

Mobile App Pilot Project To Make Travel Easier in Greater Minnesota, Rochester, Mankato

ST. PAUL, Minn. – When a person wants to take a trip across the country, they can choose from a variety of travel planning apps to help make that happen. But what if the trip they want to take is from Mankato to New Ulm, or within their own community, using non-personal transportation?

The Minnesota Department of Transportation has launched a pilot project to bring trip planning and payment technology for daily trips in areas less dense than in an urban setting.

Residents and visitors in southern and western Minnesota now have the ability to plan for and, in some cases, pay for public transit and intercity bus trips by using the Transit app. Travel and route information for these agencies went live within Transit on March 1.

Transit, a free app available for download in Google Play or the Apple App Store, is used in more than 300 cities around the world. It allows users to see route and travel options for public transit and connecting services. Select transit agencies will also have in-app ticketing, allowing riders to pay for fares electronically and show their device to bus drivers to ride.

“This pilot with Transit app focuses on rural areas because this technology has not yet been made available outside of Minnesota’s big cities,” said Elliott McFadden, who serves as MnDOT’s Greater Minnesota Shared Mobility program coordinator. “The project will be the first to bring the latest technology to make it easier to plan and take trips in many communities in Greater Minnesota.”

The pilot will run through April 2024 and is funded by two innovation grants from the Federal Transit Administration at a cost of \$1.9 million. Researchers from the University of Minnesota will study both of the projects to help determine whether this technology should be scaled to the rest of the state, with the goal of better informing future public transit investment in Greater Minnesota.

Participating transportation providers include (indicates in-app ticketing will be available):*

- Brown County Heartland Express
- Central Community Transit
- Jefferson Lines (by mid-March)
- Land to Air
- Morris Transit*
- Mankato Transit System*
- Minnesota River Valley Transit
- Prairie Five RIDES
- Rochester Public Transit (by the end of March)
- Rolling Hills Transit*
- SMART*
- The Otter Express*
- Tri-CAP*
- TRUE Transit
- UCAP Community Transit