

# Shelter Placement Guidelines

The shelter placement guidelines are used by Metro Transit to prioritize bus stops for transit shelters.

## Why shelter placement guidelines?

Metro Transit places shelters at bus stops to help improve transit customers' comfort while waiting for the bus. With its buses serving over 12,000 bus stops, Metro Transit must prioritize where shelters are located. Metro Transit has a limited budget for constructing new shelters and for the ongoing costs of shelter maintenance.

## What are Metro Transit's goals for shelter placement?

Metro Transit's goals for shelters are to:

- Efficiently provide shelters to improve the transit customer experience at the bus stop for the most people.
- Serve transit customers who may especially benefit from a shelter. Priority locations include bus stops that serve transit customers who due to ability or health condition have greater access to transit where there is a shelter – such as housing for people with disabilities, housing for older adults, hospitals, healthcare clinics, or social service providers. Bus stops are also prioritized for shelters if they are major transfer points, or if they are in areas where more households do not have cars.

Metro Transit monitors the number of shelters that can reasonably be maintained when considering whether to add additional shelters.

Once a bus stop is identified as a priority for a shelter based on the guidelines, site factors such as available space, slope, and obstructions determine if a shelter can be located at a bus stop.

## Summary

Shelter Improvement	Criteria
Consider adding a shelter: <i>highest priority</i>	100+ daily boardings and priority location*
Consider adding a shelter: <i>high priority</i>	100+ daily boardings
Consider adding a shelter: <i>medium priority</i>	30+ daily boardings and priority location
Consider adding a shelter: <i>lower priority</i>	30+ daily boardings
Replace shelter	At least 15 daily boardings
Remove shelter	Fewer than 15 daily boardings
Consider adding light to shelter	Not a standard shelter feature. Prioritized based on boardings from sunset to sunrise, personal security concerns, and site factors
Consider adding heat to shelter	Not a standard shelter feature. Considered where there are 100+ daily boardings



\*Priority locations include areas where more households do not have cars, near hospitals, healthcare clinics, social service providers, housing for people with disabilities or older adults, and major transit transfer points.

## Guidelines to Consider Adding a Shelter

1. *Highest priority:* Metro Transit's highest priority is to make shelter available at bus stops with 100 or more average transit passenger boardings per day and in priority locations.
2. *High priority:* Metro Transit's priority is to make shelter available at bus stops with 100 or more average boardings per day.
3. *Medium priority:* As funding and maintenance resources allow, Metro Transit considers adding shelters at bus stops with 30 or more boardings per day and in priority locations.
4. *Lower priority:* Bus stops with lower boardings but with at least 30 boardings per day are considered for a shelter if resources are available. This is the minimum threshold to be considered for adding a shelter.

## Guidelines to Consider Removing a Shelter

A shelter may be permanently removed if:

1. There are consistently fewer than 15 average daily boardings.
2. Changes in roadways or property boundaries that make it so the site cannot fit a shelter.
3. There are site problems, such as inadequate clearance around the shelter for pedestrians or traffic safety issues.

A shelter may be temporarily removed if:

1. It is located in a construction zone, such as a street construction project or development of property.
2. There is ongoing vandalism or documented public safety issues. Persistent vandalism takes maintenance staff time away from other needs, and temporarily removing the shelter interrupts the pattern of behavior.

## Guidelines to Consider Shelter Lighting

Metro Transit prioritizes shelter lighting based on the number of boardings that occur during the typical dark hours between sunset and sunrise. Site factors related to the light's source of power and personal security factors are also considerations.

1. It is a priority to add shelter lighting in locations that have the highest boardings during typical dark hours.
2. A shelter may be prioritized for lighting if there are documented personal security concerns and shelter lighting will help address the concerns. Concerns may be documented through various Metro Transit departments including customer relations, police, community outreach, or facilities maintenance departments.
3. Site factors:
  - a. A shelter may be prioritized for lighting if the location receives enough sunlight for a solar-powered light, or if there is an electrical connection readily available.
  - b. A shelter may be prioritized for lighting when there are opportunities to partner with a construction project that lowers the cost of making an electrical connection.
  - c. Shelter lighting may be a lower priority if the area surrounding the shelter is well lit.

