



in transit

Northstar Commuter Rail ridership tops 33,000 in opening days of service

MINNEAPOLIS – Northstar commuter rail trains made 33,112 trips in November. The ridership figure spans Northstar’s first 15 days of service, which included the Thanksgiving holiday weekend.

“While it is too early to make sweeping statements, these early ridership results indicate to us a very positive response to the state’s newest transportation option,” said Metro Transit General Manager Brian Lamb. Daily ridership in November averaged 2,207 compared to a 2010 daily average goal of about 2,460, Lamb said. The numbers include strong weekend ridership as well as one special event train serving Vikings fans.

“Northstar is off to a good start,” said Anoka County Commissioner Dan Erhart, who chairs the Northstar Corridor Development Authority. “The service provides an important alternative to driving, especially as we enter the winter season with its unpredictable commute times.”

Northstar offers five morning rush-hour trips to Minneapolis and five trips home in the afternoon as well as one reverse-commute trip. Three roundtrips are available on Saturdays and Sundays. “Regular ridership patterns will not emerge until 2010,” Lamb said. “The November results include a long holiday weekend, and

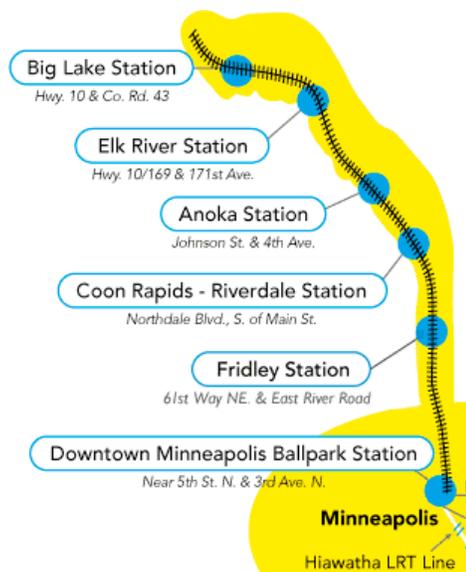
December is historically the lowest ridership month across our entire system given vacation schedules to enjoy the holidays. Nevertheless, we are pleased with initial ridership results.”

In other Northstar news, Metro Transit has leased a locomotive from the Utah Transit Authority, which is the sixth in the Northstar fleet. It will enhance long-term service reliability and ease maintenance pressures.

The \$317 million Northstar rail project was delivered on time and under budget through collaborative efforts of the Metropolitan Council/Metro Transit, Northstar Corridor Development Authority and Minnesota Department of Transportation. The Counties Transit Improvement Board and Sherburne County assist with operating funds.

Northstar, Minnesota’s first commuter rail line provides fast, convenient, hassle-free service in one of the region’s fastest growing and most congested corridors. The 40-mile line operates between Big Lake and downtown Minneapolis, with stops in Elk River, Anoka, Coon Rapids and Fridley.

[Read More about Northstar](#)





From the President

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Happy New Year. The start of a new year is a good time to take a look at how far we've come in expanding transit service, increasing support for transit and strengthening the Minnesota Public Transit Association.

Transit ridership has been growing significantly over the last 5 years, both in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area and in Greater Minnesota. Between 2003 and 2008, ridership in Greater Minnesota grew 21.5 percent. In the Metropolitan Area, total regional transit ridership has grown 17.4 percent from 2005 to 2008. For many years we talked about the fact that 7 counties in Greater Minnesota with no transit service at all. Today, we're down to 4 counties that have no transit service. In the Twin Cities Area, bus service has expanded, the I35W Urban Partnership project is complete, more bus shoulders and park and ride lots have been added and the Northstar Commuter train is now in operation. A new long-range plan for transit in the Metropolitan Area contains plans for a number of additional transitways including light rail transit and bus rapid transit.

Legislative support for transit has grown as demand has grown and our lobbying efforts at the Capitol have been successful. We've seen the dedication of motor vehicle sales tax revenue to transit and a new one-quarter cent sales tax for transit in the Twin Cities Area. We know that vocal support from constituents and transit systems makes a difference and that strong lobbying in St. Paul can move transit up the priority list.

