

intransit

July/August 2014 Edition

RouteMatch Comes to Renville County

Contributed by RACHEL SCHNEIDERMAN and edited by LAURA EASH

In April of 2013, Renville County Heartland Express and Kandiyohi Area Transit jointly applied for a grant from MnDOT to bring new technology to their transit systems and purchased RouteMatch, a routing software. This process involved “the three C’s” of cooperation, coordination, and consolidation. After working with the software for a year, Renville County Commissioners gave approval for dispatchers Robin Schwer and Jane Schroeder to attend the 2014 User Conference in Atlanta, Georgia from March 31 – April 3. They received comprehensive training on different RouteMatch products and modules from RouteMatch’s specialists and learned of the new enhancements that are coming out. They also received valuable information from other users. Both transit systems received grant money for more hands-on training in office. Shemika Flynn from RouteMatch came to the Renville County Heartland Express transit office May 19 – 22 to teach staff more about scheduling, reporting and verification.



From left: Dispatcher, Jane Schroeder; RouteMatch Support Specialist, Shemika Flynn; Transit Director, Rachel Schneiderman

MPTC MINNESOTA PUBLIC TRANSIT CONFERENCE

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2014

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Transit Conference

September 9-11, 2014

Saint Paul RiverCentre

There is still time to register!

www.mpta-transit.org

*Important Training Sessions * Inspiring Speakers * Interesting Break-Outs * Fun Experiences*

PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

Tuesday, September 9th

- 12:30 to 4:00 pm - Training Sessions
 - ◊ **Developing a 5-year Plan for Your Transit System**
 - ◊ **Diversity**
- 4:30 pm - MPTA Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony
- 6:30 pm - Welcome Reception

Wednesday, September 10th

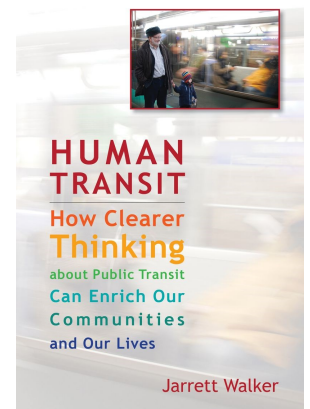
- 7:00 to 8:30 am - Breakfast
- 8:30 to 9:00 am - Welcoming Remarks - Mayor Coleman and MPTA President Marc Hall
- 9:00 to 9:45 am - Keynote Speaker: **Laugh Trip: Manage Your On- and Off-Road Stress with Laughter** - *Jody Ross*
- 10:15 am to noon - Concurrent Sessions
- Noon to 3:30 pm - Lunch and Vendor Expo with Special Exhibitions and Presentations
- 3:30 to 5:30 pm - **Tour of METRO Green Line Light Rail Transit and Union Depot**
- 6:00 pm - First Transit Reception

Thursday, Sept 11th

- 7:30 am - Breakfast
- 8:00 to 9:15 am - FTA's Marisol Simon and MnDOT Commissioner Zelle
- 9:30 to 10:30 am - Concurrent Sessions
- 10:30 to 11:45 am - Concurrent Sessions
- 12:30 pm - Lunch with Jarrett Walker, Author of *Human Transit*



Jody Ross



President's Column



It's time for the Great Get Together. Not the State Fair – the annual Minnesota Public Transit Conference where we all get together to learn from each other and share our insights, our concerns and our ideas for the future.

The Minnesota Public Transit Association (MPTA) is here to support you and to make sure your voice is heard. One of the biggest tools we have for that is the annual conference where MPTA members have an opportunity to learn, share and get more involved. We want to hear from you about the future of your system and the future of transit in Minnesota. Working together, we can all be stronger than working alone.

Please check out the agenda for the conference on our web site: www.mpta-transit.org. We have a great line-up of speakers and plenty of time for networking and discovering the value of stress relief through laughter. MPTA will also be presenting awards to people who have worked hard to provide great transit service and further the profession. You won't want to miss this year's conference.

We also want to thank everyone who participated in the year's Bus Roadeo in Duluth. Once again, we had a great group of drivers who demonstrated their skills and left the event ready to tackle the streets with renewed enthusiasm.

