

A bimonthly newsletter published by the Minnesota Public Transit Association.

intransit

August 2016 Edition

***Congrats to all
participants!***



From left to right, 1st place large bus—Jack Berner, Metro Transit; 2nd—Paul Mattson, Duluth Transit Authority (DTA); 3rd—Rick Roser, DTA; Duane Dufner Memorial Award—Chris Daniels, Rochester Public Transit; 1st place small bus—Todd DeZurik, St. Cloud Metro Bus (SCMB); 2nd—David Peacock, SCMB; 3rd—T.J. Johnson, Transit Alternatives



Large bus division competition



Small bus division competition

President's Column

Craig Rempp



We're heading into fall and that means the Minnesota Public Transit Conference will be here before you know it. **If you haven't registered for the conference yet – sign up today!** We have a new registration system that makes things easy, just visit the MPTA web site: mpta-transit.org and then let me know what you think of the new web site design.

MPTA has updated the look of the web site and it's now mobile friendly so you can find information on the web site using your phone, tablet or computer. We hope you find the new web site user-friendly. Any comments or suggestions are appreciated.

You don't want to miss this year's Public Transit Conference. We have two quality training sessions that help make your job easier:

4 Hour Session – Communication and Writing: **Carol Wright**, Easter Seals

Information Websites, Brochures, and Schedules

3 Hour Session – Managing Customer Behavior: **Gregory Bennett**, National Transit Institute

Dealing with Customer Behavior

In addition, you'll learn about important trends and opportunities to integrate transit into your communities and help make them healthier places to live. Break-out sessions include timely topics such as using apps, how new technologies like ride services and automated vehicles are impacted transit, the implications of the new federal transportation legislation and Idea Cafes that allow you to share experiences with colleagues on issues like driver retention, mobility management and negotiating contracts. The conference will be a great learning experience for everyone in transit.

The Minnesota Public Transit Association Annual Meeting will take place at the conference. Be sure to join us on October 17th for a review of association action and a discussion of how MPTA can help you in your day to day operations. We'll be honoring transit professionals and systems and planning for a strong future of our organization. We value your participation and membership. It's your organization so please help us plan for a successful 2017.

Speaking of awards for transit systems, we want to congratulate **Metro Transit which received the 2016 Outstanding Public Transportation System Achievement Award from the American Public Transportation Association (APTA)**. This is a major national honor recognizing all the work that Metro Transit has done to increase ridership and the quality of the transit service it provides.

This year's Rodeo was a huge success. Thanks to everyone in Winona for hosting this year's event and to everyone who participated. The Rodeo continues to be a valuable and fun way to improve safety as we support the people who make bus service happen all across the state. Join us next year in Fergus Falls.





A bimonthly newsletter published by the Minnesota Public Transit Association.

It's campaign season this year. In addition to the presidential election, all US House members are up for election as well as all 201 members of the Minnesota legislature. Local offices are also important. Please make sure you are educating candidates about the importance of transit and the growing demand for service all across the state. Many candidates are not aware of the extent of transit service that exists. You can make a difference in shaping the debate and setting up future legislators to be transit supporters. Election day is November 8th – don't forget to vote.

See you at the conference!

Craig Rempp, President

Legislative Report

Margaret Donahoe

Will they? Won't they? Maybe later? No – it's official. There will not be a special session of the legislature to pass the tax bill and bonding bill that did not become law during the regular session.

We've been hearing that a deal was close and then not close as meetings were scheduled on and off to negotiate an agreement that would lead to a special session for three months. It was clear that the agenda would focus on the omnibus tax bill that the governor did not sign into law due to a drafting error and the capital bonding bill which failed at the last minute on the last day of the session. Much of the discussion focused on funding for the Southwest Light Rail Line. Democrats and the governor insisted that funding for the project had to be on the agenda for any special session and Republicans insisted that no special session would be agreed to that did include funding for Southwest LRT. With no resolution in sight, the House Speaker, Senate Majority Leader and Governor all agreed that no special session would happen prior to the November 8th election.

The Southwest LRT project has completed environmental reviews, has 90% of the engineering and design work complete and has funding commitment for 84% of the non-federal share. The holdup is the state portion of the funding (10%) estimated at \$144.5 million. The local share would leverage \$928.5 million in federal New Starts dollars for Minnesota. The Metropolitan Council reported that without a decision on the rest of the funding, the project will run out of cash September 30th. The project has needed \$140 million to get it to this stage of development and if it stalls, that funding could be lost along with creating uncertainty over future transitway projects.