The Minnesota Public Transit Association continues to grow with most transit systems now members of the Association and many more companies that serve and supply transit systems as members. MPTA is the lead organization that hosts the annual Minnesota Public Transit Conference and will be more involved in the Bus Roadeo in the future. We continue to raise the profile of transit through the media and participated in the production of a new video that has been shown on Twin Cities Public Television dealing with the issue of older drivers and the need for alternatives to driving.

Adequate funding for transit continues to be a challenge. That's where we need all of you to help make a difference. The state is facing yet another budget shortfall and all programs funded with general fund dollars will be vulnerable to budget cuts. If legislators don't hear from

their constituents about the need to maintain transit funding, it will be relatively easy to take another whack at the general fund appropriation. You can all send a quick e-mail message or make a phone call and let your legislators know how important transit service is in your community. Make sure they hear from the families who rely on bus service. We have a compelling story to tell, let's make sure we share it with legislators.



MPTA President Tony Kellen presents State Representative Terry Morrow with Friend of Transit Award.

MPTA Lobbyist Sherry Munyon and President Tony Kellen traveled to St. Peter on January 6 to present Representative Terry Morrow (DFL-St. Peter) with the Friend of Transit Award for 2009.

Representative Morrow, who serves on the Transportation and Transit Policy and Oversight Division as well as the Transportation Finance and Policy Division has been a strong voice for investing in public transit in Minnesota.

Rep. Morrow was first elected to the Minnesota House in 2006. He has consistently voted for increased transportation funding including supporting the transportation funding bills developed in 2007 and 2008 and voting to enact transportation funding over the veto of the governor in 2008. Morrow continues to work for greater transparency in the appropriation of transit funding.

As a legislator who works closely with colleagues all across the state, Rep. Morrow has successfully championed legislation improving transit policies and expanding transit service. He has strongly encouraged Mn/DOT to commit to better planning, service coordination and funding for transit in Greater Minnesota and continues to be an advocate for public transit in areas where service is limited or non-existent.



Legislative Update

Margaret Donahoe
Advocacy Director
Minnesota Public Transit Association

As usual, there is good news and there is bad news on the legislative front, so let's start with the good news.

Congress has been busy working on legislation to help strengthen the economy and get people back to work. The latest news from Washington, D.C. shows that lawmakers recognize the value of investments in transit and highways in terms of stimulating our lagging economy.

On December 16th, the House of Representatives passed "The Jobs for Main Street Act," a bill that would supplement the core federal transportation programs with \$37.2 billion in new transportation infrastructure investments and extend the current authorization for the federal highway and transit programs (SAFETEA-LU) through FY 2010 (September 30, 2010).

The measure would provide an additional \$27.5 billion for highway improvements, \$8.4 billion for public transportation, \$500 million for airports, and \$800 million for Amtrak to address the nation's struggling employment situation. The highway and transit investment levels are identical to the amounts provided earlier this year in the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The proposal is also nearly identical to the recovery act's transportation investments with respect to project eligibility, accountability, distributions between state and local governments, state maintenance of effort requirements, and the use of time lines. The major differences between the jobs proposal and the recovery act are:

- For the highway and transit programs, 50 percent of the jobs funds are required to be "under contract" in 90 days. The recovery act imposed a 120-day obligation deadline for the first half of highway funds and a 150-day obligation deadline for transit resources;
- The measure also includes a new requirement that highway and transit funds be distributed equitably between urban and rural areas;
- The measure sets aside \$5 million in highway funds and \$1.5 million in transit funds for the Office of Expedited Project Delivery. This office does not currently exist, but is proposed in the House multi-year surface transportation reauthorization proposal; and
- While the total public transportation investment is the same, more money is provided to rail modernization activities and less to the formula and new starts programs than under ARRA.

The Senate is expected to take up the legislation sometime in the early part of the year. Stay tuned for more details on this important legislation.

Congress also passed and sent to the President the Transportation and Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Bill (THUD) for FY2010 along with funding for a number of other federal agencies. For Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Programs, the FY 2010 THUD bill provides a total of \$10.733 billion in budgetary resources. This is a 3.9 percent increase over the budget request and a 4.9 percent increase over FY 2009 funding levels (excluding the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding).

