



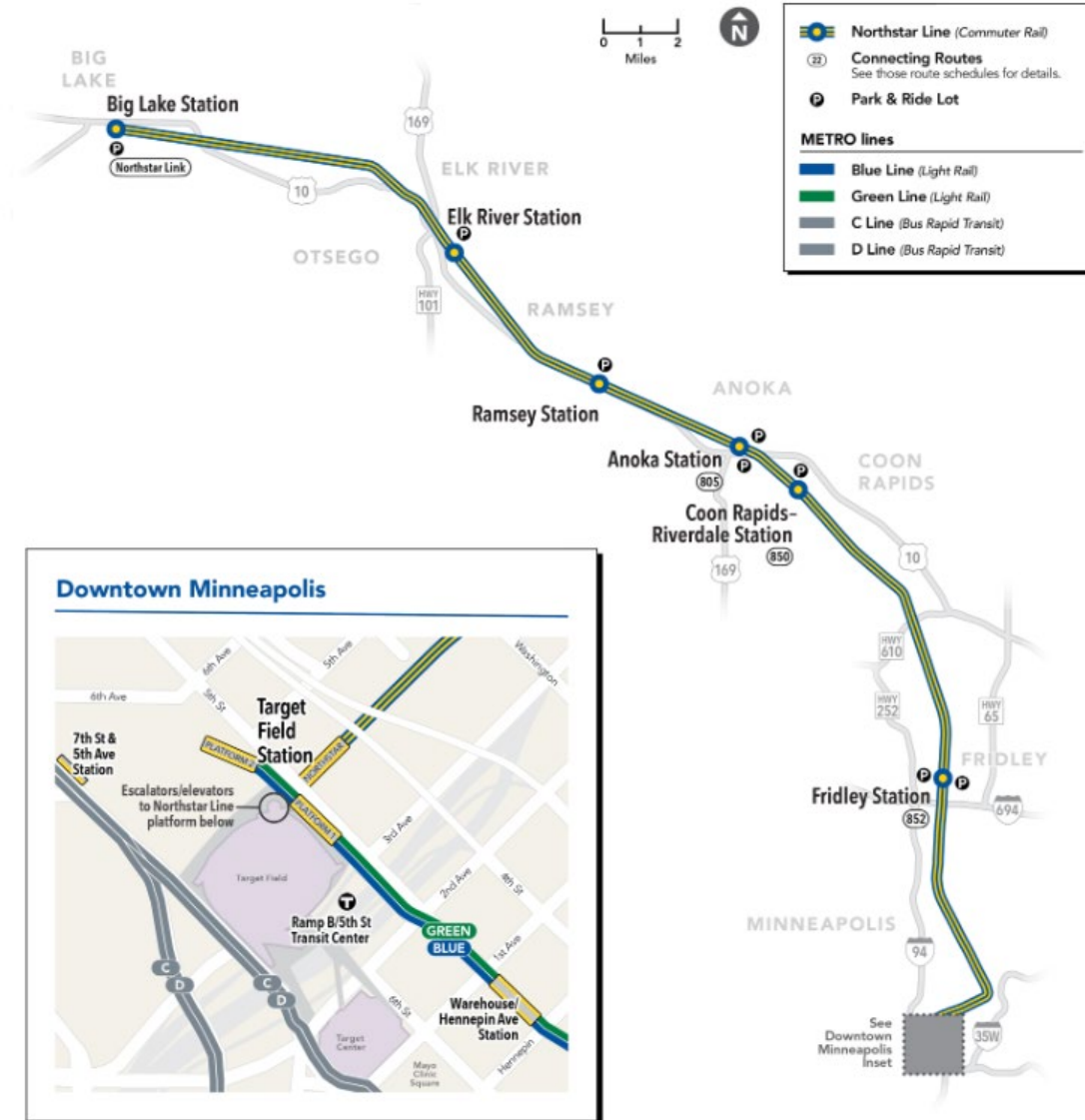
Northstar Transition Update – August 6, 2025

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Today's Topics

- Why transition from commuter rail to bus service?
- What is the enhanced replacement bus service?
- When will the transition occur?
- What other activities are involved in the transition?
- What future actions will be requested of the Council?



