

1 REVIEW OF PAST PLANS AND PROJECTS

MINNETONKA PROJECTS

Minnetonka 2030 Comprehensive Guide Plan

Minnetonka's 2030 Comprehensive Guide Plan provides a policy framework to guide development, redevelopment and public services and programs. It identifies three community values related to transportation:

- Enhance resident & business mobility with quality roads & transit
- Meet local & regional needs through leadership & collaboration
- Expand & increase usability of our trails & sidewalks

It further states that “the transportation system needs to be planned to: support the villages and the Ridgedale/Opus regional areas, and to accommodate public travel and recreational needs.” The plan notes that “opportunities for multi-modal transportation facilities are available or planned in the Ridgedale, Opus (Southwest Corridor LRT) and community village areas where major transportation corridors exist” and calls for higher density development and greater accessibility around those corridors or areas.

Transportation policies most relevant to transit include:

- Policy No. 2: Recognize the interrelationship of land use and transportation, and anticipate impacts of the location and intensity of planned land uses on the transportation system.
- Policy No. 3: Provide and promote convenient and accessible transportation systems to residents and employees of Minnetonka businesses.
- Policy No. 5: Anticipate, plan for and collaborate with other agencies for local and regional transportation improvements and programs to lessen the impacts of congestion.
- Policy No. 6: Encourage the expansion of multi-modal and transit services in the city with other government agencies to support resident and business transportation needs.

Policy No. 7: Plan for trails and pedestrian ways as a transportation mode and provide a network of trails and pathways connections to schools, commercial areas, parks, activity centers and access to transit services. Minnetonka 2002 Opt-Out Study

In 2000 Minnetonka was granted an opportunity to replace Metro Transit with a transit system of its choosing. The Opt-Out Study, conducted for the City by URS in 2002, noted key distinctions between Minnetonka's choice whether to opt-out compared to the considerations of cities that opted out prior to sunset of the original 1982 opt-out law in 1989. These include:

- Minnetonka is not at the “end of the line,” and Metro Transit would likely reconfigure through routes to communities to the west.
- Minnetonka is part of the I-394 corridor with regional express service.
- Metro Transit completed a plan in late 2000 to improve service to Minnetonka, Hopkins, and St. Louis Park.
- Minnetonka transit service was commensurate with its financial contribution, although as of 2001 property taxes no longer funded transit operations.
- The amount of operating funding available to Minnetonka was uncertain.

The loss of Minnetonka's financial contribution would cause a significant funding shortfall for Metro Transit, likely leading to service cuts to Minnetonka, potentially including routes terminating before City limits, closed-door operation within the City, or elimination/reconfiguration of service operating on either side of Minnetonka.

The study presented three options, and recommended the second option:

1. Choose to not opt-out.
2. Choose to opt-out, but negotiate with Metro Transit for improved service and greater local control.
3. Choose to opt-out and develop/contract for replacement transit service.

Minnetonka 2010 Transit Study

Background

In 2002, Minnetonka chose to opt-out of the regional transit provider, Metro Transit, and participate in the transit replacement service program under Minnesota Statute §473.388. In July 2002, the City of Minnetonka entered into a six-year agreement with the Metropolitan Council to provide transit service.

The initial length of the agreement between the city and the Metropolitan Council for Metro Transit to provide service to Minnetonka was until July 2008. Now, with 18 months notice, either the city or the Metropolitan Council may terminate the agreement.

2010 Minnetonka Transit Study

The City of Minnetonka performed a 2010 Minnetonka Transit Study to better understand the transit services provided to, and available to, the city and to provide the city with options for provision of transit service that can best meet the city's transit needs. It was also to identify future

changes as light rail becomes available. The outcome of this study was to provide the city with the means to evolve their transit system to meet the changing needs of the community.

