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President's Column



It's 2023 – a new year with new opportunities for transit statewide! MPTA will be speaking out throughout the year for all transit systems and the challenges we all face with

increasing costs, increasing demands and fewer resources.

I would like to thank the members of the Board of Directors for MPTA:

- Luther Wynder, MVTA
Vice President
- Daryn Toso, Transit Alternatives
Secretary
- Nick Lemmer, Rochester Transit
Treasurer
- Mike Klauda, North Central Bus Sales
Vendor Rep.
- Ted Nelson, Prairie Five Rides
- Alan Herrmann, SmartLink
- Tiffany Collins, Central Community
Transit
- Rod Fournier, Duluth Transit Authority
- Matt Fyten, SouthWest Transit
- Nick Leske, United Community Action
Partnership
- Brandon Nurmi, Arrowhead Transit

These dedicated Board members provide valuable insight and assistance in the work we do at MPTA on your behalf. Working together, we can all assist each other and the Minnesotans who rely on transit service every day! If you are interested in serving on the Board, please let me know. It's a great way to make a difference for your colleagues.

I urge you to renew your membership in MPTA for 2023 so we can continue to advocate with decision makers and provide training and other services for our members.

Transportation Day at the Capitol is an important event that brings transportation advocates to St. Paul – one day out of the year – to educate legislators about the importance of transit and transportation. We had a great group of transit professionals participate on March 1st and hear first-hand what the plans are for transit in Minnesota. They met with local legislators to help them understand how transit service works in their districts. Thanks to everyone who helped to advocate for transit funding!

We're also 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!

As always, we want to hear from you! Please don't hesitate to contact me or any of the MPTA Board members with questions, comments or suggestions.

Our goal for 2023 is to make progress for you. Thank you for your partnership. I look forward to seeing you soon!

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

VP Kamala Harris stops in St. Cloud to discuss electric vehicles

Vice President Kamala Harris was in St. Cloud February 9th to discuss the future of public transportation.



Every year, gas-powered buses add millions of tons of pollution to our atmosphere, which further accelerates the climate crisis," Harris said. "But there's a solution to all this – and that solution is parked right over there — these buses. Electric buses."

NFI Group announced the VP would visit the New Flyer of America's facility in St. Cloud to "highlight" the current administration's commitment to zero-emission public transportation.

New Flyer, "the largest heavy-duty transit bus manufacturer in North America," according to the company, is the manufacturer of the Xcelsior CHARGE NG, a zero-emission vehicle that is primarily battery-electric, and "the most advanced electric bus on the market today."

Harris called the vehicle a "model of American innovation."

"Minnesota, this is a transformative moment," she said. "The climate crisis has presented a historic challenge to our nation and to the world. It also presents a historic opportunity to create new jobs; to drive new innovation; to generate prosperity in all communities."

Harris also thanked state leaders for their work to combat the climate crisis, calling Governor Tim Walz a "true champion" and "partner" to the Biden administration on the issue.

"As you all know, earlier this week, he signed a law that will make Minnesota's electricity carbon-free by 2040. That's a big deal," she said.

This visit is part of a post-State of the Union "blitz," where President Biden and his Cabinet scheduled visits to 20 states this week.

But this wasn't the first visit to St. Cloud by a current member of the Biden administration. In 2009, then-Vice President Biden spoke from the same facility.

"At the time, here at this plant, you were producing cutting-edge, hybrid transit buses, and then-Vice President Biden said, and I'll quote, 'This company is an example of the future.'"

She added, "Here in St. Cloud, you are not just building better buses, you are building a better America."



Legislative Report

The 2023 Legislative Session is going full steam ahead with an unprecedented number of bills introduced and major legislation passing in the first weeks of session.

The Transportation Committees have been focused on the need to match federal dollars authorized under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) as well as equity in transportation and the funding shortfall the system faces.

With a historic \$17.6 billion budget surplus forecast for the coming FY24-25 biennium, there is a great deal of competition for increased funding. Transportation has traditionally struggled to get attention with all of needs in education, health care, housing and other areas.

