

A bimonthly newsletter published by the Minnesota Public Transit Association.

# intransit

July 2017 Edition

**Congrats 30th Annual MN State Bus Rodeo Winners!**



*From left to right: Third place small bus winner Glenn Zimmel from Tri-CAP Transit Connection, Second place small bus winner David Peacock from St. Cloud Metro Bus, First place small bus winner Todd DeZurik from St. Cloud Metro Bus, First place large bus winner David Palm from Metro Transit, Second place large bus and Driver's Choice Award winner Paul Mattson from Duluth Transit Authority and Third place large bus winner Douglas John from Metro Transit. Visit [MPTA's Facebook page](#) for more photos from the event.*

# President's Column

## Craig Rempp



**Thank you to everyone who participated in this year's Bus Roadeo!** It was a great opportunity for drivers, managers and agency staff to come together and focus on safety on our buses. We want to especially thank Transit Alternatives for hosting the event this year in Fergus Falls.

As I have mentioned previously, MPTA is working to provide all of our members with great training and networking events as well as the latest information on best practices and timely updates on developments and news you need to know. We are working closely with the Office of Transit and the Metropolitan Council as well as other officials to represent your interests and foster collaboration so Minnesotans can count on quality transit service throughout the state.

Here is an update on some issues that I know are of interest to many of our members:



### New Service Expansion (NSE) Program Funding Decisions

Tom Gottfried and Mike Johnson will distribute the overall basis for the funding decisions and the amounts granted to each system by July 28, 2017. They will send a more specific description about the funding decision to each individual transit system that applied for NSE funds by August 11, 2017.

### 5-Year Plans

Noel Shughart and Sara Dunlap we will work with MPTA to assemble a Project Management Team in August 2017 to help us gain a consensus on the scope of these plans and develop a Request For Proposals for consultants to assist with the plans. The PMT will determine the sequencing of transit systems. Once the RFP is ready, it generally takes about 5 months to get a consultant started on work.

### State-level Strategic Marketing and Communication Plan

Lisa Austin will be the Office of Transit's lead on this effort. Lisa will return from a mobility assignment in October 2017 and begin working with the transit systems on this task then. The marketing program must work together with the 5-year plans to have the greatest likelihood of success. The marketing program will be a 3 to 5 year effort. MnDOT will work with MPTA to identify a Project Management Team in August 2017. The PMT will first work to complete the Request for Proposals for a consultant team that will develop the Strategic Plan.

### Rural Transit Assistance Program Advisory Committee

Megan Neeck will consult with MPTA rebuilding the RTAP Advisory committee with a goal to begin meeting in September to November 2017, depending on availability of participants.

### Documentation of Process for Annual Grant Funding Decisions

Noel Shughart and Sara Dunlap will have a draft ready for review by MPTA members by October 31, 2017.

### Updating Rules Governing the Greater MN Public Transit Participation Program

The Office of Transit is in the process of internally reviewing Chapter 8835, Public Transit Rules. It is anticipated that the Office of Transit will publish a Request for Comments to seek public comments on Chapter 8835 by the end of the year. As part of the Request for Comments, the Office of Transit will be inform the public that the Office will be appointing an advisory committee to comment on the possible rulemaking. Contact information will be



# President's Column

**Craig Rempp**

provided in the Request for Comments as to how the public, including MPTA, can participate on the advisory committee.

## New Chair at the Metropolitan Council

Adam Duinick announced that he is leaving the Metropolitan Council to head up the North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters, handling legislative and public affairs in a six-state region, representing 24,000 union carpenters.

Governor Mark Dayton announced that he has appointed Alene Tchourumoff to serve as Chair of the Metropolitan Council. Tchourumoff currently serves as Minnesota's State Rail Director, and brings a decade of experience in infrastructure planning, transportation policy, and finance to her new role.

Previously, Ms. Tchourumoff served as Director of the Planning Department for Hennepin County Public Works, where she led the county's comprehensive planning efforts. Prior to her work with Hennepin County, Tchourumoff was a manager for Deloitte Consulting in Washington, D.C., where she served as a financial and strategic policy advisor to the Federal Railroad Administration at the U.S. Department of Transportation focused on program implementation and financing. She also previously served as manager in the transportation and finance practice for Infrastructure Management Group advising clients in California, Texas, and Puerto Rico on transportation policy and finance issues.

