

intransit

DARTS to operate Transit Link service in Dakota County

By MARK HOISSER, President of DARTS

On March 24, 2010, the Metropolitan Council voted to award a five-year contract for Transit Link (dial-a-ride) service in Dakota County to DARTS. The new contract took effect in May with service beginning May 3. The new contract is part of the restructuring of dial-a-ride services region-wide.

This is the third and final contract awarded by the Council for the new Transit Link service. Arlene McCarthy from the Council said “[DARTS] has provided service to parts of Dakota County for many years, which will help to make a smooth transition for riders in this area.”

Transit Link service is minibus or van service for members of the general public. It differs from the ADA-

With the new Transit Link contract, DARTS will be adding buses to the fleet and extending the hours of weekday service, which will increase the demands on day-to-day management capacity. The entire DARTS transit team will be focused on a successful transition to the new Transit Link (dial-a-ride) service in Dakota County.

certified ride service, which serves riders who need additional assistance due to physical, cognitive, or psychological limitations. ADA transit service in Dakota County is not changing. DARTS also is the Metro Mobility provider for Dakota County.

DARTS currently provides more than 165,000 rides annually. The Transit Link contract covers all of Dakota County and will enhance DARTS' ability to provide mobility for current and new riders county-wide. DARTS will coordinate trips with MVTA and

Metro Transit and expanded Transit Link service will be available in communities where a fixed-route service is not currently available. For instance, Hastings residents and users of the discontinued TRAC system can use Transit Link to travel outside the city limits of Hastings.



As part of reorganization, Kevin Raun was hired as DARTS Director of Transportation.

Transit Link service will be available weekdays from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. Rides may be scheduled up to five days in advance by calling 651-602-LINK (-5465) between 7 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Fares are based on the distance traveled. For trips less than 10 miles, passengers will pay \$2.25 each way. For trips between 10 and 20 miles, the fare will be \$4.50 each way. And for trips greater than 20 miles, riders will pay \$6.75 each way. Transfers are free and discounts are available for group trips. ADA-certified riders pay a maximum of \$4.50 per direction, regardless of distance.

DARTS is pleased to have been awarded the Transit Link contract through a competitive bid process, acknowledging the ability to provide high-quality services to the community in a cost-competitive and efficient manner. The new service extends DARTS' mission of promoting the full participation of all generations in community life.

From the President



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President's Column

It's spring, and the Minnesota Public Transit Association is busy working for you. MPTA has been advocating for transit funding and policy issues at the capitol. With the severe budget deficits, all programs funded from the general fund are on the chopping block. MPTA has been pushing for smaller cuts and stressing the need to maintain existing transit service without increases in fares. Many transit systems around the country are facing serious budget problems and transit service is being cut. As always, we want to hear from you about the impact of the decisions made at the Capitol. If your system experiences any service reductions or fare increases, we need to know. Please contact me or Sherry Munyon and let us know about any negative impacts on service or riders.

The association is busy organizing major training events for transit service providers. In addition to the Bus Roadeo being held in Alexandria on July 24, MPTA is busy working to organize the annual Minnesota Public Transit Conference. The 2010 Transit Conference will be held September 13-15, 2010 at the Mayo Civic Center & Radisson DoubleTree hotel. Mark your calendars now and visit the MPTA web site: www.mpta-transit.org.

This year is a major election year with the governorship and all 201 seats in the legislature up for election as well as constitutional officers and members of the US House of Representatives. It is absolutely critical to have the support of elected officials for transit in order to maintain and improve transit service for Minnesota residents.

At the March meeting, the MPTA Board recognized Roxanne Emmerson for her service from 2005-2009 on the Board of Directors. Emmerson is leaving Human Services, Inc. to pursue other employment and has resigned from the Board of Directors. Right: President Tony Kellen is pictured with Emmerson.

Educating candidates about the importance of transit service will be extremely important and MPTA will be working with members to convey a strong message to candidates.

MPTA continues to work with other transportation organizations to promote strong investments that will create jobs and enhance the services we provide. We're also working to reach out to the public to stress not only the value of public transportation, but the nuts and bolts of how to use the bus and where transit service is available. We would like to work with you to reach out to local media and highlight the transit service in your area. A quick visit to a local newspaper or radio station will be valuable in making your service more visible and building public support. Please contact us if you can help out with this effort.

