

intransit

April 2016 Edition

Mark Your Calendar! Upcoming Transportation Events

Washington Fly-In

June 7-9, 2016

Washington, D.C.

[Learn More](#)



MN Bus Rodeo

July 8-9, 2016

Winona, MN

[Learn More](#)

MN Public Transit Conference & Expo

October 17-19, 2016

Rochester, MN

President's Column

Craig Rempp

It's that time of the year – mark your calendars for important transit events!

This year the 2016 Bus Roadeo will be held July 8th and 9th in Winona. Rolling Hills Transit is excited to be hosting the 29th Annual Minnesota State Bus Roadeo, with co-host Winona ORC representing the newly added non-CDL class. We have a great event planned in a fantastic location! The 2016 MN Statewide Bus Roadeo Committee is busy planning this year's event. We have some great activities planned – be sure to check out the [website](#) for more information.

MPTA is also busy working on the other big event of the year – the Minnesota Public Transit Conference scheduled for October 17th to 19th at the Mayo Civic Center in Rochester. There are big changes happening in Rochester with plans for the Destination Medical Center so join your colleagues at this year's conference and get the latest news on what's happening in transit, important training sessions and more information on how this exciting new facility will handle the need to move thousands of people every day. We also want to hear from you! What session topics and training ideas would you like to see covered at this year's conference? MPTA sent a survey out to ask for session topic ideas. If you didn't get a chance to fill it out, you can still [send me an email](#) with any suggestions.

We're at the halfway point of the 2016 Legislative Session and still no word on how the House and Senate plan to come together to get a transportation funding package passed. Make sure your legislators hear from you! They need basic information on your system and why transit service is important for your community. It only takes a few minutes; MPTA can help with sample letters and information on contacting your legislators.

Thanks to all the MPTA folks who came to St. Paul for Transportation Day at the Capitol. We had a great turnout of advocates who were able to hear directly from Governor Dayton, Lt. Governor Smith, House Speaker Kurt Daudt, Senate Majority Leader Tom Bakk, Transportation Committee Chairs Senator Scott Dibble and Representative Tim Kelly as well as MnDOT Commissioner Charlie Zelle and Metropolitan Council Chair Adam Duinick. We were able to meet directly with local legislators and send a strong message about the need to increase funding for transit statewide.

There are many changes happening in the world of transit here in Minnesota and my commitment is to keep you informed and updated as new developments occur. Please contact me with any questions or concerns and please check our web site regularly. We're here to work for you so take advantage of the events, the legislative information and the ability to have input when it comes to your association.

Craig Rempp, MPTA President





Legislative Report

Margaret Donahoe

We're at the halfway point of the 2016 Legislative Session and transportation funding remains in limbo. The conference committee working to resolve the differences between the House and Senate versions of the transportation funding bills passed last year has met once. During that meeting, staff reviewed the highlights of the two bills and there was no discussion regarding a path for how the sides can come together. The House and Senate Transportation Committee Chairs expressed great optimism that they can agree on funding plan, but no specifics were offered.

So to review where things are at, here are the main funding proposals on the table:

House

Dedication of all sales tax on leased vehicles

⇒ \$28M split 50% Greater MN Transit and 50% Metro counties

Dedication of 6.5% general sales tax on rental vehicles to Metropolitan Area Transit Capital

⇒ \$39 Million

Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB) required to pay 100% of transitway operating costs

Dedication of 6.5% sales tax on auto parts to be deposited in Highway Trust Fund

⇒ \$230M

Dedication of 9.2% tax on rental vehicles to small cities road aid

⇒ \$55 Million

One-time general fund appropriation for roads

⇒ \$228 Million

Senate

¾ cent increase in local sales tax in 7 Metro Counties for transit with some allowance for road needs

⇒ \$390 Million

Elimination of leased vehicle sales tax for GM Transit – increase in MVST from 4% to 8%

6.5% fuels gross receipts tax (16.3 cent per gallon equivalent)

⇒ \$477 Million

License tab fee increase

⇒ \$107 Million

Vehicle registration renewal surcharge and title transfer surcharge

⇒ \$57 Million to cities for road needs

The release of the February 2016 general fund budget forecast seemed to have a chilling effect on plans to dedicate future revenue. While the current budget surplus was reduced from \$1.2 billion to about \$900 million, the future outlook for the economy is not as good as previously projected. The consensus seems to be that this change in the forecast will make it harder for a compromise on transportation funding as many competing issues vie for surplus dollars including tax cuts.

