

## 5 KEY FINDINGS AND NEXT STEPS

This report will serve as the foundation for the development of potential service alternatives including local, midday service in Minnetonka. A summary of key findings from the review of previous planning efforts, review of existing transit services, and demographic information is provided below:

### Previous Planning

- The 2010 Minnetonka Transit Study evaluated the transit service being provided in Minnetonka to determine if there were other operating models that would serve the city better. The study recommended that the City of Minnetonka remain with Metro Transit and that express services are viewed favorably and are serving the city well. The study recommended further exploration of a transit circulator service that met the midday, local needs. The 2010 study was the basis for this follow-up study.
- Minnetonka's Comprehensive Guide Plan serves as the city's roadmap for future land use and transportation improvements in the city. As such, this document reflects that direction with regard to future development of potential local service alternatives.
- The Metropolitan Council's Transportation Policy Plan provides a regional transportation strategy, including long-range transit strategies, for the region. The TPP identifies five "Transit Market Areas" identified by the Metro Council to define the typical services appropriate for each area. Minnetonka includes three of those Market Areas, which indicates that the city has a wide variety of land use characteristics and transit demand varies greatly.

### Minnetonka Demographics

- Although overall residential population density is low in Minnetonka (five or fewer persons per acre), there are pockets of slightly higher density (five to nine persons per acre) located around the city and a small number of medium-to-higher density concentrations near transit centers, park and rides, or along major roadway or highway corridors. Employment density is projected to increase at a few locations along the I-394 corridor and in the Opus area, but otherwise remain relatively constant.
- Minnetonka has a relatively high share of seniors (nearly 17% of the city's population). Seniors are relatively uniformly distributed around the city; several areas of relatively high senior density generally correspond to senior housing developments.
- Only 4% of households in Minnetonka are considered extremely low-income, lower than the regional average. The low-income population is more highly concentrated on the eastern side of the city. The percentage of households without access to a vehicle (less than 4%) is also much lower in Minnetonka relative to the region. The highest concentrations of households without access to a vehicle are along I-394 northeast of the Plymouth Road Park & Ride and west of U.S. 169 on either side of Cedar Lake Road, where there are apartments and other higher density housing. However, block groups with lower vehicle availability do not necessarily correspond to block groups with the highest low-income concentrations.

- About 10% of Minnetonka workers live in Minneapolis. About 8% of Minnetonka workers both live and work in Minnetonka. With the exception of the Central Area, Minneapolis residents comprise the single largest share of workers in each area while Minnetonka residents make up between 5% and 6% of workers. In the Central Area, 12% of workers live in Minnetonka and represent the largest share of workers. There were nearly 24,000 workers among Minnetonka residents in 2009. Nearly 20% of residents work in Minneapolis while almost 15% of residents both live and work in Minnetonka.

## **Existing and Future Transit Services**

- Transit service in Minnetonka largely consists of peak-period express service to downtown Minneapolis and the University of Minnesota. Route 675, which is an express route, operates all day along the I-394 corridor, while local routes 9, 12 and 615 operate mostly on the eastern edge of the city, in the Opus area, or in the I-394 corridor. A large area of the city is unserved by fixed route transit during the middle of the day, but TransitLink offers general public Dial-a-Ride service throughout the day as well as on Saturday.
- The highest boarding activity is at the two park and rides along I-394 where express services are concentrated (Co. Rd. 73/I-394 and Plymouth Park & Ride). Other areas with high levels of boarding activity include the Opus area and Greenbrier Drive and Cedar Lake Road.
- Based on the 2011 Minnetonka residential survey, about a fifth (19%) of residents have taken a bus during the past two years, of which 13% are daily riders while 55% ride less than monthly. Of residents who used transit, 55% are very satisfied and 41% are somewhat satisfied with bus service. Although 28% of these residents ride the bus to get to work, the largest use was for special events, the state fair, and sporting events—a combined 51%.
- The Southwest Corridor Light Rail project will have a significant impact on transit service in the southwest metro area, including Minnetonka. Two future stations are either in or on the border of Minnetonka: Opus and Shady Oak Road. The Southwest Corridor LRT project is currently in the preliminary engineering phase and expected to be in operation by 2018.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The next steps for the study include the development of a peer review focusing on local, midday services in areas similar to Minnetonka. This peer review, along with the Existing Conditions report, will form the foundation for developing conceptual service alternatives. A transit and community survey is also taking place in late March and early April, which will also help inform the planning process.

A public open house meeting is being held on May 23, 2012 that will present key findings from the Existing Conditions report and peer review, and get feedback from the community on conceptual local service alternatives.