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President's Column



The outcome of the 2023 Legislative Session is definitely cause for celebration!

Transit in Minnesota will be receiving significant new funding -

funding that will be sustainable into the future.

The outcome of the session also demonstrates the power of consistent and persistent advocacy efforts. Thanks to our years of pushing for increased funding through many different funding options and MPTA's willingness to work as a partner in coalitions, legislators were ready to act when the opportunity presented itself.

The Transportation Committee Chairs in both the House and Senate were well-aware of the importance of transit service and the need for significant levels of new funding. They were ready to put together and pass a major transportation funding bill. Our coalition partners also helped to get the legislation over the finish line.

Your voice and your advocacy really do make a difference! **Thank you to all of our MPTA members** who support the work of the association in advocating and educating decision makers so that all systems are better able to meet the needs of transit riders.

MPTA continues to work for you in providing the training, updates, critical information and networking that are so valuable to everyone involved in transit.

We're gearing up for the 2023 Bus Roadeo. **This year's event will take place July 21-22, 2023 in Rochester.** Thanks to our host system and Nick Lemmer for all of the work to prepare for this event. I urge you to send drivers to this year's Roadeo which will provide valuable training and great fun for everyone who attends!

This year is also a year where we partner with our colleagues in Wisconsin to host a joint Minnesota/Wisconsin Transit Conference. This year we will be in LaCrosse from October 23-25 at the LaCrosse Center. **This will be the big transit event of the year so don't miss out!**

Some of the topics that will be covered at the conference include:

- Staff Recruitment and Retention
- Transit Funding
- New Technology
- Marketing and Transit Promotion
- Safety and Security
- Microtransit

Also look for more opportunities to hear from MPTA regarding the impact of new state and federal funding and new policies that may impact your system.

We are here to serve you so don't hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns. Thank you for your partnership and your continued advocacy!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ryan I Daniel". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ryan Daniel
MPTA President

Legislative Report

The 2023 Legislative Session started with a bang and never really let up. With DFL control of the House, Senate and Governor's office, legislators worked quickly to pass priorities that had been waiting for years to be enacted, including a major transportation funding bill.

Despite the \$17.5 billion general fund surplus, dedicated fees for transportation – including the motor vehicle sales tax (MVST) – had not been performing as expected. The need for ongoing revenue pushed the discussion in the Transportation Committees toward fee and tax increases that would provide more secure funding into the future.



The largest revenue increase by far is new $\frac{3}{4}$ cent metropolitan area sales tax. Currently, the seven metropolitan area counties levy a sales tax for transportation purposes – an element of the 2008 transportation funding package. Most counties levy a $\frac{1}{2}$ local sales tax and are free to use the funds for transit or roads. The new sales tax will be imposed by the Metropolitan Council and will generate over \$400 million per year with the vast majority of those funds dedicated to transit and active transportation in the region.

For Greater Minnesota Transit, the omnibus transportation funding bill – [Chapter 68](#) – includes a one-time general fund appropriation of \$40 million over the base general fund appropriation to match IIJA funds and allow a temporary reduction in the local match requirement. **The biggest impact is the increase in MVST. The rate of the tax was increased from 6.5% to 6.875% and the distribution of the funds was changed from the current 36/4% split between Metropolitan Area Transit and Greater MN Transit to 34.3/5.7% split.** This provides a significant boost in ongoing, dedicated revenue for transit outside the 7-county metro area. MPTA worked hard throughout the session to highlight the funding challenges that all transit systems face and the need for ongoing funding increases. MPTA also heard from members that going back to the full local match requirement right away was problematic. The legislation that passed will allow systems to ease back to the local match level required before the pandemic.

In addition to the omnibus transportation funding bill, the legislature was able to agree on a historic capital investment bill. After two years without passage of a significant bonding bill, there was a huge amount of pent-up demand. A total of \$2.6 billion was provided in both general obligation bonds and general fund cash for programs and projects statewide. **Transit projects will receive a total of \$82 million through the capital investment bill.**

The 2023 Session proved to be transformational for transit in Minnesota. The significant increases in ongoing, dedicated revenue as well as the one-time general fund increases will give systems needed resources to recover and rebuild better, faster, more accessible transit service for Minnesotans.

