



# in transit

Minnesota Public Transit Association



## SouthWest Transit named Minnesota transit system of the year

ST. PAUL – SouthWest Transit, the public transit provider for Eden Prairie, Chanhassen and Chaska, has been named the 2008 Transit System of the Year by the Minnesota Public Transit Association (MPTA) at the 26th annual Minnesota Public Transit Conference which was held September 29 - October 1 in the St. Paul Civic Center. This is the second time in the last ten years that SouthWest Transit has been honored with this recognition.

The president of the MPTA, Tony Kellen, announced the award during the association's annual membership meeting and awards ceremony on September 29. "There are just so many reasons for SouthWest Transit to be honored with this award," said Kellen. "SouthWest Transit has been recognized for its safety, on time performance, system efficiencies, innovation and customer satisfaction. SouthWest Transit is just a great all-around transit agency."

"This is an award that reflects all of our employees' efforts to provide the very best service," said Len Simich, CEO of

SouthWest Transit. "Our Commission and staff work together so that our customers can Expect the Best."

SouthWest Transit has also been honored as the Minnesota Transit System of the Year in 1999, the National System of the Year in 2004, the National Environmental Excellence Award winner in 2005, and the National Safety Award winner in 2008.



SouthWest Transit General Manager Len Simich receives award from MPTA President Tony Kellen with Dave Jacobson - Chief Operating Officer for SouthWest Transit and Sherry Munyon.

MPTA also honored U.S. Congresswoman Betty McCollum with the National Friend of Transit Award. Minnesota Senator Scott Dibble, Minnesota Representative Kathy Tingstad and Sherburne County Commissioner Arnie Engstrom were honored with the Friend of Transit Award. Retired DOT official Donna Allan and Mary Fossen of Arrowhead Transit received Distinguished Career Award; and Scott County Transit's

ADA/STS Complimentary Paratransit Service received the Management Innovation Award.





Sherberne County Commissioner, Arnie Engstrom receives the Friend of Transit Award from Tony Kellen and Sherry Munyon.



Minnesota Representative Kathy Tingstad Dibble receives the Friend of Transit Award from Tony Kellen and Sherry Munyon.



Minnesota Senator Scott Dibble receives the Friend of Transit Award from Tony Kellen and Sherry Munyon.



MPTA President Tony Kellen presents the National Friend of Transit to Peter Frosch (on left) and Josh Straka who accepted the award for Congresswoman Betty McCollum.



MPTA President Tony Kellen presents appreciation award to Deb Little who is leaving the MPTA Board at the end of the year. Little currently serves on MPTA's executive board as secretary.



MPTA President Tony Kellen presents Management Innovation Award to John Swanson of Scott County.



Mary Fossen of Arrowhead Transit holds the Distinguished Career Award surrounded by Jack Larson and Harlan Tardy of Arrowhead Transit and Tony Kellen.



Donna Allan, recently retired Mn/DOT Office of Transit Director receives the Distinguished Career Award from Tony Kellen with Tom Gottfried and Mike Schadauer of Mn/DOT on left.

*More conference photos on following pages*

## From the President



Tony Kellen, President  
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be in Duluth with our joint Minnesota-Wisconsin event. The timing couldn't be better with SAFETEA-LU expiring and a new six-year federal surface transportation authorization bill being debated in Washington. We'll have a chance to focus on national issues of concern to folks in both states as well as best practices for day-to-day system operations.

Thanks to everyone who helped to make the 2008 Minnesota Public Transit Conference a huge success! We had a great turnout of folks who were inspired by speakers, updated with the latest information and entertained with music and great company. This year's conference, held in St. Paul, focused more on transit projects in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. Next year we will

As Sherry Munyon mentioned at the Transit Conference in September, MPTA is working to develop a strong legislative agenda to support transit systems statewide. We need your ideas and your voice advocating for transit funding. We know that the state will be facing a deficit in the General Fund so we need to be organized and ready to go when the session convenes in January. Without a strong voice at the Capitol, budget cuts will threaten transit services. Please contact me or Sherry with your ideas for transit policy and funding options for the upcoming session. We'll need your involvement to maintain the progress we've made in recent years.

We also need volunteers to host local meetings and work with local media to raise the awareness of how important transit services are in keeping people moving around the state. Demand for transit service has never been higher and we need to make sure that elected officials understand how much their constituents are clamoring for options to driving. They also need to understand the impact that high fuel prices and lower auto sales are having on transit system budgets. Thanks to a grant from the American Public Transportation Association, we'll be able to generate more media attention about the need for stable transit funding to meet people's needs.

