



In Transit

A bimonthly newsletter published by the Minnesota Public Transit Association.

June 2018 Edition

INSIDE

President's Report

Craig Rempp

Legislative Report

Margaret Donahoe

Upcoming Events

Community Transit Celebrates Long-Time Rider

Shelly Pflaum

DTA Introduces New General Manager

Excerpt from Duluth News Tribune

Arterial Transitway Corridors Study

Excerpts from Metro Transit document

Route 495 Ridership Growth

Richard Crawford

Community Transit Adds to Fleet

Shelly Pflaum

DTA Presents 2017 Safety Awards

Heath Hickok



President's Column

Craig Rempp

Transit Director
Greater Mankato Transit System



Lots of changes and new initiatives are happening with MPTA – it seems to be the theme of the year!

I have taken on a new position as Manager of the Mankato Transit System and will continue to serve as MPTA President. The transition to the new position has meant new opportunities and challenges that I'm looking forward to, in addition to the developing and continuous work with MPTA.

Our association has a new Project Coordinator – Samantha Schwanke. She is taking over for Laura Eash who moved on to a new organization. Samantha has a background in journalism and graphic design and we're looking forward to getting to know her better in the coming months. She'll be at the Bus Roadeo, as well as working on coordinating the fall transit conference.

MPTA has been busy working on a few new initiatives. We're working with the Office of Transit and Active Transportation on the development of Five-Year Transit System plans for smaller Greater Minnesota transit systems. MnDOT agreed to support the development of these plans to further the goals that we all share: planning for a transit future with more transit services throughout the state.



Senator Tina Smith with Craig Rempp, Daryn Toso and LuAnn Bleiler at the Transportation Alliance Washington D.C. Fly-In in May.

In order to make expanded service a reality, we need to carefully plan for what kind of new service makes sense, including the additional funding that will be required for future operating and capital needs. Each system will have the opportunity to work one-on-one with a consultant to craft a plan that works for their system. The plans will allow everyone to get a better handle on the unmet needs and the benefits that transit service can bring to local communities. Please check out our MPTA website for updated information as the Five-Year Transit System plan process unfolds: <https://www.mpta-transit.org/five-year-transit-plans-greater-minnesota-systems>.

The 2018 Legislative Session concluded with few accomplishments. Particularly for transit, it was a session with very few initiatives that became law. Over the interim, MPTA will be re-grouping and developing new policy and funding initiatives. We would like your input as we plan for the 2019 Session.

Federal transit funding is another area that we have been focusing on this year. A group of MPTA members attended the Transportation Alliance Washington, D.C. Fly-In from May 22nd to 24th to talk directly with

Congressional members and staff about transit funding needs in Minnesota. The federal appropriations process is currently underway so it was a good time to be talking about federal funding levels. We also worked to get a bill introduced in Congress to address the lower reimbursement rate for mileage by those doing charitable work. Rep. Rick Nolan introduced legislation that would make the charitable mileage reimbursement the same as the business reimbursement rate – an annual determination made by the IRS that takes into account the current cost to operate a vehicle. MPTA will continue to push for support and passage of this legislation.

Another area where MPTA is getting more involved is with training opportunities available through the federal RTAP program. MPTA members are providing input as part of the RTAP Advisory Committee on the use of federal dollars, which have been increasing in recent years. If you have training needs or ideas for training sessions, please let us know.

Speaking of great training opportunities – our Annual Bus Rodeo is right around the corner: July 13-15th. This year we will be in Duluth, which is a beautiful location. We want to thank the Duluth Transit Authority and everyone on the Bus Rodeo Planning Committee for all of their hard work on this year's event! Registration is available on our MPTA web site: www.mpta-transit.org/event/2018-minnesota-bus-rodeo.

The other big event of the year is also in the planning stages – our fall transit conference. This year we are once again "Teaming Up For Transit" with our friends and colleagues in Wisconsin. The conference will take place in La Crosse, Wisconsin from October 15-17th. Mark your calendars and plan to be at the biggest transit conference in the Midwest! Registration will be available on our MPTA web site. Check often for updates!