A big Thank You to everyone who contacted their legislators and attended Transportation Day at the Capitol. Your voices make a huge difference!

Legislative Report

2023 Legislative Session

Chapter 68 – Omnibus Transportation Budget bill

Transit Appropriations	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27
Greater MN Transit				
Base GF	\$18,201	\$18,201	\$18,201	\$18,201
Maintain Current Service	\$ 77	\$ 123	\$ 123	\$ 123
IIJA Match	\$40,000			
Demand Service Rochester	\$ 200	\$ 50	\$ 50	\$ 50
Active Transpo Grants	\$19,500	\$19,500	\$ 8,875	\$ 9,000
TOTAL Transit	\$58,478	\$18,374	\$18,374	\$18,374
Metropolitan Area Transit				
Base GF	\$32,654	\$32,654	\$32,654	\$32,654
Blue Line LRT	\$50,000			
US 169 BRT Project	\$ 3,000			
Metro Mobility	\$55,976	\$55,976	\$55,976	\$55,976
TOTAL	\$141,630	\$88,630	\$88,630	\$88,630
Ongoing Revenue Increase				
MVST 6.5% to 6.87%				
GM Transit (5.7%)	\$19,750	\$19,996	\$20,718	\$21,508
Metro Transit(34.3%)	\$ 930	\$ 924	\$ 1,002	\$ 1,092
Metropolitan Sales Tax ¾ cent				
Metro Transit	\$300,333	\$465,462	\$479,886	\$493,730

Policy Provisions

Transportation Advancement Account

Funds in the Transportation Advancement Account shall be distributed: 36% to metropolitan counties. Of the funds to metropolitan counties, 17% must be used for:

- (i) Transit purposes, including but not limited to operations, maintenance, capital maintenance, demand response service, and assistance to replacement service providers under section 473.388;
 - (ii) complete streets projects, as provided under section 174.75; and
 - (iii) projects, programs, or operations activities that meet the requirements of a mitigation action under section 161.178, subdivision 4.
- (b) Funds must supplement and not supplant existing sources of revenue.

Active Transportation Advisory Committee

MnDOT must establish an Active Transportation Advisory Committee to make recommendations related to active transportation including safety, education and development programs and Safe Routes to School. The committee must review issues and needs and develop solutions for meeting those needs.

Legislative Report

Regional Bond Authority

The Metropolitan Council may issue bonds in an amount not to exceed \$104,545,000 for capital expenditures in 2023 and 2024.

Metropolitan Governance Task Force

A Metropolitan Governance Task Force is established to study and make recommendations to the legislature on reform and governance of the Metropolitan Council. The study must include an analysis of the costs and benefits of direct election of members to the Metropolitan Council, a combination of directly elected and appointed members to the Met Council, a council of governments that would replace the council; reapportioning responsibilities of the Met Council to state agencies and local governments, adoption of a home rule charter and any other regional governance approaches that are viable alternatives to the current structure.

IIJA Discretionary Match

Grant funds shall be allocated for requests submitted by federal grant recipients, followed by announcement or notification of the federal grant award.

- (1) to a federal grant recipient for match requirements under federal discretionary grants;
- (2) for a transportation-related purpose, including but not limited to a project, a program, planning, program delivery, administrative costs, ongoing operations, and other related expenditures; and
- (3) in an amount not to exceed the lesser of (i) the amount necessary for the federal match requirements, or (ii) \$10,000,000.

Operating and Capital Assistance - Greater Minnesota Transit.

The commissioner of transportation must fund the operating costs of any eligible public transit system under Minnesota Statutes, section 174.24, subdivision 2, such that the percentage of total contracted operating costs paid by any recipient from local sources will not exceed five percent.

The commissioner of transportation must fund 90 percent of the capital costs approved by the commissioner under the public transit participation program under Minnesota Statutes, section 174.24. The recipient must provide the remaining ten percent of the approved capital costs from local sources. This section is effective July 21, 2023, and expires June 30, 2025.

