

3/27/24 **Modal Consultation – Transit**

Description: MIC staff attended the regularly-scheduled meeting of the Duluth Transit Authority Board of Directors MIC staff presented an overview of the ongoing development of the MTP and invited comments from the group regarding transit issues, needs and opportunities in the MIC area.

What We Heard – Comments:

- “We have many needs, limited resources – in keeping with the theme of your plan!”
- Expenses are on the rise and funding can be hard to acquire, at federal, state and local levels – in prior year, the DTA’s requested tax levy was the only one on the docket that was reduced.
- Raising fares is not the way to increase needed revenues; the DTA has an ongoing commitment to not raising fares to keep it affordable for users. Increasing fares could actually reduce ridership which would be very detrimental and hard to counteract (“transit death spiral.”
- Would like to see free bus fares offered to senior citizens
- Would like to explore the option of becoming a regional transit authority
- Would like to see better snow removal at bus stops; issues with coordinating with the city
- Supply chain issues with acquiring new STRIDE vehicles – and finding parts to maintain them
- Would like to see positive messaging to counter the generally negative image of public transit; bus seen as a second-class transportation option; “those people” who take the bus;
- Safety for bus rider and drivers is first and foremost concern; interest in the safe systems approach to traffic safety and how it might have positive impacts on transit.
- Interested in the continued buildout of the Go Lines, and introducing bus rapid transit
- Interest in future transit-oriented development – but location and partners TBD.
- Real problems with hiring and retaining enough drivers to maintain the routes and complete schedules of the Better Bus Blueprint. Housing has been an issue for people who are interested in relocating to work for the DTA but unable or uncertain about where they’d be able to live.
- Interest in maintaining and expanding DTA relationship with local schools
- Ridership at local colleges is growing but not to pre-pandemic levels. Might want to market more heavily, e.g., with an emphasis on environmental benefits and affordability.