

HISTORY

Suburban communities sought legislation in 1982 to **create transit agencies to serve fast-growing suburban areas**. Some cities chose independent transit operation while others created joint powers agreements. The Legislative Auditor reported that "the existing planning structure was not responsive to the need for a service plan which would address transit needs in the area, particularly the growing suburbs." In short, suburban communities pushed for local control of transit because they weren't receiving the services they were contributing to via their tax dollars. The Legislative Auditor has recognized the important contributions of suburban transit agencies to the regional transit system and that the region has benefited from expanded services, reduced congestion, and regional innovations as a result of the suburban transit agencies' presence and initiatives.

- Before suburban transit agencies formed, several suburban communities were paying into the transit system and not receiving ANY service, or at best only one or two trips per day.
- Minnesota Valley Transit Authority, Maple Grove Transit, Plymouth Metro Link and SouthWest Transit formed. (Prior Lake and Shakopee agencies ultimately merged with MVTA).
- While suburban ridership has grown from 1 million passengers per year to more than 5 million passengers per year since the creation of the suburban transit agencies, funding equity has remained an ongoing concern. A 2016 analysis by the Suburban Transit Association found that **suburban communities were contributing more than 10 percent to the MVST funding formula but only receiving back under 4 percent of their contribution.**

EFFECTIVE SERVICE

The Legislative Auditor determined that suburban transit agencies have established themselves as **productive contributors to the regional transit system and have developed close relationships with the communities they serve**. Suburban transit agencies have been known for their innovations and the Legislative Auditor highlighted our pilot tests of new approaches and technologies.

- Employment lifeline - **Connecting customers to employment centers in suburban communities and the downtown areas is a top priority of suburban transit agencies.** Suburban transit agencies have the longest-serving reverse commutes, which have connected residents in the core cities, including Cedar Riverside, to jobs in the suburbs. According to Metropolitan forecasts, more new jobs are expected to be located in suburban areas than the urban core in the next 30 years.
- Innovation - Innovation (public-private partnerships, microtransit initiatives, mixed-use developments, transit-oriented developments and the first transit app in the region) is a hallmark of the Suburban Transit Association. **The suburban transit agencies operate with an entrepreneurial approach**, acting many times as the transit laboratory for the entire region.
 - o Suburban transit agencies introduced coach vehicles to the region and were the first to offer Wi-Fi on buses.
 - o Suburban transit agencies have some of the lowest subsidized demand response systems in the region as well as in the entire state.



Committed to serving suburban communities & connecting the region.



SERVICE (cont)

- o Suburb-to-suburb pilot service has shown strong growth and has benefitted employees and employers through the use of public-private partnerships.
- o Innovative routing has resulted in **reduced congestion and improved trip times** for public transit agencies serving Minneapolis.
- o Maple Grove Transit, Minnesota Valley Transit Authority and SouthWest Transit all have been selected as Transit System of the Year by the Minnesota Public Transit Association.
- Economics - **Suburban transit agencies are doing more with less.**
 - o From the beginning, suburban transit agencies have given up at least 10 percent of the funding generated in their communities to the regional transit system. This trend continued when we transferred to MVST from Property Tax.
 - o When MVST funding for regional transit increased by 14.5 percent, no additional funding was guaranteed to the suburban transit agencies. Since the increase, more than 95 percent of those funds have gone to Metro Transit/Metropolitan Transit Services/Metro Mobility.
- Customer Service - Suburban transit agencies consistently receive **high customer satisfaction rates from over 95 percent of system riders.**
 - o Safety records have been reported with accidents, injuries, vehicle breakdowns and ADA compliance incidents below 1 percent based on ridership, revenue miles and hours.
- Ridership - During the COVID-19 pandemic, suburban local routes have had the highest ridership of any transit service type in the region maintaining 52 percent of pre-COVID levels.
 - o Ridership interest has grown from outside our service areas based on license-plate surveys.
 - o **The suburban agencies have the highest usage of park-and-ride stalls in the region.**



GOVERNANCE

The Suburban Transportation Association - guided by local elected leaders from member agencies - is structured to stay close to the needs of our riders and communities. **Decision-making has resulted in increased ridership in areas previously underserved**; has brought innovative transit solutions to the region; has benefited employees and employers throughout the region; and has reduced congestion on the regional highway system.

- We know our service areas and involve our communities in the decision-making process. This is accomplished through surveys, research and local involvement and engagement.
- We believe that **suburban providers should receive an equitable, proportional share of the transit funding for the region** and would support any Met Council governance alterations that would support this goal.
- The Suburban Transit Association favors governance that is more accountable to the region and is structured to **ensure suburban communities are directly represented.**
- The innovation, success and service of the Suburban Transit Association can be enhanced by a more collaborative decision-making structure that **recognizes member organizations as a full partner** with a "seat at the table" when it comes to building a public transportation network for the future.



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StarTribune.com MINNEAPOLIS - ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA
 Among suburban commuters ... **Catching the bus is**
 on
 By DAVID PETERSON, Star Tribune
 February 4, 2008
 Tony Piesille never used to take the bus to work. But a new job downtown taught it costs to park there. He decided to give it a shot. And he was surprised.