

METRO F Line Bus Rapid Transit
Minneapolis, Minnesota
Small Starts Project Development
(Rating Assigned November 2022)

Summary Description	
Proposed Project:	Bus Rapid Transit 13 Miles, 32 Stations
Total Capital Cost (\$YOE):	\$98.00 Million
Section 5309 CIG Share (\$YOE):	\$53.40 Million (54.5%)
Annual Operating Cost (opening year 2026):	\$18.29 Million
Existing Corridor Ridership (Warranted):	11,000 Daily Linked Trips
Overall Project Rating:	Medium
Project Justification Rating:	Medium
Local Financial Commitment Rating:	Medium

Project Description: The Metropolitan Council (Met Council) proposes to construct a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project in a corridor beginning in downtown Minneapolis, extending through the Northeast area of Minneapolis, and through the suburban communities of Columbia Heights, Hilltop, Fridley, Spring Lake Park, and Blaine. The project is planned to operate in a semi-exclusive right of way for just under half of the route and includes off-board fare collection, transit signal priority, queue jump lanes, real-time travel information, shelters with heat and light, and 18 60-foot articulated diesel buses. Service is planned to operate on weekdays from 4:00 am to 2:00 am, with buses every 10 minutes. During weekends, service is planned to operate from 5:00 am to 2:00 am with buses every 10 minutes.

Project Purpose: Current transit service in the project corridor includes both local and express bus service operating to downtown Minneapolis. The corridor ranks in Met Council’s top five busiest for both ridership and productivity. Met Council intends for the project to provide faster, more reliable, and more attractive bus transit service to improve unreliable transit service and inadequate passenger facilities. Downtown Minneapolis, the southern terminus of the project, includes high density-offices, arts and entertainment venues, government buildings, sports facilities, retail stores, restaurants, and a rapidly growing residential population. The rest of the corridor includes many trip generators including the Central Avenue & University Avenue Commercial Corridors, St. Anthony Main Street, Medtronic headquarters, Columbia Heights Transit Center, Mercy Hospital, and Northtown Mall and Transit Center. The project is part of a BRT network of corridors being operated, constructed and planned in the area. It connects downtown with the blue and green light rail lines.

Project Development History, Status and Next Steps: Met Council selected the locally preferred alternative in March 2021, and it was included in the region’s fiscally constrained long-range transportation plan in March 2022. The project entered Small Starts Project Development in April 2022. Met Council anticipates completing the environmental review process with receipt of a Categorical Exclusion from FTA in November 2023, receiving a Small Starts Grant Agreement in late 2024, and opening for revenue service in late 2026.

Locally Proposed Financial Plan

<u>Source of Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds (\$million)</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Federal:		
Section 5309 CIG	\$53.40	54.5%
FHWA Flexible Funds (Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program)	\$25.00	25.5%
State:		
State of Minnesota Legislative Appropriation	\$13.21	13.5%
State of Minnesota Motor Vehicle Sales Tax	\$1.07	1.1%
Local:		
Regional Transit Capital Bonds	\$5.32	5.4%
Total:	\$98.00	100.0%

NOTE: The financial plan reflected in this table has been developed by the project sponsor and does not reflect a commitment by DOT or FTA. The sum of the figures may differ from the total as listed due to rounding.

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LAND USE RATING: Medium-High

The land use rating reflects population density within one-half mile of proposed stations, employment served by the line, and the share of legally binding affordability restricted (LBAR) housing in the station areas compared to the share in the surrounding counties.

- Average population density within one-half mile of all station areas is 6,600 persons per square mile, corresponding to a Medium rating. An estimated 160,800 jobs would be served by the project, which corresponds to a Medium-High rating. Daily parking fees in the central business district average \$13, which corresponds to a Medium-High rating. The ratio of station area to county LBAR housing is 2.22, corresponding to a Medium rating.
- South of the Mississippi River, the corridor is characterized by a dense, mixed-use downtown. North of the Mississippi River, low- and mid-rise residential and strip commercial development are found adjacent to the corridor with dense, single-family residential neighborhoods nearby. Scattered industrial sites and regional shopping centers are also located in the corridor.
- Sidewalks are present on both sides of the proposed alignment throughout the corridor and include crossing signals, Americans with Disabilities Act- compliant curb ramps, and street trees in some locations.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RATING: Medium

Transit-Supportive Plans and Policies: Medium

- *Transit-Supportive Corridor Policies:* The majority of jurisdictions support increasing density and transit-oriented development (TOD) in station areas and along the corridor. Most plans create a link between land use and transit and recommend transit-supportive design and reduce parking requirements.
- *Supportive Zoning Near Transit Stations:* Minneapolis adopted zoning supportive of major transit investment with densities in station areas rating Medium to High. Zoning in larger jurisdictions allows transit-supportive densities adjacent to the corridor but there is a significant amount of low-density residential zoning in station areas of smaller jurisdictions. Many zoning codes encourage TOD.
- *Tools to Implement Land Use Policies:* There is a strong history of proactive outreach to the development community and support for TOD. State and local incentives support TOD planning and development.

Performance and Impacts of Policies: Medium

- *Performance of Land Use Policies:* Several examples of recent and proposed TODs were provided. These include dense residential, hotels, office/retail spaces, and redevelopment projects. Little information was provided on how the developments were influenced by land use policies.
- *Potential Impact of Transit Investment on Regional Land Use:* The corridor has 300 acres of vacant or underutilized parcels of which 240 are located at the Northtown Mall redevelopment site in the City of Blaine. Approximately 67 percent of multi-family development is planned near high-frequency transit.

Tools to Maintain or Increase Share of Affordable Housing: Medium

- Based on projected need, the allocated affordable housing target set by the Metropolitan Council for all jurisdictions in the corridor is about 3,400 units at 50 percent area median income or less. No evidence of the long-term affordability of these units was provided.
- Plans and policies generally support increasing affordable housing. Minneapolis provides density bonuses for the provision of affordable housing units.
- There are a variety of state and local direct funding and tax credit programs available for the creation of affordable housing. Recent public and private developments that delivered affordable housing units were identified.

METRO F Line

Metro Transit - Minneapolis, MN

-  Planned Route
-  Planned Station
-  Stations with Park & Ride Facilities

