

LET'S GO

SUMMER '09
NEWSLETTER



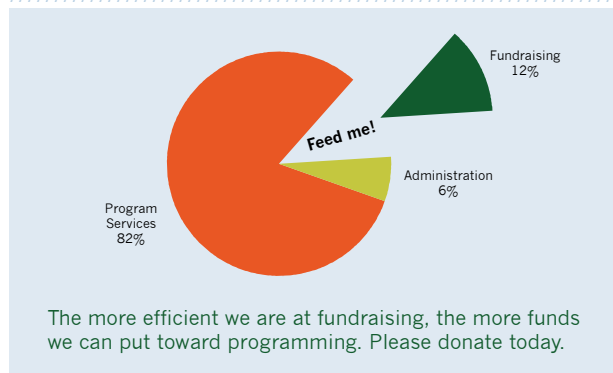
TRANSIT
for Livable Communities

IT'S WORKING

Thanks for committing time, energy, and financial support to make our communities more livable. It's working.

We've produced groundbreaking victories for transit at the state legislature, worked with partners to make our streets safer for walking and bicycling, and helped our members become even stronger advocates for better transportation in their communities. We are expanding our community organizing program to bring in new supporters and develop current members.

Join us to make Minnesota an even better place to live. Please take a moment now to return a contribution personally significant to you. Your tax-deductible contribution will go to work through programs that advocate for fully funding a regional transit system, promote walking and bicycling, and strengthen community participation in transportation decisions. TLC is responsible with contributions; **82 percent of TLC's budget is spent on programs.**



New Executive Director Search Underway

Thanks to Lea Schuster for her eight years of leadership and best wishes in her new endeavors in the Washington D.C. area. A nationwide search for the next Transit for Livable Communities executive director is underway.

In the meantime, Jan Lysen is stepping down from the TLC board and acting as the interim executive director. Jan's experience and leadership are a great fit for the transition, and we're excited to have her on board.

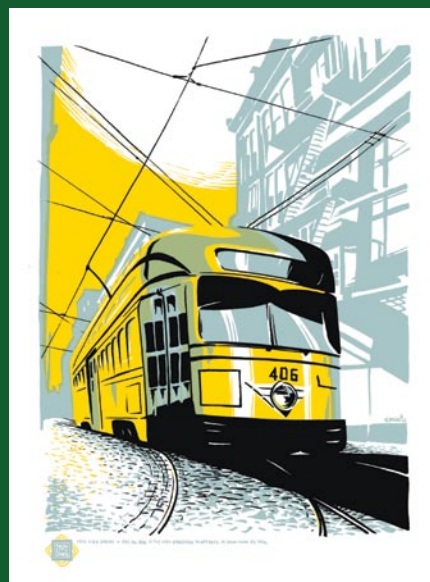
If you know a candidate who deserves consideration, or if you have any questions, please contact Transit for Livable Communities at tlc@tlcminnesota.org. As always, thanks for your support!

FRANK DOUMA



When I was young, my grandfather took me on bus rides to the end of the line—just for fun! Now, I am a parent making transit work for my family—each day, after bringing our two children to daycare, my wife and I park the car and bus to work. When we bought our house 10 years ago, we chose a location that made it possible for transit, walking, and bicycling to be viable choices. We've made this extra effort because it adds to our quality of life and allows us to use our financial resources differently.

HISTORIC LENS



PPC No. 406, the Last Street Car in St. Paul, Minn.
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CAN STREETCARS COME BACK?

In the early 20th century, the Twin City Rapid Transit Company (also known as Twin City Lines) operated an intercity streetcar system believed to be one of the best in the U.S. It is said that anyone who lived in Minneapolis was no farther than 400 yards from the nearest station. R.T. Rybak, the mayor of Minneapolis, called for streetcars to replace buses on key Minneapolis transit routes. Noting the need for a "streetcar city" where homes, workplaces, and shops are woven together, he said that the city's transportation plans are "about revitalizing neighborhood districts and making it more possible to work, live, and play in Minneapolis without total dependence on a car."

MEMBERS ADVANCE TRANSIT POLICIES AND FUNDING AT STATE LEGISLATURE



TLC members stepped up to the plate this year. The \$62 million transit operating shortfall threatened service cuts and fare increases, largely for the bus system. Lawmakers heard from hundreds of transit supporters, and in the end, created a budget that will likely stabilize the bus system for two years.



