

A bimonthly newsletter published by the Minnesota Public Transit Association.

intransit

July/August 2015 Edition

MN Statewide Rodeo 2015: A Great Weekend in St. Cloud!



Thank you to this year's judges!



*Large Bus Division Winners—from left to right:
Paul Mattson—3rd Place, David Palm—2nd Place,
Chris Daniels—1st Place and Rich Anthony from the
Rodeo Committee.*



*Small Bus Division Winners—from left to right:
TJ Johnson—3rd Place as well as Driver's Choice,
David Peacock—2nd Place, Todd DeZurik—1st Place
and Harold Jennissen from the Rodeo Committee.*

President's Column

Marc Hall



Thanks to everyone for a very successful Bus Roadeo in St. Cloud in July! In this issue, you will find the winners as well as great photos from the event. The training and the camaraderie of this event make it one that bus drivers have told us they really appreciate. Safety cannot be stressed enough and this kind of event drives home that message while giving everyone a fun experience filled with learning and sharing important updates and information. It's not too early to start planning for your system's participation in the Roadeo next year.

Right now we're in the midst of planning for the MPTA Annual Meeting and the joint Minnesota/Wisconsin Public Transit Conference scheduled for October 19-21 in Duluth. We have a great program featuring important training sessions, break-out sessions you don't want to miss and keynote speakers that will get you motivated and ready to have your best year ever. Join your colleagues, representatives from MnDOT, WisDOT and FTA along with experts in key areas and experience fall along Lake Superior. It's an event that is well worth the time and money to get away and really focus on how to make your transit service even better. Register today at: www.mpta-transit.org/events. Deadlines for hotel rooms and early-bird registrations are coming fast!

The Minnesota Public Transit Association is here to speak up for you and to be a resource for you. Our board has been bringing concerns and questions to MnDOT and key legislators to improve policies and to provide answers for all systems in the state. At our Annual MPTA meeting on October 19th we will share information on questions that have been raised about future policies and funding and we will let you know how you can make a difference in advocating for transit funding. We will also be presenting our MPTA Awards to colleagues who have gone above and beyond and deserve special recognition for their work. Make plans to attend MPTA's Annual Meeting as part of the conference.

It's not too soon to start to thinking about legislative action as well. At the federal level, fall will be a very busy time now that the latest extension of MAP-21 is set to expire on October 29th. We all need to be contacting members of Minnesota's Congressional delegation to urge support for a multi-year transportation funding bill, something that seems much more likely this year than in past years. More information is available in the Legislative Report in this issue.

At the state level, we continue to meet with key legislators, urging them to finish the work they started in 2015 to pass a comprehensive transportation funding bill with dedicated dollars for transit systems statewide. MPTA will also be supporting requests for transit

Enjoy the summer weather! We'll see you in Duluth at the Minnesota/Wisconsin Public Transportation Conference.

Marc Hall

President



Legislative Report

Margaret Donahoe

For this report we are focusing on action at the federal level. Please take a few minutes to send an email message to your US House member and our two US Senators urging them to follow through on passage of a 6-year surface transportation authorization act before the latest extension of MAP-21 expires on October 29th.

It's official – the US Senate passed a 6-year surface transportation authorization act – the DRIVE Act with 3 years of funding and some significant policy provisions. Since the House refused to take up the DRIVE Act prior to the July 31st expiration of MAP-21, the Senate also passed a 3-month extension of the current program which the House passed this week, changing course from the previous 5-month extension that the House expected the Senate to pass.

Senators passed the “Developing a Reliable and Innovative Vision for the Economy (DRIVE) Act” on July 30th by a vote of 65 to 34. The measure would guarantee increased highway and public transportation investment for the next three years and distribute six years of contract authority to the states to aid in long-term transportation planning.

Minnesota Senators **Amy Klobuchar** and **Al Franken** both supported the bill. ***Please take a few minutes to thank them for their support of this legislation*** which provides a path to actually securing more than two years of federal funding for the first time since SAFETEA-LU.

