

In Transit

A quarterly newsletter published by the Minnesota Public Transit Association.

February 2019 Edition

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President's Column

Craig Rempp

Transit Director

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Welcome to the 2019 Legislative Session with great new opportunities to secure additional resources for expanded transit service all across the state!

The new Minnesota Legislature features many fresh faces with almost one-third of the legislature comprised of newly-elected members. This means we have a big challenge in educating legislators about the important role that transit service plays in their legislative districts and all across the state. MPTA is here to provide resources and assistance as you reach out to legislators to talk about your systems and the need for expanded service.

The new Chair of the House Transportation Committee, Rep. Frank Hornstein, is planning a number of hearings outside of St. Paul to gather stories and input from stakeholders. We will be contacting folks regarding your opportunity to talk to the committee about transit needs in your area.

We're working on individual profiles of each transit system as well as a sample resolution and letter to legislators so that you have tools at your disposal to easily reach out and highlight the work you're doing and the reasons why the state should invest more in transit service. Your involvement is critical to our success!

The Board of Directors for MPTA has approved a legislative agenda for 2019 that focuses on additional funding for all transit systems while also addressing policy issues including those hampering volunteer driver programs and requirements governing the local share for transit operations and capital. MPTA staff will be reaching out to get your input and your stories as we all work to advocate for additional resources to meet the growing needs.

MPTA is also monitoring the development of the Five-Year Transit System plans for systems receiving 5311 funding. We hope that you are working closely with your consultants to develop a plan that works for you and your system. If we can assist in any way, please don't hesitate to contact MPTA staff.

In addition to our legislative work and coordination with the Office of Transit and Active Transportation, MPTA is also working to provide productive training and informational sessions at upcoming events. We're always interested in your input as we work to develop our major events: the Bus Roadeo (July 12-13 in Marshall) and the Minnesota Public Transit Conference (October 9-11 in St. Paul). Please send suggestions for topics and training sessions our way. If you are interested in serving on the planning committee for the fall transit conference, please send an email to samantha@transportationalliance.com.

It's an exciting time to be in transit in Minnesota! With more interest in transportation funding, we can all make a difference by telling our stories and reaching out to elected officials. Your membership allows MPTA to work on your behalf. Thanks for your partnership!

Legislative Report

Margaret Donahoe

Executive Director

Minnesota Transportation Alliance

Governor Tim Walz presented his proposed budget for the FY20-21 biennium on February 19th.

While the plan has significant new revenue for Metropolitan transit, Greater Minnesota was not so lucky as there is no significant increase in state funding. Greater Minnesota Transit was not even mentioned in the budget plan summary distributed.

The Governor did not recommend a general fund increase for Greater Minnesota Transit – MPTA is requesting a \$10 million annual increase. (Governor Dayton had previously recommended \$10 million a year). The Greater Minnesota Transit Investment Plan shows the average annual investment needed is \$22 million a year to meet 90% of the need for service.

While there is a slight increase proposed in the MVST rate from 6.5% to 6.87%, it appears MVST revenue is projected to be lower than previously forecasted. The budget reduces the Motor Vehicle Lease Sales Tax (MVLST) revenue, leaving a reduction from current law for the next biennium of \$3.7 million. We anticipate that this will change as a two-year budget bill is put together by the legislature and that the new administration will support some additional funding for Greater Minnesota transit.

While Metropolitan Areas transit will receive significant increase in funding, there was no mention of the role of our suburban transit systems. The governor's plan for the metropolitan area includes:

- A new 1/8 cent sales tax collected by the state in the seven-county metro region. This new revenue is estimated to generate over \$70 million per year or \$770 million over the next ten years.
- \$20 million per year in General Obligation Bonds, providing \$230 million over ten years for capital expenditures.
- \$205 million over the next ten years from MVST with the rate increased from the current 6.5% to 6.87%. Metropolitan Area transit current receives 36% of MVST so the increase in the tax rate is estimated to provide an additional \$205 million over the next ten years.
- Funding will continue to be provided through the current 1/4 cent metro area sales tax originally imposed by the Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB) and now levied by individual counties — \$700 million over ten years.

