

A bimonthly newsletter published by the Minnesota Public Transit Association.

intransit

May 2017 Edition

Register Now for Upcoming MPTA Events!



July 14th and 15th

Fergus Falls, MN

Details and registration here:
mpta-transit.org/event/2017-minnesota-bus-roadeo



October 16th to 18th

St. Cloud, MN

Details and registration here:
mpta-transit.org/event/2017-mn-public-transit-conference-expo

President's Column

Craig Rempp



The 2017 Legislative Session is over and a new transportation budget bill has been signed into law by Governor Dayton. It was not a great year for transit in Minnesota, but thanks to advocates speaking out and a commitment from the governor, transit service will not be cut from current service levels in the next two years. The future, however, is very uncertain.

With a general fund surplus of \$1.65 billion, it was very disappointing that the initial transportation budget bills included cuts to the general fund appropriation for transit and language that would prevent work on future light rail transit lines as well as changes to the makeup of the Metropolitan Council. The final transportation budget bill provided an increase of \$70 million in the general fund appropriation for Metropolitan Area Transit as well as \$1 million for a suburban transit system demonstration project. Metro Transit was facing a shortfall of \$67.5 million for the coming biennium so the increase will prevent any cuts in service. By 2020, the two-year projected budget deficit is estimated at \$110 million.



For Greater Minnesota transit, the legislature cut the general fund appropriation in fiscal year 2018 by almost \$17 million due to a fund balance in the Transit Assistance Account of \$27 million after the two-year pilot project funding of \$24 million was allocated. MPTA had been lobbying for 50% of all revenue from the sales tax on leased vehicles for Greater Minnesota transit which would have provided an annual increase of about \$14 million. The legislature did dedicate all of the MVLST to transportation, but changed the distribution so that Greater MN transit will receive 38% of the total funding instead of 50% of the funding.

The MPTA Board of Directors continues to try to work more closely with the Office of Transit at MnDOT to improve the process of distributing transit funds appropriated by the legislature, work with systems to develop comprehensive five-year plans, respond to legislative requests for more transparency in the grant process and provide more opportunities for training with RTAP dollars.

The 2017 Bus Roadeo is right around the corner and we're pleased to be working with Transit Alternatives on a great event in Fergus Falls. Not only will drivers be able to show off their skills, the event will provide important information for all transit systems.

We're also working with the planning committee on the 2017 Minnesota Public Transit Conference scheduled for October 16-18 in St. Cloud. This year's theme is Navigating the Future – with a strong emphasis on new transit technology including apps, and other tools for systems as well as updates on what is happening with ridesharing and other future trends in public transit. The conference has something for everyone so mark your calendars and plan to join us in St. Cloud.

As always, the success of our transit association and transit service itself, depends on the commitment of the people in transit. Your work allows people to live independently and get around safely. Your voice and your participation in all of the work including the funding of transit is what makes service possible for thousands of riders every day. We look forward to fostering a strong partnership with riders, providers, legislators and agency staff to provide the best transit service possible. Thank you for your commitment to public transit and your membership in MPTA!

See you at the Roadeo!

Sincerely,

Craig Rempp, President



2017 Legislative Session Summary - Margaret Donahoe

After failing to pass all of the necessary budget bills by the close of the regular 2017 session on May 22nd, the legislature went into overtime after reaching agreement on global targets with the governor. While the initial agreement was for a one-day special session on Tuesday, May 23rd, by the 7:00 am end time, not much progress had been made. The legislature decided to remain in special session and continue to pass budget bills, a tax bill and a capital bonding bill.

A new bill was introduced to fund transportation for the coming biennium. HF3, the Transportation Budget bill, provides an additional \$70 million over the base general fund appropriation for Metropolitan Area Transit. The bill retains base funding of \$89.82 million from the General Fund for FY2020/21; by 2020, the two-year projected budget deficit is estimated at \$110 million.

It also includes a \$1 million appropriation to suburban transit providers for a demonstration project. The bill does not include language dealing with the dissolution of the Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB) and does not prohibit local governments and regional rail authorities from moving ahead on light rail projects that have not specifically been approved by the legislature. The bill does include a provision removing the responsibility of the state to pay for 50% of the operating cost of future light rail projects and shifts that cost to Hennepin County. Another provision prohibits the Metropolitan Council from issuing certificates of participation for Light Rail Transit.

The Counties Transit Improvement Board reached an agreement without legislative assistance to disband the board. This means that the counties are now free to individually increase the local options sales tax in their counties. Hennepin and Ramsey counties have indicated they plan to raise the current ¼ cent sales tax for transit to ½ cent.

