

MATA unveils new buses

by [Steve Bohnel](#), Daily Memphian

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Memphis Area Transit Authority unveiled new buses during a press conference on Wednesday, Sept. 2, 2026.
(Mark Weber/The Daily Memphian)

Typically, Beale Street on a Friday or Saturday might be buzzing with residents, tourists and others looking to enjoy a critical part of Memphis' entertainment Downtown.

On Wednesday, Sept. 2, however, eight new Memphis Area Transit Authority buses were parked on the street — representing what Rodrick Holmes said he hopes is a new chapter

The eight buses are part of 12 that have been delivered to Memphis in recent weeks, said Holmes, the trustee overseeing MATA's daily operations.

It has been possible due to investment and partnership with Mayor Paul Young and the Memphis City Council, Holmes said.

"Your investment today is appreciated and critical to rebuilding this," Holmes said.

"Your support, your collaboration and, most of all, your belief that the citizens of Memphis deserve a public transportation system they can rely on.

"For too long, MATA has been defined by the challenges of aging fleets and years of deferred investment," he said. "Our riders, citizens of this great city, deserve better."



"For too long, MATA has been defined by the challenges of aging fleets and years of deferred investment," Memphis Area Transit Authority trustee Rodrick Holmes said. "Our riders, citizen of this great city, deserve better." (Mark Weber/The Daily Memphian)

The 12 buses are just the beginning, Holmes said. As part of a mix of local and federal funds totaling \$48 million, another 44 buses are scheduled to join the fleet by 2027, he said. Eight of the initial 12 buses were wrapped in various institutions known in the city:

- Metal Museum;
- “Daydream,” an art piece by Alive Paint;
- LeMoyne-Owen College;
- Crosstown Concourse;
- Regional One;
- Delta Specialty Memphis;
- Memphis Light, Gas and Water Powerpay;
- Memphis Grizzlies

“We wanted these buses to feel like Memphis, so we didn’t just want to put companies on there,” Holmes said. “This is a town that’s built with music and art and culture.” Young said the new buses represent another step in stabilizing the system, an idea Holmes has repeated throughout his tenure as trustee. “We have had challenges over the years with the fleet of buses that we’ve had,” Young said. “The employees have had challenges trying to get buses out each morning because many of them would have mechanical issues.”

Holmes said the 12 buses that have arrived are from Gillig, a bus designer and manufacturer based in Livermore, California.



There are industry standards that must be met, he said. It usually takes about 18 months to deliver them, but Holmes said partnerships with the city meant the first batch arrived in about 10 months. The dozen buses will be deployed on some of the busiest routes in the system, including along Poplar and Lamar avenues, Holmes said.

They have modern seating and advanced safety features, and he and the mayor said the first 12 are part of reducing wait times for riders. And the agency has said in a recent City Council meeting that it aims to bring back four trolleys Downtown by this fall.

“The biggest thing this does is provide reliability, improves that reliability, and improves the passenger experience,” Holmes said. “All things we want to make sure happen.”



Steve Bohnel

Steve Bohnel is a Temple University graduate, originally from Bucks County, Pennsylvania. He's worked at news organizations in Iowa, Maryland and Pittsburgh, covering local and state politics. He covers health care, transportation and logistics, manufacturing, and technology. He is an avid traveler, an Everton F.C. and Philadelphia sports fan, and likes collecting records and biking around town.