The Formula and Bus Account is funded at a level of \$8.3 million, the same as in both the House and Senate bills, and a 1 percent increase over FY 2009 levels. The bill does include 227 earmarks for bus projects, totaling just under \$200 million. The bill includes funding for Northstar Commuter Rail expansion, the Central Corridor Light Rail Line, alternatives analysis for I-94 Transit Corridor and Bottineau Corridor as well as funding for the Cedar Avenue BRT and Intermodal transit facility in Minneapolis.

The legislation includes \$75 million in new funding for grants modeled after the TIGGER program and contains \$2 billion for FTA Capital Investment Grants (New Starts), which is 9.4 percent above the budget request and the level proposed by the House, but \$307.3 million below the level proposed by the Senate. Among the policy provisions debated within the House-Senate conference, the conference report adopts a modified version of a Senate provision dealing with "contingent commitment authority", enabling the FTA to expand the total amount of funding available for Full Funding Grant Agreements (FFGAs) for FY 2010, beyond the current level allowed. Also, a Senate provision prohibiting the FTA from proceeding with its New Starts rule making is not included in the final bill.

On the state level, the news is more grim. The requirement that the state keep its budget balanced between revenues and expenditures means that action will be needed again during the 2010 Session on the budget front. The reduced level of revenues being generated in this recession means that the 2-year budget passed last May is already out of balance to the tune of over \$1 billion.

Governor Pawlenty continues to oppose any increases in taxes to generate additional revenue. He has promised to propose spending cuts to erase the deficit. He has said that he would like to work with legislators to develop a plan to balance the budget that they will support, but if he fails to reach an agreement with them, he is prepared to un-allot in order to bring the budget back into balance.

The revenue coming in from the sales tax on motor vehicles is up from the projections made at the end of the 2009 Legislative Session, but cuts to the general fund appropriation for transit could mean cuts in existing service and will put plans to expand transit service further behind.

The 2010 Session is also the "bonding year" when legislators put together a capital investment plan for the next two years. Transit has been receiving significantly more funding in recent bonding bills. We don't know what the governor will propose for the capital bonding bill, but we do know what Mn/DOT and the Metropolitan Council have requested. Mn/DOT's

Continued on next page

bonding request calls for \$29.14 million for Greater Minnesota transit facilities including a major new transit facility in the City of Rochester. This request is ranked as the Department's second highest priority.

The Metropolitan Council has requested \$25M in funding for the Heywood Garage and \$50M in bond funds for a number of transitways in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. Some of the corridors and projects in need of capital funding include the following:

- Southwest LRT transitway for preliminary engineering, final design and construction;

- Rush Line corridor for park and ride facilities;
 - Cedar Avenue BRT to continue construction and match federal funds for the bus lane improvements;
 - I-94 East corridor for park and ride facilities;
 - Arterial BRT transitways for implementation of station and roadway improvements;
 - Bottineau Boulevard corridor for environmental analysis;
 - Central Avenue/TH65 corridor for park and ride facilities;
 - I-35W South BRT corridor for stations and park and ride facilities;
 - I-35W North corridor for environmental analysis;
 - I-394 HOT corridor for park and ride facilities;
 - Red Rock corridor for park and ride and station facilities;
 - Robert Street corridor for a bus layover facility;
- Other transitways are identified in the Council 2030 Transportation Policy Plan.

MnDOT getting a line on Twin Cities-Duluth rail

Transit official says citizens are set to support the passenger line regardless of cost - a moving target.

By PAUL LEVY, Star Tribune

The day after saying that a passenger rail line from Minneapolis to Duluth could cost \$1 billion, the state transportation official who talked about that price tag was shocked by what he heard at a public meeting in Cambridge: "Just get it done." "People told me they didn't care what it cost," said Dave Christianson of the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT), who oversees all state rail projects and has attended environmental assessment open houses in four cities along the proposed line.

