

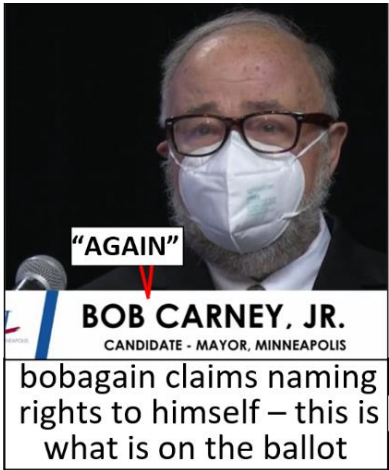


Republican Mayoral candidate (and School Bus driver) Bob “Again” Carney Jr. (bobagain) demands school bus crisis Emergency Action; releases two major transit documents; “Peaceable Assembly” and news event will be 3 PM Wed 9/22 at Government Center plaza

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Minneapolis, MN, 9/20/2021 – Republican candidate for Mayor, self-described “candidate-journalist” and “School Bus expert” (he drives one) Bob “Again” Carney Jr., (bobagain) called for “emergency action” on the Minneapolis and wider Metro school bus crisis. Bobagain also announced he was declaring the plaza at the Hennepin County Government Center Plaza a [“Peaceable Assembly Zone”](#) for “politically homeless” people – especially former Republicans. The Plaza was the main site of the 2011 Minneapolis Occupy movement. In addition to his school bus driver-driven expertise, bobagain has an MBA from the U. of M. Carlson school – and has been writing extensively on transit issues for a decade. Two new documents are now available as downloads from the [votebobagain.com](http://www.votebobagain.com) website – a three century history of transit in the Twin Cities, and Demand Transit Revolution, an e-book bobagain wrote for his 2013 campaign for Mayor. “I thought a book-length solution to a major public policy challenge would earn media attention,” bobagain said.



Bobagain will present his Emergency Action agenda at a 3 PM Wednesday, Sep. 22nd news event -- as part of the next announced “Peaceable Assembly Zone” event. All Minneapolis Municipal candidates with e-mails on their Affidavits of Candidacy have been invited; members of the public are also invited to attend. “I’m suggesting only general, informal guidelines – everyone should be respectful of everyone else’s right to speak; we should all be willing to talk and listen to each other. Public address systems, bullhorns, drums and other noisemakers are not necessary and may discourage active listening. There’s plenty of room for multiple groups and circles to coalesce and dissipate naturally. Restroom facilities are available in the Hennepin County Government Center during their hours of operation – masks are required while in the building,” bobagain said. Currently, porta-potties are not permitted on the Plaza – bobagain may be challenging this restriction. “We’re all members of the GO P Party – that’s ‘GO’ – space -- and the letter ‘P’” he noted, and added, “limiting restroom facilities is a technique used by governments to stifle our constitutional right ‘peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.’”

“Emergency Action” needed on School Bus Crisis

Both Minneapolis and the whole Metro area are challenged today by a school bus crisis. Not enough school bus drivers are currently licensed and driving – as a result, public, charter and private schools are unable to provide reliable bus transportation for students. Urgent action is needed.

“In the great tradition of Upton Sinclair, I’m working as a school bus driver. However, while I see and hear the challenges daily (a lot on the company radio,) I haven’t seen a basis for any kind of ‘Transit Jungle’ expose,” bobagain said. “My base currently has only about half of the drivers we had before COVID hit in early 2020. Everyone is doing their best, but route scheduling often appears to be too tight. I must acknowledge being constrained by both privacy and employment issues from elaborating with more detail on the record. When you add in the awful state of Minneapolis streets – construction roadblocks are everywhere – health (COVID) concerns, and the perception of a dangerous Minneapolis – current conditions are against us. As for hiring new drivers, even someone with school bus driving experience requires a full training routine – three days of in-class training, and 30 hours or more of behind-the-wheel training. There just aren’t enough people ‘in the pipeline’ to support an expectation that the conventional ‘ramping-up’ process is going to resolve this crisis any time soon,” bobagain said. Emergency action is clearly needed, the only question is: what actions might be most productive and practical in the short run?

Bobagain sees a set of seven possible immediate actions as offering a prospect for dramatic improvement.

