



Stronger, Better

2023 Strategic Plan





To get where we want to go, we must work together

From General Manager Wes Kooistra

The strategic goals and core elements are critically important to our success because these connect us to our shared mission and values. Each of us has the opportunity to improve our service and our workplace by linking our own work and actions to the Strategic Plan.

In the coming year, we will open the North Loop Garage, launch new technician apprentice programs, and continue efforts to recruit and retain the staff we need to provide safe and reliable service.

As our Network Now project moves forward, we will also be having important conversations about the service decisions we'll make in the coming years.

We will push forward while welcoming many new employees, new leadership, and adapting to ongoing changes in the workforce and in the communities we serve.

There will, of course, be many challenges. But the future holds just as many opportunities.

Thank you in advance for the work you'll do in 2023 to help us continue making progress toward our shared goals.



Introduction

What is the Strategic Plan?

The Strategic Plan defines Metro Transit’s goals and core elements that characterize our work and the reputation we want to earn. It describes the initiatives we’ll take to make meaningful progress. The plan creates a shared vision and a commitment to sharing where we are focusing our efforts.

This plan’s actions strive to make it easier for our frontline coworkers to deliver reliable and safe service. Our operators, technicians, facility workers, and police officers make

a difference for tens of thousands of customers daily; this plan doesn’t capture the magnitude of their contributions. It does help you understand what we are trying to do to be better and stronger for our coworkers and community. Looking toward the future, the Strategic Plan supplements the Metropolitan Council’s long-range plan – Thrive MSP 2040 – and the Transportation Policy Plan.

We have **four goals and core elements** that organize our work, support accountability, and help us communicate our desired **outcomes and commitments**.

Goals

1. We provide service that is resilient, reliable, and easy to use.
2. We provide service that is safe, welcoming, and comfortable.
3. We are a great place to work and build a career.
4. We make our region more environmentally sustainable.

Core Elements

1. We meaningfully advance equity inside our organization and throughout the region.
2. We effectively communicate and engage with our customers, stakeholders, and employees.
3. We evaluate our performance and foster innovation for continuous improvement.
4. We are responsible stewards of a transformative and financially sustainable transit system.



Goal 1:

We provide service that is resilient, reliable, and easy to use

We connect people with service that is relevant for our community's shifting travel needs and is reliable even as we face workforce challenges. Our strategies and actions are informed by our community priorities gathered from engagement activities, survey results, and ridership trends. We continue to invest in quality and timely customer information and infrastructure that allows everyone to feel ready to ride.

As we see both ridership and operator workforce trends stabilize and grow, we look to add more service this year and to plan for the future. We are launching Network Now, a project to **engage our community** about their priorities as we plan Metro Transit's service, including programmed transitways, over the next five years. This work includes inviting feedback on the values and principles we should use when making service decisions. A list of prioritized service changes that could be made in the coming years – guided by the values and principles defined through Network Now engagement – will be completed in early 2024.

We are promoting fares like all-you-can ride passes and increasing their availability through schools, employers, and multi-family building owners and managers. Easy ways to pay and accessible bus stops, rail stations, and transit centers ensure our service and facilities are **available to all**.

We continue to make our service **faster and more reliable** with fewer stops, bus lanes, Transit Signal Priority, and smart management so detours, poor weather and traffic congestion will have a reduced delay and improved reliability in delivering our service so detours, poor weather and traffic congestion have less of an impact. Our bus rapid transit program continues to expand with B Line and E Line development underway, and F Line in the planning phase. Route 17 will be improved as part of the ongoing Better Bus Routes effort by the end of the year, as we identify additional routes for the Better Bus Route treatment. Between BRT, LRT and Better Bus Routes improvements, more than 75% of our riders will benefit from speed and reliability initiatives.



Goal 2:

We provide service that is safe, welcoming, and comfortable.

Providing a safe, welcoming, and comfortable transit experience is at the heart of our mission, and yet, we know we are falling short of our customers' and our employees' expectations. Through the Metropolitan Council's police review, we heard how factors such as the visible presence of transit employees, clean and well-lighted facilities, and reliable transit service contribute to a sense of safety. Based on community and employee feedback, the Safety & Security Action Plan includes the steps Metro Transit is taking to improve public safety on our system. More information can be found at metrotransit.org/public-safety

We seek to **improve conditions onboard and while waiting** with additional official presence and investment in lighting, public art, and facility maintenance. We are narrowing facility hours at some locations and adding contracted security as necessary to ensure facilities are clean and welcoming throughout the service day.

