



# in transit

Minnesota Public Transit Association



## SouthWest Transit receives Gold Award for Safety from APTA

EDEN PRAIRIE – The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) has awarded SouthWest Transit its 2008 Gold Award for Safety. The APTA Bus Safety Awards program recognizes transit systems for their commitment to improving the safety of transit employees, customers, and communities through the application of effective safety initiatives.

APTA presents just one Gold Award in each of its size categories and one Certificate of Achievement. In 2007, SouthWest Transit received a Certificate of Achievement meaning it was the runner-up for the Gold Award.

“It takes a great deal of effort to ensure the safety of our riders,” said SouthWest Transit’s Board Chair Jay Rohe. “This award recognizes the hard work, extensive planning and heads-up efforts of everyone who works for SouthWest Transit.”

Data clearly shows that SouthWest Transit continues to improve its safety and reliability each year. Miles driven, the number of passengers and the miles between breakdowns has all increased in each of the last four years. During the same period there were decreases in the number of accidents as well as the total costs associated with accidents.

“This safety award is not about one person or one team doing the right thing. It’s about everyone working together to make sure our customers are safely brought to and from work and home,” said Chief Executive Officer, Len Simich.

Drivers, supervisors, mechanics, outside workers, office staff and management each have a role to play in safety at the agency. The “Expect the Best” credo shown on each of the buses reflects the importance SouthWest Transit places on its staff to provide a safe ride, while also providing the highest level of customer service and satisfaction.

SouthWest Transit will provide more than 1,000,000 rides in 2008. In 2007, SouthWest Transit’s Park & Ride lots were at 99 percent of capacity on a daily basis. To help meet the increasing number of people using SouthWest Transit services the SouthWest Village Park and Ride lot along Highway 312 in Chanhassen is now open. Later this year the East Creek Station Park and Ride in Chaska at the intersection of Highway 41 and Highway 312 will open.



SouthWest Transit drivers, supervisors, mechanics and customer service employees along with John Mathews, Regional VP of First Transit (far left) and Len Simich, CEO of SouthWest Transit (second from left) celebrate the agency being presented the 2008 Gold Safety Award by the American Public Transportation Association.

# From the President



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

Summer is here and that means the Annual Minnesota Public Transit Conference is right around the corner. This year Minnesota Public Transit Association (MPTA) members are working hard to provide you with a great learning and networking experience. The 2008 conference will be held from September 29 – October 1<sup>st</sup> at the River Centre in St. Paul. The conference will focus on the latest, hot topic – rising fuel

prices and the need to be “green.” Our theme is “The Changing Environment – Transit – Changing the Environment.”

We all find ourselves in a very different environment. With gas prices hitting \$4 per gallon and people becoming more conscious of environmental degradation and problems that causes, transit systems will be increasing in the spotlight, providing part of the solution to our environmental challenges. Environmental circumstances are increasing demand and we need to adapt to this new environment. At the same time, increased transit use will help reduce emissions and reliance on fossil fuels, changing our environment for the better.

We have a great line-up of dynamic speakers who will discuss a wide range of issues including green marketing, alternative fuel use, cultural diversity, walking and biking,

green technologies and how transit is leading the way in providing options to our auto-dependent society. Our opening keynote speaker, Sue Thomas, is an amazing woman who has inspiring and humorous stories to tell about the challenges of being profoundly deaf and her work for the FBI. We’ll also hear updates from the Metropolitan Council and MnDOT’s Office of Transit as well as updates on federal funding.

You don’t want to miss this year’s event! We will have a huge Vendor Expo area with companies featuring the latest products to help us serve our customers. Tuesday evening’s reception will feature Bella Diva – a great band, back for an encore performance. A great time will be had by all so sign up TODAY at [www.mpta-transit.org](http://www.mpta-transit.org).

In addition to planning our annual conference, MPTA has been working to expand our influence and visibility. I recently returned from visiting with members of Minnesota’s Congressional Delegation as part of the Transportation Alliance Washington, D.C. Fly-In. I had an opportunity to meet with members and staff to discuss transit needs and concerns throughout the state. Updates on the federal funding situation painted an uncertain future for all transportation modes. Declining revenue from the federal gas tax also hurts transit funding which receives a portion of those dollars. Efforts are already underway to develop the next 6-year surface transportation authorization bill as SAFETEA-LU is set to expire in September of 2009. This will be a watershed bill for all of transportation and MPTA will be there, advocating for transit systems.



## Bemidji hosts 2008 Minnesota Bus Rodeo on July 19

The 2008 Minnesota Bus Rodeo, entitled, “Call of the Wild / Wheels Up North,” will be held in the Bemidji Lakes area on July 19th, hosted by Minnesota’s Northern Tier of Transit Organizations, led by Paul Bunyan Transit of Bemidji. “ We look forward in having everyone come to Bemidji and enjoy the area along with the competition,” commented 2008 Bus Rodeo Committee Chair/Paul Bunyan Transit Director, Greg Negard. “The committee has worked hard to make this a memorable event for everyone.