Transition Consistent with Network Now Framework

- **More Options for Riders:** Enhanced bus service offers more trips for more of the day, with comparable travel times, weekend service and lower cost
- **Adapts to Changing Needs:** Service changes designed to grow ridership by responding to changes in when and where people are choosing to travel.
 - Service more frequent on busy corridors throughout the day, on nights and weekends
 - Fast, frequent service that serves many trip purposes
 - Similar to discontinuation of 50 routes in March 2025, nearly all of which provided weekday commuter express service like Northstar
- **Responsive to Community:** Service design informed by feedback from riders and community partners

Low Ridership with Little Rebounding

- Pre-pandemic, Northstar saw a maximum of 2,660 average weekday rides - less than half the projected 2025 ridership (projected 5,590)
- By 2024, ridership had declined to 430 average weekday rides



Steadily Increasing Operating Costs

- Cost more to provide 40 weekly trips in 2025 than it did to provide 72 weekly trips in 2019
- Significant insurance premium increase coming in 2026
 - Federal liability cap for passenger rail anticipated to increase from \$323 million to \$400 million
 - Approximately \$400k to \$450k

Year	Operating Budget
2019	\$17.5 million
2020	\$15.6 million
2021	\$8.9 million
2022	\$11.7 million
2023	\$11.7 million
2024	\$15.5 million
2025	\$18.6 million

Subsidy per Ride is an Outlier

- Region
 - In 2023, the subsidy per Northstar ride was \$116.60 compared to \$16.07 for commuter bus service that year (each round-trip Northstar rider cost taxpayers about \$233)

NORTHSTAR SUBSIDY PER RIDE:

2017		\$	16.15	
2018		\$	17.24	
2019		\$	19.29	
2020		\$	99.13	
2021		\$	173.35	
2022		\$	147.21	
2023		\$	116.00	

- National
 - Of 29 other U.S. commuter rail lines, only one had a higher subsidy per ride in 2023