Governor Walz presented his budget recommendations for both the two-year operating budget and the capital investment budget. For transportation, his plan involves shifting general fund dollars to transportation for four years. Here are the details for transit:



	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27	
Metro Transit (Metro sales tax 1/8th cent)	\$60.046M	\$93.196M	\$96.272M	\$99.448M	\$348.962M
Capital (regional bonds)	\$51.5M Bonds	\$53M			\$104.5M
General Fund transfer	\$29.2M				\$ 29.2M GF
GO Bonds	\$72M GO				\$ 72M GO
Greater MN Transit Increase	\$17M	\$17M	\$17M	\$17M	\$68M
Capital	\$1.2M GO				

The governor's budget would increase transit funding in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area through the implementation of a new sales tax collected in the seven-county region dedicated to transit operations and capital of 1/8 of one cent. In addition, the budget calls for a one-time appropriation of \$29.2 million to assist in the purchase of electric buses. For Greater Minnesota transit, the governor recommends an increase in general fund appropriation of \$17 million per year for four years.

For the Capital Investment budget, the governor recommends \$72 million in general obligation bonds for Bus Rapid Transit lines in the Twin Cities area in addition to authorization for \$104.5 million in regional bonds issued by the Metropolitan Council. The capital recommendations also include \$1.2 million in GO bonds for projects in Greater Minnesota.

MPTA is working to convince legislators to provide more stability and certainty for Greater Minnesota operating funds by making the \$17 million increase permanent. Our goal is secure ongoing, dedicated funding that systems can plan for and rely on in the future. In addition, we know that bus costs have skyrocketed so an additional \$10 million in one-time funds would help with the increased costs for buses and facilities.

Legislative Report

The House and Senate Capital Investment Committees are moving much more quickly than in previous years to pass a capital bonding bill. The even-numbered years are traditionally considered the years for passage of a major capital bonding bill, but in 2022 no agreement was reached on a bill and so no capital investment package was passed.

The legislature is making up for last year with a bill that has similar dollar amounts and similar projects from the hearings and discussion last session. The capital investments have been separated into a bill with General Obligation bonds and a bill with cash.

For transit, both the House and Senate are proposing:

Greater Minnesota Transit Capital	\$3 million GO bonds
Active Transportation	\$1.2 million GO bonds
Safe Routes to Schools	\$2.4 million GO bonds
Metropolitan Transit Bus Rapid Transit	\$72 million GO bonds

At the federal level, Congress passed a budget for federal fiscal year 2023 that funds transportation at the levels authorized under the IIJA. The Federal Transit Administration just posted the [2023 allocations](#) for formula funds.

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration (FTA) also announced the [availability of nearly \\$1.7 billion](#) to support state and local efforts to modernize aging transit fleets with low- and no-emission buses, renovate and construct bus facilities, and support workforce development. Made possible by the President's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which included historic funding to support public transportation, this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is for **two programs** (No/Low Emission vehicles and Buses and Bus Facilities) that help transit agencies replace old buses, provide good-paying jobs, improve transit affordability and reliability, invest in community health and environmental justice, and contribute to the President's goal of net-zero emissions by 2050.

Instructions for applying and eligibility information can be found on and in GRANTS.GOV (FTA-2023-002-TPM-LWNO; FTA-2023-003-TPM-BUS). Complete proposals must be submitted electronically through the [GRANTS.GOV](#) "APPLY" function by April 13, 2023.

MPTA continues to work at the federal level on the issue of mileage reimbursement rates for volunteer drivers. We appreciate the support of Representative Pete Stauber who serves on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for his willingness to author legislation removing the 14-cent per mile reimbursement rate and allowing drivers to receive the IRS business rate.

You can learn more about MPTA's legislative work on our [web site](#) and through our updates.



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

Hello Transit Friends and Partners!