Microtransit Service

From sales tax revenue, the Metropolitan Council must provide financial assistance to replacement service providers under Minnesota Statutes, section 473.388, for improvements related to demand response transit service. The council must make grants in fiscal year 2024 as follows:

- (1) \$2,300,000 to Minnesota Valley Transit Authority for vehicle costs;
- (2) \$3,500,000 to Minnesota Valley Transit Authority for infrastructure and other capital costs;
- (3) \$3,000,000 to SouthWest Transit for vehicle costs, infrastructure, and other capital costs, and
- (4) \$200,000 to Maple Grove Transit for vehicle costs.

Capital Bonding Bill

Greater Minnesota Transit Capital	\$ 3,000,000	GO
Safe Routes to School	\$ 2,400,000	GO
Active Transportation Program	\$ 1,200,000	GO
Met Council Bus Rapid Transit	\$72,000,000	GO
Apple Valley Transit Station	\$ 7,000,000	GF

Mark Your Calendar!
Rochester Bus Roadeo July 21-22, 2023

Join Your Colleagues and Support Bus Operators!

Great Training and Experience for Bus Operators



**2023 MPTA
Bus Roadeo
Rochester, Minnesota
July 21-22**

Visit:

www.mpta-transit.org



Office of Transit and Active Transportation

Office of Transit and Active Transportation (OTAT) Update – May/June 2023

Hello Transit Friends and Partners!

There has been a lot of activity in the Office of Transit and Active Transportation during the last several months and we're excited about what's to come! Thank you to everyone that joined us at the Spring Workshop in St. Cloud in May.

There was a lot of great content, and we are appreciative of all the effort from our partners that helped this event to be successful. We continue to make progress on process improvement initiatives, updates to our website, communication improvements and are hard at work prepping to roll out the 2024 Operating Grant solicitation. Details will be coming soon!

Staffing Updates

Staffing in OTAT has seen a fair amount of change recently and we are excitedly prepping for our newly selected Office Director Sarah Ghandour to join us beginning June 7th. We look forward to introducing you all once she's had a chance to get a little more comfortable in her new role. Our interim Office Director Mark Nelson will be resuming his role as Assistant Office Director at that time, and we are grateful for his willingness to carry us through the transition. In addition to Sarah, OTAT has been delighted to welcome Emily Smoak to our office as the interim Planning Unit Supervisor. This unit has lost some incredible talent this year with promotions of Jake Rueter and Cole Norgaarden to exciting positions outside of our office. Emily is working hard to fill those Active Transportation Planning positions as I type.

Since we last updated, our office has also welcomed new Staff Attorney Chad Hermes and Transit Project Manager Jim Wolter ... both of whom we are happy to have on board. Finally, we will also be sending our Bicycle and Pedestrian Data Analyst Suzy Scotty off to

MnDOT's Metro District on a mobility for which we are very proud of her.

Research Report Update

Research and improvement projects continue to build momentum in our office, and we are pleased to release the final report of the *Understanding Post-COVID Safety Concerns, Perceptions, and Preferences of Transit and Share Mobility Users in Minnesota* research project. This study investigates the perceived safety risks and barriers that might prevent transit and shared mobility services from attracting post-COVID riders in Greater Minnesota. It includes an online survey of Greater Minnesota residents to understand their COVID-related safety concerns and their preferences and perceptions toward existing and potential safety protocols.

The survey results show that, during the post-COVID era, driving alone continues to dominate, but desires to use transit and shared mobility modes remain strong. Lack of access, lack of interest, and lack of available better alternatives jointly affect transit-use behavior. Women, people with COVID concerns, urban residents, online shoppers, and transit users are associated with stronger preferences toward COVID safety measures. People with COVID concerns, online shoppers, and transit users are also associated with preferences toward general transit service improvements. We also find that elderly people, hesitant tech users, and transit-dependent users are unlikely to be positively affected by trip-planning tools and contactless payment technology. Furthermore, income and car ownership predict future transit use, and younger age is associated with more interest in carpooling.

These results help to inform transit and shared mobility providers about what safety and communications strategies will be most effective in bringing users back.

The full report can be accessed here: [Understanding post-COVID safety concerns toward the use of transit and shared mobility in Greater Minnesota | MnDOT Digital Library](#)

Office of Transit and Active Transportation

OTAT Out and About

Several OTAT staff members recently attended the Open House of SMART Transit's new transit facility in Owatonna. This \$2.6 million dollar project includes fabulous and efficient amenities such as drive-through garage stalls, a wash bay, conference room, and offices for staff. The finished project will purposefully and effectively support the transportation needs for SMART in Steele County for years to come.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation was happy to support this project and OTAT staff were delighted to be invited to the special open house event. Please consider inviting our staff of these celebratory events whether you are commissioning a new bus with a ribbon cutting or opening a new facility. We are happy to come out to show our support whenever possible.