# 2008 Minnesota Public Transit Conference



**September 29 - October 1**  
**St. Paul RiverCenter**

## ***“The Changing Environment -TRANSIT - Changing The Environment”.***

Don't miss this year's information-packed, fun-filled event! Join your colleagues and learn more about the changing environment with public policy and transit financing. Sessions will focus on trends in public policy and transit financing and the ways in which transit service positively impacts our personal and natural environment. With a variety of topics to choose from and informative general sessions with colleagues, you will be inspired, informed and ready to make a difference

## **Keynote Speakers**

Welcome & Opening Remarks

**Sue Thomas**

Staying In the Race



Captivating her audiences and leaving them speechless is the trademark of Sue Thomas. Profoundly deaf since the age of 18 months, Sue spent years with therapists to develop her voice and in the process became an expert lip-reader in order to communicate with the hearing world around her. Inspired by Sue's unique job at the FBI headquarters in Washington DC, doing undercover surveillance by lip-reading, in 2002 her speaking platform went international with the release of the TV series, SUE THOMAS: FBEYE.

Today her dynamic spirit cannot be contained in her silent world and reaches out to break the Sound Barrier with widely diversified audiences worldwide. Her humor is contagious and her stories are compelling. When she is not traveling and speaking, Sue Thomas lives in the quiet hills of Vermont with her Special Skills/Hearing Dog, Katie. Besides her best-selling autobiography, "Silent Night", she is working on several other writing projects, and is in the development stages of EPEC, a service dog training facility, as well as a silent retreat, 'A Place of Streams. Today, besides her deafness, she also walks with Multiple Sclerosis. When asked what her greatest accomplishment has been, she answers, "Simply staying in the race."



Closing Remarks

**Kim Carlson**

Final Session Luncheon

Kim Carlson's passion for the planet has led her to become an eco-savvy entrepreneur, green business author and an eco-chic life-style expert. She practices what she preaches - Except she doesn't really preach. She enthuses!

Kim's real world expertise in all things green has made her a popular keynote speaker and green business consultant to corporations, universities, governments and consumer groups. Kim uses her media appearances as the EarthSmart Expert on NBC television to convey the myriad pleasures of a planet-friendly life-style, touching upon topics ranging from stylish organic entertaining to nontoxic gardening and eco-golf. Kim can be seen and heard as a frequent eco-expert on national talk radio and television reaching an audience of over 17 million in 2007. She has been the host of the weekly national radio program, Living The Green Life and Public Television specials on earth-friendly topics. Kim currently is a regular guest writer for The Minneapolis Star Tribune Newspaper's Saturday Home Section and contributes green content to national magazines such as Self, Health, Shape, Natural Health, Cooking Light, Bride & Groom, Experience Life, and Midwest Home. For more about Kim Carlson visit [www.earthsmartconsumer.com](http://www.earthsmartconsumer.com).

# Legislative Update

Margaret Donahoe  
Legislative Director  
Minnesota Transportation Alliance

## 2008 Session Summary

The 2008 Session was a critical one for transit systems around the state. Here is a run down of the final outcome.

### 2008 Transportation Funding Bill

- Authorization for counties in the seven-county metropolitan area to levy of sales of ¼ percent for transitways. Five of the seven counties have voted to levy the tax. (10-year cumulative estimate: \$1 billion in new revenue)
- Dedication of sales tax on leased vehicles to transportation with 50 percent for Greater Minnesota Transit and 50 percent for county highways. (10-year cumulative estimate: \$56 million)
- Authorization for counties outside the metropolitan area to levy a sales tax of up to ½ percent for transportation purposes.
- \$50 million of the \$1.8 billion in trunk highway bonds for Statewide Transit Facility Improvements

### 2008 Capital Bonding Bill

- Greater Minnesota transit facilities - \$1 million
- Cedar Avenue busway - \$4 million
- Urban Partnership Agreement grant for Met Council - \$16.6 million
- Central Corridor Light Rail line - \$70 million

### Transportation Policy Bills

- Expands the goals of the state's transportation system to include minimizing adverse environmental impacts and expanding transit statewide.
- Modifies the Metropolitan Council's special transportation service duties to include contracting with providers when it is "feasible and cost-

efficient." Amends various regulations governing special transportation services.