Legislative leaders pushed a 3-month extension of MAP-21 in order to provide more time for the House and Senate to agree on a longer-term bill. With an October 29th deadline looming, the goal is to have the House pass a long-term bill in September when Congress comes back from the August recess with time for a conference committee to resolve the differences between the Senate's DRIVE Act and the bill developed by the House.

To support its first three years of highway and public transportation investment levels, the DRIVE Act would generate \$45.6 billion from a variety of non-transportation activities and transfers those proceeds to the HTF to complement \$120 billion of projected incoming revenue from existing highway user fees.

Under the bill, authorization levels for the federal transit program would be increased by 8.78 percent in FY 2016 and by 25 percent over six years. This compares with 3.4 percent growth of the highway obligation limit in FY 2016, and 19 percent growth over the six-year bill.

Detailed Numbers in Senate bill:

The total funding for the transit program authorized in the bill grows from \$10.695 billion in FY 2015 to \$13.36 billion in FY 2021, **for a total growth rate of 25 percent over the six years authorized.** Of that amount, programs funded from the Mass Transit Account (MTA) grow from a current level of \$8.595 billion in FY 2015, to \$10.609 billion in FY 2021. General Fund programs (subject to annual appropriations) grow from \$2.095 billion in FY 2015 to \$2.751 billion in FY 2021 for a total growth rate of 31.3 percent.

Legislative Report

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Over the six-year authorization, **the bill increases by \$387 million authorizations to the Bus and Bus Facilities Program**, bringing the total program level up to \$815 million by Fiscal Year (FY) 2021. The funding levels for Bus/Bus Facilities program include a bus discretionary (competitive) grant program totaling \$180 million in the first year, and increasing to \$190 million in FY 2019 through FY 2021 to address the bus capital investment needs of transit systems. This includes the no or low emission vehicle grant program (previously part of Section 5312) in the Bus and Bus Facilities competitive grant program and provides a \$55 million setaside per year for these grants. The bus and bus facilities competitive grant program also includes a 10 percent rural setaside. The Sec. 5339 bus formula program establishes a new minimum state allocation of \$2 million.

The bill includes a 12.12 percent increase, or \$262 million, in FY 2016 State of Good Repair (fixed-guideway) grants. The total program grows an additional \$492 million over the remainder of the authorization period.

Urbanized Formula Grants

The bill increases Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula grants by \$862 million over 6 years. The bill includes a grant requirement that the recipient maintain their equipment and facilities in a state of good repair. It also adds general public demand response service to the eligibility requirements of the 100 bus rule. The bill also gives the Secretary the discretion to grant temporary and targeted operating assistance to large urbanized areas that have a three-month unemployment rate greater than seven percent. Further, it allows section 5307 funds to be used to finance the operating cost of equipment and facilities for two consecutive fiscal years.

Urbanized area formula grants (Sec. 5307)

Rural Area Formula Program

	MAP-21 FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
Urbanized Area Formula Grants	4,458.65	4,538.91	4,639.10	4,794.64	4,975.88	5,101.40	5,230.40
% increase over prior year	-	1.80%	2.21%	3.35%	3.78%	2.52%	2.53%
Total % increase over FY 2015	-	1.80%	4.05%	7.54%	11.60%	14.42%	17.31%

The measure increases funding for rural areas by \$105 million over the six-year authorization, including additional funding for Public Transportation on Indian Reservations. Funding for public transportation on Indian reservations increases by \$5 million to \$35 million annually. It also continues to include \$5 million annually for a competitive grant program.



