



in transit

Minnesota Public Transit Association



2007 Minnesota Legislative session produces mixed results

ST. PAUL— The 2007 Minnesota Legislature approved funding to sustain regional transit and park operations, as well as passing several of the Metropolitan Council's policy initiatives.

However, the Council's ability to implement its long-term vision to grow the metro area's transit system remains very much in doubt. That plan calls for expanding the current bus system, developing a network of bus and rail "transitways," and doubling ridership by 2030.

"The 2007 session left some unanswered questions about how we will fund much-needed highway and transit improvements to keep pace with our region's growth, improve mobility and ease congestion," said Peter Bell, Council chair. "We very much hope the transportation funding issue will be at the top of the legislative agenda again next year."

MVST allocation for metro area falls short

During this year's session, the governor and Legislature were unable to agree on a long-term transportation funding package to accelerate highway and transit improvements.

The "lights-on" transportation finance bill passed on the final day of the session provides \$98.8 million for transit in fiscal year 2008 and \$78.8 million for fiscal year 2009, about \$7.7 million less than needed in the second year of the biennium.

The larger problem, however, is how the Legislature allocated the revenues from the Motor Vehicle Sales Tax (MVST) under the constitutional amendment approved last fall. The amendment requires that at least 40 percent be allocated to transit and not more than 60 percent to highways when the dedication is fully implemented in 2012.

The Council had been counting on receiving 38 percent for metro area transit, with 2 percent going to transit in Greater Minnesota. In the lights-on bill, however, the Legislature approved a 36-4 percent split. It also failed to allocate MVST revenues from leased vehicles for transportation, as the governor had proposed. The total result is that the metro area will receive at least \$30 million less each year starting in 2012, once MVST is fully phased in.

"The bottom line," said Bell, "is that we will have difficulty using as much MVST revenue as we had planned in the coming years to help finance major capital projects such as the Central Corridor light-rail transit line."

Bonding for Central Corridor vetoed

Advocates of the Central Corridor LRT project, led by the business community, also were unsuccessful in securing state bonding dollars that would go toward the state's share of the \$930 million project. A \$334 million bonding bill that included \$40 million for the Central Corridor LRT project was vetoed by the governor, who objected to the total size of the package.

A separate bill that included language clarifying the Council's authority to build LRT lines failed to win final legislative approval. The Council will continue leading the project in concert with the Minnesota Department of Transportation, which has such statutory authority.



The "lights-on" transportation finance bill passed by the Legislature doesn't allow for the region to expand its transit system to keep pace with the region's growth.

From the President



Tony Kellen, President
Minnesota Public Transit Association
Director of Operations
St. Cloud Metro Bus
tkellen@stcloudmtc.com - 320/529-4481

Welcome to the electronic version of In Transit for those who are receiving the newsletter in this format for the first time.

The Minnesota Public Transit Association continues to be extremely active following on the heels of a major legislative session. While the outcome of the session was not what we wanted in terms of increased transit funding, we were able to convince many more legislators of the need for additional transit service. We know that obtaining more support for transit

takes one-on-one visits with local legislators to talk about local needs and demands for transit. MPTA assisted with legislative field hearings during the session focusing on local transit needs. We greatly appreciate the participation of all of our members who attended these important transit hearings!

Coming so close to a strong transit funding package means that this summer will NOT be one for kicking back and forgetting about the legislature. We need everyone to maintain the pressure and keep working during the interim for few additional votes we need to make a strong transit funding

package a reality. We have another chance to try for an override of the Governor's veto and if we can't capitalize on this opportunity, it will difficult to be taken seriously in the future. Stay tuned for ways you can help make a difference in the future of transit funding.

Hearings, conferences, and other events provide an important setting for furthering the goals of providing quality transit service. In addition to legislative hearings, MPTA is involved in a number of important events. As MPTA President, I traveled to Washington, D.C. in early June as part of the Transportation Alliance Washington, D.C. Fly-In to talk with members of Minnesota's Congressional Delegation about the need for additional federal funds for transit systems in Minnesota. Another national opportunity for Minnesota came with an invitation for MPTA to participate in the national Transit Initiatives Conference in Austin, Texas. Margaret Donahoe spoke to attendees on behalf of the association regarding the campaign to pass the MVST constitutional amendment.