- Requires the Metropolitan Council to identify heavily traveled corridors where development of a transitway might be feasible and cost effective in its transportation policy plan.
- Provides that the governor must designate either the Metropolitan Council or MnDOT as the entity responsible for a new light rail transit line in the metro area.
- Extends jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Transit Police to bus/transit lanes, freeway shoulders used by transit vehicles and HOV lanes used by transit.
- Allows the Metropolitan Council to offer discount passes to registered non-profit organizations for use by people under 16 years of age.
- Requires MnDOT to develop an implementation plan for providing transit in Greater Minnesota that meets 80 percent of the unmet need by 2015 and at least 90 percent of the unmet need by 2025. Requires an annual report on transit service in Greater Minnesota that includes a summary of funding source, each transit program, data on use of volunteers, financial data and information on excess or deficit in transit funding to meet the needs.
- Requires the Metropolitan Council provide on its web site information on finances and ridership of light rail transit lines.
- Requires MnDOT, in cooperation with the Metropolitan Council and local governments, to study the benefits, feasibility and costs of adopting a complete streets policy.

### 2008 Supplemental Budget Bill

- One-time cut to FY2009 Appropriation for Metropolitan Area Transit - \$136,000
- One-time cut to FY2009 Appropriation for Greater Minnesota Transit - \$32,000

The tax bill includes sales tax exemptions for materials purchased for the construction of the North Star Commuter Rail line and the Central Corridor Light Rail line.





## Pennock man is 1 millionth rider on Kandiyohi Area Transit

WILLMAR — Kandiyohi Area Transit served its 1 millionth rider on Friday, May 23rd.

Dan Wieberdink, 24, of Pennock received a basket of KAT promotional items and a certificate noting his ridership milestone after he arrived for volunteer work at Bethesda Pleasantview Nursing Home in Willmar.

“Other systems around the country do a millionth rider,” says John Groothuis, KAT director. “It’s taken us nine years, but we’re very happy with the nine years. That’s pretty good for a small system.”

Wieberdink, who lives in a group home and uses a motorized wheel chair, was surprised by the honor and was pleased to receive the hat, fishing lure and other goodies. But he’s thankful for the bus service that’s been taking him to appointments, stores and Bethesda for nearly five years.

Before Wieberdink took the bus, he was at home with his mother.

“I wouldn’t have independence if it was not for the KAT bus company, so therefore it’s a very good thing,” he said. “It’s just a very good service and I’m glad they’re around to help out ... for not only me but for everybody. They have lifts on every bus to accommodate everybody.”

Wieberdink has been a steady passenger for Gene Floren, who was driving the 19-passenger, 2007 Ford bus. Floren has been driving for 8½ years. “It’s gone real good,” he said.



Groothuis said he and his staff determined Thursday afternoon who the honored passenger would be.

“This was the time that worked out,” Groothuis said. “(Wieberdink) has been riding with us for quite some time now. He rides every day.”

KAT began operations in July 1999 and serves about 550 riders a day, Monday through Friday, and about 100 riders on Saturday, in Willmar and Kandiyohi County. The public transit service has 18 drivers, of which about half work full-time, and a fleet of 10 buses.

## SouthWest Transit opens East Creek Transit Station



SouthWest Transit’s East Creek Transit Station opened just off of the new Highway 312 in Chaska on June 2. In the first week, 70 percent of the 250 parking spots were filled on a daily basis. One week later, Lt. Governor Carol Molnau, along with representatives of the Met Council, Carver County, the City of Chaska and SouthWest Transit Board were on hand for a dedication ceremony.





## DTA's U-PASS ridership sets all-time record high

DULUTH – U-PASS ridership at UMD, College of St. Scholastica, Lake Superior College and UWS during the 2007-2008 school year was up 23.17 percent over the previous school year. The DTA provided 497,671 U-PASS rides during the 2007-2008 school year – up 93,621 rides over the 2006-2007 school year.

The U-PASS Program was introduced in Fall Semester of 2000 as an innovative partnership between UMD and the DTA to encourage greater use of public transportation on campus by providing free unlimited rides for students, faculty and staff and building an on-campus transit hub. Participating colleges subsidize the free rides on a contractual basis.

U-PASS ridership at UMD increased by nearly 13 percent during the 2007-2008 school year with 381,084 rides. UMD ridership for February 2008 totaled 55,506 and was the highest monthly total ever at UMD.

The DTA's U-PASS Program at UMD, which began in September of 2000, surpassed the 2 million rider milestone on February 1, 2007. Since the U-PASS Program at UMD began in 2000, the DTA has transported 2,548,061 riders on the U-PASS program at UMD.

Prior to the establishment of the U-PASS Program in 2000, UMD ridership averaged just 4,000 a month. UMD ridership today tops the 4,000 rider mark in only 2 days.

U-PASS ridership at UMD has increased every year since 2000 and has accounted for approximately 11 percent of the DTA's over-all ridership since that time period. However, from September through May when school is in session, U-PASS ridership at UMD accounts for 15-20 percent of DTA's system-wide ridership.