In order to keep the Southwest project moving including filing with FTA for a full funding grant agreement, Governor Dayton and Met Council Chair Adam Duininck announced a potential option – not a very good one – for identifying the remaining \$144.5 million. The Metropolitan Council could issue Certificates of Participation for \$103.5 million with debt service covered by the Council and the Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB). In addition, the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority could authorize spending \$20.5 million on the project and CTIB could vote to spend another \$20.5 million on Southwest. The Certificates of Participation would not be issued until July of 2017 so there is the potential for the legislature to provide a better option during the regular 2017 Legislative Session. The Certificates of Participation incur higher levels of debt than other bonds and CTIB

Legislative Report

Margaret Donahoe

and HCRRRA have already contributed significant funding to the project and would prefer to have the state cover the 10% share.

At the federal level, Congress will come back into session after Labor Day facing the need to pass 2017 appropriations bills including the Transportation and Housing and Urban Development (THUD) bill. Work done on this bill to date would provide the levels of funding authorized under the FAST Act for transit formula funds.

Minnesota was fortunate to host a visit by US DOT Secretary Anthony Foxx. Congressman Rich Nolan arranged for the visit and provided the Secretary with an opportunity to learn more about transportation in northern Minnesota. Dennis Jensen from the Duluth Transit Authority talked about DTA's ongoing work to improve transit service and meet growing demand. DTA was awarded a grant worth \$6.3 million from the Federal Transit Administration in February 2015 to receive six electric buses. The DTA will continue to share roughly \$1.1 million in the total cost of nearly \$7.5 million for the buses. The DTA and the bus manufacturer, Proterra of Greenville, S.C., are collaborating on an extended-range bus model that will charge overnight and be used for several hours a day during peak morning and late-afternoon hours.

MPTA and other transportation groups will be busy this fall educating candidates about the importance of Minnesota's transportation system and the need for additional funding. Our goal is to remind everyone that transportation funding remains unfinished business and needs to be addressed during the 2017 Session. You can make a difference by joining us at a local event and contacting your legislators so that transit service can grow and improve in Minnesota and serve the thousands of people who rely on transit every day.



Nominate a deserving individual, project or system for a MPTA Award!

2016 MPTA Award Nomination Form

Anyone can submit as many nominations as they would like, but one form is required for per nomination. Submissions due September 9th.



Tri-CAP's Transit Connection provides safe, dependable, affordable and courteous transportation services for the general public in rural Benton, Morrison, Sherburne, and Stearns Counties.

Transportation Director Wanted

We are looking for the ideal Transportation Director to lead a staff of 35+ providing transit services in a four county service area in Central MN and oversee funding and budgets in excess of \$3,000,000 annually.

This person has integrity, creativity, passion and a commitment to serving others and community development. The leader we seek is a highly motivated self-starter who is organized, able to prioritize tasks, and highly skilled at bringing out the best in a team.

\$58,000+ annually plus benefits.



Qualities & Qualifications

- *Excellent communication skills- verbal/written
- *Proficiency with computers for writing, email, calendars, spreadsheets, etc.
- *Significant leadership and supervisory experience
- *Knowledge of transportation compliance/regulations such as FTA, ADA, MNDOT, Specialized Transportation Services (STS), drug & alcohol testing protocol, etc.
- *Bachelor's degree + six years' experience, or combination of ten years education/experience
- *Pass a DHS background check
- *Valid driver's license

To apply

Please send cover letter, resume and professional references to Michelle Peterson, Human Resources Director, hr@tricap.org with "Transportation Director" in email subject line

The mission of Tri-CAP is to expand opportunities for the economic and social well-being of our residents and the development of our communities.

MPTC

MINNESOTA
PUBLIC TRANSIT
CONFERENCE

2016

CREATING CONNECTIONS



TO HEALTHY LIVING

October 17th to 19th
Expo on the 18th
Mayo Civic Center
Rochester, MN

Great Networking
Important Training Sessions
Latest News and Information

This year's conference focuses on the exciting new developments happening with the Destination Medical Center and the role transit plays in making all communities healthier and more prosperous places to live.

Visit mpta-transit.org for hotel information and to register today! Early registration for attendees ends October 3rd.