We look forward to getting to know the new Chair of the Metropolitan Council and wish her well as she takes on her new duties.

The Council is forming a Metro Mobility Task force as required by legislation passed in 2017.

The task force will include:

- ◆ One representative from Metro Mobility, appointed by the Council.
- ◆ One elected official from each metropolitan county. Each of these officials must be from a district or unit of government in the Metro Mobility service area, and must be appointed by the respective county board in consultation with cities in the county.
- ◆ At least one and no more than three persons representing transportation network companies.
- ◆ At least one and no more than three persons representing taxi service providers.
- ◆ One representative appointed by the Council's Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- ◆ One representative appointed by the Minnesota Council on Disability.
- ◆ One representative appointed by the Commissioner of Human Services.
- ◆ One representative appointed by the Commissioner of Management and Budget.
- ◆ One representative appointed by the Association of Residential Resources of Minnesota.
- ◆ One representative appointed by the Center for Transportation Studies at the University of Minnesota.

The Metro Mobility, transportation network companies, and taxi service representatives will be non-voting members.

# President's Column

## Craig Rempp



Transportation network companies and taxi services are encouraged to contact the Council if they are interested in having a representative on the committee. The Council has reached out to the agencies named in the legislation to appoint a representative to the task force. Contact Nick Thompson, Metropolitan Transportation Services Director, at [Nick.Thompson@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:Nick.Thompson@metc.state.mn.us) or 651-602-1754, for information or to express interest in serving.

**We're planning a great transit conference that you won't want to miss!** Register Today and bring your colleagues to learn the latest information from experts on a whole host of topics. We make training and learning fun with national speakers, state agency representatives, consultants, colleagues and representatives from companies with new products and new services that will help you run your system. With the conference scheduled for October 16-18 in St. Cloud – everyone can attend!

As always – thanks for your membership and participation in MPTA!

Craig Rempp, President

## Thank you MPTA Members for attending the Washington DC Fly-in!





# Legislative Report

## Margaret Donahoe

With the state legislature out until the 2018 Legislative Session, summer is a good time to track what is happening at the federal level with transit funding and policies. In June, MPTA Board members, along with Legislative Director Sherry Munyon, spent time visiting with members of Minnesota's Congressional delegation at the annual Transportation Alliance Washington, DC Fly-In. The level of interest in transportation funding is strong on the part of Minnesota's representatives in Congress. Our newest House member, Rep. Jason Lewis, serves on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

### **FY2018 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations (THUD)**

The main funding bill is the annual appropriations bill that provides formula funds and discretionary funding for transit. We're advocating for a funding bill that provides at least the levels of funding authorized under the FAST Act. While the FAST Act authorized funding for five years, the appropriations committees have to pass a budget every year to actually send those dollars to the states.

The federal fiscal year runs from October 1st through September 30th so Congress has its work cut out for it to pass a new budget by the end of September. With few legislative days scheduled in August, the end of September will come quickly and the THUD appropriations bill is just starting its journey to completion. Congress may wind up needing to pass a short-term Continuing Resolution to keep the government operating if a full budget is not passed by the end of September.

The Trump administration presented a budget for FY2018, but it was short on details and parts of it were considered very controversial. Congress is expected to adopt some provisions of the President's budget and substitute its own numbers and policies in other areas. For transportation, the administration's proposed cuts and eventual elimination of a number of programs including the Capital Investment Grant (CIG) program and TIGER grants.

The House has started to move on a bill with both the Appropriations subcommittee and full committee passing a bill. It is not clear if will go the House floor as a stand-alone bill or as part of a larger omnibus budget bill.

The bill provides a total of \$11.752 billion in FY 2018 for public transportation programs administered by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). It fully funds FAST Act formula programs from the Mass Transit Account of the Highway Trust Fund at \$9.733 billion, and provides \$150 million for WMATA under a separate authorization. The bill funds the Capital Investment Grant (CIG) general fund program at \$1.753 billion, \$549 million below the amount authorized under the FAST Act. Under the CIG program, the bill sets specific funding levels for new starts, small starts, and core capacity projects, and it also provides \$400 million for a joint public transportation and intercity passenger rail project that is intended to go to the Gateway project – a major project between New Jersey and New York. Separately, under the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Federal State Partnerships for State of Good Repair Grants, the bill provides another \$500 million, which is also intended for the Gateway project.

