The skyline of Minneapolis—the city of lakes—is dominated by the 32-story, tapered Foshay Tower—a "must" for all visitors.

Rapid Conversion

The story of transit in the Twin Cities as of July, 1954 is an amazing account of rapid conversion from rails to rubber.

Three years ago 758 street cars still formed the backbone of the Minneapolis-St. Paul area transit system. Last month the last trolley clanged to a halt and the Twin Cities became one of the world's largest (and the first of 21 covered so far in our series) metropolitan areas to depend solely on automotive power for its mass transportation needs.

And the man in the driver's seat for this breakneck race to rubber tires (and black figures) has been Fred Ossanna, a lawyer turned transit man, whose herculean efforts we will come to later.

Area's History Dates Back to 1680

In 1683 Louis Hennepin, a French priest, carved the Arms of France into an oak tree on the bank of St.

Fred Ossanna, a lawyer turned transit man, has been in the driver's seat for the drive to all bus operation in the Twin Cities. Here the genial president of the Twin City Rapid Transit Company is shown at the wheel of one of his new GMC buses.

1951

758 STREET CARS
351 BUSES

Twin City's former PCC cars now are running in Cleveland, Newark and Mexico City—and their old yellow trolleys are now in the scrap heap.
Changes Twin City Transit Picture

Anthony's Falls—the first white man to visit the area. After the Louisiana purchase in 1803, settlers began to come into the area—Zebulon Pike negotiating a treaty with the Sioux chiefs to obtain a tract of land for them. In 1820 Fort Snelling was built. Saw mills and flour mills were erected near St. Anthony’s Falls and the village of St. Anthony became a thriving metropolis.

Around 1850 St. Paul officially replaced Pigs Eye as the name of the area to the east of the Mississippi River and Minneapolis (“city of falling water”) was incorporated as a town. In 1858, when Minnesota became a state, St. Paul was made the capital.

St. Paul Had Horsecars in 1872

By 1870 Minneapolis was a major railroad center—and the city of St. Anthony became a part of Minneapolis in 1872. From that time on Minneapolis (to the northwest) and St. Paul (to the south east) have grown

1954

838 BUSES
0 STREET CARS

Soon after their arrival, 30 of the new GMC diesels were lined up alongside the Auditorium for inspection by the public. Colors are red, blue and cream.
Horsecars were operated first in St. Paul in 1872—and then in Minneapolis in 1875.

as separate cities, their contiguous suburbs welding them into one vast metropolitan area.

Public transit in the area began on July 15, 1872 when the St. Paul Street Railway Company was formed—with six horse cars (called "cracker boxes on wheels" by St. Paulites), 30 horses and 14 drivers. Receipts averaged 50 dollars a day.

The following year in Minneapolis (where Dorilus Morrison, the city's first mayor, had organized a horse car company in 1867—only to fail before the line was opened) Colonel King and Thomas Lowry (whose name was to become synonymous with transit in the Twin Cities) founded the Minneapolis Street Railway Company—thus the lines were not opened until 1875.

**Thomas Lowry Formed TCRT in 1884**

The St. Paul company ran into financial trouble in the late 1870's and after several futile attempts at reorganization, was taken over by Lowry's Minneapolis property in 1882—and two years later the two companies were merged into the Twin City Rapid Transit Company which has been king pin in Twin City mass transportation, since that time (and, until recent years, under Lowry family direction).

In 1879 a competing company—the Minneapolis, Lyndale and Minnetonka "Motor Line"—opened a line from Bridge Square to Lake Calhoun using steam locomotives. In 1889, 1890 and 1891 three cable car lines and an experimental electric line were constructed. On February 22 the first line to be converted to electricity was opened in St. Paul. Electrification of all lines followed rapidly, the cable materials being scrapped at a loss of $225,000.

In 1898 the company, unsatisfied with street cars purchased from car builders, designed two of its own—and for the following 48 years all TCRT cars were built in Snelling Shops, with as many as 550 men employed in the construction department.

**Comes the Revolution!**

To the casual observer, the changes in the TCRT set up have come with dramatic suddenness. Actually they have their roots way back in the depression 30's when dividends were passed year after year and large blocks of locally held stock were disposed of and dispersed thruout the country. Then, in 1949—when TCRT was still hauling 165,000,000 riders in its 332 buses (mostly Mack gas jobs) and 777 street cars (including 141 new PCC cars)—Charles Green, a "city slicker" from New York, was carried into the president's chair long held by D. J. Strouse on the waves of a proxy fight.