Since 2000, when the U-PASS Program was instituted, UMD has experienced a phenomenal 23 percent increase in enrollment. UMD enrollment is at an all time high with 11,190 students. The U-PASS Program has been very instrumental in accommodating the transportation needs of this increased enrollment.

The DTA and UMD are contractually committed to continue the U-PASS Program through spring semester 2011.

U-PASS ridership at Lake Superior College, the College of St. Scholastica and UWS, which joined the program last year, also continues to grow.

System-wide DTA ridership increased by 6 percent in 2007 and for the first quarter of 2008, ridership continues an upward swing with an increase of 12.4 percent over the first quarter of 2007.

## DTA to discontinue token fares on January 1st Riders encouraged to use tokens before they lose value

DULUTH – The Duluth Transit Authority will not accept tokens as a valid fare beginning January 1, 2009.

The DTA currently values small tokens at 50 cents and large tokens at 35 cents; and accepts single or multiple tokens towards fare payment.

When fares were increased in 2005 and a new electronic fare collection system introduced, the DTA discontinued sales of tokens and notified the public that tokens will eventually be phased out.

The DTA presently accepts tokens towards fare payment or in combination with cash.

The DTA will not redeem tokens for cash. However, the cash value of tokens can be transferred to a fare card at the DTA Operations Center at 2402 W. Michigan Street during weekday business hours.





### MN transit providers attend CTAA Expo in New Orleans

NEW ORLEANS –The 2008 Community Transportation Association of America Expo in New Orleans, LA, was attended by the following Minnesota transit providers: Karen DeBoer, Tom Jay, Terrie Gulden, Harold Jennissen, Dwile Kwasnieski, Greg Negard, Mike Ness, Daryn Toso, Mike Frisch, Cindi Pic and Erlene Welshons.

Mr. Jeff Iceman, driver for Red Lake Transit, represented Minnesota in the CTAA National Bus Rodeo, having qualified for this honor as the 1st place winner of the 2007 Minnesota Bus Rodeo Small Bus Division.

Minnesota's Rural Transit Assistance Program (MN RTAP) was featured in a best-practice workshop entitled: "What Makes Minnesota RTAP Great?" MN RTAP Coordinator, Lynn Frank of Mn/DOT gave the presentation at the CTAA National RTAP Seminar, attended by RTAP coordinators from across the nation.

### Metro Transit expands service in South Minneapolis/Richfield

MINNEAPOLIS – Metro Transit bus service was expanded on the south end of Route 14 on May 31, creating more access to jobs in Richfield and near the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport. Funding for the service enhancement comes from a federal Job Access and Reverse Commute grant, which supports transportation services that improve access to employment opportunities.

The expanded service will be offered seven days a week on Route 14C and Route 14F branches. The expanded service extends Route 14 from 54th Street to the air-freight terminals at the airport on Cargo Road.

New Route 14C trips will serve the Cedar Point Commons shopping center, which includes Target and Home Depot, located at 66th Street and Cedar Avenue in Richfield. New Route 14F trips will serve FedEx and UPS, both located on Cargo Road near the airport.

### New Metro bus route serves Minnetonka and Hopkins

MINNETONKA/HOPKINS – West-metro residents were provided with a new east-west bus route on May 31 that travels between Minnetonka and Hopkins, providing job seekers access to employment centers in both cities. Funding for the new service comes from a federal Job Access and

Reverse Commute grant, which supports transportation services that improve access to employment opportunities.

The new Route 612 will provide eight eastbound and eight westbound trips on weekdays, and 10 eastbound and nine westbound trips on Saturdays. The route will travel primarily on County Road 101 and Excelsior Boulevard, serving retail destinations in Minnetonka and downtown Hopkins.

The route will be operated by Transit Team through a contract with the Metropolitan Council. It is considered a demonstration project, lasting at least through September 2009.

When preparing for Route 612, planners at Metro Transit identified more than 4,500 entry-level jobs in the route's service area. Customers who take Route 612 also can transfer in downtown Hopkins to Route 12 and Route 615, providing access to even more employment centers such as Opus, Ridgedale, Knollwood, Uptown and downtown Minneapolis.

To celebrate the new service, transit customers can get a free children's ticket to see *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* at Stages Theatre in downtown Hopkins. To get the offer, customers must present a valid transit pass, bus transfer or rail ticket at the Stages Theatre Box Office and buy one adult ticket to the show. The production runs June 27 through August 3.

### MN Transit Tax begins July 1st

MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL – The sales tax increased July 1 in five metropolitan counties to fund improvements to the bus and rail systems.

The new transit tax is one quarter of 1 percent and it will go into effect in Anoka, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey and Washington counties.

The new tax is equal to 25 cents on a \$100 purchase. The Minnesota Department of Revenue estimates that it will bring in about \$95 million over the next 12 months.

