

A bimonthly newsletter published by the Minnesota Public Transit Association.

# intransit

December 2017 Edition

## Fall and Winter Fun at MPTA



For more 2017 MN Public Transit Conference & Expo photos from October, visit [MPTA on Facebook](#).



MPTA members and staff learned about and rode MnDOT's autonomous bus pilot in December.

# President's Column

## Craig Rempp



Happy Holidays! It's been another great year for me as MPTA President. Our Board of Directors is planning for 2018 and we expect some exciting new initiatives that will help you as you plan for the future of your transit system.

Our 2017 Public Transit Conference was fantastic. Thanks to all of our great vendor members and sponsors who made the conference profitable and successful. We also want to thank all of the volunteers who helped to plan the conference and man the registration area throughout the event. It takes a team of committed people to pull off a great event. Next year we'll be joining forces with the folks from Wisconsin to host a bigger conference in LaCrosse. Mark your calendars and plan to spend October 15-17, 2018 having a great time learning the latest in transit trends and best practices in Wisconsin.

The Minnesota Public Transit Association is here to serve you and we'll be working to update our web presence so we'll be able to provide more information and serve as a clearinghouse for all things related to transit. Whether it's information on RTAP, events that are coming up, policy and system changes or other information you need, just ask us.

The MPTA Legislative Committee is working to develop our 2018 Legislative Agenda. We may need to play defense when it comes to transit funding if the budget forecast goes into negative numbers. The session will be very short – starting on February 20th and ending in May. We'll need to be prepared to hit the ground running. If you have any issues of concern or suggestions for legislation, please be sure to let me know: [craig.rempp@co.isanti.mn.us](mailto:craig.rempp@co.isanti.mn.us)

Another big initiative that MPTA is working on in conjunction with the Office of Transit is the development of 5-Year Plans for each transit system in Greater Minnesota. Larger systems already develop long-term plans but for smaller systems that rely on annual contracts with MnDOT, planning can be challenging and costly. The Office of Transit has agreed to hire consultants to work with each transit system to engage local officials in the development of a 5-year plan that will look at operating and capital needs as well as finances and trends in the area the system serves. We believe that these plans will greatly assist systems as they plan for the future as well providing a blueprint for how the state will meet the statutory goal of meeting 90% of the transit need in Greater Minnesota by 2025.

There are some great transportation events coming that you don't want to miss:

◆ **Transportation Day at the Capitol**

Wednesday, March 7th

*Best Western Capitol Ridge, St. Paul*

◆ **MN Bus Rodeo**

Friday, July 13th – Saturday, July 14th

*Duluth*

◆ **MN/WI Public Transportation Conference & Expo**

Monday, October 15th – Wednesday, October 17th

*La Crosse Center, La Crosse, WI*

It's a privilege for me to serve as your MPTA President. With the holiday season in full swing, let me take this opportunity to thank you for all the hard work you do throughout the year and to wish you and your loved ones a wonderful holiday and a new year filled with new transit riders and new adventures.

*Craig Rempp, President*







## Legislative Report

**Margaret Donahoe**

The 2018 Legislative Session begins February 20th and MPTA is preparing for what promises to be a short and fast-paced session with a couple of new legislators and a new Lt. Governor.

As transit systems continue to rely heavily on general fund appropriations, we are monitoring the forecast for general fund revenues. The November budget forecast was just released but with many caveats. It's clear that the February, 2018 forecast will provide much more clarity as to where things are at with the state budget.

A reduced U.S. economic growth forecast is mirrored in Minnesota's budget outlook. A deficit of \$188 million is now projected for the FY 2018-19 biennium. All major tax types show reduced growth with individual income taxes expected to be \$461 million lower over the current biennium. Spending is estimated to be \$398 million higher than end of session largely due to a higher forecast for special education spending along with unspent appropriations from FY 2017 that are projected to be spent in FY 2018. Partially offsetting lower revenue growth and higher spending are \$625 million in increased resources available from a positive closing balance in FY 2017. Reserve balances are \$20 million higher due to statutory allocations. A reduced budget outlook continues into the next biennium with negative balances due to slower growth.

The November forecast could not account for the potential impacts of changes to the federal tax code that may be passed by Congress. The forecast also recognizes congressional failure to appropriate funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). The forecast includes \$178 million in additional medical assistance spending in the current biennium since congress has not authorized funding for this program that provides federal funding for certain children's health care. Those funds may end up being appropriated by Congress, reducing the projected \$188 million deficit to about \$10 million. Unfortunately, the outlook does not look good for the following biennium. In the FY 2020-21 biennium base level spending is expected to exceed forecast revenue by \$337 million.

Transit advocates will need to be active and vocal in promoting the importance of transit service with legislators and local elected officials as funding becomes tight. With the release of the February forecast, there may be some adjustments proposed in the budget passed last year for the current biennium. MPTA is ready to work with you to set up meetings in your community with local legislators. We need decisionmakers to understand how transit service is making a difference for their constituents.

