

intransit

Burnsville high school students produce bus panels for MVTA

By ROBIN SELVIG, Minnesota Valley Transit Authority

Students enrolled in the Interactive Design and Application Development Class at Burnsville High School have produced interior panels for display in local and express Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA) buses. The panels focus on themes involving school spirit and transit.

The students' artwork was reviewed by the MVTA and winning entries were selected in the two categories. Winners were: School Spirit – sophomore Suraj Shah and Transit – senior Mackenzie Hearnden. The students received a certificate of award and a \$25 gift certificate to Best Buy for their efforts. Additionally, a number of students received honorable mentions. The MVTA has previously worked with students at Eastview High School in Apple Valley where students have created interior bus panels for the MVTA.

As part of their class, students were to complete a project using software such as Photoshop, along with a variety of graphics and images. The MVTA had the panels printed and dry mounted by Cornerstone Copy Center, for display on the interior of MVTA buses. Students were also given a copy of their final product.

“The students are very creative in the tools and techniques they use to complete a final project,” said program coordinator Robin Selvig, MVTA Customer Service Manager. Selvig added, “We appreciate the opportunity to partner with Burnsville High School, and we hope that it’s fun for the students to receive life-size copies of their bus panels and see how the work is actually put to use on the buses.”

This project is part of a strategic partnership between the MVTA and area schools. Other area high schools interested in participating in this program are invited to contact the MVTA. Cornerstone Copy Center also participates by producing the panels for a reduced price.



Burnsville High School Senior Mackenzie Hearnden and Sophomore Suraj Shah display their winning bus panels. All of the panels created as part of the Interactive Design and Application Development Class are currently posted in Route 444 buses that travel between Savage/Burnsville and the Mall of America.



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President's Column

We lost a critical opportunity to make progress in passing increases in dedicated, long-term funding for transit throughout the state during the 2013 Session. We now have to re-double our efforts to speak out and talk to legislators about the importance of transit service to their constituents and the very real needs that are out there.

With a full agenda of various issues at the legislature, increasing funding for transportation did not make the top 10 list. All session we've struggled to have a plan that advocates could rally behind that had a chance of passing and being signed into law. Other issues took precedence such as education funding and budget balancing.

Clearly grassroots advocacy makes a difference in whether or not certain issues are seriously considered. Increasing revenue is never easy and legislators need to hear from folks back home that revenue increases for transit investments are worthwhile and will be supported. That's why we need you to make those phone calls, send those letters and visit with elected officials. That's what works.

MPTA will be working during the summer and fall to build more support in local communities and reach out to legislators. With your help and participation, we can raise the profile of transit service and build momentum toward the 2014 Legislative Session.

MPTA has a new web site so be sure to check it out: www.mpta-transit.org and mark your calendars for our events that coming sooner than you think: the Bus Rodeo in Rochester (July 19-20) and the Annual Public Transit Conference in St. Cloud (October 14-16).

As always, you make transit happen in Minnesota. MPTA is here to provide tools and assist you in any way we can, but your actions and involvement are what really makes things happen. Please stay involved and thank you for your service to those who rely on transit every day.



2013 Minnesota Bus Rodeo July 19-20, Rochester, MN

Registration deadline: **June 28**

Registration fee is eligible for RTAP reimbursement for those who qualify.

RTAP reimbursement submission deadline: **June 19** - NO EXCEPTIONS

Option to pay with credit card on PayPal.

To register, or to learn more [click here](#)



Margaret Donahoe
Advocacy Director

Minnesota Public Transit Association

Legislative Report

The 2013 Legislative Session provided some big ups and downs for transportation advocates. We saw a number of funding proposals for both Greater Minnesota Transit and Metropolitan Area transit put forward but ultimately, no permanent increases in dedicated funding were passed.

Transit advocates had a bill introduced that would have increased the sales tax in Twin Cities metropolitan area by $\frac{3}{4}$ cent. Combined with the existing $\frac{1}{4}$ cent local option sales tax for transit, that increase would have provided a full one cent sales tax for transit, bike and pedestrian investments and other improvements determined by local governments. The plan also included dedicating all of the sales tax on leased vehicles to transportation on an ongoing basis with all but \$9 million annually deposited in the Greater Minnesota Transit Assistance Account.