Thanks to the hard work of many advocates, we've made real progress in dedicating the funds we need to provide quality transit service. It will take the continued involvement of many folks to maintain and build on that progress.

# Legislative Update

Margaret Donahoe  
Legislative Director  
Minnesota Transportation Alliance

As the weather gets colder, our thoughts turn to the upcoming 2009 Legislative Session which will convene in early January. Transit funding will definitely be on the agenda as systems struggle to deal with fuel prices and lower than anticipated revenue from the motor vehicle sales tax.

The Department of Finance will issue its November forecast at the end of the month with estimates of what to expect for state revenue for end of this biennium and into next biennium. While the legislature balances the state budget based on the February forecast, the November forecast sets the tone and gives everyone a pretty good idea of how state finances are shaking out. Not surprisingly, legislative leaders are expecting bad news on the budget front. The general economic troubles are hitting Minnesota along with other states and we could see a projected budget deficit of anywhere from \$1 billion to \$3 billion for the coming biennium.

The funding situation will require everyone to be ready for a long, tough session and transit advocates need to be making their voices heard and standing up for the need to keep transit systems moving. MPTA will keep you informed of the latest action and will let you know how you can make a difference in supporting transit funding.

The legislature also debates transportation policy issues each year and two major issues affecting transit appear

to be ripe for discussion during the coming session. Transportation and land use has been discussed for years but the dramatic fuel price increases and scarcity of revenue for highways is leading to a stronger push for better coordination of transportation and land use decisions. Transportation investments, particularly transit investments, need to be integrated with land use and development patterns so that residents and businesses have a high level of accessibility. Communities that increase the concentration of jobs and housing will have more opportunities for transit systems that provide the accessibility that people need. Legislative proposals are anticipated that will deal with improving the coordination of land use and transportation investments.

Another major policy issue that will be discussed has to do with how transit service is organized in the state and which agencies are charged with planning and funding transit systems. The current model of having the Metropolitan Council in charge of metropolitan area transit and MnDOT's Office of Transit in charge of Greater Minnesota transit has been criticized by some legislators. Legislation is likely to be introduced that would create one statewide entity in charge of transit system planning and management.

On the federal level, action will probably accelerate with the Presidential election out of the way. There may well be a second economic stimulus package that includes funding for highways and transit. Legislation that was passed by the House of Representatives in September included \$3.6 billion for transit capital needs. The legislation stalled in the Senate, but may well come back again.

Stay tuned to our MPTA updates for information regarding these important transit issues.



MPTA President Tony Kellen cuts ribbon to open Expo.



Vendor Expo Lunch

# Vendor Expo 2008





First Transit Reception with Belladiva entertainers.

**First Transit** 



## St. Cloud Metro Bus wins Grand Award in AdWheel competition

ST. CLOUD – St. Cloud Metro Bus was named the AdWheel **Grand Award** winner for its Sunday Service campaign at the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Expo in October. The campaign included print and radio ads, and vinyl on the sides of the buses, featuring several characters touting the benefits of Metro Bus’s new Sunday Service.

St. Cloud competed against systems with more than one million, but fewer than four million passenger trips annually. The campaign was designed in collaboration with Eyecon Graphics and Regent Broadcasting.

The AdWheel Awards recognize public transportation systems and APTA business members for excellence in advertising, communications, marketing, and promotion. Nearly 750 entries were submitted to the prestigious awards in the four categories of print, electronic, campaign, and special event. First place honors were awarded in various subcategories to each of four groups, based on system size. Grand Award winners were chosen from those first place winners in each group. This is St. Cloud Metro Bus’s third Grand Award, having won the top awards also in 1998 and 2005.



## St. Cloud Metro Bus on board with travel training

ST. CLOUD – St. Cloud Metro Bus recently implemented a Travel Training and Community Outreach program to enable people of **all abilities** to travel more freely and ride public transportation with confidence. The program is funded by a New Freedom grant from Mn/DOT with FTA Section 5317 funding.

While the traditional purpose of travel training (sometimes known as “mobility training”) is to expand transportation options and promote independence for seniors and people with disabilities, St. Cloud’s program also reaches out to the general public.

