

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION, PURPOSE & SCOPE**

Improvement and expansion of the public transit system is the backbone of the Metropolitan Council's 25-year transportation policy plan to accommodate the population and employment growth forecast for the region. Current estimates of growth are for 1% per year increases in both population and employment. The Regional Transportation Plan calls for development of transitways in all major corridors, consisting of bus-only shoulders, high-occupancy vehicle lanes, exclusive busways, LRT and commuter rail service. Bus services, in a variety of forms, will be the foundations of the public transit expansion program. Bus services will include local bus service, express service, as well as special services for the disabled.

Metro Transit provides most of the bus services throughout the Twin Cities metropolitan area, supplemented by routes contracted by the Metropolitan Council to private providers and "opt-out" systems operated by local municipalities. In order to ensure efficient, safe and responsive transit services, Metro Transit continually reviews and updates service plans (mostly on an individual route basis) to reflect the changing nature of development and travel in the Twin Cities area. In addition to these reviews, more comprehensive and broad based sector studies are undertaken periodically. Sector studies have been undertaken for Sectors 1, 2, 5 and 7. This report presents the existing transit conditions for Sector 8, a first task in the Sector 8 Transit Planning Study.

Sector 8 comprises the northwest portion of the region, bounded by Highway 55 in the south, the Mississippi River on the north and east, and the limits of Hennepin County to the west. As shown in Exhibit 1.1, the study area for this review of Sector 8 existing conditions is limited to the eastern portion of the sector where fixed route transit services are provided (either by Metro Transit or other providers) but does not include the City of Plymouth. The current services within the area of this review are the local and express bus services, excluding dial-a-ride services and special transit services.

As well as providing a review of the performance and structure of existing services, the overall Sector 8 plan will also examine the integration and expansion of services to accommodate the proposed Northwest Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service. The BRT service will generally follow an alignment along County Road 81 between downtown Minneapolis and Rogers, with branches during the peak period to serve major trip generators within the northwest sector.

Depending on funding and construction schedules, the BRT service is expected to be in operation between downtown Minneapolis and 63<sup>rd</sup> Avenue by 2008. A challenge of the Sector 8 plan is to develop a two-phase service concept plan, which will be able to accommodate the BRT service in the most efficient and convenient manner possible. The first phase will consist of changes not related to the BRT, and then changes associated with the BRT would follow in coordination with BRT implementation.

This report describes the existing conditions within Sector 8, examining the current land use and demographics within the sector, the existing transit service structure, existing ridership and route performance and a summary of transit service deficiencies and opportunities.

This report is a snapshot of the bus service within Sector 8 as it was in October 2001. All figures, statistics, and references to routings are based on the service at that time. Some noteworthy changes have occurred since then, such as the extension of Route 32 to the Robbinsdale Transit Center, the elimination of Route 717 weekend service and Route 716 service on Sunday. Route 55 was split into two routes (755 and 756) and Route 755 no longer serves Robbinsdale on Saturday.

A subsequent report will outline land use and ridership growth projections, proposed restructuring of routes to accommodate current and short term demand, and, finally, a restructuring concept to accommodate introduction of the BRT service.