Key Findings

The City of Minnetonka has been, and continues to be, a good regional partner by working closely with the Metropolitan Council. Minnetonka does not want to get into the regional transit business, but does see a need to improve their ability to respond to the community's needs and improve local transit circulation.

General:

- **Transit Funding (MVST and Fare Revenue).** Motor Vehicle Sales Tax (MVST) revenue continues to drop. Projections for calendar year 2011, obtained from Met Council staff, have the City of Minnetonka's share at \$2.623M. In addition to this funding source, it is projected that the bus routes running within the City of Minnetonka will generate \$1.45M in passenger fares for a total of \$4.07M available for transit operations.
- **Minnetonka is low-density and mostly built out.** According to the Comprehensive Guide Plan, less than 300 acres of land remain undeveloped in Minnetonka. The average number of dwelling units per acre is about 2.5 in 2007 (up from 1.6 in 1979).
- **Minnetonka is an aging community.** According to the Demographic Change Report, Minnetonka can expect to see a significant and steady increase in senior households over the next 10 to 15 years, and corresponding economic cost and impact on demand for services, particularly transit.
- **Land use changes are expected largely along I-394 and in the Opus area.** Based on the Comprehensive Guide Plan and other regional plans, the I-394 and the Opus area are expected to change the most in the coming years, especially as key transit improvements are implemented. These include the Southwest Corridor LRT project as well as improvements to the I-394 transitway to enhance express transit operations in this corridor. The 2030 Land Use Plan defines village centers that have a coherent image and identity, and are conveniently accessed by various transportation alternatives.

Existing Transit Service:

- **High level of express service.** The majority of service in Minnetonka is express and is provided during peak periods only. Service is largely concentrated in the I-394 corridor, but most of the major corridors in the city also have some express service to downtown Minneapolis.
- **Cost Benefits:** Minnetonka is receiving comparable service hours per capita as surrounding transit agencies (SouthWest Metro, Plymouth Metrolink, Maple Grove) and the \$4 million available for transit operations are being utilized well, but not necessarily meeting the goals of the city.
- **Off-peak service concentrated on east side of city.** While the urban local routes and suburban local route (615) provide service throughout the day, most of Minnetonka does not have regular route service outside of peak periods.
- **High level of satisfaction with Metro Transit.** Just under 90% of existing passengers surveyed in 2008 indicated that they either agree or strongly agree that they are satisfied with Metro Transit service. This closely corresponds to responses received from the region as a whole.
- **Strong demand for park and ride.** As with other low-density communities, the most successful transit service in Minnetonka is park and ride based. The Minnetonka Park-and-Ride facilities are currently at or near capacity and there are plans to increase capacity by 900 spaces by 2030.

- **Transit Link provides important local service.** Because fixed route service is not largely available in Minnetonka outside of peak periods, Transit Link provides an important service for people who do not have other transportation options. Unlike most communities in the Twin Cities, Transit Link service hours have been extended in Minnetonka and are also provided on Saturday. While this service was started in March 2010, based on May 2010 data, about half of current trips on Transit Link are made within Minnetonka (44%) and to either Deephaven or Excelsior (22% and 12% respectively).
- **Transit Facilities.** The existing transit facilities are inconsistent and/or limited in some areas in terms of amenities, access and maintenance.

Regional Commute Patterns:

- **Strong commute demand to downtown Minneapolis,** but also neighboring communities. Only 15.5% of Minnetonka residents both live and work in Minnetonka; about 20% of residents work in an adjacent city while 19% commute to Minneapolis for work (the majority to downtown).
- **Strong Reverse Commute Pattern in Minnetonka.** Over 92% of Minnetonka workers live outside the City; Minneapolis is the largest single origin, with about 9% of the total. Minnetonka residents account for 8% of workers in Minneapolis.
- **Long Express Routes.** Most of the existing express service provided in Minnetonka consists of long lines traveling local corridors before becoming limited or non-stop into downtown Minneapolis or the University of Minnesota. Express service is largely concentrated on I-394, but also utilizes portions of State Highway 7, Highway 169 and even Highway 100. The major advantage of this type of route is that residents can board and access transit without driving to a park and ride or transferring to another route. Passengers can still choose to drive to a park and ride and use any of the express routes going to their destination. The major disadvantage is that many of these routes are not truly “express” until they reach I-394 and can result in long travel times especially on segments further away from I-394.