As always, I want to thank you for the privilege of serving as your MPTA President. Together we are embarking on new initiatives and changes that are improving the quality of transit service throughout Minnesota. While new initiatives and changes can involve more work initially (something I'm learning first hand in my new job) in the end, we'll all be better prepared to make the vision of a future that involves expanded transit options for everyone a reality.



"President's Column"

Craig Rempp

Transit Director

Greater Mankato Transit System

Legislative Report

Margaret Donahoe

Executive Director

Minnesota Transportation Alliance

The 2018 Legislative Session was billed as one that would be short and focused on conformity with the new federal tax changes, passage of a capital bonding bill and some adjustments to the two-year budget passed in 2017. With a forecast of a \$329 million budget surplus in the general fund, legislators debated various proposals to increase spending and reduce taxes. However, the legislative process was not easy in an election year and at the end of the day, the only major bill signed into law by the Governor was the capital bonding bill.

For transportation, the House and Senate committees spent the first part of the session dealing with the cost to fix computer problems with the MnLARS system in the Driver and Vehicle Services Division of the Department of Public Safety. There were no bills introduced to increase funding for transit or roads for the FY18-19 biennium. There was a bill to place a constitutional amendment on the ballot asking the public if all of the sales tax on auto parts should be deposited in the Highway Trust Fund over a 5 year period of time starting in FY2021. The legislature has statutorily dedicated about half of that revenue to Highway Trust Fund already. The bill was passed in the House but was not passed in the Senate.

For transit, the supplemental budget bill (SF3656) did include a one-time capital appropriation of \$2.1 million for suburban transit providers but that funding was lost when the governor vetoed the bill. There were projects in the capital bonding bill. The Metropolitan Council requested \$50 million for Bus Rapid Transit projects and another \$50 million for the Heywood Bus Garage in Minneapolis. The final bill (HF4425) did not contain any funding for the BRT projects or the Heywood bus garage. MnDOT requested \$2.5 million for the Rochester Bus Garage and this was included in the bonding bill.

The MPTA Board approved a legislative agenda that supported some policy changes as well as supporting the investments in the previous paragraph. Recent issues with reimbursement rates for volunteer drivers led the association to introduce legislation. The bill – HF3631 - clarifies that volunteer drivers providing transit service and only receive reimbursement are NOT “For-Hire”. The bill was introduced by Rep. Jeff Howe who offered the language as an amendment in the transportation committee for discussion purposes. MPTA plans to spend more time over the interim working to build legislative support and address some of the concerns raised by opponents of the legislation.

On the federal level, Rep. Rick Nolan introduced legislation that allows for the same process in determining the reimbursement rate for charitable purposes that is used for business purposes – a annual rate set by the IRS – eliminating the current 14 cents per mile rate. The Volunteer Driver Tax Appreciation Act of 2018 (HR5662) was introduced April 27th and was referred to the Ways and Means Committee. Rep. Collin Peterson is a cosponsor and MPTA is working to get other members of the Minnesota delegation to sign on as cosponsors.

MPTA had also discussed legislation that would provide more transparency regarding how the Office of Transit and Active Transportation makes decisions in awarding operating grants to systems in Greater Minnesota. Legislation was introduced but withdrew the bill from a hearing as the MPTA Board worked with OTAT to improve the grant award process for 2019.

Legislation modifying the governance of the Metropolitan Council and eliminating the current Transportation Advisory Board was passed by the legislature. The bill would have increased the size of the Council from 17 members to 28 with local elected officials making up most of the membership along with the MnDOT Commissioner and a person representing nonmotorized transportation, freight and transit appointed by the MnDOT Commissioner. Currently, all members of the Metropolitan Council are appointed by the governor. The legislation was vetoed by Governor Dayton.

As we head into another campaign season, it will be critical for candidates to hear about the important role that transit service plays in their communities and the need for policies and funding levels that support expanded transit service throughout the state. MPTA will assist all transit advocates in getting the word out and communicating with those who will be in a position to decide the future of transit in Minnesota.