"There was no opposition whatsoever," said Christianson, who worked as a consultant for the proposed Northern Lights Express line before becoming MnDOT's project manager. "The support for this passenger rail line is probably stronger than for any I've ever seen." Northern Lights Express (NLX) alliance officials, who last year projected the cost of the 155-mile line at \$360 million, have nearly doubled that figure to \$615 million. But that, says John Ongaro, director of intergovernmental affairs in Duluth, is a far cry from the \$990 million that Christianson calls a "worst-case scenario." "It won't be close to \$1 billion, and Dave Christianson has worked on this project long enough to know that," Ongaro said.

Christianson hopes Ongaro is right. When Anoka County Commissioner Dan Erhart, one of the engines trying to move this line, asked Christianson whether he agreed with the \$615 million figure, Christianson said he responded, "Yes." Then how did the cost projections of NLX and Mn/DOT, seemingly further apart than Minneapolis and Duluth, suddenly become as hazy as a snowstorm covering the Duluth harbor?

MnDOT suggests it would be necessary to buy as many as eight sets of trains to accommodate eight daily round trips from Minneapolis to Duluth. But NLX says trains reaching speeds of 110 miles per hour and covering 155 miles in slightly more than two hours could make more than one round trip per day. That could deflate the cost by as much as \$200 million, Christianson said. MnDOT also wants two sets of tracks running the entire route. But NLX thinks only the middle two-thirds of the route — from Coon Rapids to Sandstone, the stretch where the train would probably reach its highest speeds — needs a second track. That also could save the project hundreds of millions of dollars, Christianson said.

Price of gas a factor

The price tag that Christianson said may convince skeptics of the line's real value is \$4-plus — the price of a gallon of gas last year.

"When we did a cost-benefit analysis, we talked about gaining more freeway capacity as a good tradeoff," Christianson said. "But if the price of gas doubles, we're going to have enough passengers to fill this train no matter what the tickets cost." Citizens will learn more about the line when MnDOT presents some of its state rail plan findings and asks for public input on its website, www.dot.state.mn.us, before Christmas.

"When building a railroad, you can figure out what things are going to cost and be off by 50 percent, depending on assumptions," Christianson said of the line that NLX officials hope will open in 2012 or 2013. "More important, we have to start determining what a good system looks like, who it will benefit and how we can make it happen.

"You can't say, 'Build it and they will come,'" Christianson said. "But when I went to Cambridge, the day after the newspaper article in which I said it could cost \$1 billion, people shook my hand and said, 'Get 'er done. Let's get this thing started.'"



Tight budget strains MVTA

By KATIE HUMPHREY, Star Tribune

BURNSVILLE – A budget squeeze could force the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority to park some of its buses by the end of 2010.

MVTA board members on Wednesday night reluctantly approved a \$17.5 million 2010 operating budget that includes spending \$3.6 million in reserve funds, but not before airing frustration with the Metropolitan Council for pushing suburban transit providers to spend down reserves to help fix a deficit in regional transit funding.

The budget approved by MVTA's board would leave the south-suburban bus service with \$2.7 million in reserves by the end of 2010. That's less than two months worth of operating expenses, and it may not be enough to keep cash flowing and to maintain current levels of bus service, officials say.

"We've never had an experience that says we can operate at that level [of budget reserves]," Will Branning, a Dakota County Commissioner and MVTA board member, said. "It seems to me like that is an impossible task."

The board did not discuss the extent of specific cuts nor did it note which routes could be affected, but it directed MVTA staff members to monitor the budget closely and to report back throughout the year.

"We'll cross that bridge when we come to it," Burnsville Mayor Elizabeth Kautz, the MVTA board chairwoman, said.

It's a scenario that MVTA and other suburban transit providers predicted months ago when the Metropolitan Council, with the blessing of the Legislature, came up with a plan to fix a \$62.4 million regional transit deficit over the next two years.

To help fill that financial hole, the Legislature approved a Metropolitan Council plan to withhold \$7 million from suburban transit providers.

The metro planning agency had doled out that money — generated by the motor vehicle sales tax — to the suburban bus services. But the Met Council decided to keep a larger share of it, much of it to cover the losses of Metro Transit, which serves more urban areas.