Locally, the Bus Roadeo is happening in July in Willmar, Minnesota this year with many transit systems participating. The annual Public Transit Conference is coming up in October as well. In the next several weeks more information will be available on the MPTA web-site. On-line registration for the conference will be available beginning July 2, 2007. Don't miss out on this great event. Register early at www.mpta-transit.org.

As always, thank you for your commitment to transit in Minnesota and your participation in MPTA. We're only as strong as our membership so we count on your support and advocacy.

Minnesota Public Transit Association   

MPTA President Tony Kellen attends Minnesota Alliance "Washington Fly-In"

WASHINGTON D.C. — Tony Kellen Minnesota Public Transit Association (MPTA) President and Director of Operations and Technology for St. Cloud Metro Bus accompanied a delegation of elected officials and staff members from various agencies to the 36th annual Minnesota Transportation Alliance "Washington Fly-In". Meetings were held with the majority of Minnesota's legislative delegation.

At those meetings Mr. Kellen thanked Minnesota Congressional Members for their past and current efforts in securing funding for Minnesota's Transit systems, presented information identifying the Greater Minnesota FTA Section 5309 capital funding requests and solicited their support in passing a strong FY2008 Transportation Appropriations bill. Other multi-modal related topics discussed during these Congressional meetings included the need for continued support of the Northstar Commuter Rail line between Minneapolis and

St. Cloud/Rice. Congressmen Oberstar expressed his appreciation for providing a clear and unified message of transportation needs and priorities .

The Minnesota Transportation Alliance hosts the longest running transportation Fly-In, bringing close to 100 transportation advocates together in Washington, D.C. each year. According to Margaret Donahoe, Legislative Director for the Alliance, the need for additional transit investments is a big part of the message delivered by the Alliance to the Congressional Delegation. It's truly an effort to secure funding for all modes of transportation in Minnesota and transit advocates play an important role in educating members of Congress about the transit needs throughout the state.



Legislative Update

Margaret Donahoe
Legislative Director
Minnesota Transportation Alliance



2007 Session - So close and yet so far

The 2007 Legislative Session provided quite the roller coaster ride with an amazingly dull end. The session started with ambitious transportation funding proposals in both the House and Senate that included an increase in the sales tax in the Twin Cities metropolitan area to fund transit with a corresponding increase in funding for Greater Minnesota transit. A conference committee, which worked to develop a compromise bill, put together a proposal that was still a very strong transit funding bill. The compromise, HF946, included:

- Authorization for any county in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area to impose a ½ cent increase in the sales tax with revenue dedicated 50 percent to transit, 25 percent to roads with the remaining 25 percent left flexible for use on either roads or transit systems.
- Statutory dedication of the sales tax on leased motor vehicles starting in FY2010 with 50 percent dedicated to highways, 50 percent dedicated to transit with a 75/25 split of the transit portion between metropolitan area transit and greater Minnesota transit.
- Distribution language for the motor vehicle sales tax dedication approved by voters in November. The bill allocated 60 percent of the revenue to the Highway Trust Fund

and 40 percent of the revenue to transit with a 36/4 split of the transit portion between metropolitan area transit and greater Minnesota transit.

In addition to the transit funding provisions, the bill included a 5-cent increase in the state gas tax, an increase in the license tab fees and a gas tax increase based on debt service costs for trunk highway bonds. The bill was passed in the House on a 90-43 vote and in the Senate on a 47-17 vote. That means that 137 legislators – a “super-majority” of the legislature – voted in favor of this bill. The Governor vetoed the bill as he promised he would. Just prior to completing their work for the session, the House took up a motion to override the Governor’s veto of the transportation funding bill, needing 90 votes to successfully override the veto. At one point, there were at 88 votes in favor, but without the necessary 90 votes, Republican supporters and 2 DFL members switched their vote. The final vote on the override attempt was 83-50.

