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National Research Project Seeks Successful Public Transit Practices or Strategies for Improving Mobility and Efficiency in Rural and Tribal Areas

Help is needed from rural and tribal transit providers to identify successful practices and strategies that improve mobility and efficiency for inclusion in a guidebook.

If your organization provides rural public transit or tribal transit services, you are encouraged to complete this survey: https://ndstate.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1FXcgz7Vv30Rpr0

Responses will be accepted through **May 3, 2022**. The survey is being conducted for Transportation Research Board (TRB) Project NCHRP 08-147 / TCRP B-49, Improving Public Transportation in Rural Areas and Tribal Communities. This research project will develop a practical and actionable Guidebook that rural and tribal communities can use to initiate new and enhance existing public transportation and improve mobility. More information on the study can be found on the TRB website at: <http://apps.trb.org/cmsfeed/TRBNetProjectDisplay.asp?ProjectID=4958>

President's Column



It's spring and that means we're busy getting ready for the Bus Rodeo in Austin, Minnesota July 15-16th! Mark your calendars and plan to join us.

Top Reasons to attend the Bus Rodeo:

- Support a fun training event for bus operators from across the state;
- Enjoy the sun on a beautiful Minnesota July day;
- Visit the Spam Museum – this is your big chance;
- Catch up with transit colleagues;
- Support your State Transit Association – MPTA!

Thanks to the hard work of the Rodeo planning committee, this year's event will be better than ever. Please join us in Austin.

It's also the time of year when the Legislature gets serious about completing its work for the Session. We've been meeting with legislators and participating in committee hearings to stress the importance of transit funding – both to match federal dollars and to help transit systems recover from the pandemic. Additional transit funding was included in both the House and Senate versions of the supplemental transportation budget bill. We're also working to have transit funding included in the Capital

Bonding bill. The adjournment date is May 23rd and with no requirement that a new budget bill be passed,

we will need your help in contacting legislators between now and then. **A brief email message can make a big difference in getting the attention of legislators.**

MPTA is also working at the federal level to reinforce the message regarding the portance of transit services for Minnesota and to push for changes to the federal reimbursement rate for volunteer drivers. Rep. Pete Stauber has agreed to author legislation changing the 14-cent per mile rate to the business reimbursement rate as set annually by the IRS.

importance of transit services for Minnesota and to push for changes to the federal reimbursement rate for volunteer drivers. Rep. Pete Stauber has agreed to author legislation changing the 14-cent per mile rate to the business reimbursement rate as set annually by the IRS.

I had the privilege of testifying at a Senate Subcommittee hearing thanks to an invitation from Senator Tina Smith. Senator Smith Chairs the Subcommittee on Housing, Transportation, and Community Development (HTCD). She held a hearing on the bipartisan infrastructure law's effect on smaller cities and rural areas. The hearing examined the benefits of the bipartisan *Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act* for smaller transit systems with a particular focus on how the Department of Transportation can most effectively implement the law in small and rural communities.

Witnesses included:

Mr. Ryan Daniel, Chief Executive Officer, St. Cloud Metro Bus

Mr. Scott Bogren, Executive Director, Community Transportation Association of America

President's Column

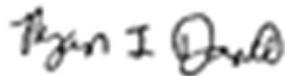
Mr. Baruch Feigenbaum, Senior Managing Director, Transportation Policy, Reason Foundation.

You can watch the hearing and download the written testimony by clicking: <https://www.banking.senate.gov/hearings/advancing-public-transportation-in-small-cities-and-rural-places-under-the-bipartisan-infrastructure-law>

You can rest assured that MPTA is busy working for you throughout the year – both in St. Paul and in Washington, D.C. Your membership allows us to speak out for transit needs. **Please be sure to renew your MPTA membership for 2022 so we can continue to work for you and all of the transit systems in Minnesota.**

Enjoy the spring weather and thank you for all the work you do every day for transit in Minnesota!

Sincerely,



Ryan Daniel
MPTA President



MPTA

MINNESOTA PUBLIC TRANSIT ASSOCIATION

Legislative Report

State

The 2022 Legislative Session is shaping up to be another year in which the House and Senate have very different ideas on how to deal with a state budget surplus and with no requirement that a supplemental budget be passed, it's possible that the session could end in a stalemate.

