



in *transit*

Newsletter for Minnesota Public Transit

March/April 2007

Transportation Rally at Capitol supports highway and transit

ST. PAUL—The Transportation Rally at the Capitol on April 12 had a great turnout and was an overwhelming success. Supporters for highway and transit funding turned out in

great numbers to hear U.S. Congressman Jim Oberstar and others talk about the importance roads and transit projects in Minnesota.



Legislative Update

Margaret Donahoe
Legislative Director
Minnesota Transportation Alliance



It's Crunch time at the Legislature

As the legislature completes its work for 2007 Session, decisions will be made that will impact transit for at least the next 2 years, if not longer. With transit systems facing an immediate budget shortfall, a deficiency bill is necessary to ensure needed funding for the current 2006-2007 biennium. That should not be a problem.

For the next biennium and beyond, transit advocates continue to push for additional dedicated funding that will allow for stable dollars to expand service and build a true transit network. With new leadership in the House and Senate, the legislature passed major transportation funding proposals that provide significant funding increases transit throughout the state. The major provisions for transit include:

- An increase of ½ cent in the sales tax collected in the Twin Cities metropolitan area with proceeds dedicated to transportation. In the Senate bill, 80 percent of the sales tax revenue would be used for transit, biking and pedestrian purposes. In the House, the distribution of the funds is not spelled out.
- A statutory dedication of the sales tax collected on motor vehicles that are leased rather than purchased with the revenue split 50/50 between highways and transit is contained in the Senate

funding bill. This provision was not included in the House bill, although the Governor proposed dedicated this revenue with the same 60/40 split between highways and transit that has been proposed for the sales tax dedicated through passage of the constitutional amendment.

- An expansion of the transit taxing district in the metropolitan area and authorization for \$44 million in regional bonding is included in the Senate funding bill.

While the vote on both the House and Senate bills was strong, the Governor has indicated that he will veto any transportation funding bill with a gas tax increase or sales tax increase. Transit advocates will need to work hard to push for a compromise position that moves us forward.

In addition to the funding bill, the legislature has passed a smaller capital bonding bill that contains funding for a number of transit projects. Funding has been included in both the House and Senate bills for:

- The Central Corridor
- Southwest Corridor
- Red Rock Corridor
- Rush Line Corridor
- I-494 Corridor
- I-394 Corridor
- St. Paul Union Depot
- Midwest High Speed Rail Initiative

As the session moves into the final weeks, it is more imperative than ever that legislators hear from you and other transit advocates. Please take a few minutes to send an e-mail or make a phone call. It really does make a difference!

Transportation Rally at Capitol



From the President



Tony Kellen, President
Minnesota Public Transit Association
Director of Operations, St. Cloud Metro Bus
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Thanks for signing up to receive In Transit in its new electronic format. We hope that you enjoy this version of the newsletter and appreciate your feedback on the new format and process.

The Minnesota Public Transit Association has been busy representing your interests at the Capitol, raising awareness of transit throughout the state, and planning for important events including the annual Public Transit Conference and the Bus Rodeo. We've had some important successes, but also face some

big challenges in the months ahead. Your involvement and support and of this organization is critical to our efforts to improve transit in Minnesota.

Please continue to visit our MPTA web site at: www.mpta-transit.org. You can register for the annual Public Transit Conference online and find information about hotel accommo-

dations. The conference is coming up quickly, so don't put off reserving your hotel room. Online registration begins June 1, 2007. This year's conference promises to be a great event that will focus on transit's role in building and improving communities. Our theme for the conference is: Public Transit: Serving Communities, Empowering Lives. You won't want to miss out on the information sessions and national speakers we have lined up for this event.

As the legislative session winds down, it's even more important for transit advocates to be talking with legislators and raising awareness in your own communities about the funding challenges we all face. If legislators don't hear from you, they won't be hearing from the people with the most knowledge, experience and commitment to transit in the state. It only takes a few minutes to send an e-mail message, or make a phone call or send in a letter to the editor. Make a difference in transit funding today!

The fact that we have a statewide association comprised of transit systems is so important for the future of transit service. Local governments have a statewide association, highway interests have a statewide association, railroads, airports and other transportation interests all have statewide associations comprised of those engaged in the day-to-day work to represent their interests. MPTA is only as strong as our membership. We greatly appreciate the transit systems that are members of MPTA and who promote the association. If you have not yet paid your dues for 2007 membership, please join today. We need the support of all transit systems to ensure that transit has a strong voice in Minnesota.

