

A bimonthly newsletter published by the Minnesota Public Transit Association.

intransit

March 2017 Edition

2017 Transportation Day at the Capitol



MnDOT Commissioner Charles Zelle and St. Cloud Metro Bus Executive Director Ryan Daniel



MN Valley Transit Authority Finance Officer Lois Spear and Executive Director Luther Wynder



MPTA Board President Craig Rempp (Chisago-Isanti Co.), MPTA Board Member LuAnn Bleiler (Paul Bunyan Transit) and Met. Council Project Administrator Dana Rude



Speaker of the House Kurt Daudt and Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka

President's Column

Craig Rempp



Thank you for your membership in the Minnesota Public Transit Association! We're busy at the legislature and busy working to assist transit systems in getting the resources and support they need.

MPTA members worked closely with the Office of Transit at MnDOT to identify important unmet transit needs. **Those conversations culminated in the creation of a 2-year pilot program that will allow systems to apply for funds for both operating and capital that do not require a local match.** This is an important opportunity for your system to plan for the future by replacing aging buses on current routes, building a bus garage or expanding service in your communities. We have a big responsibility to meet the growing demand for transit service with a goal of meeting 90% of the need by 2025. This new 2-year program will allow us to make big strides in meeting that goal and serving people throughout the state.



A new draft is out of the Greater Minnesota Transit Investment Plan. We want to thank the staff at the Office of Transit for listening to the concerns of MPTA members and incorporating changes we suggested into the plan. This is the document that will guide investments in Greater Minnesota transit for the next 5 years so it's important that we all work together to plan for success in the coming years.

Transit service in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area is facing serious challenges and major changes. A budget shortfall has led to consideration of fare increases and concerns over the potential for loss of service. The Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB) has been negotiating a plan to disband this joint powers board which has been in place since 2008 so that individual metro counties can decide how to increase local levies and how to spend those dollars.

At the federal level, there has been a great deal of talk about the need for an infrastructure plan but no details on what that would look like or if transit infrastructure would be included. The President has made it clear that he wants to increase defense spending and reduce discretionary spending which could mean reductions in federal transit funds.

The bottom line: We all have to stick together and speak up for transit service in Minnesota! With new lawmakers at all levels, we have a big responsibility for educating decision makers and advocating for our riders.

MPTA is advocating for all transit systems at the legislature and we need your help if we're going to manage the new political landscape and prepare for the future. We'll be sending you information on contacting your legislators and local government officials. *It only takes a few minutes to make a big difference!*

As always, contact me at any time with questions, comments or concerns: craig.rempp@co.isanti.mn.us

Craig Rempp

MPTA President



Legislative Report

Margaret Donahoe

We're in the heart of the 2017 Legislative Session with a flurry of bills and committee action as legislators work to get budget bills to the governor with enough time left in the session to negotiate a final outcome if the governor vetoes individual appropriations bills.

The February forecast provided some good news: the forecast projects a \$1.65 billion general fund surplus for the legislature to work with for the coming biennium. The big question is how much will be needed to pay for tax cuts sought by the legislature and how much other items like health insurance reform will cost. Some areas of state government may face proposed cuts as legislators try to shift priorities for spending.

The GOP controlled legislature has been able to work together with DFL Governor Dayton in some areas like health care reform and allowing Sunday liquor sales. When it comes to transportation, the two parties have very different views on how to pay for increased investments and whether or not to fund major transit projects.

In the area of transit, the legislature has spent most of its time scrutinizing the budget for Twin Cities Metropolitan Area transit, proposing changes to the governance of transit and questioning the value of light rail projects. Some of the major bills include:

[HF1866/SF1490](#)

The bill changes the makeup of the Metropolitan Council, increasing the council from 17 to 27 members who would be elected officials with staggered terms. The bill sets a farebox recovery objective for Twin Cities metropolitan area transit of 40% by 2022. The Metropolitan Council is prohibited from undertaking a light rail project without explicit legislative authority, consideration of reasonableness of system plans in Metropolitan Land Planning Act is allowed, light rail transit project development governing requirements are established, and the Metropolitan Council is required to revise the transportation policy plan.

[HF1745/SF1713](#)

This bill establishes a Metro Mobility Enhancement Task Force which must evaluate the Metro Mobility program. The task force work must include but is not limited to analysis of customer service, program costs and expenditures, service coverage area and hours, reservation and scheduling, and buses and equipment. The task force must analyze approaches to improve Metro Mobility program service by using partnerships with transportation network companies.

