

Background Information on the St. Cloud Metropolitan Transit Commission

1. Organization. The St. Cloud Metropolitan Transit Commission (SCMTC) was established by the Minnesota Legislature as a political subdivision transit authority of the State of Minnesota. The SCMTC's initial governing board was comprised of Waite Park mayor, Alcuin Ringsmuth; Sauk Rapids mayor, Arthur (Ben) Gratzek; St. Cloud councilman David Sauer; and St. Cloud councilman George Reasbeck. The SCMTC's original transit area was composed of the cities of St. Cloud, Sauk Rapids and Waite Park.
2. Initial Bus Service. The St. Cloud Bus Lines, Inc., owned by Stanley Preusse since 1966, had discontinued five of the firm's seven prior bus routes two weeks before the SCMTC establishment. Initially, the SCMTC debated whether or not to enter into an operations contract with the St. Cloud Bus Lines, Inc., or with the owners of the Voigt Charter Company. The SCMTC ultimately voted to negotiate a management contract with the Voigt Charter Company for bus service in the St. Cloud area. Stanley Preusse continued to operate one bus on routes in Sauk Rapids, Waite Park and St. Cloud through the balance of 1969. The Voigt Charter Company incorporated its city bus line as Transit Systems, Inc., and began bus service with three buses in October, 1969, on routes in Sauk Rapids, St. Cloud, and Waite Park and with buses periodically routed to the St. Cloud Hospital and to the South Side college area. Later in 1969, three additional buses were put into service.
3. 1970's Service. In 1970, Transit Systems, Inc. increased its bus service and the SCMTC levied a property tax for the bus service in the three communities. In 1973, the SCMTC obtained eight new 45-passenger diesel buses from the General Motors Corporation with financial assistance from the Urban Mass Transportation Administration of the United States Department of Transportation, and, in 1974, purchased one additional 45-passenger diesel bus. The new 1973-1974 GMC buses replaced a fleet of older 1957 leased buses. Also, in 1974, in cooperation with the St. Cloud Area Council for the Handicapped and various other local social service agencies, the SCMTC began specialized service for the handicapped. In 1975, the SCMTC obtained a piece of off-street urban renewal property for a central transfer point, reduced fares, eliminated the use of transfer tickets, received \$60,007 in supplemental aid funds under 1974 State legislation creating a Supplemental Transit Aid Program to cover up to two-thirds of the transit system's operating deficit, and received capital and operating funding assistance under the Urban Mass Transportation Act Section 5 program. Between 1975 and 1980, minibuses were added between the St. Cloud State University and high density student populations, added nine 1966 GMC buses purchased from the Twin Cities Metropolitan Transit Commission.
4. 1980's Management Changes. In 1983, the SCMTC made changes with the vendor operating the bus service. In August, 1986, the SCMTC ended its contract with Transit Systems, Inc., and shifted to directly employing bus operations personnel and directly managing the transit system. The 1986 had the effect of making the employees public sector employees rather than private sector employees. When the SCMTC was contemplating this change in early 1986, a law firm retained by the SCMTC contacted the Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA) about the pension coverage of its bus drivers, who were members of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and covered by the Teamsters Central States Pension Plan and Fund. The PERA staff forwarded the SCMTC law firm questions to its Special Assistant Attorney General, who informed the SCMTC that PERA General Employees Retirement Plan membership would become mandatory when the SCMTC assumed direct management and personnel employment on August 1, 1986. The SCMTC law firm indicated that it was the Teamster Union's indicated desire to obtain an exemption from PERA-General Employee Retirement Plan membership through special legislation and to continue Teamster's Central States Pension Plan coverage instead, but no special legislation to this effect appears to have been enacted. The SCMTC indicates that it was informed later in 1986 that the Attorney General's initial determination on mandatory PERA-General membership was modified and that it had a membership exclusion for its fixed-route bus drivers. Neither PERA nor the SCMTC has been able to produce any written evidence of the determination change.
5. Current Operations. The SCMTC governing board is composed of Dave Kleis, Mayor, City of St. Cloud; Amy Braig-Lindstrom, Council Member, City of Sartell; Harold Jesh, former mayor, City of Sauk Rapids; Carolyn Garven, Council Member, City of St. Cloud; and Rick Miller, Mayor, City of Waite Park. The SCMTC currently has two operating divisions, a fixed-route division and a dial-a-ride division. The fixed-route division has 21 fixed routes, serviced by 39 buses with an average age of eight years, and has an average number of 7,900 weekday passenger trips. The dial-a-ride division has 22 buses with an average age of three years and has an average number of 500 weekday trips. The SCMTC owns/operates a 77,425 square foot operations center that was built in 1985 and expanded in 1994, 1998, 2000, 2005 and 2006 and that houses administrative offices, the Dial-a-Ride dispatching, the Fixed Route call center, a maintenance shop, and vehicle storage, a multimodal transfer facility in downtown St. Cloud that was built in 1992 and remodeled and expanded in 2012, a Crossroads Center Bus Stop built in 2005, 56 bus shelters, and 700+ signed bus stops throughout the St. Cloud, Sartell, Sauk Rapids, and Waite Park transit service area. The SCMTC operating budget for Fiscal Year 2013 was \$9.5 million.