The state announced in March that the February, 2022 Forecast projected a historic budget surplus – over \$9 billion for the FY22-23 biennium. The legislature passed the budget for this biennium during the 2021 Legislative Session. With the new forecast, legislators and the governor put together proposals for modifying the two-year budget with a supplemental budget. In addition, the even-numbered years are traditionally the year for the legislature to pass a capital bonding bill.

The governor released his capital bonding recommendations as well as his recommendations for a supplemental budget bill. For transit, the bonding recommendations include \$60 million in state funds for development of busway capital improvement projects. The funding would accelerate arterial bus rapid transit (BRT) corridor development including, but not limited to, environmental analysis, engineering, design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction. For Greater Minnesota transit, the governor's recommendation was for \$1 million for capital facilities.

The governor's plan for the budget surplus focuses on increased spending on education and health care along with providing "Walz Checks" (\$500 per person and \$1000 per couple), paying

frontline workers, replenishing the unemployment insurance trust fund and providing some tax cuts for middle class families.

In the Legislature, the House and Senate are miles apart when it comes to a supplemental budget with the GOP-led Senate proposing major, permanent tax cuts and the DFL-led House proposing major spending increases for education, early childhood programs, health and human services and housing.

On taxes, the Republican-controlled Senate passed a \$3.4 billion tax cut, primarily by nearly halving the lowest income tax tier and ending the state's remaining taxes on Social Security income. Senate Republicans are proposing spending about \$1.7 billion on new spending, with the bulk of that going to increase pay for long-term care workers.

The House DFL has proposed \$1.6 billion in tax cuts, which are mainly targeted at lower-income residents and families via child care credits, rental credits and student loan credits. In turn, they have crafted new spending that totals around \$5.4 billion on education, early childhood programs, health and human services, housing and other areas of government.

However, when it comes to transportation, the roles are reversed. The Senate GOP wants to spend a significant amount of general fund dollars on an ongoing basis for transportation while the DFL House has a modest increase of mostly one-time funding for transportation.

The House Senate Transportation Committees have passed their versions of the omnibus transportation budget bill – along party lines. These bills will need to be passed by the full House and Senate later in April.

Legislative Report

MPTA is advocating for both the Senate ongoing funding of \$7 million per year in operating funds for Greater Minnesota transit and the \$10 million of one-time money included in the House bill.

The need to match federal funds from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act is a major component in both the House and Senate bills, but the Senate provides more ongoing funding for this purpose. In addition, the Senate bill includes a statutory dedication of all of the revenue from the sales tax on auto repair parts to transportation. Currently, about half of that revenue is deposited in the state's highway trust fund. MPTA is supporting this dedication with a portion of the revenue dedicated to transit.



Omnibus Transportation Funding	Fund	Senate				House			
		FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
<i>In Thousands</i>									
GM Transit (federal match)	Gen	\$7,000	\$7,000	\$7,000	\$7,000		\$10,000		
Passenger Rail	Gen		-\$500	-\$500	-\$500				
Train to Chicago ops	Gen						\$740	\$1,490	\$2,200
NLX Mpls to Duluth	Gen						\$51,000	\$17,000	\$17,000
Active Transportation	Gen						\$12,500	\$6,150	\$6,150
Safe Routes to School	Gen			\$3,500	\$10,500		\$1,859		
Other Multimodal (fed match)	Gen	\$13,100	\$13,100	\$13,100	\$13,100				
Metropolitan Council		Senate				House			
(Metro Transit Reduction)	Gen		-	-	-				
(Fed match)	Gen	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000		\$20,000		
(Transit Signal Priority planning)	Gen						\$75		
(Zero bus emissions transition)	Gen						\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
(Arterial BRT planning)	Gen						\$500	\$500	\$500
(Transit shelter improvements)	Gen						\$2,000		
(Opt-outs microtransit)	Gen						\$1,300		
(Transit fare temporary reduction)	Gen						\$2,305		

Legislative Report

Overall, the Senate omnibus transportation budget bill provides about \$492 million general fund dollars in the current biennium (FY22-23) and almost \$750 million in the following biennium while the House bill provides \$225 million in general fund dollars for the current biennium and \$100 million in the following biennium.

Work on a Capitol Bonding bill has been moving slowly. The House Capital Investment Committee has had numerous hearings on many bills but the Senate Capital Investment Committee has had only one hearing so far this session to review the governor's recommendations.