The House THUD appropriations bill also eliminates the TIGER grant program which provided an opportunity to apply for federal funds for a wide range of local and state multimodal and multijurisdictional projects including transit, walking and bike infrastructure, freight mobility, bridge repair, and more.

The House Budget Committee Republicans released Building A Better America, their FY 2018 Budget Resolution. The committee states it "balances the budget within 10 years by cutting spending, reforming government, and growing the economy. The budget produces a \$9 billion surplus in fiscal year 2027." Unfortunately, the Resolution proposes phasing out the CIG program.

# Legislative Report

**Margaret Donahoe**



The full House Appropriations Committee also marked up the funding bill for the Department of Homeland Security. The Transit Security Grant Program was funded at a level of \$90 million, up \$2 million enacted levels from FY 2017. Additionally, Urban Area Security Initiative grants were funded at a level of \$630 million, up \$25 million from enacted levels for FY 2017.

The Senate is moving a much more robust appropriations bill. The Senate Appropriations Committee passed legislation that increases funding for the DOT to \$19.5 billion, an increase of \$978 million over current funding and \$3.3 billion more than requested in the Trump budget. For transit, the bill maintains the authorized level for formula grants at \$9.73 billion and does not incorporate the Trump proposal to cut the Capital Investment Grant program. The bill provides \$2.13 billion for CIG, which funds all projects with full funding grant agreements as well as those expected to enter into agreements in 2018. The Senate also rejects the proposal to eliminate the TIGER program and instead increases funding to \$550 million.

More than 50 public transit projects in two dozen states are seeking federal support, though many are in early planning stages, according to the American Public Transportation Association. In addition to the Purple Line in suburban Washington, DC, four other proposals — a streetcar in Orange County, Calif., two light-rail extensions in the Twin Cities, and a light-rail extension north of Seattle — are on the cusp of signing federal funding agreements, the association said.

The bill rejects the Administration's proposal to eliminate long-distance passenger rail routes and provides Amtrak with the fully-authorized level of \$1.6 billion, \$105 million more than fiscal year 2017.

## Grants for Bus and Bus Facilities – 5339 (b) Program

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) announced the availability of approximately \$226.5 million of Fiscal Year 2017 funds for buses, bus facilities, and bus equipment. Synopses and full announcement will be posted on Grants.gov as opportunity [FTA-2017-004-TPM-BUS](#). Proposals must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov website by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on **8/25/2017**.

The purpose of the Bus and Bus Infrastructure Program is to assist in the financing of buses and bus facilities capital projects, including replacing, rehabilitating, purchasing or leasing buses or related equipment, and rehabilitating, purchasing, constructing or leasing bus-related facilities. The program provides funds to designated recipients that allocate funds to fixed route bus operators, and to states, and local governmental authorities that operate fixed route bus service.

## Self-Driving Vehicles

A House Energy and Commerce subcommittee voted to advance a bill that would speed up the development of self-driving cars and establish a federal framework for their regulation. The bill, known as the [Highly Automated Vehicle Testing and Deployment Act of 2017](#), is the first major federal effort to regulate autonomous vehicles, and would give the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration broad oversight of the self-driving car industry. The bill could go before the entire House this fall.

In the absence of federal guidance, many states have started developing their own laws for self-driving cars. California's Department of Motor Vehicles recently released a series of proposed rules, and the state is beginning to modify its roads to make them easier for the sensors in autonomous vehicles to analyze. Michigan passed a package of bills last year that made it easier for auto manufacturers to experiment with self-driving cars on public roads. And Florida passed a law that legalized truly self-driving cars, with no human operator behind the wheel.



