

In Transit

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May 2019 Edition

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President's Column

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Another Legislative Session has flown by – one that has provided opportunities to raise the profile of transit in Minnesota, if not necessarily the level of long-term funding.

Governor Walz made transportation funding more of a priority while campaigning for the office and continued to push the legislature to support a comprehensive, long-term funding plan during the session. The House Transportation Committee held field hearings around the state, and we're pleased that representatives from transit systems, as well as transit advocates, spoke at each of these hearings, highlighting the need for additional service and additional funding along with the challenges of keeping volunteer drivers.

MPTA has worked hard this year to partner with the Office of Transit and Active Transportation (OTAT) to explore new ways to distribute existing funding and to find ways to better quantify and identify funding needs for the future. MPTA recommended the creation of 5-year Transit System Plans to assist in getting systems ready for growth and service improvements as well as being ready for any funding opportunities – both operating and capital – that might come up in the legislative process. We're excited that the 5-year plans for 5311 systems are all coming together and being finalized. We believe that the information in these plans will prove invaluable as we all work to tell the story about why transit is so important and why additional, stable funding is critical to improving the quality of life in communities all across the state. In particular, MPTA wanted to help systems in reaching out to local government officials to improve the level of understanding and support for local transit service. We hope that we can continue to assist in improving support for transit at all levels: local, state and federal.

Speaking of federal transit funding, members of the MPTA Board of Directors will be heading out to Washington, D.C. June 18-20th to participate in the Transportation Alliance Fly-In. We will be meeting with members of the Minnesota Congressional Delegation and their staff to talk about the need for transit funding. In particular, we'll be talking with the members about a bill introduced by Rep. Collin Peterson and co-sponsored by Rep. Pete Stauber to change the mileage reimbursement rate for charitable rides to get rid of the 14 cent-per-mile rate and simply provide the business rate for volunteers who provide a critical service in driving people to appointments and other destinations.

MPTA continues to work closely with OTAT on the new contracts for operating grants and a new process for capital as well. We greatly appreciate your input and feedback as we work through changes to the usual process so that we can all spend less time filling out applications and more time providing great transit service.

With summer on the horizon, we're busy planning the 2019 Bus Roadeo. This year we will be in Marshall July 12th and 13th with a great new opportunity – bus simulator demonstrations. MPTA has been participating in the RTAP Committee and brought the idea of purchasing a bus simulator to the committee to consider mobile equipment that would help all of the systems with driver training. We'll have demonstrations at the Roadeo so drivers and others can experience the benefits of this type of training.

Our other big event – the Minnesota Public Transit Conference — will also be coming up Wednesday, October 9 — Friday, October 11th in St. Paul with the theme of: Planning For Greatness! This year's event will be a key opportunity for important training sessions, updates on all the big changes in procedures with agencies, hot new trends in transit for both large and small systems and great networking with your colleagues and friends in transit.

MPTA has been working hard to represent your interests and make sure that you are consulted in decisions impacting your system. We're here to support you and provide resources for you. We work hard to strengthen the voice of transit statewide by bringing transit systems from all across the state together under one umbrella. When we all work together, we can accomplish more. With your membership and participation in MPTA, transit in Minnesota has a bright future.

See you at the Roadeo!

"President's Column"

Craig Rempp

Transit Director

Greater Mankato Transit System

Legislative Report

Margaret Donahoe

Executive Director

Minnesota Transportation Alliance

The 2019 Legislative Session started out with high hopes for increased transportation funding, but other issues and funding priorities left us with very little new funding.

Governor Walz and the House DFL majority had proposed additional funding for transportation. The House passed a major transportation budget bill that included a 1/2 cent local option sales tax in the seven-county metropolitan area with most of the new revenue dedicated to transit.

The House transportation bill provided an increase of \$22 million for the biennium for Greater Minnesota transit by shifting funding from the constitutionally-dedicated motor vehicle sales tax. The House bill also increased the rate of the motor vehicle sales tax from the current 6.5% to 6.875% to match the sales tax on leased vehicles. The House bill also changed the statutory dedication of the sales tax on leased vehicles (MVLST) so that \$32 million per year would be deposited in the general fund rather than being dedicated to transportation.

Both the Governor and the House developed a capital bonding proposal that included significant GO bond funds for bus rapid transit lines in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

The Senate passed a transportation budget bill with no additional funding for transit. The Senate bill maintained the statutory dedication of the motor vehicle lease sales tax (MVLST) that was passed in 2017. That provides a slight increase in funding in the coming years for Greater Minnesota transit.