The budget separates operating costs for Metro Mobility from operating costs for the regular bus service to better track this expense for service that is mandated by the federal government.

Legislation that is moving through the process would allow for greater reimbursement from Medical Assistance of Metro Mobility rides and that policy change could provide another \$8-10 million to assist with rising Metro Mobility costs.

The governor's plan will allow the Twin Cities metropolitan area to develop 10 new Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines, provide a 40% increase in transit service generating a 30-40% increase in regional ridership. Metro Transit will also be updating its fleet with 220 electric bus purchases in the coming years.

MPTA Top Priorities

- Support a level of funding adequate to serve the entire metropolitan area, both for Metro Transit and Suburban Transit, to build out the bus systems over the next 15 years including facilities, operations, technology and vehicles.
- Increase general fund base for Greater Minnesota transit by \$20 million for FY20-21 biennium.
- Increase general fund base of Metropolitan Area transit by \$250 million for FY20-21 biennium.
- Maintain leased vehicle revenue.
- Suburban Transit Association \$6.0 million for service modernization and expansion.
- Reauthorize the statutory floor for the current RAMVST funding of .35% for Suburban Providers.
- Support Metropolitan Council 2-year bond authorization at increased level to replace old buses and purchase new buses to increase service.
- Continue to work on lower local share to meet operating and capital needs in Greater Minnesota.
- Volunteer Driver Definition – clarifying MN Law to assure volunteer drivers receiving funding from the public transit participation program are not for-hire carriers; working with MCOTA and MnDOT for leadership on this.
- Volunteer Driver Reimbursement – change the federal mileage rate (now 14 cents) to be the same as the IRS business rate, which was increased in January 2019 from 54.5 cents to 58 cents.

Some bills related to transit service have been introduced and a few have had hearings. Metro Mobility service would be expanded under SF65/HF171 to any city that pays into the transit taxing district that is not included in the district. In effect, this bill expands Metro Mobility services to Lakeville, Ramsey, Maple Plain, Forest Lake, and Columbus. Another bill, SF695/HF307 would allow for sharing specified data on individuals may be disclosed between DHS and the Council to: (1) coordinate Metro Mobility services and services funded by DHS; and (2) provide for reimbursement of Metro Mobility. Both of these bills have had an initial hearing in the Senate.

The February 2019 budget forecast should be released at the end of the month. While the November 2018 forecast projected a \$1.5 billion surplus for the FY20-21 biennium, there is some expectation that the February forecast will estimate a smaller surplus with weakening in the out years. Stay tuned.

Advocacy for transit funding will be critical! The House Transportation Committee is holding hearings outside St. Paul to allow for more public input. Please try to attend a hearing near you! MPTA is happy to help with talking points and to arrange for you to speak.

St. Cloud - Friday, Feb 22nd 12:00 Noon to 3:00 pm, St. Cloud City Hall, 400 2nd Street South. Contact: john.howe@house.mn to testify.

Minneapolis - Tuesday, Feb. 26th, 6:00 pm to 8:30 pm, North High School Auditorium, 1500 James Avenue N. Contact: john.howe@house.mn to testify.

Blaine - Friday, March 1st, 9:00 am to 12:00 noon, Blaine City Hall, 10801 Town Square Drive. Contact: john.howe@house.mn to testify.

Savage – Tuesday, March 5th, 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm, Savage City Hall, 6000 McColl Drive. Contact: john.howe@house.mn to testify.

Mankato - Friday, March 8th, 12:00 noon to 3:00 pm, Mankato City Hall, 10 Civic Center Plaza. Contact: john.howe@house.mn to testify.

2019 Transportation Day at the Capitol

This year's Transportation Day at the Capitol took place on Thursday, February 7 at the Capitol Ridge Hotel and focused on transportation policy, such as work zone safety and autonomous vehicles, and a change in leadership, not only with the new Minnesota governor and legislators, but also at organizations such as MnDOT and Met Council.

Citizens for Work Zone Safety representative Duane Hendricks, President and CEO of Egan Company, spoke on the seriousness of road worker safety.

"We have about a thousand employees, and for us, that's a thousand families. That's a thousand people that need to go home safe every night," Hendricks stated.

