

CHAPTER SEVEN: FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS

A Central Corridor bus facilities plan has been developed with the intention of providing facilities support to the proposed bus service changes contained in the Central Corridor Transit Service Study. These changes will be implemented in conjunction with the opening of the METRO Green Line in 2014 and are intended to maximize usage and efficiency of transit in the Central Corridor service area.

The Central Corridor bus facilities plan is focused on the area defined by the Central Corridor Transit Service Study and encompasses all the route changes that are proposed to improve connectivity to the METRO Green Line. The focus of the plan is to improve bus facilities along the new and existing routes in the study area so that using transit, especially in order to connect to the METRO Green Line, is a more attractive and easier option for customers. Downtown Minneapolis and downtown St. Paul are not considered as a part of this Central Corridor bus facilities plan due to other, ongoing projects that are improving facilities in the two downtowns. In addition, bus facility improvements were not considered for Snelling Avenue/Ford Parkway and West 7th Street as these corridors have been identified for the implementation of arterial bus rapid transit lines and will be receiving facility improvements as a part of the implementation of that project.

A number of areas for improvements in Metro Transit's bus facilities have been identified to enhance connections between METRO Green Line service and bus service in the study area. In anticipation of METRO Green Line service in 2014, Metro Transit proposes to make enhancements to the following categories of bus facilities with the Central Corridor Transit service area.

DOWNTOWN ST. PAUL BUS STOP IMPROVEMENT PLAN

In 2009, the City of Saint Paul developed the 6th + 5th Street Capital Improvement Plan, which defines a vision for improving the physical environment of 6th and 5th streets between Rice Park and Mears Park. One of the recommendations of this plan was to improve the physical environment of the four highest-volume downtown bus stops on 5th Street, Minnesota Street, 6th Street and Cedar Street.

In response to this need, Metro Transit applied for and was awarded a \$2.6 million Federal Transit Administration grant to upgrade these four bus stops. The upgrades will improve the safety, function, amenities and aesthetics of the facilities and will maximize the benefits of other transit investments currently underway in downtown St. Paul, including the introduction of the METRO Green Line service in 2014.

Improvements to all four bus stop facilities will include the following:

- Transit shelters/waiting area improvements
- Safety and security upgrades
- Signage (real-time departure, transit and way-finding information)
- Sidewalk and street modifications
- Integration of benches, plantings, waste receptacles, public art, lighting, bicycle

- amenities and other streetscape elements
- Vertical connection to METRO Green Line (partial funding)

STUDY AREA WIDE BUS STOP IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Shelter upgrades are being prioritized along bus routes that make connections to METRO Green Line stations, especially at University Avenue stops. These stops are anticipated to be high-transfer areas for transit customers who are making connections between LRT service and bus service. New or modified routes in the study area, such as the proposed Lexington Avenue route, are also prioritized for transit shelters where these routes connect with the METRO Green Line. Along University Avenue, Metro Transit intends to provide shelters with lighting to enhance customer safety and comfort. Shelter installation in other locations in the study area will be prioritized based upon ridership at those stops. To ensure equitable use of limited capital resources, Metro Transit requires that a stop in Minneapolis or Saint Paul has 40 or more boardings a day before a shelter is warranted. Excluding the downtown zones, there are currently 89 bus stops within the Study Area that have 40 or more daily boardings, but do not have a shelter.

The improvement of informational signage within the Study Area is also seen as a key opportunity to increase amenity for transit customers. Metro Transit, in partnership with the cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, will provide directional signage along bus routes serving the METRO Green Line to make these connections more legible and clear. Signs indicating which bus routes connect to the METRO Green Line will be placed at bus stops in the Study Area to help customers, particularly infrequent riders, better understand the transit service available to them. Signs with real-time bus arrival information are also intended to be deployed at high usage stops such as those near the University of Minnesota campus and at bus stops along University where customers will make connections with LRT service.

While the majority of stops in the Study Area already provide safe and accessible bus boarding areas, Metro Transit will be replacing or installing bus pads where safety and accessibility can be enhanced. This will include placing or replacing bus pads to ensure compliance with ADA, connection to improvements that cities are making to their sidewalks and crosswalks, and enhancement of lighting at key bus stops.

The METRO Green Line will also present new opportunities for customers connecting to transit via bicycles. The goal of planned bike improvements is to provide more secure bike parking along the METRO Green Line and thereby encourage biking as a mode of access to transit service. This access will be particularly useful to those residents with less convenient bus connections or for those bicycle commuters in the east metro who wish to extend their commute via the METRO Green Line to the U of M and downtown Minneapolis. A pilot project of a secure “bike-and-ride” is being considered at the Dale or Victoria station. Bike-and-rides, which have been successfully implemented in other parts of the country, provide secure bike parking through card access that will be integrated with Metro Transit’s Go-To Card. As part of an ongoing capital improvements project, Metro Transit will replace bike lockers with more effective covered bike racks.

Initiatives to continually improve the sustainability of Metro Transit's operations are being tested and will be expanded based upon their effectiveness. Solar-powered lights in shelters are being tested in Minneapolis. This technology could be extended to real-time signs and/or ticket machines contingent upon the success of the pilot project.

ROSEDALE TRANSIT CENTER

Rosedale Transit Center is located at the Rosedale Shopping Center in Roseville. The Recommended Plan improves the frequency of many routes that serve the mall and terminate at Rosedale Transit Center.

To accommodate the increase in bus service, the existing transit center bus parking area may need to be expanded. If this expansion is necessary, staff will work with the City of Roseville and the Rosedale Center property owner.

RAYMOND AVENUE STATION BUS LAYOVER FACILITY

A total of four bus routes will meet near Raymond Avenue Station. Two of the planned routes will terminate at this location, requiring a bus layover area and access to a restroom for bus operators.

WEST 7TH STREET BUS LAYOVER FACILITY

The Lexington Parkway cross-town bus route will meet Route 54 on West 7th Street. A new bus layover area and access to a restroom for bus operators is required near Albion Street and West 7th Street.

FUTURE SNELLING ARTERIAL BUS RAPID TRANSIT SERVICE AND FACILITIES

The Metropolitan Council's 2030 Transportation Policy Plan identifies 11 high-demand local bus corridors to develop a facility and service plan that would enhance efficiency, speed, reliability, customer amenities and transit market competitiveness. These Rapid Bus corridors include stations with heat, improved lighting, security cameras, ticket vending machines and NexTrip electronic signs that announce the actual departure times for the next bus.

A recent study ranks the Snelling Avenue corridor as one of the best corridors in which to implement this type of service. At this time, Metro Transit has established a goal of implementing Rapid Bus service on Snelling Avenue in 2014. Achieving this goal will require close coordination with many and the same stakeholders that are involved in the Central Corridor Transit Service Study.

CHAPTER EIGHT: STUDY TIMELINE AND IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

This report outlines a Recommended Plan for improved bus service plan in Central Corridor Study Area. On May 23, 2012, the Metropolitan Council adopted this Recommended Plan for public review. Once public review is completed, service change