Vision and Goals

Based on the needs assessment, review of transit improvements already planned in Minnetonka and the region, and Minnetonka’s Transit Vision the following Goals were defined to assist in future transit planning efforts in Minnetonka:

- Improve local transit circulation throughout the day
- Provide transit connections to high-density and subsidized housing in Minnetonka
- Provide Minnetonka residents better connections to major employment sites in the city
- Provide transit service that supports Comprehensive Plan land use goals

Recommendations

In order for the City of Minnetonka to improve their ability to respond to the community’s changing needs and improve local transit circulation, the following steps were recommended:

1. The City maintains their current agreement with Metropolitan Council as they perform the following:
 - a. Work with the Metropolitan Council to define Regional Integrity (as noted in the contract).
 - b. Apply the information about Minnetonka residents travel patterns and attitudes towards transit, which was received through Annual Community Survey.

- c. Revised short- and long-term transit service plan that addresses all or part of the recommendations set forth in this document.
2. City takes action to begin negotiations with Metropolitan Council for Option 2, for a new Transit Service Contract:
 - a. Coordinate with the Metropolitan Council to perform a mini-sector study to identify enhanced local community routes and maintenance of regional integrity.
 - b. Agree on a revised service plan, and other goals/objectives approved by the City as part of this study.
 - c. Draft preliminary agreement with Metropolitan Council that provides for detailed performance standards and reporting requirements.
 - d. Negotiate with Metropolitan Council to retain a portion of their dedicated MVST funds or have Metropolitan Council continue to retain all MVST funds and provide an enhanced local community transit service:
 - i. Allow for enhanced local/community circulator transit service to be contracted and managed by the City of Minnetonka or Metropolitan Council,
 - ii. Allow for express transit service to continue to be contracted and managed by Metropolitan Council,
 - iii. Allow for increased marketing, facility maintenance and possible service enhancements,
 - iv. Allow for the creation and funding of a Reserve Account for future transit service.
3. Execute a fully negotiated (preferably a two year) Contract for Transit Services with Metropolitan Council.

In the event that the new agreement with Metropolitan Council is a success, then the City should continue on this path, if it is not, the City should:

 - a. Take steps to extend the Metropolitan Council Agreement for a period of one year and during that year:
 - i. Enter into negotiations with an existing STP to join their system and dedicate all available MVTS and fare revenues to the entity, or
 - ii. Take steps to initiate a new City of Minnetonka Transit System by bidding out all city transit service to any one or combination of providers such as Plymouth Metrolink, SouthWest Transit, Metro Transit, or a For Profit Private transit company.

Update since 2010 Minnetonka Transit Study

The 2010 Minnetonka Transit Study was presented to the Minnetonka City Council during a Study Session on March 21, 2011. Since the completion of the 2010 Minnetonka Transit Study, the Metropolitan Council and the City have Minnetonka have had meetings and discussions that have led to the current 2012 Minnetonka Transit Study.