Welcome to 2023 and another exciting year of delivering public transit service in Minnesota! In the Office of Transit and Active Transportation (OTAT) we're hard at work prepping for our next State TAC meeting (virtual or in St. Cloud on March 24th), planning for the 2023 Spring Workshop (in person in St. Cloud on May 1st and 2nd), and working on projects that will improve our processes to make life better and easier for all of us.

Hopefully everyone saw the message in late January that announced the formal departure of our previous Office Director Tori Nill to a position in MnDOT's district 7. Mark Nelson will continue as our interim Office Director until the position is filled permanently following a competitive recruitment process.

In other staffing news, we're excited to welcome Professional Engineer Mitch Kiecker to our Active Transportation Planning staff! Mitch will work alongside Hannah Pritchard on pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure design guidance, plan reviews, research, and demonstration projects. Existing mobility opportunities in OTAT include Fay Simer filling in behind Kirby Becker as he continues his mobility with MnDOT's Office of Aeronautics and an open supervisor mobility position with our Planning Unit as Melinda Estey has transitioned to full time work as our Training and Communications Program Coordinator.

OTAT has also been extremely grateful for the work of Barbara Schreiber during this past year as she worked in our office on a mobility assignment as a Transit Project Manager (TPM) with the southeast region of the state. We continue to work toward permanently filling that open TPM position and Implementation Unit Supervisor Matti Gurney will take care of that region until then. Our office will also be posting a position for a Transit Planner, and we look forward to that person working on the next iteration of the Greater Minnesota Transit Investment Plan.

In the next few months, we'll have some opportunities to gather and discuss current projects, challenges, and proposed improvements at both the TAC meeting and the Spring Workshop. Teams are prepping agendas as I type, and your input is valued and appreciated at every step of the process. Please feel free to reach out to your TPM or anyone on our OTAT team if you have thoughts or ideas on topics to cover. One topic we're looking forward to reviewing with you is our proposed solicitation schedule for this and future years, and opportunities to review and provide feedback will be available via an upcoming webinar, the March TAC meeting, and potentially again during the Spring Workshop.

We are also in the process of revamping our communication processes and putting more efficient pathways in place to facilitate 2-way conversations that will improve our information flow. Recognizing that a lot of work happens in the Greater Minnesota Transit Community daily, our goal is to make our processes easy and efficient so that everyone is clearly aware of industry requirements and able to focus on

delivering service to improve the lives of Minnesotans and our guests.

Office of Transit and Active Transportation

You will see work happening diligently toward the goal of streamlining and simplifying during the coming year, and while we will need your help and guidance during this process, we will do our best to make the impact to your workload as minimal as possible.

Finally, thank you all – sincerely – for the work that you all do in your various capacities that makes an incredible difference in the lives of the people we serve. You make a difference, and we appreciate you and value the opportunity to work with you.

Respectfully submitted by Melinda Estey, February 15, 2023

Do you have questions about how things work at MnDOT, what our thoughts are for current or future projects, or anything else? Let me know what you're interested in learning about, and we can tackle those in future editions of In Transit! melinda.estey@state.mn.us

CONSULTING SERVICES PROJECT FAQ

OTAT has arranged and will pay for consultant services for our Minnesota transit partners.

FAQs

How do we ask for assistance?

The type of assistance we heard transit operators need and consultants can help with fall into 4 broad categories:

- Planning services, e.g., route or service analysis
- Marketing research, e.g., needs assessment
- Operational Support, e.g., labor/wage analysis
- Capital project support, e.g., scoping, or long-term plan development

We have an online [survey form](#) available 24/7 to help consider the assistance you need. Or talk with your TPM and ask them to let us know you need assistance.

All we need to know to get started is what type of assistance you need and who to talk to for more information (name, email, phone). Any option of communicating that information will work, just be sure it gets to OTAT and eventually to Glenn Gadbois.



Office of Transit and Active Transportation

What happens once I make a request for assistance?

