



MINNESOTA PUBLIC TRANSIT ASSOCIATION
[2026 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA](#)

Adopted by the Board of Directors on February 13, 2026

Founded in 1975 the Minnesota Public Transit Association (MPTA) is the only statewide coalition of transit systems and transit advocates. MPTA speaks out for transit systems and transit riders across the State of Minnesota. MPTA advocates for high-quality transit service that is accessible and available to everyone. Our mission is to support transportation alternatives that improve the quality of life for people in communities large and small, urban, suburban, and rural and includes biking, walking, and rolling infrastructure.

STATE FOCUS

[Capital Investments](#)

Initiative:

\$5 million for Greater Minnesota Transit Facilities

Support:

- \$75 million for Bus Rapid Transit/Busway capital improvements
- \$1 million for active transportation across the state
- \$1 million for safe routes to school across the state

[State Funding](#)

- **Oppose any efforts to further reduce the General Fund appropriation to transit and seek opportunities to reinstate funds.**
- The Greater MN Transit general fund cut is \$11 m each year for the FY26-27 biennium (total reduction is \$22 million). With the local match requirement increasing in FY27 (calendar year 2028) and less than expected revenue from MVST/MVLST, transit service is at risk of being cut. General fund dollars are critical for maintaining current bus service.
 - The metropolitan Council general fund cut is \$61.4M in FY26-27 biennium and \$24.8M in FY 28-29 biennium.
- Support legislation to ensure that suburban transit providers receive an equitable distribution of Metro sales tax.

[Policy](#)

- Allow use of state funds for transit facility improvements to protect rolling stock investment, regardless of original building funding.
- Oppose any state mandates for low-no emission buses.
- Support MnDOT report to the legislature every two years, identifying the biennial cost of meeting the Greater Minnesota transit operating and capital needs by 2030.
- Defend the existence of the suburban transit agencies against any efforts to eliminate suburban transit agencies and consolidate transit operations under Metro Transit, effectively removing local control and potentially diminishing service quality and responsiveness for suburban communities.
- Monitor for dynamic transportation option proposals, to ensure that any new services are not paid for from existing budgets for current transit service.

- *Three Reports to watch for:*
 - * *Met Council, due March 1, 2026, conducting an analysis of high-subsidy routes in the regular route system*
 - * *MnDOT Transportation Network study, improving access on TNC vehicles to individuals with mobility challenges*
 - * *BRT mode analysis, high subsidy analysis, due January 15, 2026.*

Volunteer Driver Reimbursement Legislation

- Volunteer Driver Reimbursement – authorize the IRS to set the charitable rate for driver volunteer at the same rate as the business mileage rate. The charitable rate has never changed and still 14 cents per mile reimbursement while business rate just increased to 72.5 cents per mile, January 2025. This low reimbursement rate is a financial burden and disincentive to volunteer drivers.
- MPTA will continue to co-chair the Volunteer Driver Coalition which is working to expand support across the nation.

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FEDERAL FOCUS

Transit Funding

- MPTA strongly advocates that the upcoming surface transportation authorization continues to fund public transit through the Highway Trust Fund's Mass Transit Account. This support is vital for passengers and public transit systems across the entire United States, from urban centers to rural communities. We urge increased funding levels for both formula-based and discretionary core public transit grant programs to keep pace with inflation.
- The federal share for all projects financed with FTA formula-based public transit funds should be consistent at 80 percent, regardless of whether a specific project is for “operating” or “capital” purposes. This change **will not affect the federal transit spending bottom line** and allow decisions to be made by states and urban transit agencies in recognition of state and local laws, needs and circumstances.

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FHWA STBG Flex Funding

- Continue to allow flexing of FHWA funding.

Regulatory Reform

- State-managed transit programs should comply with either state or federal regulations, not both.
- Whenever possible, FTA should defer to states’ laws, rules and policies in the oversight of state-managed transit programs. FTA should accept states’ standard certifications and assurances as evidence of compliance with applicable federal regulations.
- Streamline NTD reporting for smaller agencies and limit the scope of data review inquiries.
- FTA should allow urban transit systems with as many as 100 vehicles in maximum service- instead of 30- to be NTD "reduced reporters," and should identify ways to reduce the burdens placed on these reduced

reporters so that they do not need to follow a 188-page manual when submitting their data eliminating unnecessary reporting requirements for hundreds of smaller urban, rural and tribal transit providers.