Minnesota Public Transit Association



Center for Transportation Studies honors Mn/DOT's Donna Allan

ST. PAUL—Donna Allan, transit director with the Minnesota Department of Transportation, received the Ray L. Lappegaard Distinguished Service Award for her leadership in the field of transit. The award was presented from the Center for Transportation Studies, a University of Minnesota affiliate in Minneapolis. The honor recognizes Allan's contributions in transit, including her role in support of the state's Interagency Committee on Transit Coordination. The panel was established by Gov. Tim Pawlenty in 2005.

The committee's purpose is to improve the coordination and delivery of transit services in the state, particularly for low-income people, elders and people who have disabilities. The award also cites Allan's overall leadership, mentoring others in the field and supporting members of the transit profession. She has served in other leadership roles with organizations such as the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials and the Women's Transportation Seminar.

During her tenure as transit director with Mn/DOT, public transit services have been expanded to include service in 74 of the 80 counties outside the Twin Cities metro area. CTS presents the yearly award in memory of the late Ray

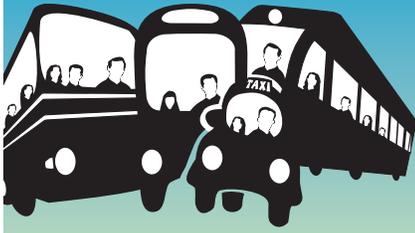


Transit Director Donna Allan

Lappegaard, a former state legislator and Mn/DOT commissioner who led the center's executive committee from 1989 until his death in 1993.



Transit in the News



New transit service begins in Bagley

BAGLEY—Transit service to Bagley, delivered by Tri-Valley Heartland Express, began on February 1. The service covers the community of Bagley and will go up to 2 miles out of the city limits. "Tri-Valley has a strong sense of helping people," said Tri-Valley Transit Director, Michael Frisch. "After receiving requests by the city of Bagley and working cooperatively with Mn/DOT, we felt there was a need to be filled." Tri-Valley reports that the service has been very well received by the community. "People comment that they enjoy the ride and the drivers are pleasant," commented Michael Frisch. Tri-Valley Heartland Express offers public transit service to Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk and Red Lake counties.

JARC/NF circulars released

MINNESOTA—Requirements for the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom programs provide formula funding for states and communities and are targeted to enhance transportation services for specific populations dependent upon alternative transportation options. These circulars are essential to Minnesota transit organizations who are presently involved in the Greater Minnesota JARC/New Freedom application process.

MN Tribal Transit Grant recipients announced

MINNESOTA—The Federal Transit Administration announced the selection of projects to be funded under the Fiscal Year 2006 appropriation for the Tribal Transit Program. This program, authorized by SAFETEA-LU legislation, provides grants directly to Indian tribes for public transportation services on Indian reservations. In the past, tribes received pro-

gram funds as sub-recipients of States. SAFETEA-LU now defines tribes as eligible direct recipients under the Section 5311 program. Several Minnesota tribes were selected to receive funds with this year's appropriation: Grand Portage Band of Chippewa, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, Lower Sioux Indian Community, Red Lake Band of Chippewa and the Upper Sioux Community.

"Safe Routes" recipients named for 2007

MINNESOTA—Safe Routes To School (SRTS) funded by SAFETEA-LU legislation, is designed to improve the conditions and quality of bicycling and walking to school in communities across the nation. The goal of the program is to reverse the 30 year decline in the numbers of children walking to school and reintroduce opportunities for regular physical activity. SRTS programs work with schools, students and parents, at a grass roots level, to identify improvements that will make biking and walking to and from school a routine part of students' experience. These improvements embody both infrastructure and educational projects which foster the Safe Routes program goals. Following is a list of the Minnesota communities who received April 2007 Safe Routes to School grants: Duluth, Hibbing, International Falls, Park Rapids, East Grand Forks, Milaca, Rothsay, New Hope, Minneapolis, Jordon, New Brighton, Plymouth/Wayzata, Lake Elmo, Edina, Eagan, Spring Valley, Red Wing, Beaver Creek, Luverne, Hills and Beaver Creek, Lester Prairie and New London.