The Senate did not develop a capital bonding bill this year, preferring to wait until next year, which is the usual year for a major bonding bill.

After months of work, the legislature could not reach agreement on how to fund an overall two-year state budget until the final two days of the legislative session, necessitating a one-day Special Session on May 24th.

In general, the Senate wanted a smaller two-year budget with no increases in taxes. The House and Governor wanted a larger budget with a number of tax increases, including continuing the provider tax that funds health care and increasing several transportation-related taxes: the fuel tax, motor vehicle registration tax, motor vehicle sales tax and metro sales tax for transportation.

At the end of the day, the provider tax was continued – at a slightly reduced rate – and that was the only significant tax concession from the Senate. There was also agreement on a tax conformity bill to match changes in federal tax law and a tax cut for middle-income earners. The final global deal includes spending \$490 million from the state budget reserve in the FY2022-23 biennium, which could put more pressure on the general fund for that biennium.

As part of the global two-year budget agreement, transportation was allocated \$93.45 million in general fund dollars above the base-level budget. The funding is distributed to:

- Metro Mobility – FY2020 \$23.19 million, FY2021 additional \$13 million*
- Deputy Registrar reimbursement - \$13 million
- MnLARS replacement system - \$55.67 million
- Disaster Contingency Account - \$20 million*

*These appropriations depend on revenue to the general fund coming in higher than previous projections for FY19.

While the Governor and the House had proposed eliminating the dedication of sales tax revenue from rental vehicles, auto repair parts and \$32 million from the Motor Vehicle Lease sales tax (MVLST), the final bill did not change the dedication passed in 2017, so there will be no change in funding or the percentage of MVLST for Greater Minnesota transit.

The final transportation budget bill expands Metro Mobility to the City of Lakeville. Policy language was passed that allows the Metropolitan Council to work with the Department of Human Services to seek additional federal funds for Metro Mobility services. That could result in an additional \$8 million per year in funding, but that is not anticipated to be realized for a couple of years.

Another policy provision in the transportation budget bill extends the Metropolitan Council's MVST regional allocation to suburban transit providers for the next two years. An appropriation of \$200,000 was provided for the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority Route 495 pilot bus service.

The Transportation budget bill also contains authorization for the Metropolitan Council to levy \$92.3 million for the coming biennium in regional bonds for transit capital. This is the usual regional bonding authorization that the Council relies on for fleet replacement and other capital needs.

The final transportation bill contains language requiring transit and other non-private providers to use vehicles equipped with wheelchair securement devices which are approved by the commissioner of public safety. Only securement devices that meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act may be used. The bill also requires a level-change mechanism or boarding device such as a lift or ramp that meets federal requirements.

While legislative leaders and the Governor had agreed that a capital bonding bill of \$500 million should be passed during the Special Session, the House Minority Leader did not agree and would not provide the number of Republican votes needed in the House of Representatives to pass a bonding bill. There was some expectation that at least one Bus Rapid Transit line could be included in a bonding bill this year.

For transit in Minnesota, the 2019 Session did not provide any significant new resources to really improve and expand service to meet the demands. Once again, there was a lot of talk and agreement on the need to increase funding for transportation, but little agreement on specific funding proposals. Other issues – namely education and health care funding – were much higher priorities and with a divided legislature, agreement on other issues was hard to come by.

With more specific information on transit system needs for both operating and capital in hand, our goal is to increase communications with legislators about the transit systems in their districts and the importance of addressing critical community needs for additional service and increased state funding.

"Legislative Report"

Margaret Donahoe

Executive Director

Minnesota Transportation Alliance

Meet the Director

Samantha Schwanke

Program Coordinator

Minnesota Transportation Alliance



Meet the Director is a column to introduce readers to new transportation directors of public transit systems in Greater Minnesota. This week's column features SMART Transit Manager Kirk Kuchera. Kuchera has been with SMART for about five years and started as a part-time dispatcher. When interviewed, Kuchera wanted to highlight his team's achievements.

"As an agency, we have grown year over year and continue to work together to better serve our communities," Kuchera said, "We were awarded the Transit System of the Year award in 2016 as well."

SMART's mission is to provide safe, reliable, accessible and courteous public transportation services in response to the needs of the community. Kuchera echoed this when talking about the work ethic of his team.

"The team we have at SMART Transit is incredible! Everyone is passionate about helping our communities and we love offering independence to those who might not otherwise be able to get out and about."



