



in transit

Minnesota Public Transit Association



St. Cloud Metro Bus drivers dominate annual Bus Roadeo

WILLMAR— Transit drivers from St. Cloud's Metro Bus system threaded their buses through a labyrinth of twists and turns to earn top scoring honors at the 2007 Minnesota Bus Roadeo held July 21 in Willmar.

Metro Bus drivers ranked first and third in the large bus division and second in the small division at the annual driving competition and training session.

Drivers from 26 state transit systems faced off on the roadeo course that simulates the challenges transit drivers face during their everyday driving duties.

Duane Dufner, St. Cloud Metro Bus, took top scoring honors in the large bus division; his coworker Chuck Olmschenk, placed third. Duane Lundgren, an operator with the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area's Metro Transit, placed second.

Jeff Iceman, a driver with Red Lake Transit, earned the first place ranking in the small bus division. David Peacock, St. Cloud Metro Bus, joined his teammates among the top point earners by placing second. Paul Yoder, an operator with the Chisago/Isanti County Heartland Express, took third-place honors.

Iceman will represent Minnesota in the national small bus roadeo competition next year.

Before tackling the roadeo course, drivers received training on safe, low-risk methods to manage passengers who may become violent or otherwise out of control. The training was provided by Kate Boelter, a trainer with the St. Cloud Metro Bus system.

Donna Allan, director of Mn/DOT's Office of Transit, said the competition, training and informal meetings gave participants an opportunity to share knowledge and experiences and further support the best in safety, efficiency and customer service.

"We conduct this event each year to honor drivers and the contributions they make in their communities' mobility, vibrancy and well-being," Allan said.

Staff members from the Minnesota Department of Transportation and transit systems served as judges.

MPTA, Mn/DOT and the state's Rural Transit Assistance Program sponsored the event. Staff from Kandiyohi Area Transit served as hosts.



2007 Minnesota Bus Roadeo Winners

Duane Dufner of St. Cloud Metro Bus, Duane Lundgren of Metro Transit, Jeff Iceman of Red Lake Transit, David Peacock of St. Cloud Metro Bus, Paul Yoder of Chisago-Isanti County Heartland Express and Chuck Olmschenk of St. Cloud Metro Bus.





Large Bus Division Winners

1st Place: Duane Dufner of St. Cloud Metro Bus
 2nd Place: Duane Lundgren of Metro Transit
 3rd Place: Chuck Olmschenk of St. Cloud Metro Bus



Small Bus Division Winners

1st Place: Jeff Iceman of Red Lake Transit
 2nd Place: David Peacock of St. Cloud Metro Bus
 3rd Place: Paul Yoder of Chisago-Isanti County Heartland Express



Winner of the first annual **Driver's Choice Award** David Peacock of St. Cloud Metro Bus. This award is given to the Bus Roadeo contestant who has displayed a genuine desire to be helpful to his/her customers, fellow drivers and community while exemplifying a spirit of passion for their profession.



St. Cloud Metro Bus drivers were among the best at the 2007 State Bus Roadeo. Duane Dufner took top scoring honors in the large bus division and Chuck Olmschenk placed third. David Peacock, joined his teammates among the top point earners by placing second in the small bus division. Peacock was also presented with the 2007 Driver's Choice Award at the awards ceremony.

Dufner will represent Minnesota in the national large bus roadeo competition next year.

"We know we have some of the best drivers in the area. Now we know we have the best drivers in the state." David Tripp, Metro Bus Executive Director said. "Going to Nationals is a very high honor, indeed."

St. Cloud Metro Bus drivers Duane Dufner, David Peacock and Chuck Olmschenk

From the President



Tony Kellen, President
Minnesota Public Transit Association
Director of Operations & Technology
St. Cloud Metro Bus
tkellen@stcloudmtc.com - 320/529-4481

August 1, 2007 is a date that won't soon be forgotten. The sudden collapse of the I-35W bridge in Minneapolis on a warm summer day riveted attention to the condition of our transportation system and the neglect of our system in Minnesota. In the aftermath of the collapse, it seemed all but certain that action would be taken to increase the level of funding for transportation in our state to repair other deficient bridges and to deal comprehensively with the issue of transportation funding.

