

Features:

Legislative Report
P.5

Operator Earns Purple
Heart on Road To
Recovery
P. 9

Southwest Transit
COVID-19 Response/
Update
P.10

Transit Alternatives
Welcomes New
Operations Manager
P. 14

Metro Bus Goes 65 Days
without an Accident
P. 16

Weather-Torn Flag
Replaced by Veteran
Drivers
P.19

*And So
Much More!*

See full story on p. 17



Photo Courtesy of Moorhead MATBUS displays toys from 'Stuff The Bus'

Meet the MPTA Board's new President

In this Q&A learn all about Ryan Daniel along with his experiences and what he hopes to do on the MPTA board

P. 3-4

Get Festive! See how transit systems across the state are meeting needs and spreading cheer this holiday season

Learn more about toy drives with SouthWest Transit, St. Cloud Metro Bus, MATBUs and so much more. As the pandemic continues to challenge transit, transit fights back to continue to serve our communities.

P. 11,13,17

President's Column



**MPTA President
Ryan Daniel**

Thank you for your membership in the Minnesota Public Transit Association and thanks for supporting me as your new MPTA President!

While we're all struggling through this pandemic, I'm excited to take on this new challenge and lead the association at a critical time, in partnership with all of the members of the MPTA Board of Directors.

As we prepare for the 2021 Legislative Session, MPTA is developing new ways of advocating for transit systems and keeping the issue in front of legislators. We will be dealing with new legislators – 10 new senators and 23 new House members – who need to learn all about how transit service operates in their districts. We're asking our MPTA members to join in our advocacy campaign with updated transit system descriptions, photos, videos and other materials that highlight the many benefits transit systems provide to the communities they serve. We know that we will need to be creative in communicating regularly with legislators as they meet and work remotely. We also know that with a projected budget deficit, we will need to be proactive in fighting for the future of transit in our state.

If you know your local legislators – great! Now is the time to send a quick email. If you're not sure who your legislators are, we'll be providing that information and working with you to find ways to connect and make sure they understand what's happening in your area. MPTA will make it easy to communicate with local decision makers, legislators and the public.

MPTA will also be working to keep you updated on the latest action in St. Paul and in Washington, D.C.

With new proposals coming and going, we'll make sure you know what is happening when important decisions are made that impact transit in Minnesota. The latest round of federal transit funding is a great development after months of on-again, off-again negotiations.

The distribution of COVID-19 vaccines in 2021 will provide opportunities for transit service to shine as we help people access distribution centers to get a shot, and this new development will make people feel more comfortable about riding transit again.

With a light at the end of the tunnel, MPTA does plan to host the Bus Rodeo in July in St. Cloud and the Minnesota/Wisconsin joint Transit Conference in Duluth in October. While those who wish to participate remotely in the conference will be able to do so, we hope that when October arrives, more people will join us in person and we will once again have a great time catching up and learning from each other.

In January, we'll be asking you to renew your membership with MPTA. Your membership allows us to lobby on your behalf, develop tools and resources to advocate for your system, and keep up to date on the latest development that impact your system, as well as accessing important training and networking opportunities. It's a great value for a modest investment in the transit community.

Thank you again for all the work you're doing during this challenging time! We'll continue to fight for transit service all across the state as Minnesotans continue to rely on transit service for access to medical services, food, work and other essential needs.
Happy New Year!

Ryan I. Daniel

Meet MPTA's New President: Ryan Daniel

Get to know MPTA's new President in our Q&A

Why did you want to be the president of the MPTA Board?

I have a genuine passion for public transportation and find great joy in leading a dedicated group of transit professionals here at St. Cloud Metro Bus. I would like to utilize my industry knowledge and experience gained from working at New York City Transit and Washington Area Transit Authority to enhance the transit services we all deliver across our great state.

What are your goals as president?

My primary goal is to ensure that the voices of all of our transit systems statewide are heard and represented on all industry issues, particularly advocating for increasing funding for public transportation.

My other top goals are to increase public knowledge about issues affecting public transit and to create an inclusive network of transit agencies statewide which will optimize partnerships and help deliver great service to all of our customers.

Lastly, increasing awareness among our potential passengers about the measures our industry is taking to keep them safe on public transit will be an important mission as we learn to live with COVID-19.

What do you expect to see in 2021?

I believe we will see a rebound in the use of public transportation as we move into and through the new year. I am hopeful that our ridership levels will increase by 50 percent compared to current levels. As life returns to normal, we know people may need our services more than ever.



Ensuring our communities know they can rely on public transportation to deliver them safely to their destinations will help our industry come back stronger than ever from these recent tough months.

Why do you think transit is important to our state and local communities?