SMART Transit employees accepting the 2016 System of the Year award at MPTA's Minnesota Public Transit Conference and Expo.

Outside of the office, Kuchera continues to pursue his passion for helping others.

"I'm passionate about charitable endeavors including veteran related events and helping victims of human and sex trafficking," he said.

To learn more about SMART Transit, visit their website at www.smartbusmn.org.

If you would like to nominate your director, please email Samantha@transportationalliance.com.

Minnesota State Bus Rodeo

Samantha Schwanke

Program Coordinator

Minnesota Transportation Alliance



The 32nd Annual Minnesota State Bus Rodeo is taking place Friday, July 12 through Saturday, July 13 in Marshall, MN. Register on our [event page](#). The course is at Southwest Minnesota State University, located at 1501 State St. in Marshall, while other activities will take place at the Ramada by Wyndham, located at 1500 E College Dr. in Marshall. Community Transit of United Community Action Partnership is honored and excited to host.

This year, there will be the unique opportunity for competitors and their families to experience bus simulators, thanks to sponsors [FAAC](#) and [L3 Driver Training Solutions](#).



FAAC is bringing an open cockpit MB-1000 bus simulator (pictured above) designed for training drivers in paratransit, school bus and fixed route bus transit. The simulator can create over 65 scripted scenarios from urban downtown traffic to rural country roads and even a cone course, like the Rodeo, according to National Sales Manager Clayne Woodbury.

“All bus operators experience that initial wow factor when they get in a simulator for the first time,” said Woodbury, “It is unique and for many, a very new experience. Adult learning on a vehicle simulator allows for much higher retention and the take away knowledge is very valuable to keeping everyone safer and better trained for life.”

L3 Driver Training Solutions is bringing their TranSim 7 driving simulator (pictured page 2), which contains scenarios that help develop skills like speed management, situational awareness, pivot point and proper

clearance, emergency maneuvers, and more, according to Product Marketing Manager Matt Derby.

“Our driving simulators have been designed for training programs across various vocations, industries and driver experience levels,” said Derby, “Our customers implement our driving simulators for pre-hire screening and assessment, new hire and onboarding of new transit operators, safety refresher skills training, post-incident/ remediation training, and advanced skills development.”

The simulator provides a risk-free environment with customized scenarios to build skills and awareness, as well as provide consistency.



FAAC will be set-up in the Ramada on Thursday, July 11 through Sunday, July 14. There will be signs posted inside the Ramada directing attendees to their simulator. L3 will be on the course Saturday, July 13 and may be making appearances in the Ramada parking lot throughout the weekend. Please watch our website for updates regarding their schedules.

Don't miss this public transit tradition that provides safety training, networking opportunities, and celebrates the dedication of those that proudly call themselves bus operators.

Find more information and register on our [event page](#).



"Minnesota State Bus Roadshow"
Samantha Schwanke
Program Coordinator
Minnesota Transportation Alliance

Minnesota State

Bus Rodeo

Schedule of Events

Friday, July 12

4:00 - 7:00 p.m.	Registration	Ramada – Ballroom
4:00 - 7:00 p.m.	Bus Orientation	South Parking Lot of Ramada
6:00 - 7:00 p.m.	Welcome Reception & Dinner	Ramada – Ballroom
7:00 - 8:00 p.m.	Judge's Meeting	Ramada – Ballroom

Saturday, July 13

5:00 - 7:00 a.m.	Breakfast	Ramada – Ballroom
7:00 - 8:00 a.m.	Bus Orientation (Competitors)	Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU) Lot B2 & B3
8:00 - 8:30 a.m.	Opening Ceremony	SMSU Lot B2 & B3
8:30 - 8:45 a.m.	Course Walk-Thru	SMSU Lot B2 & B3
8:45 - 10:00 a.m.	Large Bus Competition	SMSU Lot B2 & B3
10:00 - 10:15 a.m.	Course Change Over	SMSU Lot B2 & B3
10:30 a.m. - Noon	Small Bus Competition	SMSU Lot B2 & B3
12:00 - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch catered by SMSU	SMSU Lot B2 & B3
1:00 - 2:30 p.m.	Small Bus Competition	SMSU Lot B2 & B3
2:30 - 3:00 p.m.	Course Clean Up	SMSU Lot B2 & B3
3:00 - 6:00 p.m.	Discover, Enjoy, Learn Marshall	N/A
6:00 - 7:00 p.m.	Reception	Ramada – Ballroom
7:00 - 8:00 p.m.	Official Program & Dinner catered by the Ramada	Ramada – Ballroom
7:30 PM	Cake catered by Hy-Vee	Ramada – Ballroom
8:00 p.m. - 2:00 a.m.	Social Gathering	Shay's Restaurant and Lounge - Located in the Ramada

