



in transit

Construction of new Apple Valley Transit Station is underway

BURNSVILLE – Groundbreaking for a new transit station was the first visible sign of the future bus rapid transit system along Cedar Avenue. The Minnesota Valley Transit Authority, along with Dakota County and many other partners held a construction kick-off ceremony at the future site of the Apple Valley Transit Station on April 14.

Following the event, an open house was held at the site of the existing Apple Valley Transit Station. During the open house, visitors had an opportunity sit in a driver’s seat and experience some of what it will be like to drive buses on shoulders designed for bus rapid transit.

Construction of the new station has begun and is scheduled to be completed by December 2009. The station will include level boarding platforms, so riders can walk directly onto buses. It will also feature heated passenger skyways and elevators. A multi-level parking structure, along with a parking lot, will provide space for 750 vehicles.



Turning over dirt at the site of the new Apple Valley Transit Station, from left are: Minnesota Senator Chris Gerlach (Apple Valley); Representing Sen. Amy Klobuchar, Kelly Scanlan; Apple Valley Mayor Mary Hamann-Roland; Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB) Vice Chair and Dakota County Commissioner Paul Krause; MVTA Board Chair and Burnsville Mayor Elizabeth Kautz; Dakota County Regional Rail Authority Chair, Dakota County Commimssioner, Cedar Group co-chair and MVTA Board member Will Branning; Congressman John Kline; and Metropolitan Council Chair Peter Bell.





From the President

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It's spring and the legislative action is heating up. Unfortunately, we may not know the outcome until well into the summer. Many recent legislative sessions have wound up going into overtime with Special Sessions following the conclusion of the regular session. We'll have to see how quickly legislators can get their work done.

The one thing we do know is how critical it is for transit advocates to talk to decision makers about transit system needs and budgets. Again and again, we've seen how the most vocal advocates catch the ears of lawmakers. It's surprising how much of a difference a phone call or a letter with a personal story about the importance of transit service can make in the mind of a legislator.

The Minnesota Public Transit Association has a lobbyist working hard at the Capitol on your behalf and a little support from local systems is important. Your concerns are important so speak up with MPTA and with your legislators.

The final omnibus transportation funding bill was signed into law by the Governor. The new law pretty much covers the operating deficits faced by Metropolitan Area and Greater Minnesota transit systems, despite the need to cut the general fund appropriation. As the legislature struggles to balance the state budget in the face of a \$5 billion deficit, just about every area of state government is being cut. However, legislators shifted funds from other accounts to keep our existing transit service operating for the next two years.

One issue we discovered thanks to input from MPTA members is a cash flow problem for some systems that has started to arise. The timing of payments from MnDOT can leave some Greater Minnesota transit systems strapped for cash await-

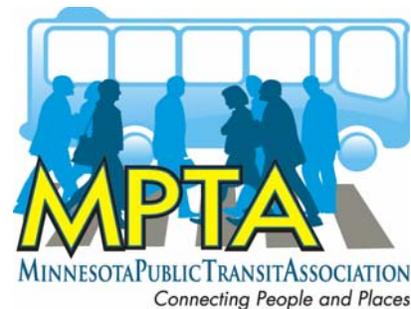
ing the next payment. Over 20 smaller systems were impacted by this payment schedule and they were looking at serious cash flow problems. MPTA worked with legislators to have language introduced that will change the payment schedule and change the allocation of dollars over the next three fiscal years so that systems are not faced with a cash crunch

and a potential need to borrow money or cut back on service. When we hear concerns raised from our members, MPTA can act on your behalf and work for needed policy changes.

You can have an impact on transit funding and policy and MPTA will work with you to enact positive changes. So pick up the phone – it only takes a few minutes – and send a message to your legislators about the need to keep transit service adequately funded. Our riders are depending on us to speak up for them.

