

News from the PACE committees

Partnership to Achieve Comprehensive Equity



June 2015

PACE gets recognized nationally!

On April 1 Rob Gannon and Judy Young were present on behalf of the PACE effort to receive the National Public Employer Labor Relations Association (NPERLA) Pacesetter award for 2015.

The Pacesetter Award is presented by the association to individuals, groups or organizations that have demonstrated particularly innovative leadership in public sector labor relations. The award recognizes those individuals who, through their professional achievements, have successfully developed a new



tool or technique for resolving conflicts, addressing new challenges, or assisting others in their growth in public sector labor relations and human resources. Pacesetters are role models who serve as resources to others in the field.

PACE was selected to receive this award because of its innovative approach to collaborative problem-solving

between government and union. As evidence of how unique the partnership's approach is within the public sector, Judy Young was the only union official in attendance at the conference.

Report from March 5 PACE Retreat

Observations from the Flight Deck (in memory of Leonard Nimoy):

PACE members gathered to engage, discuss, reminisce and reconnect as PACE marches forward. We met early Thursday morning to check in and catch up with each other. New invitees were also in attendance as our PACE community continues to grow.

We were greeted by Jake Jacobovitch who introduced Department of Transportation Director Harold Taniguchi. Harold's inspirational and moving stories held our attention and demonstrated his deep understanding of these issues. He talked about courage and how much bravery it takes to keep having the "messy, tough conversations" needed to address issues of discrimination.

Our keynote speaker was King County Council Member Larry Gossett, who talked about his experience as part of the revolution to break down the barriers of racism. He left us with this: "Be the change you wish to see in the world."



Among other things, the day was spent reviewing progress to date including changes to Policy 15, Customer Feedback. The revised policy incorporates subcommittee recommendations and was implemented on Feb 11, 2015. This revised policy will be reviewed as feedback comes in from operators and customers. It is exciting to see the PACE recommendations coming to

In this issue:

PACE gets recognized nationally!	1
Report from March PACE retreat	1-2
PACE spotlight: Anita Whitfield	3-4
Operations chief recruitment	5
PACE . . . What's next?	6

continued on page 2

Keep PACE

Report from March PACE retreat continued from page 1

fruition. Remember, these are small steps to sustainable change. We are not slapping our hands together and saying we're done. PACE is committed to the long haul of change and continuous improvement.

There was also a presentation about recommendations from the Recruitment and Selection and Workforce Development subcommittees which were piloted by Transit HR in the recruitment and hiring of seven chiefs. Key components included workshops that provided support and information on the hiring process, application help, and a "Chief's toolbox" to support their body of work. Remember, this is only the beginning!

We spent the afternoon with Dr. Caprice Hollins, who has been working with us on our PACE journey. She provides us with opportunities to explore our own biases and awareness about PACE's work to address social justice and equity.

Our lesson for the afternoon: racial microaggressions and how to recognize, acknowledge, and address these

issues. Retreat participants practiced role plays and provided feedback about the process. This was an opportunity to self-examine and reflect on our own issues and "walk in another's shoes" to understand the impact that microaggression play in our lives.

We also discussed PACE's role and position in the agency. PACE works toward equity and inclusion, social justice, engagement and empowerment. We are not the equity police; we are one way to address institutional racism and the system that supports it. We are a movement, not an easy road to say okay, we did this, this, and that and we're done. This is about challenging ourselves on a journey with a destination unknown. It is not an event, it is a priority. It is about institutional change and systemic change to make our workplace fair and equitable.

We are all challenged to stay the course. Ask yourself, "What are you doing?" WE ARE PACE! Partnership for Achieving Comprehensive Equity!

Lorrie Alfonsi



PACE Spotlight: Anita Whitfield, Transit Diversity Manager

Please provide a brief background of your work history.

I've been at King County doing a variety of different things over the years. I started many many years ago as a Clerk Typist II for a gentleman named Fritz Kopeinig at East Base. In 1998, I became the Assistant Manager for the Minority and Women's Business Enterprise Division. From there I managed the Licensing and Regulatory Services Division and then for a number of years I was the HR Director for the Executive Branch of the government. I left the county in 2011, and returned to work in the DOT Director's Office. In 2014 I took on the role of PACE Project Manager.

Why did you want to become the Transit Diversity Manager?

