

1 Introduction

In 1998, the Metropolitan Council and Metro Transit embarked on a program to evaluate transit service and needs, determine market opportunities and recommend service and facility improvements. The metro area was divided into nine geographic sectors for this purpose, as shown in Figure 1. To date, transit service restructuring studies have been completed and implemented with successful results in Sectors 1, 2 and 7. For example, after its restructuring in 2001, ridership in Sector 2 grew by 6 percent in 2002.

Sector 5, known as Central-South, includes downtown Minneapolis and downtown St. Paul, as well as the cities of Edina, Richfield and Bloomington. It includes several major transportation corridors: Hiawatha, I-35W South and I-494. The new Hiawatha light-rail transit (LRT) line is scheduled to begin service between downtown Minneapolis and Fort Snelling in April 2004 and will extend to the airport and Mall of America in December 2004. The light-rail line is entirely within the study area.

This study focuses on Sector 5, Metro Transit's most productive sector in terms of ridership. As a percent of Metro Transit's total service area, this sector is as follows:

- Riders: 36.4 million / 55%
- Routes: 55 / 38%
- Rush hour Buses: 288 / 37%
- Mid-day Buses: 142 / 46%
- Population: ½ million / 20%
- Jobs: ½ million / 34%

An Existing Conditions Report was completed to document current bus operations and ridership. A key element of this report was ridership data that showed boardings at each bus stop location. This was an important resource used in making the planning decisions outlined in this report.