

5. OPPORTUNITIES AND NEXT STEPS

When the METRO Green Line LRT begins operating in mid-2014, a strong emphasis will be placed on providing frequent connecting bus service with Green Line trains. Bus hours will be added to fill in the gaps in bus service span daily. Priority will be placed on improving the frequencies of bus service operating in Transit Market Area 1.

Metro Transit is addressing some of the deficiencies in this area identified in Chapter 2 by increasing the frequency of East Side evening and night service beginning in August 2013. In May 2013, the weekday span on Route 61 was extended and night and Sunday service on Route 63 was improved from 60 minutes to 30 minutes. Also, frequency on Route 71 was improved on weekday and Saturday nights to every 30 minutes and on Sundays hourly service was added after 7:00 p.m.

Regular Bus Service Improvements

- Routes 64, 71, 74: Improve night frequency to 30 minutes all days Aug 2013
- Route 63, Improve frequency to 20 minutes all days and extend to Green Line Summer 2014
- Route 74: Improve frequency between Stillwater Ave./Nokomis Ave. to 46th St. LRT Station to 15 minutes on weekdays and Saturdays 2015
- Route 80: Improve frequency to 30 minutes on weekdays, Saturdays and Sundays 2015
- Route 80: Improve weekend span of service 2015

Transit Facility Service Improvements

- Maplewood Mall Park & Ride expansion from 500 to nearly 1000 spaces 2013
- Downtown St. Paul passenger waiting area improvements at 5th Street & Minnesota, Minnesota & 6th Street, 6th Street & Cedar, and Cedar & 5th Street. Project scope includes new expanded transit shelters, safety and security upgrades, and streetscape elements including lighting, benches, plantings, public art, Nextrip signage 2014
- I-35E MnPASS lanes from I-694 to downtown St. Paul 2015

Arterial BRT

East 7th Street Arterial Bus Rapid Transit

East 7th Street is one of twelve corridors identified for potential arterial bus rapid transit (BRT) implementation in the Metropolitan Council's *2030 Transportation Policy Plan*. The East 7th Street arterial BRT corridor was included in Metro Transit's *2012 Arterial Transitway Corridors Study (ATCS)*, which developed the arterial BRT mode, evaluated potential performance in the 12 corridors and prioritized corridors for near-term implementation.

Arterial BRT Characteristics

Arterial BRT is a package of transit enhancements designed to reduce travel times and provide an improved customer experience while operating in mixed traffic on urban transit corridors with high existing ridership. These enhancements include:

- **Increased frequency and limited-stop service:** In general, BRT will operate every 15 minutes or better during daytime and evening hours, stopping at stations spaced approximately every half mile.
- **Enhanced station amenities:** Stations will include real-time signage, customer wayfinding information and raised curbs for near-level boarding.
- **Off-board fare collection:** Arterial BRT will use proof-of-payment fare collection and enforcement. Customers not using a smart card will pay their fares at a ticket vending machine at the station before boarding the vehicle. TVMs will issue either a smart card or a paper ticket, which customers can provide upon request to roving fare inspectors.
- **Specialized vehicles:** Arterial BRT lines will use unique 40- and 60-foot low-floor vehicles with smart card readers at every door allowing for easy, all-door boarding. Vehicles will have fewer seats, allowing for quicker and more comfortable customer circulation.
- **Signal priority:** Where feasible, vehicles will be given signal priority to extend green lights or give transit an early green light, reducing transit delay at signalized intersections.

East 7th Street Corridor Concept

The ATCS examined an East 7th Street arterial BRT alignment from downtown St. Paul to the Maplewood Mall Transit Center via East 7th Street, Arcade Street, Maryland Avenue and White Bear Avenue, as shown in **Figure 36**.

The conceptual service plan developed in the ATCS included 10-minute peak/15-minute off-peak arterial BRT service along this alignment. An end-to-end trip from the Maplewood Mall Transit Center to downtown St. Paul would be 11 percent faster than existing local service on Route 64.