Federal

With the passage of a full year FY22 budget at the federal level, the FTA announced formula fund apportionments for various programs including tables by state.

You can see the funding levels for Minnesota by visiting the [Legislative Action](#) page on the MPTA web site.

For the 5311 Rural Area program, Minnesota will receive \$22,315,043. That compares to \$18,218,666 for FY2021.

For the RTAP program, Minnesota will receive \$420,240. For FY21, the state received \$284,386.

Minnesota will receive almost \$3 million from the 5310 program that provides grants for services to elderly and disabled individuals.

For the 5307 program and 5339 program, detailed tables are available at: <https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/apportionments/current-apportionments>

On March 7, 2022, FTA [announced](#) approximately \$1.1 billion available for Fiscal Year 2022 grants to help modernize bus fleets and bus facilities across the country, combining the No-

Low Bus Emissions program solicitation with the Bus and Bus Facilities program solicitation. The combined announcement is the first FTA competitive grant opportunity under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

View the [notice of funding opportunity and webinar dates/information](#).

- Learn more about [Zero-Emission Fleet Transition Plans](#)
- [FY22 NOFO Webinar Presentation](#)
- [Recording of All Applicants Webinar for FY22 Low-No & Bus Program Combined NOFO](#)

The FY22 grant opportunity is part of a larger package in FY22 competitive grant funds to help transit agencies purchase and rehabilitate buses, vans, and related equipment, and build bus facilities.

Instructions for applying can be found on FTA's website and in GRANTS.GOV (funding opportunity FTA 2022-001-TPM-LWNO for Low-No and FTA 2022-002-TPM-BUSC for Buses and Bus Facilities). Complete proposals must be submitted electronically through the GRANTS.GOV "APPLY" function by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on May 31, 2022.



35th Annual Minnesota Bus Rodeo

*Join your friends and colleagues and
support our Bus Operators!*

July 15-16, 2022
Austin, Minnesota



*Visit the MPTA Web Site for
More Information:*

www.mpta-transit.org



**Thank You to
SMART Transit
for Hosting**



Driver Retires from Rainbow Rider after 15 years of Dedication

John Hovel, Transit Driver for Rainbow Rider spent 15 years with Rainbow Rider driving in and around the Alexandria, MN area. When John started at Rainbow Rider after retiring from a previous career – he had never thought he would have driven for Rainbow Rider that long but he thoroughly enjoyed every minute (all 1,659.979.60 minutes, give or take a few) of it. John enjoyed transporting the regular riders on his route the most but also shared that it was hard losing passengers, after getting to know them so well.

Looking back through RouteMatch, as well as using a few mathematical equations (as we didn't start RouteMatch until 2013) here are some of John's stats during his time with Rainbow Rider:

302,620 miles
27,664.66 hours
91,033 passengers



Everyone at Rainbow Rider wishes John the best – he will surely be missed!



MVTA bus service increases ridership to downtown cities



Public invited to take survey, share feedback.

Minnesota Valley Transit Authority CEO Luther Wynder spoke about bus ridership trends, the pandemic experience, enhancements to the system, and future transit needs during a March 8 Eagan City Council work session at city hall.

Wynder said all forms of transportation were affected during the pandemic, and all are working now to prepare for a return to a new normal.

“The MVTA maintained transportation services for essential workers, and life-line transportation services were crucial with economic inequities increased during the pandemic,” Wynder said.

MVTA is making a big push to get out information to reacquaint with commuting by bus to Minneapolis and St. Paul from the south metro at [mvta.com](https://www.mvta.com).

The plans will be to continue adding services to the downtown.

“We are getting close to and by May we are expecting to be at 90% of our pre-pandemic services with ridership and the Express, and we plan to be able to add back trips and accommodate the demand,” said Richard Crawford, MVTA public information manager.

Riding an MVTA can be an affordable

option since it costs \$3 a bus ride or \$6 a day roundtrip commute compared to the high cost of downtown parking and rising gasoline prices.

Taking the bus can also be considered a convenience to find time during the day, as well as seeing the environmental and congestion benefits.

We are really trying to promote the cost savings with gas out of control, and we think that will help boost and return of our Express ridership.” One lingering impact is that a mask mandate on public transportation was extended to April 18 per guidance from the federal Transit Safety Administration.

Express ridership.” One lingering impact is that a mask mandate on public transportation was extended to April 18 per guidance from the federal Transit Safety Administration.