Thanks to your support of MPTA, we're busy keeping transit service moving.



Margaret Donahoe
Advocacy Director
Minnesota Public Transit Association

MPTA 2010 Legislative Agenda available at
www.mpta-transit.org.

Legislative Report

Capital Bonding Bill

This is the “bonding year” and the legislature worked very quickly to pass a major capital bonding bill with funding for capital projects throughout the state including transit facilities and transitways. The bill passed by the legislature would have provided close to \$1 billion in bond proceeds for buildings and other infrastructure.

Governor Pawlenty vetoed \$2.5 million for Greater Minnesota Transit and the \$43.5 million appropriated to the Metropolitan Council for the Transit Capital Improvement Program.

He recommended a total of \$10 million for two transit projects: Cedar Avenue busway and Southwest LRT.

Governor Pawlenty used his veto pen to eliminate the \$2.5 million for Greater Minnesota Transit and the \$43.5 million appropriated to the Metropolitan Council for the Transit Capital Improvement Program. He noted that the language for the Metropolitan Council invited an “all or nothing” veto approach rather than listing appropriations for specific transit projects. The governor had recommended a total of \$10 million for two transit projects: Cedar Avenue busway and Southwest LRT.

Transportation Budget Bill

Facing a budget deficit of \$994 million for the current biennium and a projected deficit of over \$5 billion for coming biennium, the legislature

needed to make additional cuts in general fund appropriations given the governor’s position against raising new revenue.

Transportation funding, along with all other areas of state government except K-12 Education and Health and Human Services, received additional cuts. The cut in the general fund appropriation for Metropolitan Area Transit was \$12.915 million for the current biennium with \$7.265 of that amount being a one-time cut. The ongoing cut to the general appropriation is \$5.64 million per year.

The governor’s office also recommended an additional cut to Greater Minnesota’s general fund appropriation of \$958,315 for a total cut of \$1.685 million for the current biennium. The ongoing cut to the general fund appropriation is \$960,000 per year.

The rationale for making the cuts was that the MVST revenue projections have increased significantly. There is some skepticism about the accuracy of MVST projections so we will see if the projections for increased revenue materialize. Representatives from the Metropolitan Council have said that the cut to the general fund appropriation will not result in any transit service reductions or fare increases. The Council received authority last session to shift funds from the Livable Communities Fund and the Right-of-Way Acquisition Fund to transit if necessary. The Council included \$4 million in

revenue from livable community grants that had expired in the current calendar year budget. The Council has not shifted funds from the levy for the Livable Communities Fund.

Greater Minnesota transit will benefit from additional revenue generated from motor vehicle leases. While the constitutional amendment dedicating the motor vehicle sales tax revenue to transportation did not include cars that are leased rather than purchased, a statutory dedication of a portion of leased vehicle revenue was included in Chapter 152 – the transportation funding bill passed in 2008.

Jobs Bill

A major theme running through all of the discussion at the capitol this year has been the need to create jobs. The construction industry has been particularly hard hit and businesses have struggled to get financing for any expansion projects. Legislation designed to spur job creation and economic development was passed by the legislature and signed into law by the governor.

The bill includes an incentive for investors known as the “angel investor tax credit.” In order to cover the cost of the angel investor tax credit, the low-income fuel tax refund included in Chapter 152 — the transportation funding bill passed in 2008 — was repealed.

Chapter 152 had provided a statutory dedication of leased vehicle sales tax with the first call of the money for the low-income gas tax credit and the

continued...

Legislative update continued...

rest of the revenue split 50 percent for Greater Minnesota transit and 50 percent for metropolitan county highways. The new law sets aside \$30.1 million of total leased vehicle sales tax for the angel investor tax credit in FY2011, \$31.1 million in FY2012 and \$32 million in FY2013 and subsequent years. The remaining revenue is then split between Greater Minnesota transit and metro county highways. It remains to be seen if this reduces the amount of revenue projected to be used for transportation. Last session, attempts were made to repeal the low-income gas tax credit and use the revenue for transit operations. Those attempts were not successful. Instead, a portion of the MVST dedicated to highways was shifted to transit for two years.