## Guidelines to Consider Shelter Heaters

Metro Transit may consider adding a heater to a shelter where there are at least 100 boardings per day and when there are opportunities to efficiently bring power to the shelter.

To provide heat at a shelter, there must be access to a transformer or a metered electrical connection, which can add significant installation costs. Metro Transit's priorities are to coordinate with other construction projects that will lower the cost of making the electrical connection for a heater, and to provide heaters at priority locations.

## Guidelines for Custom Shelters

1. Metro Transit may consider partnering with another party on a customized shelter when the shelter is provided, owned, and maintained by the other party. Metro Transit will consider requests for custom shelters for a bus stop with at least 30 boardings per day. The shelter may be located in the public right of way or on the requestor's property. The shelter owner and Metro Transit enter into a partnership agreement documenting responsibilities. The shelter design, manufacturing and installation costs are paid by the shelter owner. Regular maintenance is the responsibility of the shelter owner. Depending on the shelter's design, Metro Transit may maintain standard elements such as glass and transit information in the shelter.
2. Private parties may put their own transit shelter on their private property. Depending on the shelter's design and the number of customers served, Metro Transit may maintain transit information in the shelter.
3. Metro Transit sometimes provides specialized shelters at bus stops that are part of a transit service corridor, such as on Marquette Avenue & 2nd Avenue in Minneapolis and the A Line in St. Paul and Minneapolis. The shelters create a consistent level of transit customer waiting experience along the corridor.

## Exceptions and Variations

1. If there are time-sensitive opportunities, a bus stop with at least 30 boardings may rise in priority for a shelter when site work can be incorporated into a roadway project or other construction project.
2. Future transitway projects or transit service changes may affect shelter, lighting or heating decisions at a bus stop. Metro Transit may not make an improvement if upcoming transitway projects would bring station shelters to a bus stop. Or, Metro Transit may not make an improvement where upcoming transit service changes would lower the number of people using a bus stop.
3. Trends in passenger boardings over time at a bus stop influence shelter decisions. A shelter would not be removed due to one year of low boardings while there is a long-term trend of high ridership at the bus stop.
4. A shelter may become a lower priority if a nearby bus stop already has a shelter.

## Requests

Metro Transit documents requests for shelters. The request information is used for understanding conditions at the bus stop that may make it a priority location for a shelter. Metro Transit is not able to place shelters at all locations requested.

## Accountability

Metro Transit is committed to monitoring the effectiveness of the shelter placement guidelines and providing information to the public. Metro Transit:

- Notifies the public about plans to add or remove shelters.
- Makes transit shelter location data publicly available.
- Monitors the shelter program for compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

## Definitions

**Boardings:** the number of transit passengers boarding the bus per day, on average. The data comes from equipment called an Automatic Passenger Counter on the bus that counts the number of people getting on. The counter is independent of bus fares paid. The daily boardings data is summarized four times a year, and the average from the fall each year is used for shelter prioritization. The Fall weekday, Saturday, and Sunday/Holidays passenger boardings are considered in shelter prioritization.

**Boardings in typical dark hours:** Daily average passenger boardings between sunset and sunrise hours. During the Fall in the Twin Cities dark hours are approximately 6:30 pm to 7 am.

**Shelter:** a waiting area at a transit stop with a roof, wall(s), and detailed transit information. Metro Transit has a series of standard shelter designs used at bus stops. Custom shelters are those that differ from the standard designs. More information on Metro Transit's standard shelter designs: [www.metrotransit.org/shelter-design](http://www.metrotransit.org/shelter-design)

**Site:** the location where a shelter is placed. Site factors that affect shelters include: surface material and slope of the ground, size of available space, site lines and visual obstructions, electrical connections, and other unique features of the location. More information on site factors: [www.metrotransit.org/evaluating-a-stop](http://www.metrotransit.org/evaluating-a-stop)

## About the shelter placement guidelines

Metro Transit updated its shelter placement guidelines in 2017 as part of the agency's commitment to equity and to ensure that the guidelines reflect transit customer and community priorities. The update to the guidelines discontinues the practice of using two different boardings criteria for suburbs and the central cities.

In 2016 and 2017, Metro Transit gathered input from customers and the broader public to better understand where people think shelters are most important and what features are important at bus stops. This feedback helped shape the updates to shelter placement guidelines.