Safety measures that continue to be in place are air purifications systems, partitions between driver and far box, and enhanced cleaning and sanitizing. The MVTA is also working to determine the future of transit with the help of the community.

As the organization works with a consultant to map out future bus routes and examine reverse-commute options, the public is encouraged to take an online survey at <https://www.mvta-swtsystemwideplan.com>. Feedback on future routes will be accepted by April 15.



MVTA bus service increases ridership to downtown cities

Suburbs like Burnsville, Eagan, Rosemount, Apple Valley and Lakeville will see a greater demand for transit service post pandemic, Wynder said, as more workers return to work in the office in lieu of telecommuting.

“We are really trying to see growth with the return to work and the usage at the transit center due to people returning to work,” said Crawford.

The pandemic primarily affected the express ridership in the downtown area. Suburban routes and the ride on demand connect bus routes saw record growth throughout the pandemic.

“We are happy to see the express routes picking up again as we welcome back express riders, especially with gas prices where they are at,” Crawford said.

During the pandemic, suburban local bus routes showed more resiliency than other regional services and provided key connections for transit-dependent riders, said Wynder.

The micro-transit bus service called MVTA Connect has exceeded pre-pandemic levels,” he said.

Ridership peaked in January 2022 with 6,700 riders, Wynder said, and MVTA Connect had a record month-over-month growth from November 2020 through 2022, largely due to continued ridership by transit-dependent populations.

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Eagan service launched in October 2021 within connections to regional transit systems at Eagan Transit Station and Cedar Grove Transit Station and new service to the Minnesota Vikings Training Camp at

TCO Performance Center.

VTA Connect provides more than 1,000 rides per week in Eagan.

MVTA Connect provides more than 1,000 rides per week in Eagan.

In an effort to provide more more and better services, MVTA has two legislative priorities that include increase funding to 6.26 percent and having current and future federal allocations use the 5307 Federal Funding Formula.

During the pandemic, three bills related to CARES Act allowed allowed three grant installments that helped public transit weather the crisis, according to Crawford.

This week the Metropolitan Council distributed the third allocation after it was placed on hold.

This is good news for the MVTA riders and good for suburban transit, Crawford said.

The whole region was allocated \$313 million for its suburban providers, and MVTA which offers transit services in seven cities in Scott and Dakota counties that received a large chunk of that funding.

[MVTA bus service increases ridership to downtown cities | Apple Valley | hometownsource.com](https://www.hometownsource.com/news/mvta-bus-service-increases-ridership-to-downtown-cities-apple-valley)



Metro Transit will pilot on-demand rides this summer in north Minneapolis



LEILA NAVIDI, STAR TRIBUNE

Metro Transit Micro will be powered with five small buses currently used for Metro Mobility. Above, Lolly Lijewski was helped off the Metro Mobility bus by driver Rigoberto Zuniga outside her work in St. Paul in 2017.

Metro Transit plans to launch its first on-demand ride service with a pilot program that will allow passengers to use an app to schedule a shared ride much like they do with Uber and Lyft.

Called Metro Transit Micro, the test program expected to roll out this summer will serve a small area of north Minneapolis and operate much like Southwest Transit's Prime, Maple Grove's My Ride and the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority's Connect. "This adds another layer of service," said Meredith Klekotka, Metro Transit's Shared Mobility Program manager. "This might appeal to users who do not take transit."

Metro Transit will contract with a transportation company to provide the service in a 2 1/2-square-mile area bounded by Interstate Hwy. 94 on the east, Interstate Hwy. 394 on the south, Theodore Wirth Parkway on the west and Golden Valley Road and West Broadway on the north.

"This will be one the smaller zones for micro transit" in the country, Klekotka said. It was designed that way because "we want

buses to get to people quickly so there are low wait times."

Starting small also will allow Metro Transit to evaluate how well the service is received, Klekotka said.

Metro Transit Micro will be powered with five small buses currently used for Metro Mobility, the door-to-door service for people with disabilities who can't use regular transit. Two more buses will be on reserve.

Fares will be the same as those charged on fixed-route lines — \$2 during nonpeak times and \$2.50 when rush hour fares are collected. Seniors and children ages 6 to 12 will pay \$1 per ride during nonpeak times. The service will accept cash, Go-To Cards and other passes. Metro Transit Micro users will be able to transfer to other bus and rail lines at no extra cost, Klekotka said.