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Rural area formula grants (Sec. 5311)

	MAP-21 FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
Rural Area Formula Grants	545.64	552.56	565.97	580.10	609.74	626.51	643.74
Percentage % over prior year	-	1.27%	2.43%	2.50%	5.11%	2.75%	2.75%
Total % increase over FY 2015	-	1.27%	3.73%	6.31%	11.75%	14.82%	17.98%
Rural Transportation Assistance Program	12.16	12.40	12.67	12.96	13.57	13.91	14.26
Public Transportation on Indian Reservations	30.00	35.00	35.00	35.00	35.00	35.00	35.00
Appalachian Development Public Transportation	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00

The bill grows Capital Investment Grants by 20.7 percent, or \$395 million in FY2016, and authorizes it to grow by 35.82 percent by FY2021. The Capital Investment Grant program streamlines projects by employing innovative project delivery and financing methods for projects seeking minimal Federal funding. Additional flexibility is also given to the corridor-based bus rapid transit definition to include weekend days. Further, the bill increases the Small Start project threshold to allow applicants to request up to \$100 million in Federal funds for a project with a total estimated net capital cost of up to \$300 million.

As Members of Congress from both the House and Senate spend August in their home districts, **it is important for public transportation advocates to convey the urgent need for Congress to complete the process of writing legislation** that authorizes increased investment for federal transit and highway programs under a multi-year surface transportation bill.

With House action on a bill expected during September, now is the time to **send an email message to your member of the Minnesota House delegation** and to thank Senators Franken and Klobuchar for their support!

- Thank Senators for advancing a six-year authorization bill increasing investment in public transportation.
- While we appreciate that Congress has prevented a disruption of federal transit and highway programs at the height of the construction season, **the House of Representatives needs to pass a long-term surface transportation bill that increases investment in public transportation, and increases the dedicated revenues that go into the Highway Trust Fund to support transit and highway spending.** This bill needs to be approved as soon as possible, so that the House and Senate can send a bill to the president for his signature before the current extension expires at the end of October.

Legislative Report

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- Long-term, predictable funding for the federal program is needed so that states and local governments, working with the federal government, can maintain, rehabilitate, and expand our existing public transportation infrastructure which serves millions of Americans daily. The U.S. DOT has identified a one-time backlog in transit capital investment needs of \$86 billion just to bring the existing system into a state of good repair. That figure does not include the ongoing costs of replacing buses and maintaining rail systems, the cost of building new systems, or the cost of operating existing transit service.
- Based on our growing population, and the growing demand for public transportation service, we need to invest more, not less in our transportation infrastructure.
- Please include the specific service expansion and capital needs at your system that would be funded under a long-term bill. Private sector members should include how federal funds will benefit or impact your business.

We have a real opportunity to see an increase in federal funding as well as much needed stability!

For bus purchases, the federal funding is very important so please do your part to educate federal lawmakers about the importance of this funding for your communities.

Add or renew MPTA membership in just one step during conference registration at mpta-transit.org/events!

Display commitment to advocating for transit funding to hundreds of conference attendees with special booth signage and your company highlighted in the program. Your company will also be listed as a member on MPTA's website.

When registering, simply select **2015 MPTA Member Dues**.



Early Registration Rates

- \$600 - National/Regional Vendor or Vendor with Vehicles
 - * Additional \$200 per vehicle under 35 feet long and \$350 per vehicle 35-45 feet long
- \$400 - Statewide Vendor (Based only in MN or WI)

Expo fees are all inclusive except for electrical charges.

Join us in Duluth for the Vendor Expo on
October 20th!

Hundreds of transit professionals from Minnesota AND Wisconsin will attend—joint conferences only happen every three years!

Visit mpta-transit.org/events for registration and more information

Get your company noticed through sponsorship!

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Benefits of sponsorship include preferred booth location on expo floor, logo on insert in registration materials and in the printed conference program and recognition signage.

Interested in sponsoring a specific event like a breakfast or reception or making an in-kind contribution? Questions about the conference, membership or sponsorship? Contact Laura at 651-659-0804 or laura_eash@mpta-transit.org.



2015 – JOINT CONFERENCE

DON'T MISS THIS YEAR'S MINNESOTA/WISCONSIN PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION CONFERENCE

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REGISTER TODAY: WWW.MPTA-TRANSIT.ORG

2015 MPTA Awards - Now Taking Nominations!



Management Innovation

This award is presented to individuals or organizations that have implemented a project innovative to the field of transit or have established a creative new partnership, collaboration or other unique method of addressing transit and transit-related concerns of transit users. Consideration is given to projects demonstrating measurable results such as increased ridership, lower costs, new markets served, etc. The recipient(s) of this award will be part of a collaboration or other effort with a transit system that is a member in good standing of the Minnesota Public Transit Association.