Arlene McCarthy, Met Council's director of Metropolitan Transit Services, has said the move was necessary to even out budgets and reserve balances across the region. While some suburban agencies, such as Maple Grove Transit, held reserves equal to 200 percent of their operating budget, Metro Transit had reserves of just 2 to 3 percent of its budget.

In the case of MVTA, which serves Apple Valley, Burnsville, Eagan, Rosemount and Savage, the reserve fund will be down the equivalent of 1.8 months worth of expenses by 2011. That's contrary to MVTA policy of having a reserve that could cover four months of expenses.

The MVTA board made sure to note that on Wednesday, adding a line to the budget specifying that they'll need about \$3 million — from somewhere — to follow its own policies and keep four months in reserve funds. "We have worked too hard to make sure that we have quality service for our citizens to get penalized when we provide a cost effective and efficient service," Kautz said.



Heartland Express: North Branch City Bus is on its way!

CAMBRIDGE – The Heartland Express is proud to announce that Chisago County and the City of North Branch have teamed up to provide North Branch City Bus service that began on January 4. The City Bus runs from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday thru Friday (except holidays). It covers an area from 410th on the north, Harder Park on the east, 370th on the south and the county line on the west. The fare is \$1.50 per one-way trip but passengers 65+ can ride for \$.75 (one-way). Those going to "Senior Dining" ride for a "free-will donation."

County Market joins Nelson's Market as one of the token outlet locations in North Branch. Other county locations include: Chisago County Government Center Administration Office, Center City; Brinks Market, Chisago City; Main Street Market, Rush City; Heartland Express Transit Center, Cambridge; Wal-Mart and Cub Foods; Cambridge and Riverside Market; City of Isanti.

North Branch City Bus also produced a new brochure which includes a color-coded map that match tokens that come in four

colors and are sold in packs of 10. Purple (in-city) for seniors 65 and older: 75-cents; Pink (City) \$1.50; Blue (Corridor - city to city) \$2; Orange (Border Zone) \$3.50. Rides between corridor zones will be at the \$3.50 fare. Wyoming – Chisago corridors are considered one corridor and the fare is \$2.

Heartland Express is a rural public transit system which operates Monday thru Friday from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. excluding holidays. Telephones are answered from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. and an answering machine takes after hour requests and cancellations. All buses are handicapped accessible and most buses have bike racks, the service is available to everyone. There are no restrictions.



Apple Valley has high hopes for stylish transit station

By KATIE HUMPHREY, Star Tribune

APPLE VALLEY – Featuring a swooping roof line and the first skyway south of the river, the new Apple Valley Transit Station opens to bus riders on Monday.

The new facility, set flush with Cedar Avenue north of 155th Street, replaces an older park-and-ride station just a block away on Gaslight Lane. And it immediately becomes a prominent landmark of the bus rapid transit system planned for the corridor.

“It’s been a long time coming,” said Will Branning, a Dakota County commissioner who also serves on the board of the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority, the south metro transit service that uses the new station.

The \$21 million station features a three-story parking garage with space for 750 vehicles, including some designated for hybrids only, and more than 4,300 square feet of enclosed, climate-controlled platform space. A second-level skyway spans Cedar Avenue to connect the southbound and northbound sides of the station.

Apple Valley Mayor Mary Hamann-Roland said the striking glass, stone and steel building has piqued the curiosity of residents.

“A lot of people have said to me, ‘Wow, that is a really, really cool looking transit center,’” she said. “The roof line follows the terrain. It’s art. It’s architecture reflecting the natural environment.”

The station is the largest of eight stops planned for the bus rapid transit line along Cedar Avenue when buses start running from station-to-station in a designated lane between Lakeville and Bloomington in 2012.

For now, it will replace the older transit station as a hub for riders of local circulator routes and serve commuters who ride express buses to and from Minneapolis and St. Paul. Sam O’Connell, a transit specialist with Dakota County, said the new station sets the tone for the rest of the bus rapid transit corridor as it develops.

Because it’s located right on Cedar Avenue, buses won’t have to leave the roadway to pick up or drop off passengers. And the skyway, meant to give people safe passage across the multi-lane road, is a nod toward the visions of a pedestrian-friendly corridor.