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Hours have yet to be set, but the goal will be to match those of the C-Line, the rapid bus line that runs every 10 minutes most hours of the day between downtown Minneapolis and Brooklyn Center.

"It will be a broad time frame," Klekotka said.



Metro Transit will pilot on-demand rides this summer in north Minneapolis

The start of road construction season is not far off, and one of the biggest [projects](#) the Minnesota Department of Transportation will undertake is rebuilding Hwy. 10 through Anoka.

Starting this spring and running for two years, MnDOT and the City of Anoka will repair bridges, rehabilitate pavement, put in roundabouts and install walkways and trails for bicycles and pedestrians between Thurston Avenue and 7th Avenue. Noise walls also will be installed at several locations.

The goal of the \$98 million project is to improve safety and traffic flow, reduce congestion and extend the life of the pavement.

An open house outlining the project and potential traffic impacts, including height restrictions for and some SUVs, will be held from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Green Haven Golf and Banquet Center, 2800 Greenhaven Rd., Anoka.



Rochester awarded \$4.3 million for transit projects

Federal funds will help create Rochester's first city-owned park-and-ride facility and enhance bus transit operations.

March 11, 2022 03:36PM

ROCHESTER – A \$4.3 million federal grant will help Rochester build a new park-and-ride facility on 75th Street Northwest, near U.S. Highway 52.

The U.S. Department of Transportation announced the grant this week as part of the federal Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities program.

Improving the overall passenger experience is a priority for RPT,” Rochester Transit and Parking Systems Manager la Xiong said in a statement announcing plans

This grant will provide a big boost to a program we started last year to improve the condition and accessibility of RPT’s over 700 bus stops. Now we have the funding to take action on those we have identified as a priority.”

The grant was part of \$1.47 billion in federal transit grant funding announced this week, and Rochester is required to provide a 20% local match to the federal funds.

Projects funded with the money are expected to extend into the next three to four years.

Approximately \$1.6 million will be used to construct the planned 75th Street Northwest park-and-ride facility, which will feature a 490-space surface lot and be the first such facility owned by the city.

“Improving the overall passenger experience is a priority for RPT,” Rochester Transit and Parking Systems Manager la Xiong said in a statement announcing plans

<https://www.postbulletin.com/news/local/rochester-awarded-4-3-million-for-transit-projects>



Metro Gold Line, a new kind of transit, is ready for its close up



This rendering from Metro Transit shows the western station of the new Gold Line BRT transit line, scheduled to run from St. Paul to Woodbury starting in 2025, much of it along a dedicated bus transitway, to be built starting later this year.

The Twin Cities are about to get a brand new kind of transit, tried elsewhere in the country but not previously in Minnesota.

Metro Transit's Gold Line has just wrapped up its end-to-end design process and is ready to move into construction and full federal funding — literally the last steps before the rubber hits the road.

Not the rails, mind you. It'll be old fashioned tires and asphalt because the line is a bus rapid transit line or BRT.

But it won't be one of the arterial street BRT lines the Twin Cities have been experimenting with recently, like the A Line that runs mostly along Snelling Avenue, or highway-shoulder lines like the Red Line.

This will be a dedicated, 10-mile line, much of it a bus-only transitway across the east metro area from St. Paul's Union Depot to Woodbury, Minn.

"It's a little bit more like light rail in that respect," said Christine Beckwith, the Gold Line project director.

Yet at a fraction of the price. The project will run about \$505 million — less than a third of what train service costs to build, per mile. It will also be a dedicated transit-only route, permanent enough to justify building major park-and-ride infrastructure and some mixed-use real estate development that's already underway.

The line will have 21 stations and run mostly along Interstate 94. It will include park-and-ride facilities in Woodbury and near 3M. Buses will run every 10 or 15 minutes, and terminate at Union Depot in downtown St. Paul, a few steps from the east end of the Twin Cities light rail system, providing a connection as far west as Eden Prairie, with only one bus-to-train changeover.



"It's definitely not just a commuter line," said Beckwith. "It's much more about connecting everyone in between ... shopping and restaurants. We already see all kinds of development coming in and there's much more planned."

Metro Gold Line, a new kind of transit, is ready for its close up

Metropolitan Council planner Amy Yoder said there are already plans for more than \$1 billion of development along the route, much of it for multi-family housing, in the expectation that people will want to live with easy access to transit.