On March 4th, more than 100 people testified in favor of providing revenue to address the transit deficit. Sen. Scott Dibble (Minneapolis), chair of the Senate Transit Subcommittee, presided over the hearing; Sen. Jim Carlson (Eagan) and Rep. Frank Hornstein (Minneapolis) also attended. The following night, they were joined in Maplewood by additional legislators and more than 50 community members.

Good News



In an encouraging sign of bipartisan support for transit, the legislature overwhelmingly passed—and the governor signed into law—a state bonding bill that provides critical funding for light rail, commuter rail, and bus rapid transit, including \$8.5 million for Central Corridor, \$12.5 million for seven other metro lines, and \$26 million for future passenger rail improvements between Duluth, the Twin Cities, and Chicago. This could not have happened without the strong work of our members.

Good News, Almost



Unfortunately, the transportation policy bill, which passed overwhelmingly in the House and Senate, was vetoed by Governor Pawlenty. The bill would have revised Mn/DOT's statutory goals to include reducing car travel, prioritizing road maintenance over expansion, and requiring bicycle and pedestrian accommodations on bridge reconstruction projects.

After some traditional advocacy, TLC, Sierra Club, and ISAI AH—all members of the Transit Partners coalition—produced a skit encouraging House members to pass the transportation funding bill with resources to eliminate the transit operating deficit. Watch it online: <http://bit.ly/stophesnooze>.

TLC members helped educate legislators about a new vision for transportation that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and oil dependence and responds to changing demographic and economic conditions. Substantial work remains to build support for local and regional land-use decisions that shape future transportation choices. TLC will continue to advance legislation that engages local communities, the Metropolitan Council, and Mn/DOT in transportation investments and policy that connects to housing affordability and sustainable development.



////////////////// LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

WHAT IS A LIVABLE COMMUNITY?

Hello, One Million
New Minnesotans!



APRIL 2007



2030

July 2008 population: 5.22 million (U.S. Census)
By 2030: 1 million more (State Demographer)

One million new people. That's how many more people will live in Minnesota by 2030—more than the current populations of Minneapolis, St. Paul, Bloomington, Brooklyn Park, Coon Rapids, Maple Grove, and Fridley combined.

Population growth is not a bad thing. Yet we face a crucial question: how will we grow?

With a population growing larger and older, more residents want communities where homes, workplaces, and shops are easily accessible without a car. We call this a livable community. Many current zoning regulations, however, limit this type of development, forcing spread out growth.

A livable community gives people choices. Its buildings are located in close proximity to one another, supporting apartments, workspaces, and retail. It allows residents to ride on clean, reliable trains or buses to go to work or run errands. Its streets are narrower with lower speed limits and sidewalks, which makes walking or bicycling to a grocery store less daunting.

The overall effect? Residents have access to the transportation they need.

How can we achieve this vision?

- **Fully Fund Transit.** We achieved something monumental when a legislative victory and a voter referendum provided the first constitutionally dedicated sources of funding for transit in Minnesota. Much of this funding goes to new light rail, commuter rail, and bus rapid transit. We still need money to expand bus service, which has declined since 2000, and to build out our transitways system to better meet demand.
- **Change Design Standards.** Have you ever walked or biked on a street where you felt out of place—like walkers and bicyclists didn't belong? Many current design standards favor moving car traffic as quickly as possible, which makes it difficult and unpleasant for people to walk and bike.
- **Retool Zoning Requirements.** Zoning requirements dictate how closely buildings can be located to one another, how tall those buildings can be, and how much parking is needed in a development. Right now, many communities don't provide choices in their zoning requirements, leading to an overabundance of single-use developments that can only be reached by car.



This fitness center does not have sidewalks or bike access on the north side. Bike access is available behind the facility, but the building is not oriented to it. This is often a result of business habit and city mandate.



Livable Community Features

Excelsior & Grand in St. Louis Park

1. Sidewalks provide safe, pleasant ways to reach destinations
2. Bike racks are a convenient place to park, and they help prevent theft
3. Planters help define spaces
4. Pleasant and safe lighting is necessary for both drivers and pedestrians
5. Clearly marked crosswalks allow residents to safely cross
6. Public art enhances the identity of a community
7. Well-designed medians help people move around safely
8. Staggered parking helps calm traffic, which lowers driving speeds
9. Bollards protect pedestrians at busy intersections
10. Street trees look great and help slow traffic
11. Mixed-use buildings are transit and pedestrian friendly
12. Bus stops make commuting easier

Not pictured: Bicycle lanes are an important element of livable communities.