Minnesota Bus Operator of the Year

This award is presented to an individual who has consistently demonstrated high levels of achievement in all aspects of their performance including attendance, safety, customer service, leadership, and commitment to the organization. Overall contributions made by this driver have significantly improved the organization in which they work and the lives of the public transit customers they serve.

Transit Professional of the Year

This award is presented to individuals who have designed and implemented a specific program demonstrating innovative concepts or effective problem-solving techniques of proven value. The recipient of this award will be employed by a transit system that is a member in good standing of the Minnesota Public Transit Association.

Transit System of the Year

This award is presented to an organization that has demonstrated achievement in efficiency and effectiveness including reports on ridership, cost, safety, maintenance proficiency, agency policy and administration and the achievement of the organization's goals and objectives. The system receiving this award will be a member in good standing of the Minnesota Public Transit Association.

Access the nomination form at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2P9RZY9>. Email Laura with questions.



City of Morris Transit celebrates 40 years of operation this year. They had their 2 millionth rider on July 24th at 11:15 AM!



City, county leaders talk transit and possible service

By SUZANNE ROOK, reprinted with permission from the Le Center Leader

Public transit and a Minnesota Department of Transportation study looking at its potential expansion along the Hwy. 169 corridor took center stage during discussions between Le Sueur County commissioners and St. Peter city leaders.

While conversations between the city of Le Sueur and St. Peter and VINE Faith in Action representatives about collaborating on a shared transit system have been going on for more than a year, according to St. Peter City Administrator Todd Prafke, plans are on hold as they wait for the MnDOT study. That's expected by mid September, he said.

The July 27 meeting, the latest in periodic meetings between the government leaders, covered several topics, the most lengthy was on transit.

MnDOT, which has been pressing rural counties to expand its bus service, is looking at what changes can be made to the three systems to better serve the region. St. Peter's transit system serves a portion of Le Sueur County that includes the city of Kasota and Shoreland Country Club. The study, Prafke said, will also look at whether it can incorporate services now provided by Nicollet County Public Health's volunteer driver program, which provides rides to area seniors.

Ridership in the last couple years has been off for St. Peter's transit system, which switched one of its buses to a route-based system in August 2013. While the drop was largely anticipated as riders adjusted to the change, Prafke said the city expects to provide 65,000 rides in 2015.

Some Le Sueur County leaders have discussed the need for public transit throughout that county, including Human Services Director Susan Rynda and District Court Judge Mark Vandelist who've suggested a good number of drug court participants and human services clients would benefit from countywide bus service.

Le Sueur County Administrator Darrell Pettis believes the highest need for such services lies in the Waterville area, but neither he nor the four commissioners in attendance said they've heard much from residents on their desire for public transit.

There are already transit buses in the Waterville area, though they serve a limited population. That doesn't mean they wouldn't be included should a countywide transit system be developed. In neighboring Waseca County, a system serving senior citizens is being folded into a new countywide bus service that rolls out next January.

One of the benefits of expanding into the rural areas would be an increase in state funding. City systems are eligible for an 80 percent match for system operations from MnDOT. Cooperating to include service to rural areas would mean a jump to 85 percent, said Prafke, St. Peter's administrator.

The biggest issue, in the mind of Pettis, Le Sueur County's administrator, is the county's neighbors to the west.

"Our only problem," he said, "is we don't know where Nicollet County stands on the issue. They're being very non-committal."

Semcac's Rolling Hills Transit Hosts 1st Rodeo



Submitted by ANNETTE THEOBALD, Semcac Planning and Development Director

It was a sunny 83 degrees in St. Charles, Minnesota on August 1st. At 9:00am, Rolling Hills Transit bus drivers and other Semcac Transportation staff gathered at the St. Charles County Fair Grounds for their first Transportation rodeo event! This was a fun reason to gather the bus drivers for a day filled with entertaining and competitive driver challenges. Transportation Director, Erlene Welshons, was very pleased that the event came together so smoothly with the coordinating efforts of the Compliance & Marketing Manager, Mike Rizzo, and the Operations Manager, Amber Duncan.