We're now heading into the heart of campaign season. It's our job to make sure that candidates understand the importance of transit service in their communities and the need for additional resources. If transportation funding is not on the agenda during the campaign season, it won't be on the agenda during the legislative session in 2015. Please talk to candidates in your area about the value of transit service for all of the constituents who rely on transit every day.

As always, I appreciate hearing from you about MPTA and how we can serve you better. Please contact me with any comments, questions or interest in getting more involved. Without a strong association, transit service will suffer.

Enjoy the State Fair and then join your colleagues at our Great Get Together September 9-11 at the RiverCentre in St. Paul.

Marc Hall

President



Legislative Update

By MARGARET DONAHOE

The federal highway trust fund was in danger of hitting insolvency in August, but thanks to a very last minute vote, a transfer of funds was made along with the reauthorization to continue collecting the federal fuel tax which funds both transit and highways.

The House passed H.R. 5021 on July 15, providing approximately \$10.8 billion in offsets to support transfers of General Funds into the HTF and to extend the authorizations for transit, highway and highway safety programs funded from the HTF through the end of May 31, 2015.

The Senate adopted two amendments to alter the offsets for the funding transfers and change the length of the authorization extension. An amendment from Senate Committee on Finance Chairman Ron Wyden (D-OR) was approved to alter some of the House bill's budgetary offsets, chiefly by reducing the amount raised by the House's pension smoothing provision and replacing it with a tax compliance component. The second amendment by Senator Tom Carper (D-DE), Senator Bob Corker (R-TN), and Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works Chairwoman Barbara Boxer (D-CA) sought to end the extension in December, rather than May 2015, in order to force Congress to address the issue again this calendar year, in the hope that a longer-term revenue solution can be developed in the Congressional lame duck session following the November elections.

However, the House rejected the Senate amendments and insisted on its original version of the bill, thereby placing pressure on the Senate to recede from its changes to the bill and send the House bill along to the President for his signature. The Senate accepted the House position on the last day that Congress was scheduled to be session prior to a 5 week recess.

The Trust Fund fix signed by the President transfers \$10.8 billion into the Highway Trust Fund, allowing the Trust Fund to stay solvent through May 2015, and extends MAP-21 funding authorization and policies for highway, mass transit, and safety programs through May 31, 2015.

At the state level, the Move MN campaign is continuing to build public support and public pressure for the legislature and governor to address transportation funding needs during the 2015 Legislative Session. Funding for expanding transit service would be part of the funding package promoted by Move MN. It will take a big effort to keep this issue on the front burner through the fall and into the winter.

We need you to help with this effort! Talk to candidates in your area about the need to expand transit service and the importance of having this issue addressed during the 2015 Session. You know the needs in your area and impact of rising costs for providing transit service.

You can also make a difference by attending a Transportation Candidate Forum in your part of the state (see the schedule on the last page of this newsletter). Don't let transit be forgotten in the debate!

2014 MN Transportation Alliance Regional Meetings/

Candidates' Forums – No Cost to Attend!

MOORHEAD

Date: Wednesday, September 3, 2014
Time: 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Location: Hjemkomst Center, 202 1st Ave. North, Moorhead



OWATONNA

Date: Tuesday, September 16, 2014
Time: 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM
Location: Steele County Board Room, 630 Florence Avenue, Owatonna

SAINT CLOUD

Date: Monday, September 22, 2014
Time: 11:00 AM - 1:30 PM ~ Lunch will be served
Location: Best Western Kelly Inn, 100-4th St. St., St. Cloud

WILLMAR

Date: Tuesday, September 23, 2014
Time: 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM
Location: AFSCME Council 5, Plaza One, 1305 South First Street, Willmar

DULUTH

Date: Tuesday, September 30, 2014
Time: 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM
Location: St. Louis County Courthouse, Board Room

WORTHINGTON

Date: Thursday, October 9, 2014
Time: 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM
Location: Worthington Fire Station, 830 2nd Avenue, Worthington

FOREST LAKE

Date: Monday, October 13, 2014
Time: 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Location: Forest Lake City Hall, 220 Lake Street North, Forest Lake