For so many reasons. Most importantly, I believe this is a real time for change in Transit. Another reason is what I've seen from the leadership here in the DOT Director's Office and the Transit General Manager's Office. The commitment, honesty, and integrity I've seen from these leaders around inclusion and diversity tell me that this is a real change they are trying to make. These folks are genuinely trying to walk the talk. They are doing the hard work of figuring out how to truly build an inclusive work environment. . . . Also, the union is stepping up to the plate and figuring out how to effectively take shared responsibility for this change. And the employees. . . the operators and the chiefs and superintendents and managers who want to do good work and help build a strong and healthy work environment. I'd like to help them all make the positive change we seek, at this time, for this organization.

What will the Transit Diversity Manager do?

The purpose of this new position in short is to create an effective and sustainable diversity program including managing agency-wide activities related to diversity, inclusion, accessibility and EEO/AA. Of course, a part of the job will be to help ensure the agency's legal compliance with non-discrimination and anti-harassment laws and regulations. Another major part of the job is to help the agency truly learn to be inclusive, and to genuinely embrace and value diversity of all. In my

opinion, one important role of the new diversity manager is to help Metro Transit be a place where inclusion, fairness and valuing diversity is not a side issue, not an add on, but the heart and soul of who we are as an organization.

How has your experience prepared you for the role of Transit Diversity Manager?

My experience and background has taught me the importance of taking a multi-faceted approach to this work. I understand the legal aspect of this position, and I also understand the importance of the humanity which is at the core of the work. I have learned that you can't take a cookie-cutter approach to making the kind of positive, lasting, fundamental change we are trying to make. We can't take an existing approach and just overlay it on top of the entity that is Metro Transit. To be effective, the steps we take have to be uniquely tailored to the specific needs of the organization. My experience has also taught me that this is not a one-person job. The diversity manager plays an important role, but to make the real, lasting change, everyone has to be accountable for their own part in it.

What is your vision for the role?

My vision is to help bridge some of the gaps that can so often keep people apart. It includes helping us all to become more self-aware and aware of others. This new position in Metro Transit should be instrumental in helping to build a workplace where we are courageously addressing issues of inequity and marginalization and where we don't let fear and suspicion keep us apart – and stuck. If we are courageous, and really trying to do the work, then for sure we'll do things wrong, and we'll make mistakes, but this position should help us build an



continued on page 4

Keep PACE

PACE Spotlight: Anita Whitfield continued from page 3

environment where we learn from those mistakes so we don't make them over and over.

How will this new position benefit Transit employees?

We're building a new program here so some of the benefits of the position will be defined as we move forward, but as a member of Transit's management team, this position will be able look across all the sections within Transit with an eye towards helping managers to address common themes and concerns in a way that will benefit all employees. Also, in my view, this new position also allows us more flexibility in how we address concerns. I have found that when issues around inclusion, equity and diversity arise (or even when they have been there for a long time), most people want to know that they have been heard and understood...then they want a solution that lays the pathway for a more positive future – something that goes beyond the traditional and limited legal avenues, which often leave people angry, hurt and without resolution. One of my goals is to make sure the diversity and inclusion program that we build ultimately incorporates this reality. I think most Transit employees would find that a benefit.

Why is this work important to you?

It's important because work is so important to people. The ability to do valuable work and receive an honestly earned wage sufficient to support ourselves and those who depend on us is critical. It fuels part of our self-esteem. Work impacts lives and families. Whether a parent can gainfully work impacts children and their opportunities for generations to come. What we do (work) informs

our identities. It is a lot of who we are. Given this, it is important that people be able to experience their work in such a way that it enhances their lives and hence their communities. Because of this, I believe we have to be very serious about the issues of inclusion and diversity. We have to be purposeful about it. We have to mean it. We have to be courageous and believe enough in the possibility of something different and better that we put our shoulder to this boulder. It's important for everyone.

What will give you the most satisfaction in this position?

I would get the most satisfaction out of helping us to get to a place as an organization where we don't ignore our differences, but we learn to respect and value them. I would get a lot of satisfaction if we were able to create and sustain an environment filled with people who understand that your best is connected to my best. This position came as a result of a PACE recommendation and through my work with PACE, I've come to understand that people are hopeful, yet often skeptical that there will be real change. I would be most satisfied when we can say we've made that hope a reality.



Transit Operations Chief Recruitment Picking up the PACE!