The various tests polished driving skills and refined, already remarkable, customer service and safety knowledge. The first station was a bus driving obstacle course, where carefully plotted neon cones were placed on the lawn. The driving course consisted of a curb stop or “passenger assistance area”, “diminishing clearance”, a sharp right turn and concluded with a quick “judgement stop” (after reaching 20 mph). Each of the course challenges were scored. The obstacle course was followed by a staged pre-driving inspection; a bus was prepped with a total of 8 items that were purposely removed or tampered with that the drivers needed to identify. The rodeo challenges concluded with a test of the driver’s wheelchair skills. Drivers were tasked to load a wheelchair rider onto the bus using proper lift technique, secure the chair and strap the rider inside of the bus with correct shoulder/lap belt placement. Steps were scored. There was a 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winner for the entire rodeo, based on total score.

Since this was a Saturday event, the drivers were welcome to bring family. Children’s giggles floated among dancing iridescent bubbles and twirling hula hoops in the pavilion, spouses tossed bean bags. After the rodeo challenges were complete, everyone gathered for a delicious pulled pork sandwich and salad lunch. It was a successful and amusing event and everyone left wearing a Rolling Hills Transit Rodeo t-shirt and a smile.





Metro Bus Hosts Wings & Wheels Social Event



On the evening of Friday, July 17th, St. Cloud Metro Bus hosted Wings & Wheels, a VIP Social Networking Event for non-competing MN Statewide Bus Rodeo attendees and locals. The event included a bus driving competition on the Rodeo course. The winner was St. Cloud Mayor Dave Kleis, shown accepting his award from Metro Bus Executive Director Ryan Daniel. He only knocked down one cone while driving the course!



New addition to Rainbow Rider Transit

In April, Keven Anderson joined Rainbow Rider in Lowry as the new Assistant Director. With many years of transit experience he will bring help with administration and human resources tasks. Welcome Keven!





News



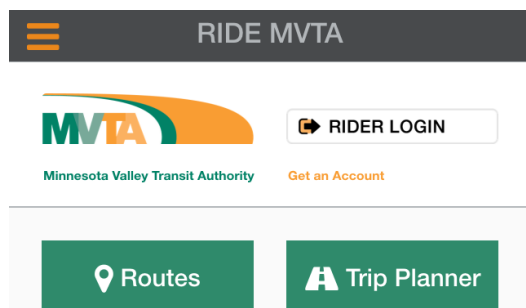
MVTA Launches Mobile App

Submitted by ROBIN SELVIG

The Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA) launched its own mobile application – Ride MVTA - available for free in both the Apple store and on Google Play on July 28th. The mobile app provides the same functionality available on www.mvta.com but optimizes the design for mobile use.

“The development of Ride MVTA is the third phase of introducing a new website,” said MVTA Vice Chair and Scott County Commissioner Jon Ulrich, who has long been advocating that MVTA create a mobile application. “The new site was launched Jan. 1 of this year and since then we have added a community forum and photos feature and now the mobile application. We invite the public to check out these tools as a means to keep current about transit information, and we welcome input.”

In addition to viewing the full site, riders using Ride MVTA can view routes/schedules, use the trip planner, sign up for and check Route Alerts, send comments to the MVTA, set “favorite” bus stops, send photos to the MVTA and participate in community discussions. “We have worked hard to establish a clean look to our app,” said Robin Selvig, MVTA Customer Relations Manager. “Transit riders have gained a great deal of sophistication in using smart phones and we hope this tool will make access to transit information easier,” she said.



MVTA Mid-year Transit Ridership Continues to be Strong

Submitted by ROBIN SELVIG; edited by LAURA EASH

MVTA ridership for the first six months of the year neared 1.5 million rides, up 6.1% compared to the same period in 2014.