First – Pay students to ride public transit. Currently, a lot of students have free Metro Transit passes – but this isn’t enough. Eligible able-bodied students – starting at somewhere between seventh and ninth grade – should be able to sign an agreement accepting a cash payment of \$2 per one-way school trip – that’s \$4 a day, or over \$80 a month – payable on an independent contractor basis. As part of the deal students must agree to be removed from the school bus list. As a result, many school bus stops will be eliminated – routes can be consolidated or cancelled. “We’re currently really paying for two busses for every student – a Metro Transit bus with available capacity, and a school bus assigned route and seat. If we cancel the school bus for a student, the result will be a savings in the total number of school buses required – but there will be either no corresponding increase in the number of Metro Transit buses needed – or only a slight increase. There will probably be a net savings in public money spent,” bobagain concluded.

Second, immediately shut down all street construction projects that can be stopped without interfering with below-payment infrastructure such as sewers. “Our Minneapolis street system is in chaos today,” bobagain said. “This affects the ability of everyone to get around – things appear to have been planned so badly, if planned at all, that we simply must stop all construction activity that we can before winter hits,” he added.

Third, buy hundreds (maybe over a thousand) of twelve-to-fifteen-passenger vans and make them available to any Uber, Lyft or taxi driver who has a track record working for their company, and who is willing to drive scheduled AM and/or PM school runs. [Vehicle options for 2021 include](#): Ford Transit Passenger Wagon; Nissan NV Passenger; Mercedes-Benz Sprinter Passenger Van; Chevrolet Express Passenger; GMC Savana Passenger. All have MSRPs under \$50,000, three are under \$40,000. Safety equipment (a stop arm with a flasher, 4-way and 8-way lights,) can be installed as needed, and a streamlined training system can be designed and implemented. Routes can be designed to prioritize safety – avoiding van stops on busy streets, which can be left for buses with experienced drivers to handle. “Each van can have radios (plural -- district and charter radio systems are separate.) “Routes can be scheduled using the same system we use to schedule school bus routes – the existing dispatch system can be used to manage and modify routes that are running. Obviously, there is a capacity issue – but many buses are already running with fifteen or fewer students,” bobagain said. “The current hourly pay for school bus drivers is something a lot of Uber and Lyft drivers are likely to find competitive, and they’ve already ‘pre-screened’ for flexible schedules,” he added.

Fourth, allow some (maybe hundreds) of current Metro Mobility drivers and vans to be deployed to run AM and PM school bus routes – similar to what is described above for point three. “At most, it will be necessary to install one or two additional radios – but these drivers should be able to start driving bus routes immediately – again using the existing routing and dispatch systems,” bobagain said.

Fifth, negotiate with the USPS and possibly other large entities to make their employees available as part time van drivers – for either an AM or a PM route – along the lines described above.

Sixth, negotiate with schools to have their staff, including teachers, provide van driving service – also along the lines described above. Vans can remain at or near the schools during the day – everyone commutes to the school as they normally do – the routes include an AM leg from the school to the first pick-up point, and a PM leg returning to the school after the last student stop.

Seventh, as a final step, consider mobilizing the National Guard as van drivers, along the lines described above.

The next step will be to integrate the use of these vans with all elements of our existing transit system. “We actually have several transit-transportation systems: 1) Metro Transit, 2) the school bus system, 3) Uber/Lift/Taxis, 4) the Metro Mobility system (part of Metro Transit but functionally separate) – and let’s not forget the biggest one: 5) private vehicles. All of these elements can be re-designed to work together – if we are determined not to let special and parochial interests stop us from achieving the integration that is possible. The past – the status quo – is a prison of our own making. The key is to devise a workable system and then demand that all special interests yield to the overall public benefits it will provide,” bobagain said, and concluded: “Let’s get this done.”

Looking ahead -- more on the Peaceable Assembly Zone porta-potty issue



During the first 2020 Special Session of the Minnesota Legislature, Candidate-Journalist bobagain obtained a press pass, and with a video camera reported on it from inside the locked Capitol building. His one-hour video report, on the “MinnGhost” youtube channel, features a study of how authorities limit and discourage public assemblies by strategically controlling when and where porta-potties can be located. During the 2011 Minneapolis Occupy Movement porta-potties were provided at the Hennepin County Government Center (left.) But bobagain’s porta-potty tour of the Capitol grounds (graphic summary at middle) found only one public porta-potty, at the intersection of University and Rice (right.) Here’s a link to the [video](#) (the Porta-Potty section at 13:49 on the timeline.)

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