Preliminary Conference Program

Monday, October 17th

10:00 AM - Registration Opens

11:00 AM - 3:30 PM - Training Session #1 (includes lunch) - Communication and Writing

1:00 PM - 4:00 PM - Training Session #2 on Dealing with Disruptive Customer Behavior

4:00 PM - 6:00 PM - MPTA Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony

6:00 PM - 8:00 PM - Opening Reception

Tuesday, October 18th

7:00 AM - Breakfast and Registration Open

8:30 AM - 10:00 AM - Welcome and Keynote Speaker Michael Melnik on Managing Change

10:20 AM - 12:00 PM - Concurrent Sessions I and MnDOT/Met Council Updates

Topics include driver recruitment, how transit builds Healthy Communities, transit apps and technology, Olmstead Plan and an update on the Greater MN Transit Investment Plan

12:00 PM - 3:30 PM - Vendor Expo & Buffet Lunch

3:30 PM - 5:30 PM - Trolley Tour—space is limited, so sign up during registration!

6:30 PM - First Transit Reception

Wednesday, October 19th

7:30 AM - Breakfast and Registration Open

8:30 AM - 9:15 AM - General Session: FTA Update

9:30 AM - 10:45 AM - Concurrent Sessions II

Topics include FAST Act and its implications for transit in Minnesota, RTCC/Mergers and an Idea Café on Mobility Management

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM - Concurrent Sessions III

Topics include how transit plays a role in economic development, bus stop design, Idea Café on Negotiating Contracts and the implications for transit of autonomous vehicles/Uber

12:00 PM - 2:00 PM - Lunch with Panel Discussion and Prize Drawing

Metro Bus Routes Change Sunday, August 21st, Meeting Community Needs

Submitted by BERTA HARTIG

ST. CLOUD—Several Metro Bus routes will be changing on Sunday, August 21. These changes mark the first phase of a multi-year plan to improve public transit service within the St. Cloud area. The route changes are the results of the agency updating its long range transit plan.

“We are redesigning our routes to better serve the community’s needs now and into the future,” said Ryan Daniel, Metro Bus CEO.

Along with the route changes is a change to the current transfer policy. When more than one bus is needed to complete a trip the rider must request a transfer ticket from the driver. This transfer ticket is used for payment for the next bus. Current policy limits the use of the free transfer ticket to once within two hours. Effective August 21, transfers are free and valid for unlimited use within those two hours.

“We are updating our transfer policy to make our bus system more user-friendly,” said Tom Cruikshank, Chief Operations & Planning Officer for Metro Bus. “As our service area has grown, customers have needed to transfer to more buses to complete their trip. The new policy helps offset the inconvenience of transferring routes.”

The route changes scheduled for August 21 include minor changes to Routes 6, 7 and 9; significant changes to Routes 5, 11, 12 and 33 and the creation of a new Route 8. Metro Bus is also completing its conversion of route names to numbered routes. Buses have featured route numbers along with its historical route name since 2010. The printed bus schedules have used route numbers only since 2013. On Sunday, the buses themselves and Transit Center signage will change to route numbers only as well.

Those traveling downtown St. Cloud also may notice an increase in activity at the Transit Center because more routes will start and end there.

“To maximize the use of the Transit Center and the current bus lanes, some routes will be arriving or departing on the hour and 30 minutes after the hour,” said Cruikshank. “Others will continue to depart at 15 and 45 minutes after the hour.”

These route changes impact the Dial-a-Ride bus service. Dial-a-Ride is available for individuals with disabilities who are unable to ride the Fixed Route buses. This complimentary paratransit service is available within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from fixed routes. When the Fixed Route service area expands, so does Dial-a-Ride. When the Fixed Route changes from five to seven days a week of service, Dial-a-Ride does the same. To learn more about the Dial-a-Ride service call 320.252.1010 or visit ridemetrobust.com.

DTA Director of Safety Retires; Replacement Named

Submitted by HEATH HICKOK

DULUTH—After a 35-year career with the Duluth Transit Authority (DTA) as the Director of Safety, Tom Szukis officially retired on Thursday, July 21st. Szukis was responsible for the administration of all DTA Safety and Security programs and was originally recruited by the DTA as the Director of STRIDE, the ADA mandated service for persons with disabilities. Szukis will be replaced by Mark Horlocker, who started as a bus operator in 2010 and was promoted to an Operations Supervisor in 2013. Horlocker assumed all duties of the Safety Directors position on June 29th.

Horlocker has lived in Duluth since 2001 and was raised in the Red River Valley. He graduated from the University of Minnesota – Duluth (UMD) in 2005 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree and has worked in a number of different fields including radio and education. Horlocker was the DTA Employee of the Month in July of 2012 and is married with children.



