

# intransit

**Fall 2014 Edition**

## **Tri-CAP Transit Connection adds new county to the mix**

*Contributed by KEVEN ANDERSON*

After many months of planning, Tri-CAP Transit Connection successfully orchestrated a merger of Sherburne County into their services effective June 30, 2014. Tri-CAP rolled out four Sherburne County routes with this transition. In Elk River, bus storage and office space are located in the city maintenance garage. The City of Elk River is currently being provided community based service from 7:00 AM to 4:30 PM with a new route soon to be added from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM which will also provide more access for the outlying areas. In addition, three daily routes cover outlying Sherburne County areas transporting passengers to Big Lake and Elk River. Weekly shopping trips from Becker and Big Lake are running on Tuesdays into Elk River and Monticello. Tri-CAP is excited to be working with the many service based organizations in the area and has been working hard to forge new markets and make new friends!



## **Rolling Hills Transit Rider Profile: Maggie Fitch**



*Maggie Fitch is a co-owner of a school age child care center that uses the Rolling Hills Transit system with their kinder-care program. Without it, the center would not be able to take field trips during the school year. Fitch says Rolling Hills Transit is very affordable and more than accommodating to the center's needs and timeline of use.*

# President's Column

***Marc Hall***



It's been a busy but productive year as President of the Minnesota Public Transit Association. After our successful Bus Roadeo and Minnesota Public Transit Conference, we're working to prepare for the coming 2015 Legislative Session. As always, MPTA will be advocating strongly at the Capitol to address transit needs across Minnesota.

As we heard during the fall campaign, many legislators and the governor agree that transportation systems have been underfunded and the time to address transportation needs is during the 2015 Session. We have a real opportunity to make progress in our efforts to provide more transit service and better service to Minnesotans. However, this won't happen without the involvement of transit advocates speaking out for the hundreds of thousands of residents who rely on transit service every day. We need you to talk to your local legislators about the importance of transit in your community. With many new legislators being sworn in when session starts in January, now is the time to invite legislators to visit your system or meet over a cup of coffee and talk about how transit operates in the community. These kinds of meetings make a huge difference.

During the campaign, MPTA members participated in a number of transportation candidate forums, talking directly with candidates about transit service and needs so that these legislators will have some background knowledge and understanding of transit. We greatly appreciate these members taking the time to educate candidates and news reporters about the value of the work they do. It doesn't take a lot of time or special knowledge, just a few minutes talking about what you do every day helps to make the case for supporting transit service.

The 2015 Session will begin in early January and we will need to be prepared to push transportation funding to the top of the agenda. There are a number of ways in which you can make a difference in the level of funding for transit. You can join your colleagues at Transportation Day at the Capitol on February 12th, you can help mobilize riders through our post card campaign, you can meet with legislators in your hometown and you can send simply email messages in support of transit. All of these activities will be critical as we work to ensure that transit is not left behind in the transportation debate.

MPTA is the only statewide organization of transit systems that works solely on your behalf. We rely on your membership to maintain a strong voice for transit in all parts of the state. We want to hear from you about the issues and concerns you may have and how we can support you. Feel free to contact me at any time to talk about the work that MPTA does and if we can serve you better. We will be in touch about our events and our work. We all know that things are changing in the transit world with more system consolidation and new options for funding. What won't change is our commitment to do the best we can to support you and advocate for transit in Minnesota.

# Legislative Report

**Margaret Donahoe**

## Election Impact for Transportation

The 2014 campaign season ended with many new faces and changes at both the state and federal level that will have an impact on efforts to increase investments in transit.

At the federal level, the US Senate has switched from a Democratic majority to a Republican majority. The new leadership of the Senate means that both house of Congress are now controlled by Republicans who will need to work with President Obama over the next two years. This divided government is certainly not new but there are many questions about how much will be accomplished with different agendas between Congress and the White House. One of the areas that has been talked about as a potential area of compromise is infrastructure spending.