- All proceeds from the sale of transit vehicles where there is no federal financial interest should remain with the transit agency for future capital program use
- Currently, Transit agencies may retain no more than \$10,000 of sale proceeds from disposing of vehicles that no longer have any federal financial interest, allowing reinvestment back into transit system capital programs, including local match for purchase of a new or replacement vehicle. Current guidance discourages transit agencies from disposing of old transit vehicles that have reached the need of their useful life and have no remaining federal financial interest.
- FTA should pre-certify Buy America compliance of commonly purchased vehicles
- Simplify all forms of procurement for smaller transit agencies through templates, checklists, and threshold changes
- Allow for NEPA certification to occur after the purchase of land, similar to FHWA rules
- Transit agencies can acquire the property they need for their facilities in ways that align with other DOT agencies and save taxpayers' time and dollars while still assuring compliance with NEPA and other requirements.

Spare Ratio

- Post Covid many systems ended up with excess stock due to constraints from budgets, ridership levels, and workforce shortages that resulted in service reductions.
- Spare Ratio Formula should be removed and reasonableness based on local standards implemented.
- Increase system applicability from greater than 50 to less than 75/100.

5339 Formula

- The current ratio of discretionary funding in Section 5339 (b) and (c) ensures that the nation's mid-size, small-urban, tribal and rural transit systems have **ample opportunity to compete** for vital bus replacement and facility investment. Efforts to shift these funds to a formula (i.e. the Section 5307 formula) would dramatically reduce the amounts of Section 5339 (b) and (c) for the nation's smaller transit providers.
- In urban areas of 200,000+ population, 7.6 percent of their FTA formula-based public transit funds are allocated on the basis of performance. Currently **only 3 percent** of formula-based transit funds are allocated to urban areas with populations less than 200,000 on the basis of performance. This share, under the "Small Transit Intensive Cities" formula should be **increased to 5 percent**.
- Under current law, each state receives \$4 million per year in formula-based Section 5339 (a) funds for bus and bus facility projects that can be used in rural or in urban areas at the discretion of the state. Even if every state were successful at receiving Sec. 5339 (b) competitive grants from FTA for their statewide bus procurements, the 15 percent of that program's funds reserved for rural projects is inadequate to the total need for timely replacement of existing buses, renovation and construction of bus facilities, and needed expansion of many rural transit fleets. **The amount provided to states through the "national distribution" of Section 5339 (a) funds should be increased to \$8 million per state and \$2 million per territory at minimum.**

Oversight and Compliance Reviews

- FTA oversight and compliance review process should only be applied to those transit agencies directly receiving more than \$100 million in federal financial assistance, or when indicated through an objective process for identifying high-risk grants or grantees
- FTA triennial and oversight reviews should be desk reviews for smaller transit agencies unless otherwise warranted due to major capital projects and/or other concerns

CDL Testing Requirements

- FMCSA should make its existing waiver "under the hood" CDL testing for school bus drivers permanent and should extend this same waiver to include public transit bus drivers.
- States can better comply with federal requirements to test and license CDL candidates in a fashion appropriate to the vehicles they will drive, and both transit agencies and school bus operators benefit from entry-level training and CDL licensing that provides them with appropriately skilled and qualified new drivers.
- ELDT exemption for public transit providers/passenger endorsements.

Regulation Support

- MPTA supports the proposed Rewarding High Intensive Performance Small Transit Act (RHIPSTA)
 - RHIPSTA expands the performance incentive for the small-urbanized cities (under 200,000 population) that qualify under the Small Transit Intensive Cities (STIC) program.
 - It provides additional benefits to high performing cities that meet 3 or more of the performance criteria including:
 - Granting direct recipient status for FTA funding.
 - Extends availability of bus formula funds from 3 years to 5 years.
 - RHIPSTA also protects the integrity of STIC data by preventing the allocation of large urban transit data to surrounding smalling urban areas for the purpose of accessing STIC funding.
 - This reduces the funding allocation from the legislatively intended STIC target communities.

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