Policy Bill

MPTA has been working on legislation that amends the requirements for a Greater Minnesota Transit investment plan to require the identification of total operating and capital costs necessary to meet 100 percent of the Greater Minnesota transit targeted and projected bus service hours at every 5 year interval from 2010 through 2030.

The legislation also defines state sources of funds and requires MnDOT to maintain separate accounts for state sources of funds and federal sources funds.

Complete Streets

Legislation encouraging the use of a “Complete Streets” planning process for street and roadway improvements is moving to the full House and Senate. Complete Streets considers the needs of motorists, pedestrians, transit users and vehicles, bicyclists and commercial and emergency vehicles moving along corridors and across roads. The language requires MnDOT to implement a Complete Streets policy after consultation with stakeholders. Local road authorities are encouraged, but not required to create and adopt Complete Streets policies.

Federal Legislation

Congress passed legislation known as the HIRE Act that not only provides incentives for employers to hire new workers but extends the transportation authorization act – SAFETEA-LU until the end of December 2010.

Congress had been passing short-term extensions since SAFETEA-

LU expired at the end of September 2009. Although this legislation provides some stability to federal funding program, the real need now is for a new six-year Surface Transportation Authorization Act that can be passed before the current extension expires.

House and Senate Committees continue to have hearings on a new multi-year transportation act. Advocates need to continue to push Congressional members to support a new bill with increased dedicated funding for highways and transit.

At the bill signing, Chair of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Barbara Boxer said, “This is a great day. Today, a million American workers — including 100,000 in California — know their jobs are more secure because we have renewed the transportation bill through the end of the year. Now that this is behind us, we will focus on moving forward with a transformational transportation authorization that will create jobs and build the infrastructure America needs for economic recovery and long term prosperity.”



Twins fans are heeding the message to take transit to the new Twins ballpark in downtown Minneapolis. Metro Transit reported that it carried 6,700 fans to the Twins home opener on Monday, April 12, and 8,200 fans to the game on Wednesday, April 14. That translated to a 17 percent market share for the first game and 20 percent for the second.





Morris Transit celebrates milestones

What started as a one-car taxi service has served 1.6 million riders in last 35 years on road

By TOM LARSON, *Morris Sun Tribune*

When at work, Beth Heinrich probably has more conversations interrupted than anyone around.

The affable coordinator for Morris Transit usually speaks just a few sentences before her phone rings and she has to set up a transit pick-up. Then it rings again. And again.

Heinrich patiently takes the calls in stride — many times she knows who the callers by their voice — because she knows that running the transit system was much more complicated and hectic back in the day.

“The cell phone system was a godsend,” she said with a laugh.

But it’s more than technology that has kept the transit system rolling into its fifth decade.

On Monday, March 8, Morris Transit will celebrate 35 years as a city service. But public transit in Morris has been around, in some way, shape or form, since 1945.

Despite its long history, transit in the city has never been more popular. Morris Transit set its ridership record in 2008, breaking the mark set in 2007.

The 2007 ridership total beat the previous mark in 1997. And in 2009, ridership totals were the third-highest in its history.

From its inception in 1975 to March 3, 2010, more than 1.67 million riders have used Morris Transit.

“I look at Morris as a quilt,” Heinrich said. “We have all these different neighborhoods and businesses. The one common thread connecting them all is Morris Transit. We get people from the university downtown, and from there we get them back home. We get people to and from appointments, and we get people out to where they want to have fun. A lot of communities like ours don’t have that.”

Morris Transit has five vehicles on the streets from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Friday, from noon to 4 p.m. on Saturdays, and 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Sundays.

Handicapped accessible, the vehicles can also accommodate bicyclists who want to transport their bikes to a location. Daycare and school kids use Morris Transit for rides home. Heinrich said with a smile that once parents of incoming University of Minnesota, Morris students find out how well the system operates, they might think twice about buying their kids a car to use at school.

According to research conducted in the 1980s by a UMM student, Charles Teberg started Morris’ first taxi service in 1945 after serving in World War II.

Teberg relied on taxis when in larger cities during his military service and believed a system could work in Morris.