Helping people learn how to ride the bus is not a new concept to St. Cloud Metro Bus. They had a Transit Ambassador program that used volunteers to help individuals learn how to ride. That program was discontinued in favor of this more comprehensive program.

The Travel Training and Community Outreach program in St. Cloud is comprised of a travel trainer and several travel guides. The “travel trainer” works mostly with people with

disabilities and the senior population, but also reaches out to community groups. Several Fixed Route drivers are being trained to serve as “travel guides” to work with the general public. The trainings can be performed in a group setting, or one-on-one.

The travel trainer and the travel guides help people learn their routes by riding with them and coaching them through the skills necessary to ride on their own. The travel trainer also can incorporate traditional classroom-style teaching and role-playing activities, depending on the needs of the client.

Debbie Anderson, the travel trainer for St. Cloud Metro Bus, has a background in recreational therapy and has worked for community education.

“It’s very rewarding to teach people how to ride the bus,” said Anderson. “It increases their independence and expands their travel options. It gives them the freedom to travel without the wait of setting up an appointment for Dial-a-Ride service.”

Since implementing the program in September, Anderson has trained more than 30 individuals, including people of all abilities. To measure the results of this program follow-up interviews with clients will be conducted.



## DTA U-Pass ridership up 72 percent for September

DULUTH – Duluth Transit Authority’s U-Pass ridership at University of Minnesota, Duluth (UMD), College of St. Scholastica (CSS), Lake Superior College (LSC) and University of Wisconsin, Superior (UWS) has experienced phenomenal growth for the first month on Fall Semester.

September ridership at UMD, CSS, LSC and UWS has increased 72 percent with 99,392 rides compared to September of 2007.

September ridership at UMD was up 70 percent with 75,893 rides and is the highest monthly total at UMD since the program began in 2000.

September ridership at LSC and CSS was up 76 percent with 13,780 rides at LSC and 6,888 rides at CSS. LSC and CSS joined the U-Pass Program in 2001. UWS joined the U-Pass Program in August of 2007 and September ridership there was up 30.7 percent with 2,831 rides.



### DTA ridership exceeds projections for first nine months of 2008

Duluth Transit Authority ridership has continued to grow – exceeding expectations for the first nine months of 2008. DTA ridership during the first nine months of 2008 showed a 13.3 percent increase of 277,013 rides over the first nine months of last year. DTA ridership for the first nine months of 2008 totaled 2,357,699 and is on pace to top the 3 million rider mark this year.

## Transit earns honors for Commuter Challenge marketing effort

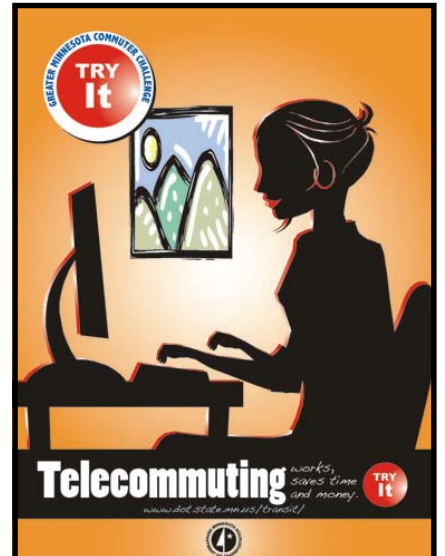
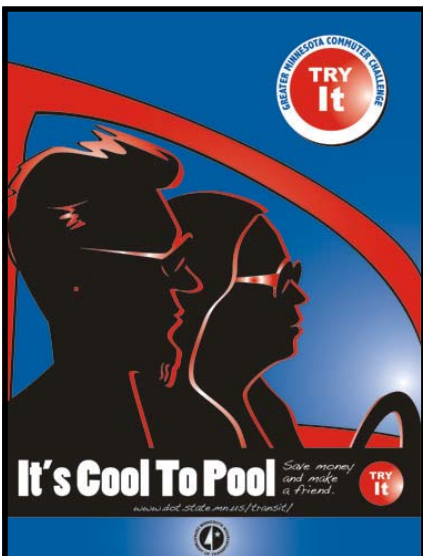
A campaign led by the Office of Transit to increase transit use and other options to driving alone in Greater Minnesota earned honors from the national Association for Commuter Transportation. The campaign focused on Greater Minnesota during the yearly Commuter Challenge “Try It” promotion.

This year, the marketing effort focused on four Greater Minnesota cities: Rochester, Alexandria, Brainerd and Northfield, said Jarvis Keys, program coordinator, Transit.