In Minnesota, Senator Al Franken was re-elected to another 6-year term in the US Senate. Minnesota's Congressional Delegation in the House did not change much. The only member who will not be returning is Rep. Michele Bachmann who chose not to run for re-election. She will be replaced by Tom Emmer, a Republican who previously served in the Minnesota Legislature.

Congress will be under pressure to pass a new, multi-year surface transportation authorization act to replace MAP-21 which expires at the end of May, 2015. There has been little appetite to increase the federal fuel tax and no other funding plans have been put forward that have been viewed as potential solutions to the long-term insolvency of the Federal Highway Trust Fund. The Obama administration has proposed closing corporate tax loopholes and shifting the one-time savings to the Highway Trust Fund. There may be potential for some kind of tax reform measure that includes funding for infrastructure.

We may also see a continuing resolution that maintains the status quo for another year or two. While Republicans have proposed reducing spending from the Highway Trust Fund in the past, it's unclear if that will be on the table and it's unlikely that the President would support such a proposal.

At the state level, the Minnesota House of Representatives has switched party control. The GOP now has the majority in the House and will need to work with a DFL-controlled Senate and DFL governor. Republicans now hold 72 seats in the Minnesota House while the DFL holds 62 seats. There are 26 newly elected representatives of which 21 are Republicans and 5 are DFLers.

Committee chairs have just been announced and Tim Kelly from Red Wing will be chair of the House Transportation Committee. The make-up of committees in the Senate is expected to remain the same as it was during the last biennium with Senator Scott Dibble (DFL-Minneapolis) chairing the Senate Transportation Committee.

During the campaign candidates on both sides of the aisle talked about the need to improve transportation, although Republican candidates tended to focus more on addressing road and bridge needs. Many candidates stated that "all options are on the table" and would not necessarily rule out revenue increases. The new House Speaker-Designate, Kurt Daudt (R-Crown) said that he believes that transportation funding will be a top priority during the 2015 session. Governor Mark Dayton, in his first press conference after the election, stated that he wants to make transportation the number one priority for the upcoming session.

*Continued on page 4*



# Legislative Report

## (continued from page 3)

The expectation is that Dayton will include proposals for increasing transportation revenue as part of his budget that is due by January 15th. If the proposals follow the measures debated last session, we would expect a sales tax on fuel, an increase in the metro sales tax for transit and a shift of revenue from the sales tax on leased vehicles to both Greater Minnesota transit and metro county highway purposes.

The Minnesota Public Transit Association is developing a new legislative agenda for 2015. The agenda will include funding proposals to increase transit operating and capital budgets statewide.

The Move MN campaign will continue its efforts to make transportation a higher priority with the public and to reinforce the need to address serious transportation needs and problems throughout the state with a long-term, multi-modal funding package.

## Your transit system can help the Move MN campaign!

Contact Laura at 651-659-0804 or [laura\\_eash@mpta-transit.org](mailto:laura_eash@mpta-transit.org) to request postcards for your system's riders to fill out—MPTA will mail them to you for free and give them to the governor and your state legislators once they're returned.



## Metro Bus maintenance manager receives national sustainability award

*Contributed by BERTA HARTIG*

Ed Yorek, Maintenance Manager for St. Cloud Metro Bus, was named a Sustainability All-Star at a conference hosted by Green Fleet magazine in late October in Schaumburg, Ill.

The Sustainability All-Stars award recognizes fleet professionals who have made a significant contribution to environmental sustainability and fleet efficiencies in the industry.

Yorek oversaw Metro Bus's conversion to Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) to fuel its buses. Metro Bus is the first public transit system in Minnesota to utilize CNG as a primary fleet fuel source. Yorek was also responsible for partnering with St. Cloud State University (SCSU) and Sodexo to develop the Husky Fried Ride — a bus that was operates on an 80-20 mixture of recycled used cooking oil and diesel fuel; with SCSU as the primary supplier of the used cooking oil.



