

MINNESOTA STATE FAIR

NEWS RELEASE

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Opening Day Is One Month Away: Free or Low-Cost Options for Getting to the 2024 Minnesota State Fair

Note: Minnesota State Fair CEO Renee Alexander is available for interviews about the fair's transportation plan on Monday, July 22, 8:30-11:30 a.m. and 1:30-4:30 p.m. Please reach out to media@mnstatefair.org with requests.

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St. Paul, Minn. – The 2024 Minnesota State Fair's opening day is exactly one month away, and today, details about the many free and low-cost options for getting to the fairgrounds during the upcoming 12 days of fun, Aug. 22 - Labor Day, Sept. 2, are available so guests can start planning. The State Fair is one of the largest, best-attended events in the region, and nearly half of its more than 1.8 million guests use some form of public transportation to get to and from the event. With bus ridership growing post-pandemic, the fair continues to partner with several transportation organizations – Lorenz Bus Service, Metro Transit, Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA) and SouthWest Transit – to provide and expand the free or low-cost bus options to bring guests from locations throughout the Twin Cities directly to the fair's gates. For those wishing to drive and park on-site, the daily parking fee of \$20 remains the same as 2023. Visit mnstatefair.org/get-here/ for complete transportation and parking information.

“On an average fair day, attendance can be more than 150,000 – equivalent to two-and-a-half sold-out Vikings games,” Minnesota State Fair CEO Renee Alexander said. “We understand our guests want to get to the fair as safely and conveniently as possible so they can make the most of their day, and our goal is to make that happen as efficiently and affordably as possible.” She added, “We are proud of the year-round planning done by our team of staff and partners to provide transportation options for not only guests, but livestock exhibitors, employees, vendors, performers, volunteers and other fair participants as well.” Alexander went on to advise, “On some days and at certain times, we know that traffic and parking can get congested, so we encourage guests to have a Plan B and C if their preferred lot or route is unavailable. There are many options to choose from, and we encourage fair fans to explore all of them ahead of time.”

Transportation and parking options for 2024 include:

State Fair Free Park & Ride Service:

- Guests can park free and ride a free shuttle to and from the fairgrounds beginning at 8 a.m. daily. The free Park & Ride service consists of 31 lots within a short distance of the fairgrounds; this includes the expanded availability of one of the larger Park & Ride locations – the I-35W & Co. Rd. C Park & Ride Ramp (2000 Iona Lane, Roseville) – now available for the full duration of the fair (previously available for only five of the 12 days). For a list of Park & Ride locations, hours and other details, visit mnstatefair.org/get-here/free-park-and-ride/.
- “Lorenz Bus Service has been the transportation provider for the State Fair's free Park & Ride service since 2009,” Benjamin Canine, chief operating officer of Lorenz Bus Service Inc., said. “We are proud to have partnered with the State Fair to build the service into what it is today – a nationally lauded, independent transportation network servicing over 30 locations. On average, nearly one million fairgoers take a Lorenz bus to the fair each year. Our team always finds providing this service for guests of the Great Minnesota Get-Together to be a rewarding, meaningful experience.”
- For those with accessibility needs, the Park & Ride service includes the Oscar Johnson Arena lot, located close to the fairgrounds off Energy Park Drive, reserved for those with accessibility parking certificates or license plates and serviced by special wheelchair-accessible buses. In addition, accessible service extends to all Park & Ride lots this year. Canine explained, “We pride ourselves on having the largest private accessible bus fleet in the nation – with at least one accessible bus servicing each State Fair parking location.”

- Since 1974, the State Fair has provided a free Park & Ride service, with the expense of the lots, bus services and staffing funded entirely by the State Fair.
- Recent years' Park & Ride ridership numbers: 940,000 in 2023 (State Fair attendance was 1.836 million); 1 million in 2022 (State Fair attendance was 1.842 million); 483,200 in 2021 (State Fair attendance was 1.3 million); State Fair was canceled in 2020; and 1.13 million in 2019 (State Fair attendance was 2.127 million).

State Fair Express Bus Service:

