Approach to Transitway Advancement

Metropolitan Council Committee of the Whole

May 29, 2024
Overview

Today’s objective: Discuss general approach to transitway advancement deliberation before transitway-specific discussions

• Context - situate upcoming transitway decisions within broader context of other information and decisions coming this year and in early 2025, including
  • Updated 30-year forecast
  • Sales tax use policy
  • 2050 Transportation Policy Plan and amendments

• Agenda - three parts to today’s presentation
  1. Review Transitway Advancement Policy adopted in 2022
  2. Review changes since adoption and timeline for upcoming discussions and decisions
  3. Share how we plan to provide information for these discussions and decisions, seek if we are on the right track, and identify what we are missing
Part 1

Transitway Advancement Policy
Transitway System

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Policy Overview

Adopted November 30, 2022. Policy summary:

- As the region’s Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the Council requires and compares information on critical aspects of a proposed transitway with standards established by the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan.

- At the point that Metro Transit is implementing the transitway, the Council and local project sponsors develop a risk register, establish roles and responsibilities that address project risks, and reflect these in agreements.
Policy applies at project phase agreements

LOCALLY LED PLANNING

- Adopt project into transportation plan (2040 TPP), reconsider if project mode/alignment changes

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

- Authorize design and engineering contracts

ENGINEERING

- Authorize real estate purchases and condemnation

CONSTRUCTION PHASE

- Authorize project construction-phase contracts

OPERATIONS

- Adopt Council capital and operating budgets

Authorize agreements with funding partners for each project phase

Addressed by 2023 transportation law; Council solely responsible
Draft Plan Reflects Advancement Policy

• Continues 2040 TPP modification, adopted June 2023
• Defines information required to reflect projects in the TPP
  • Documentation of transitway type, alignment and station locations and the selection process
  • Resolutions of support from relevant government bodies and agencies
  • Documentation of fiscal constraint
  • Documentation of public engagement and feedback

Travel and Transit Trends in 2050 TPP

• Ongoing ridership and service recovery
• High proportion of regional development around transitways and high frequency transit
• Ongoing transit system decarbonization
• Transit workforce recruiting and retention
Part 2

Recent changes, upcoming decisions
2022 Project Issues and Risks

Individual projects have faced **implementation challenges**
- Local community support
- Cost increases beyond project budgets and contingency plans
- Construction challenges
- Undefined roles or expectations for local partners

Cumulative system-level **operations and capital maintenance risks**
- Undefined roles for operations and maintenance of project assets
- Capital maintenance has emerged as a significant financial issue for the region, particularly for rail lines.
- Transitway operations require significant staffing additions
Major Changes since Policy Adoption

Organizational/Regional
- New regional funding that covers forecasted operations and capital maintenance needs
- Redefined responsibilities between local funders and Council
- Expanded authority to meet safety and security goals
- Legislation that protects sales tax from future capital funding risk for LRT
- Labor agreements that are leading to substantial improvements workforce retention and hiring
- Significant and continued growth in transit ridership

Projects
- New proposed alignments for Purple Line and Blue Line Extension
- Resolution of Green Line Extension Funding gap
- New governance model for capital projects
- Anti-displacement funding for Blue Line Extension
- Major progress on construction of four METRO transitways
Blue Line Extension

Upcoming info and decision points

- Supplemental Draft EIS Info Item
  - June 24th Transportation Committee
- Blue Line Extension Project Overview
  - July 8th Meeting
- Authorization of Public Hearing for municipal consent process
  - July 22nd Transportation Committee
  - July 24th Council
- TPP amendment for revised alignment
  - Begin process in February 2025
Upcoming info and decision points

- Amendment of Capital Grant Agreement/Implement New Governance Model
  - August 2024
- TPP amendment for revised alignment
  - Begin process in February 2025
G Line

Upcoming info and decision points

- METRO G Line – Authorization to Release Recommended Corridor Plan for Public Comment
  - July 2024

- METRO G Line – Approval of Final Corridor Plan
  - October 2024
Upcoming info and decision points

- Presentation by Ramsey County as Information Item at Transportation Committee
  - Transportation Committee Summer 2024
- Recommendation of Preferred Transit Mode at Project’s Policy Advisory Committee
  - Anticipated in Fall 2024
Part 3

Information for transitway deliberation
Topics to inform transitway discussions

Based on what we’ve heard thus far, we will bring information on the following topics when transitway decisions are considered:

- History of the project, its mode and alignment, and anticipated timeline to complete the project
- Future workforce levels needed to support the project, including operations, public safety, and shared services (IS, HR)
- Economic development impacts along the planned corridor
- Displacement impacts of the final project as well as during construction
- Financial plan for building, operating, and maintaining transitway
- How the transitway advancement policy applies, including the implications of each vote
Consideration: Ridership Trends

- Ridership is growing

- Ridership in corridors with fast, frequent, all-day service is especially strong

- U of M Center for Transportation Studies study underway:
  - Document impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on regional transit
  - Forecast future trends
  - Final report due to Legislature in Fall 2024
Consideration: Council Workforce

Transitway growth is a driver of workforce growth

- Transitway expansion will require more Metropolitan Council employees in Metro Transit and Regional Administration

- Metro Transit launched our “Workforce Taskforce” in Q1 2024 to develop and implement a unified strategy towards recruiting, retaining, and developing employees
  - Includes forecasting expected FTE needs for future transitways

- As of 4/30/24, Metro Transit has about 400 open positions of nearly 3,500 total budgeted positions

- Good news: seeing an increase in applications in recent months
Consideration: Public Safety

Public safety concerns are raised often in the context of transitway investment

• Reported crime was lower in Q1 2024 compared to Q1 2023; ridership was higher in Q1 2024 compared to Q1 2023

• Metro Transit is expanding layers of official, visible presence as part of Safety & Security Action Plan implementation
  • Supplemental security officers deployed to several locations
  • CSOs began inspecting fares and issuing administrative citations for fare non-compliance in December 2023
  • Transit Rider Investment Program (TRIP) Agents launched in February 2024
    • Job posting for the first cohort of Metro Transit TRIP Agent employees will go live on May 31
    • Transit Service Intervention Project (TSIP) partners are connecting people riding light rail to resources

• Metro Transit Police Department continues to face significant personnel shortages
  • 105 full-time officers of 171 full-time officers budgeted
Discussion Questions

Is the approach we are outlining hitting the mark?

1. Which considerations/topics are important to you?

2. What are we missing? For example:
   1. What are the considerations you want information on prior to making transitway decisions?
   2. What benefits do you want presented when discussing risks and risk mitigation?
   3. Other topics or information you need as you make decisions about transitways?