The Tale of Two Grocery Stores

One location has an overabundance of parking, the other has easy access to transit, sidewalks, and bike racks. How our developments interact with transportation and the community is often dependent on city zoning codes and design standards. Speak up—tell your city what you want!



What can you do?

- **Talk to Your Neighbors.** Make a specific request like, “We’re working to get a bike lane on our street. Would you sign our petition to the city to support this effort?” The more specific the request, the higher the participation!
- **Get Involved in Local Transportation Committees.** Many communities have neighborhood planning councils, city or county committees, and civic organizations. These are places that influence how development happens in your community. If none of these exist, start one!
- **Advocate for a Complete Streets Bill.** Not all complete streets are the same, but they often include sidewalks, bike lanes, wide shoulders, bus shelters, and more. During the next legislative session, a complete streets bill may be introduced, which could lead to greater flexibility in how streets are designed.
- **Work on a Project in Your Neighborhood.** Support construction of sidewalks in commercial and residential areas. Comment on your city’s transportation and land use plans. Support mixed-use developments, such as apartments above stores and businesses in neighborhoods.

THE FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION BILL

The hundreds of billions of dollars provided by the federal transportation bill will impact our communities for generations.

This September, the current six-year federal transportation bill expires, which provides an opportunity to develop a truly transformative bill that could revolutionize the ways we get around our communities.

This is a critical opportunity. Working with the national Transportation for America coalition, TLC convened a Minnesota-based coalition that ensures the upcoming Transportation Bill aligns national, state, and local transportation policies with economic opportunity, climate change, energy security, health, housing, and community development.

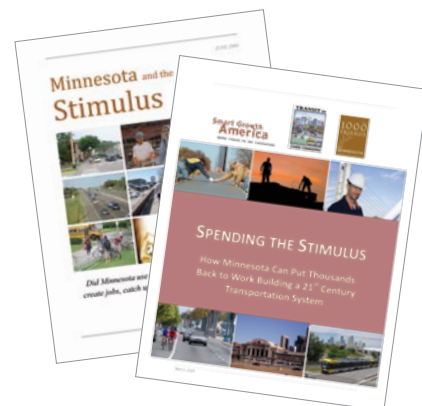
Most recently, the coalition called on state transportation leaders to prioritize funding from the stimulus bill to focus funding on repair projects rather than highway expansion. Cities, counties, and Mn/DOT submitted transportation project lists dominated by repair requests for streets, sidewalks, and trails, but a proposal to fund two highway expansion projects threatened to eat up the bulk of the metro area stimulus money.

Transit for Livable Communities and coalition partners mobilized metro area cities, transit and bicycle advocates, and members of the disability community, to provide testimony to the Metropolitan Council Transportation Advisory Board (TAB), which was charged with allocating the federal stimulus for the metro area.

Although the TAB approved the Mn/DOT \$64 million request for a three mile-extension of Highway 610 in Maple Grove, it tabled a \$138 million expansion of the 494/169 interchange. About \$146 million in federal stimulus funding was allocated for transit projects and smaller local projects in the region.

“Expanding our already extensive regional highway system won’t address the most pressing transportation needs for this region,” said Lea Schuster. “Our transportation investment strategy has barely changed since the 1950s, when gas was 20 cents a gallon and President Eisenhower launched the interstate highway system. Today, we live in a very different world. Although we were disappointed to see another highway expansion project, we’re encouraged that the TAB will fund a number of road repair, safety, and bike/ped projects.”

Transit for Livable Communities, in partnership with Transportation for America and the local coalition, recently issued two reports on Minnesota’s stimulus spending on transportation. *Spending the Stimulus: How Minnesota Can Put Thousands Back to Work Building a 21st Century Transportation System* details how the stimulus provided a critical opportunity to boost our economy by advancing a 21st century transportation system, while *Minnesota and the Stimulus: Did Minnesota use the Federal Stimulus to Create Jobs, Catch up on Needed Repair, and Expand Travel Options?* evaluates the process used in Minnesota to allocate stimulus dollars and select projects.



////////////////// TRANSPORTATION NEWS TICKER

CAN WE REDUCE DRIVING?

That question is at the heart of the \$21.5 million, federally funded initiative known as Bike Walk Twin Cities.