WOODBURY

Date: Tuesday, October 14, 2014
Time: 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Location: Woodbury Public Works Building, 2301 Tower Drive, Woodbury

EAGAN

Date: Wednesday, October 15, 2014
Time: 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Location: Eagan Community Center, 1501 Central Parkway, Eagan

BLOOMINGTON

Date: Wednesday, October 22, 2014
Time: 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Location: Bloomington Council Chambers, 1800 West Old Shakopee Road, Bloomington

Metro Bus named Urban Community Transportation System of the Year by CTAA

Contributed by BERTA HARTIG and RYAN I. DANIEL and edited by LAURA EASH

The St. Cloud Metropolitan Transit Commission (St. Cloud Metro Bus) was recently named the 2014 Urban Transportation System of the Year by the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA). It's the first time a Minnesota system has received this honor.

CTAA cited several reasons for St. Cloud Metro Bus to be given this award. This award is given to agencies who demonstrate a commitment to the community and innovation. Being the first public transportation system in Minnesota to use compressed natural gas (CNG) as their primary fuel for their bus fleet, and the opening of the state's first Mobility Training Center are two examples of their commitment to meeting the diverse needs of their community.



St. Cloud Metro Bus Executive Director Ryan I. Daniel with US Senator Amy Klobuchar and St. Cloud Metro Bus Commission Chair Dave Kleis, Mayor of St. Cloud.



Compressed Natural Gas (CNG)

This May, St. Cloud Metro Bus became the first public transit system in Minnesota to switch to CNG for their primary fueling source for their bus fleet. The conversion included the purchase of 23 new buses, as well as the construction of a fueling compound and station and modifications to the maintenance and storage facility.

The timing was perfect for the conversion to CNG: The bulk of the fixed route fleet was scheduled for replacement this year, the garage needed a new HVAC system and Congress was supporting green initiatives through the Clean Fuels grant program.

The CNG project was funded by a \$3.35 million U.S. Department of Transportation Clean Fuels grant, a \$9.1 million Minnesota Department of Transportation grant and a local revenue bond. Because of the lower cost of CNG compared to diesel, they expect to save an average of \$300,000 annually over the first 10 years in fueling expenses.

Construction during what ended up being the coldest Minnesota winter in 30 years was a bit of a challenge. With ground-thawing equipment and extra canopy structures to retain heat in the exterior work areas, the project's completion was celebrated with a ribbon cutting ceremony in May.

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The 23 new CNG Xcelior buses were built at the New Flyer plant in St. Cloud. They feature ISL G Cummins CNG engines and Voith transmissions. We continue to receive positive remarks from passengers and community members about the clean, quiet ride of the new buses. The Dial-a-Ride fleet and remaining Fixed Route buses will be replaced with CNG-fueled versions as they are retired.

The architectural and engineering for the CNG system, fueling station and building renovations were designed by Wendel Companies.

Mobility Training Center

The state's first Mobility Training Center opened in July. This is a unique facility that helps staff assess an individual's abilities to determine the best mode of transportation or training through the use of an assessment course, complete with working traffic lights and a variety of surfaces. The training center also features a partial bus for training. The bus was made from donated parts from New Flyer, USSC Seating and Hanover Displays.

The Mobility Training Center houses the successful Travel Training program, which gives specialized training to seniors, people with disabilities and people with limited English proficiency to help them learn how to use Metro Bus services. Through this program, we have partnered with more than 70 social and support agencies to provide free travel training to staff and clients to increase knowledge and use of public transportation. Through this training, agencies are able maximize their transportation budgets by utilizing our Fixed Route services first, which is more economical than Dial-a-Ride, taxi service or other private transportation.



Mobility Training Center staff pose during a facility tour earlier this summer.

The Mobility Training Center is located in a historic downtown district of St. Cloud. Metro Bus acquired the vacated former bank and office building from the city and spent about \$2.2 million to renovate the building and construct the training center. The project was funded by a \$1 million state grant and local bond. Because it was built in 1951, much work was needed to bring it up to code, including new electrical, plumbing, HVAC as well as a significant amount of asbestos removal. Metro Bus worked closely with the city's Heritage Preservation Commission and Minnesota's State Historic Preservation Office to preserve the historic features of the building, including replacing windows with a period-correct design and cleaning and repairing the granite exterior using approved historic preservation techniques. The facility's interior was opened up to take advantage of as much natural light as possible and features exposed ceilings and concrete columns. To help defray some of the operating costs, Metro Bus has obtained a tenant for the top level.



