

Featuring:

President's Column

P.2

Legislative Report

P. 3 - 5

Bus Rodeo July 19-20

P. 6

MN&WI Transit
Conference

P. 7

Federal Update

P. 8

Transit System News

P. 10-15



2025 Legislative Session

*It's Over! Learn More About the Impact
for Transit in Minnesota*

President's Column



It's summer and our thoughts turn to the 2025 Bus Roadeo! We're headed to Virginia July 18-19.

Thank You to our wonderful Roadeo Planning Committee led by Kirk Kuchera, and our host

system - Arrowhead Transit. Brandon and Dominick and team worked hard to put together a great event for our bus operators. It will be a fun weekend!

We're also busy planning for this year's joint **Minnesota & Wisconsin Public Transportation Conference October 6-8** in Rochester, Minnesota. We always appreciate the opportunity to partner with our colleagues in Wisconsin and learn from each other. With all the changes going on in the world of transit, this will be an important event for getting the latest news, updates and training sessions.

Of course our events are also focused on building new relationships with other transit professionals. The Roadeo and the Transit Conference bring people together in a fun environment where you can get to know people who understand exactly what you're going through!

Another big upcoming event is the Washington, D.C. Fly-In September 16-18. Some of our MPTA board members will be in attendance meeting with Congressional members and staff about the importance of federal transit funding. We continue to work with other groups at the national level to change the reimbursement policy for volunteer drivers.

The 2025 Legislative Session went into overtime when legislators could not finish the budget by the adjournment date of May 19th. A one-day special session was held on June 9th to finish all the budget bills including the transportation budget bill.

This was a difficult year at the legislature. From some initial disarray and confusion to tight votes with 100 GOP members and 101 DFL members to a special session as legislators faced a significant future budget deficit and then the tragic shooting of legislators on June 14th. Our condolences and heartfelt sympathies go out to the Hortman and Hoffman families during this sad time.

While the projected budget deficit made for very tough decisions regarding where to cut general fund dollars, transit in Minnesota will continue to benefit from the work done in 2023 to provide new, ongoing revenue. We anticipate that the impact of the new budget on transit operations will be manageable in the short-term. In the long run, we will need to continue to speak out, stand up and fight for transit dollars to maintain, improve and grow our systems.

You can read more about the details of the legislative session in the Legislative Report.

Thank you so much for membership in MPTA! You give us the resources we need to speak out for you.

Sincerely,

Ryan Daniel
MPTA
President



Legislative Report

2025 Legislative Session

The 2025 Minnesota Legislative Session finally ended in June rather than May, but agreement was reached without getting close to the July 1st start of the next fiscal year and the threat of a partial government shutdown.

The main work of the legislature this year was to pass a two-year budget. The forecast for the general fund is rather gloomy. While the February forecast predicted a \$456 million surplus for fiscal years 2026-2027, the long-term structural deficit for fiscal years 2028-2029 grew to nearly \$6 billion — roughly \$800 million more than previous estimates in 2024.

Legislators and the governor agreed to not only set a budget for the FY26-27 biennium, but to work toward reducing the \$6 billion deficit projected for the FY28-29 biennium by agreeing to budget cuts in the out years.

The governor's budget recommendation included a reduction of \$8 million per year in general fund dollars for Greater MN transit while acknowledging this level of funding "will result in less grants, planning support and technical assistance for Minnesotans." The general fund appropriation for Metropolitan Area Transit was reduced by approximately \$32 million per year in the governor's budget, a 100% reduction in the appropriation to the Metropolitan Council for rail operations. The Council would instead rely on use of reserves and other revenue sources for light rail and commuter rail, such as the regional transportation sales tax enacted during the 2023 legislative session.

MPTA communicated throughout the session with lawmakers, letting them know the importance of maintaining transit funding from the general fund in addition to other revenue sources available in the transit assistance account, as systems continue to need time to get back to the traditional local match levels.

The general fund targets set by legislative leaders required a reduction of \$115 million for the transportation budget in FY26-27 and a reduction of \$133 million for the FY28-29 biennium. The transportation omnibus budget bill - [Chapter 8](#) - was finally passed on June 9th.