However, a lack of agreement over how to fund roads and transit has left us pretty much where we were before August 1st, working toward passage of a funding package during the 2008 Legislative Session. This tragedy has shown just how important the transportation system is for people and just how intractable the differences seem to be over how to fund what everyone agrees is an underfunded transportation system. It will take a strong effort from all of us to convince lawmakers that we need dedicated funding to develop a 21st Century transportation system.

The summer has also been busy with MPTA events and activities. The annual Bus Rodeo was a huge success with many participants. This year's theme – "Driving With the Stars" was appropriate for all the stars who drive buses every day. The winners honored at the event were:

Small Bus Division

- 1st Place – Jeff Iceman, Red Lake Transit
- 2nd Place – David Peacock, St. Cloud Metro Bus
- 3rd Place – Paul Yoder, Chisago-Isanti Heartland Express

Large Bus Division

- 1st Place – Duane Dufner, St. Cloud Metro Bus
- 2nd Place – Duane Lundgren, Metro Transit
- 3rd Place – Chuck Olmschen, St. Cloud Metro Bus

Driver's Choice Award

David Peacock, St. Cloud Metro Bus

Sign up today for the Annual Minnesota Public Transit Conference in St. Cloud! You can register online at: www.mpta-transit.org. This year's event will be huge. We have top notch keynote speakers and many important break-out sessions that will address this year's theme of how transit systems positively impact communities and make a difference in people's lives. Come learn more about how you can impact your community and get inspired for another year with your colleagues and friends.

The Minnesota Public Transit Association continues to work hard to be the voice for transit in Minnesota. We appreciate your membership and involvement and welcome your comments. As transportation becomes more of an issue with the public and moves up as a political priority, we will all need to work together for our clients, our communities and our state.

Minnesota Public Transit Association   

DTA Hybrid Electric Bus @ Energy Fair



DULUTH—The DTA showcased a hybrid electric bus at the Lake Superior Energy Fair at Bayfront Park on September 8. Attendees of all ages were very interested in the new environmentally-friendly bus that conserves fuel and reduces emissions. The DTA recently received two hybrid electric buses and they are scheduled to go into service in October.



Legislative Update

Margaret Donahoe
Legislative Director
Minnesota Transportation Alliance



Bridge collapse bring transportation needs home

Bridge Collapse Brings Transportation Needs Home
Our aging and deteriorating transportation system made headlines around the world with the collapse of the I-35W bridge on August 1st. For the next couple of weeks, the media examined the status of our infrastructure and how the state pays for transportation in Minnesota. In the wake of the collapse, Governor Pawlenty changed his position on the issue of increasing the state gas tax and said that he wanted to call a special session of the legislature to pass a comprehensive transportation funding bill. In a letter to legislative leaders, the Governor suggested that a transportation bill should include trunk highway bonding for bridges and roads, general obligation bonding focused on roads and bridges, dedication of the sales tax on leased vehicles to roads and transit and policy changes to improve inspection or construction of roads and bridges.



While expectations were high, meetings between legislative leadership and the Governor's office failed to produce an agreement on a transportation funding bill.

Subsequent floods in Southeastern Minnesota turned attention from repairing general transportation infrastructure to fixing the immediate problems caused by the flood.

Incredibly, our transportation funding needs appear to be headed for delay until the regular session which convenes on February 12th.

Unless transportation advocates keep up the pressure, the outcome of the 2008 session could be the same as the outcome of the 2007 session. We need everyone to contact legislators, contact the media and keep the pressure up.

You can make a difference by attending a local meeting regarding transportation funding. Meetings are being held:

Willmar - Monday, September 17

7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Health & Human Services Bldg.

2200 23rd St. NE Willmar

Open to the public at no cost

Hosted by: MN House Transportation Committee

Mankato - Monday, September 24

7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Blue Earth County Board Room

204 S. 5th Street, Mankato

Contact: Jessie Anderson (507) 304-4284

Open to the public at no cost

Hosted by: MN House Transportation Committee

Anoka - Tuesday, September 25

7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Anoka County Board Room

2100 - 3rd Avenue, Anoka

Open to the public at no cost

Hosted by: MN House Transportation Committee

White Bear Lake - Wednesday, October 3

7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Best Western White Bear Country Inn

4940 North Highway 61, White Bear Lake

Open to the public at no cost

Hosted by: MN Transportation Alliance

Apple Valley - Thursday, October 4

7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Dakota County Western Service Center

14955 Galaxie Avenue, Apple Valley

Open to the public at no cost

Hosted by: MN Transportation Alliance.

