



# in transit

## Duluth Transit Authority named Transit System of the Year

DULUTH – The Duluth Transit Authority was named Minnesota Transit System of the Year by the Minnesota Public Transit Association at its annual meeting, which was held in conjunction with the Minnesota-Wisconsin Transit Conference in Duluth September 21-23.

Also receiving MPTA awards were State Representative Terry Morrow who was named Friend of Transit; Sam Jacobs of Metro Transit and Jacqueline Forner of Chisago-Isanti Heartland Express received Distinguished Career Awards; John Swanson of Scott County and Alan Herrmann of Carver County received the Management Innovation Award for SmartLink; Mark Anderson of Greater Mankato Transit received the Transit Professional of the Year Award; and Shirley Lyons of Three Rivers Hiawathaland Transit System, who was honored with the first ever Minnesota Bus Operator of the Year Award.

The joint conference was well-attended by both Minnesota and Wisconsin transit professionals; and the usual chit-chat about the Vikings and Packers was subdued somewhat because of the Bret Favre controversy. During the Federal Funding Update, Bill Millar of APTA said he had a Vikings/Packer joke for the occasion; but thought he'd better not tell it, since it probably would offend someone.



**MPTA Award Winners**  
 Alan Herrmann of Carver County - SmartLink: Management Innovation Award; John Swanson of Scott County - SmartLink: Management Innovation Award; Sam Jacobs, Metro Transit: Distinguished Career Award; Dennis Jensen, Duluth Transit Authority: Transit System of the Year Award; Julie Johanson, Deputy Chief of Operations, Metro Transit: award presenter; Shirley Lyons, Three Rivers Hiawathaland Transit: Bus Operator of the Year Award; Mark Anderson, Mankato Transit: Transit Professional of the Year Award; and Jackie Forner, Chisago/Isanti Heartland Express: Distinguished Career Award.



## From the President

Tony Kellen, President  
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Thank You! to everyone who attended and helped plan the 2009 Minnesota/Wisconsin Public Transit Conference. The event was a huge success with over 250 people from both states attending and 90 individuals representing 66 Companies participating in the vendor expo.

We received lots of positive feedback from people who found the conference very informative and useful as they work to improve the transit service they provide. Hosting a joint conference allows us to not only get to know colleagues in Wisconsin, but gives an opportunity to learn about different ways of organizing systems and providing service. We appreciate all of the assistance and participation we received from folks in Wisconsin.

Next year the Minnesota Public Transit Conference will be held in Rochester from September 13 -15, 2010 at the Mayo Civic Center and downtown Radisson Hotel. Plan now to attend this important event and make a difference in strengthening our association and the service we provide to thousands of Minnesotans every day.



The Minnesota Public Transit Association also held its annual meeting and awards ceremony at the transit conference. We appreciate the participation and hard work of those who serve on the Board of Directors. The MPTA membership approved the following terms: 2-year Board Officer positions of Tony Kellen to

President, Greg Negard to Vice President, Amy Repinski to Secretary, Chad Gessell to Treasurer and Dave Jacobson, Tony Knauer, and Helen Pieper to 3-year at-large board seat terms for 2010-2012. Board members play a big role in directing our work and supporting efforts to expand and improve public transit in Minnesota.

The 2010 Legislative Session begins on February 4. The MPTA Board will be working to develop a legislative agenda and prepare for the coming session. If you have ideas or issues you think MPTA should address, please contact me or Sherry Munyon. We rely on information from our member systems to help us educate legislators and to assist them in forming good public policy.



Federal Funding Update panel discusses funding issues at the conference: Matthew Rudig, Office of Congressman David Obey, Jackie Morris, Office of Congressman Jim Oberstar, Bill Millar of American Public Transit Association and Rhonda Reed, Deputy Regional Administrator, Federal Transit Administration.

## Legislative Update

Margaret Donahoe  
Advocacy Director  
Minnesota Public Transit Association

The Minnesota House has been busy during the interim gathering information in preparation for what could be a difficult legislative session. Recent projections show an ongoing deficit in the general fund in the \$6-\$7 billion range. With strained relations between the Republican Governor and Democratic Legislature, the coming session could be another rocky one.

The House Transportation Committees have held hearings to learn more about transportation funding issues. On September 23, the Transportation Finance and Policy Division, chaired by Rep. Bernie Lieder, held a hearing to discuss a number of transportation issues including a funding overview and a discussion of Greater Minnesota transit.