Where transportation goes the community grows. Transit is a lifeline for many people in our state connecting them to people, places and possibilities. I have seen investments in public transportation nationwide, ranging from new rail lines to BRT, result in growth for both local and the national economies.

How have you seen transit help/ assist others in the past?

I have seen transit be a source of hope and a lifeline to many people over the years as a transit professional. One story I often think of is how our paratransit Dial-a-Ride service reinvigorated a current customer. Jan told us how she had been a marketing and sales professional for decades, leading an active life and enjoying getting out to meet others. However, when she lost the use of her legs, she became depressed as she did not want to burden her family with ride requests but had lost the joy of being active outside of her home.

Meet MPTA's New President: Ryan Daniel



When Jan discovered Dial-a-Ride service was an option for her, she felt a resurgence of hope as she was once again able to travel around the community independently. Stories like these inspire me to keep working to provide our essential services to those who use them!

Tell us about yourself! How did you end up where you are now?

My transportation career started out in aviation. I worked both above and below the wing for two years at American Airlines. During college I interned in the Human Resource department for New York City Transit for one year. *Fun Fact: every month the department was tasked with hiring over 500 employees ranging from bus and train operators to train conductors and station agents. To get to that number we had to call over 1000 candidates monthly!*

I began my role as a bus operator for New York City Transit while working on my undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Since then I have worked for transit agencies in New York, Ohio and Washington, D.C., with increasing roles of responsibility and leadership. In addition to my MBA, I have a broad-based knowledge of transit safety and security.

I am a graduate of the National Transit Institute Transit Academy and hold several certifications from the Transportation Safety Institute and FEMA. I have completed the U.S. DOT Transit Safety and Security Program and I am a Certified Safety Executive with the World Safety Organization.

How long have you worked in transit/ transportation?

I have spent the last 23 consecutive years in transportation in a multitude of roles.

Why do you continue to do what you do?

Knowing that our customers get from point A to point B safely every day throughout the year keeps me energized and my team feeds off that energy.

What do you enjoy doing outside of your work with MPTA and the transit communities?

I love international travel and driving on the Autobahn in Germany. My favorite aircraft are the B777, B747 and A380.

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about yourself, your goals or about transit/ MPTA?

Thanks to the MPTA members for selecting Phil Pumphrey and me to lead the Association. We will work relentlessly to support efforts aimed at building community support for increased public transportation investment at the federal, state and local levels.

Legislative Report

Election Results

The November election generated the largest vote nationwide, and Minnesota was at the top once again, an extraordinary achievement in the midst of a pandemic. According to the Star Tribune, eight in 10 eligible Minnesotans voted in this year's election — a rate not seen in 60 years and once again the highest in the nation.

At the state level, the outcome of the election did not change the overall political landscape. Minnesota remains the state with divided government. The DFL continues to lead the House of Representatives while the GOP is in charge of the Senate.

Senator Paul Gazelka will once again serve as Senate Majority Leader with Susan Kent serving a Minority Leader. Senator David Tomassoni and Senator Tom Bakk have formed a new Independent caucus. The Senate will have 34 GOP members, 31 DFL members, and 2 Independent members.

The Senate Transportation Finance and Policy Committee will continue to be chaired by Senator Scott Newman (R-Hutchinson). The Senate Finance Committee will continue to be chaired by Senator Julie Rosen (R-Vernon Center). The Tax Committee will be chaired by Senator Carla Nelson (R-Rochester). A Local Government policy committee will be chaired by Senator John Jasinski (R-Owatonna) with a subcommittee on Metropolitan Governance chaired by Senator David Osmek (R-Mound). The Capital Investment Committee will be chaired by Senator Tom Bakk (I-Cook).



MINNESOTA PUBLIC TRANSIT ASSOCIATION

In the House, Speaker Melissa Hortman (DFL-Brooklyn Park) will continue in her role along with Rep. Ryan Winkler (DFL-Golden Valley) serving as Majority Leader. Rep. Kurt Daudt (R-Crown) will also continue to serve as House Minority Leader. The House will have 70 DFL members and 64 Republican members.

The House Transportation Finance and Policy Committee will continue to be chaired by Rep. Frank Hornstein (DFL-Minneapolis), the Tax Committee will continue to be chaired by Rep. Paul Marquart (DFL-Dilworth) and the Ways and Means Committee will be chaired by Rep. Rena Moran (DFL-St. Paul). The Capital Investment committee will be chaired by Rep. Fue Lee (DFL-Minneapolis).