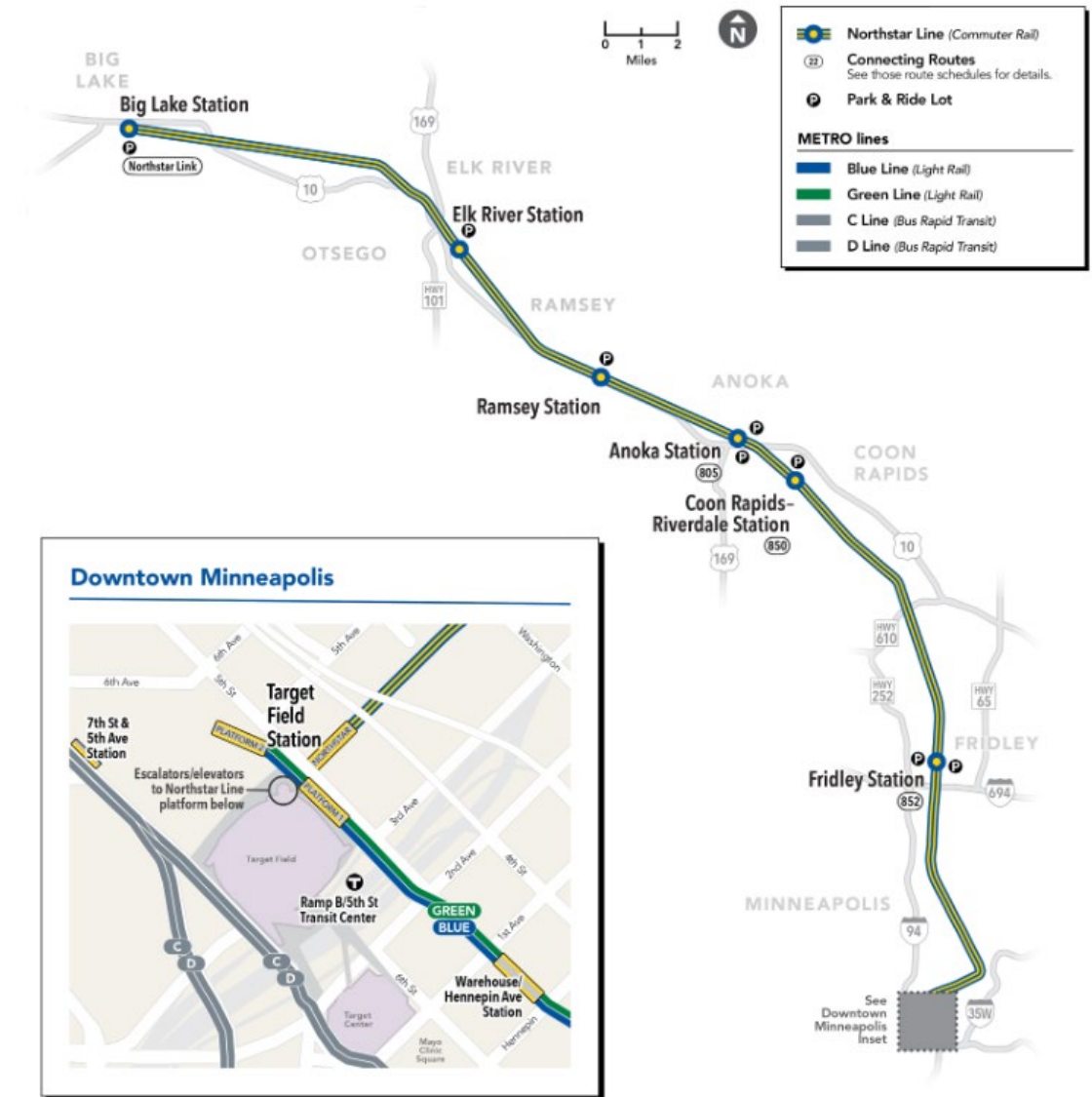
Transition to bus service improvements

- Northstar commuter rail service
- Network Now overview
- Community Engagement
- Feedback
- Recommended bus service plan

Northstar Service Levels

	Weekday	Weekend
Pre-COVID	12 daily trips	6 daily trips
2020-2023	4 daily trips	0 trips
2023-Present	8 daily trips	Special Events only

- Weekday rush hour only
- One reverse-commute trip
- Special events (Twins, Vikings, Concerts)
- Service levels constrained by BNSF contract
 - No regular midday or evening trips
 - Limited options for changing travel patterns



Network Now – framework for service improvements through 2027

40%
more transit
service

27%
increased
access to jobs

70+ routes
will have
frequency or span
improvements

26
routes will have
15 minute or
better service

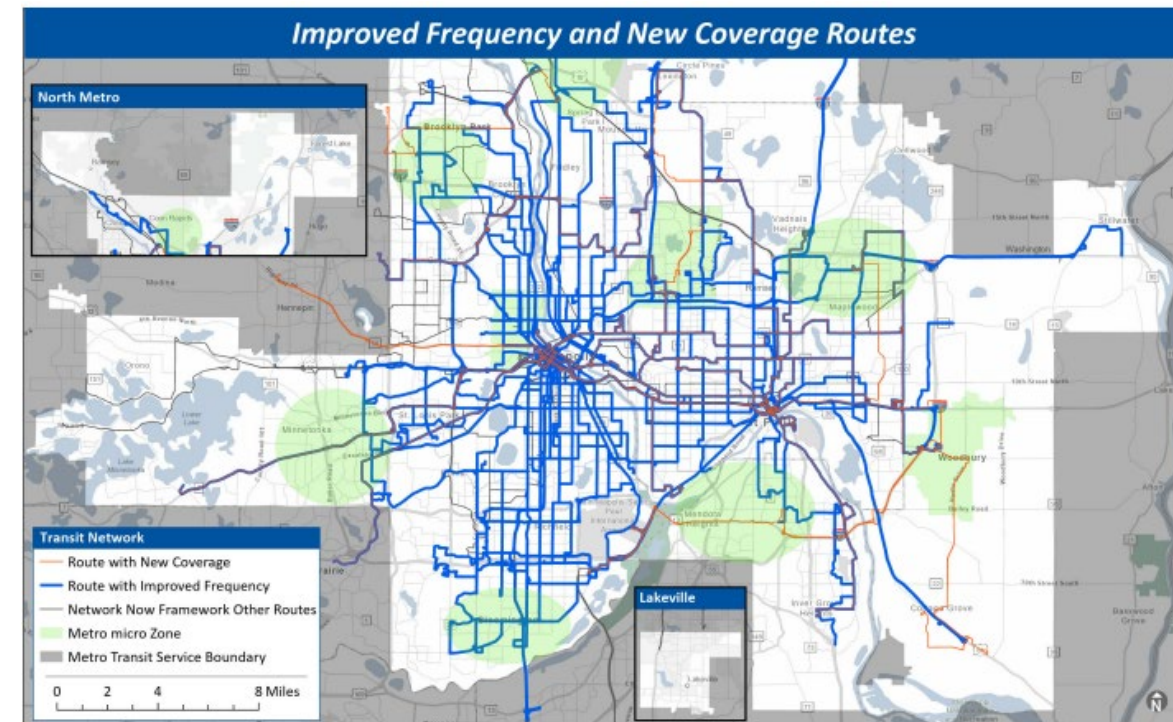
LRT service
will be back
to **10-minute
frequency**

8 new micro
zones and routes
with new coverage
will be operating

50 routes officially
discontinued and the
resources reinvested
into other service

12 suspended
routes will be
restored, among
other improvements

More options for
greener travel as
people reduce their
carbon emissions
by choosing transit