At the close of the 2009 Legislative Session, both Metropolitan Area Transit and Greater Minnesota Transit were facing slight deficits between revenue appropriated and operating costs. For the Metropolitan Area it was a \$3 million gap and for Greater Minnesota, a \$2 million gap according to legislative fiscal staff. After the session ended, Governor Pawlenty unallotted general fund dollars to all state agencies resulting in an additional a cut of \$1.5 million for Metropolitan Area Transit.

Preliminary funding information provided by House fiscal staff presented at the September 23 hearing shows receipts of motor vehicle sales tax revenue up \$32.9 million above the February, 2009 forecast. That translates into an additional \$14.5 million for the Highway Trust Fund, \$9.1 million for Metropolitan Area Transit, \$576,000 for Greater Minnesota Transit and \$8.6 million for the general fund. While these numbers are preliminary, staff are expecting a bump in MVST revenues thanks to the "cash for clunkers" program passed by the federal government that provided incentives for people to purchase vehicles that achieve higher gas mileage.

Some legislators have raised a couple of issues related to transit funding that were discussed at both the September 23 hearing and a subsequent hearing of the Transportation and Transit Policy and Oversight Division held on October 13. Legislators have

asked agency staff about the funding for the Northstar Commuter Rail line which is set to begin operations on November 16 and the use of federal Section 5311 funds for rural transit systems.

During the 2009 Legislative Session there had been some discussion about the funding of Northstar and the planning for other passenger rail service which passes from the seven county metropolitan area into greater Minnesota. In the transportation budget bill, Greater Minnesota Transit received \$32 million in general fund dollars with \$1 million of that appropriation earmarked for passenger rail studies. Metropolitan Area Transit received \$133.8 million in general fund dollars for bus transit and an additional \$10.5 million for rail transit. Since the close of the session, legislators learned that Mn/DOT plans to use \$2 million of Greater Minnesota transit funds to help cover the state's share of the operating cost of the Northstar line. This planned use of state funds was not something they were aware of during the regular session.

Federal Section 5311 funds are provided to the state based on a national formula for use by rural transit systems. The funds are distributed through a competitive grant program managed by Mn/DOT. Historically, about \$230,000 of these funds are provided to three rural transit operators in the seven-county metropolitan area. The Metropolitan Council is leading a reorganization of the metro area dial-a-ride service and, as an eligible recipient, plans to apply for Section 5311 funds for calendar year 2010 to assist with the reorganization effort. The Council is requesting \$1.1 million in 5311 funds that have traditionally been used by Greater Minnesota transit systems leading some legislators to question whether this will have a negative impact on Greater Minnesota transit.

No decisions have been made at this point on the use of Section 5311 funds, however, Mn/DOT officials have said that there are currently sufficient funds to maintain existing Greater Minnesota transit service levels while providing an increased amount of Section 5311 funds to the metro area and the Greater Minnesota portion of the Northstar operating subsidy.

Clearly, the issue of how transit that straddles the metropolitan area and greater Minnesota is funded will be a subject of further discussion at the legislature. Some legislators have talked about changes in the governance structure of transit to facilitate the planning of transit that avoids problems with geographic boundaries. Stay tuned for more developments in this area.



Dennis Jensen, General Manager of the Duluth Transit Authority (on right) receives the System of the Year Award from Len Simich of SouthWest Transit.



Jackie Forner of Chisago-Isanti Heartland Express receives Distinguished Career Award from Chisago County Administrator John Moosey.



Jack Larson of Arrowhead Transit receives Appreciation of Service Award from MPTA President Tony Kellen.



Jim Broucek of Carver County presents Alan Herrmann of Carver County and John Swanson of Scott County with the Management Innovation Award for the creation of the new SmartLink Transit system.



Mark Anderson of Greater Mankato Transit receives Transit Professional of the Year Award from Jan Klassen of MnDOT.



Shirley Lyons from Three Rivers Hiawathaland Transit receives MN Bus Operator of the Year Award



Keynote speaker, Sandra Rosenbloom, closed out the conference with her presentation "Mobility for an Aging Population."



Keynote speaker Dr. Don Bartlette presented his autobiographical profile "Marconi at Midnight" to kick-off the conference.



Sam Jacobs of Metro Transit receives Distinguished Career Award from Julie Johanson of Metro Transit.