In the end, the increase in the metropolitan area sales tax was not included in the final bill and the deficit in the general fund of \$627 million made it difficult to dedicate all of the sales tax on leased vehicles to transportation. The legislature did make a change in the motor vehicle leased sales tax (MVLST) for the next biennium only that would direct more funding to Greater Minnesota transit. The remaining funds after the initial \$32 million is deposited in the general fund will be divided so that \$9 million is directed to metro county highway needs and the remaining funds are directed to Greater Minnesota transit. This should result in an increase of \$10.8 million for the biennium.

Transportation Appropriations Bill

The best description of the transportation appropriations bill that passed this session is “lights-on.” After trying to find the political support for a plan that would increase the sales tax for transit in the seven-county metropolitan area and increase the state gas tax, Transportation Committee Chairs in the House and Senate were forced to accept bills

that simply maintain status quo funding for transportation for the coming biennium.

The House Committee Chair, Rep. Frank Hornstein (DFL-Minneapolis) and Senate Transportation Committee Chair Scott Dibble (DFL-Minneapolis) tried different approaches to increase funding but the need for funding for both highways and transit in both the metro area and Greater Minnesota and opposition to a gas tax increase by the governor made any proposal with tax increases a tough sell.

The governor’s transportation budget proposal did include an increase in the local sales tax in the seven-county metropolitan area for transit, but did not include any additional funding for Greater Minnesota transit or roadways.

For Greater Minnesota transit, the transportation appropriations bill not only includes some one-time funding from the sales tax on leased vehicles, it provides some additional funding to cover the cost of providing free trips to veterans and the administrative costs for the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access. The transportation appropriations bill (HF1444) provide (in thousands):

	FY2014	FY2015	Biennial Total
General Fund	\$16,373	\$16,373	\$16,292
Veterans Reimbursement	\$78	\$78	\$156
MN Council Transportation Access	–	\$100	\$100
Trunk Highway	\$775	\$775	\$1,550
TOTAL	\$17,226	\$17,245	\$34,471

Legislative Report Continued...

Funding for FY2012-13 biennium was \$31.596 million so the funding level for the coming biennium represents an increase of \$2.875 million.

For Metropolitan Area Transit, the transportation appropriations bill provides:

	FY2014	FY2015	Biennial Total
General Fund	\$64,889	\$64,970	\$129,859
Appropriation	\$6,000	\$12,000	\$18,000
Southwest LRT	–	\$37,000	\$37,00
TOTAL	\$76,970	\$107,889	\$184,859

The bill also provides \$250,000 each year for FY2014 and FY2015 for Safe Routes to School.

The bill provides \$500,000 per year for passenger rail from the general fund for planning alternatives analysis, environmental analysis, design and preliminary engineering.

In addition to the appropriations for transit, language in the bill would repeal a current requirement that counties in Greater Minnesota hold a referendum in order to enact a local option sales tax for transportation purposes so it can be imposed by county board action. The new language also makes it clear that revenue from a local sales tax may be used for transit operations as well as for capital needs and funding from the local sales tax may also be used for Safe Routes to School grants.

The tax bill also provides authority for the Metropolitan Council to continue to issue regional bonds (\$35.8 million) for transit capital purposes.

Transit Policy Provisions

SF745 Omnibus Data Practices Bill

Section 10 classifies as private data on transit users collected through the Metropolitan Council's personalized web services or the regional fare collection system. The council may disseminate user history and fare card use to government entities and other entities that subsidize fares or provide fare cards, provided that upon request of a user or customer, only the card balance and date of last use may be disclosed.

The council may disseminate user data to another government entity to prevent unlawful intrusion into government electronic systems. An immediate effective date is included.

HF590 Penalties For Assaulting a Transit Operator

This bill adds assault of a transit operator to the list of protected occupations and individuals under the fourth-degree assault statute. A definition of "transit operator" is provided in the bill.

The bill makes it a gross misdemeanor to assault a transit operator or intentionally throw or transfer bodily fluids onto an operator, if the transit operator is acting in the course of his or her duties while operating, aboard, or otherwise responsible for a transit vehicle. If the assault or conduct inflicts demonstrable bodily harm on the operator, the maximum penalty increases to a two-year felony.

SF654 Nonemergency Medical Transportation

The bill changes language so that special transportation providers taking clients to a health care provider must use the most direct route, and must not exceed 30 miles for a trip to a primary care provider or 60 miles for a trip to a specialty care provider, unless the recipient receives authorization from the local agency.