“Smaller cities in Greater Minnesota don’t have rush hour traffic congestion levels like we do in the Twin Cities, so we promoted using transit and carpooling for ‘getting around’ to destinations such as shopping, church or public events as well as for commuting to work or school,” he said.

Transit enlisted support from schools, employers, transit system operators and Mn/DOT’s district transit and public affairs coordinators to spread the campaign message.

Materials included eye-catching posters and “how to” guides for each mode of travel. The Commuter Challenge program was started in 2005.







## Central Corridor LRT Update



### Business leaders view LRT construction on walking tour of Hiawatha extension work

**Chris Weyer**, who will be construction manager for the Central Corridor LRT Project, led 10 members of the project's Business Advisory Council on a walking tour Sept. 15 of the work to extend the Hiawatha LRT line from the Warehouse District Station to the new Minneapolis Multimodal Station. The extension will open in late 2009 to coincide with the opening of the Northstar commuter rail line from Big Lake, which also will terminate at the same station adjacent to the new Minnesota Twins ballpark at the western edge of downtown Minneapolis. Central Corridor LRT trains will run the last mile in downtown Minneapolis over Hiawatha tracks to this new station, too, when the Twin Cities' second LRT line opens in 2014. Members of the BAC said Weyer's experience on the Hiawatha and Northstar projects gives them a lot of confidence in the Central Corridor project's ability to accommodate business needs during construction. Those on the tour included **Jonathan Sage-Martinson** of the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative and Learning Network and **Karri Plowman** of the Central Corridor Partnership. The funders collaborative and the partnership were established to help businesses weather construction, which will begin in 2010.

### Meeting to prepare small, minority- and women-owned businesses for LRT work draws 135 people

A special mixer Sept. 25 at the Central Corridor LRT Project office drew 135 people who learned what they need to do to apply for contracts to help build the Twin Cities' second light rail line. Although construction doesn't begin until 2010, the Central Corridor LRT Project is already working to help firms become certified as Disadvantaged Business Enterprises and learn whether they will need to hire additional workers with special skills to qualify for contracts. Small, minority- and women-owned construction and construction-related business owners heard about job opportunities from project staff and advice on how to succeed from four DBE contractors who helped build the Hiawatha LRT line.

The project already has hired firms with 16 women- and minority-owned and small subcontractors for the engineering and environmental analysis phase of the project, which amounts to 17 percent of the nearly \$94 million worth of contracts. The nearly \$915 million project has the capacity to employ upwards of 20 DBE firms for the construction phase, said **Roderic Southall**, the Met Council's Office of Diversity lead staff for the Central Corridor project.

Opportunities will exist for building track, bridges, retaining walls, stations, electrical systems, roadways, curbs, gutters, sidewalks and installing traffic signals, striping and signage. Building an operation and maintenance facility in St. Paul will involve construction of a shop, administrative and storage structures, site work and track, mechanical, electrical and plumbing work. Retrofitting the Washington Avenue Bridge for LRT will involve structural steel work and replacing the roadway

deck. Other work will involve furnishing and installing train signal systems, communications and traction power/electrical systems. For more information, contact Southall at [Roderic.southall@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:Roderic.southall@metc.state.mn.us).

### Staff enters advanced preliminary engineering while FTA reviews application to enter final design

Project staff is advancing preliminary engineering after submitting the Metropolitan Council's draft application on Sept. 5 for federal approval to enter final design on the Central Corridor LRT Project. The Federal Transit Administration is expected to review the 4,000-plus pages of charts, graphs, technical drawings, information on project plans, ridership projections, operating and maintenance costs and a project budget of \$914.9 million over the coming months before making a decision by early next year. The application was the result of 20 months of work, which included nearly a thousand public meetings attended by 25,000 people. Soaring costs for steel, asphalt, concrete and other materials forced modifications in August in project plans to reduce costs and meet federal cost-effectiveness requirements of \$24.49 or less. With the new budget, the project's revised CEI is \$24.41. As proposed, the project includes 15 new stations, a transit-pedestrian mall on Washington Avenue on the University of Minnesota's East Bank campus and the underground infrastructure for three additional stations that could be added later at Western, Victoria and Hamline on University Avenue in St. Paul.