“It really is the highlight of the corridor,” she said. “Other stations will have the same look and feel.”

Currently, about 600 people park at the older Apple Valley Transit Station each day to catch the bus. But MVTA officials note that’s not a total picture of ridership in the area. Many

people get dropped off at the station instead of parking on-site, and local and express routes feed into the hub.

By 2030, Dakota County estimates, 4,100 trips per day will start or end at the Apple Valley Transit Station. Most will be express bus trips for commuters, but a few hundred will be station-to-station riders.

To accommodate the increased

usage, the parking garage is designed so that it can be expanded to five stories.

“This adds more capacity to the service we give our citizens south of the river,” said Burnsville Mayor Elizabeth Kautz, who is also chairwoman of the MVTA board.

And the higher profile bus service has Apple Valley city officials dreaming about nearby downtown development.

Just east of Cedar Avenue in an area dubbed Central Village, the city has dozens of acres devoted to development, likely high-density housing and commercial space.

Apple Valley Community Development Director Bruce Nordquist said the parcels are level and ready to develop. But he also noted that neither development nor bus rapid transit is immediate just because the station is there.

“It’s an evolution. We recognize that it may take 10, 15, 20 years,” he said. “Everyone is really excited about it and has worked for years on it.”



The Apple Valley Transit Station under construction on Cedar Avenue at 155th Street opened its doors on January 4th.

Put down the bus schedule, pick up your phone

Innovative apps making mass transit easy

By JULIO OJEDA-ZAPATA, Pioneer Press

Trying to pull up local bus or light-rail information on a smart phone used to be a nightmare. The problem: Web-based schedules and trip planners made to be viewed on computers did not work in mobile-phone browsers.

There was no app for that, either. But this is changing. Local developers have figured out ways for smart phone users to find Metro Transit bus and train info with a few finger taps and in formats for small screens. Some developers have created applications for Apple's iPhone with names such as Train Brain and TopStop. Others have focused on making transit data Web-friendly so the information is easier to find, read and bookmark in the browser of an iPhone, Motorola Droid or Palm Pre.

Metro Transit's own NexTrip online service is now a lot more smart phone-friendly, too. These developments are a big deal for reasons that go beyond making life for commuters more convenient. Government data, including public transit data, is becoming increasingly accessible to the public in forms that can be analyzed and adapted easily for consumer use. Want to whip up your own mobile-friendly transit app or service? Grab an online treasure trove of raw transit data. If you have the technical chops to adapt it for use on a phone, fame can be yours. This trend is being repeated across the country. Nearly 100 transit agencies now have open-data policies to help spur transit app development, according to the City-Go-Round site ([http://www.citygo-round.com](#)), which tracks use of transit data to create apps and services. One reason for the technology trend is President Barack Obama's open-data mandate: Each federal agency has been directed to release three "high-value" databases within 45 days and to take other similar measures (see whitehouse.gov/open).

The private sector also encourages open-data policies. Google offers bus and train schedules in some cities as part of its Google Maps service. To make this possible, the company has asked transit agencies to provide data in a Google-friendly form. Metro Transit and several dozen other transit agencies have complied. The availability of this data has triggered an app-development frenzy in some communities. The Bay Area Rapid Transit system, which serves the San Francisco region, is a prime example with more than two dozen mobile apps or services available to riders. BART not only makes transit data available to developers but encourages creativity with a developer section on its site, an e-mail list and posters in public places to trumpet third-party app development. It also has sponsored such events as a TransitCamp for tech experts who want to brainstorm how transit data can be used more effectively. "We decided we wanted to nurture this (developer) community," said Tim Moore, BART's Web site manager. Other developer-friendly transit agencies include MassDOT in Massachusetts and TriMet in Portland, Ore. Such transit-data hotbeds are a potential model for Metro Transit. While it doesn't discourage app development, it also doesn't actively encourage it. But enterprising local developers aren't waiting for Metro Transit assistance. St. Paul developer Andy Atkinson, for instance, has created a Train Brain app for the iPhone so light-rail users can better keep track of urban trains. He recently added the Northstar Commuter Rail to the app.