Investing in training with de-escalation practices and revamping the peer support program is part of our strategy to **train and support employees** who face challenging situations.

We are **engaging customers and partners** to support violence prevention and to ensure we can connect those that are unhoused to resources and housing. We also invite our community to be part of the solution through our Adopt-A-Stop program. The Metropolitan Council continues to seek legislative authority to address fare non-compliance through an administrative, rather than criminal, citation. This would allow employees who are not police to issue citations for fare non-compliance, freeing up additional police time to focus on more serious public safety matters.



Goal 3:

We are a great place to work and build a career.

Nearly 1,300 employees are directly responsible for safely operating our vehicles, greeting our customers with a smile or friendly head nod, and addressing concerns with their safety. Our priority is making the day easier on and off the clock for our growing group of frontline workers with on-the-job support, training, mentorship, simplified reporting, and ongoing facility improvements. We are also committed to investing in new approaches and resources that allow us to grow our workforce to meet the needs of a larger and more complex network.



We are working harder to **attract and retain** employees by involving frontline staff in our recruitment efforts, offering competitive wages, and offering pathways to career advancement. We are launching a paid training program for people who are interested in becoming bus operators. Our retention efforts include continued investment in two-year apprenticeship programs and leadership development programs that prepare our coworkers for supervision. We are also improving our internal communication efforts and providing managers more tools and encouragement to meaningfully engage with their teams.

When our coworkers feel **positive and included**, we deliver the best results to our customers and community. Through the **Great Workplace Project** we are strengthening workplace protocols to improve our team functionality and create a transit culture that is consistently high-performing, inclusive, open, caring, and equitable. Employee teams developed workplace norms that guide us in practice of our desired workplace culture. We're investing in leadership development and team building activities. We track conduct policy violations and harassment reported by our coworkers and make sure people are heard and barriers to a respectful and dignified work environment for all are addressed.

Goal 4:

We make our region more environmentally sustainable

Transportation is Minnesota's largest source of carbon emissions so decisions about how we travel are critical to our region's health and future. We provide transportation options that are sustainable by design, allowing people to live car-free or car-light lifestyles and get where they need to go by sharing a ride. Our transition to electric buses and fleet vehicles builds on this foundation, reducing tailpipe emissions and advancing our commitment to environmental justice.*

Our **Metro Transit Sustainability Plan** describes our baseline performance for our vehicles and facilities and sets targets that should guide investments like LED lighting and building automation systems that reduce waste in HVAC systems.

The March 18 opening of the North Loop Garage with solar panels and electric bus charging stations and plans to upgrade our East Metro Garage are part of our ongoing work to implement the **Zero Emission Bus Transition Plan**. This plan sets a goal of having at least 20% of 40-foot buses purchased through 2027 be electric.



*Source: [Climate change trends and data | Minnesota Pollution Control Agency \(state.mn.us\)](https://state.mn.us/climate-change-trends-and-data)

Core Element 1:

We meaningfully advance equity inside our organization and throughout the region

Transit equity requires identifying and addressing injustices and building actionable pathways to create a fair and more just future, especially for underserved communities. We do that by reviewing and revising policies that affect our coworkers and community, seeking partnerships with other responsible institutions, and improving planning and operational practices.

We are building our practice of making more **equitable budgets, service decisions, and policies** by using data to make decisions and determine if we are contributing to disparate impacts and hold ourselves publicly accountable.

Ongoing training on racial equity and creating a respectful workplace are also being provided to ensure all employees have an appreciation for and commitment to our equity statement.



Core Element 2: We effectively communicate and engage with our customers, stakeholders, and employees

With so many recent changes, ongoing challenges, and uncertainty, it is more important than ever to communicate effectively with our employees, customers, and the wider community. We want our work, goals, and performance to be visible so conversations are rooted in a common understanding of where we are and where we want to go. Shared understanding based on great information is the start of great teamwork, problem-solving, and changes that improve everything from real-time information updates to our recruitment efforts.

Community members, stakeholders, and employees need ready access to **responsive, accurate, and timely information**. We continue to invest in processes and practices that provide excellent real-time departure information, particularly during poor weather or during unexpected or planned detours.



