

# Green Fee gets green light

*MSU, MSSA, and city officials begin preparations*

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The "Green Transportation Fee," as it has been called by many at Minnesota State University, Mankato, was passed shortly after the finale of this previous semester.

The proposal originally went up for vote at the MSSA April 10 general election, though participation levels were low. With only 1,621 votes cast during the election, the ballot participation target level fell short by 3 ballots.

In an Administrative Cabinet Meeting, President Richard Davenport and Vice President of Finance and Administration Rick Straka approved the proposal, which will increase student fees by 75 cents per credit. The money will be used to improve bike racks at MSU, expand Mankato's bus service and offer MSU students the ability to ride the bus at no cost to them.

The fee is expected to drastically change the manner in which students, faculty and staff travel to MSU. These services would be expected to reduce

vehicle parking demand, allowing the University to effectively deal with what could be considered a parking stall pitfall.

Included in the original plan by MSSA leaders, was a proposal to expand Stomper's Express' Thursday, Friday and Saturday runs to Walmart and the River Hills Mall from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. to include Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

The increased student fees are expected to bring in an

estimated \$250,000 to \$276,000 annually which will be directed towards covering existing busing costs currently unmet by state federal aid and bus advertisements.

A condition built into the proposal ensures that the Greater Mankato Transit system would be compensated in the event that revenue is lost from MSU-related cash fare riders



• courtesy of Fakhar Raza

*MSSA officials, David Cowan, and Michael Anderson gathered May 22 for a photo op commencing Green Fee action.*

who would have otherwise not purchased a \$45 semester bus pass or \$16 thirty day pass in the past.

Essentially, the proposed fee intended to extend the bus service to those who otherwise wouldn't be able to afford the bus service, current MSSA Vice President David Schieler said.

Former MSSA President Matt Lexcen and Vice President Moriah Miles were noted as being in favor of the initiative, stating that bus ridership should increase, utilizing the proposed bus system improvements available through the passage of the Green Transportation Fee.

"Recognizing that complaints exist about tuition and activity fee costs, I'm amazed that top MSSA (Minnesota State Student Association) leaders, and Student Senators, "led from the front" and aggressively supported a student activity fee increase to create an environment that promotes a fundamental change in how people travel to and from campus," said David Cowan in an official University email describing the fee.

Cowan is the Facilities Services Director at MSU, he ensures that the city will not be

harmed in any way financially. The indebted loss would be to students at MSU who are paying for this service up front with tuition.

Essentially, a "single payer system," Mark Anderson, the superintendent said, "students are prepaying."

Lexcen also added that because students were considering parking permit changes and bus system improvements, the Student Association and MSSA would not support the elimination of the 430-stall Free Lot in the near future.

A meeting is to take place in the near future to discuss and develop the contract between MSU and the Greater Mankato Transit System for the 2012-2013 academic year.

"Our relationship with Schieler and MSU has been really good over the years," Anderson said.

Future discussions between the city and MSSA officials will be to ideally encompass the community with the bus service of surrounding colleges like Bethany and South Central.

Mavcards will be effective as the universal buss pass at MSU beginning August 23. 