Atkinson gives Metro Transit kudos for publishing raw data but said it does not promote this service enough. "I would rate Metro Transit as OK compared with other agencies nationally" in its

support for app developers, Atkinson said, "but there is room for improvement," perhaps with formal app-development guidelines to foster such activity. Metro Transit does make "real-time" bus- and train-schedule information readily available to consumers via its NexTrip online service, which has been overhauled to run better on the small screens of smart phones. But the agency is feeling competitive heat from third-party Web developers such as Paul Wenzel, who has made a browser transit-lookup service with a cleaner and more readable interface. Wenzel said his Twin Cities Transit Mobile is stripped of all "unnecessary fluff" and is "extraordinarily fast." But why did he take the time to create the service? He said it was for personal use, after finding Metro Transit offerings awkward. "Remixing data is really fun," he said. "The most interesting remix projects are ones people do to solve a personal need."



TRANSIT APPS AND SERVICES FOR PHONES

If you use Twin Cities public transit and pack an iPhone or other recent-model handset, you're in luck. It has never been simpler to pull up station, route and schedule information on your smart phone. Here is what you need to know: **Google Maps** (maps.google.com): Just before the Republican National Convention in 2007, when thousands of visitors needed to find their way around the Twin Cities, Google added a local public-transit option to its Google Maps service. Since then, anyone needing to figure out a metro-bus or light-rail route has been able to harness the popular Google site as an alternative to the **Metro Transit Web site** (metrotransit.org). This works well on any desktop or laptop computer. It is also a breeze on smart phones such as Apple's iPhone and certain phones running Google's Android operating system (both have Google Maps apps); click the little bus icon between the car and pedestrian icons when mapping a trip route. **NexTrip** (nexttrip.metc.state.mn.us): This Metro Transit service is a handy way to snag real-time bus or light-rail information, such as when the next bus on your route will leave the stop nearest to you. This works on computers and now on smart phones such as the iPhone or the Motorola Droid. It is possible to save a page with your search criteria so you can call it up anytime to find out when to board the next bus or train. Just bookmark it in your handset's browser or save it as a shortcut on an iPhone or Android desktop. **Twin Cities Transit Mobile** (tctransit.mobi): This mobile-Web service created by Paul Wenzel works essentially like NexTrip but with a more elegant and readable interface. As with NexTrip, pages with custom route and station info can be bookmarked and later accessed at any time for real-time arrival and departure information. It is a good idea to have both NexTrip and Twin Cities Transit Mobile set up on your phone, because the former has technical glitches on occasion while the latter will sometimes provide inaccurate info. Transit apps for Apple's iPhone: Yes, Metro Transit riders, there's an app for that — several, actually. Train Brain, created by Andy Atkinson, is designed for users of Metro Transit light rail and Northstar Commuter Rail. There is no Bus Brain yet, but metro-bus riders can grab Shawn Flahave's TopStop. The app adapts Metro Transit's two ways to do PC-based routing, NexTrip and its Trip Planner, on the smaller iPhone screen. At least one other iPhone app, UniBus, includes Twin Cities transit information as well as data for other U.S. cities. Beware, though, of occasionally incomplete bus-route information.

Mythbusting Automated External Defibrillators

Why AED programs are the right choice for your business

Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA)

Early access to the VF victim is therefore vital and the statistics for survival are clear: CPR and Defibrillation provided within the first minute, 90% chance of survival; within 5 minutes, 30-50% survival. Encouraging action from the lay/minimally trained bystander will save lives.

Resuscitation

We've all seen the TV shows set in hospitals where the patient's heart monitor is beeping along and all of a sudden the nurse yells, "Emergency, the patient is in asystole!". The physician then rushes in, rips back the patient's gown and grabs the defibrillation paddles shouting, "Clear!" and delivers a shock of around 1500 Volts hoping that he has restored saved the patients life by restoring their circulation.

If a minimally trained person has witnessed a real life cardiac arrest in a business setting, reaction time and efficacy of CPR and Defibrillation can mean the difference between life and death to a victim.