THANK YOU MPTA CONTRIBUTORS!

JEFFERSON LINES Your #1 Bus Experience

Celebrating 100 Years

As we begin our second century of service, Jefferson continues to grow as an independent bus company with a focus on convenience and value by connecting our communities, our civic institutions and our transportation partners. Our strong reputation continues to be founded in the belief that every community and every customer deserves convenient and affordable transportation that exceeds their expectations.

From our home in America's heartland, we connect people with places. Our transportation company provides scheduled service and a full range of group travel services. We earn our customer's business by understanding what they value and require when traveling with us. Then we provide service that exceeds their expectations.

Named after the Jefferson Highway, a north-south route that ran from Winnipeg, Canada, south to New Orleans, Louisiana, Jefferson Lines local and long-distance bus company was created to make convenient intercity bus travel accessible for people throughout the nation's heartland.

Founded in 1919, Jefferson Lines has a rich history of civic and philanthropic involvement in the communities it serves. Jefferson Lines continues to be family-owned and operated, and today is managed by the third generation of the Zelle family to actively participate in the business.

IS THIS HEAVEN? NO, IT'S IOWA.

Nestled in the quiet cornfields of central Iowa, Kelderman Manufacturing has been in business since 1970. Founder/President Gary Kelderman started his own small manufacturing company building innovative products for the agricultural market. Gary is a renowned inventor for his work with rubber track systems, corn harvesting attachments, hay raking equipment, and more. Kelderman existed only in the agricultural marketplace for roughly 20 years until Gary's passion for cars/trucks led to the creation of Kelderman Air Suspension. The history of Kelderman Air Suspension first began to take shape when Gary made a common purchase and ended up with a common problem.

In 1990, Gary Kelderman bought a new Cummins Ram right off the showroom floor. He was so dissatisfied with the way it rode that he parked it for several months to develop a solution for the rough riding Ram truck. Those months of fabrication and design ended



TRI-CAP Creates New Service Routes

Tri-CAP Transit recently created three new service routes for their public transportation program. All three routes are geared towards ridership services that are more fluid and flexible in nature to meet the growing unmet need of current and potential riders. Within the first three months, the number of rides has surpassed the original goal and continues to increase weekly.

The three routes include the following:

1. Mille Lacs Workforce/School Based and General Passenger route that runs between Milaca, Foreston, Bock, Princeton, Zimmerman into Elk River. Monday through Friday from 6 am to 6 pm and Saturdays from 8 am – 5pm.
2. Sauk Centre/Melrose Workforce/School Based and General Passenger route that runs between Sauk Center, Melrose/Freeport and surrounding areas Monday through Saturday from 8 am to 5 pm.
3. Sherburne Workforce/School Based and General Passenger route that runs between the Elk River, Big Lake, Becker and into Otsego and Monticello Monday through Friday from 6 am to 6 pm and Saturdays from 8 am – 5pm.

Here is the message I received from the parents whose children are riding on our Sherburne Expansion Route:

I just wanted to express my deepest gratitude for your services. My husband and I have young, adult twins with disabilities. They will not be able to drive on their own, but because of Tri-CAP they are becoming more independent. They are slowly learning to use the bus outside of our community (Elk River)! Thank you for starting the pilot program. They recently have been going to Big Lake to visit their grandparents. While they stay the weekend they still are able to go back and forth from their jobs in Elk River as well. We are excited for them to eventually travel to Monticello to the theater, since Elk River's theater has recently closed. The option to go to Otsego is their next endeavor, to pick up their medication from Coborn's and to shop at Target.



Thank you so much from our whole family! You are making a big difference!