“The groundwork laid by the MVTA is paying off,” said MVTA Board Chair and Apple Valley Councilmember Clint Hooppaw. “We have added trips to our downtown express service in Rosemount (Route 478) and ridership is up,” he said. “Further, new downtown express service from the Marschall Road Transit Station in Shakopee (Route 493) and it is proving successful.” He added, “The addition of free Wi-Fi on buses is producing a positive impact.”

Highest ridership routes during the first six months of 2015 are MVTA’s Route 460 (Burnsville to/from downtown Minneapolis) – average daily ridership of 1,693; Route 477 (Apple Valley to/from downtown Minneapolis) -- average daily ridership of 1,423; and Route 444 (local service between Burnsville/Savage/ Cedar Grove and Mall of America) -- average daily ridership of 1,005.

Three routes experienced the greatest grow during the first half of the year: 421 (4,361 rides, up 9.6%), 440 (21,648 rides, up 4.6%) and 478 (15,470 rides, up 56.1%). The addition of the former BlueXpress service from Prior Lake and Shakopee has also had a positive impact.

METRO Red Line saw an increase of 6.1% (123,717 rides), with a nearly 75% increase in Sunday boardings and a 14% increase in Saturday boardings. The MVTA operates and contributes funding to the METRO Red Line under contract to the Metropolitan Council.

MVTA/Schmitty's Fresh Sweet Corn serves as 'Thank You' to Riders

Submitted by ROBIN SELVIG and edited by LAURA EASH

MVTA contracts for its bus service with Lakeville, MN-based Schmitty and Sons Transit. Now that summer is in the waning months and the Minnesota State Fair is just around the corner, an annual tradition is taking place. Schmitty and Sons employees are visiting each of the MVTA Park & rides/Transit Stations and giving away bags of freshly picked sweet corn.

The corn giveaway began on Thursday, Aug. 6 at the Apple Valley and Rosemount Transit Stations. It continued Friday, Aug. 7 at the Burnsville Transit Station. Monday, Aug. 10 corn was distributed at the Eagan Transit Station, Blackhawk Park & Ride (Eagan) and Southbridge Crossings Park & Ride (Shakopee). August 11th, there was corn at the Marschall Road Transit Station in Shakopee.

"This is such a unique expression of thanks to our riders," said MVTA Executive Director Beverley Miller. "We have a great partnership with Schmitty and Sons and we love their commitment to our mutual customers." (In fact, Miller's husband serves as part of the crew that picks the corn!).

This is the sixth year of the "corn giveaway," reported Dan Schmitt, owners of Schmitty and Sons Transit. He plants four acres of corn and each acre can yield 26,000 ears per acre. "We started growing the corn for our employees to show our appreciation in a small way for the great work they do on a daily basis," Schmitt said. "Then, we started to distribute to our customers, to thank them in a simple way for 'Riding the Bus.' Schmitty and Sons is a family-run business, and we believe that everyone that rides the bus is a valued customer that deserves the best! This is a great way to thank our customers and show them we care."

"This project is a labor of love," Schmitt said. "The corn is picked in the morning and delivered in the afternoon to various MVTA stations. Riders departing from the bus are each given a complimentary bag of 6-7 ears of fresh sweet corn and our employees have a lot of fun giving the corn away and interacting with the MVTA riders." MVTA and Schmitty's both get great feedback from our riders and many riders comment that they have been waiting for the "free corn" and they look forward to it every year.



Apple Valley Transit Station



Burnsville Transit Station

Celebrating four decades of service, safety

Submitted by DREW KERR

When Jerry Olson was sent out to drive a bus alone for the first time, the then 21-year-old operator couldn't help but feel a little anxious. After all, he'd had just four weeks of training and had gotten into enough trouble with his own vehicles that he'd earned the nickname "Crash."

"The passengers must have been really nervous, because my leg was shaking the whole time," Olson said of his maiden voyage on Route 19, taken back in 1972.

Olson quickly settled in, though, and spent the next four decades building a legacy as a model Metro Transit bus operator. Olson, #1504, is retiring this week after nearly 43 years of service.