We **foster strategic partnerships** to inform, strengthen, and support our mission and priorities. Across the agency – on a daily basis – we interact with our community through our services, programs, and people. Understanding and evaluating why staff are connecting with various partners allows us to strengthen those partnerships that support agency priorities such as ridership, sustainability, equity, and to reduce disparate and unconnected conversations to improve overall benefits to Metro Transit and our partners.

We **seek feedback** from community members, stakeholders, and employees so our decisions about routes, fares, and safety initiatives are aligned with community priorities and operational efficiencies. By centering our customer and coworker experiences, we'll **develop a reputation that is responsive and responsible** to our community and its travel needs.

Core Element 3:

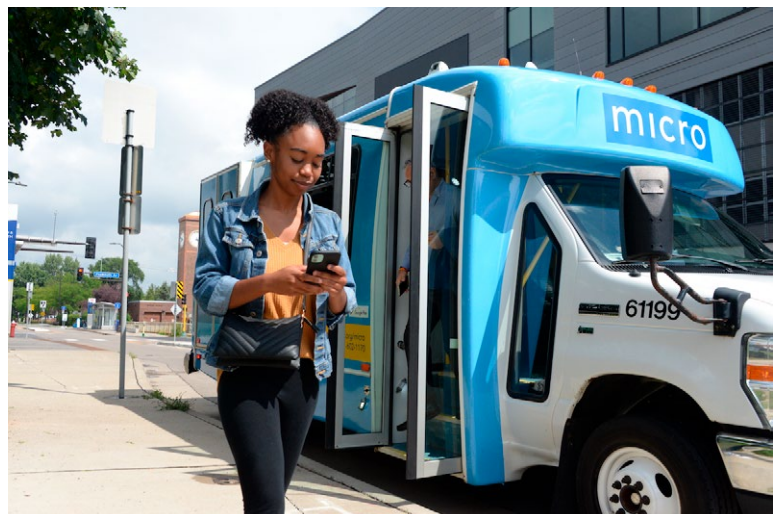
We evaluate our performance and foster innovation for continuous improvement

As we launch new programs to address workforce and customer experience challenges, it is important to both assess the impact of our strategies as well as understand how they have affected operational effectiveness. Our commitment to continuous improvement is evident from innovative programs like North Minneapolis microtransit pilot, Better Bus Routes, and Great Workplace Project as well as the disciplined approach to performance management that tracks our key performance metrics in safety, speed, and reliability.

We clearly and **consistently communicate our goals and performance** at metrotransit.org and with our cross-functional performance teams that review key performance indicators and determine next steps to maintain or improve performance.

We apply **data-focused evaluation** to marquee interventions and programs like the Safety & Security Action Plan and Network Now. Our data work supports better understanding of the impact of key initiatives like the Metropolitan Council Underutilized Business (MCUB) program and addressing essential workforce shortages to ensure attention is focused and resources are right-sized relative to goals.

Our **culture of innovation** is fostered by investing in pilots like mobility hubs and microtransit to respond to evolving customer needs and new technologies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our work. We expect to learn and make refinements from our operations teams and customers so full-scale implementations can be better and more efficient compared to pilots. We take time to recognize and celebrate coworkers who are leading new ideas everywhere from maintenance to planning.



Core Element 4:

We are responsible stewards of a transformative and financially sustainable transit system

The pandemic disrupted assumptions about everything from travel patterns to fare revenue. One-time federal COVID-19 relief funds allowed Metro Transit to maintain service levels despite revenue losses during this uncertain time. As federal relief funds wind down, we must address future needs to operate, maintain, and improve services we provide today while securing sustainable funding needed to build, operate, and maintain the METRO system.

Our operating and capital **budget decisions reflect our region's transit priorities**, so we are applying rigorous selection criteria that help us understand who in our community benefits from these significant investments and the scale of trade-offs in difficult decisions.

We **identify lifecycle costs** when making investment decisions and planning for the future. Asset management is a critical way to ensure a safe and reliable system for today and into a future where there will be a more complex set of assets with varying degrees of maintenance investments. Our financial modeling reflects that our financial responsibility extends far beyond operations costs.

We keep employees informed of our financial outlook and **engaged in the impacts of today's financial decisions**.

We are investing in additional education and support for our coworkers responsible for preparing financial information and making decisions about service plans that affect our budget this year and decades into the future.