HF946, as passed by both the House and Senate, would have provided transit systems throughout the state with an additional \$1,473,000 to \$2,111,000 (depending on the use of the metro sales tax dollars) over the next ten years. That’s at least \$147 million per year more on average for transit.

Earlier in the day on the last day of the legislative session, both the House and Senate passed a basic transportation budget bill. This was necessary to keep the Metropolitan Council and Mn/DOT operating as they normally do. Without a budget bill in this area, a special session would have to be called or these agencies would shut down. The budget bill, HF562, does not include any tax increases. The bill provides the base budget from the general fund, distributes the additional MVST approved by voters in the fall and provides a one time general fund appropriation for Metropolitan area transit of \$20 million for FY2008.

The following is a breakdown of how the state funding share of Motor Vehicle Sales Tax (MVST) and General Fund (table in \$millions) looks for the next two years compared to the stat funding provided in the previous two years:

State Funding for the Metro Area increases \$49 Million from \$392M in FY06-07 to \$441M in FY08-09

Metro Area Transit	FY06	FY07	Biennium	FY08	FY09	Biennium
Motor Vehicle Sales Tax	115.82	119.97	235.79	119.14	144.55	263.69
General Fund	77.50	78.75	156.25	98.75	78.75	177.51
Total State Funding	193.32	198.72	392.04	217.89	223.30	441.19

State Funding for the Greater Mn increases \$800,000 from \$52.33M in FY06-07 to \$53.14M in FY08-09

Greater Mn Transit	FY06	FY07	Biennium	FY08	FY09	Biennium
Motor Vehicle Sales Tax	7.875	7.850	15.73	7.446	9.116	16.56
Less MnDot Admin	(.400)	(.400)	(.800)	(.408)	(.416)	(.820)
General Fund	18.813	18.813	37.63	18.813	18.816	37.63
Less MnDot Admin	(.110)	(.110)	(.220)	(.113)	(.116)	(.230)
Total State Funding	26.18	26.15	52.33	25.74	27.40	53.14

We still have an opportunity to get the bill we really need – HF946 – with a successful override of the Governor’s veto next session. Another attempt can be made when the Legislature convenes in February because the legislature operates a biennial, or two-year, cycle. Legislation can be carried over into the second year of the biennium so a motion can be made to reconsider the motion that failed in May.

In addition to the transportation funding bill, the capital bonding bill fell victim to the Governor’s veto pen. This bill had \$40 million for the Central Corridor LRT line as well as funding for a number of transitways throughout the Metro Area.

Support for transit funding was at the highest levels we’ve seen in many years at the legislature this year. Many new legislators are keenly aware of the need for additional transit service. While we struggled in 2005 to convince 68 House members to support the Erhardt Amendment, including the proposed constitutional amendment to dedicate all of the motor vehicle sales tax, this year there were 90 votes in the House and 47 in the Senate for a bill that provided a significant, permanent increase in transit funding. We all have lots of work to do over the interim to push for another attempt at the transit funding that is truly needed in Minnesota.

Transit in the News



Metro Transit and “The MOST Amazing Race”

MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL—The Salvation Army is once again sponsoring The MOST Amazing Race. Patterned after the TV show “The Amazing Race,” this scavenger-hunt-like race is a fund-raising event which helps alleviate homelessness and hunger in the Twin Cities.

Participants registered for the event in two-person teams and attended a qualifying event on June 23. Only a few teams will make it to the finals on July 21, part of the Minneapolis Aquatennial. During the final race, teams must make their way between checkpoints using Metro Transit as their only transportation. The winning team receives a \$5,000 grand prize courtesy of Wells Fargo.

New Metro Transit bus route connects Maple Grove and Brooklyn Park

MAPLE GROVE/BROOKLYN PARK—Since June 2, residents of the northwest metro began riding a new east-west bus route connecting Maple Grove and Brooklyn Park. The new route provides access for job seekers and shoppers to Maple Grove’s expanding retail and business district.