Network Now engagement 2024

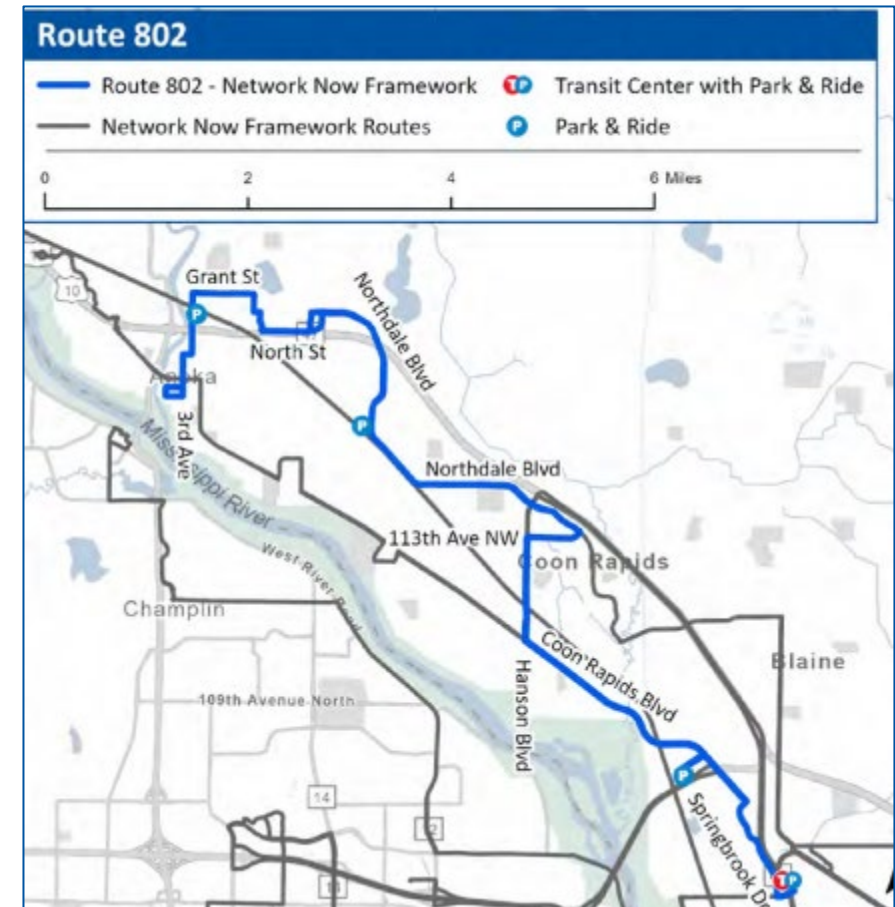
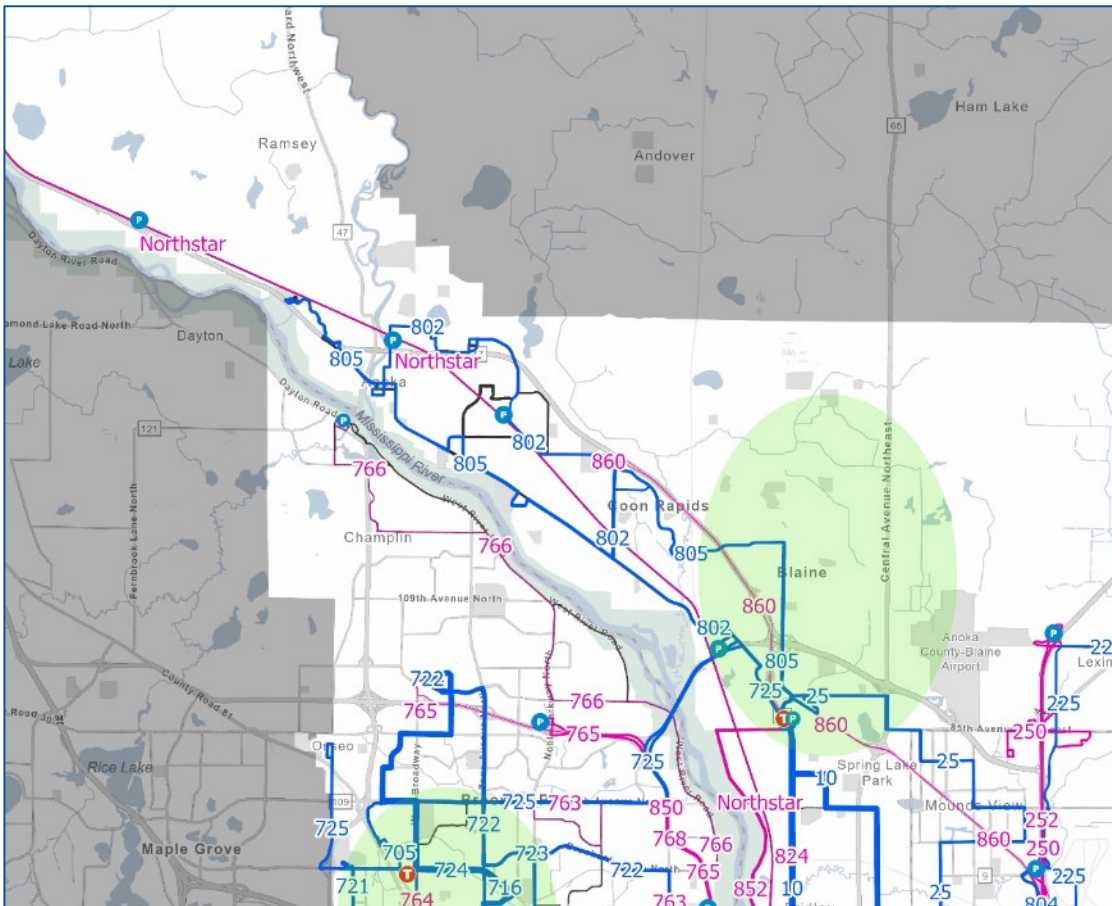
- 25 community events
 - Includes events held primarily in other languages
- 35 municipal and county public briefings
- 15 committee and other presentations
- 150 hours of onboard and transit center intercept work with material handed to over 2,000 customers
- Great Day In Transit: 65 ambassadors working 270 hours shared Network Now information, interacting with 20-50 people per shift
- Rider alerts, interior cards, newsletters, social media, partner collaboration and more