St. Cloud - Wednesday, October 17

11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Best Western Kelly Inn

100 4th Avenue South, St. Cloud

Open to the public

Cost \$20.00 includes buffet lunch & beverages

Hosted by MN Transportation Alliance

Mark your calendars and please make every effort to attend one of these meetings!

We have a lot of work to do between now and February to push elected officials to fund transit needs throughout the state. The events of August, 2007 have clearly demonstrated the critical importance of the transportation system in people's lives. It's time to meet the needs of entire system and pass the funding bill that was supported last session by a two-thirds majority in both bodies of the legislature.

Metro Transit helps region regain normalcy after I-35 Bridge Collapse

TWIN CITIES—The I-35 bridge collapse on August 1 in downtown Minneapolis shattered lives within seconds and tore a major transportation artery from the region.

While the recovery and clean-up efforts at the river continued throughout August, Metro Transit helped the region adjust and regain some normalcy. Beginning August 2, the agency ramped up service between Minneapolis and park-and-ride lots in the north and northeast metro, helping commuters get to their jobs in downtown Minneapolis in the face of added traffic congestion.

“So far, the peak-hour traffic has been moving relatively well, particularly in the mornings as people have adjusted their travel patterns,” said Metropolitan Council Chair Peter Bell. Improvements on Highway 280, and addition of a lane on I-94 between 280 and downtown Minneapolis, have also helped mitigate congestion, he said.

“But with summer coming to an end, we know that traffic will increase again,” said Bell. “The Council’s transit response plan is designed to ease congestion during the bridge reconstruction period. We will continue to monitor demand and will provide service on the street accordingly.”

Plans call for fleet expansion, more park-and-ride spaces

Metro Transit’s efforts to help the region recover are now focused on long-term plans for congestion relief in the region, since it may take a year or longer to replace the bridge. On Aug. 24, the Council approved the I-35W Bridge Transit Response Plan. The plan includes:

- Providing additional express bus service
- Expanding its bus fleet
- Hiring more operators and mechanics and
- Adding thousands of new park-and-ride spaces in the north and east metro.

Funding for the plan is expected from state and federal sources. Some of the plan will be supported by \$5 million in federal money for emergency transit efforts. This will pay for additional bus service, new drivers and mechanics, and marketing and fare incentives.

Metro Transit anticipates putting up to 75 additional buses in service. Under the plan, the agency wants to buy up to 55 new buses: 40 forty-foot buses – up to 18 of which will be hybrids and 22 will have clean diesel engines – and 15 articulated buses. To operate and maintain the new buses, the agency will need up to 75 part-time drivers and 26 full-time mechanics. Metro Transit is recruiting and hiring these employees now.

Finally, capacity in north and east park-and-ride lots would expand by 2,100 spaces. Another 1,300 spaces would be added at new park-and-ride locations.

Response immediately after the catastrophe

Metro Transit was involved in the disaster response from the onset. Transit Police officers were among the first responders, and buses were used for briefings, for shuttling police and other officials to the accident scene, and for shelter near the disaster site’s command post.

Within hours of the collapse, Metro Transit had formulated a plan to roll out extra buses the following morning. To help reduce congestion, the agency deployed 25 extra buses beginning Aug. 2 to supplement existing service from north-metro park-and-ride locations and to augment service on local routes. That service was in addition to free bus rides offered to customers from 12 park-and-ride lots the week after the collapse, resulting in a 33 percent increase in use of those lots. See information on express bus service to downtown.

The agency moved quickly to create more parking spaces at park-and-ride lots. Capacity was added at the park-and-ride facilities at Highway 610 and Noble and at I-35W and 95th Avenue, both located north of downtown Minneapolis.

In addition, the agency reached out to downtown Minneapolis business and community leaders to encourage transit use and carpooling by downtown workers. More than 100,000 inserts were included in community newspapers, outlining transit options.

