

## CHAPTER 5: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND REVISIONS TO PLAN

A commitment to community engagement is a guiding principle of Metro Transit. Public involvement is at the core of the West End and Route 9 Transit Study. In addition to outreach actions outlined below, a Public Engagement Plan (PEP) is available on the project website with more information on project outreach and engagement opportunities.

### Pre-Concept Plan Outreach

Prior to drafting the Concept Plan, staff reviewed the feedback and service requests gathered by Metro Transit Customer Relations. In addition, a survey of Route 9 customers riding west of Louisiana Avenue on Route 9N was completed in March 2016. Staff boarded all weekday, Saturday and Sunday trips to learn more about travel patterns in this area. Staff used the feedback received during pre-Concept Plan outreach and reviewed the performance and productivity of existing service in the area to develop a concept service plan, which was the topic of a formal review period in Fall 2016.

### Stakeholder Outreach Outline

Identifying stakeholders helped shape the activities planned for outreach and engagement. Stakeholders were key to good communication throughout plan development. The following were identified as project stakeholders:

- City of St. Louis Park staff and elected officials
- City of Minneapolis staff and Councilmembers Yang, Goodman and Palmisano
- City of Golden Valley staff
- City of Minnetonka staff
- Metropolitan Councilmembers Munt, Cunningham, Letofsky, Dorfman and Schreiber
- Businesses in the West End
- Current transit riders in impacted routes in study area
- Potential transit riders in study area
- Residents of the West End
- Harrison Neighborhood Association
- Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Association
- Heritage Park Neighborhood Association
- Heritage Commons

Stakeholders were contacted and provided an opportunity to comment on the plan.

### Concept Plan Outreach and Revisions-Fall 2016

#### Outreach

Metro Transit used different outreach strategies to ensure broad public engagement. Information about the project and the service changes proposed in the Concept Plan was provided in several ways:

- Notification of public hearings was provided in the *Star Tribune* and in *Connect*, Metro Transit's onboard customer newsletter.
- Project website at [metrotransit.org/west-end](http://metrotransit.org/west-end) included the public meeting presentation for those unable to attend.

- Customer notices and on-board announcements by staff took place on affected routes.
- Metro Transit worked with community-based organizations to share the plan with their members and clients.
- Targeted posts were published on Metro Transit social media accounts.
- Local newspapers and community newsletters included notices about the plan.

There were several ways for individuals to ask questions and to provide feedback. Two public meetings provided opportunities for attendees to learn about the proposed changes and the rationale for making them. Metro Transit staff presented the Concept Plan, and attendees were invited to comment. Comment cards were also available.

The public meetings as part of Concept Plan outreach included:

| <b>Date</b>    | <b>Location</b>                            | <b>Attendees</b> | <b>Type</b>    |
|----------------|--|------------------|----------------|
| Sept. 8, 2016  | Harrison Education Center,<br>Minneapolis  | 35               | Public Hearing |
| Sept. 10, 2016 | Showplace ICON Theatres,<br>St. Louis Park | 39               | Public Meeting |

Metro Transit staff also presented the Concept Plan at neighborhood associations and community organizations meetings to receive feedback from stakeholders.

Presentations completed as part of Concept Plan outreach included:

- Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Association: Aug. 10, Sept. 14
- Cedar-Isles-Dean Neighborhood Association: Aug. 10
- Harrison Neighborhood Association: Aug. 8, Sept. 19
- Heritage Commons: Aug. 31
- Heritage Park Neighborhood Association: July 11, Sept. 12
- Redeemer Lutheran: July 20, Aug. 17

## Revisions

Most comments/concerns centered on the proposed elimination of the 9H and 9B branches. Staff revised the plan to retain service on the 26<sup>th</sup> Street segment of 9H via a rerouting of Route 25 which was added to the project scope. Route 25 was also routed to serve the segment of Route 649 on Cedar Lake Road east of Highway 100. In the Concept Plan this segment of Route 649 was served by the restructured Route 9.

On Route 25 the four-block segment of the route along France Avenue between Cedar Lake Avenue and Lake Street was eliminated along with six low ridership reverse commute trips.

Lastly, in recognition of budget realities and existing ridership, peak frequency along trunk segment of Route 9, both west of downtown as well as south of downtown was reduced.

## Recommended Plan Outreach and Revisions-March 2017

### Outreach

A final round of outreach was done in March 2017 to give stakeholders the opportunity to review the revisions to the Concept Plan and see the details of the Recommended Plan that staff was bringing to the Council for approval in April. There was a public meeting held on March 21, 2017 at Showplace ICON Theatres' community room with approximately 25 attendees. In addition to the meeting Metro Transit, as in the Concept Plan phase, used different outreach strategies to ensure information about the plan and the service changes were available to stakeholders. Strategies included boarding buses to make announcements, emailing stakeholders and reaching out to affected cities.

### Revisions

On the Recommended Plan, most comments/concerns centered on the elimination of the Route 9B branch along Glenwood and Xenia west of Penn Avenue. Staff addressed these concerns by adding back limited Route 9B service, two trips in each direction, which will be operated on a demonstration basis.

### Overall Summary of Public Comments

In addition to the meetings, residents could use several methods to provide feedback. These included a dedicated e-mail account operated by Service Development staff, calls to Customer Relations, letters, faxes, petitions, Twitter, Facebook, comment cards, and the Council's public comment line. The most popular methods for the public to comment were e-mail (52 percent of comments), speaking at public hearings (22 percent of comments), and comment cards distributed at the public hearings (15 percent of comments). A fewer number of comments were received through Customer Relations, on Facebook, by voicemail and by letter.