For the FY26-27 biennium, the target of (-\$115 million)was achieved mainly through:

- Metro Transit General Fund appropriation (\$61.406)
- Greater MN Transit General Fund appropriation (\$22M)
- Reduction in auto parts sales tax dedication to HUTDF (\$11.284)
- Reduction in General Fund transfer to Active Transportation (\$11M)
- Reduction to General Fund allocations to Dept. of Public Safety (\$9M)

For the four-year period of FY26-29, the larger deductions are:

- Reduction in auto parts sales tax dedication to HUTDF: (\$94.7M)
- Reduction in General Fund appropriation to Metro Transit: (\$86.2M)
- Reduction in General Fund appropriation to GM Transit: (\$22M)
- Reduction in General Fund appropriation to Public Safety: (\$18M)
- Reduction in General Fund transfer to Active Transportation :(\$11M)

The reduction in funding for Greater MN Transit was thankfully reduced to just two years instead of the four years proposed and is a one-time cut as opposed to a cut in the base funding. The reduction in general fund dollars for Metropolitan Area Transit was smaller than the reduction proposed by the governor and should not impact service levels. A last-minute attempt to shift local sales tax dollars that are currently allocated to metro counties to the Metropolitan Council was not included in the final bill.



Legislative Report

Transportation Policy Provisions

The Omnibus Transportation Budget bill also included some important policy provisions impacting transit.

Statutory Reserve Fund Balance

The Legislature placed in statute that the Greater Minnesota transit account of must not be more than five percent of the total annual transit assistance fund balance from the previous fiscal year. Due to the projected growth in reserve funds from the 2023 funding increase, additional funds will be available for distribution that would otherwise go into the reserve account and mitigate the general fund cuts, perhaps \$3-\$4 million a year in 2025 based on the current forecast.

- 2024 - \$3.502M
- *2025 - \$7.955M
- *2026 - \$7.272M
- *2027 - \$6.721M
- *2028 - \$6.484M
- *2029 - *5.177M

*Forecast

Wheelchair accessible vehicle supply and availability TNC

Directs MnDOT to conduct a study on supply and demand of transportation network company vehicles for individuals with mobility challenges. Specifies study objectives, sets public engagement requirements, and requires a legislative report by February 15, 2026.

NLX Funding – came close to being terminated.

Funding for the Northern Lights Express survived, however the funding was cut by \$77 million in the special session transportation agreement. About \$108 million in state funding remains for the Northern Lights Express which will allow them to continue lobbying for federal funding. (In 2023 The Legislature had passed a transportation bill that included nearly \$195 million in funding for the Northern Lights Express (NLX), the passenger rail line that would connect the Twin Ports with the Twin Cities.)

Metropolitan Council Bonding

Authorizes the Metropolitan Council to issue bonds or other obligations for some regional transit capital expenditures \$54M in FY26 and \$56.2 million in FY27.

Transit Service for Certified Disabled Riders

Extended the 2023 pilot program to a permanent program, allowing riders with disability or health conditions to ride regular route bus and light rail for free.

Bus rapid transit alternate mode analysis.

Directs the Metropolitan Council to conduct an analysis of alternate transit options in the corridor of the Blue Line light rail transit extension project. Requires a legislative report by January 15, 2026.

Metro Mobility forecast analysis.

Directs MnDOT to arrange for an analysis of Metropolitan Council forecasting practices for Metro Mobility costs and service. Requires a Legislative report by February 1, 2026.

High-subsidy transit service analysis.

Directs the Metropolitan Council to conduct an analysis of high-subsidy routes in the regular route transit system. Requires a legislative report March 1, 2026.

Legislative Report



BONDING BILL - [Chapter 15](#)

The capitol bonding bill came together in the last few days before the Special Session was called.

The \$700 million bill was smaller than the average bonding bill, reflecting the projected reductions in the general fund. Legislators agreed not to include specific projects but focus on programs that fund water, state buildings, university buildings and transportation infrastructure projects.

MPTA joined a coalition of transportation organizations in submitting a letter to the leadership in support of a bonding bill. This was a final effort supporting the MPTA initiative for \$10 million in bonding for greater Minnesota transit. Unfortunately, MPTA did not receive the funding requested.

MPTA will be pushing for a bonding bill to be passed during the 2026 Legislative Session that includes funding for transit capital projects.

Minnesotans Shaken by Political Attack

We are all deeply troubled by the senseless loss of Speaker Emerita Melissa Hortman and her husband Mark as well as the shooting of State Senator John Hoffman and his wife Yvette.