Metro Transit’s response plan includes:

- Providing additional express bus service
- Expanding its bus fleet
- Hiring more operators and mechanics and
- Adding thousands of new park-and-ride spaces in the north and east metro



Metro Transit Goes Greener by upping biodiesel content



TWIN CITIES—Metro Transit has announced the next steps in its Go Greener Initiative, doubling the biodiesel content of its fuel to a 10 percent blend starting this month.

Then in March 2008, Metro Transit will double its biodiesel again to 20 percent. Thereafter, it will alternate with a 20 percent summer blend between March and November and a 10 percent biodiesel content during winter months.

“The key advantage to biodiesel is that it lessens our dependence on non-renewable fossil fuel – much of which is expensively imported from foreign sources in troubled parts of the world,” said Metro Transit General Manager Brian Lamb.

This action will reduce the agency’s consumption of diesel fuel by 1.2 million gallons annually, Lamb said.

Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty praised the biodiesel development saying, “Minnesota is leading the nation in unleashing a renewable energy revolution. Metro Transit’s environmental commitment will serve as a national model and help point the way toward a cleaner, more secure energy future.”

In August, the Governor announced a plan to boost the level of biodiesel sold in Minnesota from the current two percent to 20 percent by 2015.

Metro Transit made the announcement today to highlight its Go Greener activities at the State Fair during Hop on Transit Day.

Metro Transit has been using a five percent soy-based biodiesel mixture for the past 14 months, and buses at one of its five garages have been using B10 since May.

“We have been careful in embracing biodiesel to ensure that operational issues did not impact the reliability of our fleet and thus weaken the confidence of our customers in our ability to serve them dependably,” Lamb said. “Those operational challenges did not develop – except that we experienced some minor fuel gelling on two of our B20 test buses during very cold days last winter. Thus, our precaution to drop back to B10 during the cold winter months.”

Increasing biodiesel content comes with a modest cost increase. Lamb estimated an added cost of about \$169,000 for the approximately eight million gallons of the B10/B20 blended biodiesel fuel Metro Transit consumes each year. The agency’s fuel budget next year is about \$20.4 million.

Lamb also said that even at the B20 level the impact on Metro Transit’s fuel mileage per gallon was negligible.

Biodiesel is just one element of Metro Transit’s Go Greener Initiative. The agency is in the process of buying 314 replacement buses, 150 of which will be hybrid electric models. The hybrid buses produce 22 percent better fuel mileage and 90 percent fewer emissions than the buses they replace.

Metro Transit also was the first in the state to use ultra low sulfur diesel fuel, the cleanest available. ULSDF is now required nationwide.

“Going greener is about biodiesel, hybrid buses, new clean-diesel technology, well maintained buses and energy efficient train service,” Lamb said. “When Minnesotans think about protecting the environment, their first thoughts might not be about public transportation. Perhaps they should be.”



One of Metro Transit’s hybrid-electric buses traverses the Twin Cities wrapped in the Go Greener message.



Serving Communities – Empowering Lives

Minnesota Public Transit Conference
October 29-31, 2007

2007 Minnesota Public Transit Conference

October 29-31
St. Cloud Civic Center

Join your colleagues for a fact-filled, inspirational conference focusing the role of transit in building strong communities and positively impacting lives.

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www.mpta-transit.org

Keynote Speakers

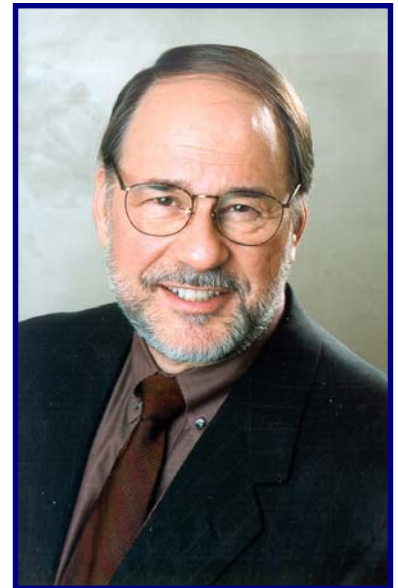


Deadra Stanton

A motivational speaker who will inspire and challenge us to focus on what is most important in life.

Vance Opperman

President and CEO of Key Investment, will discuss how we can get involved and make a difference in our communities.