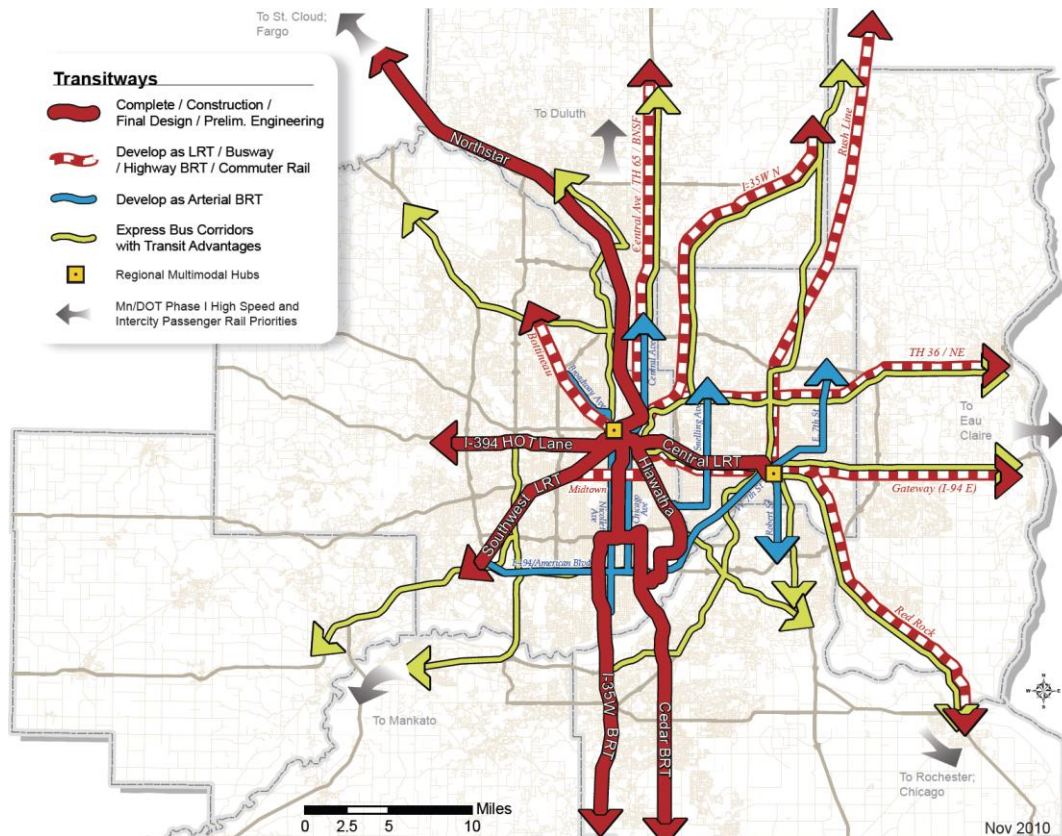
REGIONAL DOCUMENTS

Metropolitan Council 2030 Transportation Policy Plan

The Metropolitan Council’s 2030 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP)¹ provides a regional transportation strategy, including long-range transit strategies for the region. The transit vision is aimed at achieving the goal set by the Metro Council in 2004 of doubling regional ridership by 2030, which the plan indicates that the region is on track to achieve. It includes three broad strategies:

- Expanding the bus system by improving coverage and frequency; adding express routes, transit centers and park-and-ride facilities; and making technological improvements such as web-based trip planning tools and real-time service information.
- Utilizing highway improvements – such as HOT and HOV lanes, bus-only shoulder lanes, ramp meter bypasses and other improvements – that give transit a travel-time advantage over the single-occupant car.
- Developing a network of bus and rail “transitways,” including light-rail transit (LRT), bus rapid transit (BRT), commuter rail and express buses with transit advantages—as illustrated in Figure 1-1.

