

Inside Lane

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FORWARD

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The Northstar Commuter Rail Line is now open for service from Big Lake to downtown Minneapolis for residents and businesses in one of the fastest growing transportation corridors in Minnesota.

The Northstar Line – the state's first commuter rail line – provides a fast, reliable, safe and affordable alternative to sitting in traffic congestion.

Get schedule and fare information [here](#).

Note for Metropass, U-Pass and Go-To College Pass customers

Metropasses, U-Passes and Go-To College Passes are accepted at Northstar stations. To use one of these passes, customers must validate their pass by touching it to the card reader before boarding. These passes are valid for \$3 toward the Northstar fare; the remaining fare is paid using stored value, which customers can [add to their card here](#).

Guaranteed Ride Home

Commuters who ride the bus or train, carpool, vanpool, bicycle or walk at least three days a week to work or school are eligible for the [Guaranteed Ride Home](#) program. Once enrolled or registered, a commuter will get two coupons every six months to use for cab fare reimbursement or for emergency bus or train fare.

Northstar Line customers are eligible for this free perk, but they should note that the limit for cab fare reimbursement is \$25 per coupon.

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Get ready for transit improvements in downtown Minneapolis

Beginning Dec. 14, more than 60 express bus routes will travel on the reconstructed Marquette and 2nd avenues in downtown Minneapolis.

Improvements on these streets mean that your trips will be faster and your transit experience easier and

more comfortable. Buses will be able to pass each other in a second bus-only lane, saving several minutes in travel time per trip.

Here are some [tips](#) to help commuters get ready.

Learn more

If you represent a business or organization interested in learning more about transit improvements on Marquette and 2nd, we'll come to you. To schedule a presentation, call 612-349-7478.

In November, brochures will be on buses that will travel on Marquette and 2nd. You can direct your employees [here](#) for more details or they can speak to a transit expert at 612-373-3333.

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Congratulations to the 2009 winners!



COMMUTER
CHOICE
AWARDS
2009

We recognized organizations and individuals for their creative solutions in promoting alternatives to driving alone.

The 2009 Commuter Choice Awards were presented today (Tuesday, Nov. 17) at Bloomington Center for the Arts.

Is your company or school among those being recognized? Congratulations to the [winners!](#)

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Thanks for supporting Rideshare to Work Month

The numbers are in!

During Rideshare to Work Month in October, there was a 37 percent overall increase of commuters who searched for potential rideshare partners with our free Rideshare Planner.

We promoted the effort to help commuters find a better way to work by providing a \$10 gift card for anyone who looked for a carpool or vanpool partner at least once during the month. We know that you supported Rideshare to Work Month by encouraging your own employees to share the ride.

You can help us keep up the momentum. Invite employees who want to share the ride to a brown-bag lunch or a similar gathering. Need more ideas? We can work with you to develop other ways for your employees to break the ice before they form their carpool or vanpool.

Contact your [representative](#) for assistance.

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EMPLOYER SPOTLIGHT

Ecolab

Ecolab's Information Technology department in Eagan was a few months into a telecommuting pilot program when bright green billboards promoting eWorkplace captured the company's attention.

A partnership with [eWorkplace](#), a state-sponsored program to help metro-area employers expand or begin telework programs, provided Ecolab with additional tools to roll out a telework initiative for IT employees who work in help-desk positions.

Results of the company's pilot program were positive, which prompted an expansion of the program, said Micah Vono, of IT Communications & Knowledge Management.

"We saw an increase in every area of performance when an associate worked from home vs. in the office," he said. "They handled 16 percent more calls when working from home, were more available and seemed happier overall as a result."

To help employees make decisions about the option of working from home, Ecolab enlisted the help of eWorkplace to provide e-learning programs, one for staff and another for managers of potential teleworkers.

The company also provided a central online resource for employees to review all teleworking information in one place. Employees had to submit a proposal to be considered.

The goal of the program?

"It's really more about meeting or exceeding business objectives through an alternative work arrangement that is flexible and convenient for the employee and the business alike," Vono said. "Teleworking doesn't fit everyone's job situation, personality or work style, so we don't have a certain number of employees in mind."

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