Conference Includes:

NTI Training - Mobility Management
Annual MPTA Meetings & Transit Awards Ceremony
Advocacy/Community Outreach
New Freedom/JARC
Safety, Security and Emergency Coordination
Try It / Arrive Minnesota
Computer Dispatch and Mobile Data Systems
Joint MnDOT/Met Council Update and Brainstorming Session
Laidlaw Reception

Legislative Panel
FTA Update
Transit and Community Development Marketing
Marketing Transit Services
Transit and Community-based Provider Service Coordination
Northstar Commuter Rail Update
Customer Service
Vision for Your Transit System
Community Outreach
Transit Ambassadors

Plus Huge Vendor Expo and Prize Drawings

Transit in the News



Airport LRT Station re-opens September 8

MINNEAPOLIS—The Humphrey Terminal light-rail station at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport has re-opened on Saturday, September 8.

The station has been closed for the past year as the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) began construction of a 5,500-space parking ramp adjacent to the station. Initial stages of ramp construction included work to connect the station to the new ramp. Hiawatha trains passed through Humphrey Terminal Station during the initial phase of construction but did not serve customers in the work zone.

Construction has progressed on schedule, allowing the train station to re-open as planned while building activities continue on other parts of the parking structure. When the station re-opens, it will include escalators and elevators providing direct access to the second level of the new parking ramp and from there to the Humphrey Terminal.



Over the past 12 months, airline passengers and airport employees traveling between Humphrey and Lindbergh terminals have used a MAC-funded shuttle bus service operated by Metro Transit. When light-rail service to Humphrey Terminal resumes on September 8, that shuttle service will no longer be needed and will be discontinued.

Light-rail service between the airport terminals operates 24-hours-a-day and is free of charge. Fares elsewhere on the Hiawatha light-rail line are \$1.50 or \$2 depending on time of day.

State Fair ridership sets new records

MAPLE GROVE / BROOKLYN PARK — Preliminary ridership figures for Metro Transit's 2007 State Fair service show a record-breaking performance, with 975,863 rides during the 12-day event that wrapped up on Labor Day. With the preliminary numbers, ridership is up 4.6 percent over last year, beating this year's goal of 943,000 rides by 3.5 percent.

Metro Transit set another record, beating the previous one-day ridership total. On Saturday, August 25, buses provided 115,269 rides, which surpassed by 6 percent the

earlier record of 108,567 set on Saturday, August 30, 2003.

Market share – the percentage of attendees who rode Metro Transit buses to and from the fair – was 29 percent, up nearly 2 percent over last year's performance. State Fair attendance inched out 2006 numbers by roughly 1,100 visitors. Rides taken on express service from 11 park-and-ride lots were up 35 percent to more than 411,000. One of the newest sites – the recently expanded ramp at I-394 and County Road 73 in Minnetonka – was also the most popular. Maple Grove Transit Station, which operated State Fair service on weekends only, and Oakdale Center, which offered daily bus service, grew by the largest percentages: 41.7 percent and 40.7 percent respectively.

Ridership at all express sites grew in comparison to last year except for Maplewood Mall, which switched from daily service in 2006 to weekend-only service this year.

As expected, ridership on free shuttles from lots near the fairgrounds was down compared with 2006, owing to the loss of thousands of parking spaces due to University of Minnesota stadium construction. Preliminary free shuttle ridership stands at 513,192, or 10.6 percent below last year, but will increase as additional farebox data is collected.

The busiest free shuttle parking lot was Roseville High School, which produced more than 98,000 rides. The shuttle route serving the U of M 4th Street Ramp and various surface lots near the U Transitway recorded 97,794 boardings and there were 89,000 rides taken at I-94 & Snelling Avenue.

Metro Transit July Ridership up 6 percent

TWIN CITIES — Ridership on Metro Transit buses and trains last month was 6 percent higher than July 2006.

Customers used Metro Transit service 6.3 million times in July, nearly 356,000 more rides than the same month a year earlier.

"We recorded double-digit growth among customers holding Metropasses," said General Manager Brian Lamb. "Metropass holders took nearly 564,000 rides last month, up 15.6 percent from a year earlier." More than 160 companies are enrolled in the Metropass program under which employees are eligible for discounted annual transit passes. There are more than 27,000 Metropasses in use.