STEP 1: understand the assistance needed. We currently have the ability to meet all the requests received so far, but this could change if we receive more requests than we can handle. For now, when a request is received, OTAT will communicate the request to the consultants, and they will initiate a “discover meeting” to better understand what is needed.

STEP 2: get the requested work into a Task Order. Once the request is analyzed, it will either be added to an existing task order or created into a new one - whichever makes the most sense. That process will include internal review to make sure the right people are involved and that work isn't being duplicated. A final review of the request will ensure the requestor's needs are being met, and finally, OTAT will make a request to MnDOT's Consulting Services Office to process a new task order, which takes approximately 4 to 6 weeks.

STEP 3: get to work delivering the assistance needed. Once we have a task order, consultants will contact you to schedule a kick-off meeting to begin providing the assistance you need and value.

Will this cost me anything?

Yes: some of your time and your active participation. The consultant's work is only as good as the guidance and engagement of the client however, there will be no financial obligation for the requestor. OTAT will pay all bills associated with the task order. Contact Glenn.Gadbois@state.MN.us immediately if there is ever a request for payment from the consultants or if you have concerns about the process or consultant performance.

When will we see results from this project?

We anticipate the first round of Task Orders representing dozens of requests for assistance will be finalized by mid-April. Consultants will begin arranging kick-off meetings that week focusing on urgent items first. Each project will have different times, but we expect to see preliminary results (i.e. wage/labor analysis) in weeks not months on some projects. We will create a more robust website space to report on stories, results, products, and playbooks from these projects. We can also develop articles for MPTA's newsletter and other channels.

If you have additional questions, please send them to Glenn.Gadbois@state.MN.us. We will get you the best answer we have and publish it online too.

Dashboard View (Current state as of February 2023)

13 agencies are asking for assistance, and they have **53 requests that will be bundled into 8 task orders.**

7 requests for system-level service analysis

7 requests for assistance with facilities and 7 requests for assistance with procurement

5 requests for assistance with Technology research, planning, and 6 requests for assistance with procurement.

5 requests for Marketing assistance

6 requests for Labor Market Analysis

4 requests for assistance with facilities and several more with assistance related to procurement.

4 requests for financial planning assistance including research for new revenue.

3 requests for policy reviews and update assistance.

7 requests for general assistance with procurement. OTAT management has initiated internal reviews before deciding how if and how this consulting contract might contribute to solution

We look forward to keeping you updated and sharing results as we proceed with this service.

Submitted by Glenn Gadbois ... February 2023

THANK YOU MPTA CONTRIBUTORS!



What started a project between Ralph Braun and his father in their garage has evolved over the last five decades to become a transformative mobility company that has brought independence to millions. This year marks our 50th anniversary, and we're celebrating by both looking back at how far we – and mobility transportation – have come and looking forward to our bold future.

Built to Trust is more than a promise to our customers—it's also a mantra for our hundreds of BraunAbility employees. Famously, our team is trained with the instruction to build our vehicles like they were building them for their mothers, brothers, grandfathers, and cousins. It's the last thing they hear before they join the line with their coworkers and it's the most critical part of their training. So whether you purchase a new handicap van, a used handicap van, or a van that's equipped with a BraunAbility wheelchair lift, your mobility product was touched by dozens of hands that made it the absolute best for their family—[which is why we say you join the BraunAbility family when you drive it home.](#)



Our continuous efforts in researching trends allow us to react quickly to changing needs and deliver the products and services that get millions of riders to their destination every day. We manufacture passenger seating for city service bus, light rail and motorcoach, and continue to lead the industry with solutions that provide value and durability. Our products are on the road and rail each day in every major North American city, and we're continually striving to exceed expectations.

You can trace our successful track record to a few simple principles - we listen to our customers, engineer the appropriate design, and continue to provide service and value long after installation. It's our mission to constantly set and maintain the industry benchmark for durability, reliability and customer satisfaction. American Seating product solutions provide exceptional value because they are engineered and built to last.

