driving Vashon Island Route 119 out of King County's Vashon Maintenance Yard. Picking his coach up there, he made connections with the north- and south-island ferry docks, and returned the bus to the yard at the end of his day. He was known for bringing homegrown roses onboard, filling his coach with their fragrance (until the deer started eating his rose bushes)—and for going out of his way to get his passengers home, not always easy when ferries were so often off-schedule.

In Transit

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.



We'll Get You There

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Transit operators of the month

December 2011

Atlantic Base: **Sandra Huff**

Central Base: **John Pedersen**

Eastside Campus: (declined)

North Base: **Tamara Suschik**

Ryerson Base: **Girma Stephanos**

South Base: **Betsy Boyle**

January 2012

Atlantic Base: **Zeola Beasley**

Central Base: **Injerjeet Dhaliwal**

Eastside Campus: **Eric Vickery**

North Base: **Kristine Stephens**

Ryerson Base: **Victor Moore**

South Base: **John Thomas**

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On the Move

Gregory Eugene Larson, rail track and ROW maintainer (Link) — December 12

Andrew Miller, rail track and ROW maintainer (Link) — December 12

Service Development

Kendra Dedinsky, transportation planner II (Route Facilities) — January 5

Colin Drake, transportation planner II (Route Facilities) — January 5

Transit Safety

Andrew Goudreau, safety and health administrator I — December 14

Vehicle Maintenance

Jennifer Blackstone, administrative specialist II — October 24

Ramsey David Bohner, equipment dispatcher — January 9

William Craig Thon, transit vehicle procurement administrator — January 3

Vinh Phong Tran, fiscal specialist II — January 3



ON THE MOVE

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

Retirements

Design and Construction,

George Mitacek, engineer V — February 17; 28+ years

Operations

Sherman Alston, base chief (Atlantic Base) — January 1; 32 years

Lauri Camara, base chief (North Base) — February 1; 32 years

John Costello, base chief (North Base) — January 1; 27 years

David Earle, transit operator (North Base) — August 1; 27 years

Richard Edmund, transit operator (South Base) — December 31; 32 years

Leonard “Pat” Engrissei, transit operator (Central Base-Vashon) — January 6; 27+ years

Jim Irvine, PT transit operator (North Base) — November 1; 20 years

George Johnson, PT transit operator (North Base) — January 1; 32 years

Tom Sparks, PT transit operator (North Base) — January 1; 30 years

James Tandoo, transit operator (North Base) — November 1; 23 years

James Worthington, transit operator (South Base) — December 1; 21 years

Paratransit/Rideshare Operations

Cathy Blumenthal, rideshare operations chief (Rideshare) — January 1; 16+ years

Janey Elliott, transit planner (Accessible Services) — January 18; 25+ years

Power and Facilities

Wes Dawson, utility line worker (Power Distribution) — December 31; 26 years

Barbara Divers, transit custodian I (Facilities Maintenance) — December 29; 25 years

Vehicle Maintenance

Roy Epps, mechanic — January 1; 15+ years

Ray Hayashi, equipment dispatcher — January 7; 40+ years

Promotions and Job Changes

Metro Transit Police

Deputy Jon Akiona (and partner “Chase”) to MTP K9/Joint Transit Anti-Terrorism Unit from Sound Transit Police

Brad Haskin, administrative specialist IV to MTP from KC Sheriff’s Office (Records Unit)

Deputy Brad Ray to MTP Patrol from KC Sheriff’s Office (Civil Unit)

Operations

Cathy Vujovich to base chief (North Base) from South Base

Power and Facilities

Lisa Brown to electrical constructor (TLT) from transit electronic communications specialist (TLT)

Ken Enge to electrical constructor (TLT) from transit electronic communications specialist (TLT)

Service Development

Christina O’Claire to supervisor (Long Range Planning and Performance Management) from transit planner III

Vehicle Maintenance

Iranie Antoine to lead equipment service worker (Atlantic Base VM) from Central Base VM

Danny Belcher to acting millwright from sheet metal worker (Component Supply Center)

Bonnie Davis-Losey to acting chief from lead mechanic (East Base VM)

William “Max” Lee to acting lead mechanic from mechanic (Atlantic Base VM)

Ryan Stringfellow to acting chief from mechanic (Central Base VM)

Gary Tveit to acting chief from lead mechanic (Ryerson Base VM)

New Hires

Power and Facilities

David Bales II, transit electronic communications technician (Radio Electronic Maintenance) — December 13

John “JAC” Ciccossanti, transit electronic communications specialist - TLT (Radio Electronic Maintenance) — November 14

Lowell Wood, building operating engineer (Facilities Maintenance) — October 28

Rail

Marvin Doering, rail track and ROW maintainer (Link) — December 12

Joanie Guillen, rail track and ROW maintainer (Link) — December 12

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