



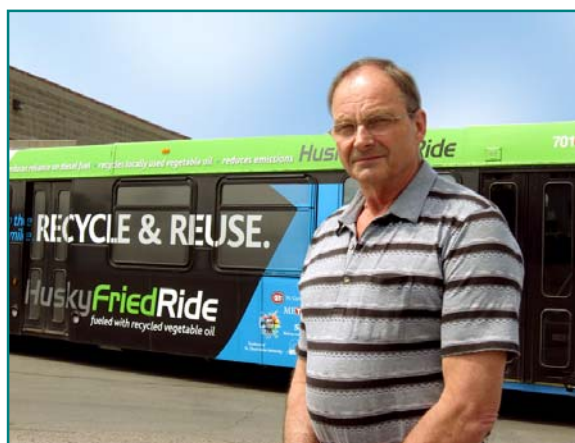
in transit

St. Cloud Metro Bus “Husky Fried Ride” collaboration recognized

ST. CLOUD – The St. Cloud Husky Fried Ride, which is fueled by waste cooking oil, has received a 2008-09 Innovative Partnering and Collaboration Award from the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system. The selection by MnSCU academic and student affairs administrators recognized the project for its sustainability, the benefits it provides to all partners and its impact on students. The vehicle, powered by recycled deep fryer vegetable oil, was unveiled in conjunction with Earth Day festivities in April 2008.

The 40-foot New Flyer bus is powered by a mixture of 70 percent recycled vegetable oil and 30 percent diesel fuel. The vegetable oil, which would otherwise be hauled away, comes from deep fryers at St. Cloud State, where Sodexo provides food service for Garvey Commons and the Atwood Memorial Center. The only conversion needed for the bus to use the oil was the addition of an external heater on the fuel tank. Otherwise, most of the innovation is with the oil collection and filtration system. Metro Bus Maintenance Manager Ed Yorek was instrumental to the design of the vehicle and filtration system.

The environmentally-friendly vehicle, Metro Bus #701, operates on Husky Shuttle park-and-ride routes and on four Campus Clipper routes to student housing areas throughout St. Cloud. Annual ridership on the bus, which travels about 15,000 miles a year, is estimated to be 120,000 students, faculty members and staff.



St. Cloud Metro Bus Maintenance Manager Ed Yorek

Bus Roadeo set for July 25 in Albert Lea

ALBERT LEA – The 2009 Minnesota Statewide Bus Roadeo is scheduled for Saturday, July 25 in Albert Lea and participation is expected to be good. Last year, the Statewide Bus Roadeo had a record 63 contestants, which was the highest in the State Roadeo’s 21-year history.

This annual event provides training, skill-enhancement and recognition for Minnesota’s public transit operators. Drivers compete in one of two divisions, Small or Large Bus, where they navigate an obstacle course designed to simulate real-life driving challenges.





From the President

Tony Kellen, President
Minnesota Public Transit Association
Director of Operations & Technology
St. Cloud Metro Bus
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320/529-4481

You can choose from more training sessions featuring important strategies for training staff, improving customer service, managing technology and marketing your transit service. In addition, you'll get the latest news from agency officials on activities at both the state and federal levels that directly affect you.

Transit budgets survived a raucous legislative session in good shape. The governor's announcement that he would use his authority to "un-allot" or cut previously authorized spending in order to balance the state budget surprised many. Fortunately, his plan for reducing spending does not include any additional cuts to the general fund dollars allocated for transit in the omnibus transportation budget bill. The level of funding for transit will allow existing service to remain on the streets while plans for new transit ways and expanded service continue to receive more support.

Support for transit funding and demand for transit service continues to grow. Transit systems will need to be ready for a new future, one that includes a move away from our heavy reliance on automobile travel.

The Annual Public Transit Conference provides critical information for all those involved in providing transit service around the state. With all the activity at the federal level, this is a great year for our joint Minnesota/Wisconsin Public Transit Conference, "Transit Moves America," scheduled for September 21-23 in Duluth.

Conference participants will also get a first-hand look at the products and services offered by major vendors serving transit systems at the large Vendor Exhibition in the Midwest. Everything from buses to software to seating will be on display with inter-active sessions that will demonstrate how these products can make your life easier.

As always, this year's conference will provide great opportunities to see old friends, meet new people and learn from colleagues in both states about best practices in the transit field.