Central Community Transit Director Leaving Transit

Central Community Transit Director Tiffany Collins to leave west central Minnesota organization

West Central Tribune Feb. 10, 2023

Tiffany Collins, the transit director for [Central Community Transit](#), has decided to leave the organization to pursue another job opportunity. Collins submitted her resignation to the Central Community Transit Joint Powers Board.

An emergency meeting of the board is scheduled for 10:30 am. Feb. 17 at the CCT Willmar Office to discuss the steps the board will need to find Collins' replacement. Collins said she plans to stay until about mid-March.



Collins has a long history with Central Community Transit and its predecessor KAT. She started back in 1999 as the second in command at what was Kandiyohi Area Transit. She was [promoted to transit director](#) in January 2009, taking over from John Groothuis.

Collins led the transit organization through its merger with [Renville County in 2015](#) and [Meeker County in 2016](#). Lately CCT has been facing challenges regarding [driver shortages](#) and lack of new buses to replace an aging fleet.

CCT provides public transportation for all ages across the three counties using both a fleet of buses and a volunteer driver program.

From the MPTA Board

Thank You Tiffany of all your support and work for transit systems over many years! We will all miss you! Best of luck in your new career.



Still without a new CEO, SouthWest Transit widens search

Still without a new CEO, SouthWest Transit widens search

By [MARK WEBER](#) January 31, 2023 Updated: January 31, 2023
Eden Prairie Local News

Two job-search finalists have said “no” to serving as chief executive officer of SouthWest Transit, but the local agency is confident it will have a new leader about mid-2023 or shortly thereafter.

That’s because the SouthWest Transit Commission, its governing body, has decided to cast a wider net for CEO candidates, going beyond the transit industry to public-sector leadership overall.

The commission agreed Jan. 26 to get help from Baker Tilly US, a national firm with an office in St. Paul, for an amount not to exceed \$26,500. It’s the second search firm the commission has used since former CEO Len Simich departed at the end of March 2022. Two finalists identified last year by the search firm KL2 Connects declined the job during negotiations on work agreements.

The commission has also reconfigured its CEO Search Committee, according to Matt Fyten, SouthWest Transit’s chief operating officer and interim CEO. PG Narayanan will represent the City of Eden Prairie on the panel. He is a city council member and vice-chair of the commission.

Simich had served as SouthWest Transit’s CEO since 1997. He informed the commission of his retirement plans in 2021, and the agency subsequently hired KL2 Connects to begin the nationwide search for a replacement.

Simich continues to serve in a limited capacity, most recently as SouthWest Transit’s representative, in efforts to bring commercial development to the SouthWest Village transit station in Chanhassen.

SouthWest Transit was created when the suburbs of Eden Prairie, Chanhassen, and Chaska decided in 1986 to opt out of the Metropolitan Transit Commission, as allowed by state law, and create their own transit system under a joint powers agreement. Carver has since been added to the group.



Headquartered in Eden Prairie, the agency’s services include transportation to downtown Minneapolis and the University of Minnesota, as well as the popular on-demand ride service known as SW Prime. It has a bus fleet of 92 vehicles and a 2023 budget of \$16 million.

Rochester rapid-transit plans are moving forward

Rochester rapid-transit plans are moving forward

Federal funding decision expected in May as city continues planning with proposed 2026 launch.

By [Randy Petersen](#)

February 06, 2023 06:23 PM

ROCHESTER — Planning for Rochester's proposed bus rapid transit system through downtown is 60% complete as the city maneuvers through final federal requirements.

"From what they tell us, it's going well," Rochester Transit and Parking Systems Manager la Xiong said Monday.



Dubbed "Link Rapid Transit," the specialized public bus service will run a 2.8-mile route connecting a current Mayo Clinic parking lot on Second Street Southwest near Cascade Lake to a site near the intersection of Third Avenue Southeast and Sixth Street.

Xiong said final design is slated to be completed in December, but work must wait for an environmental review, which is required as part of the city's request for federal funding to cover more than half the cost of creating the new system.