Speaker Emerita Hortman was a strong transit advocate and champion for improvements to Minnesota's transportation system all across the state. Her leadership was critical to the passage of major transportation funding legislation including the bill in 2008 that established the metropolitan area sales tax for transit and dedicated funding for Greater MN transit as well as the 2023 legislation that provided a new metropolitan area sales tax for transportation and increased dedicated funding for Greater MN transit.

We extend our deepest sympathies to the Hortman and Hoffman families. This attack on public servants and on our democracy cannot deter our work and commitment to enacting public policy that serves Minnesotans. We can all honor their lives by continuing our work serving people who rely on quality transit service.

2025 Bus Rodeo - July 18-19

Virginia, MN



Get Ready for the 38th Annual Minnesota Bus Rodeo!

We're heading way up north! The **Minnesota Public Transit Association (MPTA)** is excited to host the **38th Annual Minnesota Statewide Bus Rodeo** on **July 18-19, 2025**.

This year's event offers a unique opportunity for bus operators from across the state to **enhance their driving skills, participate in valuable training sessions, and reconnect with fellow transit professionals**. Plus, enjoy a **fun-filled weekend** featuring live music, family-friendly activities, and networking opportunities—all set against the backdrop of the beautiful Iron Range.



2025 Joint MN & WI Public Transit Conference

October 6-8

Rochester, MN

Healthy Transit Builds Healthy Communities

REGISTER TODAY!

Transit Conference 2025 Topics:

- Security issues at transit systems - TSA
- Electric and alternative fuel buses
- Customer service, problem riders, ADA
- Federal, state and local funding for transit – navigating the partnership
- Bus maintenance/fleet management
- Transit reporting
- Paratransit – in-house vs. contracting for service
- Procurement
- Transit technology – passenger counts/video systems
- Driver recruitment and retention best practices – panel discussion
- BRT – Rochester
- Tribal transit topics
- FTA Updates
- OTAT Updates



Join colleagues and friends at the 2025 Public Transit Conference!

These three days will be packed with great opportunities to network, connect and learn along with fellow transit professionals from both states.

www.mpta-transit.org



Legislative Report

Federal Update

Action in Washington, D.C. has been focused on the federal reconciliation act or “big, beautiful bill” which passed Congress on July 3rd. The transportation portion of the act included some increases for air traffic control and the coast guard with little impact on transit.

Now Congress needs to turn its attention to passing the annual appropriations bills including the Transportation and Housing and Urban Development (THUD) appropriations bill. A continuing resolution is in place through the end of September that is keeping transit dollars authorized under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) flowing to states. The IIJA will expire in September of 2026.

As Congress prepares to put together a new surface transportation authorization act, the committees with jurisdiction over transportation have been holding hearings to get updates on issues.

On April 9th, the U.S. House Subcommittee on Highways and Transit held a [hearing](#), titled “America Builds: A Review of Our Nation’s Transit Policies and Programs.”

Testimony was provided by national organizations including the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) and the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA).

Nat Ford, the former chair of APTA, recommended that the next surface transportation authorization bill use IIJA transit and rail funding as a baseline to build from, recognizing increased costs due to inflation. He emphasized the need to upgrade old facilities and equipment, pointing to a transit industry state-of-good-repair backlog of more than \$101 billion. He noted that almost one in six transit buses and vans in the U.S. are not in a state of good repair, and the average rail transit vehicle is 24 years old.

Safety and crime were topics raised by numerous members of Congress and the witnesses who testified.

Greg Regan with the AFL-CIO applauded the IIJA’s requirement that transit agencies report all assaults, not just ones that resulted in a fatality or an ambulance transport. He urged the subcommittee to mandate minimum vehicle design safety standards for transit vehicles, and provide operating funds that can be used for policing, monitoring security cameras, and transit ambassadors. He also argued “The deployment of automated vehicle technology in public transportation—absent a clear, enforceable federal framework—poses a significant risk not only to public safety but to the workforce that keeps our transit systems running.”

Barbara Cline from CTAA talked about the need for more funding and flexibility in its use. She noted that aging facilities and fleets are a major concern at small rural transit agencies. She emphasized how continued and adequate support of the rural transit formula programs (Sections 5310 and 5311 of title 49, U.S.C.) is essential. She also recommended set-asides for smaller transit agencies within transit discretionary programs.