### Alicia Vap new manager for streetscape, station design and public art

As the new project manager for streetscape, station design and public art, **Alicia Vap** brings a wealth of experience following more than eight years with the Ramsey County Regional Rail Authority. She was a transit project manager managing planning studies for transit projects, transit-related studies and passenger rail studies. Most recently, she managed the Rush Line alternatives analysis for RCRRA.

Vap, who also has worked at the Minnesota Department of Transportation, has a master's degree in urban planning from the University of Kansas. "I've worked a lot with elected officials, including county commissioners, city council members and state legislators, on several of these projects and have worked with community members and the public as well. Several of my projects were potential New Starts fixed guideway projects, so I've got a background in working with the Federal Transit Administration. I also have worked with Metro Transit service planning and Metropolitan Transportation Services at the Metropolitan Council," Vap said.



# Progress is visible on Northstar commuter-rail line

## Project is on time and budget for service in late 2009

With the arrival of its first brightly colored locomotive, the reality of Northstar commuter rail is finally coming into view. Nearly 10 years in planning, the \$317 million project is “on time and on budget,” project leaders say, and scheduled to open for service from Big Lake to Minneapolis in late 2009.

The first of five new locomotives for the Northstar commuter rail arrived in Big Lake, Sherburne County, on October 3. The rest will be delivered later this year. Service begins in late 2009.

New train and passenger facilities are well under construction along the 40-mile corridor, and are visible proof that moving people more quickly is no longer a distant dream for long-suffering drivers in the north-west corridor.

Northstar Project Director Mark Fuhrmann said the project’s primary partners – the Metropolitan Council, the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Northstar Corridor Development Authority – worked hard the past few years to move the project forward, and that collaboration is paying off. “The county rail authorities especially deserve a measure of public gratitude for advancing millions of dollars for construction last year – before full federal funding was approved – to enable service in late 2009,” Fuhrmann said.

Northstar is a vital component of the Council’s long-range transportation strategy to address congestion in the northwest metro area. In 2010, its first full year of operation, weekday ridership is estimated at about 4,100 trips.

At speeds of up to 79 mph, ride time from Big Lake to Minneapolis is estimated at 45 minutes.

As part of the federal funding agreement signed last December, commuter stations are now under construction at Big Lake (the north end of the line), Elk River, Anoka, Coon Rapids and Minneapolis (the south end). At Minneapolis, riders can connect to buses and to light-rail service along Hiawatha Avenue to the Mall of America.

## New facilities under construction along the line

Most of the work will be complete by summer 2009. Here is a brief update on several of the project’s major components.

In downtown Minneapolis, Northstar will connect with Hiawatha light-rail at a new, two-story intermodal station at the new Twins ballpark. The station is under construction, and located about three blocks north of Hiawatha’s current terminus near First Ave. N.

**Locomotives.** The first of five new locomotives was towed to Big Lake by a Burlington-Northern/Santa Fe locomotive on October 3. Built in Boise, Idaho, by Motive Power Industries, the engine came to the Twin Cities through Chicago, where it was shown at a rail industry trade show. Four more locomotives will be delivered later this year.

**Coaches and cab cars.** Seventeen passenger coaches and cab cars will begin arriving in the metro area next May from Bombardier Corp. in Thunder Bay, Ontario, which also built the Council’s light-rail vehicles a few years ago.

Each coach will seat about 140 passengers. Cab cars, which, like a caboose, are placed opposite from the locomotive in the train sequence, are identical to passenger coaches, except that they seat slightly fewer riders. That’s because – similar to a light-rail train car – exclusive space is set aside for an operator to control the train from the last car in the sequence. (In this case, the train travels in both directions on the track, but the locomotive stays in one position and either pulls the coach cars or pushes them, depending on the direction the train is traveling.)

Each train set, or “consist” (pronounced CON-sist), will include a locomotive, three coaches and a cab car, with total average seating for about 550 riders.



The first of five new locomotives for the Northstar commuter rail arrived in Big Lake, Sherburne County, on October 3. The rest will be delivered later this year. Service begins in late 2009.

**Intermodal station in Minneapolis.** In Minneapolis, a new intermodal station is taking shape adjacent to the Minnesota Twins' new ballpark, where the Northstar commuter-rail line will intersect with the Hiawatha light-rail line. To reach the Northstar line, the Hiawatha line is now being extended about four blocks west of its existing terminus on First Avenue.

Passengers transferring between the two lines will make a connection through the intermodal station. The two-story station is necessary because the Hiawatha line comes in on the Fifth Street bridge, which is a story higher than the Northstar tracks.