2024 Network Now Engagement - what we heard from Anoka County/communities

- Shared plans and invited meetings with each city
- Met with Blaine staff, Anoka County Transportation Commission
- Community event and listening session at Northtown
- 151 comments related to Anoka County service
 - 39 Northstar comments
 - More bus express and Northstar frequency, all day service, extend to St. Cloud
 - Local connections via Rt 805

Network Now Framework (endorsed March 2025)



March 2025 begin Northstar transition planning

- Metro Transit constrained to Metro Area by Statute (7-county)
- MNDOT authority to provide service outside Metro Area
- Develop service concept for Route 827 and 888
 - Ramsey, Anoka, Coon Rapids, Fridley, downtown Minneapolis
 - 30-minute rush hour
 - Hourly all day
- Community engagement

Northstar bus transition engagement April-May 2025

- Survey open April 10-May 11
 - 1,455 responses
 - 23 written (paper) comments
- Four public meetings held, over 175 attendees
 - Two in-person (Anoka, Fridley)
 - One virtual
 - One onboard



Response to Alternative Bus Service (Likelihood and timing)

- Many of the people that responded have more traditional commuter hours (but not all) or only use special event service
 - Those that use Northstar most often tend to have more consistent schedules
- 46% of daily riders are **more likely** to use service every 30 minutes between 6-8:30 a.m. and 4-6:30 p.m.
- Hourly bus service 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.
 - 33% of riders **not likely at all to use**
 - More than 50% riders somewhat likely to use
- 70% of daily riders would need to **arrive in downtown Minneapolis between 6-8:30 a.m.**
 - For those that use Northstar sometimes or not at all 44% need to be downtown during that time range

Enhanced bus service 2026

New Route 888

Coach bus serving Ramsey, Anoka, Coon Rapids stations and Minneapolis

Weekdays

Direction	Time Period	Frequency
Southbound (Inbound)	Before 6 am	1 trip
	6:30 am – 8:30 am	30"
	9 am – 6 pm	60"
Northbound (Outbound)	6 am – 4 pm	60"
	4 pm – 6 pm	30"
	After 6 pm	2 trips

Saturday and Sundays

3 trips inbound: 10:30 am, 12:30 pm, 5:30 pm

3 trips outbound: 2 pm, 7 pm, 11 pm



Enhanced bus service 2026

Route 827 (replace current Route 852)