Figure 1-1 2030 Transitway System

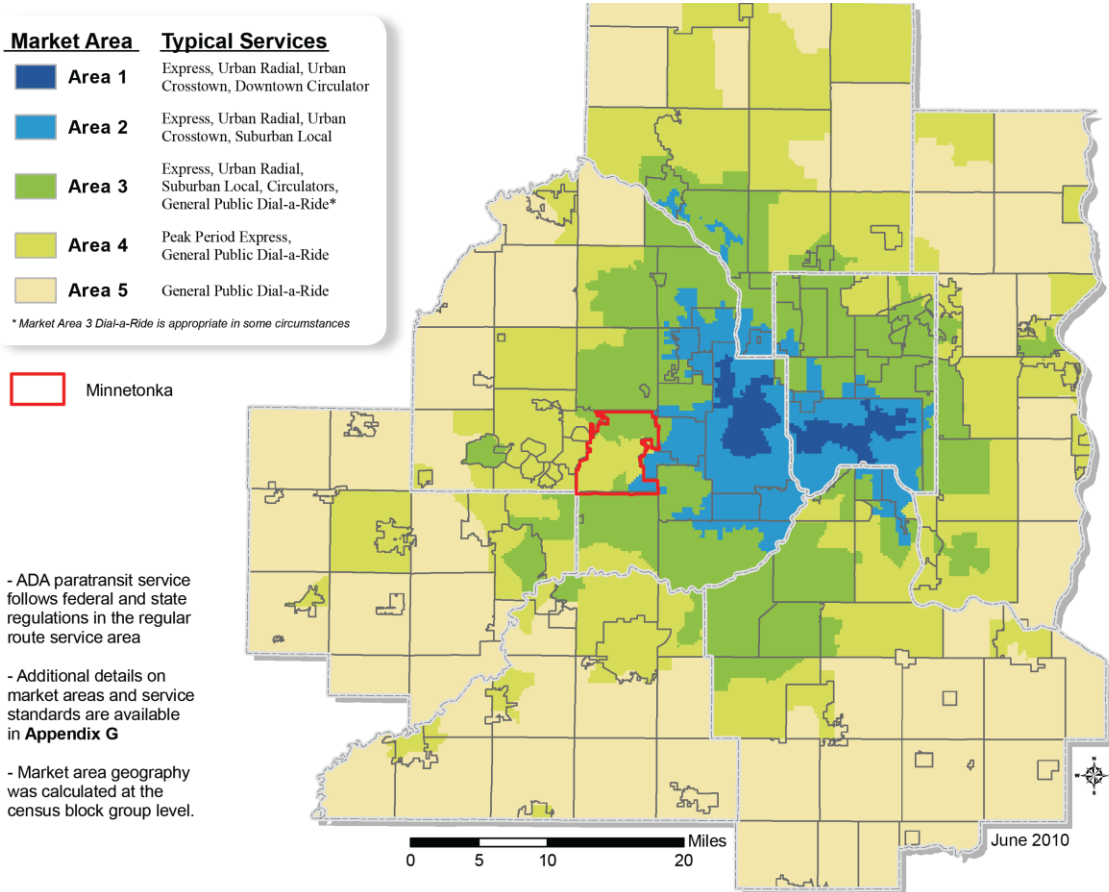


Source: Metro Council, 2030 TPP, 2010. Figure 7-43.

¹ <http://www.metrocouncil.org/planning/transportation/tpp/2010>, (Chapter 7, Transit)

Figure 1-2 illustrates five “Transit Market Areas” identified by the Metro Council to define the typical services appropriate for each area, based on a Transit Market Index that expresses relative transit demand per acre at the Census block group level. The index is calculated based on population and employment density and transit dependent population. The Transit Market Area for a particular location is determined based on the index for that location as well as surrounding areas. The northern part of Minnetonka (approximately north of Minnetonka Blvd.) is in Market Area III while the southern part is in Market Area IV. The area east of Minnetonka, including the Opus area of Minnetonka, is in Market Area II. Figure 1-3 describes the characteristics of the Market Areas relevant to Minnetonka (II, III, and IV).

Figure 1-2 Transit Market Areas



Source: Metro Council, 2030 TPP, 2010. Figure 7-19.