"Legislative Report"

Margaret Donahoe

Executive Director

Minnesota Transportation Alliance



Upcoming Events



View the MPTA Events Page online at:
<https://www.mpta-transit.org/events>

31st Annual Minnesota State Bus Rodeo

Get ready for the 31st Annual Minnesota State Bus Rodeo! The event is taking place in Duluth, Minnesota on Friday, July 13 and Saturday, July 14. Registration has closed for contestants, judges and guests, but sponsor registration is open until Wednesday, June 20. [Register here.](#)

Hosted by the Duluth Transit Authority (DTA), this event features a 12-stage obstacle course at the Duluth Heritage Sports Center, located at 120 N 30th Ave W. The DTA will provide 40-foot Gillig buses for the large-bus competition and Arrowhead Transit will provide vehicles for the small-bus competition. The DTA will provide shuttle buses between the course and the Radisson Duluth—Harborview hotel, located at 505 W Superior St, where all event activities outside of the competition will take place.

The registration table will be open at the Radisson starting on Friday from 4:00 - 7:00 PM. The Welcome Reception will be in the same area at 6:00 PM, followed by the Judge's Meeting at 7:00 PM.

The Opening Ceremony will kick off at 8:00 AM on Saturday. The Large Bus Competition runs from 8:45 – 10:00 AM and the Small Bus Competition runs from 10:30 AM to 12 noon. Other activities include TSA training, trolley rides and meals with colleagues and peers. Click here to view the full [Schedule of Events](#).

This Minnesota public transit tradition provides safety training to bus operators and gives the public transit community the opportunity to network. This event recognizes the men and women who are proud to call themselves bus operators.

Visit the [Events page of the MPTA website](#) to learn more!



2018 MN/WI Public Transportation Conference & Expo— Save the Date!

MPTA's 2018 Minnesota / Wisconsin Public Transportation Conference and Expo is Tuesday, October 16 and Wednesday, October 17 at the La Crosse Center, located at 300 Harborview Plaza in La Crosse, Wisconsin. There will be a block of rooms reserved at the Radisson Hotel, located at 200 Harborview Plaza. The event will feature a large vendor expo starting at noon on Tuesday, with vendor setup on Monday, October 15th starting at 11 AM. Vendors and sponsors can [register now!](#)

Keep an eye on our website and social media pages for additional updates, as well as interesting information on state and nationwide transportation news. Please send any local news or job postings to Samantha@transportationalliance.com to be featured on our social media pages or even in the next InTransit newsletter.

Event page: <https://www.mpta-transit.org/event/2018-mnwi-public-transportation-conference-expo>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MNPublicTransit/>

Twitter: [@MNPublicTransit](https://twitter.com/MNPublicTransit)



"Upcoming Events"

Community Transit Celebrates Long-Time Rider



Shelly Pflaum

Access Coordinator

Community Transit of United Community Action Partnership

A Community Transit bus in Jackson is on its way to pick up some regular passengers. Without really thinking about it, the driver glances in a window of a little house as she drives by. She's checking on another long-time rider.

Lyla Wing sits in her chair by the window, enjoying the early morning sun. Things are as they should be. Things are, in fact, as they have been for years. And Lyla is plenty content with that.

"I've always got things I can do. I'm never bored," she said with an air of something akin to defiance.

Community Transit staff can attest to just how active Lyla is. She just turned 100 years old and is possibly the longest riding-passenger for the 8 county public transit program run by United Community Action Partnership in Southwest Minnesota.

Lyla said she started riding during the winter months 27 years ago after she noticed a decline in her driving skills and made the wise decision to hang up the keys for good.

"I almost went out in front of a car a couple of times in one day and I thought, 'well, that's enough of that,'" she said. "I brought my car home that night and said, 'that's it.'"

It's a decision she doesn't regret. "I thought, 'I don't want to cause no accidents and get anybody killed—or myself, either.'"

Taking the bus isn't always possible, but that's where family comes in.

"If there was something important [and the bus wasn't running] the kids would come and get me," she said.

Since adjusting to life without her car, Lyla has been able to get almost everywhere using Community Transit as the biggest piece of her transportation patchwork.

"It's been wonderful. I can go, now, wherever I want."

Lyla proved that riding public transit didn't have to slow her down.

"I went pert near every day to the [Senior] Center, medical appointments, and I went for groceries, which I don't do any more, and dentist appointments," she recalled. "I remember riding with all the little kids," she said. "When I didn't go, of course, they fussed because you forgot me."