New Route 720 offers hourly service between 9 a.m. and 10 p.m. weekdays, 9 a.m. and 9:30 p.m. Saturdays and 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. Sundays. It serves Starlite Transit Center in Brooklyn Park and retail destinations in Maple Grove.

The new route travels on Brooklyn Boulevard serving Hennepin Technical College, Elm Creek Boulevard and then along the roads that serve Fountains at Arbor Lakes, Shoppes at Arbor Lakes, Main Street, Grove Square and other retail destinations, ending just north of Weaver Lake Road.

The Met Council, Hennepin County and the City of Maple Grove collaborated on the project. Hennepin County’s human services staff identified a need to link its clients with the 1,800 new jobs in the Arbor Lakes/Elm Creek corridor in Maple Grove. At the same time, customers and stakeholders involved in the Northwest Metro Transit Restructuring Plan to improve service in the northwest metro said they would value transit service between the northwest suburbs and Maple Grove.

That service was identified as a future growth opportunity in Metro Transit’s restructuring plan, but became possible earlier when a funding plan came together. Under the plan, the Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County will split the cost of the new service, with half the money coming from a federal

Job Access and Reverse Commute grant and the other half of the local match coming from Hennepin County. Route 720 will be a one-year demonstration route.

Arrowhead Transit marketing pays off

N.E. MINNESOTA—Arrowhead Transit, located in northeastern Minnesota, was faced with a growing need to serve its aging population. With the assistance of the marketing dollars allotted to Minnesota transit organizations by Mn/DOT in 2005, Arrowhead worked to improve ridership totals in Aitkin County, a county with a population of 15,301 mostly rural residents. Arrowhead’s Marketing and included a live remote broadcast from the bus. After the media blitz, newspaper and radio advertising were continued on an ongoing basis.

In July of 2005, Arrowhead began to notice a steady ridership increase. Over the past two years since the marketing efforts began, passenger totals in Aitkin County have increased 19.1 percent.

Expanded West Metro Park & Ride re-opens

MINNEAPOLIS—West metro commuters are now getting some relief from congestion as they can once again park their cars at an expanded park-and-ride and take a Metro Transit bus for fast, frequent service to downtown Minneapolis or the University of Minnesota.

A new three-level parking ramp opened on June 4, at the park-and-ride, located on the southwest corner of I-394 and County Road 73 in Minnetonka. The ramp replaces a 188-car surface lot, which has been closed for about a year during construction. The new ramp features 750 free parking spaces.

“The expanded facility will help take pressure off a travel corridor with the some of the highest un-met demand for park-and-ride spaces for people traveling to downtown Minneapolis,” said Metro Transit General Manager Brian Lamb.

Metro Transit, Mn/DOT and the City of Minnetonka collaborated on the new ramp. “Funded through Minnesota’s Bond Accelerated Program, this project is a good example of interagency cooperation and showcases what can be done through bonding packages,” said Jennifer Conover, MnDOT Team Transit project manager.



Workers are busy finishing construction of the park-and-ride ramp at I-394 and County Road 73.

Chisago-Isanti County Heartland Express moves forward with system re-design

City of Cambridge gets new bus - city route

Jacqueline Forner
Transit Director
Chisago-Isanti Heartland Express

CAMBRIDGE—It has been eighteen long months of meetings and partnerships since the Chisago-Isanti County Heartland Express started its system redesign process. What drove us to this point were stalled passenger counts over the last three to four years, with an increase in denials and longer wait times for medical returns. Our mission in providing service is to recognize, plan, implement and evaluate the needs of our customers. In looking for a partnership, it became apparent that the demand for service in the City of Cambridge required a separate bus route. When the City of Cambridge was approached with this idea, their response was overwhelmingly positive. They agreed to pick up the local match for the Cambridge City bus. This bus will run hourly Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on a deviated route that includes the downtown area, the college, hospital, government center, residential areas and the retail district, which includes Wal-Mart, Menards, Target and Cub Foods.