Lamb told the committee that ridership on express buses was flat for the month but that core urban local routes saw a growth of 6.3 percent. In fact more than 40 percent of the increase in bus ridership was recorded on Metro Transit's High Frequency network. The Hi-Fi network, which debuted last year, includes all or portions of 12 routes on which service operates at least every 15 minutes.

Light-rail ridership was down 5.9 percent to 802,000 due to the nearly year-long closing of Humphrey Terminal Station for airport construction. In July, 137,600 rides between the two airport terminals, which would normally have been aboard light rail, instead were logged on a Metro Transit shuttle bus service. Humphrey Terminal Station will re-open to train service on September 8.

For the first seven months of 2007, Metro Transit ridership reached 42.9 million, 4.7 percent, or 1.9 million rides, higher than the same period last year.

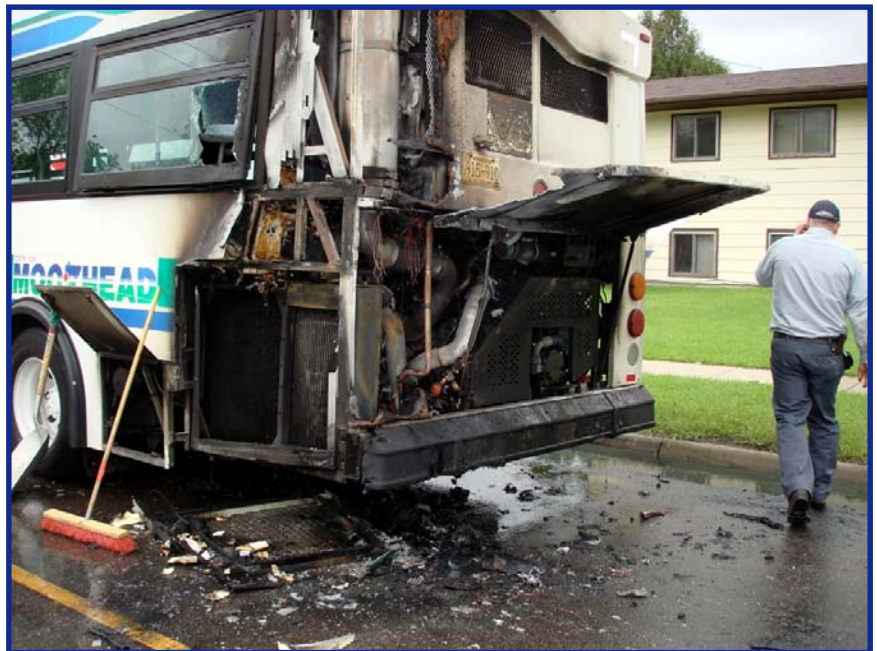
"We are well ahead of the pace we need to top our goal of 75 million rides this year," Lamb told the committee. When it reaches 75 million rides, Metro Transit will have logged the highest annual ridership in 23 years.

Lessons learned from the Moorhead Bus Fire

MOORHEAD—Senior driver Bill Gruber remained calm when the fire alarms rang inside his fixed route bus on May 24, as he drove Route 2 south on 11th Street. The security video footage later showed him pulling the bus over and telling the passengers they needed to get off. The four passengers on-board calmly and safely deboarded and appeared to not know the bus was on fire. The fire shut down the bus and radio, so the driver used his cellular phone to call 9-1-1. Within three minutes, the fire department was on the scene putting out the flames at the rear of the bus. The fire wall between the engine and interior of the bus kept the fire contained, with only smoke entering the interior. This was a first fire for Moorhead Metro Area Transit and hopefully the last. The street showed a fluid leak that stretched for four blocks, and the EPA had to be called in to stop the hazardous waste from running into the storm sewer and eventually the river.

Investigations followed with participation from the bus manufacturer and insurance company in cooperation with the City of Fargo staff who currently maintain the 2003 Orion VII 35-foot low-floor bus. The cause was determined to be a hydraulic hose leak that sprayed oil onto the exhaust system which ignited the oil. There were no advance signs of the leak in the storage garage or at the transfer center.