Metro Transit steps up bus security

METRO—Metro Transit recently announced a \$2.4 million plan to increase security in the wake of two killings and other recent violence aboard buses. The agency says transit crime fell last year and is down again this year, but it acknowledged a fatal shooting in downtown St. Paul last month and a beating death in Minneapolis in March have unnerved riders.

Highlights of the increased Metro Transit security plan: Transit police officers will ride buses 1,500 hours a month, up from 270 hours a month last year. There will also be more coordination with municipal police to patrol bus stops. In addition, nearly 250 buses will get upgraded digital cameras that produce clearer video and record continuously. Metro Transit will also partner with groups such as "Mad Dads", which puts volunteers on buses to improve civility and etiquette.

"U-Go Free" summer youth pass promotion huge success

ST. CLOUD—Since 2004, Metro Bus has provided free bus transportation during the summer for youth riders ages 6 to 17 through its *U-Go Free* program. This innovative program has been an overwhelming success and youth ridership has grown from 1,500 rides the first year to 55,000 last summer — a 1,300 percent increase.

The *U-Go Free* summer promotion is available to youth riders in the four city region Metro Bus serves, St. Cloud, Sartell, Sauk Rapids and Waite Park. The idea originated from a telephone conversation with City Bus General Manager Martin Sennett of Lafayette, Indiana. "It's been one of our most successful programs in the 27 years I have been with Metro Bus," said Executive Director David Tripp.

U-Go Free bus passes are available at the Metro Bus Transit Center in downtown St. Cloud starting in May and are valid from June 1 through September 1. Youth riders must be accompanied by a parent or guardian to register for and pick-up their *U-Go Free* bus passes.

Metro Bus works with KIDSTOP and the local Boys and Girls Club to get summer participants enrolled in the *U-Go Free* program. KIDSTOP uses Metro Bus for all of their summer outings and field trips. Three separate school districts covering the Metro Bus transit service area also are strong proponents of the program. During the month of May, they distribute *U-Go Free* brochures and sign-up forms in the class rooms.

DTA names Employee of the Year

91 bus operators and mechanics commended for safety

DULUTH—The Duluth Transit Authority (DTA) has named driver John Pike as the Employee of the Year for 2006 at the DTA's annual Employee Safety & Recognition Award Breakfast, which was held at the DTA's Operations Center on March 29.

The DTA also recognized and commended 91 bus operators and mechanics at the Awards Breakfast for achieving a cumulative total of 906 years of accident-free service.

John Pike began his career at the DTA as a full-time driver in October of 1984. He is an outstanding employee and truly enjoys working with the public. John has a great attitude and always performs his duties in a courteous and professional manner. He is very dependable and rarely misses a day on the job.

In addition to his good customer service skills, John is an excellent bus operator. In his 22 years of service with the DTA, he has not had a single accident.

His driving skills have also earned him quite a reputation around the state, too. John won his first of four Minnesota Statewide Bus Roadeo competitions in 1994 and then for an unprecedented three consecutive years from 1997 to 1999. This accomplishment is unparalleled in State Bus Roadeo history.

John has served on a number of DTA committees over the years—including the Accident Appeals, Safety Goals and Safety Focus Group committees.

John was named Employee of the Month in October of 1989 and November of 1999. He was also named DTA Employee of the Year in 1999.



DTA General Manager Dennis Jensen (right) presents Employee of the Year award to driver John Pike.

DTA participates in Career Day at Fond-du-Lac Community College

CLOQUET—The Fond-du-Lac Community College in Cloquet has been hosting Student Career Days for years and the DTA has been an annual participant. Junior high and senior high school students from Duluth and other regional schools were bussed in for this "Career Day Expo."

In all, nearly 500 students take part in the event. Students had the opportunity to ask questions from a number of local tradesmen and professionals; and explore the many career options presented at the event. Also on hand were col-

lege and technical school recruiters.

The DTA is always an attraction at Career Days. A bus was parked outside the college and interested students experienced the vehicle inside and under the hood. Students ask what it's like to be a bus driver or a mechanic working on mass transit buses and technical equipment.



DTA representatives, Don Johnson (center), Bob Grossman (center left) and Brad Erickson (center-right) talk to students at Fond-du-Lac Community College during the Career Day event.