State Budget

Minnesota's economic and budget outlook have improved since May, when the state released a budget projection just as the COVID-19 pandemic was taking hold. With the November forecast, the state is anticipating higher general fund revenues and lower expected spending which should result in a projected surplus of \$641 million for the FY 2020-21 biennium. The improved budget outlook continues into FY 2022-23, but a \$1.273 billion budgetary shortfall remains for that biennium. As the pandemic continues, economic challenges also persist.

Legislative Report

Minnesota has 184,000 fewer jobs than in February.

- Current year projected deficit eliminated; **\$641 million surplus** now projected. This forecast adds back about half of the current biennium revenue taken out in the May projection.

- Improved budget outlook continues into the next biennium, but a **\$1.3 billion shortfall remains for FY 2022-23**

For the Transit Assistance Fund, which includes MVST and MVLST, total fund revenues are projected to increase for 2020 from an expected \$327 million to \$357 million. For FY2021, the fund projected to increase to \$387 million. The forecast calls for a slight decrease from the previous projection in FY2022-23.

State leaders have been hoping for additional federal assistance to help reduce the state budget deficit. Minnesota received \$150 billion CARES Act funding and states have been lobbying Congress for another round of funding. However, disagreement over this issue led to passage of a new round of relief funding that does not include direct aid for state and local governments. It remains to be seen if more federal funding will be made available in 2021.

2021 Minnesota Legislative Session

The Minnesota Legislature will gather – some in person and some remotely – on January 5th for the start of the session. This is a budget year so the need to put together a two-year state budget will be the main focus of the session.

Early indications are that legislative leaders want to limit the agenda for the 2021 Session due to the challenges for staff of dealing with the need for remote hearings and sessions. The top priorities will be the state budget and legislation relating to pandemic management and recovery.

Against this backdrop, MPTA will be highlighting the key role transit plays in assisting with pandemic management as well as the recovery process and the need to include transit funding in the two-year budget process. MPTA will continue to advocate for policy changes needed to keep volunteer drivers assisting with providing rides for people in communities across the state.

MPTA will provide regular updates during the course of session as committees begin to meet and will make sure you know about opportunities to get involved and communicate with legislators.

Federal Transit Funding

Federal funding for transit has proved to be a life saver in 2020. Federal funding will continue to be a major issue as additional relief packages are debated and as Congress grapples with the expiration of the FAST Act in September of 2021.

The CARES Act provided a total of \$25 billion for transit nationwide. In Minnesota transit systems have received:

- \$227 million for Twin Cities Metropolitan Area Transit
- \$27 million for small urban systems
- \$54 million for Greater Minnesota (\$40 million for 5311 systems, \$8 million for intercity bus and \$5 million in administrative funds)

Legislative Report

In addition, Minnesota received a federal grant of \$4.4 million to replace 47 buses for 20 transit systems.

The latest round of federal funding provided in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, provides a total of \$14 billion for transit nationwide with a focus on transit systems with larger budgets. According to a new analysis from the Federal Transit Administration, this means that only 138 of the over 500 urbanized areas that got money under the CARES Act will get money under the new bill, and only 22 states will get any of the new bill's rural transit aid.

The \$25 billion provided under the CARES Act was distributed through existing formulas, but these formulas resulted in a wide disparity between COVID grant awards and the actual costs of operating a transit system. As a result, NYC and San Francisco spent through their CARES money by the end of August, while a lot of other transit providers had barely begun to spend their awards, with most big providers being somewhere in the middle. Because of this disparity, the new bill provides that, while its \$13.3 billion in new money is also to be distributed under existing formulas, there is an overriding requirement that **the combined funding from CARES and the new bill cannot exceed 75 percent of a normal year's operating expenses until all urban areas have been brought up to that 75 percent threshold. For rural systems, the cap is 125% of 2018 operating budgets.**

In Minnesota the new relief bill will provide: \$185.9 million for Minneapolis/St. Paul Metropolitan Transit, \$5.1 million for the Duluth Transit Authority and \$2.2 million for St. Cloud Metro Bus. In addition, Minnesota will receive \$14,696,885 in rural transit funding.

Legislative action in 2021 will have a long-lasting impact on transit systems all across the state. MPTA will keep you updated as decisions are made. Please stay involved and help us make the case for the future of transit in Minnesota.



Featured Industry Members

Q'Straint

For over 35 years, Q'STRAINT has been the industry leader focused on developing the most innovative solutions to advance the safety and effectiveness of wheelchair passenger travel. The diverse global staff serves customers in more than 70 countries throughout North and South America, Europe, Australia, Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

Q'Straint was the first wheelchair securement manufacturer to apply the 30MPH/20 g's "crash sled tests" to their securement systems and this was the first time a passenger in a mobility device met the same safety standards as everyone else in a vehicle. We were also the first to introduce the automatic self-tensioning, self-locking floor retractor to our transportation industry.