Dignitaries from Chisago and Isanti Counties, the ECRDC in Mora and the City of Cambridge gathered at the Cambridge City Center on June 11 for an official ribbon cutting ceremony. Jacqueline Forner, Heartland Express Transit Director, opened the ceremony with a brief overview of the process which brought us here. She then introduced Isanti Commissioner George Larson, who is also the Chairperson of the Chisago-Isanti County Heartland Express Joint Powers Board. Commissioner Larson also thanked the City of Cambridge for their support and acknowledged all the steps

that were taken to get us here today and the hard work of the Heartland Express staff. Commissioner Larson then introduced Cambridge Mayor Maryls Palmer. Mayor Palmer shared the fact that a few years ago when the City was doing a vision plan, one of the things that was identified was a city bus. "It is wonderful that on this beautiful day we could all get out of bed to celebrate this important event for the City," said Palmer. She expressed her appreciation for all the hard work and for future growth.

Donna Allan, Director, Mn/DOT Office of Transit spoke next. She brought greetings from the Lieutenant Governor Carol Molnau, Transportation Commissioner. Allan mentioned her involvement as Project Manager for Chisago County Transit back in 1986 and how the transit system has grown. She stated that there are many funding partners at the State and Federal levels besides the local level. "It truly is team work that makes this possible," said Allan.

The Cambridge Area Chamber of Commerce also participated in the ribbon cutting ceremony and all were invited for refreshments and a ride on the new City of Cambridge bus.

Regular hours for the Chisago/Isanti Heartland Express are Monday through Friday 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Ride requests can now be taken up to 3 p.m. the working day before. Passengers are still provided curb to curb service within a given route or they can board at a bus stop. A 50-cent "in-city fare" for seniors 65 and older was also established.



City of Cambridge Mayor Maryls Palmer and Chisago-Isanti County Heartland Express Transit Director Jacqueline Forner cut ribbon at official dedication ceremony in Cambridge on June 11.

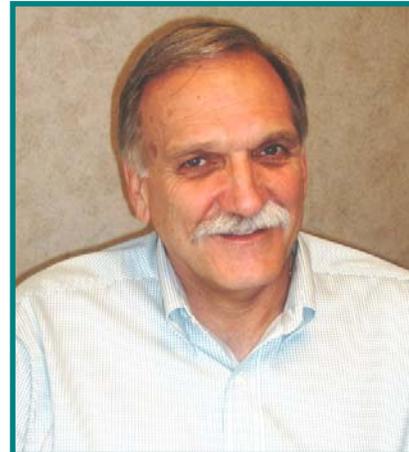
Rob McDonough joins DARTS as Vice President of Transit

DAKOTA COUNTY—Rob McDonough has joined DARTS as Vice President of Transit. Rob came to DARTS in December on an interim basis during staffing transitions and assumed transit administrative and operations responsibilities, including oversight of some key contracts. Since then, he has helped prioritize the day-to-day and future needs of our transportation division and has shown the skills and leadership that will help us build on the strong base of service we currently provide.

Prior to coming to DARTS, Rob spent 26 years at HSI in Washington County, most recently as the Director of Transit and Senior Services. We will leverage his breadth of experience and established connections in the transit community, along with his strong service delivery, operations, and business background, in developing new and innovative service models.

As DARTS staff have gotten to know Rob, they have found that he shares DARTS' core value of serving people and that he will confidently tackle challenges with enthusiasm and calm. As Transit Director Kris Barrett says, "his common sense knowledge of transportation makes him an excellent addition to the DARTS organization."

Rob's administrative oversight will allow me to step away from day-to-day transit operations. As we transition these duties, he will be the key contact for Transit issues, policy, and operations. Rob can be reached at 651-234-2295 or rob.mcdonough@darts1.org. We're proud to have him on the DARTS team.