The Minnesota Public Transit Association is busy working for you to promote transit systems and secure needed funding. We'll be out around the state this summer and fall visiting with systems as well as local media to highlight the service that is being provided and talk about the unmet needs that still exist. As always, we need to you to do your part in helping to spread the word about the value of transit service in Minnesota.



Legislative Update

Margaret Donahoe
Advocacy Director
Minnesota Public Transit Association

The 2009 Legislative Session was historic for a number of reasons. The state faced the largest deficit in recent history and the session ended without an agreement between the legislature and governor and his unprecedented announcement that he would balance the budget through the unallotment process.

For transit systems, the session was about the best we could hope for. Although general fund dollars to transit were reduced, transit service should be able to continue at current levels thanks to dedicated revenue from the motor vehicle sales, federal funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, and shifts of other revenue. In the face of a \$5 billion general fund budget deficit, this is a huge victory for transit advocates. Few areas of state government escaped the session without significant budget cuts.

Transportation Budget Bill

The final transportation budget bill addresses the identified gap between operating costs and anticipated revenue in the following ways:

Metropolitan Area Transit

Operating deficit of \$62.4 million for the biennium
General Fund cut – \$13M for biennium
TOTAL Deficit – \$76M

Impact of omnibus transportation funding bill and Metropolitan Council plans:

Livable Communities and Right-of-Way acquisition fund shifts	\$27 million
American Recovery Reinvestment Act (ARRA) capital to operating	\$18 million
Met Council administration efficiencies	\$ 5 million
Met Council one-time reserves	\$ 3 million
Reduce MVST to regional (suburban) providers	\$ 7 million
MVST shift from Highway Fund to transit	\$13 million
	\$73 million
Total deficit	-\$(\$3M)

Greater Minnesota Transit

A number of systems in Greater Minnesota were facing serious problems with the timing of payments from the state. The greater reliance revenue from the sales tax on motor vehicles had made it difficult for some systems to maintain their cash flow while waiting for funding from Mn/DOT's office of transit. In order to address this situation, a shift from FY2011 to FY2009 of \$2.5 million was included in the funding bill. This allowed for addition funds up front to meet the cash flow issues.

Identified Deficit -\$8M for biennium including \$3M cut to general fund appropriation

Impact of omnibus transportation funding bill:

MVST shift from Highway Fund to transit	\$6 million
Total deficit	-\$(\$2M)

The House bill had taken advantage of revenue from the sales tax on leased motor vehicles to help fill the funding gap, along with other measures. On the last day of the conference committee, the leased vehicle revenue was taken away from the transportation budget. In order to replace revenue from the leased vehicle sales tax and to ensure that a property tax increase would not be needed, the committee decided to shift some of the funds from the constitutionally dedicated motor vehicle sales tax from the Highway Trust Fund to Greater Minnesota transit assistance and Metropolitan Area Transit Assistance. The shift of \$18,667,000 is for two years only. In FY12, when the MVST is fully phased in, the split of the revenue reverts to the previously agreed upon 60 percent for highways and 40 percent for transit.

Continued on next page

Legislative Update

Continued from previous page

The final omnibus transportation funding bill requires that transit providers of “fixed route public transit” provide transit service free of charge for disabled veterans starting July 1, 2009.

Another section of the bill requires the Metropolitan Council to contract with the Center For Transportation Studies at the University of Minnesota to develop a report on land use and transportation planning strategies to reduce air pollution, mitigate congestion and reduce costs for operation or improvement of infrastructure. The report will be funded with \$375,000 from the general fund appropriation for Metropolitan Area Transit.

The Commissioner of Transportation is required to report back to the Legislature by February 1, 2010 on the status of passenger rail projects and recommend future funding sources, definitions to distinguish passenger rail from commuter rail, legislative changes to facilitate and improve the passenger rail planning process and state operating subsidy mechanisms designed to create local tax equity between communities served by passenger rail and commuter rail.

Language in the bill also requires the Metropolitan Council to prepare bid specifications for bus purchases that conform, to the greatest extent practicable, with products that are manufactured in this state.

The Metropolitan Council is also required to establish a pilot program to sell transit fare media at a 50 percent discount to eligible charitable organizations. The pilot project terminates March 15, 2011.

Capital bonding bill

The legislature also passed a rather significant bonding bill, particularly given the fact that this was not the traditional bonding year. Again, transit and passenger rail did very well in securing bond dollars for a number of transitways as well as providing state matching funds for potential federal rail dollars.