Lyla Wing is one of Community Transit's longest riding passengers. "When it started, I started," she said. She poses here with a bus pass given to her on her 100th birthday.

She has been riding with Community Transit so long that there's no way to determine exactly how many rides she's taken. Based on the data that is available, her estimated trip count is 15,255.

The number doesn't faze Lyla. "I know it's been quite a few," she said, but her favorite part is not getting from one place to the next. "[It is] all the jokes. All the fun we have on the bus."

Even at 100, she's still active and riding several times a week, often to the Senior Center, a place where her connections run deep.



Community Transit staff Amanda Genslinger and Randy Drahota present Lyla with flowers, a card and an unlimited monthly bus pass for her 100th birthday.

Early in her journey with Community Transit, she traveled out there for both work and play.

"I worked three years, and then I quit and I had my hip surgery. Then, I worked for a couple years because they couldn't find anybody," she said.

In those days, she said, the Senior Center was very active, with well attended meals and multiple events per week.

"When I started we were serving 50 people a day," she said. "Now, we're serving 15."

Lyla said that, while there has been a shift away from Senior Centers which started as people began working later, she will continue meeting with her friends at the Center. She doesn't believe all hope is lost, either. These days going to Senior Center is a multi-generational affair, for her.

"My grandkids came from Wisconsin, retired," she said. "They love it down there. They've been there several times already."

Family and friends will gather at the Senior Center in June to celebrate Lyla's 100th year, but for the staff at Community Transit, such a momentous occasion for such a special rider couldn't wait. As Lyla entered the bus to go to the Senior Center on her birthday, she was presented with flowers, a card signed by all the Community Transit staff in the Jackson office, and her usual unlimited monthly ride pass.

No doubt, she'll put it to good use.

"Community Transit Celebrates Long-Time Rider"

Shelly Pflaum

Access Coordinator

Community Transit of United Community Action Partnership

DTA Introduces New General Manager

Brady Slater

Excerpts from Duluth News Tribune's article "'It's about helping people': New GM takes place atop DTA"



Phil Pumphrey pulled into town last week and immediately went to work at the helm of the Duluth Transit Authority — taking over as only the second permanent general manager in the past 39 years.

On Pumphrey's first day, there was a meet-and-greet with employees, followed by an evening spent getting to know better the members of the board of directors who hired him in April.

Like the passengers served by the DTA, Pumphrey took a transfer to get to Duluth. He moved from Connecticut where he was the assistant GM working with Connecticut Transit operations in Hartford, Stamford and New Haven — a triangle of cities on or near the Atlantic Coast. Having started as a driver in Austin, Texas, Pumphrey spent 21 years with First Transit, a transit giant and longtime management company contracted to operate the DTA.



Pumphrey comes with an easy charm to go with the requisite love for the work and deep understanding of what it means to be the primary mode of transportation for the DTA's 6,000 riders a day and three million riders annually.

"I think it's about serving and helping people," Pumphrey said. "Your main job is to give people access to things like education, health care, employment, friends and a social life. They're bettering themselves, their lives and their families and we're helping them do it."

Pumphrey is taking over for Dennis Jensen, who retired last fall after 38 years atop the DTA. Both men met several times throughout their careers with First Transit.

"I've known Dennis a long time," Pumphrey said, admiring the work of his predecessor by highlighting the still like-new hub downtown, the Duluth Transportation Center.

"Electronic fareboxes, automatic passenger counters — the technology has changed so much in the last 30 years," Pumphrey said. "Electronic buses might be the future, or maybe autonomous vehicles since they're making a lot of progress."

Like a lot of the business office staff at the DTA, Pumphrey climbed the ladder after a stint in the driver's seat. Even after taking over as a supervisor following five years as a bus driver in Austin, he stayed on as a backup driver.

DTA employees were already responding well to Pumphrey's arrival.