Tom Szukis



Mark Horlocker

New Route to Serve Shakopee from Mall of America, Burnsville

Submitted by ROBIN SELVIG

SHAKOPEE—Employers in Shakopee will gain a new source of workers from throughout the Twin Cities, beginning Aug. 20 with the launch of Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA) Route 495. This new route, to operate seven days per week, will travel between Mall of America, Burnsville Transit Station and Marschall Road Transit Station in Shakopee.

Funded directly by the Minnesota Legislature, this is the next iteration of the Suburban Transit Association's (STA) suburb-to-suburb service. "Jobs and economic development are very important to me," said Rep. Tony Albright (R-55B of Prior Lake). "This suburb-to-suburb demonstration project has the potential to serve many employers in Shakopee and provide access to thousands of jobs in the area. I am proud to have authored the bill in the House and am excited to follow the results of Route 495."

The service plan includes 39 trips (18 southbound and 21 northbound) operating seven days per week, between about 4 a.m. and midnight. "MVTA has worked closely with several employers in Shakopee to create this service schedule," said MVTA Executive Director Luther Wynder. "Many of Shakopee's businesses operate six or seven days a week, with 10 or 12 hour shifts. Route 495 was designed to meet employee shift times, providing access to jobs and contributing to the economic development of this ever-growing community," he said. "Further," Wynder added, "Route 495 provides an impactful new transit option for Scott County residents with daily access to Burnsville Transit Station and Mall of America and connecting access throughout the Twin Cities for work, entertainment, events, and the MSP Airport."

An express fare (\$3 per trip during peak hours of about 6-9 a.m. and 3-6:30 p.m. or \$2.25 per trip during off-peak times) will be charged on this route. Transfers are available to local or other routes. All buses are equipped with regional fare equipment and will accept Go-To cards, Metropasses, tokens, Stored Value cards and cash. Change is not available.

"I have been a long-time supporter of our suburban transit providers," said Sen. Jim Carlson (D-51 of Eagan & Burnsville). "Providing a ride from Mall of America and Burnsville to Shakopee, increases opportunities for commuters from Dakota County and throughout the Twin Cities. It is an excellent way for us to grow transit while serving the significant number of unmet employer and employee needs along the route."

Pocket schedules are available by contacting Minnesota Valley Transit at 952-882-7500.



www.mvta.com

Metro Transit honored as System of the Year

Metro Transit is celebrating a top national award that recognizes its record ridership and success in a range of areas, including safety, operations, maintenance and community relations.

The agency has received the American Public Transportation Association's (APTA) 2016 Outstanding Public Transportation System Achievement Award. The prestigious annual award, also known as System of the Year, reflects accomplishments made between 2013 and 2015.

Those accomplishments include growing ridership, expanding access, advances in sustainability and overall success in system safety. Metro Transit was selected among agencies from across North America that provide more than 20 million annual passenger trips.

“Minnesota's economy depends upon a robust, modern transportation network, including transit. This need will only intensify in coming years as the Twin Cities adds an estimated 800,000 residents and 490,000 jobs by 2040,” said Lt. Governor Tina Smith. “This award confirms what the thousands of Minnesotans who rely on transit already know: Metro Transit delivers consistent, high-quality service. This recognition is well deserved, and an important reminder that Minnesota needs to continue to expand and improve transit services if we want our economy to stay strong.”

Local elected, business and community leaders were on-hand Wednesday at the Union Depot in St. Paul to join Metro Transit and Metropolitan Council leadership and staff as the award was announced. The award will be presented at APTA's Annual Meeting in Los Angeles, Calif. in September.

“Public transit benefits everyone in the region, whether they use transit or not,” said Council Chair Adam Duinick. “We know businesses cite access to public transit as one of the most important aspects of attracting and retaining talent. And ridership continues to grow, with no sign of slowing down.” (Continued on next page)



Metro Transit honored as System of the Year (continued from last page)

Metro Transit also unveiled a new decal noting the award which will be added to all of its buses and trains. The agency also announced a customer and staff appreciation event that will be held on Saturday, Sept. 24, at the Target Field Station amphitheater. For updated event details visit www.metrotransit.org/systemoftheyear.

“Metro Transit’s success is a reflection of the talent and dedication shown by each of our 3,200 employees who work together to provide the essential services our region depends on, as well as the enduring relationships we’ve built with our customers and partners,” General Manager Brian Lamb said. “Being named APTA’s System of the Year is a humbling and high honor, and one that can be celebrated by all who helped bring us to this point.”

