

THE MBA AND PARTNERS EDUCATE PUBLIC ON TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS



The Northstar Commuter Rail is one transportation option to Target Field.

As the excitement and anticipation builds for Opening Day at Target Field, the Minnesota Ballpark Authority (MBA), the Twins, Hennepin County, Metro Transit, the city of Minneapolis and other interested stakeholders know transportation-related questions are mounting, too.

Where exactly is Target Field? What's the best way to get to the ballpark? How close can I park? Will there be traffic tie-ups? Should I take a bus or a train?

To make it easier for Minnesotans to answer these questions, the team and the MBA have been working closely with its partners over the past several months to develop a strategic transportation communications plan. At the January 15th MBA Board meeting, Kevin Smith, Executive Director of Public Affairs for the Twins, and Bob McFarlin of Weber Shandwick, unveiled a comprehensive information campaign to help fans find Target Field, what routes to take, and which mode of transportation best fits their desired game-day experience.

"Maybe as important or more important than a good-tasting hot dog and a fresh popcorn is a great experience in getting our fans to Target Field for games and then home," Smith told MBA Commissioners.

McFarlin presented the details of the strategic plan and announced the launch of a new website: DestinationTargetField.com, which is specifically designed to educate spectators about getting to and from the ballpark. The website encourages fans to plan ahead, arrive early and use transit.

The MBA's Executive Director Dan Kenney says the goal of the group, which is made up of 10 public and private entities, is to effectively communicate solutions to ease game-day congestion and ensure fans have a great experience as well as a positive impression of Target Field and downtown Minneapolis. "The ballpark site is the new front door of downtown Minneapolis," Kenney said. "We need to communicate to fans that there is a mode of transportation for everyone, and that the journey – whether by car, train, bus, bike or on foot – can be convenient, cost-effective, safe and fun."

Target Field will be one of the most transit-friendly sports facilities in the country, but Kenney acknowledges the ballpark's location in the historic Warehouse District of Minneapolis and the complex system of city streets that surround it could be unfamiliar to many Minnesotans. And when an anticipated 40,000 fans per game head for Target Field, there may be transportation challenges.

Kevin Smith said successfully managing the flow of fans will depend in part on good communication by officials and in part on the actions of fans. Smith also noted Minnesotans should choose their transportation mode to match their preferred experience.



Bob McFarlin of Weber Shandwick and Kevin Smith of the Twins discuss the strategic communications transportation plan at the MBA Board meeting.

For example, if fans plan to visit the Warehouse District restaurants after the game, coming by car and parking in one of the 7,000 parking spaces located adjacent to Target Field, might be the best option. Because of normal urban congestion, it will take time for all parking ramps to empty, especially those closest to the new ballpark.

On the other hand, if fans want to go home immediately after a game, hopping on the Hiawatha Light Rail Train (LRT), Northstar Commuter Rail or a Metro Transit bus might be better choices. Kenney says the MBA and its stakeholders are strongly encouraging fans to use one of the transit options (many of which will offer discounted fares) for mobility, environmental stewardship and convenience.

Target Field Station is now the service hub for the Hiawatha (LRT) and the Northstar Commuter Rail Line. In addition, more than 20 regularly scheduled bus routes provide service from various locations throughout the Twin Cities to stops at or near Target Field.

For walkers and bikers, the Cedar Lake Trail provides both pedestrian and bicycle access to the ballpark. More than 300 bicycle parking options will be available at or near Target Field and there are nearly 10,000 parking spaces in 23 parking facilities located within a 10-15 minute walk to Target Field.

With so many transportation options available, Kevin Smith believes the best advice may be to let the “past be the guide.” Target Field is only 12 blocks from the Metrodome, and, for the vast majority of fans, the same parking and transit patterns they used before will provide easy and convenient access to the new ballpark.

“Whether fans come early or stay late, they should remember traffic slowdowns can be a normal part of the downtown event experience,” Smith said. “We’re encouraging people to plan ahead and pick the best mode of transportation to minimize delays and maximize their enjoyment at Target Field.”