Rob McDonough
Vice President of Transit
DARTS



Willmar to host 2007 Minnesota State Bus Rodeo on July 21

WILLMAR—Preparations have begun for the 20th annual Minnesota Bus Rodeo, to be held in the Willmar Lake Country, on Saturday, July 21, 2007. The Minnesota Bus Rodeo is a statewide event which combines training, networking and skilltesting for ALL public transit drivers, regardless of their experience-levels.

The Rodeo is a fantastic time for drivers, both new and seasoned, to network with each other, receive STS-qualified training and hone their driving skills. This year's event, titled, "Driving with the Stars," promises to be a wonderful experience for drivers and will feature a specialized training class called: "Non-Violent Crisis Intervention Training for Transit Operators."

Information for the Minnesota Statewide Bus Rodeo is available online at www.dot.state.mn.us/transit.



Bike to Work Day in Duluth

DULUTH—The City of Duluth held its second annual Bike to Work Day on Friday, May 18, in conjunction with National Bike to Work Day. “Bike to Work” events in Duluth and throughout the country were planned to raise awareness about the health and environmental benefits of biking as an alternative to driving to work.

The Duluth Transit Authority (DTA), with its fleet fully-equipped with bike racks, offered free fares to those utilizing its Bike & Bus service on Bike to Work Day. “Biking to work can be easy if the weather’s nice and you’re going downhill,” says Tom Elwell, DTA marketing director. “But if it rains after work or you live over the hill, putting your bike on the bus becomes a convenient option.” More than 100 of the Bike to Work riders took advantage of the DTA’s Bike & Bus service that day. DTA buses are all equipped with bike racks and support two or three bikes. The DTA also has permanent bike racks at its two park and ride lots - in the Piedmont and upper Woodland neighborhoods.

The YMCA also provided free bike storage and free showers for bicyclists for the day.

There was also a morning Bike to Work Rally at the Duluth Civic Center that included free bike inspections and tunings, demonstrations on how to use DTA bike racks, biking resource information and refreshments. “Participation in the Bike to Work Day event was a great opportunity to increase awareness of the DTA’s Bike & Bus service and familiarize bike riders with our bike racks,” said Elwell.

Last year, DTA buses transported nearly 14,000 bikes during its seven-month Bike & Bus season.

Duluth Mayor Herb Bergson, who rode his bike to work, kicked off the rally.

Sponsors of the Bike to Work Day included the City of Duluth, Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC), Duluth YMCA, Ski Hut, Continental Ski & Bike, the Greater Downtown Council and the DTA.



Duluth Mayor Herb Bergson bikes to work

Go Greener hits high gear

Metro Transit committed to environment

TWIN CITIES—The average Twin Cities commuter contributes about 2.6 tons of greenhouse gas emissions every year by driving alone to work. This spring, Metro Transit is inviting Twin Cities residents who want to lighten their impact on the environment to start making changes on a personal level. It's as easy as sharing the ride or taking transit one day a week.

The agency's Go Greener campaign, launched in May, focuses attention on transit's role in reducing pollution and Metro Transit's wider commitment to the environment, including plans to purchase 150 hybrid-electric buses. "Consumers are looking for options that are better for the environment," said Metro Transit General Manager Brian Lamb. "They want to know what they can do now. We're reminding them that something as simple as getting out of their cars and taking transit can make a huge difference."

Metro Transit leads the industry

Metro Transit unveiled its first hybrid electric bus in 2002. By 2012, 150 buses – almost 20 percent of the agency's fleet – will be hybrids. That's just one component of Metro Transit's expanded commitment to the environment. To further reduce tailpipe emissions, the agency plans to buy 164 buses that use clean diesel technologies.

Metro Transit is an industry leader on providing transit service in ways that are more environmentally friendly, Lamb said. Efforts have included:

- Since mid-2005, using ultra-low sulfur diesel, the cleanest fuel on the market, on all Metro Transit buses.
- Surpassing the State of Minnesota's mandate that all diesel fuel sold in the state be 2 percent biodiesel by increasing the biodiesel content to 5 percent in July 2006.
- Using 10 percent biodiesel in all of its 900 buses this year.
- Modifying bus transmissions for better fuel economy and reducing bus-engine idling.
- Taking over management of the region's carpooling, ridesharing and biking programs.