Some common Myths associated with AED's and CPR

- Myth: AED's are complex and difficult to use and should only be used by a trained professional.
 - Facts: Lay/minimally trained rescuers will find today's AED's much easier to use than those of earlier times, or as seen on TV shows. In addition, the devices are highly accurate in determining if a shock is warranted.
- Myth: Too much legal risk in using or owning an AED.
 - Facts: There have been no known lawsuits against lay rescuers who attempt and provide CPR and/or AED use. The Cardiac Arrest Survival Act (CASA) was part of legislation signed into law in November 2000 and, among its provisions, provides nationwide Good Samaritan protection that exempts from liability anyone who renders emergency treatment with a defibrillator to save someone's life. In addition, this covers the owner/acquirer of the AED. Since the SCA victim is nonresponsive, CPR and AED use can only help not harm.

- Myth: Lay bystanders are required to perform mouth to mouth breathing.
 - Fact: In April 2008, the American Heart Association revised its recommendations and encouraged lay bystander rescuers to use chest compression-only CPR as an alternative to CPR with exchange of breaths. Research has shown that potential rescuers are reluctant to provide CPR because of their personal discomfort in providing mouth to mouth breath exchange to a stranger.
- Myth: EMS will arrive in time, we do not need an AED program
 - Fact: CPR and an AED must be administered within 5-7 minutes of a SCA event for best chance of survival. In spite of best efforts, EMS arrival is typically not in time. With an AED program in place, survival increases from 5% to 50-75%.

HeartSine Technologies manufactures a portable, easy to use AED with a low cost of ownership. This device is ideal for public, private, charter and para-transit applications. For more information, contact HeartSine at: info@heartsine.com, or 215-860-8100, extension 112.

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metro council.org

Metro Mobility goes hybrid

Metro Mobility's first hybrid-electric vehicles are now on the road. The 15 buses were purchased with federal stimulus money. They are expected to get nearly 30% better fuel economy and produce significantly fewer carbon emissions. The buses are equipped with wheelchair lifts and other safety features.

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Buses moving faster through downtown Minneapolis

More than 22,500 commuters on 65 weekday express bus routes traveling to Minneapolis from dozens of park-and-ride facilities around the region are experiencing a quicker, more convenient trip through downtown. On Dec. 14, the newly rebuilt Marquette and Second avenues reopened to bus traffic with double bus lanes, allowing buses to "leapfrog" each other and get through downtown in one-third or even half the previous time.

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Park & ride use down 6 percent

Higher unemployment rates and decreased fuel costs are the likely cause for a recent drop in commuter demand for park-and-ride spaces. Despite the decline, demand remains higher than 2007 levels, and the system has 29 facilities that are near, at or over capacity.

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Hiawath LRT opens new station

A new Hiawatha light rail station, anticipated to serve as the transportation anchor to mixed-use development in Bloomington, opened on Dec. 12. The American Boulevard Station is located on 34th Avenue just south of I-494/Hwy. 5 in Bloomington's Airport South District.

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Central Corridor Making Tracks News

Central Corridor LRT Update



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in transit

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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Metropolitan Council Newsletter

SEND NEWS

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DTA employees raise \$1,600 for Toyland Express

DULUTH – Duluth Transit Authority drivers and staff volunteers raised \$1,600 for the local Toyland Express Drive in a raffle that was held at the Driver's Annual DTA Holiday Party on December 5th. The DTA's Toyland Express Committee presented the Salvation Army with a check along with twelve brand new youth bicycles and a box of toys which were donated by DTA employees. Toys and gifts were purchased by the Salvation Army with the \$1,600 and distributed to children of needy families in the Twin Ports in time for Christmas.



Santa (Mechanic Clint Johnson) and Mrs. Claus (Driver Ruth Christie) of DTA's Toyland Express Committee bring holiday cheer to the annual Driver's Christmas Party and Toyland Express Raffle.

InTransit Bulletin Board

Events

September 13 -15, 2010	Minnesota Public Transit Conference	Rochester
	Mayo Civic Center and Radisson/Doubletree	
July 24, 2010	Minnesota Statewide Bus Rodeo	Alexandria

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.