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Despite the lack of transit funding in the House plan, Rep. Tim Kelly, Chair of the House Transportation Committee has made it clear that he understands the need for ongoing transit funding to be included in a final package. Recently, the head of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce has publicly stated that transit funding needs to be part of the transportation deal as business owners need better transit service.

The Governor released his recommendations for the capital bonding bill, one of the big three bills that everyone expects to be the top priority for the session along with the tax bill and the transportation bill. His proposal does not include any bonding dollars for transit projects. He has said that he wants to see transit funded through a comprehensive transportation funding bill.

Governor Dayton has also released his supplemental budget proposal. This plan is intended to increase the two-year budget passed last year in light of the \$900 million budget surplus. Some items of note:

- ◆ Under the Dept. of Administration, the proposal calls for an increase of \$148 million in 2017, 2018 and 2019 to fund staff to assist state agencies and the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities in carrying out the implementation of the Olmstead plan.
- ◆ Under the Metropolitan Council, the budget reiterates the governor's support of a ½ cent increase in the metro sales tax to fund transit projects. The half-cent sales tax would raise approximately \$170.6 million in fiscal year 2017, \$270.5 million in fiscal year 2018 and \$283.2 million in fiscal year 2019.
- ◆ Under Tax Policy, the plan would slightly reduce the amount of funding for Greater MN transit from the sales tax on leased vehicles to account for the percentage of the tax that is attributable to the legacy sales tax that funds environmental improvements and the arts. This reduces transit funding by about \$2.5 million per year.
- ◆ Under the Department of Transportation, the proposal restates the governor's transportation funding plan including increasing the fuel tax and license tab fees and also providing an increase in the general fund appropriation for Greater Minnesota transit of \$10 million per year.

There has not been much activity in terms of transit policy issues. One recurring theme has been reform of the Metropolitan Council. Some legislators have made this a condition of supporting more funding for metropolitan area transit. A bill moving through the process would require staggered terms for members of the Metropolitan Council and would allow the metro counties to appoint county commissioners to the Council in addition to the members appointed by the governor.

Language is moving through the process that would clarify some requirements for [non-emergency medical providers](#), other than public transit systems which are exempted, related to meeting background check requirements and vehicle performance requirements.

Another policy bill would create a task force to study the potential for autonomous vehicles to provide mobility for people with disabilities. The bill is [SF2569/HF3325](#). The autonomous vehicles task force is



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established to design and supervise a demonstration project, analyze results, and report to the legislature concerning issues related to the use by people with disabilities of autonomous vehicles on public roads and highways. The goal of the autonomous vehicle demonstration project is to identify means by which autonomous vehicles can best be equipped and utilized to provide mobility service for people with disabilities. The membership of the task force includes legislators, the Commissioner of Transportation or a designee, one member with experience in greater Minnesota paratransit administration appointed by the commissioner of transportation and one member with experience in metropolitan-area paratransit administration appointed by the Metropolitan Council, among others. The bill calls for an appropriation of \$5 million from the general fund.

As the focus of the session shifts from policy to funding, we really need you to contact your legislators! One quick and easy step: sign our [online petition](#). Our goal is to have over 1,000 signatures on this petition which calls for passage of a transportation funding bill this year. We need to send a strong message to legislative leaders and the governor.

Then send a quick email to your local legislators. Here's what you can say:

- Finish the job on transportation funding in 2016.
- Bus service is critical for people in your district who want to get to work, to school, to medical appointments and remain in the community.
- Thousands of Minnesotans from all across the state rely on bus service every day, yet systems are struggling to meet the growing demand and growing cost of providing service.
- The need for increased funding is not going away. This is the year to improve bus service in your district.



