



Transit Investment: Proposed Policy Direction For confirmation September 4, 2013

Overall direction

The Metropolitan Council will invest in transit as part of a coordinated, interconnected, and multimodal regional transportation network that safely and reliably connects people and freight with destinations in the region and beyond.

Transit will be an increasingly important travel option in the future due to changing demographics, changing travel preferences, increased costs of driving, and funding trends. Transit plays an essential role in creating travel options, connecting jobs and workers throughout the region, promoting livability, sustainability, prosperity, and contributing to regional economic competitiveness.

Effective stewardship of public transit dollars relies on strategic coordination of regional transit investments with more-intensive surrounding land uses and connected development patterns.

Investment strategy

Transit investment, especially frequent, all-day transit, can help shape development patterns and intensity within the overall market demand, especially within established and imminent transit markets. Transitways, whether bus or rail, create a perception of permanence and increased certainty that attracts developers.

The Council will first prioritize investments necessary to maintain and improve the current system.

The Council will next prioritize new transit investments where services are matched to development patterns and transit markets while balancing productivity and connectivity – for example, improving transit service to existing regional employment centers.

The Council will continue to strongly support and grow transit connections between lower-income or disadvantaged residents and opportunities such as jobs and education, including improving access to opportunity for residents of racially concentrated areas of poverty.

The Council's transit investment strategy will advance a portfolio of high-frequency transit service to appropriate markets balanced with the need to exercise prudence with taxpayer resources. Since transit alone does not attract development, the Council will not prioritize major transit investments in areas that do not have transit-supportive infrastructure and development patterns either in place or committed to in the planning or development process.

The Council will consider transit investments that advance geographic balance of the benefits of transit access across the region. All investments will be prioritized based on their ability to address regional principles and goals and to be cost-effective in the near term. The Council will carefully assess the costs, benefits, local commitment to transit-supportive development patterns, and the market for development prior to expanding geographic coverage. Where appropriate, staging of the modes, extent and frequency of service will match the patterns and intensity of development to minimize the risk to public resources.

Align local land use with transit investments

In addition to its roles planning and operating transit, the Council also plays a key function of working with local governments on land use and comprehensive planning to ensure the orderly and economical development of the region. The Council will collaborate with local jurisdictions to coordinate land use and development patterns with frequent, all-day transit service and transitways to increase transit ridership, ensure a successful transit investment, respond to new market opportunities around transit investment. Specifically, the Council will offer technical assistance to local communities in areas such as transit-supportive land use, urban form and zoning; creating a pedestrian-friendly public realm; understanding and attracting transit-oriented development (TOD) within the constraints of the market; and cultivating neighborhood support for transit-supportive development.

Under policy to be refined in the Thrive Transportation Policy Plan, the Council will define the expectations for local comprehensive plans to conform with transit-supportive land use planning and contain policies and guidance related to connectivity, environmental considerations, and zoning near major transit investments, primarily transitways.

The Council will reflect transit considerations across its work, including other areas of Council policy, to increase integration of efforts. The Council will incorporate transit investment priorities into regional grant program criteria, including the Livable Communities Act grants.

Additional detail about transit will be developed and adopted in the Transportation Policy Plan.