And then, in 1951, the unpopular Green team bowed out and Fred Ossanna, a colorful Twin Cities attorney, took over. At that time the TCRT property was in perilous condition—losing money every month.

Ossanna and his new management team attacked immediately on four fronts—equipment conversion, tax reduction, service curtailments and better employee and public relations. And each campaign has been won.

Now, just 25 months after the first equipment move, where 724 street cars and 354 gas buses once ran, a fleet of 838 buses, many of them new GMC, air suspension diesels, now operates. Fighting for—and getting—relief on personal property, real property and license taxes has saved $700,000 in the same period. Nearly 400 miles of rail and overhead has been abandoned and service has been "tailored" to fit riding. And, thru the tireless efforts of Ossanna (in addressing civic groups at the rate of 400 talks a year) and Dr. David Ellison (who not only runs an unusual medical and counseling
department but also directs such activities as the suggestion box and "driver-of-the-month" campaign, both public and employee relations have been greatly improved.

**Ossanna Tells of Conversion**

"Our main objective through this great effort," says Ossanna, "has been to make this transportation system the finest in the country. In less than 25 months we have been able to transform a sprawling, confused system, comprising 392 miles of rail and overhead wire and cable, 724 streetcars and 354 older type buses, into a modern engineered network served by the world's largest fleet of 51-passenger air ride, diesel buses. This has been accomplished in four years—less time than outside experts predicted as a possibility."

This summary of Twin City Rapid Transit Company operating statistics shows how the company has changed over the past 15 years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cars</th>
<th>Buses</th>
<th>Riders</th>
<th>Fare</th>
<th>Wage</th>
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<td>1939</td>
<td>715</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>104,388,147</td>
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<td>713</td>
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<td>104,313,619</td>
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<td>1941</td>
<td>704</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>105,941,868</td>
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<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>704</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>128,924,943</td>
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<td>228</td>
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<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>196</td>
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<td>1946</td>
<td>743</td>
<td>203</td>
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<td>733</td>
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<td>20c</td>
<td>$1.89</td>
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<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>838</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>20c</td>
<td>$1.94</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Looking back to 1951 when he moved in, Ossanna declares, "We took over a system with heavy debt structure, inequitable tax burdens, obsolete franchises, multiple public controls, vehicles running almost empty over sprawling lines, and inadequate rate structures. Labor and public relations were also at the lowest ebb. This management had an abiding confidence that a favorable public opinion would result once all the facts were disclosed. Never in the history of the Twin City Rapid Transit Company have the facts been so frankly and fully presented to the public in such a short period. In newspapers, public hearings, judicial proceedings, and in hundreds of public appearances, the facts were told. In all of its hearings before the public bodies, just relief was granted, and in every legal action the Supreme Court has sustained the fairness of the company's position."

**Conversion Costs and Profits**

The conversion involved a tremendous expenditure of millions of dollars for new equipment and housing facilities, as well as many millions more in settlement of franchise obligations and the absorption of abandonment losses. Here are the figures:

- New buses purchased or leased: $11,192,019
- Used buses purchased: $416,344
- New garages: $1,099,777
- Additional garage facilities planned: $900,000
- Settlement of franchise obligations for maintenance, track removal and repaving: $1,277,790
- Losses due to abandonments: $12,490,944

Total: $27,376,874

Commenting on the conversion, John Seidel, President of the Amalgamated's Local No. 1005, declares:

Barney Larrick, long known as "the Will Rogers of the transit industry," is Vice President and General Manager of TCRT. Coming from the coal country of Southern Ohio, Barney started his own bus business, sold out to the Fitzgeralds and joined them himself—getting his great transit "know how" with NCL.
Transit in the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Area

Stillwater-Minneapolis Bus Company
Northland Greyhound Lines

Bald Eagle
White Bear Lake
Brighton

Forest Lake

St. Paul

South St. Paul

Lakeland

Bayport

St. Croix River

Stillwater

Hastings

Rosemont

Jefferson Lines

North Star Bus Company

Zephyr Lines
"We believe that this conversion will in the long run prove to be in the best interests of the union and all concerned. We believe the conversion was not only necessary to continue and improve mass transportation, but also to protect the wages and the welfare and pension benefits."

But, while the conversion has been costly, it has also been profitable. Last year, for example, the company's books showed an operating profit of $1,261,769 before taxes, and dividends were declared on both the common and preferred stock.

The profit has come partly from increased efficiency in operation and partly from liquidation of what was once carried on the books as a $40,000,000 property. In Minneapolis two street car barns, two garages, 11 substations and a downtown office building are being sold and the Northern States Power Company has purchased the transit company's power plant at a price of $1,500,000.

