

BETTER BUSING = BETTER BUSINESS

A newly-formed local group, The Winona Riders Coalition, is working to improve Winona's public transit system, build ridership, and expand routes and service hours (which, at present, do not include evenings or Sundays). 80% of the funds necessary for this project would be supplied by MnDOT; however, that support depends upon ridership, and our system is currently underutilized.

One proven way to increase ridership dramatically is to eliminate fares. Dozens of small urban transit systems across the nation are now fare-free, having secured alternative sources of revenue. The Winona Riders Coalition has already attracted the interest of several possible funding sources including Winona State University and various religious and social service organizations. The group is now turning to local businesses, highlighting the economic benefits of supporting a fare-free transit system in Winona.

Improved public transportation benefits local businesses and the local economy by...

- Increasing employment opportunities for those without personal transportation.
- Expanding the potential workforce – second and third shifts become options for more workers.
- Allowing businesses to minimize investment in parking.
- Providing visiting professionals easy access to venues and nightlife from their hotels.
- Connecting our student population to volunteer, internship, and job opportunities.
- Increasing patronage of businesses near bus stops and transfer points, particularly downtown.
- Making more parking spaces available near downtown businesses.
- Facilitating convenient multi-stop errands and shopping.
- Creating greater awareness of businesses along the bus routes.
- Enabling businesses & realtors to advertise properties as “on the free bus line.”
- Reducing traffic accidents and wear and tear on roads.
- Helping attract and retain employees, families, professionals, and businesses.
- Distinguishing Winona as an exceptional place to live – communities offering fare-free transit have frequently been recognized as among the most livable places in America.
- Creating an excellent PR opportunity for businesses providing support for fare-free service.

A more user-friendly transit system could also greatly benefit Winona's growing tourism industry:

- Hotels could offer their guests access to transportation throughout the city without the expense of owning and maintaining their own shuttles.
- Conference and festival planners often consider transportation when choosing hosting sites.
- MMAM could be reached by bus, offering visitors and locals convenient access to this gem.
- Winona could become a popular stay-over point for Amtrak passengers.
- Those visiting Winona via the Mississippi River (on the American Queen Steamboat or by pleasure craft) could more easily explore the town, dine and shop.
- Long-distance bikers who would otherwise pass through our town may decide to stop, board a bus, and see what the city has to offer.

If you or your business would like to improve our community, help your workforce reach you, or take advantage of an exciting public relations opportunity by supporting fare-free transit throughout Winona, please contact: Carrie Heckman (carrie_mckee@yahoo.com / 507-961-1022) or Margaret Trott (mtrott44@gmail.com / 507-458-4203).