In December 2014, Transit Operations partnered with Transit Human Resources and the Career Support Services group to develop a comprehensive selection plan that would honor the work of PACE as well as recognize and accurately assess the talent of our Transit employees.

Some of the major concerns we heard from PACE were a lack of transparency in the recruitment process and a lack of commitment to developing employees for promotional opportunities. Regarding transparency in particular, it was very unclear in the past what the qualifications were, how those qualifications were assessed, and how candidates were selected. To help address and meet this need, we used a tool called Lominger Competencies. The Lominger Competencies describe the attributes and attitudes necessary for success in both the recruitment and in the transit chief role. We then used those identified competencies in order to describe the duties and the qualifications of the position in plain language.

We also worked hard to develop a selection schedule that we could, as a group, commit to and stick with. Once we had a schedule, we used it to build a process that included three defined pieces: pre-recruitment, recruitment, and post-recruitment. Within these pieces we built a robust outreach and marketing plan, a talent assessment team training plan and a structured feedback plan.

With the structure complete, we developed the 2015 Transit Chief – Operations Recruitment Information Packet. This packet detailed the entire selection process from start to finish, and, once published, committed Operations to the schedule and strategy. This allowed employees to know exactly what to expect and when to expect it. It also gave employees a very clear idea of what we were looking for in a transit chief and a plethora of resources to expand upon the outlined competencies. Highlights of the packet included:

- Detailed explanation of recruitment steps and timeline
- Outreach classes including application preparation, chief information sessions, and interview preparation

- Ideal candidate profile and competencies
- Job announcement sneak preview
- Introduction to Lominger Competencies
- Competency resources including nearly 120 resources to articles and videos
- Explanation of training for talent assessment team
- Links to other King County resources and training
- Information about feedback, or “next step” sessions



We are using the competencies to inform the next step sessions as well. These sessions reviewed how the applicants did in the process, and identified areas for development and improvement to better prepare them for the next recruitment as well as the transit chief role itself.

This is a new process for us, and we understand that with any new process, we will need to evaluate it to see how we did, where we did well, and what we can improve. We have already learned some valuable lessons that we can immediately apply to other recruitments such as openly advertising outreach resources currently available in the county for employees interested in advancement.

We also know that this was an ambitious project, and in light of the amount of vacancies for this position, we deemed the time and effort not only worthwhile, but essential. We won't be able to recreate this process for every recruitment we run, but the foundation has been laid for all of our recruitments to model the tenets of transparency and the commitment to develop our internal talent pool for promotional opportunities.

Susan Eddy

Keep PACE

PACE...What's next?



With all the great recommendations made, and improvements to current processes and policies in the works, many people can't help but wonder, is PACE complete? The answer is a resounding NO! The partnership was formed with the goal of "achieving comprehensive equity." Comprehensive equity is not something that is achievable in a year, two years, or even 10. Remember this is a marathon, not a sprint! PACE identifies specific areas or processes within transit that appear inequitable, works to understand the current state and what portions are problematic, recommends solutions that would make that process more equitable, identifies key measures that would

indicate if the recommended solutions are having the desired outcome, and finally puts the changes that were recommended into action. We have done a lot of work to identify, understand, and make recommendations, and now it is time we start to make the changes.

In the near future, the original subcommittees will be overseeing and assisting in implementing the changes that were identified as the first priority (top 15 recommendations). They will be tasked with helping those who are the owners of the process to understand the intent of the recommendations their committee made. This will ensure that the intent can be met, even if the exact recommendation cannot currently be implemented.

While the subcommittees focus on giving needed input on implementation of the top 15, the Steering Committee will continue to prioritize and organize the other 100+ recommendations that came from the subcommittees so that the work can continue to progress smoothly. The Steering Committee will also be looking at what other processes should we be considering next, and how can we continue to grow the community of people who want to help shape the equitable work environment we are working to create.

Keep checking the website for future outreach dates and opportunities to contribute and provide feedback at Metro.Kingcounty.gov/PACE.

Change starts with you!

The PACE committees want to hear from you! We cannot do our job without your help. Please contact us and let us know what you think about equity and general problem-solving at King County Metro. Let us know about issues and/or concerns or a suggestion you think may be helpful. Contact PACE at pace@kingcounty.gov or at metro.kingcounty.gov/PACE.

Published by the PACE Communication subcommittee.

Photos by Ned Ahrens.



Subscribe to the TOMS PACE topic with this QR code.