The length of service is itself unique – at retirement, Olson had become the longest-tenured current operator at Metro Transit – but his record is made all the more impressive by the fact that his career also includes more than 41 consecutive years of safe driving.

"What he has achieved, less than 1 percent of operators are probably going to be able to do that," said Doug Looyen, a Safety Specialist at South Garage, where Olson has worked since 1981.

Olson said it took a few years to get fully comfortable behind the wheel, but that a commitment to the Safety Keys helped him anticipate and react to whatever came his way. He spent 18 years as a trainer and mentored operators throughout his career, helping others successfully adopt the same approach.

In 2014, Olson was recognized for his contributions and named the Minnesota Bus Operator of the Year by the Minnesota Public Transit Association. Olson also received multiple Metro Transit awards during his career.

Taking his final trip Wednesday morning, Olson navigated through residential areas of Richfield and south Minneapolis, up Interstate 35W and through downtown Minneapolis with the same cool confidence that carried him throughout the years.

Along for the ride were several colleagues and family members, including fellow operator and wife Lynnette. General Manager Brian Lamb also rode along, sharing a few words and doughnuts to mark the occasion.

As an on-call operator, Olson carried millions of customers on multiple express and local routes throughout the metro. Passengers riding with him on Route 558 on Wednesday morning were impressed to learn about his safe driving record and humbled by his decades of service.





“This is one of those underappreciated jobs but, 42 years of service and doing what you love, that’s just beautiful,” said Tamara Rogers “He’s responsible for a lot of lives and to know he’s been accident-free for so long, that’s great.”

Pulling the empty bus into the garage for the final time, Olson said his final trip was bittersweet and a bit overwhelming. Now 63, he looks forward to spending more time with family and friends. But he will also miss his co-workers and time behind the wheel.

“I’ve spent more than two-thirds of my life here, so it wasn’t an easy decision to retire,” Olson said. “But there comes a time when you just have to say goodbye.”

Pilot Transit Service Aims For “Triple Win”

Service will connect disadvantaged workers to airport jobs during the night

Submitted by METROPOLITAN COUNCIL and edited by LAURA EASH

Transit Link buses typically provide service to people outside the regular-route transit area during the day. For this pilot project, the buses will pick up workers in the wee hours of the morning in the urban core to get to jobs at Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport.

Dozens of vendors at MSP International Airport need workers to serve airline passengers in the wee hours of the morning. At the same time there are Twin Cities residents – people with low incomes or new Americans looking for their first job – who are eager to work but need transit to get there.

The catch: Regular-route transit is not an option that time of day and night because of long trips, transfers, and safety risks. Workers have to arrive at the airport in time to open up businesses for the day—typically at 6 a.m.—but passengers taking a red-eye flight or facing overnight delays are often searching for coffee at 4 AM.

“Transit is critical for workers to get to the airport,” said Butch Howard, general manager at HMS Host, which operates 40 food and beverage franchises at the airport.

Enter a pilot project that extends the reach of the Council’s regular Transit Link operations to forge the link between workers and jobs.

To be launched this month, the project will use up to three small buses operating seven days a week between approximately 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. Airport employers will help fund the service by matching the passenger fare and the Council will fund the remainder of costs.

Gerri Sutton, Assistant Director of Metropolitan Transportation Services, said it’s a triple win. “The airport businesses get the workers they need. The workers get to their jobs easily and affordably. And the Council is able to get more use of the resources we’re already paying for to support our regular program.”

Once the pilot is under way, the Council will evaluate the service against regional standards, make adjustments as warranted and determine long-term viability of the service.

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Metro Transit employee Claire Schleichert speaks with a customer during a celebration of the Americans with Disabilities Act's 25th anniversary in Minneapolis on July 23. Metro Transit has made several efforts to serve all customers since the ADA's adoption, including ramps that allow customers in mobility devices to board all regular route buses.

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- Coverage of the conference in October
- News and retweets from MPTA members
- Local and national media coverage of transit news and issues

Send submissions for the next *InTransit* to Laura: laura_eash@mpta-transit.org

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