

West End and Route 9 Transit Study

Public Outreach and Communication Plan and Summary

Project Overview

Metro Transit has begun a process to restructure bus service to the West End and simplify Route 9 in the process. Project goals are to reduce the complexity of Route 9 west of downtown Minneapolis, align the service to the demand of our customers and provide a faster connection between downtown Minneapolis and the employment opportunities available in the West End. Metro Transit staff is seeking to connect with project stakeholders including, but not limited to city and county staff, bus riders, operators, and businesses in the West End.

Public Outreach and Communication Goals

The primary goal of public outreach and communication is to support Metro Transit's Service Development department make project goal related decisions. The public outreach and communication plan seeks to communicate with project stakeholders, receive vital input for decision making, and prepare customers for changing service upon project completion.

Essential Questions

Metro Transit's Community Outreach and Engagement Team aims to draw out essential questions that project staff have for community stakeholders to help answer. A useful way to derive these questions is to utilize the Engagement Lens questions to think more broadly about the project area and the history of Metro Transit decision-making to help shape project outcomes:

- Who are the communities impacted by the policy, program or decision? How were they identified? *What is the Route 9 designed to do and who does it serve? What is the "job" of the Route 9?*
- How have historical decisions that have impacted these communities been considered in this policy, program or decision? *History of changes to the Route 9 coverage area and routing? Restructuring?*
- In what ways are you building relationships with the identified communities? Who are you partnering with? *What are you going to do?*
- In what ways did the aforementioned relationships influence the policy, program or decision? *What impact (opportunity) to influence Service Development's work?*
- How does your work create inclusive spaces that allow communities to collaborate on the development of the policy, program or decision? *Where and how will community provide input?*
- Do communities have access to all the information and tools they would need to more fully participate as a partner on the policy, program or decision?

The essential questions for this project are as follows:

- 1) Where are route 9N riders going?
- 2) How can we best serve the West End?
- 3) How can we support City of St. Louis Park staff create a pedestrian connection to the West End from the Westside to use Route 9 service?
- 4) What are the shift start/end times in concentration for employees in the West End? Does our service fit the needs of West End workers seeking to use transit to get to and from work?

Stakeholder Outreach Outline

Identifying stakeholders helps shape the activities planned for outreach and engagement. Stakeholders are key to answering essential questions, but they also necessitate good communication at key points throughout the project. The following have been identified as project stakeholders:

- City of St. Louis Park staff and elected officials
- City of Minneapolis staff and Council Members Yang, Goodman
- City of Golden Valley staff
- City of Minnetonka staff
- Metropolitan Council members Munt, Cunningham, Letofsky, Dorfman and Schreiber
- Businesses in the West End
 - Costco
 - Home Depot
 - Cub Foods
 - Hilton
 - Double Tree
- Current transit riders in impacted routes in study area
- Potential transit riders in study area
- Property owners in the West End
- Residents of the West End
- Harrison Neighborhood Association
- Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Association
- Heritage Park Neighborhood Association
- Business associations in the West End
- Heritage Commons

Referencing the essential questions, stakeholder outreach and engagement will be strategically used to gather input for community. Activities planned are as follows:

- Conduct and origin/destination survey 9N riders between Greenbrier and Louisiana Ave S
- Survey businesses the West End for employee shift start and stop times, and concentrations of employees
- Inform route 9, 604, 649, and 675 riders of Concept Plan and gather input by boarding buses and talking to customers

Internal stakeholders can also provide useful input to help answer essential questions. Internal stakeholders include:

- Route 9 bus operators
- Customer relations staff/database

Internal stakeholder outreach includes:

- Gather feedback from Route 9 operators
- Retrieving comments on Route 9 from customer relations (Pam Steffen)

Communication Strategy Outline

Communicating the project will inform riders and other stakeholders of the project and impending changes to Route 9 when the project is completed and implemented. Metro Transit has a number of different mediums that can be utilized throughout the project to communicate with project stakeholders.

Activities will require collaboration between Service Development (Steve Mahowald), Marketing, Communications (Drew Kerr), Social Media (Kathy Graul), Community Outreach/Engagement (C Terrence Anderson), and Street Operations (Jay Russell).

