

## CTIB plans to up its share of transit costs

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*Under revised funding plans, the Counties Transit Improvement Board would cover 80 percent of the projected \$27.6 million cost of developing a bus rapid transit route along Robert Street from downtown St. Paul to West St. Paul. (File photo: Bill Klotz)*

To accelerate the number of transit lines built in the next 10 years, the Counties Transit Improvement Board approved increasing its funding share for certain projects.

As outlined in its five-year investment strategy, the board, which collects sales tax in five metro area counties to pay for

transit projects, plans to fund six light rail and bus rapid transit lines currently in development. In total, the projects represent more than \$4 billion in capital costs and more than \$1.6 billion would be covered by the board.

Traditionally, half the cost of transit projects is covered by the Federal Transit Administration and 30 percent by CTIB. The board's new investment strategy aims to make projects more competitive at the federal level by reducing and, in some cases, eliminating the need for federal dollars by upping CTIB's share.

If project sponsors pursued federal dollars for each of the proposed transit lines, the region would request more than \$200 million per year over 10 years. The board's investment strategy knocks that number down to \$160 million – considered a more reasonable, but still aggressive target.

Board chair Peter McLaughlin said the investment strategy will “set the table” for the board's next generation of work.

“It's pretty exciting to think about just an array of projects starting to roll downhill,” said McLaughlin, who is also a Hennepin County commissioner.

The investment strategy will be incorporated into the Metropolitan Council's Transportation Policy Plan, which is a regional framework for transit projects. Chair Susan Haigh said the board and Met Council share goals of using the resources they already have to accelerate transit development and working jointly to secure additional funds.

Here's a list of the upcoming transit projects and CTIB's funding share:

- Southwest, \$1.653 billion, 30 percent — A 16-mile extension of the Green Line Light Rail Transit route along a rail corridor between Minneapolis and Eden Prairie.
- [Bottineau](#), \$1 billion, 31 percent — A 13-mile extension of the Blue Line from downtown Minneapolis to Brooklyn Park.
- [Orange Line](#), \$150 million, 30 percent — A bus rapid transit line along Interstate 35W from Fifth Street in Minneapolis to the Burnsville Transit Station.
- [Gateway Corridor](#), \$469 million, 35 percent — Bus rapid transit in a dedicated lane on a 12-mile corridor along Interstate 94 between St. Paul's Union Depot and Woodbury.
- [Robert Street](#), \$27.6 million, 80 percent — A bus rapid transit route is planned for Robert Street from Union Depot in downtown St. Paul to Mendota Road in West St. Paul.
- [Riverview](#), \$779 million, 80 percent — A potential light rail line between downtown St. Paul, the Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport and the Mall of America currently under study.

Though modes are identified in the investment strategy for the purpose of planning, the locally preferred alternatives for Gateway, Robert Street and Riverview have not yet been selected.

Though the board approved a framework for its investment, funding commitments for each project will be evaluated and approved by the board on a case-by-case basis.