And it did, to an extent. Teberg sold the taxi service after one year, and several owners, including Roy Lucken (1951 to 1959) and Gail Whitmer (1960 to 1968) ran a service until Whitmer got out of the business.

Morris had taxi service off and on until 1970, when the Little Flower Cab Co. started with a city subsidy. Gilbert and Barb Schmidgall ran a taxi service with subsidy money — thanks to a public vote — until 1975. On March 8, 1975, the city dissolved its contract with the Schmidgalls and by April had an agreement with the state for a grant to operate an area-wide public transit system, which consisted of a used police car and a 16-passenger Winnebago mini-bus.

Some 60 years later, public transit is still around in Morris, and thanks to subsidies that keep fares low, going strong.

Bonnie Hausman was the transit coordinator from 1975 to 2005, with Heinrich stepping in that year. Driver Linda Carver has been with the service, off and on, since 1975, Heinrich said.

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DTA banner bus was staged at temporary park and ride lots prior to the start of the construction season to promote the free parking and free round-trip express service.

DTA and Mn/DOT partner in I-35 Mega Project traffic mitigation plan

By TOM ELWELL, Duluth Transit Authority

In an effort to ease rush-hour traffic congestion during the I-35 Mega Project between Proctor and downtown Duluth, the Duluth Transit Authority and Mn/DOT have teamed-up to provide free round-trip express service for morning commuters boarding buses at temporary park & rides and bus stops west of 46th A.W. and Grand Avenue — where much of the I-35 traffic is being diverted.

The DTA established four park and ride lots on Grand Avenue, with special express service to downtown Duluth during weekday peak hours. “Buses only” express lanes also were established and are being utilized by all DTA express and mainline buses during morning and afternoon peak hours. Express buses operate in “non-stop” express mode between 46th Ave.W. and downtown Duluth and the medical corridor. This service will continue into November and will resume again for the 2011 construction season.

Mn/DOT’s two-year Mega construction project will have a significant impact on area commuters and summer visitors traveling into Duluth on I-35 from the south, as well as residents of the western part of the city. Traffic on I-35 will be restricted to one lane and many on and off ramps will be closed during construction.

Morris Transit milestones continued

The staff includes Annette Veum, Linda Hoffman, Lois Sperr, Tom Leuty, Lori Honer, Lynn Bright, Jeff Lee, Sandy Thorstad, Carver and Heinrich.

“They are all part of making Morris Transit successful on a daily basis,” Heinrich said.

Many of the transit staff have been with the service for some time, which might be why the riders who get used to the service become regulars, she said.

“They get to know the people and we get to know them,” Heinrich said. “There’s a real longevity here.”

Changes in attitudes about public transit and, in general, society, have influenced ridership, she said.

“Recently, there was grant money to promote reading and all the daycares were encouraged to send kids to the library,” Heinrich said. “We had a lot of riders because of that. The town has gotten bigger, and people who are disabled aren’t staying home anymore. They may be in a wheelchair but they still get out and go to Willie’s or McDonald’s.

“People who go to church might have wondered, ‘Do I call neighbors for rides?’ Now, they call transit

— they know it’s our job. It gives them such a sense of freedom and independence.”

Ridership might continue to grow as younger generations who grew up with transit systems age, she said.

“It’s tough for older people to lose their car when they can’t drive anymore,” Heinrich said. “Now, I think when people get older and to the point that they lose their car, it’s not that big of a deal. I think people (in younger age groups) are more aware of transit, they’re used to it and more apt to use it.”

MVTA Celebrates 40th Anniversary of Earth Day

By ROBIN SELVIG, Minnesota Valley Transit Authority

Burnsville, Minn. – The Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA) joined President Obama and transit providers around the country, along with numerous other groups, in celebrating the 40th Anniversary of Earth Day on Thursday, April 22.

“We all need to work together to improve our environment,” Branning said, “and the MVTA continually seeks ways in which we can improve the quality of life in our area.”

Other environmental initiatives: Participation in Minnesota Environmental Initiative “Project Green Fleet.” The engine of one MVTA bus has been replaced with a repowered one (move vehicles may be equipped in the future). The objective is to reduce diesel emissions from diesel vehicles in Minnesota that expose populations to diesel exhaust, particularly populations susceptible to the effects of diesel exhaust, by installing EPA-verified engine Repowers to reduce harmful emissions from diesel powered vehicles.