## Metro Bus Opens Mobility Training Center

By LAURA EASH

On Friday, November 7, 2014 St. Cloud Metro Bus celebrated its new Mobility Training Center with a ribbon cutting ceremony and an open house.

The center is located in downtown St. Cloud at 700 West St. Germain Street in a renovated building that previously housed a bank and offices. The City of St. Cloud and MnDOT helped Metro Bus open this first of its kind in the state facility, which includes a training bus, different surfaces to practice navigating, a traffic signal, and a bus bike rack.

Call 320-529-4497 to learn more about the center and their free Travel Training program. Also, visit MPTA's Facebook page for more photos!



*Exterior of the Mobility Training Center*



*Ribbon cutting ceremony - speakers during the ceremony included MnDOT Office of Transit Director Mike Schadauer (second from left), St. Cloud Mayor and Metro Bus Commission Chair Dave Kleis (third from left), and Metro Bus Executive Director Ryan Daniel (center, holding the scissors). The Training Bus is in the background.*



*Open House guests*



## **Congratulations Award Winners!**

Distinguished Career:

**BOB APITZ, BROWN COUNTY HEARTLAND EXPRESS**

Transit Professional of the Year:

**MARK FUHRMANN, METRO TRANSIT**

Transit System of the Year:

**METRO MOBILITY**

Friend of Transit:

**TRAILBLAZER TRANSIT JOINT POWERS BOARD**

**TRI-CAP TRANSIT CONNECTIONS BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Minnesota Bus Operator of the Year:

**JERRY GILLMAN, ST. CLOUD METRO BUS**

**JERRY OLSON, METRO TRANSIT**





**Thanks for attending  
this year's conference!**



*City of St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman*



*Touring Union Depot*



*Riding Metro Transit's METRO Green Line*



*Author Jarrett Walker*

**Save the Date for the 2015 Joint Conference with Wisconsin!**

**October 19 - 21, 2015**

**Duluth Entertainment Convention Center**

***Vendor Expo on Tuesday, October 20th***



## MVTA Grows with Addition of BlueXpress (Prior Lake and Shakopee) Service

The merged Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA)/BlueXpress Board of Directors met for the first time in September. The merger became official on September 9, when the final MVTA party to the agreement (Scott County) approved the Third Amended and Restated Joint Powers Agreement of the MVTA.

This move brings the MVTA Board to a total of nine parties: Cities of Apple Valley, Burnsville, Eagan, Prior Lake, Rosemount, Savage and Shakopee; Counties of Dakota and Scott. Councilmembers from Prior Lake and Shakopee were administered the Oath of Office and became MVTA Board members.

“This is a momentous occasion,” said MVTA Chair Clint Hooppaw (who also serves as an Apple Valley Councilmember). “We are meeting one of our strategic objectives, which is *The Board identifies and pursues opportunities for expansion through a position of leadership and advocacy*. We strongly believe that we can be more effective together than as individual organizations.”

“We believe this merger is good for our riders and for the City of Prior Lake,” said Mike McGuire, Prior Lake Councilmember and new member of the MVTA Board. “By combining with MVTA and creating a larger system, the potential for future transit services is far greater than what the BlueXpress could provide. We are excited to see where this takes us.”

Shakopee Councilor Michael Luce stated, “Shakopee is pleased to become a member of the MVTA. As part of a larger, stronger system, the merger will



*MVTA Board members, from left, are: Michael Luce (Shakopee), Clint Hooppaw (MVTA Chair, Apple Valley), Bill Coughlin (Burnsville), Liz Workman (Dakota County), Jane Victorey (Savage), Beverley Miller (MVTA Executive Director), Mike McGuire (Prior Lake), Bill Droste (Rosemount Mayor), Bob Crawford (Elko New Market), Gary Hansen (Eagan) and Jon Ulrich (Scott County).*

allow us to be able to offer our riders more options to meet their transit needs. It will also allow for greater flexibility and overall efficiency.”