The commissioner shall implement a single administrative structure and delivery system for nonemergency medical transportation, beginning July 1, 2014. The commissioner shall present to the legislature, by January 15, 2014, legislation necessary to implement the single administrative structure and delivery system for nonemergency medical transportation.

The commissioner shall require that the administrator of nonemergency medical transportation adhere to the assessment process recommended by the Nonemergency Medical Transportation Advisory Committee. The commissioner shall implement, by July 1, 2014, the comprehensive, statewide, standard assessment process for medical assistance enrollees seeking nonemergency medical transportation services recommended by the Nonemergency Medical Transportation Advisory Committee.

(continued on page 6)



MINNESOTA 2013 GOVERNOR'S FISHING OPENER Park Rapids Lakes Area

Transit gets people to the Governor's Fishing Opener

The Hubbard County Heartland Express and Paul Bunyan Transit out of Beltrami County worked jointly to provide all of the transportation needed for participants at the annual Governor's Fishing Opener near Park Rapids so they could travel to the various events associated with the Opener.

In addition, the Becker County and Wadena County systems had agreed to be on standby should additional resources be needed. In total, on a volunteer basis, the public transit buses provided 1,873 rides over the three day period. Shuttles ran up to Itasca Park, Two Inlets, the community picnic, the DNR Fisheries tour, the Black Swan Cooperage tour, the Character Challenge as well as the Saturday shore lunch at Northern Pines.

The joint effort between the public transit systems worked efficiently to cover a large area and helped dramatically with the issues of parking and transportation making all events very well attended. The feedback was very positive, with people expressing appreciation for the drivers and the service provided. Drivers chose to donate their time along with the other 400 or so volunteers that put the events together.

Of course, being good transit advocates, representatives of these systems were able to talk about the need for additional funding and for rural communities to work together, sharing resources to be able to manage an event like this as well as covering such large areas in their day to day work in transit.

This is not the first time that Hubbard County Heartland Express and Paul Bunyan Transit have teamed up to provide better service.

One of the first collaborations involved Hubbard County contracting with Paul Bunyan Transit to dispatch the Park Rapids City bus service through the use of AVL equipment and software dispatching system. As a result of that collaboration, city ridership increased by about 16 percent overall and Hubbard County increased its capacity without increasing service hours. It has been a great partnership since it began in 2011. In addition, this year the system was able to pursue establishing its second collaborative with a new route serving northern Hubbard County and southern Beltrami County in and out of Bemidji 5 days per week.



Cold weather didn't deter the fish from biting!

Hubbard County Heartland Express continues to share volunteer driver services with neighboring counties, choosing the most cost effective trips for Medicaid recipients and veterans as part of the transit services offered through Hubbard County.

SouthWest Transit again receives national honors for bus safety and security

By LINDA SPEVACEK, SouthWest Transit

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) has awarded SouthWest Transit its 2013 Gold Award for Safety and 2013 Certificate of Merit for Security for bus systems operating 1 million – 4 million passenger trips. APTA is an international organization that has represented the transit industry for over 100 years, since 1882.

“I want to commend all of these winners for their tremendous contribution to safety and security in the public transportation industry,” said APTA President and CEO Michael P. Melaniphy. “They are setting an example that will allow for the entire industry to continue to make a safe industry even safer for its employees and riders.”

This is the fifth year that SouthWest Transit has been honored by APTA for its safety program and the second time its emergency preparedness program has been recognized.

“Safety and security are of utmost concern to SouthWest Transit. It takes a great deal of effort from the entire agency to ensure the safety of our riders,” said SouthWest Transit’s Commission Chair Jerry McDonald. “To win these prestigious awards is truly outstanding and is testament to

the commitment of each and every person who is a part of SouthWest Transit.”

The Gold Safety Award is awarded to the transit property who demonstrates through its operating statistics that it is the top safety performing transit agency in the Country. Things such as the number of preventable accidents per miles driven, lost time due to workplace injury and miles driven between vehicle road calls are just some of the statistics collected and compared.

“This is not about just one person or one team doing the right thing. It’s about everyone working together to make sure our customers are safely transported to and from work and home. This award recognizes the hard work, extensive planning and dedication of every staff member of SouthWest Transit,” said Chief Executive Officer, Len Simich.

