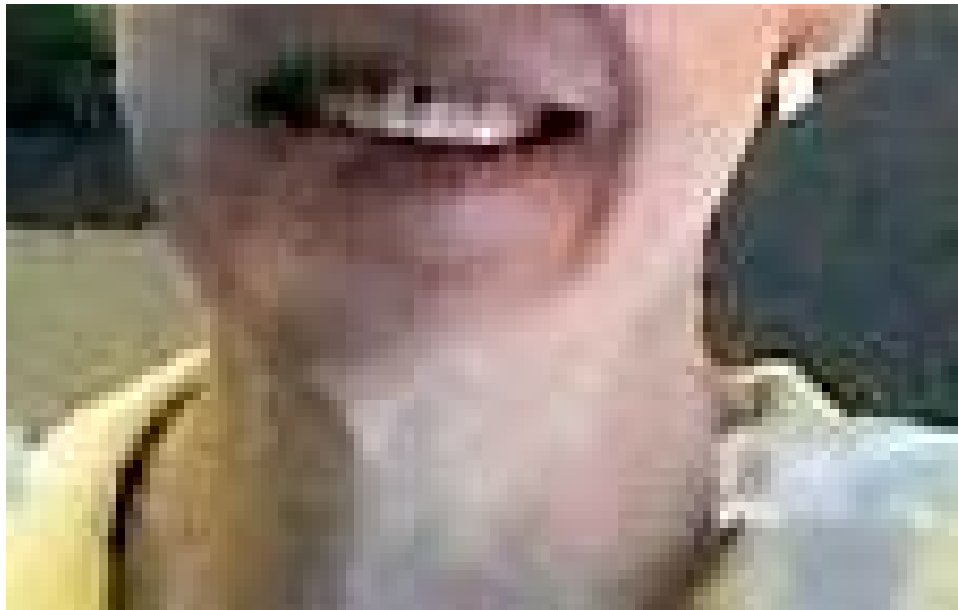




NEWS

Pedestrian killed in Green Line accident was 'very safety conscious'





Lynne Thomas served as a legislative assistant in the Office of Counsel, Research and Fiscal Analysis. (Courtesy of the Minnesota Senate)

By **NICK WOLTMAN** | nwoltman@pioneerpress.com | Pioneer Press
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Lynne Thomas rode the Green Line light rail each morning to work at the Minnesota Senate's office of counsel and research, where she was a receptionist.

When she was late Thursday morning, her co-workers began to worry — she was usually one of the first people in the office — so her supervisor called her cellphone. The Regions Hospital employee who answered, hoping a relative was calling, said Thomas had been in an accident.

Thomas had been hit by a Green Line train in St. Paul.

"The only thing I can think of is she was just distracted. She's very safety conscious," said Renee Rose, Thomas' supervisor. "Crossing against the light does not sound like her at all."

Thomas, a lifelong transit rider who didn't drive, lived just a couple of blocks northwest of the Snelling Avenue Station on University Avenue.

She was crossing the tracks on the east side of Snelling about 7:30 a.m. when she was struck by a westbound train, Metro Transit spokesman Howie Padilla said.

Thomas was taken to Regions, where she was pronounced dead about 11 a.m. She was 59.

Tom Bottern, director of the Senate's office of counsel and research, worked with Thomas for 17 of her 28 years there. He described her as cheerful and dedicated.

"Her personality came through as a receptionist," Bottern said. "She was the face of the office, the first person people saw when they came in looking for help."

And she was no pushover in an office frequented by senators, lobbyists and lawyers.

"She did not let people get past the desk if they weren't supposed to get past the desk," Rose said.

Senate Majority Leader Thomas Bakk passed along news of Thomas' death to members of the Senate in their chamber during a brief recess.

"I have to announce that the Senate lost one of our own this morning," Bakk said. "There was a tragic accident on the light rail line."

The Senate observed a moment of silence before continuing its business, many members fighting back tears as they spoke. The House also observed a moment of silence.

Gov. Mark Dayton released a statement on Thomas' death early Thursday afternoon.

"My heart goes out to the family and friends of Lynne Thomas for their sudden and tragic loss," Dayton said. "I also extend my deepest condolences to all of the Senators and staff in the Minnesota Senate family."

Thomas is the second pedestrian killed by a Green Line train since it began operating between Minneapolis and St. Paul in June 2014.

In August, a 42-year-old woman was hit and killed by a train near the Westgate Station in Minneapolis. She might not have seen or heard the train because she was wearing headphones, transit officials said.

Metro Transit Police are investigating Thursday's incident.

Regular train service resumed after being interrupted for about an hour.

Rachel Stassen-Berger and Jaime DeLage contributed to this report. Nick Woltman can be reached at 651-228-5189. Follow him on Twitter at twitter.com/nickwoltman.

Correction: An earlier version of this story misstated what happened when Smith's supervisor called Regions Hospital.

Nick Woltman

Nick Woltman reports on breaking news and blogs about local history. Before joining the staff of the Pioneer Press in 2013, he worked for the Bismarck Tribune in North Dakota. He lives with his wife and two cats in the Macalester-Groveland neighborhood of St. Paul.

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