Even though the bus shut down the radio, the security cameras continued to operate. This prompted maintenance staff into looking for a relay that will shut off the radio 15 minutes after the bus turns off – providing sufficient time to radio for emergency assistance. In addition, a sleeve called armor wrap will be put over the hose to protect from future wear and abrasion. The sleeve will prevent any leaks from spraying – rather they will drip, which improves detection and reduces the chances for a fire. The bus manufacturer is adding a preventive maintenance step for replacement of the hose every two years. The bus is being repaired at a cost of \$70,000-\$90,000 through Coach Crafters in Northfield, Minnesota. Similar buses in the Moorhead fleet will also be retrofitted with the new hose, sleeve and timer.



New express service from Scott County to Downtown Minneapolis

SCOTT COUNTY—Route 490 express service to downtown Minneapolis from the south was significantly expanded on July 16 as Prior Lake Laker Lines and Shakopee Transit jointly introduced their new BlueXpress service.

Five new coach buses obtained from the Metropolitan Council, plus two existing Prior Lake coaches, provide rush-hour service Monday through Friday, offering eight morning and eight afternoon runs. Four morning runs originate from Prior Lake at the Shepherd of the Lake Church Park & Ride on McKenna Road NW at County Road 42 from 6:15–7:05 a.m. Three of those BlueXpress buses stop at the newly constructed Southbridge Crossings Transit Station at County Road 18 just south of Highway 169 in Shakopee. Four Shakopee Transit runs also originate from Southbridge Crossings Transit Station, to offer seven runs from Southbridge directly to Downtown Minneapolis from 6:25–8:12 a.m. In the afternoon, three Prior Lake and five Shakopee runs all originate from the Gateway Ramp in Downtown Minneapolis between 3:40 and 5:39 p.m.

Shakopee Transit also operates two shuttle buses (routes 498A and 498B) from key population points within the city. Shakopee residents hop on these mini-buses from 5:52–8:00 a.m. and transfer to the 490 BlueXpress buses at Southbridge Crossings. Evening shuttle runs depart Southbridge between 5:02 and 6:16 p.m. to return riders home. Another Park & Ride lot in Shakopee near Canterbury Park connects to the Southbridge Station via these 498 shuttles.

“Scott County is one of the fastest growing counties in Minnesota, and this BlueXpress service has long been needed to meet the demand for transit generated by that growth,” said Michael Leek, Shakopee Community Development Director.

Collaboration on meeting that demand actually began in 2003, when Scott County and the Cities of Prior Lake and Shakopee established a Transit Review Board and Transit Planning Team. In 2005 a “Unified Transit Management Plan” (UTMP) was jointly funded by all of the cities in Scott County, HRAs, SMSC (Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community), and the Metropolitan Council to analyze transit needs for the entire county. The UTMP report, adopted in 2006, recommended 1,100 new park & ride spaces and express bus service to and from downtown Minneapolis.

In 2007, the Southbridge Crossings Transit Station was constructed through a joint funding effort by the federal government, the State of Minnesota, the Metropolitan Council, Scott County, and the Cities of Prior Lake and Shakopee. Southbridge provides 500 parking stalls, heated

bus shelters, a well-lit lot and loading area, two accesses for vehicles, and a dedicated bus loading/unloading lane. Landscape islands, two bio-engineered drainage systems on the east and west sides of the site, a storm-water pond, and a pervious-paver system on the busway, provide additional safety and extend the expected useful life with the environment in mind. The site was designed to accommodate both a future transit-station building and a deck structure.



The public has enthusiastically greeted both the new Transit Station and the BlueXpress service. 109 cars parked at Southbridge Crossings July 16th when service was implemented, and that number has steadily grown to 168 on August 7th when the latest manual count was made.

In the first twelve days of service (July 16-31) the six 57-passenger coaches provided 7,136 passenger trips and have already recorded some trips with standing loads. 324 trips were provided on just the first day of BlueXpress operations.

As an added incentive for commuters, Mid-Day Return service is available on MVTA (Minnesota Valley Transit Authority) buses to the Burnsville Transit Station. The Scott County Dial-A-Ride will-call service can be reserved to return passengers to their cars at Southbridge Crossings or Shepherd of the Lake Park & Ride lots.

A Grand Opening ceremony is being planned for September, and expanded marketing of the new service will kick-off with that event. For additional details, or to view the printed schedule and service maps, go to BlueXpressBus.com.



Metro Mobility offers updated, online service guide

Metro Mobility has news for its customers: get fast answers to all your service questions in a newly updated, comprehensive service Guide.