Managed by Transit for Livable Communities, the program explores whether targeted investments in infrastructure and education can get residents of Minneapolis and neighboring communities out of their cars.

This spring, the initiative funded two innovative programs:

1. **Minneapolis Bike Share** will launch in 2010, thanks to a \$1.75 million grant from Bike Walk Twin Cities. Through Bike Share, you will be able to purchase a \$50 season pass, check out a bike anytime, and return it to any self-service kiosk.



“Bike sharing will create a more vibrant, healthy, and engaged city population,” said Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak. “We’ll see business people biking to meetings, parents biking to school meetings, and employees biking to an after-work exercise class. Not only will it transform how people get around our city, but it will position Minneapolis to become the number one bicycling city in the country!”

INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL LANDER



Michael Lander is the founder and president of Lander Group.

He is active in the planning, design, and development of commercial, residential, and mixed-use real estate projects in California, North Dakota, Minnesota, and Iowa. He also serves on the board of directors of Transit for Livable Communities.

TLC: How can people who support walkable communities encourage developers to do projects in their neighborhood?

ML: Understand what makes a good walkable development. The key is the relationship of the building to the street and the quality of the pedestrian frontages. You can organize your neighbors to support good projects. Encourage your city to prepare a thoughtful development framework plan, and create the zoning and other incentives needed to make it happen. Finally, find out who the good developers are—go see their projects—and contact them with any opportunities you see in your neighborhood.

TLC: Why should developers be interested in the federal transportation bill?

ML: Transportation drives development, and at least 30 to 50 percent of the market wants great, walkable places. The current transportation bill is virtually highways only. We have to increase and diversify funding for other modes of transportation, which will support the types of development demanded by a significant—and growing—segment of the market.

TLC: Tell me about the developers table in Minnesota. What are you working on?

ML: We are a group of developers working toward a transportation bill that is friendlier to transit-oriented development. We've met a few times, but we're still determining where we should focus our efforts. We're looking at opportunities to create great, walkable places, which often require new zoning and regulatory plans.

TLC: Why are you involved with TLC?

ML: I recognize that we need a much stronger multi-modal transportation network to: (a) become a truly great 21st century city that effectively competes in the global economy and (b) support the type of development we do: great, high density, mixed-use places with a high quality public realm.



West River Commons, a development by Lander Group, is a mixed-use, transit-oriented development in Minneapolis featuring mixed-income residences, retail, and a plaza with public art. The development is located on a bus line and is highly walkable with its street trees, wide sidewalks, and interesting storefronts.

2.

The University of Minnesota Bike Center and Commuter Tracking Program, which received \$525,000, will serve 6,000 campus cyclists in addition to other commuters. Located in the Oak Street Parking Ramp, the center will include an electronic bike trip-planning kiosk, 24-hour accessible secure bike storage, changing facilities, repair service, and bike retail opportunities. A radio frequency identity system will permit bicyclists who install an identity tag on their bikes to earn benefits. The center is slated to open in 2010.



"This project demonstrates the University's commitment to sustainability," said Robert Bruininks, president of the University of Minnesota. "This center becomes more than a secure place to park your bike and change clothes; it's a community space that rewards existing bike commuters and welcomes new bicyclists to our campus with services to make their rides more efficient and convenient."

University of Minnesota President Robert Bruininks and Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak at a press conference launching the University of Minnesota Bike Center and Bike Share.



LET'S
GO

Read this Summer '09
Newsletter and help us
reform the transportation
system in Minnesota!

www.tlcminnesota.org
(651) 767-0298

////////////////// TRANSITEERING TIPS

3 TIPS FOR 2 WHEELS



Have a Transiteering Tip? Email it to us at tlc@tlcminnesota.org.



By Robynne Curlee, a TLC member

As a full-time, year-round bike commuter, I've figured out a few things to make life in the bike lane run a little smoother.

1. **Dress Appropriately.** Especially now as the weather is changing, it might be cool in the morning but hot by the afternoon. I always have layers to accommodate the changing temps. Well, almost always—there was that one time that my jeans froze to my legs when I got caught in a sleet storm without my rain pants. Learn from my mistake!
2. **Reuse Your Plastic.** I keep my gear stored in reused plastic bags. It helps keep everything organized and dry.
3. **Store the Bus Line.** The Metro Transit information line is on speed dial on my cell phone for those times when I have to fill in the gaps with bus or light rail. Route information and times are all available at (612) 373-3333.