The bill, HF3, cuts the general fund appropriation for Greater Minnesota transit by \$16.825 million FY2018. There is an increase motor vehicle lease sales tax revenue of \$1.96 million, leaving a cut of about \$14.8 million for FY2018. The funding is restored in FY2019 and beyond. Unfortunately, this reduces the overall amount that could have been spent on transit capital and operations in fiscal year 2018. The Transit Assistance Account has a remaining balance of approximately \$27 million despite requests for funding through the recent pilot program and lawmakers cited this fact in explaining the cut in the general fund appropriation for FY2018.

The bill maintains the change in the statutory dedication of the motor vehicle lease sales tax so that the \$32 million currently being deposited in the general fund is no longer deposited in the general fund and the total amount of revenue collected from the lease vehicle sales tax is distributed: 38% to CSAH, 38% to Greater Minnesota Transit Account, 13% to Minnesota state transportation fund (for a new local bridge program) and 11% to HUTDF.

Here is the impact of that change in terms of additional funding versus current law:

	FY2018	FY2019	Biennium	FY2020	FY2021
Sales tax transfer - leased vehicle	\$32,000	\$32,000	\$64,000	\$32,000	\$32,000
Allocation to HUTDF	\$10.3M	\$10.9M	\$21.3M	\$11.3M	\$11.4M
Allocation to local bridges	\$12.2M	\$12.9M	\$25.1M	\$13.3M	\$13.5M
Allocation to GM Transit	\$1.96M	\$1.23M	\$3.19M	\$.7M	\$.4M
Allocation to Metro Counties	\$1.96M	\$1.23M	\$3.19M	\$.7M	\$.4M

2017 Legislative Session Summary



For Greater Minnesota Transit, 38% of the total MVLST will provide:

FY2018	FY2019	Biennium	FY2020	FY2021	Biennium
\$35.91M	\$37.7M	\$73.6M	\$39.1M	\$39.6M	\$78.7M

MPTA had been advocating for an additional \$16 million per year in MVLST. The governor had recommended an additional \$10 million per year general fund dollars.

The bill contains language requiring the Metropolitan Council to provide financial assistance through a regional allocation process that specifies funding priorities, identifies decision-making procedures and establishes criteria to determine the amount allocated to a replacement service municipality. The Council must ensure transparency and stakeholder input including publishing its policy on the Council's web site.

Another section of the bill establishes a Metro Mobility Task Force to examine the Metro Mobility program and identify options to increase efficiency through potential partnerships with taxi service providers and transportation network companies.

Transit Provisions in the Omnibus Tax Bill – HF1 – Special Session

REGIONAL TRANSIT BONDS

Metropolitan council transit bonding. Authorizes the metropolitan council to issue up to \$126 million in additional bonds to finance its transit capital improvement plan.

An \$82.1 million limit applies to the amount that may be issued in state fiscal year 2018 and the balance may be issued after July 1, 2018.

Prohibits the metropolitan council transit from spending proceeds of its general obligation bonds (e.g., the authorization under section 7) to finance a new LRT line, an extension of an existing LRT line, or provision of additional stops on an LRT line.

Effective the day final enactment, but spending under binding contracts entered before March 25, 2017, is permitted

Underserved municipalities distribution.

Provides for a distribution of the state general levy paid by properties within a municipality back to the municipality, provided that the municipality:

- (1) lies within the metropolitan area but outside the transit district area; and
- (2) has a net fiscal disparities contribution tax capacity in excess of eight percent of the municipality's total net tax capacity.

The distribution is equal to the contribution tax capacity in excess of eight percent times the municipality's tax rate. The distribution cannot exceed the amount of state general levy paid by properties within the municipality.

Effective beginning with taxes payable in 2018.

Mankato - allows the city to extend its sales tax for different projects, as approved by the voters at the 2016 general election. Allows the city to raise another \$47 million plus associated bond costs to fund: construction and improvements to regional recreational facilities including indoor athletic facilities; improvements to the flood control and levee system; water quality improvement projects in Blue Earth and Nicollet Counties; expansion of a transit building and related transit improvements; regional public safety and emergency communications equipment, and matching funds for regional facilities such as a historic museum, supportive housing, and a senior center.

The capital bonding bill – HF5 – contains funding for 2 transit projects: the Mall of America transit station (\$8.75M) and the Orange Line (\$12.1M).



Senator Amy Klobuchar visited Hiawathaland Transit on June 9th.