Commuter/passenger rail	\$26M
Transit Capital Improvement	\$12.5M
Eligible Corridors: Bottineau Blvd Transit Way, Cedar Avenue Bus Rapid Transit, I-94 Corridor Transit Way, Red Rock Corridor Transit Way, Riverview Corridor Transit Way, Robert Street Corridor Transit Way, Rush Line Corridor Transit Way, Southwest Corridor Transit Way, Union Depot	

Central Corridor LRT	\$8.5M
Capitol Area betterments - LRT	\$313,000

Tax Bill

Tax bill included authority for the Metropolitan Council to issue \$34.2 million in regional bonds for capital needs.

Policy

Some policy measures related to transit were included in an omnibus transportation policy bill. This was vetoed by the governor and so will not become law. Some of these measures are likely to be considered again next session.

- Adding rail transit projects to the transportation projects for which mitigation of transportation construction impacts on businesses are required but exempting the Central Corridor light rail line.
- Requiring Mn/DOT to include bicycle and pedestrian accommodations on state bridge projects if the bridge is located in a city or links a pedestrian way or trail.
- Allowing use of highway shoulders by buses operated as part of regular route transit service outside of the Twin Cities metropolitan area.
- Creating the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access to study and make recommendations to improve the coordination, availability, accessibility and cost-effectiveness of public transit services.

Transit Moves America

Minnesota/Wisconsin 2009 Public Transit Conference

Monday through Wednesday – September 21-23
Duluth Entertainment Convention Center (DECC)
Holiday Inn Downtown – Duluth, Minnesota
Register online @ www.mpta-transit.org

Monday, September 21 (DECC)

11 a.m. Registration Open - DECC
1 to 2 p.m. Concurrent Training Sessions - DECC
Training Your Staff- RTAP
Customer Service - Allison & Associates
2:30 - 3:30 p.m. Concurrent Training Sessions - DECC
Technology: Determine What You Need - RTAP
Communicating with Drivers - RTAP
4 p.m. MPTA Annual Meeting & Awards Ceremony
WURTA Annual Meeting & Awards Ceremony
7 p.m. Joint Welcome Reception - Harborside Ballroom

Tuesday, September 22 (DECC)

7 a.m. Registration Open - DECC
7 - 8 a.m. Buffet Breakfast - Harborside Ballroom
8:30 - 10 a.m. Welcoming Remarks / Opening Session
Duluth Mayor Don Ness, Superior Mayor Dave Ross
Tony Kellen, MPTA President, Dave Mumma, WURTA Chair
Keynote Speaker Dr. Don Bartlette - Macaroni at Midnight
10:20 - 11:50 a.m. Concurrent Session I:
Midwest High Speed Rail Initiative
Partnering & Collaborating with Training
Managing Paratransit Growth
Meeting Customer Expectations
Advocacy and Community Outreach
Noon - 3:30 p.m. Buffet Lunch & Vendor Expo - Pioneer Hall
3:30 - 5 p.m. State Transit Funding and Policy Updates
(MN/DOT Office of Transit - Met Council - WIS/DOT)
6 p.m. Third Annual First Transit Reception - Harborside Ballroom

Wednesday, September 23 (Holiday Inn Downtown)

7 a.m. Registration Open (Holiday Inn)
7 - 8:30 a.m. Breakfast - Holiday Inn Ballroom
8:30 - 10 a.m. General Session II - Federal Funding and Authorization
(FTA, APTA & Congressional Updates)
10:15 - 11 a.m. Concurrent Sessions II:
Transit Marketing 101
Operations and Safety
Federal Motor Carrier Regulations
Wisconsin Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Services Update
Mobility Management
11:15 a.m. - Noon Concurrent Sessions III:
MN/WI JARC/New Freedom
Future Trends & Demographics
Marketing Your Transit System
Advances in Fuel & Lubricant Technology
County Elderly, Disabled & Rural Transit Coordination
Noon Lunch - Keynote Speaker: Dr. Sandra Rosenbloom
Do I have to give up my car? - Mobility for an aging population





St. Cloud drivers represent Minnesota at national Rodeos

ST. CLOUD – St. Cloud Metro Bus drivers Dave Peacock and Duane Dufner represented Minnesota at two national Bus Rodeos this spring.

Dufner competed in APTA's (American Public Transit Association) national Bus Rodeo and Peacock participated in CTAA's (Community Transit Association of America) national competition.