**Suburban boarding platforms.** New platforms for boarding and de-boarding the train are under construction at Big Lake, Elk River, Anoka and Coon Rapids, and will be mostly completed this year. The platforms will include glass-enclosed shelters, ticket vending machines, abundant lighting and other amenities. All the suburban stations have free park-and-ride lots adjacent to their boarding areas.

At the Coon Rapids station, under construction, passengers will cross over the tracks through a two-story glass-enclosed walkway that connects a parking lot on the northbound side of the tracks with the boarding platform on the southbound side. Three of the stations will have at-grade passenger crossings. In Coon Rapids, passengers will cross over the tracks through a two-story glass-enclosed walkway that connects a parking lot on the northbound side of the tracks with the boarding platform on the southbound side.

**Vehicle maintenance facility.** Northstar trains and coaches will be inspected, maintained and cleaned at a new 50,000-square-foot vehicle maintenance facility in Big Lake that is nearly complete. A massive 10-ton, ceiling-mounted crane is large enough to lift large engine components and wheel sets for service and repair.

### **Fridley station: Late addition targeted for concurrent opening**

Construction of a suburban station at Fridley was initially deferred to save construction costs to meet the FTA cost effectiveness guidelines. But the Anoka County Regional Railroad Authority (ACRRA) now is pursuing alternative local funding, with hopes of opening the station concurrently with the rest of the line.

Located at Main Street and 60th Ave. N.E., the station site is now being prepared for a boarding platform and adjacent parking. The ACRRA has already funded construction of a pedestrian tunnel under the BNSF train tracks, and has acquired land for a park-and-ride lot adjacent to the station. Advance site prep will speed up actual construction when local funding becomes available.



In downtown Minneapolis, Northstar will connect with Hiawatha light-rail at a new, two-story intermodal station at the new Twins ballpark. The station is under construction, and located about three blocks north of Hiawatha's current terminus near First Ave. N.



At the Coon Rapids station, under construction, passengers will cross over the tracks through a two-story glass-enclosed walkway that connects a parking lot on the northbound side of the tracks with the boarding platform on the southbound side.



## Minnesota Public Transit Newsletter

In Transit newsletter is a bi-monthly newsletter published by the Minnesota Public Transit Association (MPTA). Opinions expressed in this publication may not necessarily be those of the Minnesota Public Transit Association.

### MN Public Transit Association

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# Metro Transit fares went up October 1

METRO—Fares for all regional buses and trains increased on October 1. The fare increase will help reduce a projected \$15 million budget shortfall for 2009 due to the cost of fuel and lower than expected revenue from motor vehicle sales taxes – a major source of transit funding.

		Off-Peak	Rush Hour
Adults (13-64)	Local Fare	\$1.75	\$2.25
	Express Fare	\$2.25	\$3.00
Seniors (65+)			
Youth (6-12)			
& Medicare			
with proper ID	Local Fare	\$ .75	\$2.25
	Express Fare	\$ .75	\$3.00
Persons with disabilities, any trip		\$ .75	\$ .75

31-Day Pass	\$31.50 (valid for \$.75 Mobility Fare)
	\$59 (valid for \$1.75 Cash Fare)
	\$85 (valid for \$2.25 Cash Fare)
	\$113.50 (valid for \$3 Cash Fare)

## Contributors

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Pat O'Connell — Met Council  
Elizabeth Mohr — St. Paul Pioneer Press  
Craig Wilkins — Mn/DOT Office of Transit  
Metropolitan Council Directions



## Bulletin Board

Berta Hartig Marketing Coordinator St. Cloud Metro Bus

### RTAP Training Classes

Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) offers training in passenger assistance, defensive driving, abuse prevention along with refresher courses and training for newly hired employees. New hires should take the full eight hours of Passenger Assistance, four hours of Defensive Driving and four hours of Abuse Prevention. Refresher training should be taken once every three years after the initial new hire courses have been completed.

Register for classes by completing the form posted on the Office of Transit's web-site at: [www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/RTAP/Form/index.html](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/RTAP/Form/index.html). **See RTAP training calendar at [www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/RTAP/rtaptrng.html](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/RTAP/rtaptrng.html)**. For more information, contact RTAP Coordinator Lynn Frank at 651/366-4710 or [lynn.frank@dot.state.mn.us](mailto:lynn.frank@dot.state.mn.us).



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