NOTICE OF POSITION OPENING AT BECKER COUNTY

POSITION: Transit Supervisor/Manager (Full Time)

QUALIFICATIONS: High School diploma or GED. Two (2) years supervisory experience, and one (1) year transportation experience. Must possess a Commercial Drivers License (Class B) with a passenger endorsement, or be able to obtain 45 days after hire. Maintain a DOT physical. Evidence of a safe driving record must be made available on an annual basis. Must pass pre-employment drug and alcohol test.

DUTIES: Budget and operational management responsibilities; supervision of transit staff; recruit and train pool of volunteer drivers; Public relations; Dispatch responsibilities and back up driving as needed.

CLOSING DATE: 4:30 PM, June 28, 2017 - Applications must be received by closing date.

Job description and application are available at the Human Resource Office in the Becker County Courthouse from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., by mailing request to the Becker County Human Resource Department, PO Box 787, Detroit Lakes, MN 56502, or by accessing the website at www.co.becker.mn.us and selecting popular pages and then the employment link.

BECKER COUNTY IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

DTA Selects Employee of the Year and Presents Safety Awards for 2016

Submitted by HEATH HICKOK

The Duluth Transit Authority has named Junior Technician, Dale Ceryes, as the Employee of the Year for 2016 and awards 82 employees for safe performance.

Since being hired in May of 1992, Ceryes was DTA Employee of the Month in June of 2001, October of 2003, December of 2009 and August of 2016. During his 25-year career at the DTA, Dale has maintained excellent safety and attendance records and is well known for his great sense of humor.

The Employee of the Year award was given at the 35th Annual DTA Employee Safety & Recognition Award Breakfast, which was held at the DTA Operating Center on Wednesday, April 5, 2017.

The DTA also recognized and commended 63 bus operators and 19 maintenance employees who worked the entire year without a preventable or lost-time accident with a cumulative total of 986 years of accident-free service. The DTA also recognizes employees who have reached significant safety milestones. This year, there were four employees who've reached five years of accident free service, three at 10 years, three at 15 years, three at 20 years and two at 25 years of service. 11 DTA employees were recognized for a perfect attendance record in 2016.



Statewide Transit News

[Metro Transit program aims to raise diversity among mechanics](#) - WCCO, May 11

[Kids can ride fixed bus routes — for free — this summer](#) - St. Cloud Times, May 7

[Blue Earth County signs off on transit network agreement](#) - Mankato Free Press, May 2

[DTA looking to add five new routes, expand downtown trolley service](#) - Fox21, Apr. 19

[SMART Transit receiving money to increase preschool transportation services](#) - Owatonna People's Press, Apr. 11

[Metro Bus, Tri-CAP receive transit grants](#) - WJON, Apr. 3

[CCT, Prairie Five among recipients of \\$24M in state grants to expand rural transit](#) - West Central Tribune, Mar. 31

[Cedar Valley Services awarded state grant](#) - Austin Daily Herald, Mar. 31

[Transit program gets boost from state grant](#) - Worthington Daily Globe, Mar. 31

[Arrowhead Transit set to expand service](#) - Mesabi Daily News, Mar. 30

[DTA, Arrowhead Transit to expand services](#) - Duluth News Tribune, Mar. 30

[Mankato gets \\$3.2M to expand transit service](#) - Mankato Free Press, Mar. 30

[Minnesota grant benefits Duluth Transit Authority riders](#) - KDAL, Mar. 30

[Rochester awarded \\$3 million for transit](#) - Post Bulletin, Mar. 30

[State awards Winona \\$324,500 for transit](#) - Winona Daily News, Mar. 30

Transit Technologies

Laura Eash



In October 2016, MPTA received a Local Transit Coalition Grant from the American Public Transit Association (APTA). The grant funds a MPTA initiative to better inform transit systems of the variety of technological options available to them. One of our goals with this project was visiting five systems for conversations about technologies, and in May and early June 2017 I met with representatives from seven transit systems in their communities.

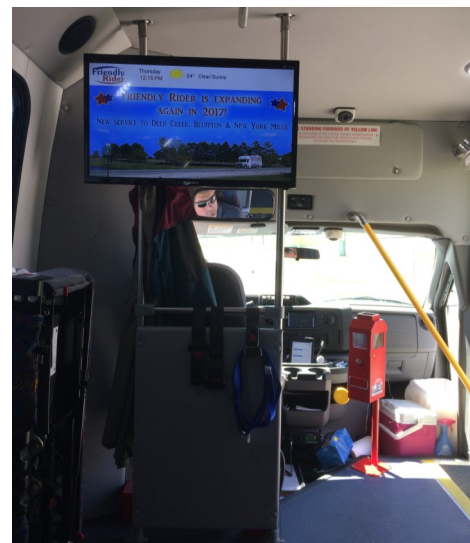


Employees hard at work at Central Community Transit.