Rochester Strategic Initiatives Director Josh Johnsen said federal funding and other requirements also put needed land acquisitions on hold for the city. He said work on obtaining needed rights-of-way will likely start in November and take nearly a year to complete.

In the meantime, a variety of work is slated to continue as the city waits for final approval of an anticipated \$84 million in federal funds to create the system, which has an estimated price tag of nearly \$143.4 million.

The remaining funding is expected to come from dedicated Destination Medical Center funds.

Xiong said the city should know whether the federal funding is approved by May, with a year delay for the grant agreement to be finalized.

The May deadline coincides with when the city will need to order a dozen 60-foot electric buses to operate the system, which will run 18 hours a day seven days a week, providing fare-free rides for all users.

Xiong said the buses, which will differ slightly from the city's two existing electric buses, will require 18 to 24 months for delivery, with a six-month period needed for testing and putting them into operation.

In addition to purchasing the buses, the city will need to hire a variety of new staff to operate the dedicated system, which will provide fare-free rides under a [20-year contract with Mayo Clinic](#).

Metro Bus CEO honored with prestigious safety award

ST. CLOUD —Metro Bus CEO Ryan I. Daniel was named as one of the [National Safety Council's Safety+Health Magazine's 2023 CEOs Who Get It](#).

He began his career in the public transportation industry as a Bus Operator for New York City Transit Authority (MTA). Along the way, he spent four years at Washington Metro Area Transit Authority (WMATA), as a Manager of Bus Service, and two years as a Training Manager for the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA). For the past nine years, Mr. Daniel has been CEO of the St. Cloud Metropolitan Transit Commission, also known as Metro Bus. His experiences at all levels of transportation give Mr. Daniel unique insight into all things related to safety.

Boards served on:

National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine—Transportation Research Board (TRB), Board of Directors for the Transit Commission, 2016 to present.

St. Cloud Regional Airport Authority Board,
Vice Chair, Board of Directors, January 2022 to present.

CentraCare St. Cloud Hospital Board of Directors, MN
Vice Chair, Board of Directors, June 2018 to present.

In addition, he is the new President of the Minnesota Public Transportation Association (MPTA), where he has been on the Board of Directors since 2019.

Mr. Daniel has a deep commitment to the health and wellness of all stakeholders at Metro Bus, especially the employees who serve, and the citizens themselves of the Central Minnesota communities. The safety of Metro Bus employees is the top priority for him and his leadership team. Under his leadership, Metro Bus has greatly upgraded safety measures leading to vast improvements of its over-the-road safety record, which began prior to the pandemic. In 2016, new safety improvements were initiated which reduced preventable accidents by 55% from 2017 through 2021. Development and implementation of the Metro Bus Safety Program was the key management factor in this improvement.



Mr. Daniel's efforts have led to Metro Bus becoming increasingly proficient in accomplishing our mission to provide safe, reliable, and friendly transportation services to the communities of St. Cloud, Sauk Rapids, Sartell, and Waite Park. Metro Bus will continue to work tirelessly towards the aspirational goal of zero accidents!

MnDOT launches greater Minnesota trip planner for public transit

The [Minnesota Department of Transportation](#) (MnDOT) has launched a multimodal trip planner for rural Minnesota.

The goal of this pilot project is to bring trip planning and payment technology for daily trips to southern and western Minnesota, including Rochester and Mankato, a news release from MnDOT said.

People can download the free phone app Transit to plan for and — in some cases — pay for public transit and intercity bus trips. Travel and route information went live on the app on Wednesday, March 1.

"This pilot with Transit app focuses on rural areas because this technology has not yet been made available outside of Minnesota's big cities," said Elliott McFadden, who serves as MnDOT's Greater Minnesota Shared Mobility program coordinator. "The project will be the first to bring the latest technology to make it easier to plan and take trips in many communities in Greater Minnesota."