We expect more hearings and activity this fall and into 2026. MPTA members will be connecting with members of Congress in Minnesota to advocate for strong transit funding and policies.



Office of Transit and Active Transportation

Update



Greater Minnesota Transit Plan Engagement

[What we heard in phase 1](#)

During the first phase, our team talked to residents in greater Minnesota to learn how they currently use transit and how it could better meet their needs. We attended six pop-up events throughout the state, held two meetings with the RIDE Advisory Task Force, hosted a community listening session with representatives from 15 organizations, and received feedback from more than 600 survey respondents. Below is a summary of what we heard:

- **Availability:** The most common reason people cited for not using transit was the lack of options or limited availability. Existing riders also identified limited availability as their biggest challenge.
- **Convenience:** Many people mentioned that transit is too inconvenient and time-consuming for them to use regularly. Current users also highlighted these challenges, noting how time-consuming and difficult it can be to reach their destinations when they rely on transit.
- **Personal vehicle preference and negative perception of transit:** Many people prefer driving their own vehicle due to the flexibility it provides. Public transit is also often perceived as a service only for those who are not able to drive or have lower incomes. Some suggested that shifting this perception could increase usage and investment to public transit services.
- **Needs for an aging population:** Older adults worry about how they will get around as they age and can no longer drive. People shared fears about isolation and the negative impact on personal well-being if they do not have a form of public transit to access errands, social opportunities, and other personal needs.
- **Access to healthcare:** More public transit options are needed to better connect smaller communities and individuals who cannot drive to healthcare and appointments. While some services exist, issues with reliability and lengthy time commitments are challenging.
- **Connection to other cities:** Many expressed an interest in expanded transit services, sharing that they would use public transportation more often if there were additional routes and service times to better connect them to other cities and the Metro area.
- **Reliance on volunteers:** Individuals who are unable to drive or do not have access to a personal vehicle depend on volunteer driving programs for medical appointments and daily necessities. However, limited volunteers and rising costs make these programs increasingly difficult for both riders and organizers.

We need your continued help to spread the word about engagement opportunities for our Greater Minnesota Transit Plan! This campaign is all about driving people to the project's [Let's Talk Transportation site](#), where they can help shape the future of transit in Greater Minnesota!

The campaign is live on MnDOT's social media channels and we appreciate your help in sharing posts and spreading the word to help with this public engagement effort. <https://talk.dot.state.mn.us/greater-minnesota-transit-plan>

Visit the transit plan website here: [Greater Minnesota Transit Plan](#)

Tri-Valley Transportation Program Breaks Ground on New Bus Storage Facility



Tri-Valley Transportation Programs celebrated a significant milestone this May with a groundbreaking ceremony for its new bus storage facility, located on Guthrie Street in Crookston.

“We are thrilled to see construction underway,” said Elizabeth Hensrud, Director of Transportation Programs at Tri-Valley. “This facility represents a major step forward for our program, and it’s the result of tremendous effort by our dedicated team.”

The new 9,105-square-foot building will feature seven drive-through bays and accommodate storage for up to 14 Class 400 transit buses. A dedicated wash bay has also been incorporated into the design to improve the long-term maintenance and care of the fleet.

“As ride demand continues to grow, it’s not uncommon to see up to eight buses operating simultaneously on city streets during the week,” Hensrud added. “Once construction is complete, the facility will house five new propane-fueled buses, aligning with our commitment to sustainability and positioning us as one of the first public transportation systems in Minnesota to transition to low-emission vehicles. We are deeply appreciative of the support provided by MnDOT in making this project a reality.”

The groundbreaking event was attended by representatives from Roers, MnDOT, and Tri-Valley, underscoring the collaborative effort behind this development.

For additional details about the Tri-Valley Bus Garage project, please visit: <https://www.roers.com/project/tri-valley-bus-garage>.

Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Inc. is a non-profit community action agency headquartered in Crookston, Minn. In existence since 1965, Tri-Valley provides services in 74 counties in Minnesota and Eastern North Dakota. The mission of Tri-Valley is to provide opportunities to improve the quality of life for people and communities. For more information on services offered and job opportunities at Tri-Valley visit the website at www.tvoc.org, follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/TVOCInc or on Twitter at @TriValley_TVOC.