[HF1570/SF1305](#)

Provides \$4,500,000 in fiscal year 2018 from the general fund to the Metropolitan Council for financial assistance to replacement service providers under Minnesota Statutes, section 473.388, for the purposes of the suburb-to-suburb transit demonstration project.

[HF800/SF1769](#)

This legislation removes the current requirement that the state pay 50% of the operating costs for a light rail transit line for any new LRT projects.

Legislative Report

Margaret Donahoe



While we've heard from both parties and the governor about the need to increase funding for transportation and make this a bigger priority for surplus dollars, there have not been many details as to what that may look like. The Governor reiterated his transportation plan as part of his budget recommendations for the FY2018-19 biennium. His plan relies on new revenue with a proposed increase in the fuel tax, the license tab fees and a ½ cent increase in the metro sales tax for transit in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. He also recommends an increase of \$10 million per year for Greater Minnesota transit from the general fund.

Legislative leaders have been eyeing a dedication of the existing sales tax on auto parts for roads and bridges and have not proposed any increased funding for transit in the metropolitan area.

A number of bills have been heard that increase funding by capturing more of the motor vehicle lease sales tax (MVLST).

[HF901/SF932](#)

This bill would transfer the \$32 million that is currently deposited in the general fund to transportation maintaining the current distribution of 50% for the 5 collar counties in the Metro Area for roads and 50% for Greater Minnesota transit.

[SF1879](#)

Re-directs the \$32 million in MVLST funds deposited in the general fund to the Highway User Tax Distribution Fund.

MPTA is supporting HF901/SF932 that would dedicate 100 percent of the MVLST and retain the current distribution of the revenue.

Other bills of interest: [HF2219](#)

This language clarifies the definition of a volunteer driver as opposed to a driver for a company Uber or Lyft to assist in obtaining no-fault auto insurance.

[HF1553/SF1908](#)

This bill makes changes related to Medical Assistance (MA) requirements for the provision of, and reimbursement for, nonemergency medical transportation services. The bill expands access to enhanced funding for rural providers, specifies requirements for managed care and county-based purchasing plans, and makes other changes.

As of March 14th, discussions to disband the Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB) stalled over a “no” vote from Dakota County. All five counties have to agree in order for the dissolution to occur. Dakota County says CTIB owes it \$29 million and won't budge until it's paid. Other members of CTIB put the figure at \$16.5 million. We'll have to see how this development impacts efforts to pass a transportation funding bill.

Position Opening: Director of Human Resources

Deadline: 4:00 PM CST Friday, April 7, 2017

Salary Range: \$78,609 - \$112,077 (11 step progression) plus comprehensive benefit package including employer paid health, dental, vision insurance, and vacation, holiday, sick leave, and retirement benefits. Relocation assistance available.

Metro Bus is located in St. Cloud, MN. We are a multiple award winning Transit Authority, created by the State of Minnesota in 1969, currently serving a four-city metropolitan area. Our 160+ employees provide seven day a week Fixed Route, Dial-a-Ride, and University transportation services along with commuter bus service. St. Cloud is located on the Mississippi River just one hour northwest of Minneapolis/St. Paul and one hour from the beautiful lakes area of Minnesota.

Duties and Responsibilities

The Human Resources Director is responsible for the management of all human resources functions. Responsibilities include developing policies and procedures, providing technical advice in all areas of human resources administration, risk management, and regulations. The successful applicant will have the ability to deal tactfully, courteously, confidentially, and persuasively with others while maintaining professional composure under pressure and in controversial situations. The Human Resources Director is also responsible for the direct supervision of the Human Resources Specialist.

Background & Experience

Bachelor's degree in human resources or closely related field required. Master's degree preferred. Minimum seven years human resource experience. Supervisory experience preferred. Demonstrated background in personnel management, recruiting/hiring, training and compliance or any equivalent combination of education and experience which provides the necessary knowledge, abilities, and skills.

Application Procedure

Visit our website at <http://www.ridemetrobus.com/home/employment> for a complete job announcement, job description, and application. To apply, submit an application, resume and cover letter to: Chief Finance and Administration Officer, 665 Franklin Ave NE, St. Cloud, MN 56304 or email recruitment@stcloudmtc.com. For questions, call 320.529.4490.

Metro Bus is an equal opportunity employer and drug free workplace.