“We owe it to our customers and employees to do whatever we can to keep them safe,” said Simich. “While it may seem fundamental, safety and security are the most important things we do on a daily basis.”

Legislative Report Continued...

Barebones Capital Bonding Bill Passed

Another disappointment of the session was the defeat in the House of the capital bonding bill. The House had put together a bonding bill of about \$800 million with funding for a number of transportation programs including transitways and transit facilities in Greater Minnesota.

Bonding bills require a 3/5th majority of legislators voting in favor to pass or 81 votes in the House so it required eight Republicans to join all of the Democrats in supporting the bill. When the vote was taken, the bill fell five votes short for passage.

The proposal included \$4.92 million for Greater Minnesota transit facilities and \$50 million for the Transit Capital Improvement program to fund various transitways.

Full Court Press for 2014

The governor has said that he would like to push for a major transportation funding proposal next year. Transit advocates need to gear up now to help join the campaign to educate the public and build support for increased investments. You know your transit system, you know the needs and you know the importance of the service for people in your community. We need you to share those stories with people in your community and throughout the state. We can do this again – just like we did in 2008!

Metro Transit honored with Industry's Top Safety Award

Metro Transit's commitment to safety earned top honors this week from the American Public Transportation Association (APTA).

Metro Transit earned APTA's Gold Award for Bus Safety Excellence for the second time in five years in competition with other large transit agencies with more than 20 million annual rides. The award was presented to Metro Transit at APTA's 2013 Bus Safety & Security Awards held during the organization's annual Bus and Paratransit Conference which concluded yesterday in Indianapolis.

"We are fully committed to a culture of safety," said Metro Transit General Manager Brian Lamb. "The skill and dedication of our bus drivers is the cornerstone of our strong safety record, but this award also recognizes the ongoing efforts of our entire staff, including operations, maintenance, training, safety and communications."

Beginning in 2009, cross-departmental teams at Metro Transit focused outreach and training on specific safety behaviors. These efforts helped the agency reduce the annual number of major collisions by 6.5 percent, saving \$419,000 in annual claim payments. Metro Transit's annual incident rate is about one-third lower than peer bus systems.

The Gold Award recognized these efforts by Metro Transit drivers and staff taken since 2009:

- A "Look & See" campaign focused on safe operation around pedestrians. It included creation of displays in bus garages, onboard 'blind spot reminder' decals as well as a training video about cyclists and traffic safety.
- Introduction of three-year mandatory recertification on the "Safety Keys" professional driving system.
- Production of a winter driving training video for bus drivers and addition of new aggressive-tread tires on the drive axles of longer 60-foot articulated buses to improve traction, especially in winter.
- Mandatory Transportation Safety Institute-certified coursework and testing on distracted driving and access to a distracted driving training simulator during annual Health and Safety Fairs for all bus operators.
- A policy change on electronic device use: As of 2009, bus drivers must turn off and stow devices while behind the wheel or face significant penalties.

Each year, APTA's Bus Safety Committee appoints an independent awards subcommittee to choose the top agency for implementing programs or projects that achieve documented success in addressing specific safety areas. Metro Transit last won the Gold Award in 2009.

SouthWest Transit awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting

By LINDA SPEVACEK, SouthWest Transit

For the sixth consecutive year, the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) has awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting to SouthWest Transit for its comprehensive annual financial report (CAFR). The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management.

An Award of Financial Reporting Achievement has been awarded to the individual(s), department or agency

designated by the government as primarily responsible for preparing the award-winning CAFR. This has been presented to: *Finance Department, SouthWest Transit*

The CAFR has been judged by an impartial panel to meet the high standards of the program including demonstrating a constructive "spirit of full disclosure" to clearly communicate its financial story and motivate potential users and user groups to read the CAFR.

The GFOA is a nonprofit professional association serving approximately 17,500 government finance professionals with offices in Chicago, IL and Washington, D.C.

DTA a major partner in Minnesota's first Safe Place program



By TOM ELWELL, Duluth Transit Authority

The Duluth Transit Authority (DTA) has partnered with the local Lutheran Social Service office to bring the first Safe Place Program to Minnesota.

Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota along with the DTA, City of Duluth and community partners announced establishment of the Safe Place Program in a news conference on March 20. Safe Place is a national outreach program that provides immediate help and safety for young people in crisis. Duluth is the first community in Minnesota to become a Safe Place destination.

Safe Place began in Louisville, KY in 1983 with 39 states currently participating in the program. The mission of the Safe Place Program is to educate young people about the dangers of running away or trying to resolve difficult, threatening situations. The initiative is to provide a "safety net" for youth in crisis and involve public transit services and community organizations to connect them to the support they need.



DTA General Manager Dennis Jensen speaks at a news conference about the DTA's welcomed participation in the Safe Place Program.

How Safe Place Works in Duluth

DTA buses and transit facilities, along with neighborhood Fire Stations, the YMCA and the Spirit Valley Youth Center will display a recognizable Safe Place yellow and black diamond-shaped logo, signaling to youth of their participation in the Safe Place program.

Once a young person has sought help on a DTA bus, the driver contacts the station dispatcher who then calls the 24-hour Safe Place crisis line. Within 30 minutes, a representative from Lutheran Social Service will meet the bus at a designated location along the route to transport the youth to Lutheran Social Service's Bethany Crisis Shelter. The youth in crisis will remain on the bus as it continues on its route and the pick-up location is coordinated between the DTA dispatcher, driver and the Safe Place counselor. If a youth is seeking a Safe Place when no dispatchers are on duty, the driver will contact 911 for a police escort to the Bethany Crisis Shelter.

Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota, an organization that has served youth for decades in the community, will operate the Safe Place Program. Their services include Street Outreach, Emergency Shelters, Runaway and Homeless Prevention and Intervention, Healthcare, and Transitional Living Options.

According to Wilder Research, 2,500 youth are homeless on any given night in Minnesota. More than 40 percent live in Greater Minnesota. Lutheran Social Service's three emergency crisis shelters in northeastern Minnesota served over 800 youth in 2012.



Safe Place ribbon-cutting ceremony with DTA, Lutheran Social Service and Duluth Chamber of Commerce representatives



Metro Bus Dial-a-Ride and Fixed Route drivers showed off their driving skills at the Metro Bus Bus Roadeo held in May.

Metro Bus driver places 4th at APTA roadeo, winners announced for local competition



Ken Rakke,
Metro Bus Fixed
Route Driver

Metro Bus Fixed Route driver Ken Rakke recently competed in the 2013 International Bus Roadeo in Indianapolis, IN. He achieved fourth place in the 35-foot bus division.

Rakke, a 16-year veteran to Metro Bus, has competed at the international level five times. Rakke worked his way to the international roadeo by winning top honors at both the local and state level competitions in 2012.

The 2013 Metro Bus Roadeo was held in May. Rakke placed first in the large bus division, while Jabin Scepurek placed second and Joel Lafrentz placed third. Rakke and

Scepurek will compete at the Minnesota Bus Roadeo in July. Last year Rakke and Scepurek placed first and second at the state competition.

In the small bus division Todd DeZurik and David Peacock placed first and second and will compete at the Minnesota Bus Roadeo. Larry Miller placed third. This was Miller's first time competing in the Metro Bus Roadeo. DeZurik placed third at the state competition last year.

Bus Roadeo competitions provide training, skill enhancement and recognition for public transit bus operators. MPTA organizes the state competition, and the America Public Transportation Association (APTA) coordinates the International Bus Roadeo.

Margaret Donahoe recognized for Distinguished Public Leadership

MPTA Advocacy Director Maraget Donahoe recently received the Distinguished Public Leadership Award by the University of Minnesota's Center for Transportation Studies (CTS) program.

Donahoe is the executive director of the Minnesota Transportation Alliance and a member of the CTS Executive Committee and the Transportation Advisory Board to the Metropolitan Council. Prior to joining the Alliance, Donahoe spent eight years working for the Minnesota Senate, the last three as committee administrator for the Senate Transportation Budget Division. Her experience also includes staffing the Transportation Study Board, a legislative commission established in the early 1990s to develop a 20-year transportation plan for the state.

The Distinguished Public Leadership Award recognizes public leaders who have influenced innovative transportation policy directions that benefit society through their vision, leadership, and knowledge.