Hendricks went on to explain the dangers of working alongside roadsides and asked for support for safety measures, not only for employees and road workers, but for motorists and passengers as well.

Margaret Anderson Kelliher, MnDOT Commissioner, and Nora Slawik, Met Council Chair, spoke at the event as well. During her speech, Slawik discussed how she hoped the Governor's budget would include funding for Greater Minnesota.

"As you all prepare to talk with legislators and others about the importance of transportation, if you could please talk about the transportation system...our successes are tied together. So, we [the MetCouncil] will be talking about statewide transit. If there was a transit funding mechanism where you could get funding out in out state Minnesota as well as rural areas, as well in our areas, I think that's really going to be a good option knowing that that's available."

She went on to encourage attendees to communicate with their legislators.

Thank you again to everyone who attended!



2019 Minnesota Bus Roadeo: Save the Date!

This year's Minnesota State Bus Roadeo is Friday, July 12 and Saturday, July 13 in Marshall, Minnesota. The host agency is Community Transit. The opening reception on Friday night and the Saturday night banquet will take place at the Ramada Inn. This year's course is located at Southwest Minnesota State University.



Registration will open at the end of March. At that time, there will be more information regarding hotel blocks, meal options, what is needed at time of registration, how to become a judge, etc. If your organization is interested in sponsorship opportunities, please contact one of the Roadeo committee members or email Samantha@transportationalliance.com.

For the time being, please keep an eye on the MPTA event page for updates and also for suggestions of what to do in Marshall outside of the Roadeo events:

<https://www.mpta-transit.org/event/2019-minnesota-bus-roadeo>

We can't wait to see you in Marshall!

TRUE Transit to expand destinations for rural transit

Nancy Madsen

Excerpts from Lonsdale News Review's article
"TRUE Transit to expand destinations for rural
transportation Jan. 2"



Based on customer demand, TRUE Transit is expanding ride destinations in the coming year.

The public transportation, short for Town Rural Urban Express, provides rides in Blue Earth, Nicollet and Le Sueur counties.

VINE Faith in Action, a group that previously just operated senior transportation services in and around Mankato and the three counties, is running the new transit system.

"We have had requests to add on different locations because of where people shop and do medical appointments," Transportation Manager Carol Clark said.

In 2016, at the request of the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and the counties, VINE began to create a public transit system for those in unserved rural areas. The system was launched in January 2017 using volunteer drivers and one small bus. It now has four buses and has run a full schedule throughout the past year.

Those routes were designed based on surveys and talks with community partners and county commissioners.

"As we have been using them in the past year, customers have been asking" to add destinations, Clark said.



There are three notable changes coming on Jan. 2, two on countywide rides. On Mondays, riders anywhere in Le Sueur County have been able to request rides to Le Center and Le Sueur. Mankato will be added as a destination.

"We wanted to make sure that people could make it into government offices as they needed to or to get shopping done," Clark said. "In the southern part of Le Sueur County, people were asking to go to Mankato on those days."

Some government business could be conducted from government offices besides those in the home county.

The story is similar for Nicollet County, where riders anywhere in the county could request rides to Mankato and St. Peter on Wednesdays. New Ulm will be added as a destination.

The other change is how the city of New Prague is treated. New Prague sits on the county line, with the southern portion in Le Sueur County and the northern portion in Scott County.

"The apartment buildings are in the north side and the grocery store is on the south side," Clark said.

TRUE had been forced to turn away potential riders because they were over the county line in Scott County.

Smart Link Transit serves Scott County, but Clark said their routes into New Prague are employment-generated.

“They don’t have much assistance other than volunteer drivers to help people get around New Prague,” Clark said.

So commissioners from Scott and Le Sueur counties, transit folks and MnDOT officials agreed that TRUE should make pick-ups in Scott County. New Prague residents can take advantage on the countywide ride day on Monday and in the “in-town ride” times of Tuesdays and Fridays from 1-5 pm to New Prague, Montgomery or Heidelberg and Wednesdays from 8 am – 12 pm to New Prague, Montgomery or Heidelberg.

The message from Le Sueur County commissioners was that “they think of New Prague as a whole.”

