

2 Summary of Existing Transit Service Network

2.1 Current Network Structure

Transit service within the study area is primarily a radial grid oriented toward both downtown St. Paul and Minneapolis, as can be seen in Figure 2. The area can be divided into four parts: Minneapolis, south of Highway 62 (Edina, Richfield & Bloomington), I-494 corridor and St. Paul. Each is summarized below.

- **Minneapolis** - The grid is well developed and functions reasonably well as far south as Lake Street. Between Lake Street and Highway 62 there appears to be sufficient demand to support a grid system. The network in south Minneapolis has differing service types with some limited-stop rush-hour overlays and express service on I-35W (serving just the Lake Street stop) to complement basic local bus service. Many routes have complex multiple branches and short-lines that make use of the service daunting to understand, especially to new riders or for current riders making new or occasional trips.
- **South of Highway 62** - Residential and commercial development in Richfield and Edina is becoming less dense and is unlikely to support a complete east-west grid system. Existing routes are radial oriented to downtown Minneapolis. Although some transit centers exist, schedules are not fully coordinated. Bloomington has a lower density residential area with a typical suburban street network; it is largely served by very low-frequency express service with an infrequent local community circulator connecting the area with major retail destinations to the north and east.
- **I-494 Corridor** - The area between Eden Prairie and the airport has the region's highest concentration of employment outside of the downtowns. However, the existing transit network largely ignores this development. Some routes have been added to partially meet specific demands, but this I-494 service has not been well integrated. Transit faces the challenges of free parking and a corridor designed for the auto.
- **St. Paul** - St. Paul is strongly radial to the west and southwest part of the study area, usually separated by the Mississippi River from direct connection to the south Minneapolis grid. Service crosses the river south of I-94 at Lake Street, Ford Parkway and West 7th Street. Currently, only Snelling Avenue service provides significant direct north-south connections within the St. Paul area.

2.2 Current Service Frequency

Frequencies and span of service decrease as one gets farther out of the downtown/urban core areas of Minneapolis and St. Paul. All of the major corridors leaving the downtowns (Nicollet Avenue, Hennepin Avenue, Lyndale Avenue, Chicago Avenue, West 7th Street, Selby Avenue, Grand Avenue and Randolph Avenue) have very frequent service, with most above 100 trips per weekday. The majority of suburban service have moderate (26–100 trips/day) to low (less than 25 trips/day) weekday frequencies. On Saturday, many of the major corridors maintain high frequencies; however, much of the suburban service does not operate. Very few of the major corridors operate high frequency service on Sunday (only Nicollet Avenue, Chicago Avenue, Lake Street in Minneapolis and West 7th Street in St. Paul). The other corridors drop to moderate frequency. Most suburban service does not operate. As would be expected, the areas with the most frequent service are also those with the highest residential and employment densities.

2.3 Current Network Productivity

To determine whether the transit network is performing adequately, a *predictive regression model* was used. The model correlated population, employment density and transit boardings. The model showed that transit offers adequate service to downtown Minneapolis, the neighborhoods north of Lake Street in Minneapolis and several neighborhoods in the Highland Village area of St. Paul. However, transit could be doing a much better job in the I-494 and I-35W corridors, two of the most congested corridors in the region, with significant population and employment. Boardings - particularly in the I-494 corridor - were significantly lower than expected. The area south of the Lake Street corridor continuing to the southern border of the study area has significant opportunities for increased transit, as does the area southwest of downtown St. Paul.