Meeker Public Transit was given the Danielson/Nelson award from ProWorks for being a large part of giving ProWorks clients independent services to get them to and from their job sites.

Receiving the award from Dale Miller (ProWorks Director) is Donna Anderson (MPT Director); also pictured are MPT drivers Craig Lundin (14 years driving), Rick Sandry (10 years) and Melanie Kotte (16 years). Also pictured is Arlene Groskruetz, Chairperson of the Proworks board.

Recent Transit News from Greater Minnesota



[Litchfield, Meeker County to join Central Community Transit](#)

Mass Transit Magazine, April 21

[United Way targets needs through transportation](#)

Owatonna People's Press, April 13

[Metro Bus plans to replace campus routes, add St. Joe](#)

St. Cloud Times, April 1

[MnDOT looks at ways to fill gaps in transit](#)

Rochester Post-Bulletin, March 23

[Greater Minnesota eyes transportation funding debate](#)

West Central Tribune, March 14

[Little bus on the prairie: Rural transit, faced with demographic change, adapts and evolves](#)

MinnPost, February 29

[Arrowhead Transit offers guaranteed bus to Duluth from North Shore](#)

Duluth News Tribune, February 6

FTA Notice to Transit Agencies: Apply Now for 2016 FTA Administrator's Award

Any local rural transit provider receiving assistance under Sec. 5311 may be nominated for [FTA's Administrator's Award for Outstanding Public Service](#). Transit providers will be judged on their success in improving the mobility of Americans in rural areas and providing better access to jobs, health care, and other community services. Nominations must address how transit systems create connections for riders, particularly in low-income communities, as well as veterans, seniors, youths, and disadvantaged populations.

The awards will be presented at the [22nd National Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation conference](#) in Asheville, N.C. October 2-5, 2016. Award recipients will be expected to attend the conference, where they will be honored and will have an opportunity to share the secrets of their success with other conference attendees.

Jan Homan: 40 years of service and a legacy that will last a lifetime

By DREW KERR, edited for length by LAURA EASH

The first night Jan Homan reported for work – Christmas Eve 1975 – he was asked to do nothing more than keep an eye on the new Shingle Creek bus garage.

Homan took his responsibilities seriously, locking every door in the building and preventing his replacement from entering the building.

That first evening might have been the only quiet moment of Homan's 40-year career.

Long before he was tapped to lead Metro Transit's bus maintenance and transportation divisions, Homan's career began the same way it did for many in Bus Maintenance – as a Cleaner sweeping buses for \$4.28 an hour.

Twenty-five years after Homan began his career in transit, he found himself leading the department where he got his start as Director of Bus Maintenance. In his final chapter, as Deputy Chief of Operations-Bus, Homan oversaw both the maintenance and transportation divisions. The move gave him an opportunity to shape not just bus maintenance but all aspects of bus operations, including operator training, garage management and street supervision.

Ask Homan about the achievements he's had over his four-decade tenure and you'll get a characteristically humble response.

"In all my years, it's never really been about titles but about being able to contribute in a different way," he said. "And for most part that meant putting great people in place to execute ideas – coming up with a concept and letting them make it a better reality."

Jan Homan retired from Metro Transit on April 1, 2016. In retirement, he plans to spend time with his family, including wife Mary, son Sam, and two daughters, and to continue improving his property in northern Minnesota. Brian Funk, who most recently served as Director of Light Rail Operations, will serve as the next Deputy Chief of Operations-Bus.

[Read the full piece on Metro Transit's Rider's Almanac](#)



From left: Metropolitan Council Chair Adam Duininck, Jan's wife Mary, Jan and Metro Transit General Manager Brian Lamb.

MVTA Hires New Executive Director

Submitted by ROBIN SELVIG

The Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA) Board of Directors is excited to introduce Luther Wynder as the new Executive Director of MVTA. He began his employment on April 4, 2016.

Wynder was Chief Performance Officer (CPO) for the Delaware Transit Corporation (DART), a statewide agency that provides fixed route, paratransit, and commuter rail service across the State of Delaware and into Philadelphia. As CPO, he sat on the five-member Executive Leadership team. He was with the Delaware Transit since January 2005. Wynder has an MBA, a Master’s Degree in Information Systems Technology, and a Bachelor’s Degree in Management.



