2004 Metro Transit Bus Strike

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Twin Cities Bus Strike

- March 2004 – Members of Amalgamated Transit Union local 1005 voted to strike.

- Were Objecting to:
  - Council’s proposal to increase health insurance premiums for working members and cut health care coverage for retirees.
  - Its proposal to freeze wages for 2004 and have a 1% increase the next year

- Strike lasts 6 weeks. Members agree to terms that are much less than what they were demanding.
Transit Labor Relations - History

- Unions in transit industry go back a long way
  - Mid 1800s – Workers on New York’s Third Avenue streetcars unionized Short lived.
  - 1885 a more stronger union formed – got concessions from management – encouraged unionization elsewhere in transit industry.
  - 1892 – 1st Nation wide transit workers union – what has today become the ATU.
- 1910 – 1920 Emergence of Bus Transport in cities.
- Bus transport provided by private companies
- Through World War II increased use of busses.
  - Fuel was scarce
  - Rubber was scarce
- After WWII Roads Expanding
  - Rising Incomes
  - Cars becoming affordable
- Transit ridership declines.
- 1950s and 60s – Transit firms in financial crisis - pay cuts, strikes, financial woes – many transit companies went out of business.
History…Continued

- 1964 - UMTA passed by congress.
  - Provided federal funds for states/cities to own and operate their own transit systems.
  - Ensured that collective bargaining rights would be preserved as employees moved from privately owned transit companies to public companies.

- At the state level, ATU and local leaders push for legislation for local public transit systems.

- States had to allow collective bargaining for transit workers in order to qualify for federal funding.

- By 1970’s most transit systems are publicly owned and operated.

- Workers right’s to strike without loss of job is assured.
To Strike or Not to Strike…

- Labor – Why not strike?
  - Loss of income
  - Company may end up in a worse financial situation

- Labor – Why strike?
  - Last bargaining chip.
  - Gives company incentives to settle disputes.
Incentives to Settle

- **Private Sector**
  - Profit maximizers
  - Loss of Revenue
  - Loss of trained workers
  - Competition can harm company’s position in industry

- **Public Sector**
  - Not profit maximizers
  - No competition, except from other modes
  - Loss of revenue not as big a player here.
  - Indirect pressure from the public through the Legislature and Governor's office.
Who was affected?

- **Bus Drivers/Passengers**
  - Loss of job/regular form of travel
- **Drivers**
  - Heavier traffic levels
  - Greater usage of parking lots
- **Bikers/Pedestrians**
  - Theft
  - Increase in density
Strategies for Mitigation

- Few and far between
- Drive, bike or walk
- Commuters -> parking lots/meters
- Timeframe of strike (early March until mid-April) was an issue
- Slushy/snowy/wet roads and sidewalks
Effect on Congestion

- Some, but not more than expected
- Commuters into the metro area experienced some delays of *up to* 30 minutes compared to usual travel time
- Delays with parking as well, plus the increase in payment for a ramp space or at a meter
Where was the congestion?

- Knowing a strike was imminent, affected citizens and communities mobilized
  - Deeply discounted parking rates in city-owned ramps for carpoolers.
  - Carpools, shuttles, schedule shifts
- Some people made fewer trips
  - Transit dependent workers traveled less
  - Fewer peak-period trips to avoid congestion
Where was the congestion? Cont.

- Many Bus systems were still operational
  - Opt Out providers (MVTA, SW Metro, etc.) were still in business, except for MetroTransit-operated routes (These routes use freeways).

- Congestion predictions misinformed
  - “75,000 riders”, “40% of downtown workers”
  - Downtown Minneapolis drive/ride mode split calculations can be confusing...
Downtown Mode Split

- Calculated in different ways, all depend on:
  - Methodology (question asked, sample size)
  - Geographical area in question (CBD vs. entire “downtown”- Loring Park to Riverfront)
  - Time of day: peak period, “peak hour”, all day, 24-hour, inbound versus outbound.
  - Type of trip: work, shopping, short-term, long-term.
  - Mode of transit: LRT vs. bus trips (a new issue)
A few examples of mode splits

- **United States Census: 25.0%**
  - How do you get to work? For all downtown Mpls workers (136,000), 34,000 said “transit”.
    - Measured all downtown, 24 hrs, work trips

- **Cordon Count: 34% (Mpls Plan)**
  - Survey teams at 100+ entrance points counting people entering downtown
    - Measured peak period, all downtown, all trips

- **Employer Survey- 24-58%**
  - (source: SRF Consulting, 2000 Downtown Transportation Study)
    - Survey responses at dozens of major employers in downtown area, 1990 & ‘98-99
      - Looks at short term vs. long term trips, all day, by downtown area
Travel Behavior Inventory

- Sample of 5% of households in Metropolitan area, asked question “how do you get to/from work?”
- For downtown Mpls (split into 3 areas), work trips, 24 hours (split into AM/PM peak, off peak, peak hours)
- Results affected by small sample size for some areas.
## Results from TBI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Inbound” transit users</th>
<th>AM peak hour</th>
<th>AM peak period</th>
<th>PM peak hour</th>
<th>PM peak period</th>
<th>Off peak</th>
<th>Entire day</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td><strong>68.2</strong></td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>39.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer core</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frame</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td><strong>43.4</strong></td>
<td><strong>40.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>31.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>19.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>18.8</strong></td>
<td><strong>26.8</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions about mode split

- Mode split depends on question asked
  - For total “displaced” workers, rely on census data
    - Popular Misconception: 55,000 workers take the bus to downtown Minneapolis for work every day during rush hour. In reality, 34,000 ride in ALL DAY
  - For Peak Period congestion forecasting, much trickier
    - Depends on time, direction, CBD area, trip type, destination
    - All of these factors affect congestion

- What about downtown St. Paul?
  - Small mode split (12.5% in census) and fewer jobs (<45,000 vs 135,000+ in Mpls) = ~5,000 workers ride to work
Since the Strike… recovery

- Post-strike ridership was initially quite low
  - May ’04 rides 16% below May ’03, despite comparable February months in each year
  - Opt-out operated routes fared worse: 45% lower in May ’04 vs. May ’03

- Recovery occurred quickly
  - Reg. Route MT ridership only down 8% in July ’04 vs. July ’03, without accounting for LRT

- Difficult to gauge recovery in exact terms
  - LRT opened June 26
  - Many “opt-out” routes contracted to MetroTransit reverted back to private operators
  - Annual variation/long term will tell real story
Questions

- Which side won in the transit strike?
- Which side(s) lost in the strike?
- Is the transit system important for the reduction of congestion? For “the poor”?
- What alternatives exist to transit? Are any feasible?
- Did the Met council aim to “bust the union”, as many strikers charged?