2014 Winners

LARGE BUS DIVISION

1st Place: Paul Mattson, Duluth Transit Authority

2nd Place: Jack Berner, Metro Transit

3rd Place: Chris Daniels, Rochester Public Transit

SMALL BUS DIVISION

1st Place: Chuck Springer, Rainbow Rider

2nd Place: TJ Johnson, Transit Alternatives

3rd Place: Jeffrey Iceman, Red Lake Transit

DRIVER'S CHOICE AWARD

Jeffrey Iceman, Red Lake Transit



Photo from DTA

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**Check out these outlets for media coverage—
all links can be found on MPTA social media!**

- CBS Minnesota
- Duluth News Tribune
- FOX 21
- WDIO

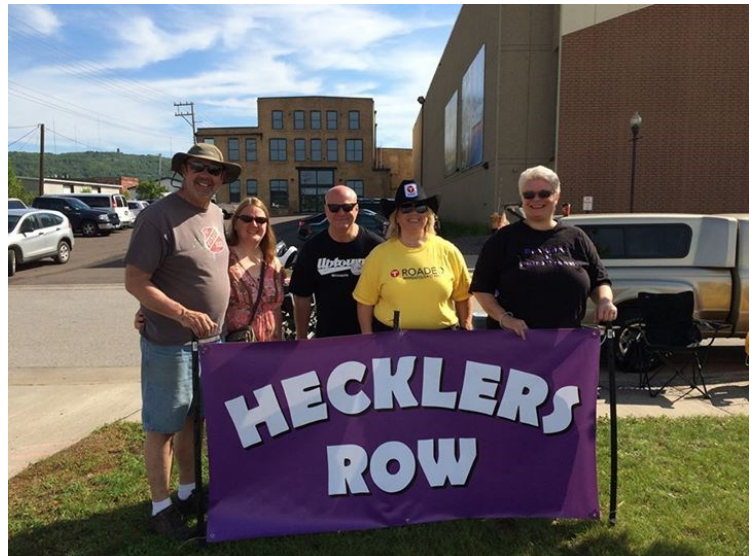
Clockwise from left: Committee Chair Heath Hickok welcomes all to the course, the Large Bus Division prepares for competition, and competition viewers.

SAVE THE DATE

2015 MN State Bus Roadeo in

St. Cloud

Host system: St. Cloud Metro Bus





Council Announces Regional Transit Equity Plan

Contributed by METROPOLITAN COUNCIL and edited by LAURA EASH

On July 8th, Metropolitan Council Chair Susan Haigh announced a regional transit equity initiative that, if adopted, will begin to fulfill pledges made during her 2014 State of the Region speech and commitments outlined in Thrive MSP 2040.

The 2014-2015 regional transit equity initiative, which will address many of the equity considerations around Southwest LRT raised by Congressman Ellison and the Equity Coalition, goes beyond the Southwest LRT line, applying equity enhancements around jobs centers and racially concentrated areas of poverty (RCAPs) throughout the region.

The draft equity initiative will be heard by the Council at July 9th's regularly scheduled Council meeting. The Council will be asked to approve a public comment period for the initiative, which will allow Council Members and staff time to do significant engagement work and to refine the initiative based on feedback during the engagement process. The Council will be asked to adopt a final regional transit equity plan later this fall.

"The Metropolitan Council made a significant commitment to regional equity when we adopted Thrive MSP 2040 in May," said Chair Susan Haigh. "The regional transit equity plan is a down payment on that commitment. I want to thank Congressman Ellison and the Equity Coalition for highlighting the need for transit equity around Southwest LRT. This regional transit equity plan responds to those suggestions and provides these types of improvements throughout the region."

During her 2014 State of the Region speech Haigh pledged to "make investments in the region's transportation system that will provide both the short-term benefit of construction jobs and the longer-term benefits of improved access to employment." The Council's new 30-year plan for regional development, Thrive MSP 2040 states that the Council will "work to mitigate concentrated and racially-concentrated areas of poverty by better connecting their residents to opportunity and catalyzing neighborhood revitalization."