DTA Hires New Director of Planning & Grants

Submitted by HEATH HICKOK

Sophia Parr has been named as the new Director of Planning & Grants for the Duluth Transit Authority (DTA). Parr was most recently a Legal & Compliance Contractor at the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) in Chicago. She began her work at the RTA as an intern working in Paratransit and Regional Accessibility. Parr began her professional career as a Research Analyst with Insidedge, an employee communications practice at Golin, a public relations firm in Chicago.

Parr received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Management with a concentration in Marketing from Purdue University. In December 2016, she obtained a Master of Urban Planning and Policy Degree with a focus on Transportation Planning from the University of Illinois at Chicago. During that time, she received a grant from Peninsula State Park in Door County, WI to develop a signage inventory for a popular bike trail in the park. The project utilized map data and new analysis techniques that she hopes to bring to her work at the DTA. Parr values a multi-modal approach to transportation and looks forward to understanding how transportation works within the Duluth geography.

Her interest in relocating to Duluth came after a visit in March of 2016 to go fat-tire bicycling. As an avid bicyclist, she welcomed the opportunity to relocate and put her education and experience to use in Duluth. At the DTA, Parr will be responsible for service planning and grants administration.



Statewide Transit News

[State may pay for new county transit bus, service to Lake Park, Audubon](#) - *Detroit Lakes Online, Mar. 9*

[Faribault County OKs loan to transit](#) - *Fairmont Sentinel, Mar. 8*

[CCT \(Kandiyohi, Meeker, Renville\) considers new fare structure](#) - *West Central Tribune, Feb. 28*

[Tri-County \(Blue Earth, Le Sueur, Nicollet\) transit system needs survey answers](#) - *Mankato Free Press, Feb. 15*

[Brainerd City Council: transit service to replace bus](#) - *Brainerd Dispatch, Feb. 6*

[Rochester eyes 'game changer' transit plan. Will public get on board?](#) - *MPR News, Feb. 6*

[St. Cloud Metro Bus CNG fleet paying off in cost savings](#) - *WJON, Feb. 6*



News



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MVTA Ridership Continues Strong

Submitted by ROBIN SELVIG

The Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA) provided 2,902,398 riders during 2016, down 2.1 percent from 2015, but the second highest ridership in MVTA history.

MVTA Executive Director Luther Wynder stated, “The MVTA provides a valued service to our residents and that is played out with strong ridership despite the low gas prices. Further, we introduced new Route 495 that operates seven days a week between Mall of America/Burnsville Transit Station/Shakopee with week-over-week increasing ridership since the route launched in August.”

“The MVTA continues to provide great service,” said MVTA Board Chair and Scott County Commissioner Jon Ulrich. “The new route serving Shakopee, along with the partnerships established with Amazon and Mystic Lake, has great potential – and, ridership on that route pushed MVTA into being the second largest transit agency in the state of Minnesota (after Metro Transit and before Duluth Transit).”

Routes with the highest ridership gains in 2016 were Route 420 (local service between Rosemount and Apple Valley), Route 478 (express service between Rosemount/downtown Minneapolis, Route 484 (express service between Eagan/Rosemount and downtown St. Paul and Route 493 (express service between Shakopee and downtown Minneapolis). These routes had trips added in 2016 that spurred the additional ridership.

MVTA’s 2016 highest ridership routes are:

Rank Route Total Riders

1	460 (BTS to/from DT Mpls)	417,162
2	477 (AVTS to/from DT Mpls)	346,446
3	465 (BTS to/from DT Mpls/U of M)	248,249
4	444(BV/Savage to/from Mall of America)	237,278
5	480 (BV, AV to/from DT Mpls)	139,521
6	470 (Eagan to/from DT Mpls)	130,897
7	490 (PL/Shakopee to/from DT Mpls)	124,350
8	476 (Palomino Hills to/from DT Mpls)	102,046
9	472 (Blackhawk to/from DT Mpls)	84,650
10	446 (46th St. Station to/from Eagan)	80,927

MVTA’s 2016 Rider Survey indicates that their top three reasons for using transit are: Saves money (over 30%); Avoids the stress of driving (over 19%); and Convenience (over 17%). Most riders use transit to get to/from work (86%) and school (12%). With regard to MVTA’s service performance, 96% of the survey responders indicated MVTA “meets” or “exceeds” expectations. That same percentage indicated they would recommend MVTA to others. Improvements that would encourage more ridership, according to survey respondents, focuses on real-time information at both bus stops (52%) and transit stations (31%).

MVTA Salutes Bus Operators-of-the-Year, “Stuff the Bus” Operator

Submitted by ROBIN SELVIG and edited by LAURA EASH

Recognizing that bus operators are the eyes and ears of MVTA, the MVTA presented its 17th Annual Bus Operator-of-the-Year Awards at a recognition dinner at Valleywood Golf Course in Apple Valley on February 22.