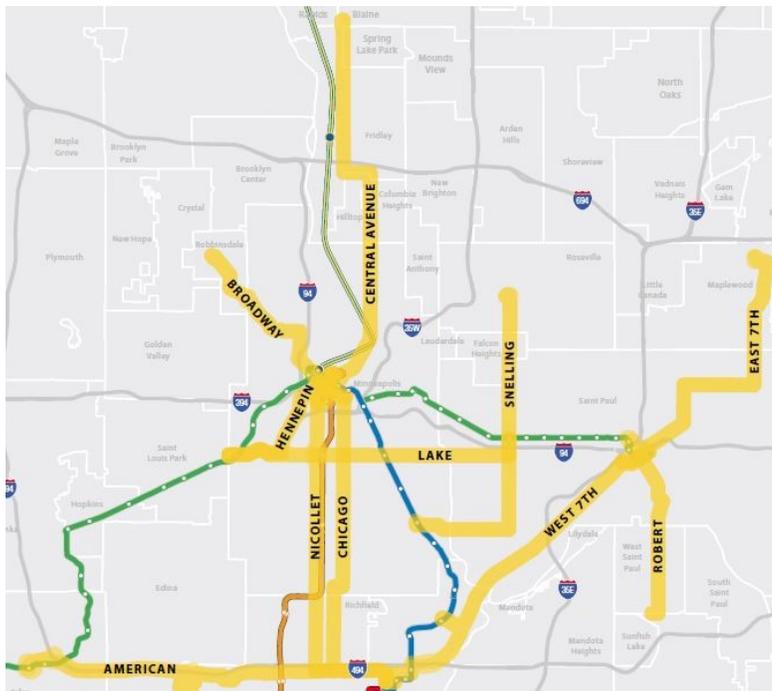
"Phil is new here, but he's just new here," said the DTA's director of maintenance Jim Caywood. "He brings a wealth of experience with him."

Read the whole article online: [Duluth News Tribune](#)

Arterial Transitway Corridors Study

Metro Transit

Excerpts from a Metro Transit document. Read the entire piece here: https://www.metrotransit.org/Data/Sites/1/media/pdfs/atcs/atcs_summary.pdf



In 2011, Metro Transit embarked on the Arterial Transitway Corridors Study (ATCS), a year-long study of improvements along some of the most heavily traveled transit corridors in the Twin Cities area. The purpose of the ATCS was to develop a bus facility and service plan to enhance efficiency, speed, reliability, customer experience, and transit market competitiveness on 11 high-demand urban transitway corridors. The] document explains Arterial BRT/rapid bus and its benefits in the 11 study corridors.

The routes examined in this study account for half of the region's urban local transit service and carry 86,000 people each weekday. Transit's efficiency and attractiveness in these corridors is limited by slow speeds and can be enhanced significantly by improving passenger facilities.

Past studies consistently show the 11 transit corridors to be among the strongest for potential ridership in the region. However, narrow streets in these highly developed areas mean that constructing light rail or dedicated busways would not be feasible without significant community and transportation impacts and high costs.

Frequent stops and delays at red lights significantly slow transit speeds. On a typical corridor, buses are moving less than half the time. Furthermore, the transit infrastructure in these corridors is not on par with the role transit plays in providing corridor transportation.

Rapid bus offers a context-sensitive solution that better meets transportation needs in these environments.

What Is Rapid Bus?

Rapid bus provides faster and more frequent service as well as an improved customer experience. Faster service is accomplished by reducing customer boarding and traffic signal delays and stopping at fewer locations. An improved customer experience is achieved by adding stations, using information technology, and improving service reliability and vehicle comfort. Rapid bus operates in existing traffic lanes, with signal priority to help improve transit travel time.

Learn more by watching this informative YouTube video by Metropolitan Council: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcWtr_3OWXM

Route 495 Ridership Growth

Richard Crawford

Public Information Manager
MVRTA



Route 495, a suburb-to-suburb demonstration project funded by the Minnesota State Legislature, continued to see strong ridership growth during the first quarter of 2018.

The route, which Minnesota Valley Transit Authority started in August of 2016, connects Shakopee to Burnsville and the Mall of America seven days a week.

In the first quarter of 2018, daily weekday ridership grew by 46 percent from 202 rides per day to 295. Weekend ridership also has seen strong quarter-over-quarter growth – up 43 percent on Saturdays and 39 percent on Sundays.

“It’s fairly unusual to see such a significant ridership jump this early with a new route,” said MVRTA Executive Director Luther Wynder. “It provides justification to the support provided by state officials.”