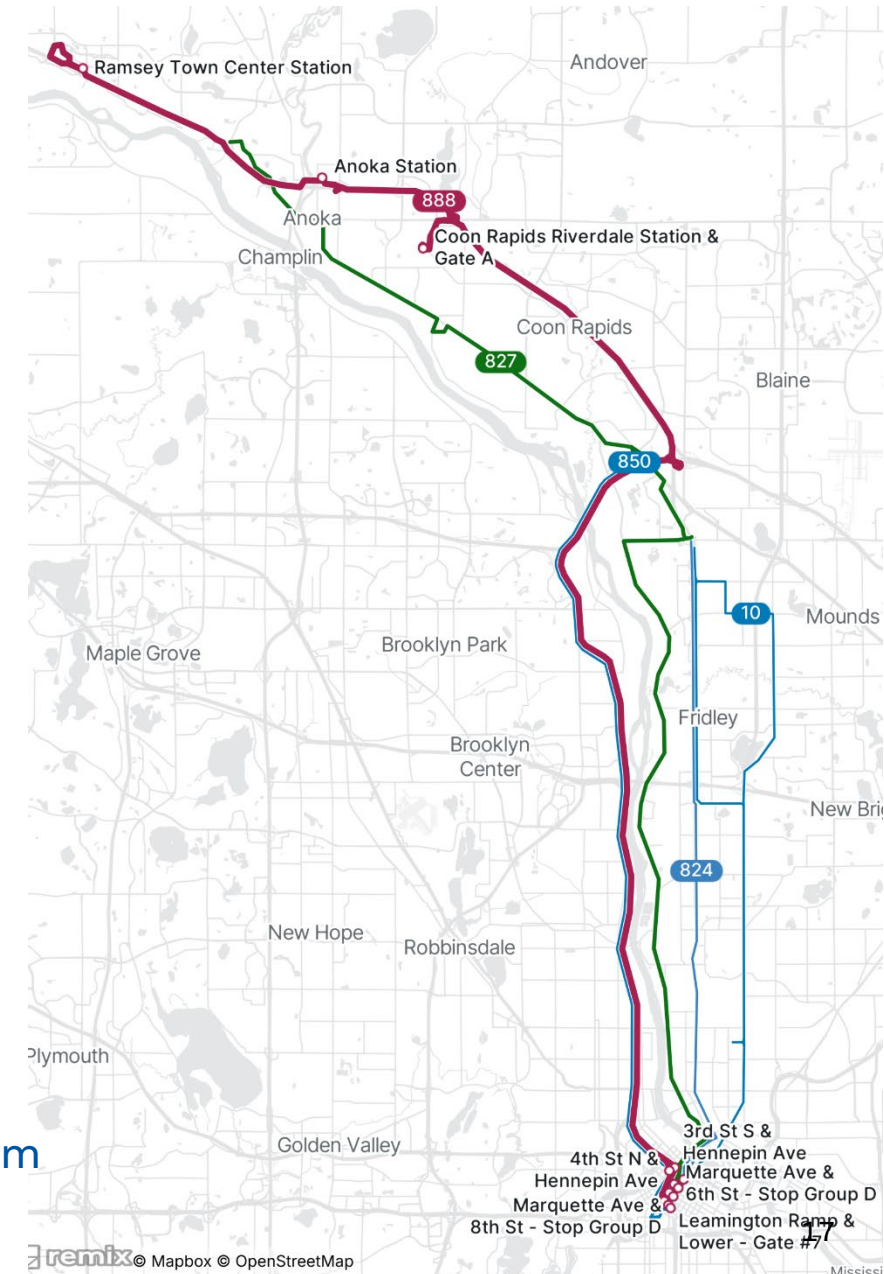
Limited stop bus serving Fridley Station @ East River Road to Minneapolis