After opening the METRO Green Line in 2014, Metro Transit saw its highest ridership in 30 years. More than 85.8 million rides were taken in 2015. In addition to record ridership, Metro Transit was recognized for successes in system safety, reliability, community relations, workforce development, sustainability and financial management, among other areas.

Growth in the Metro Transit Police Department, enhanced operator training and highly visible safety campaigns have improved system safety. Carefully-managed maintenance programs have doubled vehicle reliability over the last decade. And \$16 million in savings have been realized through the expanded use of hybrid-electric buses, solar energy and other sustainability efforts. New transit information tools, fare programs for students and expanded bus service have also made transit more accessible.

As the system has grown, so too has Metro Transit’s commitment to the communities it serves. In 2015, Metro Transit began working with local groups to shape ongoing bus stop improvements, launched a groundbreaking program that provides job-seekers a path to full-time Mechanic Technician roles and formed an outreach team to ensure residents were both heard from and involved in the decision-making process.

"Winning the 2016 Outstanding Public Transportation System Achievement Award means that Metro Transit has been recognized as the top large public transit system in North America," said Paul Skoutelas, APTA Awards Chair and National Transit Director, WSP|Parsons Brinckerhoff. ""This is a huge honor that reflects all of the hard work done by the 3,200 Metro Transit employees. Metro Transit is a model for other public transit systems."

"Congratulations to Metro Transit!" said Richard A. White, APTA Acting President & CEO. "Metro Transit's record ridership, its emphasis on safety, its outstanding vehicle reliability and its great effort in sustainability are just some of the reasons APTA is giving Metro Transit this prestigious award."

For more information about upcoming activities and Metro Transit’s accomplishments visit www.metrotransit.org/systemoftheyear.

Aspiring Mechanic-Technicians build skills, confidence

By DREW KERR and edited for length by LAURA EASH

Jason Johnson was newly-unemployed, discouraged and facing an uncertain future when he walked into [Urban Ventures](#)' Minneapolis offices looking for help finding a new job.

His visit came at an opportune moment: that afternoon, representatives were there promoting a new program that would offer a path toward a full-time role as a Mechanic-Technician at Metro Transit.

It had been 20 years since Johnson graduated high school and worked as a mechanic with the U.S. Marines. He applied with little expectation it would amount to anything.

But more than a year later, he found himself standing alongside 18 other participants who had successfully completed the first phase of the inaugural program to celebrate how far they'd come.

"It's a second chance at life I never expected to get," he said after the program, held amid the sounds of power drills and other activity at Metro Transit's [Overhaul Base](#). "It's been such a huge boost – to my confidence, to my happiness. I have no idea where I'd be without this."

The transformative experience is precisely what Metro Transit and partnering agencies hoped to provide in creating the [Metro Transit Technician program](#) last year. An industry first, the program combined empowerment training, tutoring and 300 hours shadowing current Mechanic-Technicians.

Metro Transit, [Twin Cities Rise!](#), the [Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1005](#) and [Hennepin Technical College](#) collaborated on the effort. Funding came from the Federal Transit Administration.

With the first phase completed, participants will now begin a customized, two-year degree program at Hennepin Technical College while continuing to work full-time as Mechanic-Technician interns at Metro Transit.

The hope is that the additional training and education will lead participants to long careers at the agency, helping fill a worker shortage that is expected to grow as more Baby Boomers retire and fewer people enter the industry.

More than half of the 439 Mechanic-Technicians who work at Metro Transit are over the age of 50.

"The industry wasn't supplying us the skilled workforce we needed, so what we've done here is essentially take it upon ourselves to build the workforce of the future," said Gary Courtney, who managed the program on behalf of the Office of Equal Opportunity.

Several longtime Mechanic-Technicians who helped guide the participants said they were proud to have played a part in introducing the participants to a profession they love. Many of the participants had no prior mechanical experience. (Continued on next page)





Aspiring Mechanic-Technicians build skills, confidence (continued from last page)

Among those who provided guidance was East Metro Mechanic-Technician Nate Allen, who has been at Metro Transit for more than 32 years. As a mentor, Allen handed over his daily work orders, putting participants in a position where they had to ask him questions and get engaged in the work with him.

“I’ve really enjoyed this from beginning to end,” Allen said. “You could definitely see the improvement, which was very rewarding.”

The program is now being held up as a national model that could expand opportunity while helping transit agencies across the country address a growing need for skilled workers. Metro Transit has also received state funding to offer the program to another group of participants who will begin as early as this year.

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- Updates on legislative action
- 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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