**TCRT and Suburban Lines Serve Million**

Today, the Twin Cities Rapid Transit Company and several suburban bus lines serve a metropolitan area population of over a million. Minneapolis boasts a population of 522,000 over rival St. Paul's 319,000—such suburbs as Richfield, Bloomington, Chaska, Glen Lake, Excelsior, Deephaven, Golden Valley, Osseo, Anoka, Fridley, Columbia Heights, New Brighton, Stillwater and South St. Paul pushing the population within a radius of a dozen miles from St. Anthony's Falls to over a million.

The area is a pretty (several of the states' 10,000 lakes are within the city limits), healthful (life expectancy three years greater than the nation as a whole) and busy (nineteenth ranking industrial city in the United States) one—with much to keep transit carriers busy. The state capital in St. Paul, the vast University of Minnesota (18,000 students) and diversified industry—including flour milling (General Mills, Pillsbury and others) food products, all sorts of manufacturing and railroads (10 trunk lines including the Burlington, Milwaukee, Rock Island, Great Northern, Northern Pacific and others)—maintain a high level of activity.

To meet the transit needs of the metropolitan area, the TCRT operates a network of 46 bus lines—26 in Minneapolis and 20 in St. Paul carrying 90,000,000 passengers a year. TCRT lines blanket all of Minne-
Suburban Bus Lines Ring City

Several million more do their commuting on the buses of the more than a dozen suburban lines shown on the map on pages 36 and 37.

One of the most important suburban operations is the Anoka-Minneapolis line which last year carried 448,000 riders on its 15 blue and white buses (three Flxibles, three Yellow Coaches, three Fitchjohns and six Fords). Coming in from Anoka to Minneapolis (along a route begun as a trolley line in 1912), the company has operated buses since 1939.

Nearly 200,000 riders used the eight orange and black Medicine Lake Bus Company last year to commute from Medicine Lake and Golden Valley on the Olson Memorial Highway.

Northland Greyhound operates suburban service from all points of the compass—from Anoka and Osseo to the northwest, Chaska to the southwest, Hastings to the southeast and Forest Lake to the northeast—into terminals in both Minneapolis and St. Paul.

The area's other prominent intercity carrier, Jefferson Transportation Company, carries some commuters in from the Rosemount area south of St. Paul. And the territories served by the other suburban lines—operating from one to a dozen buses—are indicated on the map.

Street Car's Passing Recalls Memories

Eight of the last Minneapolis streetcars making their final trips on June 18 were loaded with 320 civic leaders and businessmen. While the cars wound thru the Minneapolis loop on the way to their graveyard at the Snelling Avenue shops in St. Paul, the riders were served an "end-of-the-line" luncheon. Senator Hubert Humphrey and TCRT president Fred Ossanna beamed under their motorman's hats as they piloted a 1914 trolley across Washington Avenue bridge.

At the Snelling shops Ossanna put the torch to one of the old street cars. Another car, originally valued at $25,000, was raffled off with the understanding that the winner would present it to the Hennepin County Historical society. Mayor Hoyer of Minneapolis, the winner, said he would do this. "This is Black Friday for us," declared Clark Johnson, President of the Minnesota Railfans Association.

Luther Bakken, who joined the company in 1912 and now is Superintendent of Transportation, recalls one time when he took in 155 fares on a car hauling a Sunday horde to Minnehaha Falls. The company used to run a streetcar-every-minute service between Minnehaha Falls and Lake Harriet, with the trolleys packing crowds in for the afternoon band concerts at Minnehaha and the evening concerts at Harriet. A breezy ride to "Tonka was a favorite way for many to beat the summer heat on a weekend, before the line went out in 1932.

Today only a few road bed mounds, fast disappearing under the suburban housing boom, remain as relics of that once-flourishing trolley network which at one time included 523 miles of track and 22 miles of express boat route on Lake Minnetonka. Time was when a person could board a trolley in Excelsior or Deephaven and ride all the way thru Minneapolis and St. Paul to Stillwater and down to Bayport.

"My first ride was on the Oak-Harriet line so it's a fitting route for my last ride," observed Senator Humphrey, adding, "It's progress—but it's also the end of an era."

Today Transit Rolls on Rubber Tires

Looking down from either Foshay Tower or St. Paul's First National Bank Building, all you can see on Twin Cities streets is rubber-tired transit—including the 838 TCRT buses, maybe 200 suburban and intercity buses and, as always just too darn many autos.