Weekdays

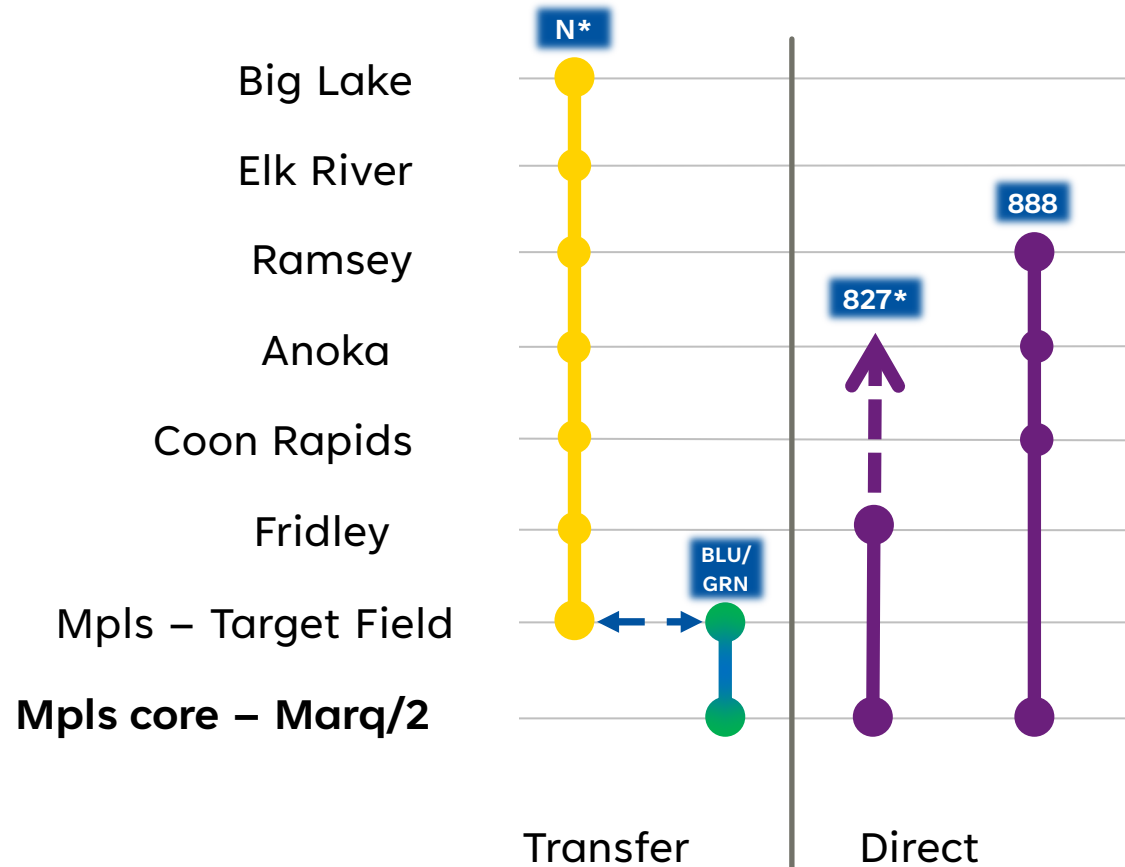
Direction	Time Period	Frequency	
Southbound Weekday (Inbound)	6 am – 9 am	30"	Northtown-downtown
	9 am – 9 pm	60"	
Northbound Weekday (Outbound)	5 am – 3 pm	60"	Downtown-Northtown
	3 pm – 6 pm	30"	
	After 6 pm	3 trips	

Saturday

Inbound: hourly 8:45 pm – 6:45 pm; Outbound: hourly 9:30 am – 7:30 pm



Service Comparison



Travel time comparison

Origin Station	Northstar-LRT to 5 th & Nicollet	Bus to 5 th & Nicollet
Ramsey	45 minutes	63 minutes
Anoka	42 minutes	49 minutes
Coon Rapids-Riverdale	39 minutes	41 minutes
Fridley	29 minutes	33 minutes

