

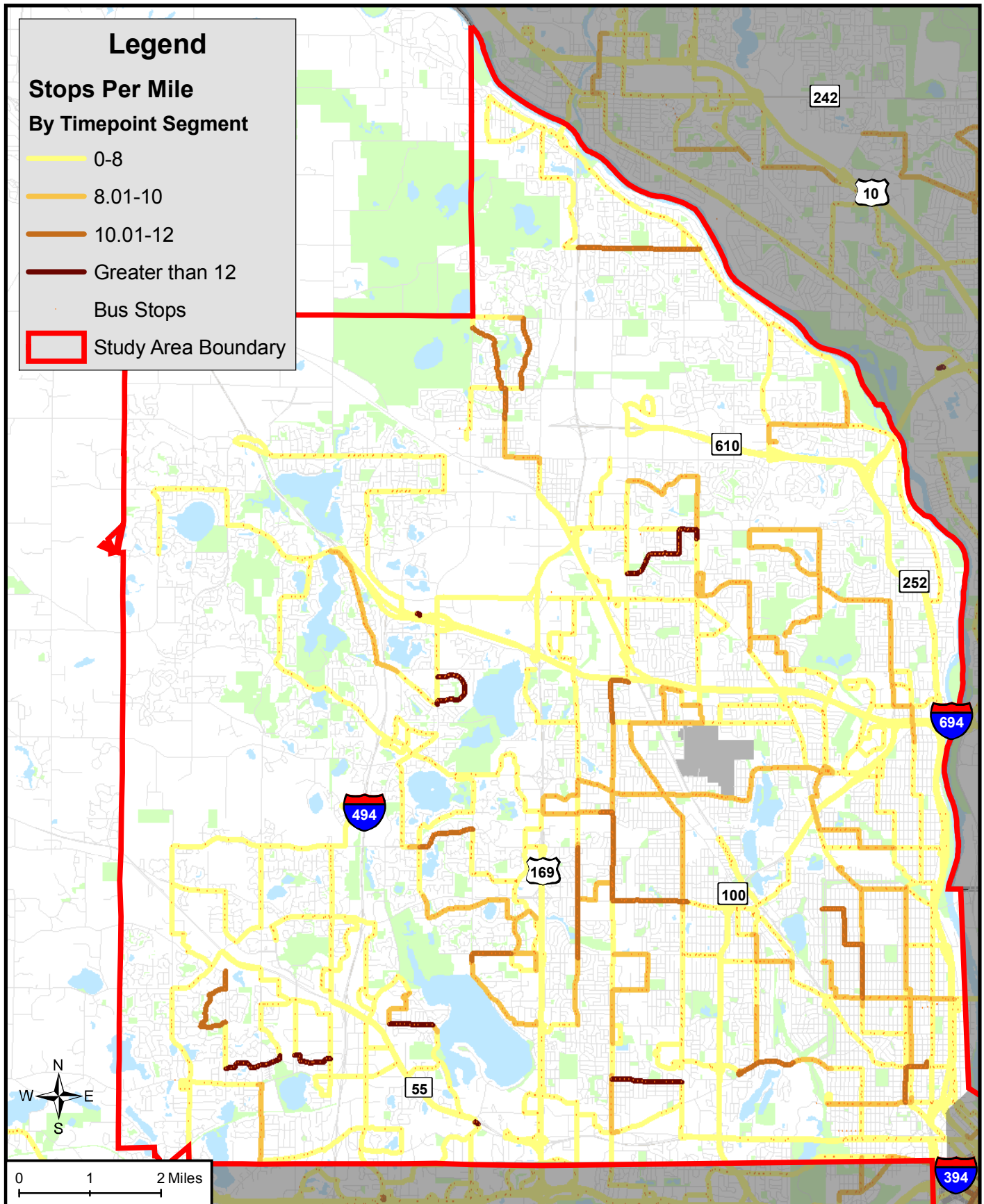
CHAPTER TWO: PHILOSOPHY AND STRATEGIES OF RESTRUCTURING

Evaluation of service in north Minneapolis and the northwest suburbs and the objectives identified as most important by stakeholders indicate six primary opportunities to improve the productivity and efficiency of transit:

- Speed up the system. Service is slow due to closely spaced bus stops, indirect routings and slow fare collection.
- Improve service frequency. Given a choice, most people will choose more frequent service within reasonable distances.
- Simplify the route structure. The current system is too complex and confusing for existing and potential new riders.
- Enhance off-peak service. Increasingly, people need to travel outside the traditional rush hour commute periods.
- Improve connectivity. Timed transfers at suburban transit centers allow passengers to easily transfer between several routes.
- Anchor Lines at Major Destinations. Ridership tends to drop off toward the end of a bus route because there are fewer destinations. Ending routes at logical destinations such as downtown, shopping centers, colleges, transit centers and other activity centers allows for strong ridership along the entire route.

These basic observations lead to the following tenets:

- Where possible, reduce the complexity of individual routes-and therefore the network- by reducing multiple branches and improve “straight-lining” (i.e. limiting deviations and staying on major corridors). Simplifying routes makes them less intimidating for new riders and more attractive for current customers.
- Improve timed transfer connections at suburban transit centers. Well-timed connections make it easier for customers to more quickly access a variety of suburban destinations.
- Provide faster, more direct service to major destinations through express and limited stop services, continuous routings on major corridors and not having to go downtown to transfer between suburban destinations.
- Improve route reliability by creating shorter routes as appropriate and ensuring adequate recovery time.
- Implement bus stop spacing in accordance with current policy (eight stops per mile, or one stop every long city block, or a stop every two short city blocks) to improve operating speed and increase efficiency. Figure 4 shows the street segments that currently have more than eight stops per mile.
- Reduce route redundancy by seeking an optimal route spacing of a ½-mile (1/4-mile walk in areas with high population and employment density), providing good access without unnecessary overlap.



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Bus Stop Spacing - March 2006

Figure 4

BOTTINEAU BOULEVARD CORRIDOR BUS RAPID TRANSIT (BRT)

The Council's 2030 Transportation Policy Plan calls for a busway along County Road 81 between downtown Minneapolis, Maple Grove and points north, with branches during the peak period to serve major trip generators in the northwest suburbs. The project will be implemented in phases. Phase One includes BRT station shelters, limited-stop service through north Minneapolis, new park-and-ride lots in Brooklyn Park and the expansion of Starlite Transit Center facility. Subsequent phases call for exclusive bus-only lanes between Osseo and Robbinsdale, additional BRT stations and all-day service.

The Northwest Metro Transit Study service plan will meet not only the near-term needs in the study area, but also is flexible enough to lay a foundation for longer-term BRT service. Elements from Phase I of the Bottineau BRT service plan are included in the growth scenario of the Northwest Metro Transit Study. However, the Northwest Metro Transit Study service plan does not include services related specifically to the BRT project, as such longer-term changes would need to be developed separately in coordination with BRT implementation and will require additional transit resources.

ACCESS MINNEAPOLIS- 10 YEAR ACTION PLAN

The *Access Minneapolis* study, the city's ten-year transportation action plan, calls for a "frequent transit network" of bus routes within Minneapolis that offers a high-frequency of daytime bus service seven days a week. In concert with this idea, the High Frequency Network being promoted by Metro Transit starts to implement this level of service. This includes identifying portions of transit routes that provide service at least every 15 minutes weekdays 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturdays 9:00 a.m.- 6:00 p.m. This network includes Route 5 on Emerson/Fremont Avenue. Some routes envisioned as part of the long-term Frequent Transit Network may not meet the frequency standards as they are proposed in the Northwest Metro Transit Final Plan but service frequency will be improved as the transit market develops and funding becomes available.

The *Access Minneapolis* study also is evaluating the benefits of consolidating transit service to fewer streets in downtown Minneapolis, which will allow Metro Transit to provide enhanced passenger facilities, improved bus connections for faster, more reliable service, and better customer information. Additional changes to downtown bus routings may occur as part of the *Access Minneapolis* study.