

There are numerous public transit systems throughout Minnesota. They operate locally or regionally and vary widely in ridership, geographic coverage area, and types of service provided.

Forms of Service

Public transportation systems vary in the service provided. The basic forms are:

- **Regular route bus service**, operating primarily in urban settings on fixed routes and standard schedules, and typically with frequent stops;
- Arterial and highway **bus rapid transit (BRT)**, which compared to regular route buses have fewer stops as well as various amenity and service improvements;
- **Express bus service**, which generally follows longer routes with limited stops and is often oriented to commuters (e.g., with service between suburbs and an urban core);
- **Rail service**, which operates on railroad track and includes street cars, light rail transit (LRT), commuter rail, and intercity passenger rail;
- **Demand response or “dial-a-ride,”** in which riders can arrange for specific trips upon request (usually in areas not served by regular routes);
- **Route deviation**, typically offering bus service on regular schedules that follow fixed routes but with small deviations upon rider request; and
- **Paratransit**, providing door-to-door transport for people who are unable to use regular bus service (required under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to complement fixed route bus service areas).

Service in Greater Minnesota

There are over 40 transit systems in Greater Minnesota. Each is classified under state law into one of four categories based on its location and characteristics, as summarized below. [Minn. Stat. § 174.24](#).

Class	Count	Forms of Service	Typical Service Area	Examples
Urbanized	7	Mainly regular route	Larger city and surrounding communities	Duluth, Moorhead, Rochester, St. Cloud
Small urban	4	Dial-a-ride, route deviation	One or a few cities	Granite Falls, Hibbing, Morris, Winona
Rural	26	Dial-a-ride, route deviation	Various	Arrowhead, Brown, Wadena
Elderly/disabled	6	Paratransit	Matches regular route	East Grand Forks, Rochester

Although there are commonalities (particularly within each classification), the transit systems vary. Service is most often operated by cities and counties but some systems are run by other forms of local government or nonprofits. Fixed route service and paratransit are only found in more densely populated urban areas. Route deviation or dial-a-ride service, or both, are offered in small urban and rural settings. While transit systems in an urban area typically cover one or a couple of cities, rural systems can cover part of a county, run countywide, or extend across multiple counties. Frequency of service also varies; it

usually covers the working day but can have limited operating hours or days of the week. A number of counties lack countywide transit service. There are also privately operated intercity bus routes.

Service in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area

Multiple transit providers offer several forms of service in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

The Metropolitan Council. The council operates the state’s largest transit system, with over 80 percent of calendar year 2018 ridership. It also performs regional transit planning. Service includes:

- **Metro Transit**, which encompasses an extensive regular route bus system along with light rail transit, bus rapid transit, express bus, and commuter rail;
- **Metro Mobility** paratransit for those with disabilities or health conditions;
- **Transit Link** dial-a-ride service for the general public in parts of the metropolitan area that are not served by regular route transit; and
- **Park-and-ride** lots.

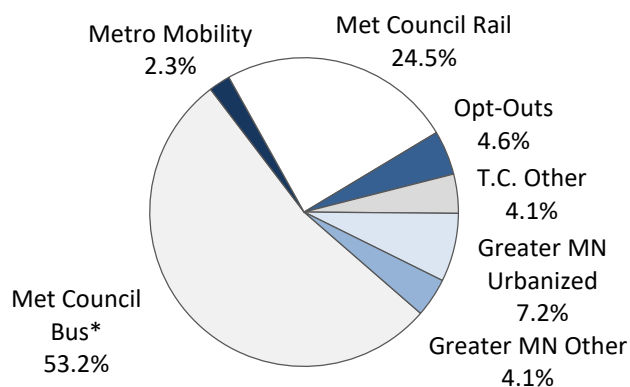
“Opt-out” systems. Suburban transit providers, or opt-outs, are operated by a range of agencies including counties and cities as well as nonprofits. The service replaces that offered by the Metropolitan Council (although there is some overlap in coverage due to commuter service to the central cities). Offerings include circulator service within specific communities, dial-a-ride, and express buses.

Transit Ridership

Over calendar years 2015 to 2018, statewide ridership fell by nearly 5.3 million trips to 105.1 million (an annual average decrease of 1.6 percent). Over that period, changes were mixed with the largest contraction in Metropolitan Council regular route bus ridership; this might partially reflect rider shifts to other modes (as both LRT and BRT experienced growth). The charts below highlight ridership activity.

Transit Ridership Distribution

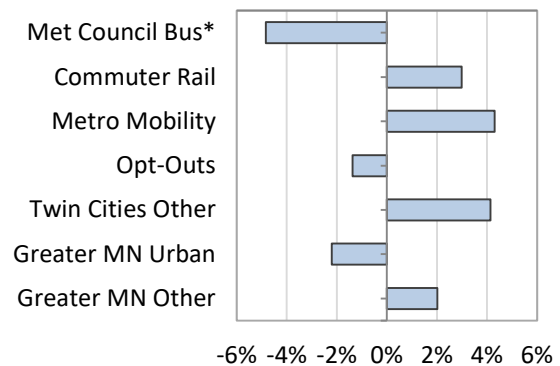
CY 2018 (105.1 million)



* Includes contracted service and BRT

Change in Transit Ridership

3-yr. Annual Avg., CY 2015-18



* Includes contracted service, excludes BRT



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