Connections improved

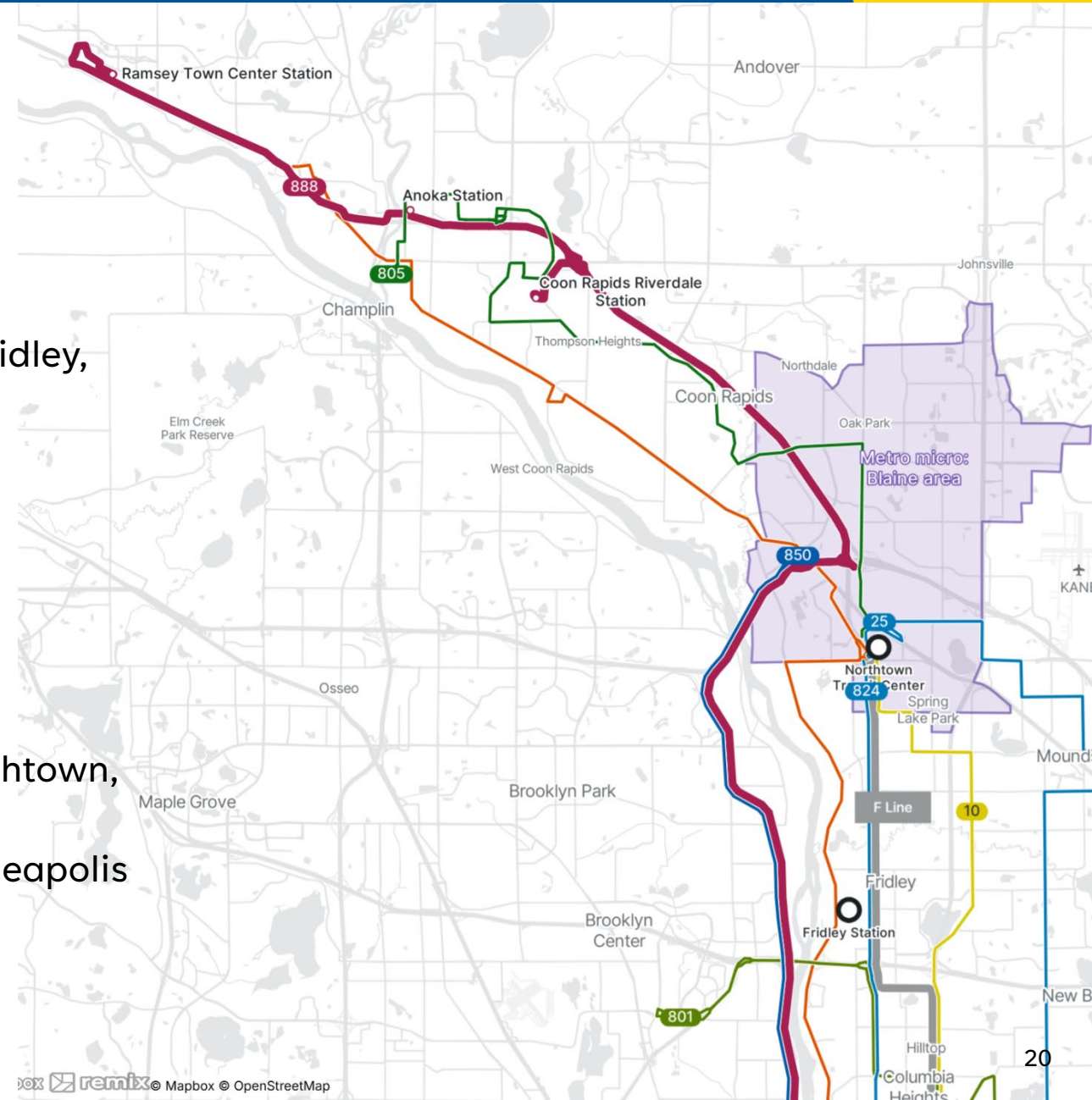
- Nicollet Station - Blue & Green Lines
- Marq/2 – Orange, 645
- 7th/8th Streets – C, D, 5, 9, 14, 22, 94

Rail to bus service comparison

	Current rail schedule	Planned bus schedule
Weekdays	8 trips per weekday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 southbound AM • 3 northbound PM • 2 reverse trips, one AM and one PM 	Route 888 (Ramsey, Anoka, Coon Rapids, Minneapolis) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 southbound 5:00 am – 6:00 pm • 16 northbound 6:00 am – 7:00 pm Route 827 (Fridley, Minneapolis) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 southbound 6:00 am – 9:00 pm • 19 northbound 5:00 am – 8:00 pm
Weekends	None, except special events	Route 888 Saturday & Sunday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 southbound 10:30 am – 5:30 pm • 3 northbound 2:00 pm – 11:00 pm Route 827 Saturday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 southbound 8:00 am – 6:00 pm • 11 northbound 9:30 am – 7:30 pm
Weekly total	40 trips	379 trips

Planned bus service

- 2025
 - Route 805 Anoka-Riverdale-Northtown
 - Route 852 Anoka, Coon Rapids, Northtown, Fridley, Minneapolis
 - Route 850 Coon Rapids-Minneapolis
 - Route 860 Anoka, Coon Rapids, Northtown, Moundsview, St. Paul
 - Metro Micro
- 2026 Enhanced service
 - Route 827 (old 852) Anoka, Coon Rapids, Northtown, Fridley, Minneapolis
 - Route 888 Ramsey, Anoka, Coon Rapids, Minneapolis
- Transit Link across Anoka County



Service Transition

- Planning for the transition from commuter rail to bus service on January 5, 2026
 - Last train Saturday, January 3 or Sunday, January 4 after final Vikings regular season game
 - Last day of weekday commuter rail service will be January 2

Other Transition Activities

- Continued conversations with MnDOT, FTA, FRA, State of MN, BNSF, and other partners
- Other Activities Underway
 - Determining the disposition of infrastructure requested to be retained by others
 - Completing design plans for station demolition and corridor restoration
 - Assessing the value of undepreciated capital assets and real estate
 - Preparing disposition plans for federal review and concurrence

Anticipated Future Actions by Met Council

- August 27, 2025 (TC: August 11th): Suspension of Northstar Commuter Rail Service & Amending Enhanced Bus Replacement Service into Network Now Framework
- Other actions may be necessary during Winter 2025



Questions?