Popular Hiawatha line park-and-ride facility to expand

New ramp at the 28th Avenue Station will hold 1,450 parking spaces

METRO—The 28th Avenue Station park-and-ride lot in Bloomington has long been popular with commuters who ride the Hiawatha light-rail line. It's so popular that the lot is often full on weekdays and during special events in downtown Minneapolis.

Parking capacity along the Hiawatha Line will grow significantly in the next year, thanks to a new 1,450-space parking ramp at the station. Once complete, the ramp will be Metro Transit's largest parking structure.

Construction on the five-level facility will begin in mid-April and should be finished in fall 2008. Construction is expected to cost \$16.3 million.

During construction, the park-and-ride lot south of the line will be closed. A temporary lot — on the southwest corner of 82nd Street and 28th Avenue — with 500 parking spaces will be available. The north lot, which has 150 spaces, will remain open for commuters during construction. The station itself also will remain open.

Designs call for a plaza, and retail

If a commuter has a quick shopping errand to run on the way home, he or she might be able to take care of it at the station. Plans for the ramp include 2,000 square feet of retail space. That's not the only amenity anticipated. Designs call for a plaza between the parking ramp and the light-rail station, with room for planters, trees and areas to sit and relax.

The ramp's construction is being financed through an arrangement with the Bloomington Port Authority. The Port Authority will fund construction through the sale of revenue bonds and will initially own the structure. According to the

agreement between the Port Authority and the Met Council, the Council will make lease payments to the Port Authority. Once the bonds are paid off in 2009, the Council will own the parking ramp.

Demand for park-and-ride spaces is high

Across the system, customer demand for park-and-ride facilities continues to be high. Since 1999, the region has expanded park-and-ride capacity by 177 percent, but the number of users has grown 223 percent. The 28th Avenue Station parking ramp is one of more than a dozen major facilities set for building or expansion between now and 2010.



The 28th Avenue light rail transit station's park-and-ride lot is routinely full. A new ramp will be constructed there starting in mid-April.

Renville County Heartland Express gets first Turtle Top bus in State

RENVILLE COUNTY—Transit Director Rachel Schneiderman and Dispatcher Robin Schwer of the Renville County Heartland Express traveled to the Hogle Bus Company in Monticello on March 20 to drive their first Turtle Top bus back to Olivia. They were very excited to bring the Turtle Top home and introduce it in Renville County. Schneiderman and staff have been waiting for nearly 5 years for smaller bus to be approved. Schneiderman first saw the Turtle Top bus at the 2006 Transit Conference in LaCrosse, WI and knew it was the bus for Renville County. "There are routes in our County that do not require a 21 passenger bus. We felt a smaller bus with capacity for nine passenger or three wheelchairs would be more beneficial to our rural areas," said Schneiderman.



Renville County Heartland Express staff exhibit new Turtle Top bus at the District 8 meeting in Marshall on March 16.



Metro Transit helps customers celebrate Earth Day

MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL – “Ride the wind-powered light-rail train, hop on a hybrid bus, sign up for the Commuter Challenge.” This was the environmentally friendly theme promoted by Metro Transit on Earth Day, Sunday, April 22.

Metro Transit kicked off its Go Greener Initiative on Earth Day with fun activities that have a serious purpose. Metro Transit purchased enough wind power from Xcel Energy’s Windsource program to essentially power the entire Hiawatha light-rail operation by wind on Earth Day. “This gesture draws attention to the rail line, which already is an environmentally friendly way to travel,” said Brian Lamb, Metro Transit general manager. “The wind-driven train also helps focus on our agency-wide commitment to the environment.”

Metro Transit is ordering 314 new buses, including 150 with hybrid electric technology. The hybrid buses deliver 22 percent better fuel mileage and produce half the soot emissions of the buses they replace.

To mark this Go Greener milestone, Metro Transit offered free rides on its three hybrid electric buses on Earth Day.

The Go Greener Initiative on Earth Day was a great way to promote Commuter Challenge 2007,” Lamb said.

Those who signed up on Metro Transit’s website and committed to trying an alternative to driving alone at least once by the end of June became eligible for prizes, including flat-screen TVs, i-Pods and bikes.

“Last year, 10,500 people took the challenge, and among those who used to drive alone, 45 percent are still using alternative transportation,” he said.

Lamb said the agency has loaded its website - metrotransit.org - with information on what citizens can do personally to improve the environment and details of Metro Transit’s commitments, including the use of five percent biodiesel in all of its nearly 900 buses.