Proterra

Proterra is a leader in the design and manufacture of zero-emission, heavy-duty electric vehicles, enabling bus fleet operators to significantly reduce operating costs while delivering clean, quiet transportation to local communities across North America.

Since 2004, Proterra® technology has been proven through more than 16 million service miles in heavy-duty applications. With more than a decade of experience delivering electric transit vehicles, Proterra has sold more than 1,000 electric buses to 125 communities across 43 U.S. states and Canadian provinces.

The Proterra ZX5 battery-electric transit bus is designed to serve the daily mileage needs of a wide range of transit routes on a single charge.



Do you know a SeQurement Hero?

Starting January 2021, the "SeQurement Heroes" campaign is your chance to say THANK YOU for keeping wheelchair passengers safe during these difficult times. Nominees can include bus drivers, managers, installers, or anyone you feel deserves some special recognition. Nominees may be featured on our website or ads and some lucky winners will receive special Q'STRAINT swag. Nominate a special someone in your organization today and make them a Hero. <https://www.qstraint.com/my-hero/>



PROTERRA

The ZX5 can now be equipped with 675 kWh of energy, the most energy storage of any 40-foot electric bus available today. Made with an advanced composite body, the ZX5 is designed to safely and quietly endure nearly two decades of on-road service.

To provide agencies with a comprehensive set of products to deploy and scale their EV fleets, Proterra also offers a turn-key approach to delivering the complete energy ecosystem for commercial electric vehicles. In addition to high-power charging systems, Proterra Energy™ fleet solutions include charging infrastructure design, build, financing, operations, maintenance and energy optimization. 8

Operator earns Purple Heart, on road to recovery

Story from Metro Transit's Internal newsletter

Growing up, Ousmane Bah watched a lot of military documentaries and dreamed of someday serving in uniform.

In January 2017, years after his family emigrated from Guinea, Africa, to the United States, he enlisted in the Minnesota Army National Guard and started doing just that. Two years later, he put on another uniform, becoming a part-time weekend bus operator out of South Garage.

Today, Bah is tending to combat injuries so he can get back to serving his country and his community.

On March 14, Bah sustained significant injuries when a rocket hit a base he was stationed at in Iraq, where he and other members of the 2nd Battalion, 147th Assault Helicopter Battalion were supporting the Iraqi military. "It was very scary and frightening," Bah said. "I didn't know if I was going to make it or not."

Recovering at Fort Riley, Kansas, Bah is hopeful he'll soon be able to drive buses and continue toward his goal of becoming a Warrant Officer.

In late-November, he returned to Minnesota where he was awarded a Purple Heart, an Army Combat Action Badge and an Army Commendation Medal. The ceremony was attended by family members, as well as Assistant Transportation Manager Anna Penland and South Garage Manager Doyme Parsons.



Bah said he was proud of the recognition and committed to his ongoing recovery. "Wearing that uniform and knowing that I'm part of the greatest military in the world makes me really proud," he said. "I just love doing it."

**Find this story and more
on MPTA's Social Media!
@MNPublicTransit**

SouthWest Transit COVID-19 Response/Update

Article Submitted By:
John Haggemiller
Marketing and Public
Outreach Manager
SouthWest Transit

The coronavirus pandemic has changed so much about how we go about our everyday lives. It has fundamentally impacted how we interact with one another, where we can travel, and how we work. Like so many local businesses and community members, SouthWest Transit (SWT) has been significantly impacted by the changes brought about by COVID-19, but rest assured that SWT is doing everything in its power to ensure its services are safe and that we are ready for our riders' return when they are ready.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic SWT has had procedures in place to ensure the safety of everyone using our services and those who run it. In addition to requiring both riders and all SWT staff to wear masks, all SWT vehicles and facilities are cleaned and disinfected daily or after every trip, plexiglass barriers have been installed both around the driver and throughout the passenger cabins for enhanced safety, seating is limited on all SWT vehicles to ensure safe social distancing, passenger loads are monitored in real-time to ensure overcrowding does not occur, passenger waiting areas are marked with social distancing floor markers, all SWT staff undergo temperature checks daily, and all vehicles have been newly equipped with a state of the art ion air purification system to further ensure the highest level of safety possible on our vehicles.

With so many people practicing social distancing and having no choice but to work from home, SWT's services have been greatly impacted.



Express ridership is down 90% and SW Prime ridership is down 50% from pre-pandemic levels. These drastic ridership reductions forced SWT to make some tough decisions such as reducing our services by over 60% and furloughing or eliminating over 50% of our workforce. These actions were not taken lightly and were done so to ensure the agency's long-term success. With State revenues being stretched to the max, the cuts that have been made give SWT a fighting chance to ensure our success in a post-pandemic world.