***Paul & Deanna Salfrank
(Ashton & Austin's parents)***

FTA Recognizes MVTA on Earth Day



Federal Transit Administration Recognizes Minnesota Valley Transit Authority's Work to Reduce its Environmental Footprint in Earth Day Celebration

Thursday, April 20, 2023

WASHINGTON –The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration (FTA) today recognized the exemplary efforts of the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA) for its plans to reduce carbon emissions to combat climate change. MVTA's work, part of FTA's [Sustainable Transit for a Healthy Planet](#) initiative, garnered the Twin Cities, Minnesota-area transit agency an award during FTA's second annual Earth Day event.

MVTA received the Most Transformative Plan Award for its [2023 Sustainability Plan](#). The plan provides a road map for expanding agency resources and capabilities to achieve carbon reduction goals throughout every aspect of the transit system, starting with a comprehensive public input and planning process. It highlights strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve energy efficiency as part of its commitment to a sustainable and equitable future for residents in the seven communities it serves.

"Transit agencies across the country are greening their fleets, hardening critical infrastructure, and transitioning their workforces to reduce the disproportionate impacts of a warming climate on their communities," said **FTA Administrator Nuria Fernandez**.

"Minnesota Valley Transit Authority is taking a holistic approach to reducing its footprint, and I congratulate their award-winning efforts."

Created in June 2021 to help advance President Biden's ambitious greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction goals, FTA's Climate Challenge calls on transit agencies to develop strategies to reduce emissions, such as converting fleets to electric buses, making facilities more energy efficient, and generating power through renewable energy sources. Although the transportation sector is the leading emitter of GHGs in the United States each year, the transit industry has long been at the forefront of reducing emissions.

A total of 222 transit agencies from Maine to Hawaii participated in the FTA Climate Challenge. Throughout the year, FTA helped participants advance their goals with technical resources, targeted listening sessions, and peer exchanges.

FTA encourages transit agencies interested in advancing their sustainability and climate goals to sign up for phase 3 of the [Sustainable Transit for a Healthy Planet](#) initiative.

Federal Funding for Grand Rapids Transit Project



SENATORS KLOBUCHAR, SMITH ANNOUNCE SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT IN GRAND RAPIDS TRANSIT PROJECT

[May 31, 2023](#)

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith (both D-MN) announced over \$9.3 million in federal funding to support a free, on-demand transit service in Grand Rapids, Minnesota. The investment will be used to expand the current [goMARTI](#) (Minnesota’s Autonomous Regional Transit Initiative) vehicle fleet with electric vehicles and automated driving systems (ADS).

The expanded fleet of vehicles will be wheelchair accessible and will expand service to communities that lack access to reliable, convenient transportation.

“Investments in our transportation systems are a down-payment on the long-term economic success of our state and ensure Minnesotans can safely and reliably get to where they need to go,” said Klobuchar. **“This federal funding will help meet Grand Rapids’ growing transit needs and provide accessible, efficient, and modern transportation options for residents and visitors alike.”**

“Each day, transit systems connect Minnesotans to their jobs, schools, grocery stores and countless other opportunities – all while reducing traffic congestion and pollution,” said Smith, Chair of the Senate Transit Subcommittee. **“This funding will help modernize transit options around Grand Rapids with electric vehicles and new automated driving technology. It’s a big win for residents who have lacked access to affordable, modern, and accessible ways to get around.”**

The federal funding is made possible through the Advanced Transportation Technology and Innovation (ATTAIN) Program, which awards grants to deploy, install, and operate advanced transportation technologies. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which both Klobuchar and Smith helped pass, amended and helped fund the program. These projects are intended to help demonstrate how emerging transportation technologies, data, and their applications can be effectively deployed and integrated with existing systems to pro-

Legislature Approves Safety Funds for Metro Transit

Lawmakers approve Metro Transit safety money to combat violent attacks

KARE11 News

May 22, 2023

MINNEAPOLIS — The [final transportation bill](#) passed by the Minnesota House and Senate this weekend includes funding and initiatives for Metro Transit safety, following a string of high-profile crimes near light rail stations in recent months. The [latest incident](#) occurred on early Saturday morning, when police say a fight led a man into the path of an oncoming train at the Warehouse District station.



Through a metro sales tax increase, the transportation bill includes funding that can be devoted to public safety. Specifically, the spending measure also allocates \$2 million for mental health and addiction intervention teams and gives Metro Transit broader authority -- beyond just police -- to penalize people who don't pay their fares aboard trains and buses.