- State Fair Express Bus service is offered by Metro Transit, Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA) and SouthWest Transit from farther-out sites throughout the Twin Cities area. Guests can park at these locations for free and ride a bus directly to and from the fairgrounds for a small fee; fares and discounts vary by service provider. All service providers are keeping their fares the same as 2023. For more information and a list of State Fair Express Bus service locations, visit mnstatefair.org/get-here/metro-transit/.
- In 2024, Metro Transit has increased its State Fair Express Bus service to six area Park & Rides (up from four in 2023). Those Park & Rides are located in Blaine, Bloomington, Cottage Grove, Maplewood (new in 2024), Minnetonka and Maple Grove (new in 2024). All lots except Maple Gove will operate the 12 days of the fair; Maple Grove will be open weekends and Labor Day. Round-trip tickets can be purchased in advance through Metro Transit's app or website for \$5; cash-only fares can be purchased at boarding locations for \$6. "The Great Minnesota Get-Together is all about showcasing the best our state has to offer, and that includes transit," Metro Transit General Manager Lesley Kandaras said. "We're excited to expand our offerings as we continue the tradition of providing safe, reliable and convenient trips to and from the State Fair in 2024." In 2023, 241,000 rides were provided to and from the fair on Metro Transit Express Buses, an increase of 33 percent over 2022. For more information, visit Metro Transit at metrotransit.org/statefair.
- In 2024, MVTA will offer three State Fair Express Bus routes – from Burnsville Transit Station, Eagan Transit Station and Southbridge Crossing Park and Ride in Shakopee – with 15-to-20-minute frequency all days of the fair and dropping off at the Transit Hub at the fairgrounds. Tickets are \$6 round-trip and can be purchased in advance on the RideMVTA App, with exact cash, or with credit cards. Children 5 and under ride free. "MVTA is excited to facilitate access to this year's State Fair for our south metro communities," said MVTA Chief Executive Officer Luther Wynder. "Last year, we achieved record ridership with over 110,000 rides to the fair, and we look forward to another successful year serving our communities." For more information, visit mvta.com/statefair.
- In 2024, SouthWest Transit has expanded its service to four stations (up from three in 2023) in Carver (new in 2024), Chanhassen, Chaska and Eden Prairie. Also new in 2024, bus service is available from all lots every day except Labor Day, Sept. 2, when no service is available. (This is an increase to 11 days from nine days of service provided in 2023.) Round-trip fare is \$6 for adults; discounts are available on Seniors Days and Military Appreciation Days; disabled veterans and children 5 and under ride free; additional fare discounts available. Tickets can be purchased through the Token Transit App or at Express Bus stations. "We're proud to provide expanded State Fair service from the Southwest Twin Cities suburbs this year for 11 days of the fair (every day except Labor Day), plus a new park and ride location in the City of Carver. Every one of our coach-style buses features comfy seats, cold A/C and convenient Wi-Fi access," said Erik Hansen, Southwest Transit CEO. In 2023, more than 77,000 people boarded SouthWest buses to the fair, up from 68,500 in 2022. For more information, visit swtransit.org/events/mn-state-fair/.
- All buses servicing Metro Transit, MVTA and SouthWest Transit Express Bus routes are ADA-compliant, and accessible and bike parking is available at all locations. With the addition of three State Fair Express Bus locations and two additional days of service, more bike parking is now available to guests in the farther-out suburbs.

Metro Transit Regular Bus Route Service:

- Metro Transit operates three regular bus routes that serve stops near the fairgrounds – the METRO A Line on Snelling Avenue, Route 3 on Como Avenue and Route 61 on Larpenteur Avenue. Trips on these routes run frequently throughout the day and into the evening. Fairgoers traveling on regular routes are encouraged to purchase an All-Day Pass in advance using the Metro Transit app. An All-Day Pass can be used for unlimited rides until 2 a.m. on the date after purchase.
- Throughout the fair, Metro Transit actively monitors regular route service and has additional buses on standby. To ensure buses are arriving at scheduled intervals, the standby buses are put into service if/when there are delays due to heavy traffic on local roads. To provide the most capacity possible, the agency also maximizes the use of larger 60-foot buses and three-car train sets. For more information visit metrotransit.org/statefair.

- Ridership on Metro Transit regular bus routes continues to increase. In 2023, ridership was 49,600. This compares to 36,500 and 25,660 in 2022 and 2021, respectively.

Rideshare – Uber, Lyft and Taxi Service:

- App-based ride services such as Uber and Lyft have two designated drop-off and pick-up points located on the north and south ends of the fairgrounds. The fairgrounds is geofenced for the Uber and Lyft apps to guide users to these locations to facilitate less-confusing drop-offs and pick-ups.
- In response to growing usage of ride-hailing and transportation network companies to get to and from the fair, the rideshare drop-off and pick-up locations were recently expanded, and this year are reconfigured to allow more staging space for waiting vehicles.
- During the State Fair, taxi drop-off and pick-up is located at the Loop Gate (#9), on Como Avenue on the south end of the fairgrounds.
- Visit mnstatefair.org/get-here/taxi-and-rideshare/ for more information.

On-Site Parking for Cars, Bikes and Motorcycles:

- There are approximately 5,000 parking spots available for the public in lots on the north, west and south ends of the fairgrounds. Of those spots, approximately 800 are designated as accessible. The parking fee on-site is \$20, the same as 2023.
- Three free secure and monitored bike parking areas are available on the north, west and south ends of the fairgrounds with space for up to 930 bikes. The largest bike lot, located at Loop Gate (#9) on Como Avenue, was more than doubled in size in 2023 from a capacity of 250 bikes to 600. In 2024, the fair purchased additional bike racks to more efficiently park bikes in these lots. Visit mnstatefair.org/get-here/bicycle/ for more information on biking to the State Fair.
- Motorcycle parking is available for \$15 in a secure lot on the south side of Como Avenue.
- Visit mnstatefair.org/get-here/vehicle/ for a map of State Fairgrounds parking lot locations.

Neighborhood Parking:

- The neighborhoods surrounding the fairgrounds provide parking options for guests, including private residences, lots and on-street parking.
- Each city sets its own parking policies, and guests should be mindful of various restrictions.
- The State Fair also asks our guests to help the fair be a good neighbor by not littering, being loud, or blocking driveways, alleys or emergency lanes with their vehicles.

During the State Fair, parking and transportation updates for State Fair lots will be posted on the Updates page of the fair’s website at mnstatefair.org/updates/parking/.

The State Fair is financially self-supporting and fully funds its multimillion-dollar transportation and parking operation without receiving state appropriation. Our transit partners also commit sizeable resources in addition to maintaining their regular route service.

The Minnesota State Fair is one of the largest and best-attended expositions in the world. Showcasing Minnesota’s finest agriculture, art and industry, the Great Minnesota Get-Together is 12 Days of Fun Ending Labor Day, Aug. 22 through Sept. 2. Visit mnstatefair.org for more information. Follow along on Facebook, X, Instagram and TikTok @mnstatefair for year-round updates.