

1. BACKGROUND

The Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority (RCRRA) and other partners, including Metro Transit, are seeking to engage St. Paul's East Side citizens and businesses in a conversation about transit service in this area of St. Paul. As part of this effort, this report provides an evaluation of current transit service provided on the East Side of St. Paul to determine its effectiveness and efficiency. It examines existing conditions as well as potential new service, transit market opportunities and facility needs.

Metro Transit has successfully used a sector-based approach to address the emerging transit needs within the region. As shown in **Figure 1**, the region is broken into nine transit planning sectors. Sectors 1, 2, 5, 7 and 8 and most recently the Central Corridor have undergone prior planning studies.

In 1999, Metro Transit began the Northeast Metro Transit Restructuring Study that included Sectors 1 and 2 in northeast Minneapolis, St. Paul north of I-94 and the northeast suburbs. This study aimed "to update the design of Metro Transit bus services to improve service in a way that reflects community needs and goals."

In 2001 Metro Transit and the Metropolitan Council implemented most of the service and facility improvements that were recommended in the Sectors 1 and 2 Restructuring Study Service Plan:

- Simplify the system so it is easier for residents to understand. This was accomplished by reducing the number of route branches and terminals from 152 before the study to just 54 route branches and terminals after implementing the recommended plan.
- Provide faster travel times for trips throughout the system. Travel time includes walking to the bus stop, waiting, riding and transferring.
- Implement a network of service that run every 15 minutes or better all day. A portion of Route 64 is included in the Hi-Frequency service network.
- Concentrate more service on fewer streets.
- Improve travel speeds by making routes more direct with fewer route deviations.
- Reduce the number of bus stops to comply with regional bus stop spacing standards of generally no more than eight bus stops per mile.
- Extend service to major destinations including Sun Ray Shopping Center and Maplewood Mall.
- Improve facilities including installing bus stop signs at all stop locations, more passenger waiting shelters and new transit centers at locations where multiple routes connect.

Even outside of the formal sector study process, Metro Transit reviews route design, performance and operations on a regular basis and makes service adjustments as appropriate. Over the last 10 years, Metro Transit has made over 75 service adjustments on the routes serving the East Side of St. Paul. More than half of these changes were running time or trip time changes and about one-third were changes to the frequency of service. Other types of changes include improving or reducing the span of service and making routing adjustments.

Highlights of these service changes:

- Route 61: On weekdays a later evening round trip and an earlier westbound trip were added.
- Route 63: Night service was increased to 30 minute frequency until midnight. Nearly all trips were extended from Sunray to McKnight/Lower Afton. Sunday service was improved from hourly to every 30 minutes between 8:00 a.m. and midnight.
- Route 64: On weekends service to Maplewood Mall improved from hourly to every 30 minutes. Owl trips at 3:00 a.m. and 4:00 a.m. were eliminated. The “C” branch via Hazel, Ivy, Furness and Ruth streets was eliminated due to low ridership. The span of service on the “N” branch was extended on weekday evenings and on weekends. Weekday frequency was improved to every 10-15 minutes between 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. New Saturday service on the “D” branch was added.
- Route 71: Weekday and Saturday night service improved to every 30 minutes and 60-minute service was added on Sundays between 7:00 p.m.- midnight.
- Route 80: Service improved from hourly to every 30 minutes during peak periods.
- Route 219: Saturday service was eliminated in 2005 and restored in 2008. Weekday trips were rerouted to serve Century College West and East. Weekday frequency improved from hourly to every 30 minutes. The weekday and Saturday service increases were temporarily funded by a federal Job Access and Reverse Commute grant.

The St. Paul East Side study area, shown in **Figure 2**, is generally bounded by I-94 on the south, McKnight Avenue on the east, Larpenteur on the north and by I-35E on the west. The Study Area is almost completely urban, including downtown St. Paul and covering many neighborhoods on the East Side of St. Paul. There are 99,277 people who live in the Study Area, with minorities making up 57.6 percent. There are 37,932 housing units. As of 2010, there were about 27,000 jobs in the Study Area, which represents about 1.8 percent of the employment in the entire metropolitan area.

The routes included in the study include all those which operate a portion of their total service in the study area. This includes routes 61, 63, 64, 70, 71, 74, 80, 219, 294 and 350. These routes are indicated in bold lines on **Figure 2**.