Since Metro Transit currently operates an "open system" without turnstiles, Gov. Walz proposed nearly \$8 million to add these barriers at three platform locations. A spokesperson for the Senate DFL said that while the final bill does not specifically include this money, some of the funding allocated by the legislature could theoretically be used by the Met Council for additional barriers, if they choose.

"At this time, we have to deal with the reality that the system isn't closed," Metro Transit Police Chief Ernest Morales III said. "Let me be clear about this: Turnstiles serve as a barrier. If I have criminal intent, I'm still going to get by that barrier and commit my crimes. Enforcing fare evasions, enforcing property crimes, but more importantly enforcing the code of conduct -- that will minimize and curtail this negative behavior."

According to Morales III, who [took over the job earlier this year](#), "Group A" serious crimes jumped 66% during the first quarter of 2023 on the Metro Transit system. However, he said that 38% of those crimes were related to drugs.

Morales III said that Metro Transit has been holding outreach events, including one at Mall of America, to deal with issues of addiction, homelessness and mental health.

"Our initiatives are to get police officers out there. Omnivision is very important, but more importantly when we do come across these individuals," Morales III said, "I'm not going to criminalize homelessness. I'm not going to criminalize chemically dependent individuals. But we will get them the resources they need."

2023 Minnesota/Wisconsin Public Transportation Conference

October 23-25, 2023

LaCrosse Convention Center

Register Today!

Your organization will be recognized with signs and announcements at all of these events throughout the conference:

- Monday Welcome Reception
- Tuesday Breakfast
- Tuesday Expo Luncheon
- Wednesday Breakfast
- Wednesday Closing Luncheon

Contribution Levels



PLATINUM LEVEL

\$7,000

- Includes four representatives
- Special recognition at Plenary Sessions throughout the conference
- Prominent logo and company description in program
- Recognition in conference packet
- Prominent display on signs
- Prime booth location in the expo hall

GOLD LEVEL

\$2,000

- Includes three representatives
- Special recognition at Annual Meetings and Welcome Reception
- Prominent logo and company description in program
- Recognition in conference packet
- Prominent display on signage at Events and Registration Area
- Prime booth location in booth and multiple attendee registrations included

SILVER LEVEL

\$1,500

- Includes two representatives
- Prominent display in conference packet
- Company displayed on all signage at events
- Company recognized in conference program
- Better booth location and multiple attendee registrations included

BRONZE LEVEL

\$600

- Includes one representative
- Company recognized on all signage at events
- Company listed in conference program
- Company recognized in conference packet

2023 Minnesota/Wisconsin Public Transportation Conference

**Sponsorship and Expo Opportunities —
Get Great Exposure for your Company!**



Vendor Registration Rates

- \$600 Regional / National Vendor or vendor with vehicles
 - \$350 per vehicle (35 feet or larger)
 - \$200 per vehicle (under 35 feet)
 - \$400 Statewide (MN) Vendor

Vendors With Vehicles are Provided an 8-foot table and two chairs

Other Vendors Receive a Standard Booth Size 10' x 8' with 8-foot table

Expo Fees Include All Costs for Vendor Representatives

Electric service and other amenities need to be ordered directly from the River's Edge Convention Center

Attendee Rates

- \$ 75 October 23
- \$150 October 24 or October 25
- \$275 Full Registration October 23-25

*\$25 cancellation fee

No Refunds After October 14th

October 23-25, 2023
LaCrosse Convention Center

[Register Today!](#)