Despite all the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, SWT does see a brighter future ahead, and we are already well on our way to planning for a "new normal" after COVID. It is expected that commuter patterns will likely change post-pandemic as employers continue to take advantage of the flexibilities brought about by remote work. While we believe employees will return to their physical workplaces, we understand that our services need to adapt to a changing world where telework is more of the norm.

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This is why SWT is already planning for new and innovative services such as service along the I-494 corridor to the Mall of America and MSP Airport; expanding our SW Prime and Prime MD services to Shakopee and other neighboring communities; allowing for scheduled rides on our SW Prime service, improving first mile/last mile connections to our stations and SWLRT (once it's operational) via expanded SW Prime, carsharing, and bike sharing; demonstrating autonomous vehicle technologies on SW Prime and in Eden Prairie's Golden Triangle Area; and implementing electric vehicles throughout our fleet just to name a few.

SWT was formed in 1986 by the Cities of Eden Prairie, Chanhassen, and Chaska to better meet and adapt to the changing transit needs of their communities. For over 30 years SWT has been doing just that and will continue to do so long after the COVID-19 pandemic is over.

More Updates from SouthWest Transit Service Expansion

SWT is excited to announce an expanded service area for SW Prime, the agencies on-demand ride service. Beginning mid-January 2021, SW Prime will include Shakopee. This expansion allows transit riders access to facilities like Amazon, Shutterfly, St. Francis Medical & the Minnesota Valley Transit (MVRTA) system.

SW Prime is a local on-demand ride service - Similar to Lyft or Uber. It serves the cities of Eden Prairie, Chanhassen, Chaska, Carver, Victoria & soon Shakopee. SW Prime can be utilized for all essential travel needs like work, groceries, & doctor appt's. Rides can be booked via phone or an app.

Toys for Tots

Giving back and helping the communities we serve has always been a high priority for SWT, and this year was no different. Toys For Tots collection bins were placed at all SWT Stations along with separate collection boxes for the local food shelf. With ridership being a fraction of what it was pre-COVID, there was concern we may not collect anything. Yet in the midst of a pandemic and a bit of an economic recession, we discovered that ridership may be down but the generosity is not.



Thank you to our Vendor Members!

Thank you to our Vendor Members for continuing to support not only MPTA, but also transit as an essential service all over the state of Minnesota during this unpredictable year.

Vendor Members:

- A&J Mobility
- Alexander Dennis Inc.
- American Seating Company
- ARBOC
- Braunability
- Creative Bus Sales
- CTS Software
- Ecolane
- First Transit
- Gerflor USA
- Gillig
- Høglund Bus & Truck
- Jefferson Lines
- Kelderman Air Ride Suspension
- LHB, Inc.
- Liquid Spring
- MORRYDE International Inc.
- New Flyer/ MCI
- North Central Bus & Equipment
- Optibus
- PCTrans
- Proterra
- Q'Straint
- Rosco Vision Systems
- Rousch CleanTech
- Routematch Software
- Safety Vision
- Safe Fleet Bus & Rail
- Schmitt and Sons Transit
- Telin Transportation Group, LLC
- USSC Group
- Walker Parking Consultants
- Wendel Companies



Vendor Member Benefits:

- Vendor members and transit systems will be published on our website to show off your commitment to transit needs in our state.
- Opportunities to sponsor and attend events such as the Minnesota Public Transit Conference and Bus Roadeo for training.
- The option to attend events both online and in-person to meet transit professionals and learn about the latest developments impacting transit and more.
- Information on transit happenings through our InTransit newsletter, social media and more. Your company can also be featured in our newsletter.
- The ability to advocate for transit needs with elected officials at the state and federal levels.

There's still time! Become a Vendor Member here.

St. Cloud Jolly Trolley Delivers Again; 10th Anniversary

**Article Submitted by:
Nate Ramacher
Marketing &
Communications
Manager
St. Cloud Metro bus**

Over its 10-year history, the Jolly Trolley Food Drive has collected almost 19 tons of food and over \$23,000! The food drive is held annually by St. Cloud Metro Bus and several partners in Central Minnesota including Townsquare Media, Royal Tire and North Central Bus. In past years, the food drive involved bringing a bus to area grocery stores each night during one week in December and collecting food and cash donations from customers as they enter and exit the stores.

This year the Jolly Trolley was held under very different circumstances and utilizing new strategies. Non-perishable food and cash donations were collected at locations of the partner businesses during a two-week window ending December 20. A web portal was also implemented allowing for online donations. Lastly, large food donations were solicited from major community food distributors and grocery stores.

