

Deborah A. Dyson, Legislative Analyst
296-8291

Metro Mobility

This information brief provides basic historical information on metro mobility.

Readers of this brief may also wish to see *Transit Operations Funding, Overview of the 1994-1995 Biennium* House Research information brief, August 1994.

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The Regional Transit Board (RTB) provides metro mobility, a special transportation service and the primary complementary paratransit service in the metropolitan area. Metro mobility offers demand-responsive, door-to-door transit service to persons who cannot use regular route service because of their disabilities.¹

Because metro mobility is funded by state general fund appropriations, its costs, funding and levels of service have been key issues for legislators. Since its inception in 1976 as a demonstration program, demand for metro mobility services, and the accompanying costs, have continued to climb. Ridership per year has gone from a few hundred thousand to well over a million. At this time there are approximately 20,000 people certified to use metro mobility. The per trip subsidy, however, has not changed much in current dollars. If one accounts for inflation, moreover, the per trip subsidy actually has declined. In 1979 constant dollars (or real dollars) it has gone from \$9.64 in 1979 to \$4.98 in 1993.²

The table on the next page shows the history of metro mobility ridership, subsidies, and total costs.

Metro Mobility History³

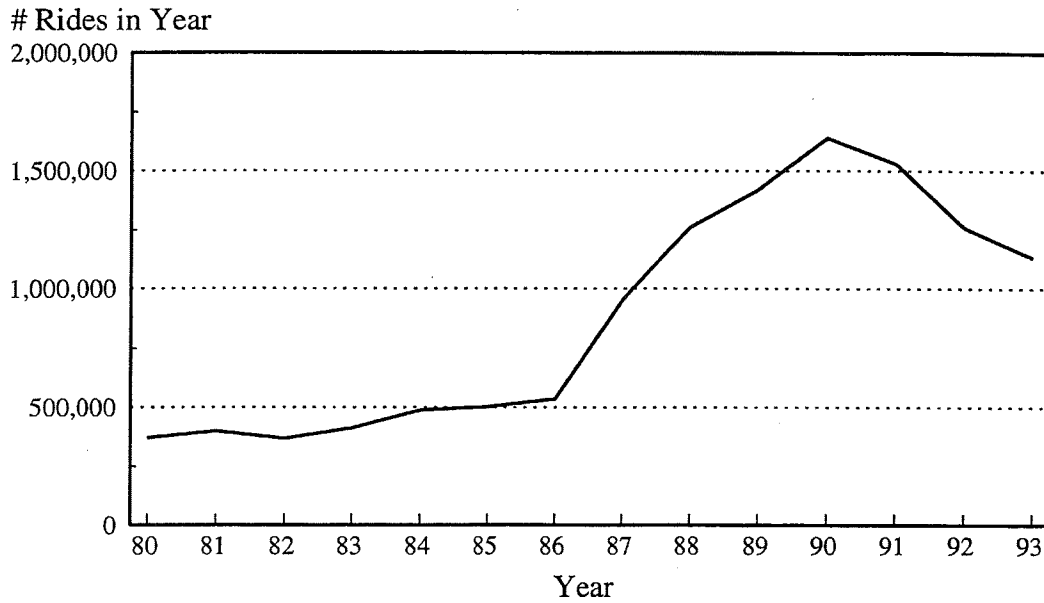
Year	Service Area	# Rides in Year	Per Trip Subsidy	Total Program Cost ⁴
1976	demonstration: part of south Minneapolis	several hundred		
1977	same	same		
1978	larger part of Minneapolis			
1979	Mpls., St. Paul, and 1st ring suburbs	182,000	\$9.64	
1980		372,000	\$9.16	\$3,690,000
1981		399,000	\$9.62	\$4,150,000
1982		368,900	\$10.89	\$4,300,000
1983		412,000	\$10.87	\$4,800,000
1984		487,000	\$10.21	\$5,350,000
1985		501,500	\$10.44	\$5,620,000
1986		535,000	\$9.94	\$5,640,000
1987	added n. & w. Henn., s. Anoka & n. Ramsey (from 280 sq. miles to 533 sq. miles)	952,945	\$7.61	\$8,200,000
1988	added w. Washington, n. Dakota & Scott, and e. Carver: service to all in the transit taxing district	1,260,099	\$8.00	\$11,300,000
1989		1,421,139	\$8.65	\$13,600,000
1990		1,639,722	\$9.01	\$16,400,000
1991		1,528,418	\$9.21	\$15,600,000
1992		1,260,611	\$9.61	\$17,300,000
1993	metro mobility service area of 661.3 sq. miles, including the ADA mandated area of approximately 570 sq. miles ⁵	1,134,000	\$9.45	\$16,019,920

Endnotes

1. The Metropolitan Council will be responsible for providing special transportation services after October 1, 1994. See Metropolitan Reorganization Act of 1994, chapter 628, abolishing the Regional Transit Board effective October 1, 1994, and transferring the RTB's powers, duties, and operations to the Metropolitan Council.
2. Using the implicit price deflator for state and local government purchases, as prepared by the United States Department of Commerce, and 1979 as the base year. *Economic Report of the President Transmitted to the Congress, February 1994, table B-3.*
3. RTB staff memorandum, *Metro Mobility History and Highlights* (spring 1992); RTB staff.
4. Sources include the state appropriation, fare revenue, and since 1990, agency reimbursement.
5. The rest of the 1105 square mile transit taxing district previously served by metro mobility is provided paratransit service by county operators.