The transit tax stacks on top of existing sales taxes. That means sales taxes in the area will range from 6.5 percent in Scott and Carver counties to 7.4 percent in Minneapolis.

The transit sales tax applies to the same things already subject to the sales tax. Food and clothing remain exempt.

In addition, a new \$20 tax on the sale of new and used vehicles in those counties also started July 1.



# Central Corridor LRT Update



## Traffic mitigation issues identified for Washington Avenue transit-pedestrian mall

METRO –Planners for the Central Corridor LRT line envision a transit-pedestrian mall on Washington Avenue extending from Pleasant Avenue to Walnut Street through the heart of the University of Minnesota’s East Bank campus. The cost of converting this stretch of Washington into a mall is \$11.1 million. The mall will be designed to accommodate LRT, buses, emergency vehicles and pedestrians.

Planners conducted four traffic studies that looked at intra-campus roads and surrounding roadways to determine how to reroute autos off the mall. They are recommending a number of traffic mitigation steps to accommodate the rerouting while maintaining access to university facilities. The steps include:

- Installing traffic signals and constructing turn lanes at six intersections on the East Bank
- Converting Harvard and Beacon streets from one-way streets to two-way streets and extending each a block to improve connections with adjacent roads
- Improving five intersections by modifying the timing of traffic signals and extending or adding turn lanes

Project stakeholders have identified areas that will need work but are outside of the project’s scope and budget, such as currently congested intersections near campus and new roadways previously planned. They are discussing how to accomplish these needed improvements.

Technical staffers for the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Hennepin and Ramsey counties, the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Metropolitan Council’s Central Corridor Project Office believe direct impacts of the Washington Avenue at-grade alignment have been adequately identified and can be mitigated.

## Station design will be simple, with emphasis on durable materials

Design concepts for the 15 Central Corridor LRT stations will be guided by a philosophy that the stations should enhance the street and surrounding buildings and be a part of the street as opposed to a monument placed in the street. Under the station design, architects will incorporate features to protect waiting passengers, including those in wheelchairs, from the elements and road spray.

Stations areas identified as opportunities for integrated art applications include columns, railings, platforms and windscreens. Integrated art is that which enhances existing system elements, rather than creates a freestanding art piece. Materials need to be durable to withstand the elements. Standardization is necessary to make replacing broken and worn elements easier and affordable and ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The Metropolitan Council, on behalf of the Central Corridor LRT Project, is issuing a Request for Qualifications in early June, seeking up to five artists with expertise in creating integrated, outdoor public art for the design, fabrication and installation of art. Artists must have experience in engaging the community, have knowledge of the community and explain how their work will be inclusive of and responsive to local culture and identity. Artists will develop a plan for how they will engage the community in the art process for each station. The station art budget is \$3.7 million.

The deadline for artists to submit their qualifications is 2 p.m. July 8. For information on requesting a form, visit: [http://www.metrocouncil.org/doing\\_business/solicitindex.htm](http://www.metrocouncil.org/doing_business/solicitindex.htm). Project office to hire replacement outreach coordinator

Questions or comments? Call the Central Corridor LRT Project Comment Line at 651-602-1645 or email us at [centralcorridor@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:centralcorridor@metc.state.mn.us)





# State action propels progress on UPA projects

## Transit improvements on I-35W, Cedar Avenue shift into high gear

METRO –By the end of 2009, commuters using transit to get into and out of downtown Minneapolis via I-35W and Cedar Avenue will get to their destinations faster and have more options than today. They'll be able to:

- Board bus rapid transit (BRT) from one of several new and existing park-and-ride lots along Cedar Avenue in Dakota County.
- Hop on an express bus from three new park-and-ride lots in the I-35W corridor.
- Experience quicker boarding, disembarking and passage through downtown Minneapolis with the advent of an additional bus lane on both Marquette and Second avenues.

In addition, motorists willing to pay the price will be able to drive in a dynamically priced, high-occupancy-toll (HOT) lane on I-35W from Burnsville to 46th Street in Minneapolis. The HOT lane will shift onto a dynamically priced shoulder lane north into downtown during congested periods. Carpools and buses will use the HOT lanes free of charge.

Work on these improvements and other projects is now accelerating. In mid-May, the Minnesota Legislature approved authorizing legislation and \$50 million in state funds to match a \$133 million federal Urban Partnership Agreement (UPA) grant awarded to the region in August 2007.

"This is an exciting project that will give transit in this region a big boost, at a time when demand for transit is growing rapidly," said Metropolitan Council Chair Peter Bell. "It is a major victory for our region to have secured these funds."

### Improving the speed, capacity and appeal of transit

The Twin Cities metropolitan area was one of only five regions nationwide to win competitive funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation's UPA program. The "urban partners" agree to use aggressive congestion reduction strategies under the umbrella of four "Ts" — tolling, transit, telecommuting and technology.