Food donations, including hundreds of pounds from the local Lunds & Byerlys grocery store and the SpartanNash distribution center in west St. Cloud, blew away all previous totals with a whopping 6,400 lbs. collected! The donations FILLED the historic Metro Bus Fixed Route bus that was used to collect, store and deliver food donations.



Photos courtesy of St. Cloud Metro Bus



Total cash donations were down a bit from last year at \$2,580 but still relatively consistent with recent years. Cash donations are also matched at two of the three charities receiving donations, Catholic Charities and Salvation Army, through a grant from the Skalicky Foundation. The third benefactor is Promise Neighborhood of Central MN, a local community center and food shelf that hopped on board the Jolly Trolley in 2017.

Metro Bus CEO Ryan I. Daniel shares the importance of the Jolly Trolley Food Drive. "This year families in our community are experiencing greater needs than usual. The Jolly Trolley serves those most in need with important food resources. Metro Bus and our partners on this mission recognize how crucial having enough food on the table is for area residents, especially this time of year. We are extremely proud that this year yielded the biggest food collection in the history of the event!"

The Jolly Trolley hopes to be back on the road in 2021 but, whatever form it takes, the Trolley will continue to deliver necessary help to families throughout Central Minnesota during the giving time of year.

Transit Alternatives welcomes Operations Manager

After about 4.3 years of working with Transit Alternatives Otter Express, Cindy Rogholt retired.

Rogholt provided a missing connection between the employees, ridership and the director at their transit site. She will miss the people she has gotten to know and work with over the years, but is looking forward to sleeping in and getting retirement projects done around the home.

Rogholt served on the MPTA Rodeo committee, helping to plan the event and make it a success. She has many memories of her time working with MPTA, and still believes that transit is an important part of her community.

“Without transit many people would have no other mode of transportation to get to where they need to go. We have been able to get people who have no other mode of transportation to jobs, school, medical appointments, hair appointments, groceries, etc.,” Rogholt said.

Introducing the New Operations Manager

Although MPTA and Transit Alternatives are both sad to see Rogholt go, they are now welcoming Kayla Sullivan as the new Operations Manager who will be overseeing their drivers and dispatch supervisor.

Sullivan worked for Transit Alternative’s parent company, Productive Alternatives, in the Human Resources department. In that role she has worked with Daryn and some of the Transit employees.



“I have experience in employee relations, organizational benefits, labor laws, job descriptions and postings, and unemployment. I also do photography for our parent company,” Sullivan said.

She is excited to look for changes that can positively impact her department and employees, and has a few goals in mind, as well.

“I will look at various avenues to ramp up our social media and marketing. I will review our routes and look for more efficient alternatives. I also will be working with Daryn, our Transit Director, on our fleet and review what is current and what our future needs are,” Sullivan said.

During this year Transit Alternatives had to eliminate a couple of out-of-town routes, and Sullivan will review if that is a need that is current and if they should implement those routes in the future.

Her department also has some processes that are pen and paper, and she will implement an electronic process. She will execute an internal employee appreciation process as Sullivan believes happy employees are key to our department’s success.

Transit Alternatives welcomes Operations Manager

Not only is she looking forward to how the changes she plans to implement will have a positive impact on her department, but she is also excited to see them take effect at the community level.

“We have a large elderly and low-income population. I believe transit is extremely important in our area to get persons to where they need to go in a cost-effective manner.

We regularly transport people to their jobs so in turn gives them a consistent vehicle to get to and from their jobs. We also take numerous riders to their medical appointments, and without our service they would have a challenging situation,” Sullivan said.

Sullivan is excited to meet everyone. She describes herself as open and willing to meet in-person when we can do that, again. In the meantime, she has experience with all types of online meetings.



Kayla Sullivan



Photos courtesy of Transit Alternatives website and LinkedIn

Metro Bus Goes 65 Days without an Accident

Article Submitted by
Nate Ramacher
Marketing &
Communications
Manager
St. Cloud Metro Bus

METRO BUS

The mission at St. Cloud Metro Bus is to provide safe, reliable, friendly public transportation services for the residents of St. Cloud, Sartell, Sauk Rapids and Waite Park. Safety comes first in their mission because it also comes first in their priorities. Without delivering safe service, a public transportation system cannot deliver reliable or friendly service!

To encourage employees to always keep safety top-of-mind, Metro Bus developed a system for tracking all preventable accidents. In conjunction with that, they produced a Safety Board that hangs in a highly visible location in their Fixed Route bus garage and counts the number of days, hours, minutes and seconds since the last preventable accident.