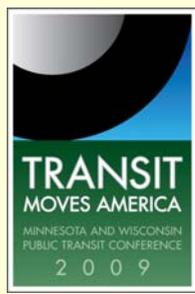
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# EXPO



# 2009





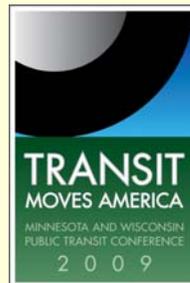
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# 2009





## MVTA launches fleet of buses featuring driver assist system

BURNSVILLE –The Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA) has launched a fleet of 10 colorful vehicles wrapped featuring components of the Driver Assist System (DAS) the MVTA will be implementing on Cedar Avenue in conjunction with the University of Minnesota Intelligent Vehicles Lab. The final installation work on the wraps was completed earlier this week.

To highlight the DAS, the MVTA created unique “Bus 2.0” wraps for the 10 buses that will be operating the service. Currently the vehicles are operating in both the I-35W and Cedar Avenue corridors, but ultimately these buses will be in service along the Cedar Avenue corridor. The bus wraps were funded as part of the MVTA’s participation in the Urban Partnership Agreement (UPA) and the contract was awarded to Visual Image Systems in the amount of \$49,281.59. Seven bids were received for the project.



The “Bus2.0” concept points to the fact that the new technology being deployed and tested in these buses is a quantum leap forward in transportation technology — that hidden under the familiar shell of a city bus is really a whole new type of bus. Rick Shuster of Think Graphic Design who created the wraps, stated, “The overall design of all of the bus graphics represents abstractly the high-tech nature of the vehicles and some of the advantages to the user — such as speed, communication and safety.”

Each of the three different designs highlight just a few of the specific features of the cutting-edge technology being developed and tested in these buses, from the in-road radio frequency identification (RFID) tags and satellite navigation that help guide the vehicles to the head-up displays that aid the driver in keeping their eyes focused on the road. Some of these specific technologies are directly represented in the graphics, and for the observer looking

more closely at the vehicle there is information about many of the other technologies being used to aid in navigation, communication, speed and safety.

The MVTA is the public transportation provider for the businesses and residents of Apple Valley, Burnsville, Eagan, Rosemount and Savage.



## DTA turns on the heat in new downtown shelters

DULUTH – With the cold weather approaching, the Duluth Transit Authority has turned on the heat in its six new downtown shelters, which were erected last summer and equipped with real-time schedule signs, interior lighting and “upon demand” electric heaters. The shelter heaters provide radiant heat for five minutes whenever a passenger turns it on, which should keep them warm until their bus arrives. After five minutes,

the heaters must be turned on again for continued use. Pushing the “turn-on button” multiple times will not extend its prolonged use. The erection of new downtown shelters is just one of several DTA improvement projects that have been underway for more than a year.



# St. Cloud Metro Bus to operate Northstar Link commuter coach service

Metro Bus was recently awarded operation of the Northstar Link commuter bus service. Metro Bus was one of four providers who submitted bids to operate the service.

Northstar Link bus and Northstar Line commuter rail service begins Monday, November 16. The long awaited Northstar Line will replace the current Northstar Commuter Coach service that has been in operation since 2001 between Elk River and downtown Minneapolis.



Northstar Link will transport commuters between the park and ride lot in East St. Cloud to the Northstar Line Commuter Rail station in Big Lake where it will meet all train departures and arrivals. From there, commuters can ride the rail from Big Lake to any of five stations, ending at downtown Minneapolis. Three refurbished MCI 102D3 buses will provide commuter service approximately every half-hour during prime morning and evening weekday rush hours between St. Cloud and Big Lake. For information on Northstar Link visit [www.catchthelink.com](http://www.catchthelink.com) and for Northstar Line commuter rail [www.metrotransit.org/northstar/](http://www.metrotransit.org/northstar/).

## METRO BUS

## Travel Training makes an impact at St. Cloud Metro Bus

ST. CLOUD –After one year of implementation, St. Cloud Metro Bus reviews the results of the Travel Training and Community Outreach program. The success of the program can be seen in a reduced ADA denial rate and the positive outcomes of a telephone survey of travel training participants.

The Travel Training and Community Outreach program, which is funded by a New Freedom grant, was developed to:

1. Manage the growth of paratransit services, control costs and reduce ADA ride denials.
2. Bring fairness to the system to ensure capacity is available for those who truly need paratransit service.
3. Provide fixed route transportation travel training assistance to seniors and people with disabilities to transition them from traditional paratransit services.
4. Serve as a central point for transportation information and help in the St. Cloud metro area.

