

TH55 Transit Study – Policy Advisory Committee Corridor Tour

Date: 08/18/2025

Time: 2:15–3:15 PM

Location: Hennepin County Public Works Facility

Purpose of meeting: To debrief from TH 55 corridor tour and discuss the Medina terminus

Welcome and Introductions

Adele Hall opened the meeting by congratulating everyone on the smooth, timely operation of the tour so far. Participants included:

- Policy Advisory Committee (PAC)
 - Councilmember Judy Johnson (Metropolitan Council)
 - Commissioners Irene Fernando and Kevin Anderson (Hennepin County)
 - Councilmember Gillian Rosenquist (City of Golden Valley)
 - Mayor Jeffry Wosje (City of Plymouth)
- Agency Staff
 - Cole Hiniker, Bradley Bobbitt, Michael Sund (Metropolitan Council)
 - Dusty Finke (City of Medina)
 - Jacquelyn Kramer (City of Golden Valley)
 - Daniel Soler, Bill Emory, Cathy Gold (Hennepin County)
 - Amrish Patel, Sara Pflaum (MnDOT)
- Project Management Team (PMT)
 - Ryan Heath, Adam Harrington, Jonathan Ahn (Metro Transit)
 - Adele Hall, Eavan Moore, Matt Stegeman (SRF Consulting Group)
 - Max Wilson (Hennepin County)

Committee Chair and Metropolitan Councilmember Judy Johnson facilitated a debrief from the tour.

- Commissioner Anderson said that the conversation around being able to connect people into the stops is very important. Referencing Mayor Wosje's remark at an earlier meeting that transit drives development, he commented that if we can invest now into things that will drive transit- and pedestrian-friendly development, we will see the dividends. Trails will be key to connecting into transit corridor. Parking availability is also important, as households still rely on cars.

- Councilmember Rosenquist commented that Golden Valley is served by less transit now than when she started her term on council, despite many actions to bring density and connectivity up to transit standards. Golden Valley is reacting to the fact that people want to live in first- and second-tier suburbs and they're building accordingly – but as a city they want to be a place where cars aren't mandatory. For a city like Golden Valley, getting a major transit route is the foundation for doing local work like trails, pedestrian infrastructure, and strategically converting parking lots into multi-purpose spaces. If the city knows it has the commitment of a big line like this, it can put those plans together.
- Councilmember Rosenquist noted that Golden Valley is growing, but there's demand for it to grow more. Growth in a fully developed suburb isn't possible unless it's done in a way that doesn't add as many cars as people.
- Councilmember Johnson remarked that when you try to bring in density, traffic congestion is brought up as a concern.
- Mayor Wosje asked what increase in ridership is anticipated from turning off Highway 55, and where the balance is between gaining ridership and adding travel time. He fears that if it takes too long to travel from Plymouth to Minneapolis, people will simply keep driving.
- Councilmember Johnson suggested that the City of Plymouth's local transit service could perhaps make those local connections from off-highway locations. She asked whether there are conversations in the community to get input from Plymouth residents on their preferences. Mayor Wosje said they are not far enough along for that.
- Councilmember Johnson said she hoped the terminus would be Medina. She would like to see it bridge the east and west sides of the county. Drivers don't see this as two corridors, but as one, so it's important not to work against each other in the corridor.
- Commissioner Fernando said she was excited and grateful that we get to see this long-discussed corridor reflected in today's tour. She emphasized that whether your commute is in-person or virtual, some reconstruction is needed to provide the right infrastructure, as remote workers depend on broadband.
- Commissioner Fernando gave a shout-out to the staff who work long years on these projects. It can take 7 years to get an idea on paper and then another 7 years to build. She also said she wanted to commend everyone for the progress that was so visible in the construction sites on this tour.
- Councilmember Johnson added that developers watch these corridors all the time. The city has to have confidence that something will happen before it makes a big stake in an intersection like 55/494. This project is still just a gray line on the map, but it helps in passing the baton to a future City Council.
- Councilmember Rosenquist asked where destination partners like the Loppet Foundation or the Hilde would be brought in.