And Yoder said there's likely to be more, if other projects are any indication: "In communities where there's enough density, and enough resources, that creates kind of a feedback loop, with high-quality transit. As that network builds up, there's more investment."

Yoder said that's still happening, years after the Blue Line and Green Line trains started service.

One of the Gold Line stops in Oakdale has already attracted an apartment development of 71 units, many of which will be designed for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

The engineering and planning work means that the project is ready to go out for construction bids. Utility relocation will likely start this spring, and full-fledged construction of the transitway and stations later this year. Passenger service is expected to start in 2025.

Ramsey and Washington counties are picking up about half the cost, with the Federal Transit Administration and some local contributions making up the rest. Initial estimates are of more than 6,000 daily riders along the line, with ridership expected to grow.

<https://www.mprnews.org/story/2022/02/14/metro-gold-line-a-new-kind-of-transit-is-ready-for-its-close-up>



MVTA announces next level of sanitization



MVTA is installing the latest air purification systems on our buses to provide the safest onboard environment.

New air purification systems on buses targets airborne contaminants

Since the beginning of the pandemic, MVTA has made health and safety of customers and employees our top priority.

With safety at the forefront, MVTA is installing the latest air purification system on our buses to provide the safest onboard environment possible.

MVTA is installing bipolar ionization directly within our existing heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems on MVTA buses.

Bipolar ionization, a process that has been around for decades, actively and continuously treats airborne contaminants. Current purification technologies only trap or reduce contaminants as they pass through an HVAC unit. Bipolar ionization is used to produce high concentrations of positively and negatively charged oxygen ions that have been proven to deactivate airborne contaminants, including bacteria, virus cells, odorous gases, and aerosols.

This process is 100 percent chemical free and completely safe for passengers. Bipolar ionization runs continu-

ously while a bus is in operation, eliminating the need for downtime or interruption of service. Cabin air will be treated working in conjunction with filters and to safeguard air quality,

thus creating the cleanest possible environment for passengers.

“While this new process is next step in onboard safety, MVTA has been leading on safety measures during the pandemic,” said MVTA Fleet Manager Dan Rudiger.

Safety precautions MVTA has taken include the promotion of federal face mask guidelines; new partitions on buses to safeguard riders and drivers; enhanced cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting procedures; and daily changing of air filters. MVTA also has taken additional steps to improve air filtration and sanitation at MVTA transit stations.

For more information, contact MVTA Customer Service by email at mvta@mvta.com or call 952-882-7500.

guidelines; new partitions on buses to safeguard riders and drivers; enhanced cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting procedures; and daily changing of air filters. MVTA also has taken additional steps to improve air filtration and sanitation at MVTA transit stations.

For more information, contact MVTA Customer Service by email



FTA Announces Changes to National Transit Database Census Reporting

FTA is announcing changes to **National Transit Database (NTD)** reporting requirements, which will change to conform with new data to be defined by the Census Bureau following the 2020 Census.

The decennial designation of new urban areas by the Census Bureau has a number of impacts on FTA's grantees. The Census Bureau's calculation of the population and land area for each urban area are direct components of several FTA funding formulas.

Additionally, the Census Bureau's designation of urban areas determine whether each grantee is located in a very large urban area (over 1 million in population), a large urban area (over 200,000 in population), a small urban area (between 50,000 and 200,000 in population), or a rural area (any other area) for purposes of FTA programs.

These classifications in turn determine what funding formulas are used by FTA in apportioning formula grants, what data is used in calculating those formulas, the role of the state DOT in administering FTA's funding, and the types of projects that will be eligible expenses under FTA grants.

Each year, federally supported transit systems report data to the NTD indicating what urbanized areas and rural areas they serve, and how they provide service to those areas.

If the Census Bureau publishes new urbanized area definitions before October 1, 2022, as expected, transit operators will be required to update certain **NTD reporting forms** based on the new Census urbanized areas as an addendum to their annual reports.

FTA will use the updated data from the Census Bureau and the NTD in the apportionment of formula grants for Fiscal Year 2023. If the Census Bureau releases new urbanized definitions on or after October 1, 2022, then FTA will not require the addendum and will instead integrate the new urbanized area definitions into the 2022 NTD reporting process and the apportionment of formula grants for Fiscal Year 2022.