### ADA denial rate reduced

Last year at this time, Metro Bus's paratransit service had an ADA ride denial rate of 3.7 percent. Now, it is only 1.4 percent. This improvement is the result of running more efficiently, the ADA recertification process, and travel training/community outreach initiatives. These initiatives have helped many elderly and individuals with disabilities break barriers and learn to use the Fixed Route system.

### Survey Results

The phone survey included those who participated in individual trainings and the main contact from the group and agency trainings from August 2008 to June 2009. Out of the possible 59

participants, 23 chose to participate in the phone survey. It is important to note some of the individual participants required multiple trainings.

- 100% were satisfied with the Travel Training experience
- 96% would recommend the Fixed Route to others
- 83% continue to ride Fixed Route
- 17% are seasonal or students who only ride during school
- 83% felt our routes covered all areas they needed to go
- 65% were confident with independent Fixed Route travel
- 26% were somewhat confident
- 26% asked for driver assistance
- 48% have learned additional routes on their own



Debbie Anderson (right), Travel Training/Community Outreach Specialist, teaches Eileen how to ride the Fixed Route to work.

# metro council.org

## Vision for transit: We're making progress



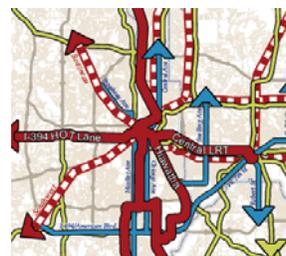
In Council Chair Peter Bell's message this month, he talks about the considerable progress that the current Council has made on its long-range plans for expanding the region's current bus system and developing a network of bus and rail transitways. Advances are currently being made in several key corridors, not the least of which is November's opening of Northstar Commuter Rail service.

[Read Story](#)

## Transit corridors get bond funding

The Metropolitan Council has allocated \$12 million in state bonding dollars to accelerate transit improvements in three busy regional corridors: Southwest, Rush Line and Cedar Avenue. Work is under way in all the corridors. The downtown St. Paul Union Depot also received funds for improvements to transform the facility into a transit hub

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## Celebrations planned at Northstar stations on November 14th

Events at the five suburban stations will include a program, family-friendly activities, transit information and a chance to ride a Northstar train for free (limited tickets are available at each station.) A train will travel nonstop from each of the suburban stations to downtown Minneapolis. At the downtown Minneapolis Target Field Station celebration, families can tour a standing train and get a coupon for a future free ride on the line

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A Northstar train waits at the Target Field Station.

## Route 288 gets long-term contract

The Metropolitan Council has breathed new life into express bus service between Forest Lake and downtown Minneapolis. The Council recently approved a five-year contract with First Transit to ensure continuation of the service.

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## Central Corridor Making Tracks News

Central Corridor LRT Update



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## Minnesota Public Transit Newsletter

*InTransit* newsletter is a bi-monthly newsletter published by the Minnesota Public Transit Association (MPTA). Opinions and views expressed in this publication may not necessarily be those of the Minnesota Public Transit Association or its members.

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- President — Tony Kellen, St. Cloud Metro Bus
- Vice-Pres. — Jack Larson, Arrowhead Transit
- Treasurer — Jacqueline Forner, Chisago/Isanti
- Secretary — Amy Repinski, Three Rivers
- Past President — Linda Elfstrand, Tri-Cap

### Board of Directors:

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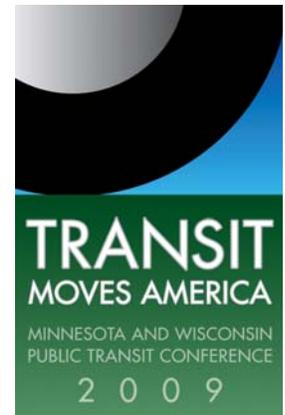
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## Contributors

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- Tom Elwell — Duluth Transit Authority
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- Tony Kellen — St. Cloud Metro Bus
- Robin Selvig — MVTA
- Metropolitan Council Newsletter

**SEND NEWS**  
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## InTransit Bulletin Board

### Events

- |                         |                                      |            |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------|
| September 13 - 15, 2010 | Minnesota Public Transit Conference  | Rochester  |
|                         | Mayo Civic Center and Radisson Hotel |            |
| July 24, 2010           | Minnesota Statewide Bus Rodeo        | Alexandria |

### 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. View RTAP calendar and register for classes online 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).