In presenting the 2016 awards, MVTA Board Chair Jon Ulrich talked about how MVTA’s bus operators are so much more than ‘drivers.’ He said, “It’s about Customer Interaction, paying attention to a ‘Sixth Sense,’ maintaining a Professional Presence, handling ‘norms’ or Frequently Asked Questions, and Technology.”

The 2016 Bus Operator-of-the-Year recipients are Chris Lyons, Schmitt and Sons Transit Full-time Driver; and Steve Vigoren, Schmitt and Sons Part-Time Driver. In addition, a special award was presented to Bus Operator Kevin Voith, who drove MVTA’s Stuff the Bus vehicle during the successful promotion last year.

Chris Lyons regularly operates Route 420 and 442. He also serves as a part-time substitute bus operator. He is in his 10th year of working for Schmitt and Sons. Chris has a daughter who lives in England with her children, and twin sons - one of whom lives in Burnsville and the other is serving in the US Army. Lyons lives in Burnsville.

Steve Vigoren drives Routes 472 and 476A. He has been driving for Schmitt and Sons for four years. He and his wife, Sheila, have three children, four grandchildren, one great grandson and another on the way. They live in Burnsville.

The 2016 runners up were 2nd Place Mihai Strogoteanu (full-time driver) and 3rd Place Dan Otto (full-time driver).

A special award was presented to Kevin Voith. He is a full-time sub-driver and occasional dispatcher. His family includes one son and one brother. He currently lives in Apple Valley.



Back row: Elko New Market Mayor Bob Crawford, Savage Councilmember Jane Victorey, Burnsville Councilmember Dan Kealey, Dakota County Commissioner Chris Gerlach, Eagan Councilmember Gary Hansen, Scott County Commissioner and MVTA Chair Jon Ulrich, Apple Valley Councilmember and MVTA Secretary/Treasurer Clint Hooppaw, Rosemount Mayor and MVTA Vice Chair Bill Droste, and MVTA Executive Director Luther Wynder. Front row: Steve Vigoren, Chris Lyons, Mihai Strogoteanu and Kevin Voith.

Honoring Ian Stevens

Submitted by DREW KERR

Metro Transit's longest-serving current employee, Lead Revenue Processing Specialist **Ian Stevens**, #3147, was recently recognized after reaching his 45-year work anniversary. Stevens began as a Coin Counter in January 1972, when coins and tokens were the primary method of fare payment and there were Coin Counters at each service garage. Stevens now serves as the Team Lead, managing all coin processing with assistance from his co-workers. While many customers now use Go-To Cards, the amount of cash collected has remained relatively consistent. The commemorative half dollar Stevens received from his managers notes he has personally processed more than two billion coins during his career. Stevens said he has no plans to retire anytime soon.



Looking for your bus or train? Map It!

Submitted by DREW KERR

Customers can track the physical location of their anticipated bus or train in real time with a new feature called Map It!

Like NexTrip, Map It! information is linked to unique stop number IDs, found through the Interactive Map or automatically with the GPS-based Find Me feature. A map with markers showing the location of at least one bus, as well as the route number and direction of travel, is then displayed for that particular boarding location. Locations automatically refresh.

Map It! was tested by around 50 customers who volunteered to provide input and was made available to all customers this week.

“We want to provide transit information in the way that customers want to see it, and this is one of those ways,” said Ben Rajkowski, Assistant Manager-Transit Information.

Map It! is part of a broader effort to improve Metro Transit's NexTrip system, which provides predicted departure times.

In addition to the website and app, NexTrip is available through text message. NexTrip information is also displayed on digital signs at all rail and A Line stations and at select bus stops. There are ongoing efforts to improve NexTrip accuracy.

How to use Map It!

If using Metro Transit's app, go to the menu and select Trip Tools, then NexTrip. Use the Find Me feature or enter the route, direction of travel and stop. If you already know your stop number, simply enter it here. When NexTrip details appear, a link to Map It! will appear at the bottom of the screen.

A link to NexTrip is found on the homepage of Metro Transit's mobile and desktop websites. Follow the same steps to access Map It! using these websites.



Upcoming Events

MN Statewide Bus Roadeo

July 14th and 15th

Fergus Falls, MN

MPTA Conference and Expo

October 16th to 18th

St. Cloud, MN

Vendor Expo Tuesday, October 17th

mpta-transit.org/events

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