Besides the countywide ride days, there are routes around Nicollet County on Mondays, which start in St. Peter, then visit Nicollet, Courtland, New Ulm and Mankato a handful of times throughout the day and return to St. Peter at 5 p.m. Lafayette is also a stop if they receive a call for a ride.

Thursdays will be Le Sueur County’s day. The bus line begins in Le Center and travels through Cleveland, Mankato, Waterville, Elysian and Madison Lake. Kilkenney will also be a stop if they receive a call for a ride.

The routes have been planned in ways that the cities could take advantage of senior discount days in grocery stores.

In 2017, the system supported more than 1,200 rides. With a full complement of buses, that will more than double by the end of this year. Through October, the system had 2,258 rides.

Save one, “each month, it’s grown in various amounts,” Clark said.

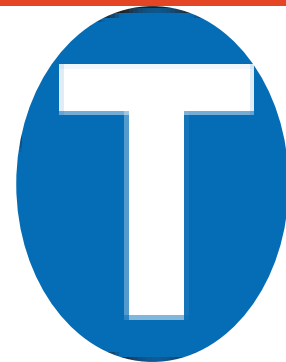
Rides are \$3 one-way. The public transportation system operates 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays. All rides must be booked at least two business days in advance online at truetransit.org or by calling (507) 388-8783.

Read the article online: http://www.southernminn.com/lonsdale_area_news_review/news/article_cd94f3ce-092e-573e-a676-687a336776c3.html



Image from [True Transit’s website](http://truetransit.org).

Shuttle services between Albert Lea, Austin Mayo



Sam Wilmes

Excerpts from Albert Lea Tribunes' article "Shuttle services between Albert Lea, Austin Mayo locales start in January"

SMART Transit will offer shuttle services between Albert Lea and Austin hospitals beginning in January.

The round-trip service will be available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays, along with limited additional trips on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

The cost for the shuttle will be \$3 per person per one-way trip, with the remaining fee covered through a Minnesota Department of Transportation grant received by Cedar Valley Services.

Garry Hart, division director for Cedar Valley Services of Albert Lea, said state grant funding for the project was first requested a couple years ago after people expressed concern over a lack of transportation options between Albert Lea and Austin hospitals.

The shuttle service is considered a partnership between the city of Albert Lea, Freeborn County, the city of Austin, Mower County, Mayo Clinic Health System and Riverland Community College.

The rides will be available to everyone.

The initial handicapped-accessible bus will hold about 16 people and have the capacity for two wheelchairs.

Hart said the shuttle service will help address concerns regarding health care access and transportation. He acknowledged though it will likely not be a cure to the issues, it is a good start.

Freeborn County Administrator Tom Jensen said the announcement will likely not alleviate transportation concerns regarding the transition of most inpatient services from Albert Lea to Austin, but called it a step in the right direction by providing a transportation option for patients to get to appointments and for other medical-related purposes.

"It's going to assist the citizens of both Albert Lea and Austin," he said.

Mayo Clinic Health System in Albert Lea and Austin CEO Mark Ciota called the announcement "wonderful news," adding the shuttle service is the result of a partnership between entities to serve patients and communities.

Ciota noted ambulance rides between the two campuses have been free since the transition of inpatient services began.

In an emailed statement, Albert Lea City Manager Chad Adams said he applauded Cedar Valley Services for receiving grant funding.

"Transit services between the two communities has become increasingly important with the transition of Mayo Clinic Health System's hospital services and has been a goal of our City Council over the past year," he said. "We look forward to a continued partnership with SMART Transit and others with the new services and also potential expansion of services between the communities."

Read the article online: <https://www.albertleatribune.com/2018/11/shuttle-services-between-albert-lea-austin-mayo-locales-start-in-january/>

DTA Considers BRT for West Mainline Corridor

Heath Hickok

Director of Marketing
Duluth Transit Authority



When most visitors think of Duluth, images of Lake Superior, Canal Park and the Aerial Lift Bridge probably come to mind. For those of us who call the “Zenith City” home, we picture the areas we live in, the parks we use for recreation, the schools our children attend and what we see along our morning commute to work.