- Adam Harrington asked what the Hilde is and several PAC members explained it is an outdoor amphitheater with a 15,000-person capacity. Adam said that knowing those event and recreation destinations is key. That must be followed by understanding which destinations can generate regular, sustained ridership, as well as looking at whether there is microtransit service to support those locations.
- Councilmember Johnson said that each city has its own tourism/event organization, e.g. Hello Plymouth. She suggested those organizations could meet and see what they can knit together. Communication along the corridor will help when it is time to go to the legislature.
- Commissioner Fernando said that the County can assist with forming an advisory board or supplemental group, if that is what Councilmember Johnson has in mind.
- Commissioner Fernando said the other consideration, when you think about destinations, is that the state of Minnesota could focus more attention on non-parks destinations. The State Fair, for example, is a great way to get people using transit for the first time.
- Returning to the topic of process, Adam Harrington said that it is a sequence. Part of the market for transit is people who use it every day, so Metro Transit will look at major employers. If employers have data on where their employees live that will be very useful. If they are spread out in all directions from a job site, that is less of a transit market than commute patterns with strong directionality.
- Commissioner Anderson asked whether Metro Transit has done a post-analysis of any projects to see if the situation changed from when their ridership was first forecasted, e.g. if people are living in different locations relative to work.
- Adam Harrington said that customer survey data offers some of that information. For a route like the Blue Line, there are only a few real centers (MOA, the airport, etc.) and that means very little change. Some destinations have not performed as well as predicted (e.g. American Boulevard). Metro Transit will look at Gold Line outcomes next year. Usually Metro Transit evaluates brand-new services to see whether anything happened there. He added that development potential is something they can show, but there isn't a lot of good information about changing travel patterns.
- Ryan Heath commented that it's worth thinking about trips people want to take, but can't today. New transit service can unlock that potential. Commissioner Fernando had pointed out on the tour that it takes an hour to get to Penn Avenue to Golden Valley by transit today. This type of demand is harder to measure, but it is really important for a region that is talking about adding transit into built-out areas.
- Bill Emory said he recognizes the process will have to be sequenced, but the TH 55 corridor has the Twins stadium on it. That is regular traffic. Golden Valley Kiwanis and similar groups could be supported in taking transit to Twins games, providing new riders with an entry into taking transit.
- Cole Hiniker remarked that while it's true that transit drives development, it's also true on both a national and regional level that local planning drives development. This corridor tour passed some

stations with really good local planning and some stations with nothing going on. He wondered if the study could be phased so that the stations with strong infrastructure support are built first.

- Councilmember Johnson said she liked that. Also, if a community knew that they needed to do some work to get a station, they might put the work in. It could catalyze economic development efforts. It's important for people currently working on this study to pass on their interest/excitement to their successors. Councils can flip on projects if momentum isn't sustained.

Dan Soler then introduced the group to the Hennepin County Public Works Facility.

- The facility is close to the center of the county. All of the snowplowing and roadway maintenance happens out of here. Most of the fleet is taken care of out here. There are about 279 employees (give or take depending on the day).
- Adam Harrington asked how many are in the office versus in road crews, etc. Dan Soler replied that more than half work outside the office, so somewhere under half of that 279 are in the office every day.
- Dan Soler said that the County has discussed developing a multimodal hub here that looks a little like Station 73. If the County started microtransit services, it could serve the many places where regular-route transit will not and may never be a thing. Such a facility would center Hennepin County and provide a connection between the very sparsely dense rural area and the very dense urban area.

Ryan Heath facilitated a discussion of Medina as a terminus.

- First he presented a table from the 2050 Transportation Policy Plan showing how Transit Market Areas (TMA) are defined by the Met Council based on their potential for transit service (Figure 1).