Maintaining the Solar Garden at the Burnsville Transit Station. This is a project completed in cooperation between the MVTA, Dakota Electric and the Minnesota Department of Commerce, where 96 solar panels help generate energy for the Transit Station site.

Participating in Dakota Electric Association’s informal “energy audits” at several MVTA sites. The audits include a careful review of the past year’s bills, an on-site audit to observe mechanical and electrical equipment and other sources of energy consumption, the inspection of delivery and control equipment to make sure it’s working efficiently and as intended, and the presentation of accurate data on energy costs and trends. Dakota Electric then offers recommendations for energy reduction strategies and efficient facility/site operations.

“We understand that everyone is operating on a tight budget these days,” said Dakota Electric Energy Services Representative Mark

Hansen. “We want to work side-by-side with our members to determine the most cost-effective solutions.”

MVTA Executive Director Beverley Miller said, “Our goal is to improve efficiency and reduce energy costs. We will continue to evaluate the safety, security and comfort of riders and others housed in our facilities, and changes will be implemented gradually.”

The MVTA has included “green” build features into new construction at the Apple Valley and Cedar Grove Transit Stations (use of LED lights, geothermal heating/cooling, use of native vegetation for landscaping to minimize carbon emissions from mowing, and use of argon-insulated glass).

Congratulations MVTA and SouthWest Transit!

APTA Announces 2010 Bus Safety & Security Excellence Awards: Recognizing public transit systems with top safety and security programs in North America.

Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (Burnsville, MN) was recently recognized with a Gold Award for Safety and SouthWest Transit (Eden Prairie, MN) was recognized with Certificate of Merit for Security.

The MVTA participated in APTA’s ‘I am E’ campaign, and invited riders to submit their own “I am E” photos (riding a bus, standing at a transit station or bus stop, etc.). See the results on MPTA’s website www.mvta.com.

The MVTA is the public transportation provider for Apple Valley, Burnsville, Eagan, Rosemount and Savage. Service is provided to downtown Minneapolis, downtown St. Paul, the Mall of America and between the five cities in the MVTA.





Fixed Route driver Ken Rakke recently represented Minnesota at the International Bus Roadeo in Cleveland, Ohio.

St. Cloud Metro Bus driver places 5th at APTA's International Roadeo

By BERTA HARTIG, St. Cloud Metro Bus

Metro Bus fixed route driver Ken Rakke recently competed at the 35th International Bus Roadeo held in conjunction with the American Public Transportation Association's (APTA) Bus and Paratransit Conference in Cleveland, Ohio.

Achieving fifth place, among 15 competitors in the 35-foot bus division, Rakke has placed higher than any previous Metro Bus driver at this level. This was Rakke's third International Bus Roadeo. Rakke earned the honor of competing at the APTA Roadeo by winning the state competition last July and taking first in the local Roadeo last May.

Competition was very close. Rakke was only one point from earning fourth and four points from taking third.

"Ken's achievement in Cleveland is the highest rank of any public transit driver in Minnesota history at APTA's International Bus Roadeo competition," said Metro Bus Executive Director David Tripp. "Our entire company is extremely proud of him."

St. Cloud Metro Bus drivers are gearing up for the local St. Cloud competition scheduled for May 20. The annual local event is held at St. Cloud State University.



ABOVE: Left to Right: Sarah Lenz, Greater MN Public Transit Coordinator, Jackie Forner, Tom Gottfried, Planning Director Office of Transit.

After more than 20 years of transit leadership, Jackie Forner, Transit Director of Chisago-Isanti County Heartland Express, retires.

Last fall Forner was awarded the MPTA Distinguished Career award in recognition of her commitment, dedication and leadership as an advocate and builder of public transit in East Central Minnesota. Her strong support for the transit community is epitomized by her many years of service, including:

- MPTA Treasurer
- MPTA Board Member
- Roadeo Committee Member
- RTAP Advisory Board Member
- 7E RDC Member
- District 3 ATP Member
- Toward Zero Deaths Initiative Member

Transit Improvement Areas (TIA) Application deadline is July 16.