Key elements of the draft regional transit equity initiative include:

- During the next 5-15 years, planned arterial bus rapid transit and LRT investments will strengthen the transit service framework serving racially concentrated areas of poverty and job centers throughout the region.
- By the end of 2015, shelters will be added at more than 75 new bus stops, and 75 old shelters at existing bus stops will be replaced. These improvements will be focused on areas of racially concentrated poverty.

Top operators honored for safe driving, exceptional service

From DREW KERR, METRO TRANSIT

Metro Transit's top operators were recognized on Wednesday, June 25, for reaching career milestones in safe driving and exceptional service.

Awards were presented to 77 bus and light-rail operators at the Ovations Awards Ceremony. The annual ceremony has honored the men and women who serve as the face of Metro Transit in the community every year since 1983.

This year's awards included two firsts. Bus operator Jerry Olson, who began his career at Metro Transit in 1972, was recognized for 41 consecutive years of safe driving. After achieving 30 Outstanding Operator awards, bus operator David Nagel was named the organization's first 30-Year Elite Operator. Nagel joined Metro Transit in 1979 and works at Heywood Garage in Minneapolis.

Outstanding Operator awards are given for excellence in customer service, attendance and safe driving. In 2013, 351 operators achieved Outstanding Operator status.

Four operators who have received 20 Outstanding Operator Awards were recognized at the awards ceremony as 20-Year Elite Operators. Awards were also given to nine 15-Year Superior Operators, 17 operators 10-Year Prestige Operators and 24 5-Year Master Operators.



Pictured, from left, are Mike Conlon, Director of Rail and Bus Safety, Operator Kent Knutson, Operator Harry Mandick, Operator David Micklin, Operator Donovan Smith, Operator Jerry Olson and General Manager Brian Lamb.

Two operators with 25 consecutive years of safe driving, four operators with 20 consecutive years of safe driving and 12 operators with 25 years of safe driving also received recognition.

The awards were presented by Metro Transit General Manager Brian Lamb, Metropolitan Council Regional Administrator Pat Born, Metropolitan Council Transportation Committee Chair Adam Duinick, Metropolitan Council Board Member James Brimeyer and other Metro Transit department leaders.

"Residents from across the Twin Cities rely on bus and light-rail operators to get them to their destination safely and on time," Lamb said. "Providing reliable service is the ultimate in customer service and that's what we're celebrating with these awards."

Metro Transit employs around 1,500 bus operators and more than 100 light-rail operators.

Metro Transit News



People boarded METRO Green Line light-rail trains more than 107,000 times during the line's opening weekend. Green Line trains started rolling just after 10 a.m. on Saturday, June 14. Ridership figures include 38 total hours: 14 hours of service on Saturday and 24 hours of service on Sunday, June 15. Concerns about high winds and heavy rain on Saturday caused organizers to wrap up outdoor station celebrations at eight stations two hours earlier than planned. Nonetheless, 61,000 of the weekend rides were taken on Saturday as riders explored the line and visited celebrations at many stations.

June 14 also represented the largest restructuring of Metro Transit bus service in a decade, involving 17 routes connecting with the new Green Line. Metro Transit, the Metropolitan Council and MVTA offered free rides systemwide all day Saturday and all day Sunday to acquaint customers with the new rail and bus connections and to give potential riders an opportunity to try transit service. Altogether, 392,733 rides were taken on the newly interconnected bus and rail network.

“The wet weather certainly didn’t dampen the mood during the Green Line’s opening weekend,” said Metro Transit General Manager Brian Lamb. “Metro Transit staff and our partners are very proud to have welcomed tens of thousands of familiar and new faces safely aboard our buses and trains. We were pleased to see a 12 percent increase in rides on existing Metro Transit bus and rail service over a comparable weekend.”



Well over 1,000 current and former Metro Transit and Metropolitan Council employees and partner volunteers participated during the weekend as station and bus stop ambassadors, event staff, operations support, data collectors and in other roles. In addition, more than 300 law enforcement personnel from Metro Transit Police and partner public safety agencies monitored and patrolled along the new line.



