

# Commuting Resource

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Issue : 1

## I-35W Congestion Relief Program

The Urban Partnership Agreement Program (UPA) is a series of projects funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation and the State of Minnesota aimed at improving traffic by reducing congestion on Interstate I-35W using road pricing, transit, tele-work, and technology. When completed in 2010, commuters will experience more transportation choices, less traffic congestion, and a cleaner commute on one of the busiest roadways in Minnesota.

Funded by \$133.3 million in federal funds and \$55.2 million in matching state funds, this innovative partnership allows Minnesota to leverage federal dollars and keep project costs low while pioneering new ways to move traffic. Building the UPA projects will create jobs and ultimately increase safety on the road, move goods more efficiently, and improve the quality of life for motorists traveling a vital section of interstate.

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## Get Ready to Ride the Line in 2009

Beginning in late 2009, the Northstar Commuter Rail Line will offer service from Big Lake to downtown Minneapolis.

As part of the state's first commuter rail line, Northstar trains will provide a fast, reliable, safe and affordable alternative to sitting in traffic congestion.



together with the Hiawatha Light Rail Line, will give commuters fast, affordable service all the way from Big Lake to the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and the Mall of America.

Northstar is designed to be easy for anyone to ride.

*Ride the Line continued page 3*

It will form the northern leg of a 51-mile transit corridor that



## Telecommuting Facts

\* There are an estimated 12.4 million telecommuters nationwide.

\* The number of Americans whose employer allows them to work remotely at least one day a month increased 25% in one year (2005-2006) and 63% in two years (2004-2006).

\* It is estimated that approximately 45 million Americans worked remotely at least one day in 2006.

\* WorldatWork estimates that 100 million U.S. workers will telecommute by 2010.

[www.telecommutect.com](http://www.telecommutect.com)

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The Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area was one of five regions of the country collectively awarded a total of \$853 million in federal discretionary funds. Other cities receiving UPA funds include Miami (62.9 million), New York City (354.5 million), San Francisco (158.7 million), and the Seattle area (138.7 million)

This project will impact Anoka County in a couple of ways. First, the funds will pay for the construction of an expanded park-and-ride lot serving the I-35W corridor. Construction is expected to begin this spring. In addition, the Anoka County TMO will be offering resources for employers interested in setting up a tele-work program for their employees. If you would like to participate in a tele-work pilot program, call 763-862-4260.

Watch our web site for more information or visit [www.dot.state.mn.us/upa](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/upa)

*Ride the Line continued from page 1*

As Minnesota's first commuter rail service, Northstar will offer unique benefits to residents and businesses along the Northstar Corridor. Northstar Commuter Rail is scheduled to operate approximately every 30 minutes during the weekday peak rush hours of 6:00 a.m. to 8:40 a.m. and 3:50 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. It will connect to the Hiawatha Light Rail Line, which operates roughly between 4:00 a.m. and 1:00 a.m. with trains departing every seven minutes during rush hours and less frequently during non-peak times.

### Weekday Schedule

On weekday mornings, Northstar trains will make five trips from Big Lake to Minneapolis and one reverse trip from Minneapolis to Big Lake.

### Weekends & Holiday Schedule

Northstar will offer three round trips on each weekend day and on holidays. Northstar will also offer some special event service.



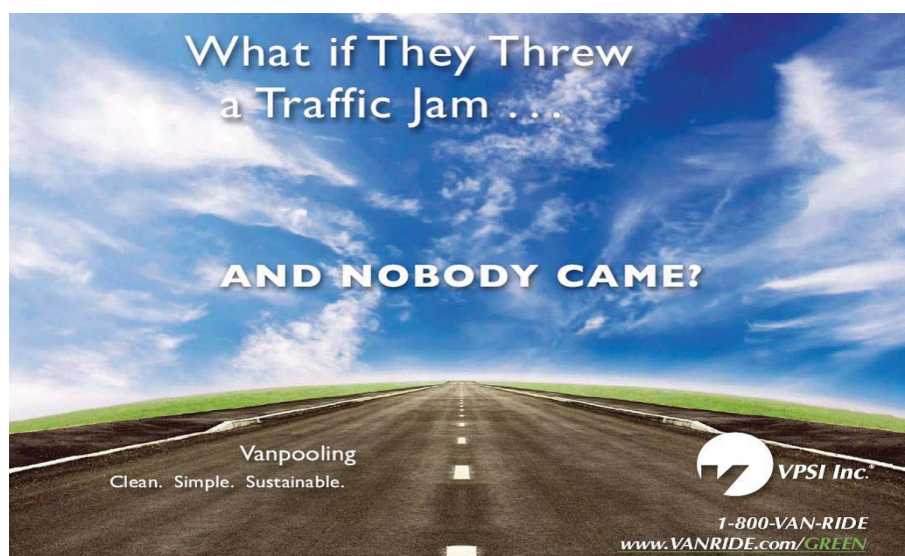
To sign up for Northstar updates please visit [www.mn-getonboard.com](http://www.mn-getonboard.com)

# New Tax Benefits for 2009 for bike commuters, vanpools, and transit.

## Increase to Parking and Transit Benefits

In October, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), released new caps for the transportation fringe benefit. Effective January 1, 2009, the monthly limitation under the 132(f) regarding the aggregate fringe benefit exclusion amount for transportation in a vanpool and transit pass, is \$120.

The monthly limitation under the 132 (f) regarding the benefit exclusion amount for qualified parking is \$320.



For more information visit [www.irs.gov/pub/irs-drop/rp-08-66pdf](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-drop/rp-08-66pdf)

## Fringe benefit to bicycle commuters

Transportation fringe benefit to bicycle commuters, Sec 211 of the Bailout Bill states beginning in 2009 employers reimburse employees tax free for "reasonable" expenses relating to their bike commute if the bicycle is used as a "substantial part" of the commuters trip to work each month. It can't be combined with other commuter tax-free fringe benefits.

[www.bikeleague.org/news/100708faq.php](http://www.bikeleague.org/news/100708faq.php)



Watch for the Commuter Challenge, Bike to Work Day, and Bike 2 Benefits this spring and summer!



**Now Available!**  
The new 2009 Park & Bike Trail Map Commuting Guide.

To request your free copy or to order copies for your business or community group call **763-862-4260.**



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**We're on the Web!**  
**[www.AnokaCountyTMO.com](http://www.AnokaCountyTMO.com)**

## **Dates to Remember**

February 2 - Ground Hog Day

February 14 - St. Valentine's Day

February 16 - President's Day

March 8 - Daylight Saving Time Begins

March 17 - St. Patrick's Day

March 20 - First Day of Spring

*The Anoka County Transportation Management Organization (TMO) helps local employers and commuters explore different choices such as carpooling, vanpooling, tele-work, transit, biking, walking, or flexible work hours. It is our goal to help make commuting easier, healthier, and more enjoyable.*

*These options can help you save money on fuel, improve your health, and keep our environment clean. With a little planning and consideration you might find that walking, biking, or taking transit to run errands or commute is as efficient as taking your car.*

*In addition, the TMO serves as a community resource providing information such as project detours and project time lines to help reduce traffic congestion around the areas impacted by road construction.*

Sources: [www.dot.state.mn.us/upa](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/upa)  
[www.mn-getonboard](http://www.mn-getonboard), [www.telecommutect.com](http://www.telecommutect.com)

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