Understanding COVID Safety Concerns in Greater Minnesota

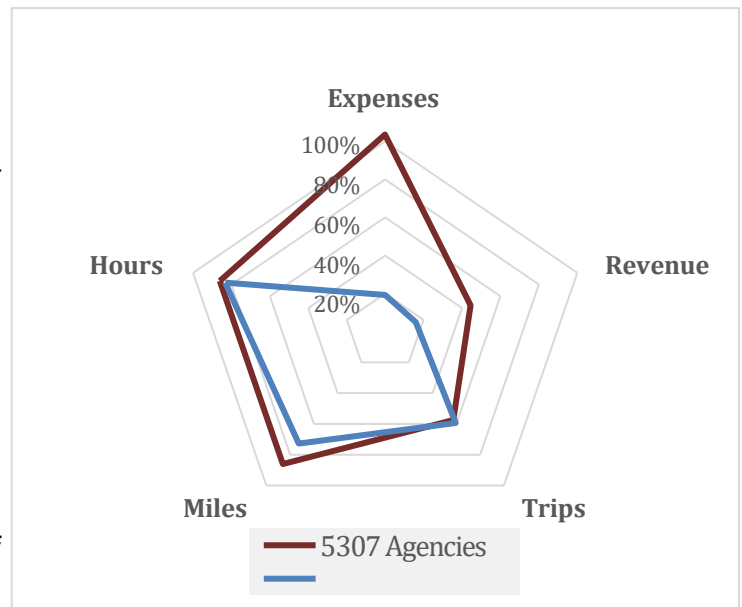
[Understanding post-COVID safety concerns toward the use of transit and shared mobility in Greater Minnesota](#)

Yingling Fan, Principal Investigator Humphrey School of Public Affairs University of Minnesota

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic and widespread social distancing measures have dramatically reduced the use of public and shared transportation services, leaving transit and shared mobility providers with massive revenue shortfalls. This research study investigates the perceived safety risks and barriers that might prevent transit and shared mobility services from attracting post-COVID riders in Greater Minnesota.

It includes an online survey of Greater Minnesota residents to understand their COVID-related safety concerns and their preferences and perceptions toward existing and potential safety protocols. The survey results show that during the post-COVID era, driving alone continues to dominate but desires to use transit and shared mobility modes remain strong. Lack of access, lack of interest, and lack of available better alternatives jointly affect transit-use behavior.



Women, people with COVID concerns, urban residents, online shoppers, and transit users are associated with stronger preferences toward COVID safety measures. People with COVID concerns, online shoppers, and transit users are also associated with a preference toward general transit service improvements. We also find that elderly people, hesitant tech users, and transit-dependent users are unlikely to be positively affected by trip planning tools and contactless payment technology. Furthermore, income and car ownership predict future transit use. Younger age is associated with more interest in carpooling.

The study results help to inform transit, shared mobility providers, government agencies, and transportation demand management (TDM) organizations regarding what safety and communications strategies will be most effective in bringing back users. It is worth noting that about 40 percent of our survey respondents choose more frequent and faster services above all other service improvements. A few COVID-19 safety measures and occupancy info are ranked higher on the preference scale because of overall respondent interest and interest from key demographics. As COVID-19 or other infectious epidemics become less of a concern among potential transit riders, frequent and fast service will be an important strategy in attracting riders.

FTA Seeks Public Comment on Updates to the National Public Transportation Safety Plan

FTA Seeks Public Comment on Updates to the National Public Transportation Safety Plan

As part of continuing efforts to enhance transit safety for transit workers and riders across the country, FTA published [proposed updates](#) to the National Public Transportation Safety Plan in the [Federal Register](#). The National Public Transportation Safety Plan will be open for [public comment](#) for 60 days, concluding on July 31, 2023.

The National Public Transportation Safety Plan is FTA's primary guidance document to improve transit safety performance on all federally supported public transportation systems and includes best practices, tools, technical assistance, voluntary standards and other resources. FTA's proposed updates align with the U.S. Department of Transportation's goal to make our transportation systems safer for all.

The proposed updates would replace the original plan published in January 2017 and incorporate Bipartisan Infrastructure Law requirements.

While the National Public Transportation Safety Plan is not a regulation and does not impose mandatory requirements, it creates a blueprint for transit agencies to adopt stronger safety measures. FTA updated the plan to include voluntary minimum safety standards and recommended practices for improving public transportation safety.

Links:

[Federal Register Notice: National Public Transportation Safety Plan](#)
[National Public Transportation Safety Plan Docket](#)
[Proposed Updates to the National Public Transportation Safety Plan](#)
[National Public Transportation Safety Plan](#)
[National Public Transportation Safety Plan \(published in 2017\)](#)



**Federal Transit
Administration**

NLX Receives \$194.7 million in Omnibus Transportation Bill

The Northern Lights Express (NLX) is a proposed passenger train between Minneapolis and Duluth, making four round trips each day. It will also stop in Coon Rapids, Cambridge, Hinckley, and Superior, WI.