Arrowhead Transit launching new route to north metro in Pine and Chisago counties

Travel to the metro has now become easier for some needing rides as Arrowhead Transit is launching a new weekday route connecting Pine City and Rush City to Wyoming (the southernmost stop for Arrowhead in Chisago County) called the HWY 61 Blue Line.

Dominick Olivanti, Arrowhead marketing and public relations manager, says the route is in response to surveys, listening sessions and real ridership data.

“The need was loud and clear. We heard the same things over and over: people needed easier access to healthcare, groceries, and regional connections,” said Olivanti. “This route delivers on those asks – and sets a precedent for what rural transit can look like when the community is truly heard. For too long, rural communities have been underserved by systems that expect riders to work around the schedule instead of designing service around the rider.”

He said the new route is part of RideSmart 2025, their nationally-watched system redesign aimed at making rural transit more rider-focused, accessible, and predictable.

The service from Pine City and Rush City to Wyoming run Monday through Friday. The morning bus leaves Wyoming at 7 a.m., arrives in Pine City at 8 a.m., and loops back. An afternoon route begins around 2:30 p.m. It’s the most consistent weekday service Pine County has had, said Olivanti.

Some customers have experienced long waiting times and have been left without a ride when a driver doesn’t wait very long for the rider. Olivanti responded to those concerns saying they don’t take the concerns lightly.

“The feedback we’ve heard has pushed us to take a hard look at both our internal processes and rider experience,” he responded. “Specifically, we’ve added more staff to our dispatch team, we’re training drivers to balance efficiency with compassion – especially when passengers need extra time and we’re actively reviewing our no-show policy to ensure it reflects the realities of rural life.”



Mankato Transit System Update

The Mankato Transit System is rolling out exciting updates to enhance the rider experience! Here's what's new:

CTS Demand Response Scheduling Software: Improvements are underway to streamline scheduling for demand response riders and bundle rides more efficiently.

Passio Voice Announcement System: The voice announcement system will provide passengers with clearer voice announcements and visual sign displaying the scheduled stops for each route.

Summer Routes: Two seasonal routes— are set to operate, offering convenient transit options during the summer months.

Kato Go Play – Connection to summer fun destinations include parks, library, children's museum, and most important swimming pools! 18-years-old and younger, ride free.

Route One—Providing service to college students during the summer months.

Bus stop improvements a multi-year project throughout Mankato and North Mankato. Increasing our ADA accessibility.

Transfer ticket – Changing to a 1-hour pass providing equality for someone who can take care of all errands within one hour.

Same Day Schedule - Pilot program for the summer with our mobility service opening up same day scheduling for medical, work, and other essential items.

Upcoming Features:

Passenger Counter: A new system to track ridership more efficiently to determine the best locations for stops.

New Bus Model: The fleet will soon include a 29-foot Gillig bus, designed for improved comfort, accessibility and longer shelf life.

Any questions let us know!

TO: [Todd Owens](#)

Transit Superintendent

MANKATO ENHANCES YOUTH TRANSIT SERVICE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MY PLACE MANKATO YOUTH PLACE INC



Announced through a social media post on the [City of Mankato, Minnesota Government's Facebook page](#), this initiative aims to refine the process of kids' drop-off and pick-up routines. Officials are focused on adjustments that could streamline the experience for those who utilize Kato-Go Play. The [post reads](#), "Our Transit team had a great visit with My Place Mankato Youth Place INC to discuss how we can work together to make Kato-Go Play

drop-off and pick-up work even better for the kids that are part of the program."

Rochester Public Transit

What to know about Rochester's future rapid transit system as construction begins

The \$175.5 million transit line is expected to be up and running by 2027, and free to riders.

The Minnesota Star Tribune



The latest round of construction to shake up the downtown area gets underway this week as crews begin laying the groundwork for Rochester's long-anticipated Link Bus Rapid Transit system.

To proponents of the project, the bus system will offer many of the same benefits as a built-in rail line but at a fraction of the cost. That includes dedicated transit lanes and seven-day-a-week service.

"This is more than a bus system," Patrick Seeb, DMC's director, said at the time. "This is a rapid transit system that uses an electric bus vehicle but has the amenities that would be expected of a high-quality transit system."