BlueXpress riders should continue to expect the same quality of service throughout the transition as the MVTA is also rider and customer service-focused. The look of the buses might change, but ultimately there should be more opportunities for the residents of Prior Lake and Shakopee to take advantage of transit. A study of the needs in northern Scott County is slated to be conducted in 2015-2016.

Currently, the MVTA is integrating BlueXpress service into its system; buses are being modified to include the MVTA’s technology (including free Wi-Fi) and to reflect the MVTA Brand; agreements between Prior Lake or Shakopee and the Metropolitan Council are set to be re-assigned to the MVTA; and a multitude of other details are being completed.





## MVTA Sets 2014 State Fair Ridership Record

While the 2014 Minnesota State Fair attendance reached an all-time record that was up two percent from its previous record, the MVTA State Fair ridership for 2014 was 57,320, up 33 percent from our previous record in 2011. MVTA provided service from the Burnsville Transit Station to the Minnesota State Fair on all 12 days of the Fair. Weekend service was also provided from the Eagan and Marshall Road (Shakopee) Transit Stations to the Fair.

2014 State Fair ridership included:

- Weekday ridership from the Burnsville Transit Station was 21,214.
- Weekend (two Saturdays, two Sundays and Labor Day) ridership from the Burnsville Transit Station was 20,962.
- Weekend ridership from the Eagan Transit Station was 11,656.
- New this year was weekend service from the Marshall Road Transit Station in Shakopee and ridership was 3,488.

“It was exciting to see strong State Fair ridership after some less-than-ideal weather the opening weekend,” according to Clint Hooppaw, MVTA Chair and Apple Valley Councilmember. “The new Transit Station on the Fairgrounds, adjacent to the new West End Market also provided great access to the Fair for our riders,” he said.

Hooppaw added, “We were also appreciative of the support of Prior Lake, Shakopee and Scott County in introducing State Fair service from the Marshall Road Transit Station in Shakopee, and their ridership for the first year, with slightly reduced hours, was very respectable.”

## Rep. Sandy Masin Receives STA “Friend of Transit” at MVTA Eagan Bus Garage

The Suburban Transit Providers presented a “Friend of Transit” award to Rep. Sandra Masin at the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA) Eagan Bus Garage on Wednesday, Oct. 8. STA chair Gary Hansen and MVTA Chair Clint Hooppaw presented the award to Rep. Masin.

When making the award to Rep. Masin, her long-time support of transit – not just as a legislator but throughout her career – was referenced. She is a former Eagan City Councilmember and member/chair of the MVTA Board. She worked to create the Suburban Transit Association and served as its chair while on the MVTA Board. Rep. Masin is one of two legislators recently honored by STA for their efforts on behalf of transit, the other being Sen. Dave Osmeck of Mound.



## News



# Haigh Announces Departure from Metropolitan Council

*Edited by LAURA EASH*

On November 19th, Metropolitan Council Chair Susan Haigh announced her intention to conclude her service as Council Chair in order to focus her energies on her full time position as President and CEO of Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity. Haigh notified Governor Dayton of her decision in mid-November and agreed to remain in her current position until Dayton names her successor.

“It has been an honor to serve residents of the greater Minneapolis-St. Paul region as Chair of the Metropolitan Council,” said Haigh. “This job has been the capstone of four decades of service in the public sector and I’m proud of tremendous accomplishments of the Council and our dedicated staff. I want to thank Governor Dayton for giving me this opportunity to serve. I also want to thank the many outstanding local elected officials and citizens who’ve been engaged and supportive of the Council’s work and achievements over the last four years.”

During Haigh’s tenure, the Metropolitan Council constructed and opened both the new METRO Green and Red Lines and advanced the METRO Orange Line as well as the Green and Blue Line Extensions in the federal funding queue. Haigh also hosted President Barack Obama in February of 2014 when he came to St. Paul to advocate for additional transit funding. Prior to Haigh’s departure, the Council is expected to adopt the first regional housing policy plan in 30 years.