Of the \$133 million federal grant, about \$86 million is allocated to transit projects. Craig Lamothe, facilities planning manager for Metro Transit, said the projects are designed to:

- Improve the speed and reliability of transit
- Enhance the appeal and convenience of transit
- Increase the capacity of transit

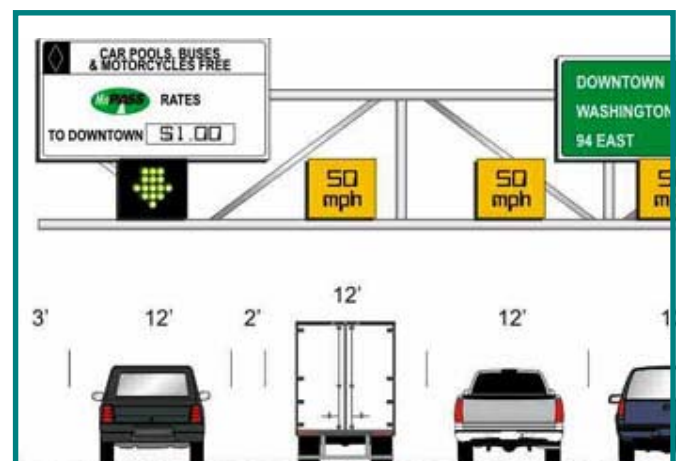
The federal grant requires a 20 percent local match, which will bring total spending on the transit projects to \$107 million, Lamothe said. Each of 13 projects is being implemented by one or two of several partner agencies, including Metro Transit, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT), the City of Minneapolis, the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA), Dakota County and the University of Minnesota.

Lamothe convenes a group of project managers from the partner agencies to keep each other updated and coordinate activities as needed. Most of the projects were being planned before the UPA grant was awarded, but the federal funds make completion possible at a much earlier date.

"Once the Legislature acted, we switched quickly from planning to implementation and we're moving forward on a rapid, aggressive schedule," Lamothe said. Under the terms of the grant, most transit projects must be completed by September 2009, with the exception of improvements in downtown Minneapolis, which must be completed by the end of 2009.



Another 500 parking spaces will be created with the construction of a new parking structure on land adjacent to the current 95th St. park-and-ride lot in Blaine along I-35W.



A new dynamically priced shoulder lane will be open on northbound I-35W between 42nd St. and downtown Minneapolis during congested periods.



# Lakeville joins metro area transit system

## Federal grant provides incentive, benefits

The story of transit service and the City of Lakeville begins with a question. A question that dates back to ancient philosophers about which came first, the chicken or the egg? For years, Lakeville city officials have been reluctant to join the so-called "Transit Taxing District" (TTD) in the metro area. The taxing district is composed of communities in which the Metropolitan Council levies a tax for investment in regional transit capital projects, including park-and-rides and buses.

From Lakeville's perspective, participation in the TTD didn't seem like a good investment. Not when the city wasn't on the receiving end of regional transit service or facilities. From the region's perspective, it wasn't a funding priority to direct limited resources to a community that wasn't helping to pay the costs of transit capital projects.

## Show me the money

"The city wanted the guarantee of transit service and facilities before they delivered the resources, while the Council needed the resources to deliver the services," said Arlene McCarthy, director of Metropolitan Transportation Services for the Metropolitan Council.

"For us, we couldn't justify raising property taxes without receiving transit-related services or facilities," said Lakeville Administrator Steven Mielke. "It was a conversation that went around and around in a circle." "We had the Council saying, 'Show me the money,' and the city saying, 'Show us what we get for it,'" said Council Chair Peter Bell. "And so it went."

Meanwhile, license plate surveys revealed many Lakeville-area residents were using park-and-ride facilities in nearby Apple Valley to hop the bus downtown. That didn't sit well with some Apple Valley officials, who looked for ways to restrict the parking facilities to residents within the TTD. But most importantly, it demonstrated the growing demand for transit facilities. Just about that time, along came the UPA and suddenly, there was the prospect of resources.