Many Duluthians live far west in neighborhoods such as West Duluth, Riverside, New Duluth and Fond du Lac. After all, the city was built on the side of a hill that is only five miles wide but spans more than 27 miles from one end to the other. Even though the city is spread out, major employers such as Essentia Health are located downtown which is in the center of town. This is one of the main reasons why the Duluth Transportation Center was constructed in that area. With 18 of the Duluth Transit Authority’s (DTA) 23 routes traveling through the facility, it is an ideal location for many commuters.

The challenge is that it takes approximately 45 minutes to ride the bus from the far west to downtown. This isn’t very convenient when you consider that traveling by car takes less than a third of that time. Therefore, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) might be an ideal option. The DTA has been working with the Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC) on a BRT Pre-Feasibility Study since last summer.

DTA Director of Planning & Grants, Chris Belden, started on the project when he worked at the MIC and believes there is opportunity for BRT along the West Mainline corridor.

“As a part of the DTA’s Transit Development Plan, higher frequency service and faster ride times were at the top for improvements people are seeking. We wanted to look at our higher ridership routes on main corridors to downtown and see if they might be candidates for a BRT-type service. Our western corridor was a former streetcar route that boasts high ridership and is long and linear,” said Belden.

BRT combines aspects of both bus and light-rail to create a conveniently quick mode of transportation. BRT features vehicles that have a higher capacity with more passenger amenities. BRT can help direct sustainable development and build vibrant, desirable neighborhoods. It can also be a powerful catalyst for new economic development.

“It currently takes quite a bit longer to ride the bus than drive due to frequent stops, traffic signals and passenger boarding delay. We want to explore options to improve delay times, enhance the quality of stops and offer more frequent service,” continued Belden.

To generate some excitement and educate the public on the BRT concept, the DTA hosted an informational presentation on Wednesday, January 9th at the Duluth Public Library and had over 40 stakeholders and members of the public in attendance. The event featured guest speaker Dave Lee, who has more than 45 years of experience in public transit. Lee recently retired after 22 years as General Manager of CTtransit,

which operates fixed-route and BRT services in Connecticut. He is a Vice President of First Transit.

DTA General Manager Phil Pumphrey has been involved from the very beginning of discussions regarding a potential BRT-type service in the western corridor of the DTA's transit system.

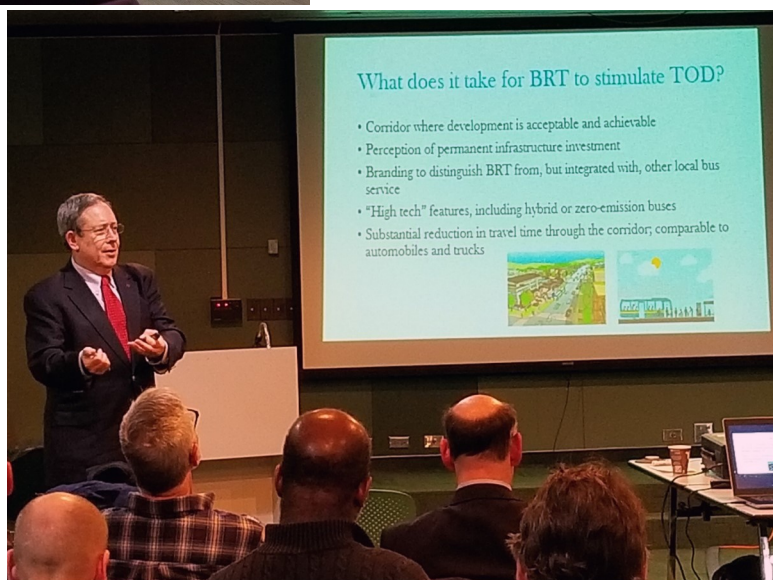
"For a BRT project to be successful, proper planning has to be done and there must be sufficient education to the community regarding the benefits," said Pumphrey. "This is exactly why we brought Dave Lee to the area as he is an expert on BRT projects in other areas of the country," continued Pumphrey.

A hallmark of Lee's career at CTtransit was the opening of CTfastrak, a \$570 million bus rapid transit project with 9.4 miles of exclusive bus-only guideway, serving 10 stations between downtown Hartford and New Britain, CT. The service, which began in March 2015, recently carried its 10-millionth passenger.