TWIN CITIES—Metro Mobility is the region's ADA-certified paratransit service for people with disabilities. The new service guide, The Metropolitan Council Answers Your Questions about Metro Mobility, went online in August. Customers who want a printed copy can receive it by using the request tear-off form included in the late summer edition of the Metro Mobility newsletter. Techno-savvy riders can just log on.

The new guide includes live links to many frequently requested services, such as online purchases, standing orders, bulletins and more. Printable application packets allow prospective riders and their families to request service without a mail delay. "Answers" also links to Metro Mobility's service supplement so riders may confirm providers' times of service each quarter.

The Metro Mobility Service Center expects half of its customers will prefer the online publication, said Gerri Sutton, assistant director in the Council's Metropolitan Transportation Services department.

"Many of our riders — like others in the metro region — prefer internet information sources," Sutton said. "Those who visit our website have immediate access to answers and updates."

Metro Mobility's website and online publications are among Council efforts to improve customer service and increase efficiency through technology. Online trip scheduling, interactive maps, stored-value card purchases and other services are available at the Council's Metro Transit website.

Metro Mobility

- Certified Riders: 19,000
- Daily Trips: 4,300
- Annual Rides: 1.3 million



Transit Team driver Charles Bediako assists Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Williams as they board their bus following a visit to the Metro Mobility Service Center. Riders can access answers to questions about the region's paratransit service at www.metromobility.org.



Minnesota Public Transit Newsletter

In Transit newsletter is a bi-monthly newsletter published by the Minnesota Public Transit Association (MPTA). Opinions expressed in this publication may not necessarily be those of the Minnesota Public Transit Association.

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Contributors

Donna Carlson — St. Cloud Metro Bus
Margaret Donahoe — Transportation Alliance
Tom Elwell — Duluth Transit Authority
Lynn Frank — Mn/DOT Transit Bulletin
Bob Gibbons — Metro Transit
Tony Kellen — St. Cloud Metro Bus
Jane Norling — KMT Communications (Scott County)
Lori Van Beek — Moorhead
Craig Wilkins — Mn/DOT
Metropolitan Council Directions

SEND NEWS

% Tom Elwell
Duluth Transit Authority
2402 West Michigan Street
Duluth, MN 55806
telwell@duluthtransit.com



Bulletin Board



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RTAP

RTAP Training Classes

Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) offers training in passenger assistance, defensive driving and abuse prevention. In 2007, RTAP is offering refresher courses and training for newly hired employees. New hires should take the full eight hours of Passenger Assistance, four hours of Defensive Driving and four hours of Abuse Prevention. Refresher training should be taken once every three years after the initial new hire courses have been completed. Register for classes by completing the form posted on the Office of Transit's web site at: www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/RTAP/Form/index.html. **RTAP calendar is subject to change. For the most up-to-date listing, see the 2007 RTAP training calendar at www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/RTAP/rtaptrng.html.** For more information, contact RTAP Coordinator Lynn Frank at lynn.frank@dot.state.mn.us or 651/296-1610.

September

- 22 Passenger Assistance Training — St. Cloud Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
- 22 Driver Refresher Training — Rochester Area — 8 a.m. - Noon
- 29 Driver Refresher Training — Big Lake Area — 8 a.m. - Noon

October

- 06 Passenger Assistance Training — Mankato Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
- 13 Defensive Driving/Abuse Prevention — Morris Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
- 13 Passenger Assistance Training — Deerwood Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
- 20 Driver Refresher Training — Brainerd Area — 8 a.m. - Noon
- 27 Defensive Driving/Abuse Prevention — Metro Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
- 27 Defensive Driving/Abuse Prevention — Fergus Falls — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

November

- 10 Passenger Assistance Training — Fergus Falls Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
- 17 Driver Refresher Training — Mankato Area — 8 a.m. - Noon

December

- 01 Driver Refresher Training — Bemidji Area — 8 a.m. - Noon
- 08 Passenger Assistance Training — Brainerd Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
- 08 Defensive Driving/Abuse Prevention — Rochester Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
- 15 Defensive Driving/Abuse Prevention — Fergus Falls Area — 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Transit Events

Oct 29-31 Minnesota Public Transit Conference — St. Cloud Civic Center, St. Cloud, MN