Last year, fixed route driver Duane Dufner took first in the large bus division of the Minnesota State Rodeo competition and dial-a-ride driver David Peacock took first in the small bus division.



Duane Dufner participated in APTA's International Bus Rodeo on May 3, in Seattle, WA and finished 12th in the 30-foot coach division. This was Duane's third time competing in the APTA Rodeo.



David Peacock attended the CTAA National Community Rodeo May 31, in Providence, RI and finished 34th in the Body on Chassis Division. This was David's second time competing in the CTAA Rodeo.

MVTA sponsors sixth annual Bus Rodeo Competition

ROSEMOUNT – The Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA) sponsored its sixth annual Bus Rodeo on June 20 at the Dakota County Technical College in Rosemount. The top two drivers will travel to the statewide Bus Rodeo on July 25 in Albert Lea.

Drivers from both the Burnsville and Eagan Bus Garages operated by Schmitt & Sons Transit Services (SST) took written as well as driving tests covering various turns, stops, safety issues, smoothness and other driving-related issues.

There were 16 drivers participating in the competition. Winners of the MVTA 2009 Rodeo are:

- First Place – Hector Espinoza, Schmitt & Sons Transit Services Eagan Bus Garage
- Second Place – Brad Weckerly, Schmitt & Sons Transit Services Eagan Bus Garage
- Third Place – Nur Mohamed, Schmitt & Sons Transit Services Burnsville Bus Garage

Espinoza and Mohammed will travel to the Statewide Rodeo. The First-Place team traveling trophy went to Schmitt & Sons Eagan Bus Garage; the Second-Place team traveling trophy went to Schmitt & Sons Burnsville Bus Garage.



2009 MVTA Bus Rodeo winners are (left to right) Hector Espinoza, Brad Weckerly and Nur Mohamed.



Senior residents club in Duluth celebrate adoption of new bus shelter

DULUTH – The Grandview Manor Residents Club held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new bus shelter they adopted on Thursday, June 18, as part of the DTA's Adopt-a-Shelter Program. The newly erected shelter serves Central Hillside residents of Grandview Manor and neighboring Tri-Towers Housing Complex along with those utilizing the adjacent Rainbow Community Center.



The DTA revised downtown routing several years ago, which resulted in buses providing direct service to downtown and western destinations from Grandview Manor and Tri-Towers.

Residents of Grandview Manor petitioned the DTA to move their bus stop closer to their main sidewalk and requested that a bus shelter be placed there on the condition that they would adopt the shelter and keep it clean and orderly. The DTA worked with the Duluth Housing and Redevelopment Authority, who manages the housing complexes, to relocate the bus stop and erect a new bus shelter.

DTA ridership at Grandview Manor and Tri-Towers has been traditionally high and residents will appreciate its convenience for years to come.

In accordance with the DTA's Adopt-a-Shelter Program, passenger shelters can be installed in high-use areas; but a commitment to keep the shelter clean, orderly and free from snow in the winter is required.

Grandview Manor Residents Club members crowd into the new DTA bus shelter they just adopted.



Taking the solemn Adoption Oath

With smirks on their faces, Marge McMullin and Cathy Gonzales of the Grandview Manor Residents Club raised their right hands, their left hands clutching a stack of bus schedules as they prepare to take the Adopt-a-Shelter oath residents crafted in advance from Jim Heilig of the DTA. "I do solemnly swear," they repeated, "to protect and defend our DTA bus shelter from all enemies, foreign and domestic. From all litterers, loiterers and vandals... and if unable to deter or prevent them - to always be willing to clean up after them!"

For the two women and other members of the Grandview Manor Residents Club, the ceremony was the culmination of their efforts to get a bus shelter at their bus stop in the Duluth Central Hillside. With the new shelter decked out with flags and balloons, they were having more than a little fun with the ribbon-cutting ceremony and tongue-in-cheek oath.



Tri-CAP's First Try Transit Event

SAUK CENTER – Tri-County Action Program and The Transportation Resource Center held the 1st Annual Try Transit Celebration in Little Falls on May 27.

News releases were sent out to the local media encouraging everyone to stop at Coborn's Superstore from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. for coffee and cookies as well as prizes and other giveaways. MorrTrans had a bus present at the event and gave tours and information to everyone interested.

MorrTrans gave away cotton canvas tote bags to the first 50 people to stop by our table. Try It blinking lights, travel mugs and ceramic mugs were also given away to participants courtesy of the Office of Transit. Approximately 50

people stopped by to check out the information and take Greater MN Commuter Challenge sign-up forms.