This pilot will run through April 2024 and is funded by grants from the Federal Transit Administration at a cost of \$1.9 million. Researchers with the University of Minnesota will study this pilot project to help determine if the technology should be scaled to the rest of the state.

The app Transit is used in more than 300 cities around the world. It allows users to see route and travel options for public transit and connecting services, with some transit companies offering in-app ticketing so people can pay for their fares electronically.

The following are the transit agencies participating in the pilot project:

Brown County Heartland Express
Central Community Transit
Jefferson Lines (by mid-March)
Land to Air
Morris Transit*
Mankato Transit System*
Minnesota River Valley Transit
Prairie Five RIDES
Rochester Public Transit (by the end of March)
Rolling Hills Transit*
SMART*
The Otter Express*
Tri-CAP*
TRUE Transit
UCAP Community Transit

The transit agencies listed above with asterisks have in-app ticketing available.

Metro Transit expands on-demand pilot program

Last fall, Metro Transit launched a one-year, on-demand ride pilot in parts of three north Minneapolis neighborhoods, and because the service has been so well-received, it's now adding all or parts of three more.



Metro Transit Micro, which went live Sept. 10, will offer expanded service starting Monday. It operates much like suburban services, including SouthWest Prime, Plymouth Metrolink's Click-and-Ride, Maple Grove's My Ride and the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority's Connect.

"The goal is to expand mobility choices, especially for low-income areas and communities of color," said project manager Victoria Dan. "We hope to see a boost in overall ridership and see the true potential on how well it can perform."

Riders use an app or call a phone number to request a ride. A small bus similar to those used for Metro Mobility — the door-to-door service for people with disabilities unable to use traditional transit options — is sent to their location and takes them to their destination anywhere in the [service zone](#).

Micro riders pay the same fares as those taking other Metro Transit bus lines or trains: \$2 during off-peak times and \$2.50 when rush-hour fares are collected. Seniors and children ages 6 through 12 pay \$1 per ride during off-peak times. Micro riders can transfer to other bus and rail lines at no extra cost.

In the five-month period that ended Jan. 31, Metro Transit Micro provided more than 6,800 rides throughout the service zone bounded by Interstate 94 to the east, Interstate 394 to the south, Theodore Wirth Parkway to the west and Golden Valley Road and West Broadway to the north.

With five buses circulating throughout the 2.5-square-mile area covering the Near North, Bryn Mawr and Harrison neighborhoods, wait times have been short, adding to the service's growing popularity, Dan said. The average time from request to pickup has been about 6 minutes, she said.

Community feedback and interest from North Side organizations led to expanding into the Willard-Hay, Jordan and Hawthorne neighborhoods, Dan said. The borders for the ride zone in the south and west will remain unchanged but will expand to 34th Avenue on the north end and to the area along the Mississippi River north of Broadway on the east end.

"We have existing resources to serve even more trips," Dan said. "We hope people will use the service to connect to the fixed route network."

As for additional expansion, that's still to be determined, Dan said. This spring, Metro Transit will conduct an in-depth evaluation to find out exactly who is using the service and why.

Ridership rebounded by 17% in 2022, Met Council says



After dealing with a significant drop in ridership during the COVID-19 pandemic, Metro Transit saw a nice rebound last year.

According to the Metropolitan Council, overall ridership on Metro Transit, Metro Mobility, Transit Link and contracted routes increased by 17% in 2022. That equates to more than 42 million rides last year compared to just shy of 36 million in 2021. “We have some good news with where we sit with ridership,” John Harper, the manager of contracted transit services for

the Met Council, said. “Every number is a positive number, an increase in ridership.”

The Met Council says the numbers offer some hope for additional growth in 2023 after a tough few years during the pandemic.

When COVID-19 hit, ridership plummeted as offices switched to virtual work and schools moved online. Last spring, Metro Transit said its ridership was only at around 52% of what it was before the pandemic but those numbers continue to rise steadily.