# Legislative Report

**Margaret Donahoe**

While engineers race to bring self-driving cars to market, Silicon Valley companies and Detroit automakers have been lobbying Congress for federal laws that would replace many of the existing state-by-state regulations and allow them to experiment more freely with new autonomous systems. Ford, Google, Uber, Lyft and Volvo have teamed up to form the Self-Driving Coalition for Safer Streets, an industry group that has pressed for a clear set of national standards.

## Transit Deserts

Though scholars have been studying “food deserts” (areas where residents lack access to nutritious food) for several decades, they have only recently applied this logic to mass transportation systems, despite the fact that food deserts often occur due to lack of transportation.

“Transit deserts” refers to areas where demand for transit service is high but service availability is low. More and more counties and cities are working to map these areas and use the data in making decisions to more evenly balance supply and demand.

Identifying transit deserts is even catching on at the federal level. The U.S. Department of Transportation recently launched a new initiative to map transit deserts nationally through a [National Transit Map](#), which will put together data from different transit agencies into a complete feed. By accessing a larger, national look at transit demand and supply, regional agencies will have extra tools available to them when making changes to their local transit services. Unlike previous efforts, the new map will include information on stops, stations and transit routes not just fixed-guideway transit.

## **Position Opening: Chief Operations Officer at Metro Bus**

**Location:** St. Cloud, Minnesota

**Deadline:** 4:00 PM CST Monday, August 14, 2017

**Salary Range:** \$80,084 - \$118,093 (11 step progression) plus comprehensive benefit package include employer paid health, dental, vision insurance, and vacation, holiday, sick leave, and retirement benefits. Relocation assistance available.

**General Duties:** The Chief Operations Officer is responsible for directing all transit operational departments including bus and maintenance operations, mobility training/community outreach, planning and training. Plans and directs development of operational policies, goals and objectives; manages changes and ensures compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The Chief Operations Officer is a member of the Executive Committee and may act on behalf of the Chief Executive Officer in his/her absence.

**Minimum Requirements:** Bachelor’s degree in business, public administration, transportation or an appropriately related field. Master’s degree preferred. Minimum six years senior management operations and supervisory experience. Demonstrated background in transit operations and personnel management or any equivalent combination of education and experience which provides the necessary knowledge, abilities and skills.

**Apply:** Applications will be accepted until 4:00 p.m. on Monday, August 14, 2017.

For more information regarding this position and how to apply, please [visit the Metro Bus website](#).

# Looking Ahead: Fall Conference in St. Cloud



**Register Today!**

[Attendee Registration](#)

[Vendor/Sponsor Registration](#)

*For hotel reservations, call  
the Best Western Plus Kelly  
Inn at 320-253-0606.*

*Questions? [Contact Laura.](#)*

## **2017 Concurrent Session Topics**

- ⇒ Planning for the Future of Your System
- ⇒ The Future of Transit Funding and Local Funding Challenges
  - ⇒ Idea Café on Customer Service
  - ⇒ New Transit Technology and Apps
  - ⇒ How to Attract Future Riders
- ⇒ Changes at the Federal and State Levels
- ⇒ Asset Management and Capital Needs
- ⇒ Performance Measures to Demonstrate Your System's Value
  - ⇒ First and Last Mile Connections
  - ⇒ Future Transitways and Passenger Rail





# Transit Conference Preliminary Schedule

## Monday, October 16

- 10:00 am – Registration opens
- 11:00 am – 3-Hour Training Session I: NTI (with lunch)
- 1:00 pm – 3-Hour Training Session II: Metro Bus Travel Training
- 3:00 pm – CEO Summit
- 4:30 pm – MPTA Annual Meeting
- 5:30 pm – Transit Awards Ceremony
- 6:30 pm – Opening Reception

## Tuesday, October 17

- 7:00 am – Breakfast and Registration
- 8:30 am – Welcome by MPTA President **Craig Rempp** and Mayor of St. Cloud **David Kleis**
- 9:00 am – Keynote Speaker: **John Martin** from SIR
- 10:00 – 11:00 am Break in expo area**
- 11:00 – 12:00 pm – Concurrent Sessions
- 12:00 – 2:30 pm – Vendor Expo and Lunch**
- 2:45 pm – Tour of Mobility Training Center and Metro Bus Operations Center
- 6:00 pm – 22nd Annual First Transit Reception

