

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The final plan for the West Suburban Service Changes project carries forward the recommendations contained in the 2012 Minnetonka Transit Study to improve local circulation and access for transit-reliant communities. Additionally, it consolidates express services, eliminates segments of route duplication and addresses areas of low productivity on express routes.

As shown in Figure 1, the study area of the West Suburban Service Changes project includes the cities of St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, Deephaven, Greenwood, Excelsior, Shorewood and Tonka Bay. Local routes 9N, 615 and a new local route along with express routes 664, 665, 667E, 670 and 671 are the focus of study.

Figure 2 highlights the route changes in this final plan. Details regarding these changes are provided in Chapter 4, which outlines the West Suburban Service Changes.

## **TRANSIT MARKET AREAS AND EXISTING SERVICE**

While several factors influence the propensity to use transit, the primary predictors of transit productivity are the density of development at the origin and destination of trips. The region has five distinct Transit Market Areas with Area I having the highest density of population, employment and people who rely on transit and Area V having the lowest population and employment densities. The level and type of service appropriate for each market varies accordingly—based on its level of population, employment and transit-reliant residents. Specific implementation of transit services depends on available resources, detailed analysis of transit demand, consideration of complementary and competing services, and other factors.

The eastern portion of the study area, including much of St. Louis Park and Hopkins, is in Transit Market Area II. As identified in Appendix G of the regional 2030 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP), suitable transit services for Area II include regular-route service, cross-town routes and limited-stop service linked to major destinations. The northern tier of the study area west of Texas Avenue, as well as a small area just west of I-494 and north of County Road 62, are in Market Area III and can support a similar variety of service, but at lower intensity than Market Area II. The central and western portion of the study area is in Market Area IV, which may be able to support express service provided there is sufficient concentration of commuters along a corridor. Figure 3 in Chapter 1 provides a map of Transit Markets in the study area.

Existing service in the eastern portion of the study area, within Market Area II, includes regular-route service, cross-town service, express routes and limited-stop service. The northern tier of the study area along I-394, in Market Area III, includes lower frequency regular-route service. It also includes cross-town service, express service and limited-stop service. The central and western portion of the study area, in Market Area IV, is served principally by express service. Transit Link, the region's dial-a-ride service, serves areas that are not served by fixed routes, regardless of the Market Area.

Additional detail and information for existing service in the study area and its Transit Market Areas is provided in Chapter 1.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN WEST SUBURBAN SERVICE CONCEPT PLAN**

The service changes in this final plan were developed with stakeholder input and public engagement. Input has been received through surveys distributed on routes serving the study

area, at senior and low-income residential complexes, at a May 2012 open house held at the Ridgedale Library and at two April 2013 public hearings. Participation in the planning process was also solicited on the Council’s website and through emails distributed to those expressing an interest in the project. Additional detail and information on public involvement in the project is provided in Chapter 2.

### **KEY OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES**

The two principal objectives of the West Suburban Service Changes project are to improve local circulation and access for transit-reliant communities and to improve overall performance of existing express service by eliminating segments of route duplication or low productivity and fringe of the peak period trips with low ridership. Other objectives include strengthening the regional network, enhancing off-peak service frequency, improving service to major destinations and in general providing levels of service appropriate for each specific area.

Service delivery strategies include reducing areas of service redundancy, improving regional connectivity and anchoring routes at nodes of retail, employment and population density.

The improvements for local service will increase access and regional connectivity for transit-reliant communities in the study area. The changes for express service will improve productivity by reducing areas of service duplication and eliminating segments and trips with low ridership. Additional detail and information regarding impacts of the plan and its key objectives and strategies is provided in Chapter 3.

### **SERVICE CHANGES, RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS AND IMPACTS**

The local service changes include adding a new local service (Route 614) between Ridgedale and Minnetonka Heights, increasing the hours of service on Route 615, and extending two Route 9 evening roundtrips to the “N” terminal in the County Road 73 and Greenbrier Road area of Minnetonka.

The local route weekday improvements add 13.8 in-service hours and one bus. Ridership is anticipated to grow by nearly 150 rides a day. The local route Saturday improvements add 5.1 in-service hours and one bus. Ridership is anticipated to increase by almost 50 riders per Saturday.

The express route consolidation blends five routes into four routes. Currently express routes in the study area carry an average of 26 passengers per trip, which is below the regional guidelines. The express changes will improve productivity by eliminating segments of route duplication and low productivity and trips with low ridership.

The express route consolidation results in a decrease of 7.7 in-service hours, and three fewer buses are needed to provide the service. It is estimated that productivity will increase by 10 percent. However, ridership is anticipated to decrease by approximately 120 rides per weekday. It is anticipated that the majority of the 120 rides will shift to other park and ride express routes, such as Route 673 serving the County Road 73 and I-394 park and ride.