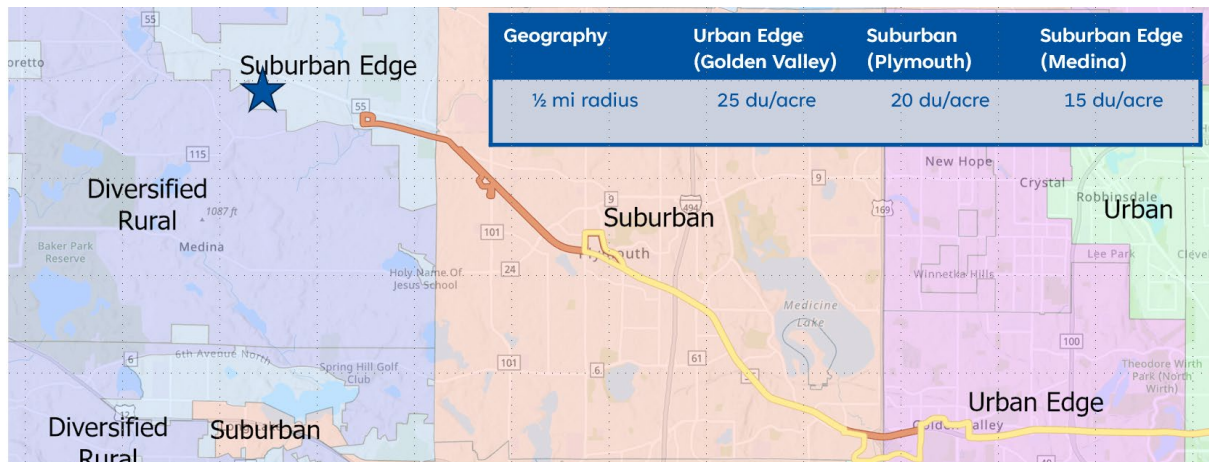
Figure 1. Met Council Minimum Frequency by TMA

Route Type	Market Area I	Market Area II	Market Area III	Market Area IV	Market Area V
Core Local Bus	15" Peak 30" Off-peak 30" Weekend	30" Peak 60" Off-peak 60" Weekend	60" Peak 60" Off-peak 60" Weekend	NA	NA
Supporting Local Bus	30" Peak 30" Off-peak 30" Weekend	30" Peak 60" Off-peak 60" Weekend	60" Peak 60" Off-peak 60" Weekend	NA	NA
Suburban Local Bus	NA	Peak 60" Off-peak 60" Weekend	60" Peak 60" Off-peak 60" Weekend	NA	NA
Arterial BRT	15" Peak	15" Peak	15" Peak	NA	NA
Highway BRT	15" Off-peak 15" Weekend	15" Off-peak 15" Weekend	15" Off-peak 15" Weekend	NA	NA
Light Rail	15" Off-peak 15" Weekend	15" Off-peak 15" Weekend	15" Off-peak 15" Weekend	NA	NA
Commuter Express Bus	30" Peak	30" Peak	3 Trips each peak	3 Trips each peak	NA
Commuter Rail	NA	NA	30" Peak	30" Peak	30" Peak

- Adam Harrington said that TMAs are a representation of employment density, residential density, and auto ownership. The Public Works facility is solidly in TMA V. This would indicate that this location would not be ripe for serving with any kind of highway BRT or local bus service. The currently proposed terminus in Medina is on the fringe of TMA III.
- Councilmember Johnson asked when Metro Transit contemplates a park & ride. Adam Harrington answered that there is good license plate survey data from every other year. They can look at 2019 and 2024, for example, to see where people were and are coming from. Factors that support park & rides include congestion and cost of parking at the end of the line. Downtown Minneapolis has both high parking costs and congestion. Other places have congestion, but not to the level of forcing people to find alternatives to driving. Adam Harrington mentioned that there had been a conversation about park & rides in Medina 15 years earlier. The conclusion was that Medina would need to join the capital levy district.
- Ryan Heath said he had not been aware of the City of Plymouth's plan, brought up during the tour, to build a public parking facility near the Ice Arena. He thought that seemed like a good synergy opportunity; a lot of Metro Transit's park & rides are isolated. He posed the question: Is there something to say for a park & ride in a destination center? Is that something to model around for this corridor?
- Councilmember Rosenquist said one of the reasons she is excited about this study is that Golden Valley and Plymouth are on the same path with their work. They are both retrofitting the car-based model into something denser and more varied in its uses.