In April, Sherry Munyon and I traveled to Washington D.C. as part of the annual Transportation Alliance Fly-In and talked with members of the Minnesota Congressional Delegation about the federal funding for transit. The meetings were very productive and very timely as Congress works to put together the budget and starts developing a new six-year surface transportation authorization bill.

It's not too early to mark your calendars for the Minnesota Public Transit Conference scheduled for September 21-23 in Duluth. This year we'll be hosting a join Minnesota/Wisconsin conference so don't miss out on the opportunity to learn much more about transit issues and best practices for transit systems. More information is available at : www.mpta-transit.org.



Legislative Update

Margaret Donahoe
 Advocacy Director
 Minnesota Public Transit Association

As the legislative session moves into high gear, the Minnesota Public Transit Association is working to keep all transit service operating in the face of a \$5 billion budget deficit for the coming biennium.

The downturn in the economy has devastated car sales. That means that the revenue we rely on from the motor vehicle sales tax is not even close to being at the levels lawmakers expected just one year ago. Metropolitan Area transit faces a \$63 million deficit and some Greater Minnesota transit systems are facing serious cash flow problems. We need the legislature to deal with these funding challenges.

MPTA had advocated for using all of the revenue from the sales tax on motor vehicles that are leased rather than purchased to fill the gap in operating costs. Unfortunately, that option was taken away right before the conference committee report was finalized. Instead of using leased vehicle sales tax revenue, the legislature shifted funds from other accounts including a shift of constitutionally dedicated MVST dollars from highways to transit on a temporary basis to get through the next two years.

The final bill, signed into law by the Governor, addresses the identified gap between operating costs and anticipated revenue in the following ways:



Metropolitan Area Transit	FY 2010-2011
Operating deficit of \$63 million for biennium	\$63 million
General Fund cut	\$13 million
Total Deficit	\$76 million

Impact of omnibus transportation funding bill and Met 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
Total	\$73 million
Remaining Deficit	(\$3 million)

Greater Minnesota Transit	FY 2010-2011
Identified Deficit (Includes \$3 million cut to general fund appropriation)	\$8 million

Impact of omnibus transportation funding bill:	
MVST shift from Highway Fund to transit	\$6 million
Remaining Deficit	(\$2 million)

In the face of an historic budget deficit with cuts to almost every area of state government proposed, MPTA worked hard to keep existing transit service operating.



DTA honors employees for safety at annual Safety Awards Breakfast

DTA achieves cumulative total of 897 years of accident-free service in 2008

DULUTH –The Duluth Transit Authority honored drivers and mechanics for safety performance and named senior mechanic James Palkki as the DTA Employee of the Year for 2008 at the DTA’s annual Employee Safety & Recognition Award Breakfast, which was held at the DTA’s Operations Center on March 26.

The DTA also recognized and commended 88 bus operators and mechanics for achieving a cumulative total of 897 years of accident-free service.

Palkki began his career in the DTA Maintenance Department in August of 1979 as a service worker and was promoted throughout his career. He is presently a Senior Technician and specializes in engines and electronic systems.

According to his supervisors, Palkki is an outstanding technician and vital member of the DTA’s maintenance team. Whenever there’s a maintenance problem to be solved, Jim is right there to help find a solution. He’s a “jack of all trades” and a valuable asset to the DTA.

DTA staff wait on tables and serve up a hearty pancake breakfast for drivers, mechanics and retirees with donations from local Perkins Family Restaurants.



DTA General Manager Dennis Jensen presents Employee of the Year Award to mechanic Jim Palkki at Safety Awards Breakfast.



DTA employees and retirees enjoy hearty pancake breakfast.

DTA’s U-PASS ridership at UMD tops 3 million rider mark on March 27

The DTA’s U-PASS Program at UMD, which began in September of 2000, surpassed the 3 million rider milestone on Friday, March 27.

Chelsea was congratulated by DTA and UMD staff and awarded gift certificates for UMD Stores and UMD Food Services.