Communication Activities include:

- 1) Developing webpage: A simple webpage (located within Transit Improvements) will be used to house documents that can be reviewed by the public and serve to provide updates when available.
- 2) Contact stakeholders: Communicate with stakeholders throughout the project to communicate project activities (e.g. release of the concept plan).
- 3) Open house: When the concept plan is produced, an open house will be a chance for project stakeholders to review and comment on the plan.
- 4) Publicizing route changes: Before the implementation of changes on Routes 9, 604, 649 or 675 Metro Transit can communicate to stakeholders the impending changes. Communication mediums include Rider's Almanac blog post, Connect for implementation center at Nicollet and Heywood Garages, information in shelters, rider alerts, and social media.
- 5) Customer Relations Follow-Up: Two Months or one pick after the improvements, ask Customer Relations (Pam Steffen) to gather comments regarding the route. See if there was any response to the frequency upgrade or outreach.

Planned Activities

Open Houses

- Thursday, September 8, 2016
Harrison Education Center
501 Irving Ave. N.
Minneapolis, MN
- Saturday, September 10, 2016
Showplace ICON Theatre Community Room
1625 West End Boulevard
St. Louis Park, MN
- Tuesday, April 21, 2017
Showplace ICON Theatre Community Room
1625 West End Boulevard
St. Louis Park, MN

Presentations

- Harrison Neighborhood Association: August 8, September 19
- Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Association: August 10, September 14
- Heritage Park Neighborhood Association: July 11, September 12
- Heritage Commons: August 31
- Redeemer Lutheran: July 20, August 17

Communication Points

- The Bugle
- HNA Newsletter
- Minnetonka Memo
- Sun Sailor
 - St. Louis Park
 - Hopkins
 - Minnetonka
- Council Member's Newsletter
 - Yang
 - Goodman
 - Dorfman
 - Cunningham
- Insight News

Documentation

Relevant documents will be published online to ensure transparency throughout the process. Documents could include the concept plan, distributed survey (not completed surveys), and final plan changes. All activities will be documented to help support future planning and outreach around service improvements and pick changes.

Concept Plan Public Comment Summary

Metro Transit received 153 comments from 128 individuals. The number in parentheses after each bulleted issue/concern indicates the number of times such issue/concern was identified. If there is no number in parentheses after an issue/concern that means it was only identified once.

If a comment applied to more than one route, it was counted toward each route referenced. For example, if a customer sent us an email with comments about Routes X, Y and Z it counted it as three separate comments (one per route) from one individual. All the emails in a conversation string are considered one comment. If a customer contacted us in multiple ways (i.e. email, voice mail, comment card) each comment was recorded per format.

	Email	Comment Card	Letter/ Resolution ^	Customer Feedback	Public Hearing	Voicemail	Facebook	Total
Route 9B	9	6	1	5	7	1		29
Route 9H	23	5	2	1	7			38
Route 9N	2	1	2	1	3			9
Cedar Lk. Rd	3	2			3			8
Route 9-other	5	1			3			9
Route 604	2			1	3			6
Route 649	1			2	1			3
Route 675/645	13	2		1	2		1	19
Facilities					2			2
Park & Rides	1				1			2
Overall Plan	9	1	1	1	7			19
Other*	1	1			4		2	8
Total	69	19	6	12	43	1	3	153

*Comments included topics such as connections to South Minneapolis, Westwood Nature Center, automated vans, access to Knollwood, Southwest LRT, the Cedar Lake Trail, 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.

Total comments/questions: 153

Overall Plan

- Don't take away existing service to serve the West End (4)
- Consider the needs of transit-dependent riders over commuters (3)
- Plan prioritizes West End over transit-dependent riders (3)
- Strongly opposed to plan (2)
- Support better access to the West End (2)
- Rider appreciates the work put into this plan. (2)
- Support goal of route simplification
- The project goals can still be met without service cuts and simplification.
- This plan does not help the Northside, keeps Harrison isolated.
- This plan sacrifices quality and will harm community.

- Opposed to route simplification.
- Focus on unreliable service, on-time performance first.