In January, FTA published a proposed **Nation Transit Database Federal Register Notice** detailing those changes and seeking input.

Links:

<https://www.transit.dot.gov/ntd>

<https://www.transit.dot.gov/ntd/ntd-reporting-system-forms>

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/01/19/2022-00851/national-transit-database-census-reporting-clarifications>

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<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDOTFTA/bulletins/3126ed2>



**Federal Transit
Administration**

Metropolitan Council survey finds changes in transit ridership during COVID-19 pandemic

Results will help Met Council improve service, plan lines.

By [Janet Moore](#) Star Tribune



Ashley Asmus, data scientist for the Metropolitan Council, conducted a survey of transit riders on a Route 21 bus last fall.

Results from a survey taken last fall aboard Metro Transit's most popular bus and light-rail routes provide a detailed snapshot of ridership on public transportation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Metropolitan Council's On-Board Survey, which queried some 4,000 riders, [indicates](#) that older men, passengers with disabilities, people earning less than \$60,000 a year and people of color made up Metro Transit's core ridership during the pandemic.

"This will help us understand who's on board and what they're doing," said Eric Lind, research and analytics manager for Metro Transit, during a Met Council Transportation Committee meeting this week.

Transit ridership plunged during the outbreak as remote work flourished and the downtowns of Minneapolis and St. Paul emptied out. But passengers are starting to come back, according to Metro Transit; it reported this week that ridership now has risen to half of pre-COVID levels, compared

with a 70% drop at the height of the pandemic.

The survey has been done every few years since 1990, providing transit officials with information to improve service and plan new routes. But this time around, it has taken on added significance because of COVID-19.

A broader survey will be done this summer and fall by about two dozen tablet-toting surveyors, sampling passengers on routes provided by all transit agencies in the Twin Cities. They hope to collect about 15,000 responses.

The preliminary data indicates Metro Transit retained a greater share of trips made by Black, Hispanic/Latino and Indigenous passengers when compared with similar results from 2016.

"When you look at the overall composition of the ridership from a race and ethnicity standpoint, it's definitely gotten less white, but it's also not terribly different from what it was before COVID," Lind said.

In addition, the share of trips made by passengers with disabilities increased from 11% to 18% between 2016 and 2021.

"The people we are serving on Metro Transit on these routes who identify as having a disability are largely still using our service during COVID," Lind said.

More men stuck with transit during COVID — they made up 57% of passengers, while women comprised 40% — and they skewed older, roughly age 45 and up, according to the survey.

Metropolitan Council survey finds changes in transit ridership during COVID-19

When asked by a Met Council member if fewer women are taking transit due to public safety issues, Council Data Scientist Ashley Asmus said the survey didn't ask passengers about their perceptions of safety. But Asmus said later that academics and other transit agencies have found that women consistently list safety as a top concern when taking public transportation. Men appear more interested in "convenience and speed," she said, citing a 2019 [study](#) from the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

The Met Council's survey results indicate that 40% of 2016 riders making less than \$60,000 annually were retained last year. Results show a smaller share of passengers were employed and that fewer students took transit in 2021.

The survey also focused on the types of trips passengers took. The greatest share were for errands and shopping — "grocery, pharmacy, basic life errands that people who use transit do," Lind said.

The biggest decline from the 2016 survey results was in the number of daily passengers heading to Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, dovetailing with the nosedive that air travel took during the height of the pandemic and the drop in airport workers after shops closed or reduced their hours.

The survey found that morning and evening rush hours, when daily transit ridership used to peak, has flattened out. "The ridership patterns that we've seen have changed from really sharp peaks to a more gentle rise and fall," Lind said.

The preliminary survey results were gleaned from passengers on the Green and Blue light-rail lines, the A and C arterial bus-rapid transit lines, and local routes 2, 3, 5, 6, 10, 18, 19 and 21. The surveyed lines represented about 64% of Metro Transit ridership in 2021.



2021 Transit Report: A Guide to Greater Minnesota's Public Transit Systems



Here is a link to the 2021 Transit Report: A Guide to Greater Minnesota's Public Transit Systems.

[2021 Annual Transit Report
\(state.mn.us\)](https://state.mn.us)

Upcoming Events:

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July 15-16, 2022
Austin, MN

2022 MPTA
Transportation
Conference
October 23-25,
2022
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