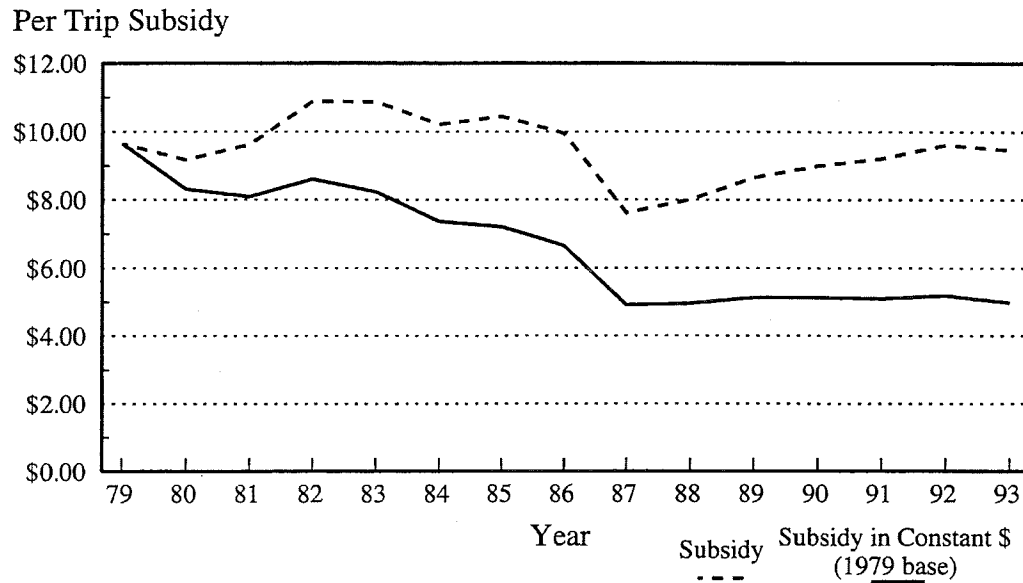
The graphs below show the trends for metro mobility ridership, subsidies, and total program costs from 1980 to 1993.

Metro Mobility Ridership



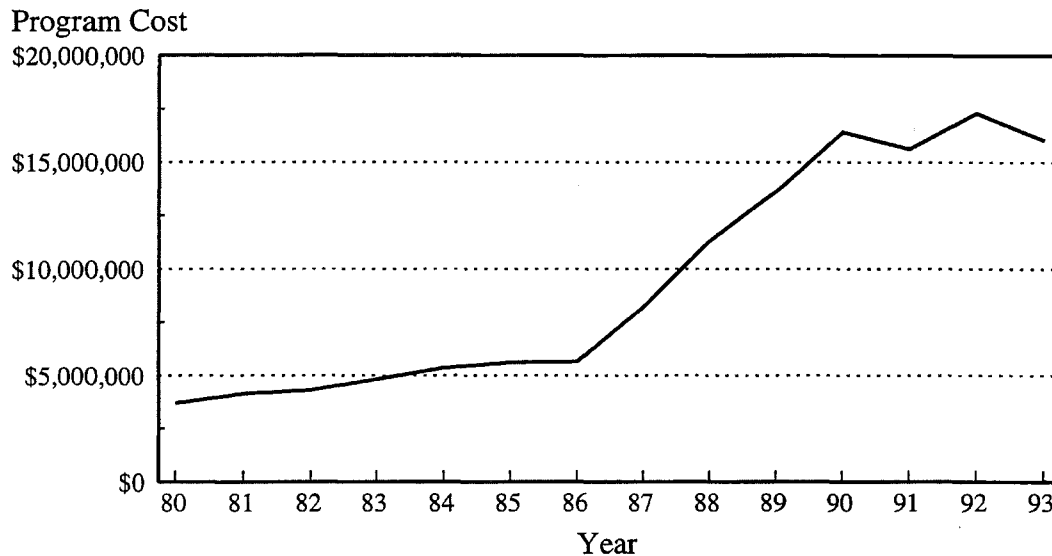
House Research Graphic

Metro Mobility Subsidies



House Research Graphic

Metro Mobility Total Program Costs



House Research Graphic

Service Structure

In 1993, the RTB restructured metro mobility in an attempt to contain costs and provide services more effectively. Metro mobility went from a decentralized system of 13 providers, each handling its own scheduling and dispatching, to a centralized system with a single administrator. ATE, Inc. provided scheduling, dispatching and administrative services. ATE was also responsible for overseeing the three companies operating the 150 vehicles. This service was then supplemented with taxi service as needed to accommodate demand.

As most people know, when the restructured service commenced in October 1993, metro mobility collapsed. By the end of the first week after restructuring went into effect, it was clear it would take time for the RTB and ATE to be able to provide the service on their own and Governor Carlson, therefore, called out the National Guard to drive the metro mobility vehicles.

As a result of the disintegration of service, metro mobility riders brought a class action lawsuit against the RTB and ATE. The suit was settled early in 1994 with ATE agreeing to pay \$1.15 million in damages and the RTB agreeing to provide riders with \$200,000 worth of vouchers.

In addition, as part of the settlement, ATE's contract as the metro mobility administrator was terminated. The RTB sought another administrator but received no responses to its request for proposal to replace ATE. The RTB then asked for and received legislative authorization to own and operate metro mobility. Since taking over direct operation of metro mobility in May 1994, the RTB has again restructured it as a semi-centralized service, with the three operating companies scheduling and dispatching in their respective service areas.