Metro Transit received 197 comments from 158 individuals.

The following chart provides the distribution of public comments received as divided by topic. If an individual's comment referred to more than one aspect of the plan, each separate topic was counted as a separate comment.

## Public Comment Tally

|               | Email      | Comment Card | Letter/ Resolution ^ | Customer Feedback | Public Hearing | Voicemail | Facebook | Total      |
|---------------|------------|--------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------|----------|------------|
| Route 9B      | 16         | 7            | 1                    | 5                 | 7              | 1         |          | 37         |
| Route 9H      | 26         | 5            | 2                    | 1                 | 7              |           |          | 41         |
| Route 9N      | 3          | 1            | 2                    | 1                 | 3              |           |          | 10         |
| Cedar Lk. Rd  | 4          | 2            |                      |                   | 3              |           |          | 9          |
| Route 9-other | 9          | 2            |                      |                   | 3              |           |          | 14         |
| Route 25      | 5          |              |                      |                   |                |           |          | 5          |
| Route 604     | 3          |              |                      | 1                 | 3              |           |          | 7          |
| Route 649     | 5          | 2            |                      | 2                 | 1              |           |          | 9          |
| Route 675/645 | 19         | 7            |                      | 1                 | 2              |           | 1        | 30         |
| Facilities    |            | 1            |                      |                   | 2              |           |          | 3          |
| Park & Rides  | 1          |              |                      |                   | 1              |           |          | 2          |
| Overall Plan  | 10         | 1            | 1                    | 1                 | 7              |           |          | 20         |
| Other*        | 1          | 2            |                      |                   | 4              |           | 2        | 9          |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>102</b> | <b>30</b>    | <b>6</b>             | <b>12</b>         | <b>43</b>      | <b>1</b>  | <b>3</b> | <b>197</b> |

\*Other comments included topics such as connections to south Minneapolis, Westwood Nature Center, automated vans, access to Knollwood, Southwest LRT, the Cedar Lake Trail, no parking enforcement in the Marq2 lanes, and general route restructuring.

^Letters are from the Mayor of St. Louis Park, a State Representative and a resolution passed by the Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Association.

## Outreach Conclusions

Feedback from stakeholders and public comments identified areas of concern in the original plan, and highlighted areas which warranted modification. Metro Transit received the most comments on Route 9H, 9B, 675/645 and the overall plan. Most comments received were opposing the proposed changes, specifically removal of the B and H branches and the conversion of the 675 into a new limited-stop 645 route.

### *Elimination of Route 9H branch*

Many riders were concerned about a potential loss of service along 26th Street in St. Louis Park. Many of the commenters said they would now drive or walk to alternate service, but hoped the 9H branch would remain in at least a limited capacity. Out of the 41 comments regarding 9H, 30 of them called to ask that Metro Transit not to eliminate the branch. As noted above, Metro Transit added service back to the 26<sup>th</sup> Street segment of 9H via a rerouting of Route 25 which was added to the project's scope.

### ***Elimination of Route 9B branch***

Many riders were also opposed to the proposed elimination of the 9B branch on Glenwood Avenue west of Penn. They suggested keeping service in some capacity along Glenwood Avenue. Out of the 37 comments regarding Route 9B, 26 of them opposed eliminating the branch. As noted above, Metro Transit agreed to keep two trips in each direction on a demonstration basis, assuming trips meet the ridership goal.

### ***Rerouting off Cedar Lake Road***

A smaller number of riders (seven) opposed the rerouting of service off Cedar Lake Road between Penn and Glenwood Avenues. Comments about this section said that schoolchildren board on Cedar Lake Road, and they would have a longer trip to school as a result.

### ***Introduction of Route 645 and Elimination of Route 649***

Ten of the Route 675 riders were concerned about changing the route from an express route to a limited-stop service. Many of them said the added stops would increase their travel time, and the bus could not support additional riders as it was already very crowded. Six individuals opposed elimination of the Route 649, saying their service will be negatively impacted if they are shifted onto an alternate route. An additional six 649 riders were concerned that the Route 645 would travel down Marquette Ave & 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave S in Downtown Minneapolis, rather than 6<sup>th</sup> Street and 9<sup>th</sup> Street as the route 649 currently does.

### ***Comments on the overall plan***

Twenty of the comments referred to the overall Concept Plan. Most of these comments were in opposition to the plan, saying that existing transit service should not be cut back. They understood the goal to improve service to the West End, but felt that service cuts and route simplification were not the best ways to achieve that goal.

### ***Other components of the plan***

Other portions of the plan, such as the shortening of Route 604 and rerouting of Route 25, did not receive many comments during the public comment period. The few comments on these routes (seven on the 604 and five on the 25) dealt with existing reliability and schedule issues.

## **Implementation and Outreach Steps**

Implementation of plan was approved by the Metropolitan Council on April 26, 2017. The service changes will take effect on August 19, 2017 and will be preceded by several outreach steps.

Outreach activities will include:

- Updating stakeholders and all individuals that submitted comments on the Concept Plan and Recommended Plan.
- Publish service changes in *Connect*, Metro Transit's onboard newsletter.
- Update the project website ([metrotransit.org/west-end](http://metrotransit.org/west-end)).
- Staff will make onboard announcements, post at bus stops, and issue Rider Alerts on the affected routes.