New TV ad includes Earth-friendly theme

To increase the public's awareness of Metro Transit's broader environmental commitment, a new TV commercial is airing this spring on Twin Cities stations. It continues the theme "Learn a New Way to Move" from an advertising campaign in the fall and integrates a new message on the environmental benefits of public transportation.

It began airing in May, when Metro Transit kicked off its "Go Greener" campaign at the Living Green Expo – an annual event that provides information on ways to live a healthier lifestyle with less impact on the environment. Visitors at the event boarded a Metro Transit hybrid bus – wrapped in new advertising touting the campaign.

In addition, those attending the event could sign up for the Commuter Challenge, Metro Transit's annual drive that encourages commuters to pledge to try transit, ridesharing or other alternatives to driving alone at least one time before June 30. The agency gathered more than 1,780 pledges during the two-day Living Green Expo event. It's a sign that the environmental message is resonating in the marketplace, Lamb said. "Consumers want to save more than just the price of gas," he said. "Metro Transit can help them go greener with transit options that can fit any lifestyle."

Earlier this spring, Metro Transit harnessed nature to power its Hiawatha light-rail trains on April 22 – Earth Day. The agency contracted enough wind power from Xcel Energy's Windsource program to essentially power the entire Hiawatha light-rail operation by wind power that day.



One of Metro Transit's hybrid-electric buses traverses the Twin Cities wrapped in the Go Greener message.



Metro Transit contracted enough wind power from Xcel Energy's Windsource program to essentially power the entire Hiawatha light-rail operation on Earth Day.

Elderly see light rail restoring freedom of their youth

Residents of Episcopal Homes share memories at Central Corridor open house

ST. PAUL—When Katy Carlsen was a schoolgirl growing up in the 1930s and '40s on Portland Avenue in St. Paul, she thought nothing of taking the streetcar by herself to downtown St. Paul to visit her mother's workplace.

"It gave youngsters a lot of freedom. If I needed to go buy something in those days, nobody worried about us being safe. It's hard to describe to people who didn't live then," said Katy, who attended the first public open house for the Twin Cities' next LRT project — the Central Corridor. The event was held in May at Episcopal Homes on University Avenue.

She and other residents of the senior housing project were keenly interested in the open house because the line will stop in front of Episcopal Homes; light-rail trains will one day take them back to some of the favorite haunts of their youth without an adult chaperone. This time, though, it's their adult children who won't have to accompany them everywhere.

Car keys won't be needed anymore

Jan Johnson jokes that her adult children, who include son-in-law St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman, have vowed to take away her car keys in six years. She says the Central Corridor LRT project better be ready to help her get around by then.

"The light rail is the main reason we moved here. I said, 'Jim, why would we want live here in an industrial area?' He said because the light rail will run here," Jan said.

Jan's husband, Jim Johnson, relied on streetcars for transportation in his youth. He rode streetcars from his home in south Minneapolis to the YMCA in downtown Minneapolis and to his job at a Lake Street grocery store. The ride cost 7½ cents (you bought two tokens for 15 cents) or 10 cents if you didn't have a token. The streetcar fare box accepted dimes because they were the same size as a token, but you lost 2½ cents if you had to substitute a dime for a token. Given that this was the 1930s and Depression-era children appreciated the value of every penny, Jim said, you tried not to be caught without a token in your pocket.

Meredith and Grant Robinson took streetcars in opposite directions when they were college students attending different campuses in the Twin Cities, often waving at each other as they passed. She also used the streetcar to get to the St. Paul library, and Grant would travel to the swimming pool at the St. Paul Athletic Club where his father was a member. As a youngster, he loved taking the streetcar all the way to Wildwood amusement park in Mahtomedi to ride the rollercoaster.