This report will examine the existing conditions of the routes in the study area, looking at the markets and unmet opportunities that exist for the current transit service being provided. It will document the development patterns, major attractions and destinations in the Study Area, and current and future travel patterns. Finally, it will provide a review of the performance and structure of existing transit service.

Figure 1 – Map of Metropolitan Area Transit Planning Sectors and St. Paul East Side Study Area

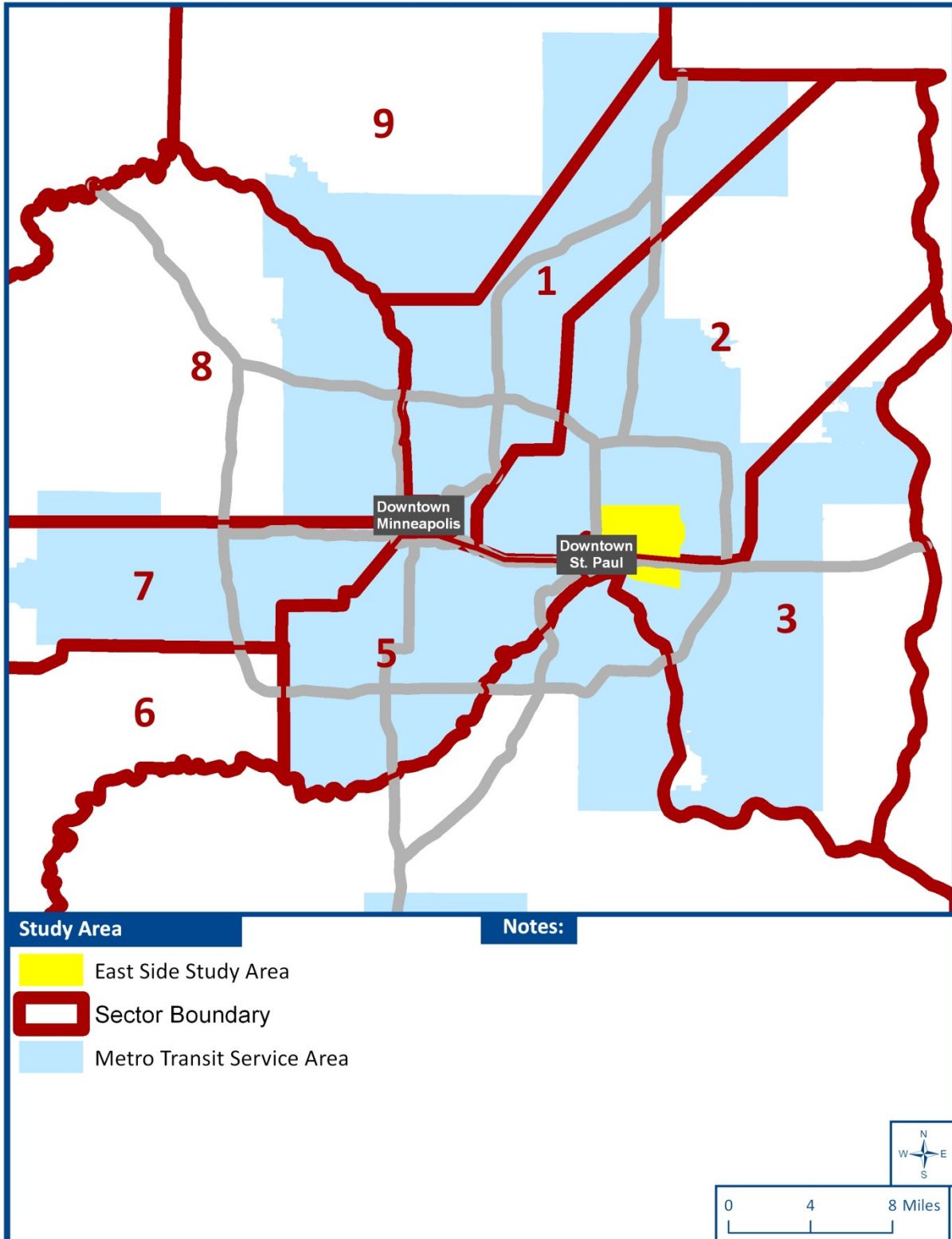


Figure 2 - Map of the St. Paul East Side Study Area