When including other transit providers — such as Minnesota Valley Transit Authority, SouthWest Transit, Maple Grove Transit, Plymouth Metrolink and the University of Minnesota — the Met Council says more than 45 million rides were provided last year, which is a 21% increase from 2021. Metro Mobility ridership also improved by 7% and is at over 80% of its pre-pandemic levels while bus rapid transit (BRT) routes now account for around 10% of regional rides.

While the rebounding ridership numbers are good news, the Met Council notes that it’s still adjusting to how the pandemic changed the way people work, shop, socialize and travel. However, with nearly two full years of data to study, the Met Council is adjusting to better allocate its resources and improve its service.

“We are advancing a vision that’s greater than simply returning to where we were before the pandemic,” Lesley Kandaras, the interim general manager for Metro Transit, said. “This is about moving forward to understand and meet the evolving needs of our customers and the communities we serve.”

As it continues that work, Metro Transit is also working to add new drivers.

After starting the year around 200 operators short of its budgeted total, the agency has started increasing wages and hosting hiring events. Those interested can find more information [online](#).

The Met Council says its other objectives for 2023 include finding ways to improve safety and expanding partnerships that connect riders to services.

Biden-Harris Administration Announces Availability of Nearly \$1.7 Billion to Modernize Fleets and Deploy Clean Transit Buses Across America

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration (FTA) today announced [the availability of nearly \\$1.7 billion](#) to support state and local efforts to modernize aging transit fleets with low- and no-emission buses, renovate and construct bus facilities, and support workforce development. Made possible by the President's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which included historic funding to support public transportation, this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is for two programs that help transit agencies replace old buses, provide good-paying jobs, improve transit affordability and reliability, invest in community health and environmental justice, and contribute to the President's goal of net-zero emissions by 2050. The first year of these programs under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law allocated funding that will nearly double the number of no-emission transit buses on America's roads.

"The historic funding opportunity we are announcing today is helping communities across the country purchase new buses, which will cut harmful pollution, and train workers for good-paying jobs" said **U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg**. "With these new, cleaner buses, Americans will have better options to get where they need to go and people everywhere will benefit from cleaner air."

As part of FTA's commitment to build a diverse and skilled public transportation workforce and help upskill workers for new bus technologies, five percent of each grant for zero emission projects must be used for workforce development and training. FTA encourages workforce development plans to be developed in partnership with workforce representatives and the use of registered apprenticeships.

This funding opportunity also gives priority consideration to projects that advance environmental justice under the Administration's Justice40 Initiative, and to projects that will catalyze a broader shift towards low- and zero-emission options across the transit sector.

"Buying new buses, including many vehicles that use new technology to fight climate change, will promote cleaner, faster, and safer rides as we move toward a better future," said **FTA Administrator Nuria Fernandez**. "Thanks to the strong commitment of this Administration to not leave anyone behind, we will be able to connect more people in their communities and improve the reliability of transit service."

FTA's [Low or No Emission \(Low-No\) Program](#) helps transit agencies buy or lease U.S.-built zero-emission and low-emission transit buses along with charging equipment and supporting facilities. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides \$5.5 billion over five years for the program – more than six times greater than the previous five years of funding. For Fiscal Year 2023, approximately \$1.22 billion will be available for grants under this program.

FTA's [Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program](#) supports transit agencies in buying and rehabilitating buses, vans, and related equipment and building bus facilities. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides nearly \$2 billion over five years for the program. For Fiscal Year 2023, approximately \$469 million for grants will be available. Both programs support buses that reduce air pollution and help meet President Biden's goal of net-zero emissions by 2050.

Instructions for applying and eligibility information can be found on and in [GRANTS.GOV](#) (FTA-2023-002-TPM-LWNO; FTA-2023-003-TPM-BUS). Complete proposals must be submitted electronically through the GRANTS.GOV "APPLY" function by April 13, 2023.



**Federal Transit
Administration**

Upcoming Events:

2023
Bus Rodeo
July 21-22
Rochester

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

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