Metro Transit’s newest Park & Ride opened on Monday, Aug. 25, in Brooklyn Park. The Hwy 610 & Noble Parkway Park & Ride is the largest and most significant transit facility in Brooklyn Park history. The new Park & Ride provides twice as many parking spaces as the previous Park & Ride, which has been at or near capacity almost since it opened in 2000. The new Park & Ride ramp includes around 500 parking spaces, most of which are covered. The adjacent surface parking area has room for another 500 vehicles, providing additional capacity that can be used in the years to come. The facility includes a 40-kilowatt solar array that will offset about a quarter of energy use, a geothermal heating and cooling system, LED lighting and electric-vehicle charging stations. The Park & Ride will be served by Route 768, with rush hour service each weekday. There will be 21 express trips to Minneapolis each morning and 21 return trips from Minneapolis each afternoon and evening. Customers can travel between the Park & Ride and downtown Minneapolis in ~30 minutes.



News

MVTA Local Ridership Up; Red Line Ridership Nearly Doubles for Twin Cities Premium Outlets Mall Opening

Bus ridership to the Twin Cities Premium Outlets mall opening weekend (Aug. 14-17) in Eagan was strong. The Cedar Grove Transit Station, served by seven MVTA routes along with the METRO Red Line, is conveniently located across the street from Twin Cities Premium Outlets.

MVTA local ridership was up 13 percent on Thursday and Friday, Aug. 14-15, exceeding 4,900 vs. 4,352 during a typical two-day period. MVTA weekend ridership on routes serving Cedar Grove was up 29 percent (2,209 actual vs. 1,719 in a typical weekend).

There were 4,543 rides on the state's first Bus Rapid Transit line, the METRO Red Line, between Thursday, Aug. 14, and Sunday, Aug. 17, more than 86 percent higher than average Thursday-Sunday ridership. Red Line weekend ridership was nearly double average weekend ridership, with 1,859 rides.

MVTA and Metro Transit partnered with outlet mall owners, Simon Properties, to provide free rides on local MVTA routes, the METRO Red Line and the METRO Blue Line Aug. 14-17 via a downloadable pass. Blue Line customers can transfer from a light rail train to a Red Line bus at the Mall of America and be at the Cedar Grove Station in approximately ten minutes.

"Twin Cities Premium Outlets is the driver of our Cedar Grove redevelopment," said MVTA Board and Eagan City Council member Gary Hansen. "Many jobs are available at this new regional destination, and it is driving additional redevelopment in the area," he added.

"With the Cedar Grove Transit Station right across the street, we knew that transit would be a key component of this redevelopment. We are pleased to see that this was confirmed by strong ridership on opening day and through the weekend."

MVTA Expands Wi-Fi Project to 35 Additional Buses

The MVTA Board of Directors approved an expansion of the MVTA's Wi-Fi project at its June 25 Board meeting. An additional 35 buses will be equipped with public Wi-Fi in the coming weeks.

"Customers are using the Wi-Fi service," said MVTA Chair Clint Hooppaw (Apple Valley Councilmember), "both on buses and at the two transit stations. Our customer service team has received many requests for the service to be expanded and the Board agrees." Deployment of Wi-Fi on MVTA buses is one initiative of the MVTA Board's Strategic Plan. Current plans call for Wi-Fi to be available on the entire fleet in 2015.

Customers should watch for the Wi-Fi decal near the Boarding door, indicating that buses have free Wi-Fi. Many of the vehicles will be operating on the Cedar Avenue and I-35W corridors.



This MVTA bus was created in partnership with the MN Zoo and is used on routes and in area parades.

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City and Duluth Transit Authority (DTA) officials break ground for construction of the new \$28 million Multimodal Transportation Center. Photo credit: DTA



Preservation group Save the Northfield Depot says the 1889 depot (left) would complement the proposed transit hub (right) . Rendering credit: Save the Northfield Depot

Like Minnesota Public Transit Association on Facebook and follow @MNPublicTransit on Twitter for:

- Coverage of MPTA events, including the conference in September
- News and retweets from MPTA members
- Local and national media coverage of transit news and issues

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