There are exciting technologies being used at Minnesota's transit systems. **Central Community Transit** (Kandiyohi, Meeker and Renville Co.) recently implemented a new maintenance software that tracks vendors, drivers' statuses (e.g. making sure IDs are up to date) and the needs of each bus. **St. Cloud Metro Bus** is in the second phase of website redesign. At **Paul Bunyan Transit** (Beltrami, Lake of the Woods and Roseau Co.), I assisted Operations Manager LuAnn Bleiler in setting up a Twitter account for PBT; check it out at <https://twitter.com/pbtransit>. **Wadena Co. Friendly Rider Transit/Becker Co. Transit** installed 32" TVs on their fleet that run a loop of announcements and ads. A new farecard system at **Chisago-Isanti Co. Heartland Express** is getting rave reviews from riders.

Although these creative technologies are utilized to attract new riders and keep existing riders returning, staff I visited had additional ideas about what they would like to add to and improve at their systems. Several systems do not have the resources at this time to maintain a presence on social media. **Central Community Transit** needs additional funding for different dispatch software, tablets for driver and a translation program to help drivers communicate with riders. **Paul Bunyan Transit** needs to upgrade their server and computer hardware, have HD cameras on buses and install a better GPS system. **Chisago-Isanti Co. Heartland Express** sees implementing a mobile app with the ability to track buses in real time and send drop-off notifications to the parents of students and the caregivers of seniors as a high priority. The technology goals at **Rolling Hills Transit** (Dodge, Fillmore, Houston, Olmsted and rural Winona Co.) include farecards and an improved website. At **Transit Alternatives** (rural Clay, Ottertail and Wilkin Co.), they would like to have real time notifications for riders through their new dispatch software.

This article is not the only time you will hear about MPTA's work around technology. Although the grant wraps up at the end of June 2017, I plan to revisit several systems to help train new staff how to update websites and use social media. There will also be a presentation on this project at the 2017 Minnesota Public Transit Conference in St. Cloud in October. As always, MPTA member systems are welcome to contact me at 651-659-0804 or laura@transportationalliance.com anytime for assistance.



An installed and operational screen on a Wadena Co. Friendly Rider Transit bus.



Transit collaboration builds a rich and inclusive community

Submitted by DAVE VAN HATTUM

AARP recently released a report detailing the impacts of isolation on older adults. They identified that over 8 million older adults are affected by isolation and the health impacts of isolation can be as hazardous as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. One contributing factor identified by older adults is lack of access to convenient, affordable, easy to use transportation.

Seniors living outside of the Metro Transit High-Frequency transit zone, or in need of service beyond that of regular route transit, often are left without workable transit options. As transit providers/advocates across the state, you know these transit challenges all too well.

DARTS, a non-profit organization that provides transit in Dakota County with a mission to “Create Connections that Enrich Aging” recently pioneered city-specific transit circulator buses, branded as a “LOOP.” The LOOP transit model begins as a one-day per week, mid-day, small bus, service with the hope that they expand their service hours as additional funding is secured. A LOOP typically completes a one-hour circuit, with 5 circuits in a given day. DART’s LOOP service provides door-to-door service, is lift-equipped, and provides assistance with boarding, passenger bags and route questions. LOOP service relies on funding from the community. Typically, it is a combination of sources including the city in which they operate, start-up funding from foundations, and community sponsors that receive advertising on the bus exterior and schedule. Riders pay a low suggested donation fare and no one is turned away for lack of fare.

On May 24th, DARTS launched the South St. Paul LOOP. The South St. Paul LOOP picks up passengers at the five senior housing facilities in South St. Paul and transports them to nearby grocery stores, restaurants, pharmacy, neighbors, inc. food shelf, Central Square Community Center and the Library. The South St. Paul LOOP links two communities, as it intersects with the DARTS West St. Paul LOOP route, allowing residents from either community to travel the other city’s routes. The route timing also allows people to pre-schedule a customized stop.

Sherie O’Connell, a senior residing in the River Heights building, commented that: “The LOOP is the best thing to come to our building in 21 years, and is an antidote to our prayers.” A West St. Paul rider commented that the LOOP ride all-day fare is “the difference of having cream in my coffee and peanut butter on my toast.”

When boarding a LOOP, one also notes that it’s more than transit from point A to Point B, but a community in which riders connect as “LOOP friends”, helping to reduce isolation.