His range of duties at DART included the development of short- and long-range plans, service planning, information technology, and oversight of the system’s operational performance. He oversaw a \$25 million annual capital program and had a staff of 45. Wynder has managed a wide range of transit technology projects including automated passenger counters, real-time passenger information systems, maintenance management systems, and the upgrade of a \$9.5 million CAD/AVL system. His position required him to interact with three MPOs and a state legislative committee that oversees DART.

“MVTA is a wonderful transit system that provides high quality service to its communities and the region,” Wynder said. “I am excited to join the agency and look forward to serving as Executive Director, working with the excellent Board and staff of MVTA, and with regional transportation partner agencies.”

Jon Ulrich, MVTA Board Chair and Scott County Commissioner, said “We believe Luther brings an excellent background and skill set to the MVTA and the Board welcomes him as our new Executive Director.” He noted that the Interview Committee and the full Board agreed on the hiring based on several interviews with Wynder as well as a review of his background.

Burnsville High School students produced interior panels for display in MVTA buses. Winners (pictured left to right):

- School Spirit – Sophomore Jared Hruby of Savage*
- Beyond the Yellow Ribbon (program supporting military families) – Junior Osiris Kegan of Burnsville*
- Transit – Senior Jeremy Colegrove of Burnsville*

This project is part of a strategic partnership between the MVTA and area schools.





News

MVTA Driver Assist System set to be deployed on 11 Additional Express Buses

Submitted by ROBIN SELVIG

The Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA) began installing Driver Assist System (DAS) technology on eleven Express Buses that operate on Cedar Avenue (TH 77) the week of April 4th. The installation will continue during the next several months.

This implementation is a result of the MVTA winning a nearly \$1.8 million Innovative Safety, Resiliency, and All-Hazards Emergency Response and Recovery (SRER) grant from the Federal Transit Administration. The grant was announced in 2015. The MVTA awarded a contract to MTS Systems of Eden Prairie to execute the implementation of the DAS technology on the eleven buses. Additionally, Athey Creek of Minneapolis and the University of South Florida National Bus Rapid Transit Institute (SRF/NBRTI) will conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the program in an effort to have other transit agencies across the country implement the system.

The DAS, developed by the University of Minnesota, provides lane keeping information, lane departure warnings, and collision avoidance advisories to operators guiding their buses on the shoulders (BOS) of the Cedar Avenue Corridor in congested areas. The buses using the second generation of this technology will operate both morning and evening express service between the southern metro suburbs and downtown Minneapolis. MVTA is also bringing its existing fleet of ten buses (funded by the Urban Partnership Agreement (UPA) in 2010, to this same level of technology.

The MVTA buses will be equipped with GPS-based technology to improve safety and bus service within narrow shoulder lanes along highly congested corridors in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. The technology provides information to bus operators in various weather and road conditions.

MTS has completed the second generation DAS system design, and is currently manufacturing or procuring the necessary parts to be installed on the buses. All eleven buses will be equipped with the technology by August 1.

MVTA's bus operator, Schmitt and Sons Transit, is also be a key partner in the DAS effort, and bus operators will be interviewed before and after deployment on the technology, to document use and success of the system.

“This is a very exciting project,” said MVTA Project Manager Robin Selvig. “So many are talking about ‘driverless cars’ and here we are deploying the same technology – and more – on a transit bus. We believe that there are great benefits of the system, including collision avoidance, both for transit riders, motorists and the transit operators themselves,” she said.



Western Community Action is seeking a mobility manager for a public transit system in Southwest Minnesota. Mobility manager will provide case management, work with various computer programs, and recruit volunteers. Position also requires doing one-on-one travel training, speaking to groups, and planning training events. Flexible part-time hours available Monday-Friday. Call 507-537-1416 to request an application or visit www.wcainc.org/transit.

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- Updates on legislative action
- News and retweets from MPTA members
- Local and national media coverage of transit news and issues

Send submissions for the next *InTransit* to Laura: laura_eash@mpta-transit.org

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