Route 9

- Route 9B
 - Oppose elimination of branch (23)
 - Propose reduced service instead of elimination (4)
 - Rider's decision to move here was based off transit (4)
 - Will increase car traffic (3)
 - Previous service cuts have harmed ridership (2)
 - Convert route into a limited stop / circulator route with 9H (2)
 - Parts of Golden Valley will be entirely without service (2)
 - Rider is disabled and will lose convenient transit access (2)
 - Not a regular transit rider (2)
 - Reroute 755 onto Glenwood (2)
 - Will lose access to child's school
 - Keep access to Wirth Lake Beach
 - There are more riders than the data says
 - Rider does not have a car
 - Senior citizens will be harmed by this cut
 - Glenwood Ave. is a food desert
- Route 9H
 - Oppose elimination of branch (27)
 - Will increase car traffic (9)
 - Propose reduced service instead of elimination (7)
 - Previous service cuts have harmed ridership (5)
 - Senior citizens will be harmed by this cut (5)
 - Environmental concerns (4)
 - Walking to alternate service is difficult in winter (4)
 - Rider's decision to move here/take a job was based off transit (4)
 - Will lose access to Benilde-St. Margaret's (3)
 - Schedule is unreliable which harmed ridership (2)
 - Support expansion of service (2)
 - Support elimination of branch
 - Not a regular transit rider
 - Rider needs access to Dunwoody College
 - Connect 9H branch to Cedar Trails
 - Convert route into a circulator route with 9B
 - Relies on this branch for travel
 - MPLS high school students will lose service
 - Route is regularly late. Fix on-time performance
- Cedar Lake Road
 - Oppose elimination of branch (6)
 - Schoolchildren use bus on Cedar Lake Road (4)
 - Support elimination of branch
 - Consider the potential for development at James & Cedar Lake

- Cedar Lake Road is safer at night than Penn & Glenwood
- BMNA just invested in bus stop improvements along Cedar Lake Rd
- Continue service only during rush hour
- The walk to Penn/Glenwood is difficult in the winter
- Ridership demand is greater on Cedar Lake Rd than on Penn
- Buses are too loud and fast going down Penn
- Bus traffic down Penn makes nearby houses vibrate and crack
- Route 9N
 - Add late-night WB trips from downtown (6)
 - Increase service on Cedar Lake Rd (3)
 - Support increased service to Hopkins HS
- Other Route 9
 - Better connections to 604 needed. (2)
 - The routing down Wayzata Ave will have no ridership
 - Preserve early morning (4:24a) trips from 46th St Station
 - Supportive of better on-time performance
 - Continue service on Penn & Glenwood
 - APC data for Penn/Glenwood/Cedar Lake Rd. is wrong.
 - Increase frequency to every 20 minutes.
 - Eliminate stops between Downtown & Park Place P&R.
 - Stagger departure times with 645.
 - Run trips between downtown & Cedar Trails at 3:15p, 4:15p, 4:45p.
 - Reprint pocket schedules to show 9th & Nicollet stop rather than 10th & Hennepin.

Route 604

- Better connections to 9 and 645 (2)
- Better connections to route 9.
- Do not eliminate route
- Do not stop route at Louisiana TC
- Better connections to 17, 675, 649
- Supports weekend service.

Route 649

- Oppose elimination of route (2)
- Reroute onto Utica Ave
- Fix schedules immediately – the last PM trip is >15 minutes late.

Route 675 / 645

- Oppose changes to route (7)
- On-time performance will worsen (5)
- New local stops will increase travel time (5)
- Support changes to route (3)
- Route 675 is too busy; 645 buses will be crowded (2)

- Better connections to 604 needed (2)
- Extend to Downtown East (2)
- Reroute 645 to more directly serve West End
- Rider will need early AM westbound trips like current 675
- Rider would prefer 15-20 minute frequency
- Rider not interested in price savings
- Changes will make rider drive
- Connect 645 to future Bryn Mawr LRT stop
- Stagger departure times with 9.
- Run the 645 past midnight

Facilities

- Improve shelters and waiting conditions to increase ridership.
- Signage is hard to read, should be like MARQ2 stops.

Park and Rides

- Park Place P&R will overflow from 645 (2)

Other / Misc

- Better service to Knollwood (3)
- Better connections between Golden Valley and Phillips
- Introduce on-demand vanpools across the region for a transit revolution.
- Concerned about connections between SLP (Louisiana/Franklin) and Target Field
- Reroute Southwest LRT to the West End
- Connect service to Cedar Lake bike trail
- Restructure routes in area
 - Route 9
 - Most complex route in system
 - Run until midnight daily every 30 minutes
 - Run 9N down Cedar Lake Rd & Plymouth Rd to Ridgedale Center
 - Replace 9H with 25L
 - Replace 9N with 675, run to Ridgedale
 - Shift 9A to run on 42nd Ave all the way to 46th St
 - Route 649
 - Replace with 25L on Cedar Lake Rd
 - Route 663
 - Eliminate route
 - Route 649
 - Eliminate route
 - Route 675
 - Run every 30 minutes off-peak
 - Run 15 minutes peak to Ridgedale & Plymouth P&R
 - Operate on frontage road between Louisiana TC & Hwy 100
 - Run until midnight daily
 - Run off-peak shuttle beyond Ridgedale and use deadhead as 675

- Run to Ridgedale, replacing 9N