In addition to funding issues, the MPTA Board is looking at some policy changes that would provide more transparency and predictability in the distribution of transit funds. The Office of Transit is currently working on proposing changes to rules governing transit operations in the state and MPTA will be involved in making suggestions for rule changes such as allowing the department to sign multi-year contracts and reducing the local match requirement for capital funding. Changes to the definition of and reimbursement rate for volunteer drivers are also being considered.

Last session the legislature created a Metro Mobility Task Force to examine cost drivers in the provision of Metro Mobility service and to explore options including taxi and other ride sharing services. That task force has been meeting and will be developing a report with recommendations for the legislature to consider. We will keep you updated on the work of the Task Force.

The resignation of one House member and one Senate member will mean special elections to fill those seats. In addition, Governor Dayton has appointed Lt. Governor Tina Smith to fill the vacancy in the US Senate left by the resignation of Senator Al Franken so a Minnesota Senator will need to move into the role of Lt. Governor. It's not clear who that will be at this time.

As always, we need your participation as we fight to maintain funding for transit in Minnesota. We need to convince legislators that the unmet needs are real and that people are demanding more and better transit service all across the state. MPTA makes it easy for you to have your voice heard. Plan to attend Transportation Day at the Capitol on March 7th and we will connect you and your colleagues with your legislators and you will be able to hear from key legislative leaders regarding their views on transportation in Minnesota. With your involvement, MPTA will successfully work to improve transit funding and the policies that govern how transit service operates in the state.

## **Metro Bus announces new Chief Operating Officer**

Metro Bus has announced the appointment of Jim Perez to fill the role of Chief Operating Officer (COO). He has a master's degree in business management and over three decades of transit experience, working in both small and large agencies.

Perez has served in various transit operations, management and leadership roles throughout the country including over two decades with the San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS). Other leadership roles include working for Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), Central Maryland Regional Transit (CMRT), and the Metropolitan Transit System (MET) in Billings MT before joining Metro Bus.



## **Metro Bus website earns award**

The Metro Bus website, [ridemetrobust.com](http://ridemetrobust.com), has been awarded a SILVER W3 Award for 2017. The W3 Awards honors creative excellence on the web. Website entries are judged on creativity, usability, navigation, functionality, visual design and ease-of-use.

The Metro Bus website was designed by PAVLOV Advertising, a full service advertising agency based in Texas.

For more information about W3 awards visit [www.w3award.com](http://www.w3award.com).

### **Statewide Transit News**

[Self care: Take the bus!](#) - Metro Transit's Rider's Almanac blog, December 13

[Nicollet Mall revamp puts transit back at the center of downtown](#) - MT's Rider's Almanac blog, November 30

[Wanted: A new name for Becker County Transit](#) - Detroit Lakes Online, November 29

[Helping to 'drive' public transit traffic](#) - Wadena Pioneer Journal, November 23

[DTA general manager Dennis Jensen retiring after 38 years](#) - Duluth News Tribune, October 25

[TRUE Transit rural bus system to roll out soon](#) - Mankato Free Press, October 18

[MnDOT chooses EasyMile for autonomous shuttle bus project](#) - MnDOT, October 4

[VIDEO: Rep. Emmer recognizes Todd DeZurik, 1st place at 2017 Nat'l Comm. Transit Roadeo](#) - September 26

[Bus stops to become more accessible](#) - Mankato Free Press, September 23

[Metro Bus improves transit center](#) - KNSI, September 20

### **Job Opportunities**

[MnDOT is hiring a Transit Tribal Program Coordinator](#) - job code 14830.

[Tri-CAP is hiring bus drivers and a Purchasing & Payables Assistant.](#)

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*The 2nd Annual Discover Duluth Transportation event was held at the Duluth Transportation Center on October 26th. The DTA Board President and DTA staff coordinated a surprise “Dennis E. Jensen Day” proclamation for that day and unveiled a monumental plaque that is now displayed at the facility. Both were a surprise as he thought that his attendance was only for a welcome and introduction!*



*Central Community Transit (Meeker County) recently did their 3rd annual "Stuff the Bus" for non-perishable items for the Meeker County Food Shelf. The last two years they collected about 400 pounds. This year they collected over 600 pounds!*



*In October, the Metropolitan Council signed off on metro-area transportation projects to add to the state’s list of projects recommended for federal funding. A previous Transportation Improvement Program included the purchase of three coach buses and startup operating funds for express bus service from the Marschall Road Station in Shakopee to downtown Minneapolis., operated by MPTA member Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA).*



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Wendel, an architectural and engineering firm with offices throughout the U.S., announced Tony Kellen, part of Wendel’s Transit Business Development team, has been elected to the American Public Transportation Associations (APTA) Business Member Board of Governors (BMBG) for a two-year term. The APTA BMBG is responsible for directing and establishing activities for APTA’s Business Members and developing policy recommendations to APTA’s Executive Committee and Board of Directors. Kellen who joined Wendel in 2013 was formerly the director of operations and technology with St. Cloud Metro Bus.

*InTransit* newsletter is a bimonthly newsletter published by the Minnesota Public Transit Association (MPTA). Opinions and views expressed in this publication may not necessarily be those of the Minnesota Public Transit Association or its members.



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Send submissions for the next *InTransit* to [laura@transportationalliance.com](mailto:laura@transportationalliance.com).