Over the past couple of months, Metro Bus had a 65 day stretch without an accident. This unprecedented accomplishment set a new standard for safety at Metro Bus and created a benchmark that any system would be proud to achieve. Metro Bus is very proud of their team for this achievement and rewarded them with thank you messages and treats for all staff.

As the Metro Bus team embarks on a new streak of accident-free days, they now have a high standard to use as a goal while making each and every day safe and accident-free. It can be a tedious and thankless job to go day after day without an accident but for over two months the great employees at Metro Bus were able pull it off!



Photos courtesy of St. Cloud Metro Bus

12th Annual Stuff the Bus event at MATBUS

Moorhead MATBUS held its 12th Annual Stuff the Bus event to help provide gifts and necessities to those in the community, especially this year amid the pandemic.

Since 2008 MATBUS and their local YWCA partner to collect toys, pots and pans, dishes, personal care items and more for women and children in need in the area.

“The YWCA is an emergency shelter that provides services to women and children experiencing homelessness. This event was started to help them join in the holiday gift-giving and receiving traditions, and gain a sense of normalcy in the midst of personal hardships,” said Taaren Haak, the Assistant Transit Planner & Marketing Specialist at MATBUS.



Photos Courtesy of MATBUS



Stuff the Bus provides an opportunity for local businesses and community members to give to those in need during the holiday season. For many families utilizing YWCA Cass Clay services, purchasing gifts for their children simply isn't an option due to other critical financial priorities like food, utilities, and paying down debt. By “Stuffing the Bus”, the community gives joy, making gift-giving one less worry this holiday season; ensuring that every parent and every child served by YWCA has a gift to open at the holidays.

The Community all comes together to support this event.

“Stuff the Bus is a unique event in that its success is attributed to the collaboration of several businesses and individuals that take it upon themselves to spread the word and get engagement,” Said Morgan Svingen, Community Relations Manager at YWCA.

“KFGO, Froggy 99.9, Jack 101.9, 104.7 Duke FM, and MATBUS take the lead providing advertising and, of course, the bus to transport all of the gifts. Then our business partners, Sanford Health, Gate City Bank, Vitalent and Beyond Realty engage their networks to gather donations.”

12th Annual Stuff the Bus event at MATBUS

All of the items donated and used to 'stuff the bus' are unloaded at YWCA Cass Clay where they are distributed to the individuals and families staying at the Emergency Shelter. Donated items are shared with Red River Children's Advocacy Center and the Fargo Police Department Community Engagement Team to give to those they serve.

"It's unique in that it's not just about donating presents. It's also about giving families a sense of independence and normalcy during trying times in their lives. They still get to choose presents for their loved ones, when they may not have been able to purchase them otherwise. The community also donates gift wrap supplies, so that they get the full gift-giving experience," Haak said.

This normalcy is seen in how the toys are later distributed to those in need.

The YWCA's event room is typically transformed into a holiday store thanks to the generosity of the community and Stuff the Bus. Women and children utilizing the organization's services then shop for presents for their immediate family at no cost during this event. This year, however, to ensure social distancing among families, gifts were distributed by YWCA staff after receiving "wish lists" from each family member.

"Stuff the Bus is more than a toy drive, generous donors in our community give toys, gift cards, and even household items like pots and pans and dishes to help those in need in our community," Svingen said.



And everyone in the community bands together, year after year to donate, from college-age adults to those who make the toys themselves, such as an elderly man who hand-carves wooden toys every year to donate.

Stuff the Bus is a partnership between MATBUS, KFGO, Froggy 99.9, Jack 101.9, 104.7 Duke FM, and the recipient organizations; each year the drive becomes more-and-more successful thanks to the longstanding partnerships between us," Svingen said. "The outpouring of support we receive from the community is remarkable."

The pandemic may have put a damper on many things this year including holiday plans and how transit systems operate as a whole, but one thing that hasn't changed is the community's willingness to donate and the adaptability of transit systems to meet the needs in their communities.

Weather-torn flag replaced by veteran drivers

On a windy October day, Mankato Bus Driver David John Neegard noticed a flag at a health care facility near his route.

The flag was torn, ripped and the color was faded. This weighed a bit heavier on Neegard's heart as he is a veteran, and he wanted to see it replaced.

"I thought that was a shame and a disgrace to our county to see a flag in that condition where other veterans could be living," Neegard said.