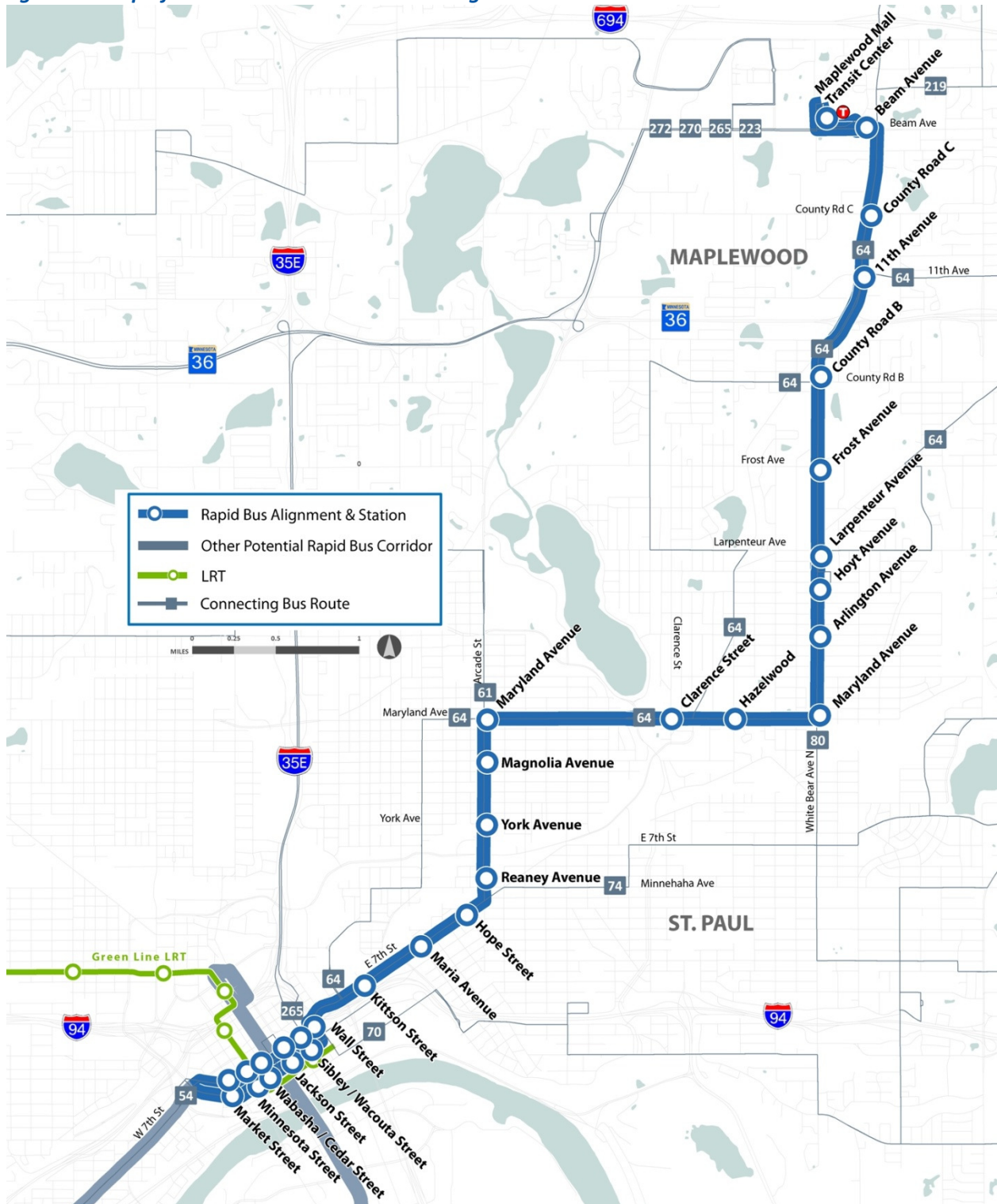
Recommendations for Future Study

When evaluated on technical criteria, including cost and ridership, the East 7th Street arterial BRT corridor from downtown to the Maplewood Mall Transit Center ranked 11th of the 12 corridors studied, due in part to low demand that may not support improvement on the entire corridor to Maplewood. The corridor was recommended for further study to better understand how a revised arterial BRT service plan could best meet travel needs in portions of the corridor with strong existing demand and complement other potential transitway investments.

Project partner feedback received during the ATCS indicated that a portion of the East 7th corridor may be served with an extension of West 7th Street arterial BRT. The portion of the corridor on East 7th, Arcade and Maryland Avenues has high existing transit demand and could support arterial BRT investment in the near term if implemented as an extension of the West 7th Street corridor.

In addition, the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority (RCRRA) is considering several potential alignments for the Rush Line Corridor, some of which run parallel to portions of the East 7th corridor.

Figure 36-Map of East 7th Street Arterial BRT Alignment



Metro Transit will begin more detailed planning on the West 7th Street corridor in late 2013 and will examine potential East 7th extensions at that time, working closely with the RCRRRA-led process to identify Rush Line and/or arterial BRT solutions that serve existing transit demand and best meet travel needs in the corridor.

CMAQ Funding Awards

In summer of 2012, Metro Transit was awarded federal CMAQ (Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality) funding for bus purchases and three years of limited-stop operations on four corridors, including East 7th Street. The Transportation Advisory Board is in the process of amending the regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to include these projects in program years 2015 and/or 2016. Availability of these and other funds will be a key consideration for phasing implementation of priority corridors, including East 7th Street.

Customer Relations Feedback

Calling or writing to Metro Transit Customer Relations is the primary way that customers communicate with Metro Transit. A review of requests related to East Side routes helps to identify unmet transit needs within the community. The most common requests on these routes are about earlier or later service and operational issues such as transfer connections, overcrowded buses or late buses. Specific requests include Sunday service on Route 61, additional weekend service on the Route 64D branch, express service between Maplewood Mall and downtown St. Paul on weekends, and better connections between Route 74 and the Blue Line.

Regional Service Improvement Plan and Next Steps

The Regional Service Improvement Plan (RSIP) identifies regional opportunities to improve transit service through expanded coverage, frequency and span of service of the regular route transit network. The RSIP is prioritized to identify projects that have the best likelihood of success in achieving regional goals for transit service.

There are eight evaluation factors used for prioritization:

- Subsidy Per Passenger: Measured in proportion to regional averages for service type
- PPISH (Productivity): Measured in proportion to regional standard for service type
- Subsidy Per Passenger Express Mile: Measured in proportion to the regional average for express routes. This factor only applies to peak express service.
- Congestion Mitigation: Measured based on an assessment of level and length of congested freeway segments served by a route. This factor only applies to peak express service.
- Capital Facility and Running Way Coordination: Measured based on committee review of project and required capital facilities.
- Benefits for Disabled Community: Measured based on comparison of population served by proposed service expansion to overall regional population, with adjustments for specific circumstances.
- Service to Minority and Low-Income Populations: Measured based on comparison of population served by proposed service expansion to overall regional population.

- Innovation: Based on recommendation of project sponsor and assessment by review committee

The RSIP focuses on near-term opportunities. Early next year the RSIP will be updated through 2018.

Any service improvements suggested in the Fostering an East Side Conversation report will be submitted for consideration in the next RSIP.