Ridership on the LOOP’s has been strong from the beginning, and is expected to grow thru both word of mouth, and travel needs of the aging Minnesota population. The South St. Paul LOOP is the metro region’s third (i.e. current West St. Paul and Hastings LOOPS), and DARTS is considering LOOP partnerships in other locations.

The most current LOOP schedules can be downloaded at <http://www.dartsconnects.org/transportation>.

Dave is the Transportation Program Manager at DARTS.

Metro Bus releases results of local bus roadeo competition

More than a dozen Metro Bus drivers competed in the company's annual Bus Roadeo challenge held at St. Cloud State University's K-Lot in early May. The top two finishers in each division will advance to the state competition in Fergus Falls in July.

In the Fixed Route division, Metro Bus newcomers Jerry Schmitz and Mike Keller took first and second respectively. Vern Dahl earned third. Schmitz and Keller were hired in 2016.

In the Dial-a-Ride division, Todd DeZurik placed first and David Peacock placed second. Josh Sachs took third.

"I am proud of all of our drivers who participated in the Metro Bus Roadeo," said Metro Bus CEO Ryan Daniel. "Their participation is voluntary and demonstrates their commitment to safety and strengthening their skills."

The Bus Roadeo is a chance for drivers in both Fixed Route and Dial-a-Ride divisions to showcase their driving skills. Drivers are scored on navigating through a timed obstacle course of orange road cones, testing various real life driving scenarios. Metro Bus has held local Bus Roadeo competitions since 1986.

The top two finishers from each division qualify to compete in the Minnesota Statewide Bus Roadeo in July. If they win first place at the state level, they are eligible to compete in their respective National Roadeo competitions. Historically, Metro Bus drivers have placed high at the state level.

Because DeZurik took first at the Minnesota Statewide Bus Roadeo last year, he will travel to Detroit, Mich. next month to represent St. Cloud Metro Bus at the National Community Transit Roadeo.

For more information about state and national competitions:

- Minnesota State Roadeo hosted by the Minnesota Public Transit Association: mtpa-transit.org
- National Community Transit Roadeo (small buses) hosted by the Community Transportation Association of America: ctaa.org
- International Bus Roadeo (large buses) hosted by the American Public Transportation Association: apta.com





Position Opening: Training and Safety Manager

Location: St. Cloud, Minnesota

Deadline: 4:00 PM CST Friday, June 23, 2017

Salary Range: \$60,660 - \$86,079 (11 step progression) plus comprehensive benefit package including employer paid health, dental, vision insurance, and vacation, holiday, sick leave, and retirement benefits.

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 Training and Safety Manager is responsible for the training and safety program for fixed-route and paratransit services, including risk assessment, System Safety Program Plan and claims handling. Will coordinate, develop and provide training for maintenance, operations and administrative personnel. Responsible for direct supervision of Training Instructors and Driver Trainers. Reports to the Chief Operating Officer.

Background & Experience

Bachelor's degree required. A minimum of three years' experience as a transit bus operator is preferred. Supervisory experience preferred. Demonstrated background in training 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: Human Resources, 665 Franklin Ave NE, St. Cloud, MN 56304 or email recruitment@stcloudmtc.com. For questions, call 320.529.4498.

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

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety's Emergency Communication Networks (DPS-ECN) invites you to participate in a *Convergence of Technologies Tabletop Exercise*. This unique event aims to help Minnesota's public safety community explore current and emerging challenges relating to:

- 911
- Radio
- Data
- Public alerting technologies

This tabletop exercise is the first step in determining how data-centric technologies are incorporated into public safety in Minnesota. Event planners will focus on interoperability challenges and brainstorm ideas for solutions. The question remains: with the vast array of available technologies in use, how will public safety embrace new capabilities while simultaneously ensuring appropriate interoperability?

Participants will come from a variety of primary and secondary public safety disciplines. The tabletop exercise will be moderated by DPS-ECN staff.

When: June 27, 2017
Where: St. Cloud Police Department
101 11th Avenue North
St. Cloud, MN 56303
Time: Networking begins at 8:00 A.M.
Exercise runs from 9:00 A.M. until 1:00 P.M.

Seats are limited.

Please RSVP to Minnesota's Statewide Interoperability Coordinator, Jim Stromberg.



Minnesota Emergency Communication Networks

Jim Stromberg
Statewide Interoperability Coordinator
James.Stromberg@state.mn.us
ecn.dps.mn.gov



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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Send submissions for the next *InTransit* to laura@transportationalliance.com.