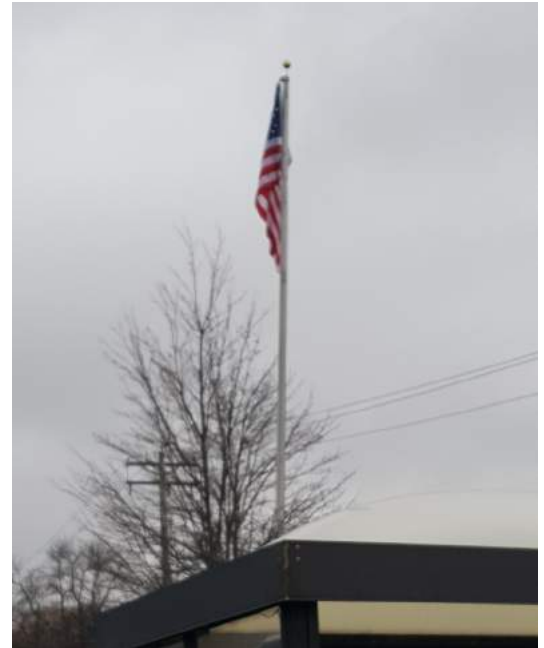
Neegard wasn't the only driver in the area to notice the worn flag. Replacing the flag meant everything to fellow driver and Veteran Bernie Steinhauer who noticed the flag while filling in for another driver on the route.

"My parents were veterans, my wife and I are veterans, my youngest son is a veteran and my oldest son is currently serving," he said. He served in the U.S. Navy for 30 years in the submarine service.

Its importance was felt by Neegard who joined the US Air Force in 1965 and was given an honorable discharge in 1969.

"I am a member of the American Legion, and I also managed a club for several years. I am a past Sargant of Arms and helped fold the flag at several funerals, which was a great honor," Neegard said.

"It was shredded by the wind and badly faded. It was not appropriate under any circumstances to display it," Steinhauer said.



"As a veteran, the American flag means something special, and to see one in that condition being flown bothered my immensely."

Steinhauer later asked Neegard if he had noticed how old and tattered the flag was. He had no idea at the time that Neegard had also been eyeing the flag for some time, or that he was also a veteran who felt that it needed to be replaced.

"Bernie contacted the health care facility and asked them if they could replace the flag, and if not, if they would take it down. I told Bernie that if he had to buy a flag that I would split the cost with him," Neegard said.

"I knew the other driver saw it on his route every day, and was hoping he would call the facility, as well to ask for it to be replaced," Steinhauer said.

Weather-torn flag replaced by veteran drivers

Neegard agreed with this as his route passes the flag 8x per day Monday-Friday.

“As a veteran it bothered me knowing that there may be veterans that live there and would not be able to do anything about it,” he said.

Steinhaus and Neegard ended up splitting the cost of a new flag for the facility, and it didn’t go unnoticed. Right away passengers on Neegard’s bus commented on how nice it looked. And that’s not all.

“The woman at the facility who I spoke with throughout this process told me over the phone that after it was replaced, she was surprised by how many staff and residents commented on it and were glad to see the new flag,” Steinhaus said.

A new American flag proudly flies high now in Mankato, once more, and both drivers are happy to see it. Neegard wanted to thank Steinhaus specifically for contacting the health care facility and getting the flag.

“It is great when veterans can work together and do something like this that represents our county that we fought for,” Neegard said.



Photos Courtesy of Mankato City Buses

Upcoming Events:

2021 Roadeo

St. Cloud, MN
Details Coming Soon...

2021 Minnesota Public Transit Joint Conference with Wisconsin

Oct. 4-6, 2021
Duluth Entertainment Convention Center
Details Coming Soon...

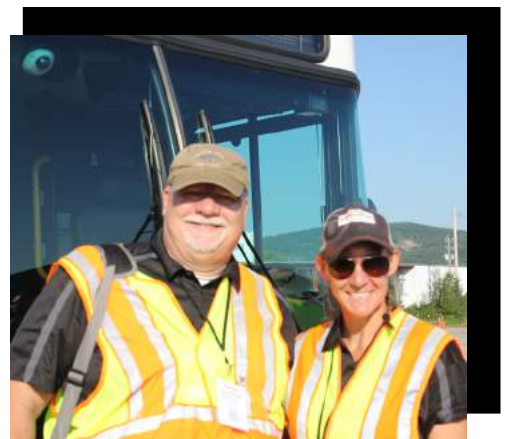
Join the 2021 Roadeo Committee!

The 2021 Roadeo Committee is humbly asking for volunteers to be on our planning committee. Help us to make our event great and fun for everyone.

- Vote on what you want to see in our roadeo.
- Help us brainstorm ideas, meet new sponsors, and more.
- Voice your opinion.
- Great for a resume and experience planning events and working with transit professionals.



Interested? Send us an email at Katie@transportationalliance.com



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Reach out to us here:
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