- Ryan Heath next presented on the Met Council's requirements for density in station area locations (Figure 2). He asked for thoughts on how that might be applied in the corridor.

Figure 2. Station Area Residential Density



- Commissioner Fernando said it would be helpful to see data from earlier to see whether and how an area might move from one designation to another. She also said that it's important to work with local city officials to make sure their vision is supported. There has been really good partnership between cities and the County in the last few years, helping cities clarify their own vision for themselves. Medina has had a multi-decade conversation going and the horizon is a little bit closer. It took a bit of encouragement and stewardship to get to the local unity that exists now; perhaps a few more rounds of that are needed to see what Medina desires.
- Commissioner Fernando mentioned the climate-data mesonet operated from the basement of the Public Works facility as an example of its importance to the region.
- Adam Harrington said that Metro Transit can look at how the TMA map has changed and come up with a list of considerations for any station location – the ingredients of the recipe, so to speak – so that local entities can have a target to aim for.
- Commissioner Fernando said that would be great. Allowing local residents and decision-makers to know what they're shooting for allows them agency.
- Councilmember Johnson asked if Metro Transit ever gambles on a station location. That is what Station 73 represents in Plymouth: a long-term bet on future bus service. It has not performed that well to date, but it might not have been possible to build in today's dollars. Councilmember Johnson suggested that it would be good for the corridor if people could get into Medina from elsewhere in the county, and that Hamel has a future as an attractive area.
- Kevin Anderson agreed that the next wave of development is going to happen in Medina or in Wright County.
- Councilmember Johnson said that we have to be patient with those communities that take a long time to become dense – or to want to become dense. That was Plymouth 20 years ago.

- Adam Harrington said that they would get a sense from everyone on expectations for development. He commented that when he looks around out here, he doesn't see a competition for land in the sense that it has to be acquired now or it will be gone. So there are opportunities to wait until there is more transit-supportive development.
- Dusty Finke said he appreciates working with Met Council staff and the technical staff on this study. He has been able to offer input on where the density is. The time horizon is important for Medina; they have to take the long vision. Dusty Finke then asked whether ridership forecasts incorporate anticipated development. Adam Harrington answered that information is helpful, but it doesn't necessarily affect the model. One thing he does want to do is to look at similar corridors currently operating so that the study has a benchmark for, e.g., what 20 units per acre in this kind of environment is currently generating in terms of transit ridership.
- Adam Harrington remarked that sometimes you end up with situations like Ramsey, which did good transit-supportive planning around its Northstar station but still didn't see strong Northstar ridership.
- Councilmember Rosenquist said it would be a good idea to understand whether the density criteria are met at certain stations already. Adam Harrington agreed and said that information will be shared. Councilmember Rosenquist said that having a rubric like those used in comprehensive plans would be helpful.
- Matt Stegeman said that there are sometimes questions about how what cities do gets reflected in the ridership forecasting work. Where that nexus is created is really in the comprehensive plan. The comprehensive plan informs the county's population and employment forecasts; then those forecasts are used by the models that forecast ridership.
- Ryan Heath said that this study is using year-of-opening and 2045 ridership forecasts based on those comprehensive plan growth scenarios.
- Councilmember Johnson remarked that that's why you need to have city councils sticking to the vision over the long run.
- Councilmember Johnson noted that while Councilmembers Osman and Cameron regret they couldn't be here today, they say hello and they will be briefed on the meeting.
- Ryan Heath thanked the corridor cities. So much is going on, and the opportunity to stop and hear from them all is really important.

Adele Hall discussed next steps.

- The next PAC meeting will hopefully be in late September, although it still needs to be scheduled. At this next meeting, a lot of information from the evaluation will be shared with the PAC. So the study team has tentatively planned on a September meeting that's a long swig from a firehose of information, followed by an October meeting to make a decision about going forward. That will give the PAC a chance to take in the information.

- PAC members shared that the end of September will be difficult because budget deadlines are right around that time. Generally speaking, Wednesdays are difficult for Met Council, and Tuesdays /Thursdays are difficult for Hennepin County.