

# Metro buses, MetroLink ridership hits new high

BY WILL BUSS  
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A record number of commuters rode Metro buses, paratransit vans and MetroLink last month.

The public transportation system has reported that more than 5 million commuters rode the MetroLink last month — the highest number for the month of May and a 14 percent increase over the total recorded in May 2006.

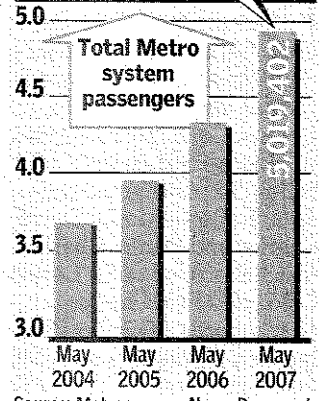
Metro Director of Planning and System Development Todd Plesko said the transit system is on pace to reach 54 million riders for the year. He attributes the surge to high gas prices and to MetroLink's recent extension with new stops across the Mississippi River at Clayton and Shrewsbury.

"We've radically expanded the number of places people can get to from the new rail alignment in the core area between Emerson Park to Forest Park, which has doubled our frequency," Plesko said. "Whereas before we were running every 10 minutes, now it's every five (minutes)."

Also witnessing record ridership is RideFinders, a program of the Madison County Transit, which links commuters from neighboring areas who travel each day to similar workplaces. Launched in 1994, the program is funded by a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration.

RideFinders marketing director Joe Wright said increasing gas prices continue

5,019,402 passengers boarded Metro trains, buses and paratransit vans last month resulting in a 14 percent increase in ridership over May 2006.



Source: Metro News-Democrat

to feed the growing demand for the ridesharing program, which also set a record for the month of May with 400 new carpoolers and vanpoolers. And the program is on pace to add another 300 pools by the end of this month.

"We've had a pretty phenomenal growth pattern," Wright said. "In a year-over-year's time, the net gain has been almost 1,000 more carpoolers and vanpoolers compared to a year ago."

Wright said the program currently serves about 6,250 commuters who work in St. Louis city and St. Louis, Franklin, Jefferson and St. Charles counties in Missouri as well as Madison, St. Clair and Monroe counties in Illinois.

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