The train will operate at speeds up to 90 miles per hour. A one-way trip between the Twin Cities and Twin Ports will take about 2½ hours. This is comparable to driving. It may be faster during rush hour and in bad weather.

Amtrak will run the trains using tracks owned by BNSF Railway.

Under the current plan, NLX would use 152 miles of existing BNSF Railway track and connect Target Field in downtown Minneapolis to the St. Louis County Depot in Duluth. Stops are planned in Coon Rapids, Cambridge and Hinckley, as well as Superior, Wisconsin.

Sections of track would be built alongside the main route so that passenger trains could move out of the way as freight trains move through. Passenger trains would travel about 90 mph along the route. Four round trips are planned each day.

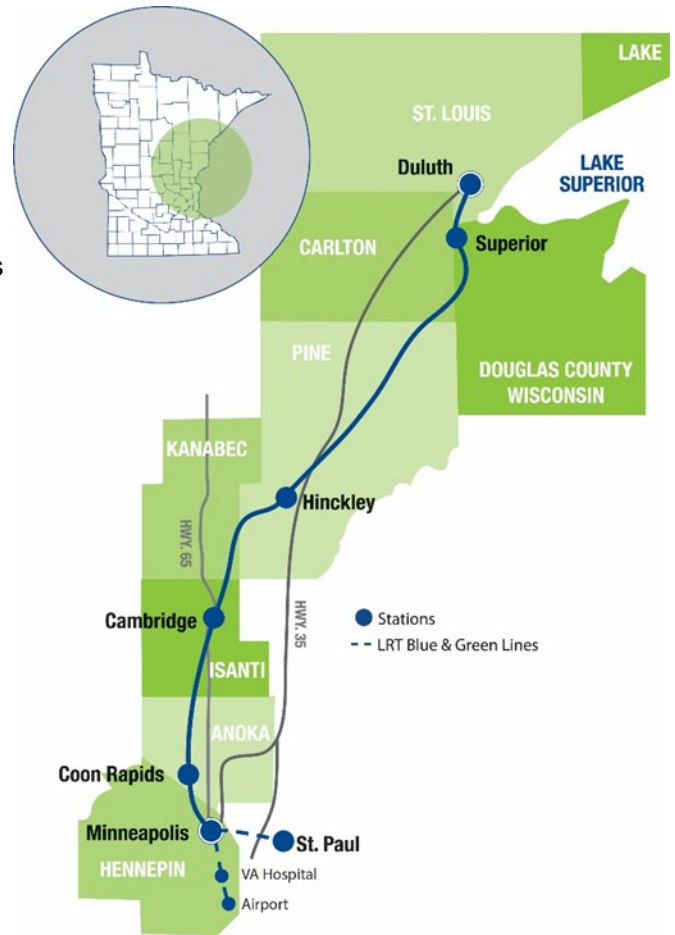
The Federal Railroad Administration completed an environmental review and approved the service development plan in early 2018. In May 2023, the Minnesota Legislature appropriated \$194.7 million for the project. These funds provide the 20% local match needed to pursue federal grants to complete design work, construct the project and purchase locomotives and passenger cars for the service. Federal matching grants are expected to pay for roughly 80% of the project.

The estimated cost for construction is \$592.3 million. This includes final design work, track and signal upgrades to accommodate higher train speeds, new and longer sidings to improve traffic flow, grade crossing improvements to increase safety, new train stations and the expansion of existing stations. The Federal Railroad Administration and MnDOT will share the construction cost.

The estimated annual operating cost is \$18.9 million.

During the first few years of service, revenue from rider fares will average about \$12 million per year and should increase over time. Other Midwest regional trains offering three or more round trips per day cover about 75% of their operating costs.

The \$12 million from rider fares will cover about 63% of the operating costs. The State of Minnesota will fund the rest of the operating costs, about \$6.9 million. Federal grants are available to help pay for the first six years of operation. This will help reduce the cost to Minnesota while ridership grows.



Upcoming Events:

2023
Bus Rodeo
July 21-22
Rochester

Minnesota/
Wisconsin Public
Transit
Conference
October 23-25
LaCrosse, WI

Contact Us:

Have a story for us?

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