U-PASS ridership at UMD has increased every year since 2000 and has accounted for 11.6 percent of the DTA’s over-all ridership of 25,899,357 during the same time period. However, during fall and spring semesters when school is in session, U-PASS ridership at UMD accounts for 20 percent of DTA’s system-wide ridership.

U-PASS ridership at UMD for 2008 increased by 32.4 percent over 2007 with 500,215 rides.

Prior to the U-PASS Program, UMD ridership averaged just 4,000 a month. UMD ridership today tops the 4,000 rider mark in only 2 days. The average monthly ridership during Fall Semester 2008 was 64,345.



UMD senior Chelsea Voltin became the 3 millionth U-PASS rider at UMD when she boarded a DTA bus on March 27. She has been riding the DTA on the U-PASS program for four years.

MPR, Met Council reach accord on LRT mitigation

The Council and Minnesota Public Radio have reached agreement on a plan to mitigate noise and vibration from the Central Corridor LRT line.

(Read Story: http://www.metrocouncil.org/news/2009/news_638.htm)

Northstar commuters weigh in on proposed fares



More than 60 residents throughout the Northstar Corridor attended three hearings in early April held to solicit public input on the proposed fares for the commuter rail line. Hearing attendees expressed support for Northstar, but concern over the prices from Big Lake and Elk River. (Read Story: <http://www.metrocouncil.org/directions/transit/transit2009/NorthstarApr09.htm>)



Central Corridor LRT Update

**Making
Tracks**

(Read Central Corridor LRT news:

<http://www.metrocouncil.org/transportation/ccorridor/centralcorridor.htm>)

Commuter Challenge encourages friendly competition



On April 1, Metro Transit launched its annual Commuter Challenge. Designed to encourage commuters to choose alternatives to driving alone to work, this year's Challenge features opportunities for friendly competition and uses a host of social networking tools.

(Read Story: <http://www.metrocouncil.org/directions/transit/transit2009/CChallenge.htm>)

metrocouncil.org



Greater MN Commuter Challenge Pledge

Greater Minnesota transit systems have been encouraged by MnDOT's Office of Transit to participate in the Greater Minnesota Commuter Challenge. Residents are encouraged to make a pledge to "Try Transit" during Try Transit Week (May 18-24) or before July 20, 2009. Those pledging to ride transit and other alternatives to driving alone will qualify for cash prizes. Winners will be notified on August 3, 2009. More information on the Greater Minnesota Commuter Challenge is available at <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/commuterchallenge.html>.

Commuters can celebrate Earth Day every day on Metro Transit



Riding Metro Transit is one of the most helpful things you can do to reduce your carbon footprint, according to a recent study by the U.S. Department of Transportation. Cars alone account for nearly half of household emissions created by a typical two-car American family, the study finds, and says that switching to public transportation has a greater environmental impact than using compact fluorescent bulbs or adding insulation to an attic.

(Read Story: http://www.metrotransit.org/news/releases/release04_21_09.asp)

in transit

Minnesota Public Transit Newsletter

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SEND NEWS

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Rosa Parks walking puppet rides DTA to bring attention to women's rights

DULUTH – In an effort by local YWCA organizers to bring attention to women's issues during February's Women's Rights Month, walking puppet Rosa Parks visited the downtown transit center and rode the bus.

In the 1930s, Miles Horton founded the Highlander Folk School in Monteagle, Tennessee. Horton was inspired by the coal mine strikes in the 1930s to educate and restore human dignity and confidence to the people of the Appalachians. In the 1950s, civil rights legends such as Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Andrew Young learned the ways of non-violent protest at Highlander. When students were asked to say what they were going to bring back to their communities. Rosa's answer was, "I don't know, but it's gonna be something big."



In Transit Bulletin Board

Events

June 1	MSES Annual Golf Outing	Hastings
	Register online at www.mses.org	
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 <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/rta/rta/trng.html>. For more information, contact RTAP Coordinator Lynn Frank at 651/366-4710 or lynn.frank@dot.state.mn.us.