Metro Transit honors top drivers for safety, good service

MINNEAPOLIS – Metro Transit honored 61 of the best Twin Cities bus and train operators at a ceremony this morning in Minneapolis.

Awards were presented to 10 bus operators for 25 years of safe driving. Five were named Elite Operators for 20 years of top-notch customer service, attendance and safe driving, and eight were named Superior Master Operators for meeting award standards for 15 years.

Prestige Master Operator status was given to 16 operators for 10 years, and 22 were presented the Master Operator designation for five years of achieving award criteria.

The bus operators were honored by Metro Transit General Manager Brian Lamb and Vince Pellegrin, the agency’s chief operating officer.

“To most transit customers, their bus or train operator is Metro Transit,” Lamb said. “The ability of each of our nearly 1,400 operators to provide on-time, safe and friendly service is the single most important measure of our reputation in the Twin Cities.”

Metro Transit is an operating agency of the Metropolitan Council. Customers boarded its buses and trains 73.8 million times last year, the highest annual ridership in 22 years.



Metro Mobility moves toward online reservation system

METRO—Thousands of Metro Mobility riders will soon be able to make, change or cancel many of their paratransit travel arrangements using only their home computer.

A new online reservation system will greatly reduce the number of steps and the time it takes to reserve a ride or make changes — tasks traditionally handled by reservation staff via telephone.

More than 60 volunteer riders are currently testing the new online system. Powered by TRAFFIX — the same software used by professional transit planners — the system should be ready for wider use later this year.

New system works well, users say

Dave Brufodt, chair of the Met Council's Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee (TAAC), said his experience with the online system is encouraging. Involved in testing the system from the start, Brufodt said a lot of the early challenges have been overcome.

"I think the system is very reliable now," he said. "I believe it will be a big winner for riders and providers alike. The riders should find the system easy to use and available 24 hours a day. The providers will hopefully see a big reduction in phone-call volume and thus reduced wait times for riders who still need to call in."

Ron Biss, another TAAC member with online experience, agreed. "When I booked a trip online recently, I found I was not getting the times I wanted, so I rebooked a second time and got more workable times. I thought that was really neat," he said.

"By doing it this way, I avoided feeling that I had to accept the first time given, or the first time that a reservationist might say is available. I also liked the fact that I was able to check on ride times without having to call by phone."

Biss said he hoped the online system eventually would accept a precise address for pick-up and drop-off, similar to the system used by Metro Transit's online trip planner. "There is still room for improvement," he said.

Metropolitan Council Member Mary Hill Smith said the online system upgrade will pay big dividends over time. "Our Metro Mobility service today is highly regarded in terms of reliability and quality, and the change to an online scheduling system makes it more cost effective," she said.

Smith chairs the Council's Transportation Committee, which oversees Metro Mobility. "We know from our demographic research that demand for paratransit service will continue rising in coming years as the population ages and people live longer," Smith said. "With more and more people using computers, the move to an online reservation system makes perfect sense. And the sooner the better." As more Twin Cities residents get older and live longer, the demand for paratransit service will grow in coming decades.



A Metro Mobility driver helps a passenger in downtown St. Paul onto the van's lift platform. Travel training helps people who don't have experience with regular-route transit learn the ins and outs of ridership.

Travel training builds confidence for new riders

METRO—But more demand won't necessarily guarantee more service. That's because future levels of service will depend — as it does now — on the state Legislature, which provides the lion's share of funding.

In response, transportation planners have developed a new approach to help keep seniors moving. "Travel Training" is a new voluntary travel instruction service sponsored by Metro Mobility to help potential riders learn how to use fixed-route transit.

The training offers benefits to all potential riders, whether they are seniors or disabled or not. The class:

- Promotes individual travel freedom
- Encourages flexibility and spontaneity
- Educates riders on system network and connections
- Informs riders of accessible features of regular buses
- Maximizes use of a rider's transit dollar.



Four women take a group travel training class to learn the ins and outs of riding regular-route transit.

ADA riders save money using fixed-route service

"The class is designed for people who may not have used fixed-route bus service in the past, but people we hope will try it out for at least some of their trips to help alleviate the demand for Metro Mobility," said Dave Jacobson, general manager for Metro Mobility.