Laurie McGinnis, Margaret Donahoe, Jeff Hamiel

SouthWest Transit again honors the “Best of the BEST”

By LINDA SPEVACEK, SouthWest Transit

At its recent Commission meeting, SouthWest Transit (SWT) Commission and staff were pleased to honor twenty-two of its sixty-six drivers as Gold drivers for 2012, the “Best of the BEST.”

The BEST Program is an incentive program designed to encourage the best individual and group performance from our drivers. It rewards operators both financially and with public and peer recognition for their part in reaching safety and customer service goals. The program has been a great success with the drivers since it began in 2002; MPTA honored the program with its first ever Management Innovation Award.

To be eligible, a driver must be with SWT for one full calendar quarter; reach a number of goals, such as no chargeable accidents, no missed routes or intermediate stops; and maintain professional behavior in the workplace.

Once eligible, operators are scored on the following criteria: following all policy and procedures daily, maintaining on-time performance, making required public announcements, having no “at fault” customer complaints, and maintaining acceptable attendance and punctuality.



Just some of the SouthWest Transit GOLD Award winners

In addition to a monetary award, the program rewards the operators who score 100 percent in all four quarters to be recognized as our GOLD drivers.

In 2012, four new GOLD drivers received a leather SW jacket and a Gold colored nameplate to display on their buses. Seven drivers attained GOLD status for three consecutive years and received a leather SW tote bag to match their jacket. Five GOLD drivers completed four consecutive years and were awarded a money clip with a monetary bonus enclosed. One GOLD driver completed five consecutive years and was presented a monetary bonus to add to the money clip.

In the News...

Ambitious transit plan needed for Twin Cities

By JESSICA MADOR, Minnesota Public Radio

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Transit planners are fantasizing about making Minnesota’s next generation transportation system reality.

That means changing the way Minnesotans have traditionally thought about how they get around. Instead of two separate worlds -- one of roads, bridges and vehicles, and another of buses, light rail and other mass transit --planners want to create an integrated system that makes it easier for people and goods to move around using different kinds of transportation.

It’s all part of a plan designed to help Minnesota catch up with transportation spending in other states. If

transportation advocates get their way, the sound of light rail, bus rapid-transit and other forms of efficient transit will become more common around the Twin Cities metro area.

By the year 2030, the Metropolitan Council wants at least three more light rail lines and at least five highway bus rapid-transit lines with dedicated lanes.

The vision also calls for at least a dozen other rapid intercity bus or streetcar lines on major avenues and at least one more commuter rail line. Planners also want to improve local bus service and access for pedestrians and cyclists.

[Read full story](#)

metro council.org

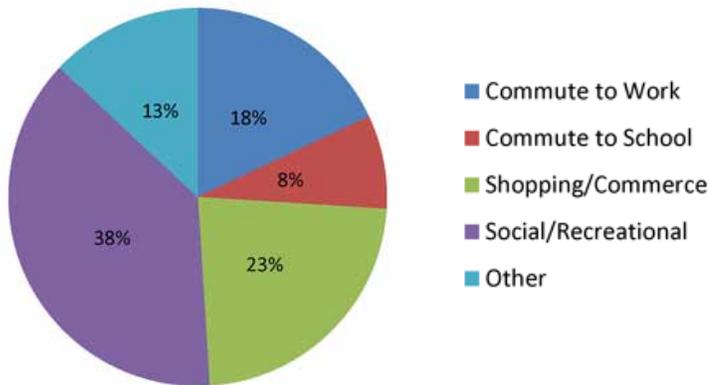
Local Officials Have Until Next Year to Apply for Federal Transportation Funds

Local officials in the metro area and others who apply for federal transportation funds have until next year to prepare their applications. The 2013 “regional solicitation” for local transportation projects, originally scheduled for May, has been pushed back to early 2014 while the Metropolitan Council, Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) and other transportation officials review the process and criteria for evaluating applications for funding.

[Read More.](#)

Travel Data Confirms Residents are Driving Less

Where is Everyone Going?



Transportation planners at the Metropolitan Council are poring over volumes of survey data about residents’ travel patterns and now the raw data are available to the public.

The Travel Behavior Inventory (TBI) gathers data through surveys done every 10 years; data that tell the stories about where people are going in the metro area, how they get there, how often they travel and why.

The TBI is a unique source of data about travel trends and behaviors, helping to inform policy makers and planners in transportation decision making and investment. The data also help to produce better forecasts and improved computerized forecasting models.

[Read More.](#)



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