Haigh has been a tireless advocate for a transit sales tax during her term as Chair. “The transit sales tax is critical to the ability of this region to compete with other regions throughout the world. I am hopeful that in coming years, the Minnesota Legislature will see fit to pass a funding plan that allows the kind of transit build out large employers and residents have come to expect of major metropolitan areas,” said Haigh.

“Although I will no longer lead the Council, I look forward to continued collaboration with the Council on affordable housing and equity issues. Our region is the economic engine of this state and the economic success we forecast will bring more people and with them, an ever increasing need for housing choices that are age-appropriate, affordable and sustainable. Working together, this region can meet its housing needs and enhance the lives of all residents by making public policy decisions in an equitable manner,” concluded Haigh.

Haigh was named the 13th Chair of the Metropolitan Council by Governor Dayton in January 2011.



## Federal Grant Will Aid Bus Stop Improvements, Advance Transit Equity

*From DREW KERR and edited by LAURA EASH*

A federal grant will allow Metro Transit to build and enhance customer waiting shelters, advancing regional transit equity goals.

The Federal Transit Administration announced in late September that Metro Transit received a \$3.26 million Ladders of Opportunity grant to build and enhance up to 140 bus waiting shelters on 19 major bus routes. The FTA made \$100 million in grant funding available through the Ladders of Opportunity program to improve transit services that enhance access to economic opportunities for low-income individuals. Metro Transit will provide a local match of \$815,000.

The combined \$4 million in funding will be directed toward shelter improvements in areas of racially concentrated poverty. Portions of 46 local Metro Transit bus routes serve these areas. Combined, these routes account for nearly 20 percent of the region's weekday rides.

“This grant will allow us to improve the experience for thousands of customers who use transit on a daily basis and help fulfill our commitment to regional transit equity,” Metropolitan Council Chair Sue Haigh said. “Shelters are just one element of a strong regional transit network but provide a level of safety, security and comfort that should be shared across our region.”

The Metropolitan Council's Regional Transit Equity Plan calls for the addition of up to 200 new customer waiting shelters in Metro Transit's service area, with a focus on areas of racially concentrated poverty. Half of the shelters will be at new locations and the rest will replace existing shelters, according to the equity plan. Equity is also a cornerstone of the Council's recently-adopted long-range plan, Thrive MSP 2040.

The Ladders of Opportunity grant comes in addition to state and local funding that has been dedicated to shelter improvements. Amenities like heat, lighting and transit information will be added to shelters where practical.

Metro Transit has begun to identify sites where waiting shelters may be added or enhanced. Further site assessments and a program of community engagement, also funded by the Ladders of Opportunity grant, will occur this fall to develop a more detailed workplan.

## METRO Green Line Tops 1 Million Rides in September

*From DREW KERR and edited by LAURA EASH*

More than 1 million rides were taken on the METRO Green Line in September, the highest monthly ridership since service began in June.

Average weekday ridership in September was 37,178, which is 35 percent higher than the ridership projection for 2015. Projected average weekday ridership for 2030 is nearly 41,000.

“We are thrilled the community is embracing the Green Line for all types of travel,” Metro Transit General Manager Brian Lamb said. “The excitement surrounding the Green Line has obviously lasted well beyond opening weekend and will continue to build as the corridor develops in the years ahead.”

Special events have also drawn high ridership. Around 12,700 fans took the Green Line to the Minnesota Vikings’ two home games at TCF Bank Stadium in September, representing around a quarter of announced attendance.

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- News and retweets from MPTA members
- Local and national media coverage of transit news and issues



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Send submissions for the next *InTransit* to Laura: [laura\\_eash@mpta-transit.org](mailto:laura_eash@mpta-transit.org)