## Federal grant helps break the deadlock

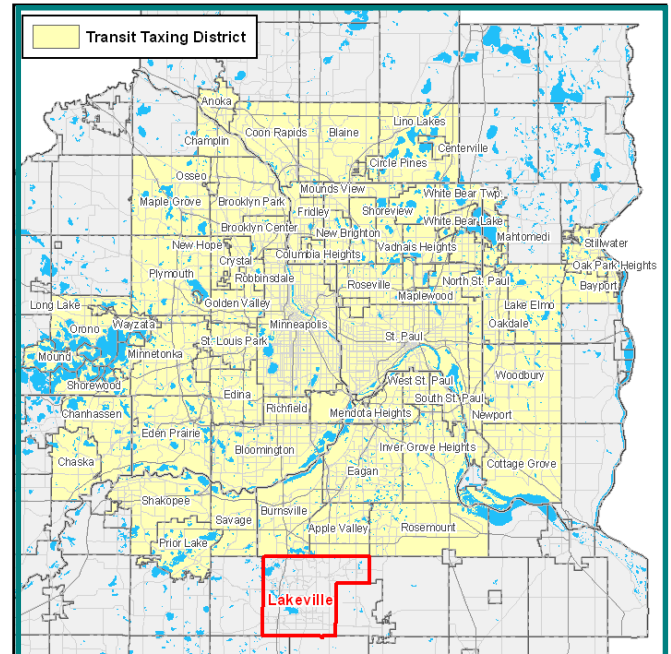
UPA stands for Urban Partnership Agreement. It's a program administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation that provides grant dollars for reducing traffic congestion. The state and region applied for, and was one of five applicants awarded, federal funds to the tune of \$133 million to address congestion along I-35W and the Cedar Avenue Corridor. Lakeville could benefit from proposed investments, but to do so, meant joining the Transit Taxing District.

To sweeten the offer, the Council, partnering with Mn/DOT, proposed a service agreement, using UPA dollars and recently authorized trunk highway bonds for transit improvements. County sales tax revenues allocated by a critical new partner, the County Transit Improvement Board (CTIB), are also anticipated to help make the new service successful. The service enhancements proposed include:

- A northbound High-Occupancy Toll Lane (HOT lane) from the I-35 split to the HOT lane beginning at Burnsville Parkway through Minneapolis
- A new 500 space park-and-ride facility on I-35 with bus-only service ramps
- A new park-and-ride facility on Cedar Avenue
- New express service from both new park-and-rides

## A one-time opportunity

"It was a one-time opportunity with a price tag upwards of \$25 million," said Bell. "We really wanted the city to come into the district voluntarily and the UPA dollars afforded us the ability to accomplish that." "For our part, it was a way to obtain a significant transportation benefit for Lakeville residents, which justified the property tax increase," said Mielke. On May 5, the Lakeville City Council took a big step in the long journey, opting to enter into a transit service plan and join the TTD. The state legislature and governor approved the enabling language needed to secure the federal UPA funds about a week later. On May 28, the Metro Council approved the service agreement offered to the city. And so ends this chapter of the story of transit and the City of Lakeville and the TDD and the UPA; a story that for both parties and the region concludes with a WIN-WIN. The UPA, of course, provides additional resources that benefit communities along the I-35W and Cedar Avenue corridors.



Lakeville has joined the region's Transit Taxing District. A property tax levy is spread to all taxable property in the district; the owner of a \$300,000 home will pay about \$37.50 annually. The Metropolitan Council and its regional transportation partners use the revenue to make capital investments in the transit system, such as bus purchases and construction of park-and-ride lots.



# Council will hold hearings on proposal to increase transit fares

Proposed increases would address shortfall from rising fuel prices, decline in motor vehicle sales

ST. PAUL—The Metropolitan Council will hold public hearings next month on a proposed increase in transit fares that, if fully implemented, would go into effect in two phases, with a modest initial increase on Oct. 1 and a second increase in 2009.

The proposal calls for a 25-cent increase beginning October 1 on all regular-route service, and a 50-cent increase on Metro Mobility service for people with disabilities. In addition, the morning rush-hour, and rush-hour fares, would be extended by one-half hour and start at 5:30 a.m. instead of 6 a.m.

If approved, new cash fares would be \$1.75, \$2.25 or \$3 depending on the type of service and time of day. New Metro Mobility fares would be \$4 during weekday rush hours and \$3 at other times. A second fare increase in 2009, at a date to be determined, could add up to an additional 50 cents to the cost of a bus, train or Metro Mobility ride, depending on the cost of fuel and other economic factors.

The proposal was recommended Monday by the Council's Transportation Committee. If approved by the full Council, it will be the subject of a series of eight public hearings and meetings in July before final Council action. A fare increase is needed primarily to help offset rising fuel costs and lower-than-expected revenues from the Motor Vehicle Sales Tax (MVST), which helps pay for transit, and reduce a projected \$15 million shortfall in the state fiscal year that begins July 1, as well as an expected funding gap in the next biennium.

The proposed increase would be implemented by all service providers, including Metro Transit, the region's largest provider of transit service, Metro Mobility, suburban transit providers, and dial-a-ride and other contacted service.

"The rising cost of fuel affects transit in a couple of ways," said Council Chair Peter Bell. "It increases the cost of doing business. And it increases ridership, which is good for transit, but also increases our operating costs. We need to be able to respond in the shorter term as well as have the flexibility to adjust fares again next year in the event our costs continue to escalate."