## Wednesday, October 18

- 7:30 am – Breakfast and Registration
- 8:00 – 9:15 am – General Session: MnDOT and Metropolitan Council Updates
- 9:30 – 10:45 am – Concurrent Sessions
- 11:00 – 12:00 pm – Concurrent Sessions
- 12:00 pm – Closing Lunch: **Anne Grady** on Navigating Change
- 2:00 – 4:00 pm – New Flyer Tour



# Prairie Five RIDES Update

**Ted Nelson**



Prairie Five RIDES has continued to grow in service and ridership throughout the program's five county region. In August of 2016, Prairie Five RIDES merged with the City of Benson's transit system and welcomed its seventh town in which it offers city bus service. A total of 156,321 rides were provided in 2016 with considerable growth in ridership throughout the region. Our program's combination of bus, van, and volunteer driver transportation dedicated nearly 742,000 miles and over 43,000 hours to residents of Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift, and Yellow Medicine counties for medical appointments, social engagements, shopping, and more.

The Prairie Five RIDES program is enjoying another successful year having provided nearly 68,000 rides in the first four months of 2017, over 245,000 miles, and dedicated nearly 16,000 hours to quality transportation. RIDES aspires to continue to provide the same expert service throughout the region as well as expand services into the cities of Clarkfield and Clara City. With the help of a new grant for expansion, Prairie Five RIDES plans bring city bus service to these two cities twice per week. Outreach meetings for public input and opinion will begin July 2017 within your local areas. Service is expected to begin sometime after July 1st, 2017.

With high demands and ever-growing ridership, Prairie Five RIDES is always in search of volunteer drivers. If you or someone you know is interested in a volunteer opportunity that provides flexibility and a rewarding experience, please call the RIDES office at 1-877-757-4337 to learn more about becoming a volunteer driver.

Prairie Five RIDES would like to thank its many supporters of the program as well as the riders for our continued success.





*Operators Duane Moore, #9045, Scott Jester, #9097, Gene Hayes, #1586, were among 41 bus and light rail operators celebrated at Metro Transit's annual Ovations banquet on Wednesday, June 28. Ovations celebrates Metro Transit's best operators, who achieved career milestones and have established strong records for safe driving, customer service and attendance.*

## Statewide Transit News

[Metro Bus appoints new Director of Human Resources](#) - Mass Transit Magazine, July 26

[New bus route connects Fulda and Worthington](#) - Mass Transit Magazine, July 24

[Fergus Falls hosts 30th state bus 'roadeo'](#) - The Daily Journal, July 17

[Bus drivers to compete in 'roadeo'](#) - Rochester Post Bulletin, July 13

[Hiawathaland Transit continues to expand](#) - Northfield News, July 4

[Expanded bus services in Rochester offers opportunity](#) - Mass Transit Magazine, July 3

[Death of a Twin Cities transit board means counties control their own funding](#) - Star Tribune, June 21

[Hennepin, Ramsey counties raise transit tax](#) - Star Tribune, June 14

[Riders grateful for bus service that connects area towns to Rochester](#) - Rochester Post Bulletin, June 13

[Tri-county rural transit provides more than 400 rides in first months](#) - Mankato Free Press, June 13

[After 41 years, Metro Transit driver retires](#) - KARE 11, May 31



## DTA Unveils New Bus Routes at DTC Event

Submitted by HEATH HICKOK and edited by LAURA EASH

The Duluth Transit Authority (DTA) unveiled the final routing of four NE bus routes at the Duluth Transportation Center (DTC) on Tuesday, July 11th. Route 5 (West to Mall Area), Route 21 (Lakeside to Miller Hill Mall via UMD), Route 22 (Lincoln Park to Lakeside) and Route 23 (UMD Circulator) go into effect on August 27, 2017. Detailed information for these new bus routes will also be available at [duluthtransit.com](http://duluthtransit.com).

This new service is being funded by a grant the DTA received from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT). It is part of a MnDOT two-year pilot program that funds public transit initiatives throughout Greater Minnesota. A fifth new DTA route, Route 20 (Downtown to United Healthcare and Airpark), will begin on December 3.

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

- 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@transportationalliance.com](mailto:laura@transportationalliance.com).

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