Download application from: www.PositivelyMinnesota.com (available Friday, May 14)

The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) is accepting applications for the designation of Transit Improvement Areas (TIA). Established by the 2008 legislature, M.S. §§ 469.35 and 469.351 were created to designate land parcels in proximity to bus rapid transit, light rail transit and commuter rail stations. Upon designation, TIAs would be eligible to receive loan dollars to help fund projects that increase the effectiveness of transit by incorporating commercial, residential, or mixed-use development and provide for safe, pedestrian friendly use. Unfortunately the program remains unfunded since its inception. However, with the recent availability of federal funds targeted towards transit and sustainable communities, DEED has been requested to make

designations with the intention of leveraging applications for other sources of funding.

Applications are only encouraged from applicants seeking federal funding or

those that find applying beneficial for other immediate funding purposes.

Application Deadline

The application deadline for the 2010 calendar year is 4 p.m. July 16. An applicant may seek designation for more than one TIA; however, separate applications must be completed for each.

DEED is hosting two workshops in the Metro area. Topics include details pertaining to the application process, completing the application and other statutory requirements.

Eligible Applicants

- Statutory or home rule charter cities
- Counties
- Joint powers boards
- Eligible applicants must submit a Transit Improvement Area plan.

Qualifying Plans

- The entire transit Improvement Area must be located within ½ mile radius of the transit station.
- The transit station must support at a minimum one of the following modes: bus rapid transit, light rail transit, or commuter rail.
- The transit station must be operational by the year 2020.
- The TIA plan must incorporate transit with commercial, residential, or mixed-use development.
- Plans with a residential component must provide a minimum of 12 units per acre or a density bonus that allows for an increase in the number of residential units.

For more information

Visit www.PositivelyMinnesota.com, attend a workshop or call Meredith Udoibok at (651) 259-7459 or Erin Welle at (651) 259-7431.

Application Workshops

June 3, 2010 11:00 am
DEED Office, St. Paul

June 8, 2010 2:00 pm
Anoka County Library, Fridley

3 reasons to submit an article:

1. It's a great way to recognize your staff's hard work and achievements.
2. It's free publicity for your transit system.
3. We learn from each other!

Send News

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Article Suggestions:

- Items published in your local newspaper
- Changes in technology or leadership
- New service initiatives and organizational changes
- Facility and fleet enhancements
- Special events, awards and retirements
- Marketing promotions and results



Decreasing Driver Distraction:

What to look for in mobile computing technologies to improve safety

Condensed from a White Paper provided by *Mentor Engineering Inc.*

One of the leading causes of accidents these days is driver distraction. The challenge when selecting mobile computing technology for fleet-based businesses is to minimize driver interaction when the vehicle is in motion, while still increasing fleet efficiency. Here are a number of guidelines to help you choose a mobile computer that will improve your fleet's efficiency without sacrificing safety.

80 percent of crashes and 65 percent of near-crashes involve some form of driver distraction occurring within three seconds before the vehicle crash.

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)

Limited functionality when in motion

Look for mobile computers with parameters that can be custom-changed. These in-vehicle computers can be customized so the screen is only visible when the vehicle has stopped and messaging capabilities are suspended when the vehicle is in motion. For example, some mobile computers can be set with a blocker such as a clock, map or blank screen to prevent access to the application while driving. In addition to these blockers is the option of displaying other important pieces of information, such as priority messages.

Look also for computers that offer quick keys, giving drivers a shortcut while maintaining functionality. For example, a Request to Talk (RTT) button lets drivers indicate that they need to talk to dispatch with minimum interaction with the device.

Ease-of-use

Commercial mobile devices, such as smartphones, are lightweight and portable, but their small buttons make it difficult for fleet drivers to quickly send messages. Their small screens make it hard to view navigational maps or easily glance at trips and route changes without

excessive scrolling. Instead, choose a mobile computer intended for fleet use and designed for ease-of-use. These computers take into account limited vehicle real-estate, while still being large enough for easy viewing and data entry. Look also for computers with touch screens that accommodate different lighting conditions, such as sun glare and night viewing, so that drivers can see the screen at a glance.