Route 495 provides transportation options to the fast-growing employment base in Scott County as well as leisure travel options to south metro transit riders. Since inception in August of 2016, Route 495 has helped foster expanded partnerships with Mystic Lake Casino in Prior Lake, and Canterbury Park and Amazon in Shakopee.

MVRTA also realigned its Route 465, which serves the Cedar Riverside area in Minneapolis, to provide a timed connection with Route 495, which has served as a transportation lifeline to employees working at Amazon and other businesses in the south metro. In addition to timed connections with Route 465, passengers can connect with local routes at Burnsville Transit Station as well as the Blue Line Light Rail at Mall of America. Route 495 has designated stops at Marschall Road Transit Station in Shakopee, Burnsville Transit Station and the Mall of America.

For more details on Route 495 and a link to the pocket schedule, go to <https://www.mvta.com/routes/495>.

Community Transit Adds to Fleet



Shelly Pflaum

Access Coordinator

Community Transit of United Community Action Partnership

A new bus has been added to the fleet at Community Transit. The bus was ordered for service in Murray County as a part of the normal replacement process for old buses, but the team at Community Transit is excited.

"This bus is the first one that has come since we updated our logo," said Transit Director Cathleen Amick.

Community Transit is a public transportation program run by United Community Action Partnership. Since 2013, the program has added five counties to its service area.

"We've added a lot of counties quickly," said Amick, "but each of those counties had their own county-wide transit service before they joined forces with us."

The logo redesign was undertaken last year to bring all the individual services together under one image. Amick said they also wanted to be recognizable to anyone who might be from a metro area.

"We tried to keep the national public transit symbol central to the design," she said. Any buses or materials ordered for Community Transit in the future will incorporate the new logo.

The newest Community Transit bus looks different, but it was made possible through the same long-standing support and partnerships. Each purchase is only partially funded by MNDOT. Funding from cities and counties is what makes each purchase possible.

"Every time we receive a new bus I'm grateful," said Amick. "We could not continue operating without the support of our cities, counties and the public."

For additional information, please contact:

Shelly Pflaum

507-537-3861

shelly.pflaum@unitedcapmn.org



Left to right: Carmen Hailey, United Community Action Partnership; Slayton City Councilman Chris Jacobson; Tara VanderSteen, Southwest Health and Human Services; Brittany Perish, Maple Lawn Senior Care; Murray County Commissioner Dave Thiner; Cathleen Amick, United Community Action Partnership

DTA Presents 2017 Safety Awards

Heath Hickok

Director of Marketing
Duluth Transit Authority



The Duluth Transit Authority (DTA) hosted the 36th Annual DTA Employee Safety and Recognition Award Breakfast at their Operating Center on Wednesday, April 11, 2018. This annual tradition features breakfast for all DTA staff and retirees who return to celebrate the announcement of the Employee of the Year and major safe-driving milestones for bus operators and mechanics.

The DTA recognized and commended 66 bus operators and 23 maintenance employees who worked the entire year without a preventable or lost-time accident with a cumulative total of 953 years of accident-free service. Several DTA employees reached significant safety milestones in 2017. Nine reached 5 years of accident-free service, three at 10 years, seven at 15 years, five at 25 years and one Bus Operator, Glenn McGill, reached 30 years of accident-free service.

The DTA also announced Payroll Supervisor, Stacy St. John, as the Employee of the Year for 2017. She began her career at the DTA in a temporary full-time position as an Accounting Analyst in December of 1979. She was promoted to Payroll Supervisor in 1984. Stacy was DTA Employee of the Month in June of 1984, June of 1991, January of 2003 and October of 2017. This is her first DTA Employee of the Year Award.



Stacy St. John being presented the DTA Employee of the Year award.



Glenn McGill with his 30 years of accident-free service award.



In Transit



MPTA

MINNESOTA PUBLIC TRANSIT ASSOCIATION

Upcoming Events

2018 Minnesota Bus Roadeo

July 13-14 in Duluth, MN

2018 MN/WI Public Transportation Conference & Expo

October 15-17 in La Crosse, WI

Find event information: [MPTA Events](#)

“Like” and “Follow” MPTA on Facebook and Twitter for news from MPTA members, as well as local and national media coverage on transit developments and issues.