## Upcoming public hearings and meetings

**Monday, July 7: 5:30 p.m. — 6:30 p.m.**

Northtown Mall, Community Room  
398 Northtown Drive, Blaine

**Tuesday, July 8: 6:30 — 7:30 p.m.**

Hopkins Center for the Arts  
1111 Main Street, Hopkins

**Wednesday, July 9: Noon — 1:00 p.m.**

Minneapolis City Hall – Conference Room 333  
350 South Fifth Street, downtown Minneapolis

**Wednesday, July 9: – 5:30 – 6:30 p.m.**

Burnsville City Hall – Chambers  
100 Civic Center Parkway, Burnsville

**Thursday, July 10: 6:30 — 7:30 p.m.**

Maplewood Community Center  
2100 White Bear Avenue, Maplewood

**Monday, July 14: 5:30 – 6:30 p.m.**

Eden Prairie City Hall - Heritage Room  
8080 Mitchell Road, Eden Prairie

**Tuesday, July 15: Noon — 1:00 p.m.**

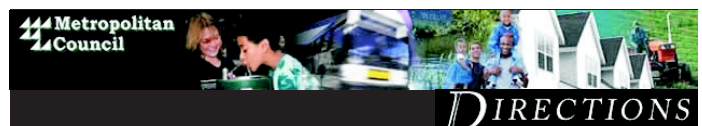
Metropolitan Council – Chambers  
390 Robert Street North, downtown St. Paul

**Tuesday, July 15: 5:30 – 6:30 p.m.**

Seward Square Apartments — Meeting Room  
2121 South 9th Street, Minneapolis

### Metro Fast Facts

- Transit is an environmentally-friendly, convenient, safe and affordable transportation option
- Metro Transit, the region's largest provider of transit service, expects to provide 80 million rides in 2008
- MVST revenues for FY2009 are forecasted to be \$124 million, \$16 million less than the Nov. 2007 forecast (in FY08, metro-area transit receives 24 percent of MVST revenues, and when the five-year phase-in is complete in 2012, metro-area transit will receive 36 percent of MVST revenues)
- The gross cost of fuel increased 65 percent from May 2007 to May 2008
- The Legislature, in 2008, approved a one-time allocation of \$30.8 million from county sales tax receipts to transit operations
- The regional transit operating budget in FY2009 is \$378.4 million (all transit service, including Metro Mobility, Metro Transit, Suburban Transit Providers, Council contracted routes and dial-a-ride service)
- The last fare increase took effect July 1, 2005.





## 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.

### MN Public Transit Association

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## MnDOT holds State Transportation Plan meetings

MnDOT will be holding a number of outreach meetings to solicit input on the direction for the new Statewide Transportation Plan. MnDOT is working in conjunction with the Metropolitan Council who is working on an updated Transportation Policy Plan. The schedule for Outreach Meetings is:

- July 11 District 8 - Kandiyohi Co. Health & Human Services, Wilmar - 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
- July 14 District 3 - St. Cloud Conference Center, St. Cloud - 12:30 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- July 15 Metro TAB - Metropolitan Council - 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- July 17 District 2 - MnDOT Dist. Office, Bemidji - 12:30 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- July 21 District 6 - MnDOT Dist. Office, Rochester - 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
- July 28 District 7 - Best Western, North Mankato - 12:30 p.m. to 4 p.m.



## Bulletin Board

### Transit Events

Sept. 29 — Oct. 1 Minnesota Public Transit Conference — River Center — St. Paul, MN  
July 19, 2008 — Minnesota Statewide Bus Rodeo — Bemidji

### RTAP Training Classes

Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) offers training in passenger assistance, defensive driving, abuse prevention along with 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](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/RTAP/Form/index.html). **See RTAP training calendar at [www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/RTAP/rtaptrng.html](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/RTAP/rtaptrng.html).** For more information, contact RTAP Coordinator Lynn Frank at 651/366-4710 or [lynn.frank@dot.state.mn.us](mailto:lynn.frank@dot.state.mn.us).



Bridge the gap with  
**RTAP**

## Contributors

Pat Brink — SouthWest Transit  
Margaret Donahoe — Transportation Alliance  
Tom Elwell — Duluth Transit Authority  
Lynn Frank — Mn/DOT Office of Transit  
Bob Gibbons — Metro Transit  
Tony Kellen — St. Cloud Metro Bus  
Bonnie Kollodge — Met Council  
Donna Middleton — West Central News  
Pat O'Connell — Met Council  
Metropolitan Council Directions

## SEND NEWS

% Tom Elwell  
Duluth Transit Authority  
2402 West Michigan Street  
Duluth, MN 55806  
[telwell@duluthtransit.com](mailto:telwell@duluthtransit.com)

Minnesota Public Transit Association