"There is a big incentive for ADA-certified riders, too, because they pay a \$.50 fare instead of the \$2.50 or \$3.50 fare they would pay to Metro Mobility."

Classes are taught by certified orientation and mobility specialists with years of experience in the field. Instructors understand the unique travel needs of seniors and people with disabilities, and teach riders how to travel safely in their local community or across the region.

For riders with more specific needs, one-on-one instruction can also be arranged. In that case, travel plans are developed for each person's range of abilities, including how they might take a bus to a specific location such as work, school or a physician's office.

The group travel class and one-on-one instruction is free to any person with a disability. To learn more, contact Deena at safetravel@comcast.net.

Transit customer satisfaction remains strong, survey says

METRO—That’s the clear message from a survey the agency conducted this past fall to gauge satisfaction, determine riding patterns and identify what enhancements are most important to customers.

Customer satisfaction is up on both bus and train service. Ninety-four percent of bus customers said they are satisfied with overall service, up from 90 percent in 2005. Ninety-six percent of rail customers said they are satisfied with overall service, compared with 93 percent in 2005.

“We’ve put an even stronger emphasis on customer service in the last year, and our riders are noticing the results,” said Mary Hill Smith, chair of the Metropolitan Council’s Transportation Committee. “We’re committed to ensuring that riding bus and rail is a positive experience.”

The survey also suggested that if it were not for buses and light rail, the region’s roads and highways would be more congested. Half of train customers and more than one-third of bus customers said they would drive alone if transit were not available.

Metro Transit conducts the research to measure system-wide customer service and satisfaction levels. The latest survey represents the twelfth wave of research on buses and the third for light rail.

Parking costs send many to transit

When asked the one main reason customers use transit, train riders most often cited convenience or to save money on parking (both rated at 26 percent). For bus riders, 36 percent said that not owning a car was their top reason, a 5 percent increase from 2005. The next most popular reason was to save money on parking, coming in at 17 percent.

Most transit riders are headed to or from work: 69 percent of rail riders and 65 percent of bus riders cited work as the primary purpose of their trip. School was the second-most frequent trip purpose for bus riders, at 14 percent; for rail riders, it was social or entertainment, at 10 percent.

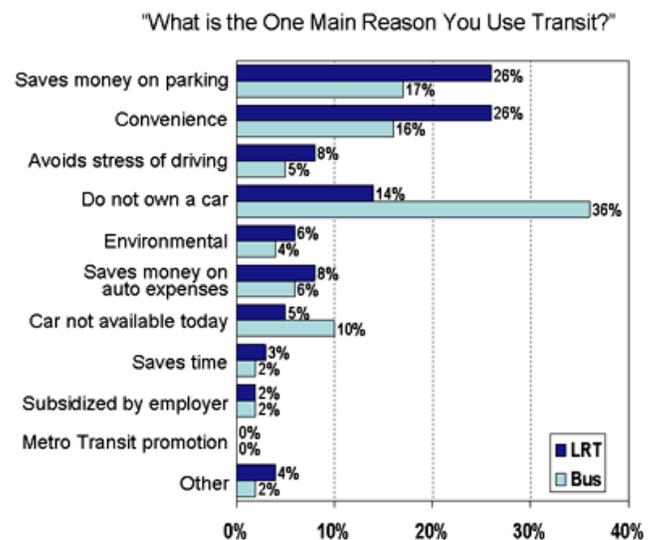
More than half of the bus riders surveyed said they have been using transit for more than five years, while more than a third of those surveyed on the train said the same.

Results from the survey provide new insights into bus customers who are students. Fourteen percent of all bus riders said they were taking transit to get to school; 11 percent said school helped influence their decision to first try transit. When ages and the length of transit use were compared, the largest share of new ridership was in the 18- to 24-year-old range. The 18-to-24 age group represents 19 percent of all bus riders.

In terms of income, 49 percent of the light-rail customers said they had a total annual family income below \$50,000. In comparison, 66 percent of bus customers said that they had a total family income in that range. Seventeen percent of rail riders said their annual family income is more than \$100,000; nine percent of bus riders had an income in that range.



Half of all rail riders surveyed said they would get to their destination by driving alone were it not for the train.



Convenience and saving money on parking motivate many people to ride light rail; for bus customers, the top reason for riding is lack of a car.