Figure 1-3 Summary of Transit Market Area Characteristics and Service Types

Transit Market Area	Transit Market Index	Market Characteristics	Service Types
II	10-20	High to moderately high population and employment densities yielding a market area that is conducive to fixed route transit operations, but not as intensive as in Market Area I.	Primary emphasis on regular route service. Crosstown routes and limited stop services are appropriate to link major destinations.
III	5-10	Moderate density and can support a variety of transit services, but at lower intensity than areas I and II. In some cases, general public dial-a-ride services may be appropriate in Market Area III.	A mix of regular route and community circulator service complemented by dial-a-ride service in specific cases. Community circulators should tie into regular route regional service at a transfer point.
IV	1-5	Lower concentrations of population and employment. This market can support peak-period express bus services, if a sufficient concentration of commuters likely to use transit service is located along a corridor. Some areas may have sufficient density for Market Area IV, but may not have sufficient aggregate commuter demand to justify extension or improvement of express service. General public dial-a-ride services are appropriate in Market Area IV.	Peak period express service, if potential demand for service is sufficient to support at least three peak-period trips. General public dial-a-ride services are appropriate.

Source: 2030 TPP, Appendix G, Tables G-1, G-2,

Southwest Corridor 3A Alignment and Feeder Network

Figure 1-4 illustrates the planned light rail alignment and station locations for the Locally Preferred Alternative (3A) for the Southwest Transitway, which is currently in the Preliminary Engineering stage of development and is planned for completion in 2018. The line will run from downtown Minneapolis along/through the southeastern corner of Minnetonka to Eden Prairie.

Alternative 3A was determined to be preferred over four other alternatives because it would be less disruptive to current Metro Transit Service, taps into the Opus/Golden Triangle transit market, and offers the most competitive potential corridor travel time (according to the Metro Council’s travel demand model).

The preferred alignment includes one station wholly in Minnetonka (Opus), one station partially in the city (Shady Oak Road) and one station that is adjacent to Minnetonka or served by feeder service through Minnetonka (Hopkins), as described in Figure 1-5. The City West station in Eden Prairie is very close to Minnetonka but separated by Highway 62.