Minnesota Public Transit Conference & Expo

Samantha Schwanke

Program Coordinator

Minnesota Transportation Alliance



The 2019 Minnesota Public Transit Conference and Expo is **Wednesday, October 9th through Friday, October 11th** at the [RiverCentre](#) in St. Paul, MN. This year's theme is "Planning for Greatness." As always, the conference will be filled with training opportunities and important updates that are valuable to your public transit employees and organizations. Last year's trainings covered topics from safety and security, to developments in transit technology, to travel training, to how to build ridership.

Vendor registration is open. Please [visit our website](#) for more information and to register.

Please watch [our website](#) for updates.



Duluth Transit Authority Selects Employee of the Year Safety Awards 2018

Heath Hickok

Director of Marketing
Duluth Transit Authority



The Duluth Transit Authority (DTA) named Bus Operator Brian Rapp, the Employee of the Year for 2018 and presented 99 employees awards for safe performance.



L to R: DTA General Manager Phil Pumphrey, Bus Operator and 2018 Employee of the Year Brian Rapp, and Director of Safety and Training Mark Horlocker

Brian began working at the DTA as a full-time Bus Operator in July of 2017 and was presented the DTA Employee of the Month award in February of 2018. This is his first DTA Employee of the Year Award.

The Employee of the Year award was given at the 37th Annual DTA Employee Safety & Recognition Award Breakfast, which was held at the DTA Operating Center on Wednesday, March 13, 2019.

The DTA recognized and commended 81 bus operators and 18 maintenance employees who worked the entire year without a preventable or lost-time accident with a cumulative total of 935 years of accident-free service.

Several DTA employees reached significant safety milestones. Eight reached 5 years of accident-free service, two at 10 years, one at 25 years and one Bus Operator, Brian Moe, reached 30 years of accident-free service. 8 DTA employees were recognized for a perfect attendance record in 2018.



A group of DTA employees at the 2018 Safety Awards Breakfast.

Harmon's Heart of Baseball

Tammy Anderson

Director of Development
Product Alternatives, Inc.



Transit Alternatives, a program of Productive Alternatives, invites you to participate in "Harmon's Heart of Baseball-Celebrating All Abilities" event at Target Field on Saturday, August 10. Productive Alternatives has partnered with Nita Killebrew, widow of Minnesota Twins great and Hall of Fame baseball player, Harmon Killebrew, along with the Minnesota Twins, to create the Harmon's Heart event. The fundraiser helps raise dollars and awareness for persons with disabilities.

"I wanted to create an event to honor Harmon's legacy that would remind all of us what impact we can all have on the lives of others, to smile, and to show love and encouragement to each other." said Nita Killebrew.

Fans can hop on one of the many community buses or meet at the game. The event includes a tailgate party at the Minnesota Masonic Center in Bloomington, hosted by the Cornerstone Lodge and the Birak Shrine Club of Fergus Falls. The party includes food, music by the Minnesota Veterans Home Choir, games and a chance to meet Nita Killebrew. Following the tailgate party, fans will head over to Target Field where the Twins will take on the Cleveland Indians. During an on-field, pregame ceremony, Productive Alternatives will present the Harmon's Heart of Baseball Award, given to a person with disabilities who exemplifies the values of award's namesake Harmon Killebrew.

There is one added treat for this year's event. Participants who purchase tickets through the www.Harmonsheart.org website will received a certificate courtesy of KLN Family Brands to redeem at the Harmon's Heart booth at Target Field for a 12" X 18" fine art print of Harmon Killebrew painted by artist Robert Blehert. Blehert will be on hand at the booth to sign the prints.

For more information on how you can be a part of the event, go to www.HarmonsHeart.org or call 218-998-5646 or email Tammya@productivemn.org.



A group photo from the Harmon's Heart website.

In Transit



MINNESOTA PUBLIC TRANSIT ASSOCIATION

Upcoming Events

2019 Minnesota State Bus Roadeo

July 12-13 in Marshall, MN

Southwest Minnesota State University

Ramada by Wyndham

2019 MN/WI Public Transit Conference & Expo

Wednesday, October 9 — Friday, October 11 in Saint Paul, MN

RiverCentre

Find event information: [MPTA Events](#)

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