Additional events were held in Sauk Centre and Melrose on Friday, May 29. In Sauk Centre the public was invited to stop by at Coborn's Superstore from 8 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. and in Melrose at Ernie's Family Foods from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Approximately 50 people stopped by in Sauk Centre and about 45 people stopped in Melrose. The Transit Connection bus was present at both events for people interested in seeing the inside of the bus as well as to generate interest. Cotton canvas tote bags were given away to the first 25 people to stop at each location along with coffee and cookies which were donated by each site sponsor. Travel mugs and blinking lights were also given away along with TRC information and Greater MN Commuter Challenge sign-up forms.



St. Cloud Metro Bus becomes a Jefferson Lines agency

ST. CLOUD – Metro Bus became a Jefferson Lines agency on April 30, 2009. This change is the result of the loss of service from Greyhound Lines. St. Cloud Metro Bus had been Greyhound's ticketing agency since 1992. Greyhound discontinued its service to St. Cloud, along with service to most of the state — retaining service in Minneapolis and Duluth only. Jefferson runs routes from St. Cloud to Minneapolis, Fargo, Grand Forks/Winnipeg, Wilmer and Bemidji.



Five years on Hiawatha LRT



Five years after its inaugural run, Hiawatha light-rail ridership has well exceeded expectations and set the stage for more rail lines in the metro area. [Hiawatha LRT anniversary details.](#)

Central Corridor project's final environmental impact statement available



The FEIS describes the route and how it was chosen, and provides exact location of the tracks, stations and key pieces of supporting infrastructure, such as the traction power substations and the LRT operation and maintenance facility. [More about the FEIS.](#)

Publication of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Central Corridor light-rail transit project represents a major milestone.

Central Corridor Making Tracks News



[Read latest updates](#)

State law now requires free public transit services for disabled veterans

Letter to public transit providers from Mn/DOT Office of Transit

Greetings:

Effective 7/1/2009 the fixed route public transit service providers will be required to provide free rides to disabled veterans.

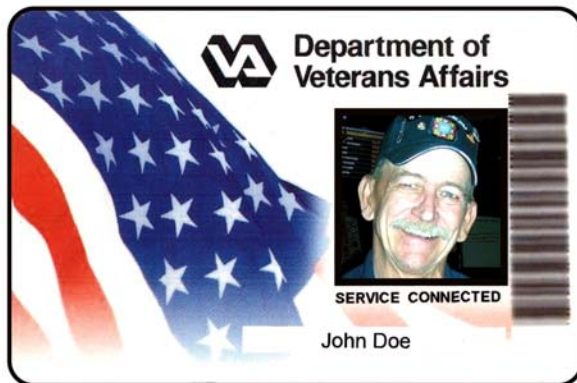
The language is as follows from chapter 36, Article 3:

Sec. 14. Minnesota Statutes 2008, section 174.24, is amended by adding a subdivision to read:

Subd. 7. Transit service for disabled veterans. On and after July 1, 2009, an eligible recipient of operating assistance under this section, who contracts or has contracted to provide fixed route public transit, shall provide fixed route public transit service free of charge for veterans, as defined in section 197.447, certified as disabled. For purposes of this section, "certified as disabled" means certified in writing by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or the state commissioner of veterans affairs as having a permanent service-connected disability.

The six Greater Minnesota transit systems that provide fixed route public transit service are Duluth, East Grand Forks, Mankato, Moorhead, Rochester and St. Cloud. These systems will be required to allow disabled veterans to ride fixed routes for free. As noted in the law, the definition of eligibility will be established by the "United States Department of Veterans Affairs or the state commissioner of veterans affairs as having a permanent service-connected disability".

Office of Transit has met with Minnesota's Assistant State Commissioner of Veterans Affairs, Michael Pugliese, on Monday of this week and were advised that the Department of Veteran Affairs already has an ID card that is issued to disabled veterans. Please note the "Service Connected" under the picture, this is the key identifier for eligibility. On some cards this may be abbreviated "SC".



Simply put, disabled veterans will show their "Service Connected" or "SC" ID card to the driver and they get to ride free. The free ride also includes a service attendant.