As a student at Hamline University, Wanda Schweizer relied on the streetcar to go shopping in St. Paul or to Union Depot where she boarded passenger trains to go home to Windom during school breaks. Later, as a young mother, she used the streetcar to go places with her children while her husband worked at his dental practice.

Although some of the residents aren't as agile as they once were and some rely on walkers to help them get around, they look forward to regaining some of the freedom of their youth when the Central Corridor light rail line opens in 2014.

"Just get it done so we're still here," Meredith said with a smile, as she and Grant examined plans for reconstructing University Avenue in front of Episcopal Homes to accommodate the LRT tracks.

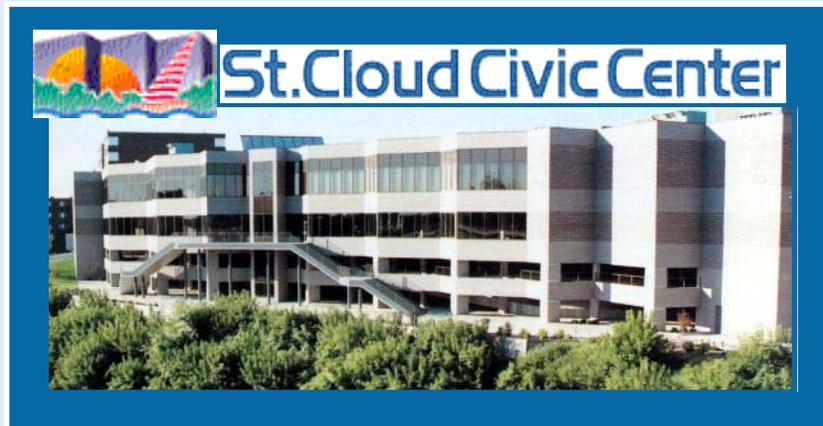


Jim and Jan Johnson, residents of the Episcopal Homes on University Avenue in St. Paul, were among visitors at the first public open house for the Central Corridor LRT on May 22.



Wanda Schweizer, left, relied on the streetcar when she was a student at Hamline University decades ago. Katy Carlsen, right, took the streetcar to her mother's workplace. Both women, residents of Episcopal Homes, are looking forward to light-rail transit.

2007 MN Public Transit Conference October 29-31 St. Cloud, Minnesota



Transit Conference Highlights:

- Annual MPTA Transit Awards
- Receptions with great networking opportunities
- Information-packed sessions
- Motivational guest speakers
- Opportunities to learn and improve the quality of transit service

Minnesota Public Transit Association   

Conference Chair:
Tony Kellen - MPTA President
320/529-4481
tkellen@stcloudmtc.com

Register early and often @ www.mpta-transit.org

Minnesota Public Transit Association





Minnesota Public Transit Newsletter

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Contributors

Margaret Donahoe — Transportation Alliance
Tom Elwell — Duluth Transit Authority
Lynn Frank — Mn/DOT Transit Bulletin
Jacqueline Forner — Chisago-Isanti County
Bob Gibbons — Metro Transit
Mark Hoisser — DARTS
Tony Kellen — St. Cloud Metro Bus
Metropolitan Council Directions

SEND NEWS

% Tom Elwell
Duluth Transit Authority
2402 West Michigan Street
Duluth, MN 55806
telwell@duluthtransit.com



Bulletin Board



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.

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)

September

- 01 Passenger Assistance Training — Brainerd Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Kris Barrett)
- 08 Driver Refresher Training — Fergus Falls Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Verona Klimek)
- 22 Passenger Assistance Training — St. Cloud Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Jamey Rosenau)
- 22 Driver Refresher Training — Rochester Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Bonnie Nielson)

October

- 06 Passenger Assistance Training — Mankato Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Steve Rasmussen)
- 20 Defensive Driving/Abuse Prevention — Willmar Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Tiffany Collins)
- 20 Driver Refresher Training — Brainerd Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Myrna Flint)
- 23 Defensive Driving/Abuse Prevention — Metro Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Sarah Lenz)

Transit Events

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