The future of BRT in Duluth is still uncertain, and more planning and analysis are needed. Furthermore, if the DTA decides to move forward with a BRT project, it would take years to implement. However, as is the case with most major transportation projects, it takes that initial step to get the bus rolling.



Stakeholders and members of the general public attend a presentation at the Duluth Public Library on Wednesday, January 9 to hear speaker Dave Lee (right). Lee has more than 45 years of experience in public transit and worked on BRT services in Connecticut.



Metro Bus CEO Receives 5 Under 40 Award

Anna Haecherl
St. Cloud Times

METRO BUS



Metro Bus CEO Ryan Daniel was recently honored with this year's award along with Joe Francis, President and CEO of Central McGowan; Kayla Strang, Founder of the INDY Foundation (I'm Not Done Yet); Cody Wendlandt, Medical Director at Sartell Family Medicine; and Shannon Wiger, Director of Business Development/Vice President of Moss & Barnett/Sprill Hill Capital.

The annual St. Cloud Times' 5 Under 40 award recognizes leaders in local businesses who innovate, inspire and make Central Minnesota better. This is the 14th year of the 5 Under 40 awards. The group was chosen by a selection committee made up of last year's 5 Under 40 winners and two Times employees.

Ever since he can remember, Ryan Daniel has had an interest in getting people where they need to go.

"As a young kid, mass transit was what I utilized to get to and from school, work, social events with friends, family gatherings... it was just a way of life," Daniel said. "I acquired a genuine passion for transportation just because I was exposed to it at a young age."

Daniel got his start in the transportation industry in 1998, working as an intern in New York City Transit's Human Resource Department. He became a bus operator in 1999, driving a bus in Times Square, Brooklyn and the Bronx.

Daniel has been CEO of Metro Bus since August 2013.

He oversaw the construction of the Mobility Training Center, the bus fleet's conversion from operating on diesel fuel to compressed natural gas, and the creation of the community-driven Rider Advisory Committee.

"I'm always known as the 'Bus Guy.' People can't remember my name, but they remember me as the 'Bus Guy,'" Daniel said with a laugh. "And that 'Bus Guy' has allowed me the opportunity to network with people from various organizations, from non-profits to government to public and private, and now we're just one big happy family."

"Bus Guy" is a pretty apt nickname for Daniel. In 2015, public transportation industry magazine Mass Transit named Daniel to its list of Top 40 Under 40. In 2016, he was selected by the American Public Transit Association to serve a two-year term as a Transit Ambassador, traveling throughout the country and educating association members on the importance of research programming.

And last year, Daniel was honored with a House resolution from the Minnesota Legislature for his volunteer efforts and

community service.

"I don't look at it as a job. I look at it as my passion, and I just come to work happy every day because every day Metro Bus makes a difference in the community, one person at a time," Daniel said. "I've been in the business now for almost 20 years and I just love it."

Even if a someone doesn't ride the bus, Daniel believes it important for a community and all of its members to support public transit.

"Because where transportation goes, the community grows," Daniel said.

[Daniel moved to St. Cloud to] "...lead a dedicated group of transit professionals who are passionate about transportation. Over the five years of just being here in St. Cloud, the community is such a small, tight-knit community and it's a family friendly town. And I'm glad I chose St. Cloud as my home because of that family feeling.

The community took me under its wing. The board of commissioners, the different boards that I serve on, the friends that I now call my family took me under their wing to help me to navigate my way around St. Cloud. The career drew me to St. Cloud, but the community kept me here."

Read the whole article online: <https://www.sctimes.com/story/money/business/2019/01/06/5-under-40-winners-innovate-and-inspire/2452762002/>



In Transit



MINNESOTA PUBLIC TRANSIT ASSOCIATION

Upcoming Events

2019 Washington, D.C. Fly-In

June 18-20 in Washington, D.C.

[Click here for information](#)

2019 Minnesota Bus Roadeo

July 12-14 in Marshall, MN

2019 Minnesota Public Transit Conference & Expo

October 9-11 in St. Paul, MN

Find event information: [MPTA Events](#)

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