Figure 1-4 Southwest LRT Bus Plan, Alternate 3A

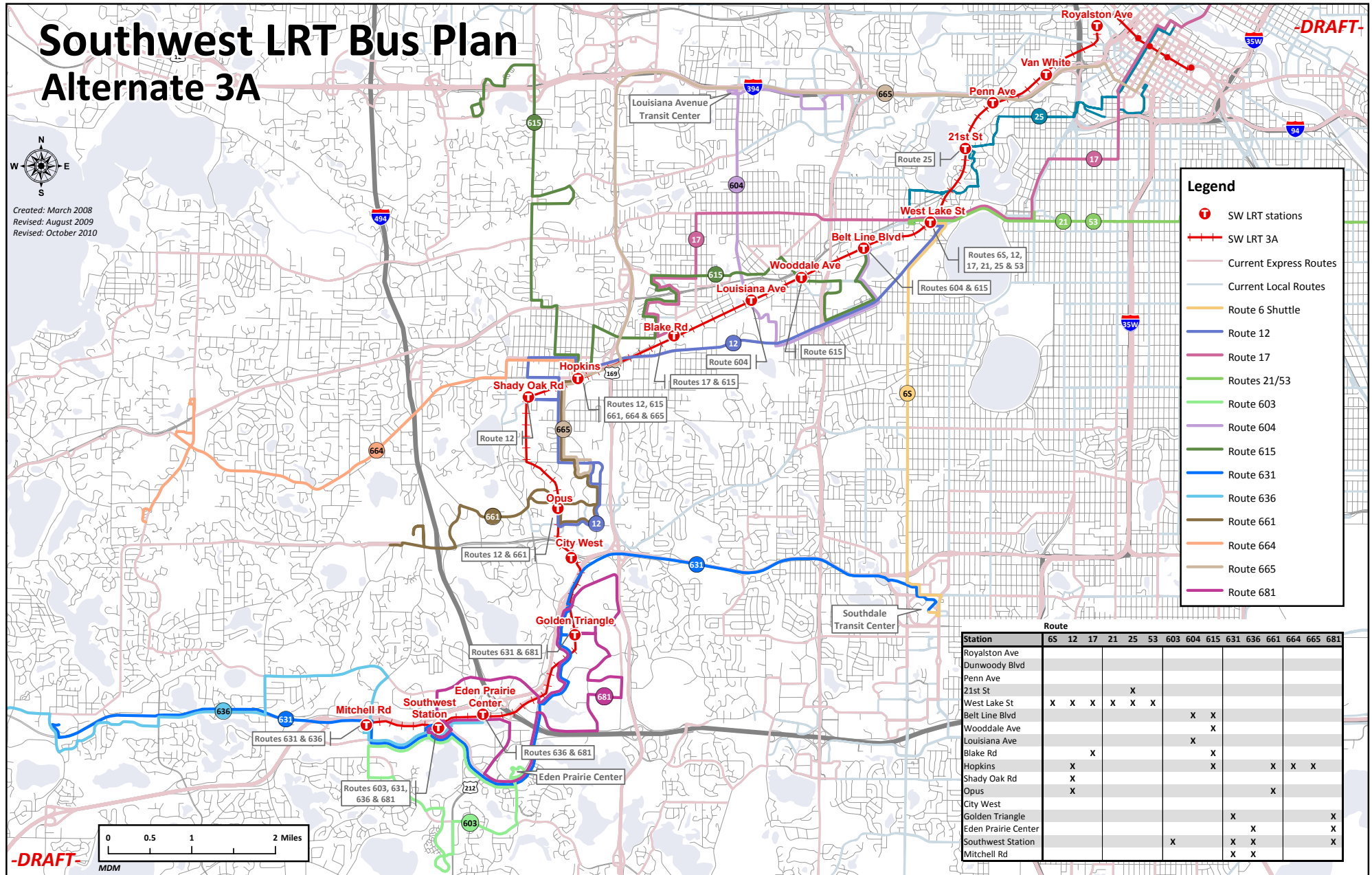


Figure 1-5 Southwest Corridor Stations Serving Minnetonka

Station (North to south)	Location	In Minnetonka?	Feeder Service through Minnetonka
Hopkins	Near Excelsior Blvd. and 8 th Avenue S	No	Routes 12, 615, 661, 664, and 665
Shady Oak Rd	Near Shady Oak Road and 5 th Street S.	Yes	Route 12
Opus	In the Opus area along Bren Road	Yes	Routes 12 and 661
City West	Near Hwy 62 and City West Parkway	No	

MnPASS Phase II Study

The MnPASS Phase II study is a regional corridor study of I-394 from Minneapolis to Wayzata aimed at increasing multi-modal transportation and opportunities for supportive land use and community design solutions. Key recommendations for the Ridgedale area include a transit center, a 500 car park-and-ride, freeway system improvements, and significant increases in commercial and housing densities consistent with the city’s comprehensive plan. The City of Minnetonka is moving forward with a master plan to guide future redevelopment of the Ridgedale Mall area, which will include the potential for a more developed transit facility.

Metro Transit 2000 Three Cities Transit Restructuring Plan

In 2000, Metro Transit conducted a study of transit restructuring for Hopkins, St. Louis Park, and Minnetonka, with a goal of redesigning service to better meet community needs and goals. This study built upon an earlier feasibility study conducted jointly by the three cities. The studies highlighted issues with existing service structure and identified four key areas for improvement:

- Develop and strengthen community-to-community and intra-community transit connections
- Improve and expand employment-oriented reverse commute services, including serving earlier and later work shifts
- Improve efficiency and effectiveness of commute service to downtown Minneapolis
- Develop and improve transit facilities, such as Transit Centers

In Minnetonka, proposed service changes included increasing frequency on selected routes, while discontinuing some low-ridership route segments. Restructuring was proposed for several routes and addition of up to 16 new hours of midday paratransit service.