The project is now estimated to be completed by 2027 at a cost of \$175.5 million, up from \$115 million just a few years ago.

The bus system is being paid for using state and local DMC funds, along with a nearly \$85 million grant from the Federal Transit Administration. About a third of the budget has already been spent preparing for construction and ordering a fleet of 60-foot electric buses.

Today, more than 70% of commuters travel downtown alone in a vehicle, while only 10% use transit.

City officials hope to reverse that pattern with the planned transit line. By 2040, DMC plans call for fewer than 50% of commuters to get downtown by car, while tripling the number of transit users.

To make the transit line attractive for commuters, Mayo Clinic is covering operational costs to make the system fare-free — not only for its thousands of downtown employees but also the general public.

Where are all these new transit users going to park their vehicles for the day? The answer lies in a what being dubbed a "transit village" planned on the far west end of the bus line.

There, Mayo is building a massive 2,500-spot parking ramp on 14 acres that had previously been used to handle fewer than 1,000 cars.

Metro Transit opening B Line, bringing faster service between Minneapolis and St. Paul

“Less stop and more go” is what the agency’s seventh rapid bus line is all about, said Katie Roth, Metro Transit’s director of arterial bus rapid transit.

By Tim Harlow
[Minnesota Star Tribune](#)

The B Line’s debut is one of several route and schedule changes the agency will enact Saturday as it rolls ahead with its Network Now initiative to bring fast all-day service to core urban routes and increase ridership, enhance mobility and adapt to ever changing travel patterns.

An end-to-end trip on the B Line from Union Depot in St. Paul to Lake Street and France Avenue on the west end of Minneapolis will take just over an hour. With just 33 stops and operating in a bus-only lane on a third of its 13-mile route, the B Line will offer trips 20% faster than the Route 21, which it is replacing.

Route 21 was one of Metro Transit’s oldest routes, dating to the 1950s. With its 90 bus stops it was also the slowest, lumbering along at just 8 mph.



The B Line becomes Metro Transit’s seventh rapid bus line and will operate from 4 a.m. to about 1:30 a.m. weekdays and Saturdays. Service will end at 1 a.m. on Sundays and holidays. Buses will run every 10 to 15 minutes mornings through early evenings and every 30 to 60 minutes late at night and early in the morning.

Built for about \$74 million, the project also included repaving Lake Street, refitting traffic signals to give buses priority green lights, and adding amenities for bicyclists and pedestrians. Metro Transit partnered with Hennepin County and the city of Minneapolis.

With the opening of the B Line, Metro Transit will be 25% of its way of completing service improvements it plans to carry out in the next two years.

MVTA proposes returning service to Dakota County Technical College, express service to Savage



[The Minnesota Star Tribune](#)

The Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA) wants to restore express service in Savage, enhance connections to Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and bring back service to Dakota County Technical College.

“Customer demand is driving the proposed changes” that would be enacted this fall, said MVTA spokesman Richard Crawford.

Route changes could bring an increase in transit service to more than 20,000 residents, Crawford said of the proposals.

The agency serving eight cities south of the Minnesota River will show off its plans during meetings at 6 p.m. Tuesday at the Scott County Government Center in Shakopee, and 6 p.m. Thursday at Rosemount City Hall.



Riders of Route 420 would see the biggest changes. The route currently operates primarily north of County Road 42 as it makes its way through Apple Valley. In its new configuration, the route would drop several blocks south and run through residential and commercial areas along W. 157th Street. Service would run from 6 a.m.-9 p.m. on weekdays.

MVTA once served DCTC, but funding for a pilot route ran out in 2018. And the college has wanted to get bus service back, Crawford said.

“We’ve always had support from the college and the student union to provide direct transportation to a premier institution in the south metro,” said Luther Wynder, MVTA’s chief executive director. “Now we have identified funding to restore service and allow it to build.”

A third major change would have Route 436 stopping at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and Eagan Transit Center on its way to the 46th Street Station in south Minneapolis. The route would also run on weekends instead of just Monday through Friday, the agency said.

Upcoming Events:

MN Roadeo

July 18 & 19

Chisholm, MN

**Minnesota/Wisconsin
Public Transit
Conference**

October 6-8

Rochester, MN



Contact Us:

Have a story for us?

Reach out to us here:

Margaret@transportationalliance.com

651-659-0804

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