Customizable navigation prompts

While limiting interaction with in-vehicle computers is important when the vehicle is in motion, there are times when support from the computer is necessary when driving, such as drivers needing navigational help. Look for mobile computers that let drivers access turn-by-turn audio prompts when the vehicle is in motion, or give drivers the ability to view an onscreen map but disable other interaction. This ensures drivers aren't trying to follow a paper map while moving, and helps them reach their destination quickly and safely.

Consolidating job tasks

Traditionally, fleet drivers have had to juggle a cell phone for voice and text messaging, a paper map for navigation, and a clipboard to record job details. Making these in-

vehicle tasks available on a single, pre-set computing device reduces onboard distractions. Drivers no longer rummage around for their map book or fill in details from the last job en route to the next. Job details are electronically time-stamped, captured and sent to head office when they occur, and trip changes are automatically received from dispatch. As a result, the in-vehicle environment is cleaner and less distracting.

Integrated voice calling

The majority of driver distraction issues in the media today are related to the improper use of cellular and smart phones. Choose a mobile computer that offers completely integrated voice communications, eliminating the need to provide drivers with cell phones. This feature mimics a cell phone, but allows full control of cellular capabilities — from texting and calling to receiving calls — when the vehicle is in motion. Limits can also be set on who drivers are able to call. Removing cell phones from vehicles ensures drivers adhere to corporate policy as well as legislation regarding the safe use of cell phones while driving.

New website helps public with options

Metro Transit is planning a marketing campaign to showcase all the transportation choices to Target Field, including taking the bus or train, biking, walking, carpooling or vanpooling. [Read more.](#)

Nicollet Mall to see transit changes

Thirteen express bus routes will move off Nicollet Mall this month to join the “ballet of buses” on the reconstructed Marquette and 2nd avenues in downtown Minneapolis. The bus routes will make the transition on March 20 to the new transit corridor, where more than 65 express bus routes moved in December 2009. In addition, Nicollet Mall will feature more hybrid buses, some free service and fewer bus stops. [Read more.](#)

Twin Cities transit ridership dropped in 2009

The economic recession and its accompanying high unemployment put a damper on demand for regional transit service in 2009. In total, the region’s transit providers finished the year with just over 88.8 million rides, a 6.2% drop from 2008. Ridership on nearly every type of service – rail, express bus, local bus, dial-a-ride service and vanpools – declined. The only service that posted a small gain – less than 1% – was service for people with disabilities. [Read more.](#)

Capitol-area LRT stations incorporate additional accessibility features

The three Capitol area light-rail-transit (LRT) stations on the Central Corridor will have special features to better serve the large number of riders with disabilities who work at and visit the seat of state government and nearby Regions Hospital. [Read more.](#)

Regional partners creating transitway development guidelines

Since 2004, the Metropolitan Council has launched Hiawatha LRT and Northstar Commuter Rail service, taken the first steps toward bus rapid transit (BRT) on Cedar Avenue and I-35W South, and initiated construction activities on Central Corridor LRT. Southwest Corridor is now teeing up as the next big transit investment in the region in the form of light rail. [Read more.](#)



Double bus lanes on Second and Marquette avenues allow buses to pass each other, speeding up trips.



By 2011, only hybrid-electric buses will serve Nicollet Mall. As of March 20, 71% of buses on the mall will be hybrids.

Central Corridor Making Tracks News

Central Corridor LRT Update

Making Tracks



[Read News](#)

InTransit Bulletin Board

May 8	Driver Refresher Far North Transportation	Roseau
May 22	Passenger Assistance Timber Trails Public Transit & Industries	Ogilvie
June 5	Passenger Assistance DARTS	West St. Paul
June 12	Defensive Driving & Maltreatment Awareness Timber Trails Public Transit & Industries	Ogilvie
June 26	Defensive Driving & Maltreatment Awareness DARTS	West St. Paul

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

Register drivers through the Mn/DOT Office of Transit website at:

<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/rtap/index.html>

You can apply to be a Host Agency for July-August-September 2010 classes through the website at:

<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/rtap/rtapclassrequest.html>

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Metropolitan Council Newsletter

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