Additional detail and information on the service changes and resource requirements are in Chapter 4.

### **TITLE VI ANALYSIS OF POTENTIAL DISPARATE IMPACTS**

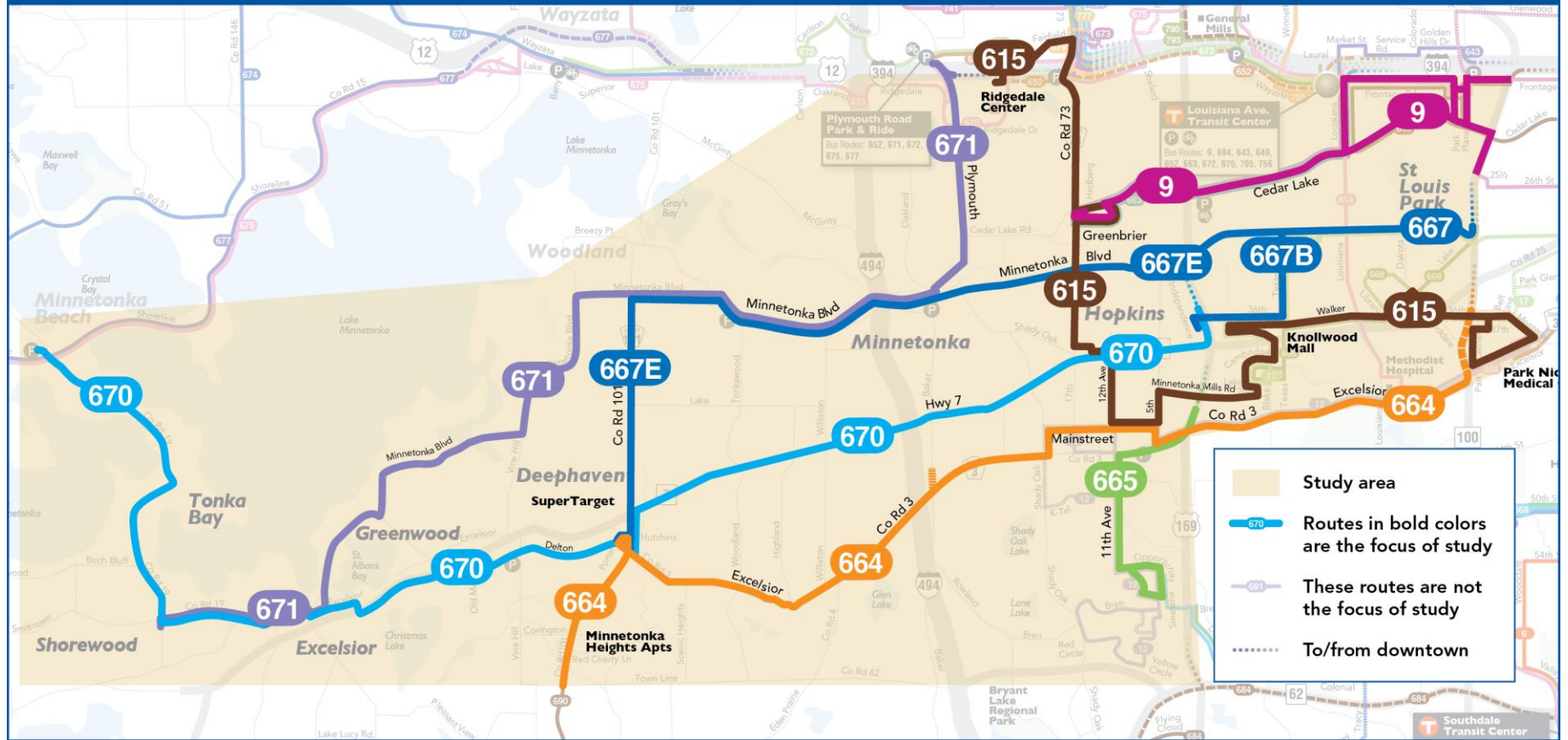
These changes have been evaluated in accordance with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Title VI requirements and Metropolitan Council guidelines to understand its impacts on minority and low-income populations. This evaluation finds that the proposed changes do not have a potential for

disparate impact on minority populations nor a potential for disproportionate burden on low-income populations. Further detail on the Title VI service equity review is available in Chapter 5.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

The Final Plan was adopted by the Metropolitan Council at their May 22, 2013 meeting. The service changes will be implemented beginning Aug. 24, 2013.

# Figure 1. West Suburban Study Area and Focus Routes



# Figure 2. West Suburban Final Service Changes

