

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Highland Park Transit Study

Background

In anticipation of the Ford Site redevelopment in Highland Park, the City of Saint Paul, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority (RCRRA) and Metro Transit are reviewing current transit service in the Highland Park area. The Metro Transit Highland Park Transit Service Study will evaluate the existing transit service in a study area that is bounded by West 7th Street, Randolph Avenue, and the Mississippi River. The study provides an analysis of Highland Park's Transit Market Area, demographics, bus routes, service levels, bus stop level ridership and public facilities.

The Highland Park area is very well served by transit. Located within the Transit Market Area II Highland Park receives a level of transit service that is nearly comparable to Market Area I. Each weekday Highland Park is served by nearly 800 transit trips on ten bus routes including the A Line Arterial BRT (Rapid Bus) route. Bus stop level ridership data indicates that transit service carries 2000 weekday passenger trips in the study area. Some more heavily used bus stops in Highland Park board over 100 passengers each weekday.

A number of earlier studies and service plans have included the Highland Park area during the past 15 years:

- The 2004 Central-South (Sector 5) Transit Plan was implemented in conjunction with the introduction of METRO Blue Line LRT service. Metro Transit made significant bus route structure changes and service improvements including a new Route 46 crosstown route between Highland Park and south Minneapolis and improved Route 54 limited stop service was introduced operating on the entire length of West 7th Street.
- The 2014 Central Corridor Transit Service Plan further improved service in the Highland Park area. This plan primarily focused on improvements to the crosstown route network and connections with the METRO Green Line. The improved crosstown network operates every 20-30 minutes seven days a week and a new crosstown route was be introduced on Lexington Parkway for connections to the new Green Line LRT service.
- In 2016 Metro Transit introduced the region's first Rapid bus line. The new faster service is matched with high amenity stations including off-vehicle fare payment, real-time bus arrival information and traffic signal priority. The new faster A Line has been successful at attracting over 30% more riders in the Ford Parkway and Snelling corridor.

The Highland Park study area lies entirely in Transit Market Area II. This market area contains moderately high population and employment densities and typically has a traditional street grid. Most of Market Area II can support many of the same types of fixed-route transit service as Market Area I, although usually at wider route spacing, lower frequencies and shorter service spans.

Highland Park is served by 8 local bus routes, one commuter express route, and one Arterial Bus Rapid Transit (Rapid Bus) route. Each weekday over 800 bus trips pass through or terminate in Highland Park study area and board over daily 2,000 riders. Many bus stops in the study area board over 50 riders each weekday and some bus stops board over 100 riders each weekday.

Project Goals

The purpose of this report is to review existing transit service performance and to consider service changes in the greater Highland Park neighborhood, and the Ford Site redevelopment specifically. These changes could be included in the Metro Transit Service Improvement Plan that is expected to be updated in 2020. Other transit service changes in the Highland Park area may be part of a connecting bus service plan for the Riverview Corridor Project.

Service Improvement Plan

The 2017 Service Improvement Plan (SIP) identifies regional opportunities to improve transit service through expanded coverage, frequency and span of service of the regular route transit network. The SIP is prioritized to identify projects that have the best likelihood of success in achieving regional goals for transit service.

In 2020, Network Next will supersede the SIP and update evaluation of potential Highland Park service improvements to the Ford Site. As the redevelopment plan for the Ford Site plan is refined and advanced, bus service and facility improvements may be recommended in the updated SIP.