We expect there will be some confusion by veterans on who is eligible, and how they can access free transit service. At this time the ID issued by the Department of Veterans Affairs is the only ID authorized to determine eligibility for this program. If any veterans have questions or need more information please direct them to:

State of Minnesota
Department of Veterans Affairs
Michael Pugliese, Deputy Commissioner
michael.pugliese@state.mn.us
(651) 757-1555

As the impact of this legislation was not fully vetted for Greater Minnesota, we will be following up with you to measure the usage and cost to local revenue. It was projected the impact would be marginal. We ask you to maintain measure of the ridership. We will assemble this data at the 2009 grant contract closeouts.

Safety message from FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff



June 26, 2009

Dear Colleague:

As the new Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration, I want to take this opportunity to reiterate the Department's position, as voiced by Secretary LaHood, that transportation safety "has always been and must continue to be the central focus of the Department."

In line with this priority, I am urging each of you to closely review your policies, procedures, and enforcement mechanisms targeting the inappropriate use of cell phones and other personal electronic devices by safety critical personnel. I am asking that you perform this evaluation, making improvements as necessary, and satisfy yourselves that your systems effectively address the hazards that inappropriate use of these devices can create.

Cell phone use or "texting" has played a role in a number of public transportation accidents. In just two recent accidents, 25 people died, hundreds were injured, and millions of dollars worth of property was damaged.

Numerous studies have shown that the use of cell phones by vehicle operators is a dangerous distraction that can result in accidents. A number of studies and other resources on this subject can be found on the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration web page (<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/>).

While public transportation remains a statistically safe mode of travel, these high profile accidents have raised public concerns about the adequacy of safety controls over cell phone use in the transit industry.

There are a number of related policy models in our industry:

- Virtually all agencies prohibit the use of cell phones and personal electronic devices while operating a vehicle.
- Some agencies have established a policy requiring that personal cell phones and electronic devices be turned off and stowed off the person while operating a vehicle or performing a safety critical function.
- Others have prohibited personal cell phones or electronic devices in operating cabs altogether.
- If personal cell phones are prohibited, your policy review should address a method employees' loved ones can use to contact an on duty employee with urgent messages (through a dispatch center for example).
- If personal cell phones are prohibited your policy review should also ensure that reliable methods are in place to report emergencies.

You should carefully evaluate the options and look at policies that best fit with your operations while effectively addressing the risk that improper use of personal cell phones and electronic devices can create.

In the end, policies and procedures are only effective if they are clearly communicated, understood, and enforced. I urge you to take a systems view of this issue and look not only at the cell phone policies that are in place, but also at the systems that support training, communication, hazard recognition and enforcement. Our industry needs to continue building a culture of safety where unsafe acts are not permitted by management or by peers.

I know that you join me in a strong desire to keep public transit as one of the safest transportation choices for the American people. I look forward to working with you on this effort now and in the years to come.

Sincerely yours,

Peter M. Rogoff
Administrator



Minnesota Public Transit Newsletter

InTransit newsletter is a bi-monthly newsletter published by the Minnesota Public Transit Association (MPTA). Opinions and views expressed in this publication may not necessarily be those of the Minnesota Public Transit Association or its members.

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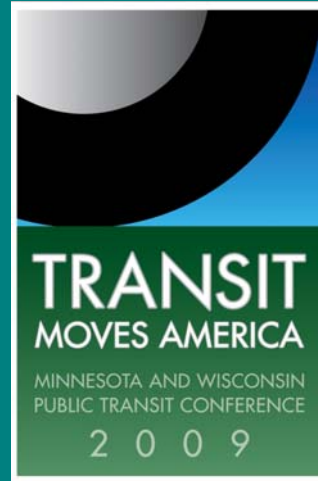


Contributors

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- Tom Elwell — Duluth Transit Authority
- Bob Gibbons — Metro Transit
- Tony Kellen — St. Cloud Metro Bus
- Robin Selvig — MVTA
- Metropolitan Council Newsletter

SEND NEWS
telwell@duluthtransit.com

Duluth - Minnesota



September 21 - 23

See page five for details

In Transit Bulletin Board

Events

- | | | |
|-----------------|---|------------|
| July 25 | Minnesota Bus Rodeo | Albert Lea |
| September 21-23 | Minnesota/Wisconsin Public Transit Conference | Duluth |

RTAP Training Classes

Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) offers training in passenger assistance, defensive driving, abuse prevention along with 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. View RTAP calendar and register for classes online at www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/rtap/rtaptrng.html. For more information, contact RTAP Coordinator Lynn Frank at 651/366-4710 or lynn.frank@dot.state.mn.us.