How the survey was conducted

Surveys were completed on paper or online by 6,592 bus riders and 1,598 train riders in late October 2006. The surveys were administered using a probability sampling technique, with each customer having a unique chance of being selected for participation. The response rate for the bus customer survey was 33 percent; for the rail survey, it was 18 percent.

Met Council publishes online guide to transit-oriented development

Updated guide features Twin Cities area projects

METRO—Seven years ago, when the Metropolitan Council produced its first Guide for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), all the guide's illustrations were from other metropolitan areas — such as Portland, San Diego, Seattle and San Francisco.

An updated, online version of the guide — now available on the Council's website — has much more of a hometown flavor. It includes profiles of 16 TOD projects that have sprung up around the seven-county Twin Cities region.

Transit-oriented development has several advantages, not the least of which is keeping cars off of the region's already congested roads.

"Nearly four out of five work-related trips in the Twin Cities region are made driving alone," said Sean Kershaw, executive director of the Citizens League. "Transit-oriented development gives people more choices that don't require driving. It's also a more efficient use of land than the typical development in this region over the last few decades."



New residential and commercial development has sprung up along with the Hiawatha light-rail transit line, which opened in 2004.

Demographic changes, congestion create market

"Changing demographics, individual preferences and increased traffic congestion have combined to create a market for TOD-type projects," says Council planning analyst John Kari.

Kari says this trend is particularly evident within "our largest demographic age group, the Baby Boomers (people born between 1946 and 1964). As the boomers retire, and as their children leave home, many are looking for condos and townhomes located near restaurants, shops, parks and transit."

TOD comes in different forms. It generally is defined as moderate to higher-density development located within easy walking distance of a major transit stop, generally with a mix of residential, employment and shopping opportunities designed for pedestrians without excluding the auto.

National market research shows an increasing number of people want to live near gathering places and amenities, Kari said. Some seek this by moving closer to downtowns, but others prefer to remain in their own communities with gathering places or "town centers" added so they can feel more connected to others.



Falcon Heights Town Square, located on two Metro Transit bus routes, replaced an aging shopping center.



Minnesota Public Transit Newsletter

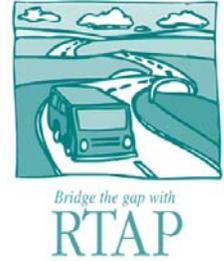
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RTAP Training Classes

Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) offers training in passenger assistance, defensive driving and abuse prevention. In 2007, RTAP is offering refresher courses and training for newly hired employees. New hires should take the full eight hours of Passenger Assistance, four hours of Defensive Driving and four hours of Abuse Prevention. Refresher training should be taken once every three years after the initial new hire courses have been completed. Register for classes by completing the form posted on the Office of Transit's web site at: www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/RTAP/Form/index.html. **RTAP calendar is subject to change. For the most up-to-date listing, see the 2007 RTAP training calendar at www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/RTAP/rtaptrng.html.** For more information, contact RTAP Coordinator Lynn Frank at lynn.frank@dot.state.mn.us or 651/296-1610.

May

- 05 Passenger Assistance Training — Fergus Falls Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Verona Klimek)
- 05 Driver Refresher Training — Willmar Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Steve Rasmussen)
- 19 Defensive Driving/Abuse Prevention — Bemidji Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Myrna Flint)
- 19 Passenger Assistance Training — Rochester Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Kris Barrett)

June

- 09 Defensive Driving/Abuse Prevention — Fergus Falls Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Myrna Flint)
- 16 Passenger Assistance Training — Brainerd Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Helen Pieper)
- 23 Driver Refresher Training — Bemidji Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Gordon Thompson)
- 30 Defensive Driving/Abuse Prevention — Rochester Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Terry Higgs)

July

- 14 Passenger Assistance Training — Willmar Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Mike Frisch)
- 14 Driver Refresher Training — Mankato Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Bonnie Nielson)
- 28 Defensive Driving/Abuse Prevention — St. Cloud Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Mike Frisch)

August

- 4 Passenger Assistance Training — Bemidji Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Gordon Thompson)
- 18 Defensive Driving/Abuse Prevention — Mankato Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Steve Rasmussen)
- 25 Driver Refresher Training — St. Cloud Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Jamey Rosenau)

Transit Events

- July 21 Minnesota Statewide Bus Rodeo — Willmar, MN
- Oct 29-31 Minnesota Public Transit Conference — St. Cloud, MN

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Metropolitan Council Directions
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