

## **Transportation Committee**

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of April 22, 2015

**Subject:** Approve the Metro Transit Service Improvement Plan

### **Proposed Action**

The Metropolitan Council approves the Metro Transit Service Improvement Plan (SIP)

### **Summary of Committee Discussion/Questions**

Ms. Harper and Mr. Burrows presented the Final Service Improvement Plan, including a brief review of the project purpose and evaluation criteria, the feedback received during the November 2014 public comment period, the modifications made to the SIP as a result of the feedback, and a summary of the projects and resources.

Council Member Rodriguez asked for the approximate capital costs of the proposed expansion. Ms. Harper said capital costs were not estimated through the SIP process, and they are developed through the Metro Transit Capital Improvement Program process. Needed capital improvements include a new bus garage, additional vehicles, other additional operating and passenger facilities, mechanics and operations staff.

Council Member Dorfman raised the issue of connectivity, access to transit, and equity, especially given the increasing suburbanization of poverty. Dorfman questioned the focus on access to low-wage jobs as compared to access to jobs paying a living wage and asked if the SIP considers where low-income populations live, including populations outside concentrations of poverty, and how they can access better paying jobs through projects like the Green Line extension, for example. Ms. Harper explained the evaluation measures used to prioritize projects at the system planning level: productivity, system connectivity-connections between routes, and social equity. General Manager Lamb emphasized that the SIP is intended to begin to identify needs, and specific connections will be addressed through Metro Transit's annual service and capital plans or connecting bus plans for transitways. Mr. Lamb emphasized the vision for seamless connections between transit services.

Council Member Letofsky asked how suburban transit service is addressed in the SIP. Ms. Harper noted that the TPP requires all providers to develop a SIP and combine the improvements into a regional service improvement plan. Each transit provider decides how to will create their SIP, the level of public involvement, and the time horizon. A staff-level group of transit providers is working to combine improvement projects, set the evaluation criteria, and identify opportunities for collaboration as well as areas of overlap.

The motion to approve the business item was made by Council Member Munt and seconded by Council Member Letofsky.

## Transportation Committee

Meeting date: April 13, 2015

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of April 22, 2015

**Subject:** Approve the Metro Transit Service Improvement Plan

**District(s), Member(s):** All

**Policy/Legal Reference:** 2040 Transportation Policy Plan, Chapter 6 Transit Investment Direction and Plan; 1-3 Transportation Planning and Transit Services Policy

**Staff Prepared/Presented:** Brian Lamb, General Manager, 612-349-7510

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**Division/Department:** Metro Transit

### Proposed Action

The Metropolitan Council approves the Metro Transit Service Improvement Plan (SIP).

### Background

Bus service is an essential part of the transit system in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area, and carries 80% of all transit rides. Building a vision for the future, Metro Transit developed a Service Improvement Plan (SIP) to frame how local and express bus service could expand. The SIP represents a prioritized list of bus service improvements that include new bus routes, arterial bus rapid transit (arterial BRT), and increases to the frequency and span of service on existing routes.

Metro Transit engaged the public and agencies early in the planning process, through winter 2013-2014 workshops and surveys, and again after the Council released the draft SIP for public comment on October 22, 2014. The draft SIP was available for review in English, Spanish, Somali, and Hmong online, at public libraries, and provided to interested community groups and members of the public. Comments were accepted verbally at five public meetings and one hearing, and by telephone, fax, mail, e-mail, and the Council web site. At the conclusion of the comment period, November 30, nearly 600 suggestions were received for bus service improvements from 176 individuals and organizations. Comments ranged from general remarks about the transit network to route-specific suggestions.

General non-route specific suggestions included:

- Emphasize connections at regional transit centers.
  - *Response: Metro Transit revised the scoring to emphasize connections to frequent service provided by transitways and high-frequency bus routes.*
- Incorporate future population, household, and employment data
  - *Response: This data will be used in future updates once the socio-economic data is finalized through the local comprehensive plan update process.*

- Use the number of low-wage jobs accessible by a 30-minute transit trip as the metric for job access under equity.
  - *Response: Metro Transit hopes to include this kind of analysis in future updates and is working with the University of Minnesota Accessibility Observatory to develop an analysis approach and tool.*
- Provide bus routes connecting adjacent Counties.
  - *Response: Transit Link, the Council's general public dial-a-ride service, will travel two miles into an adjacent county. For example, Washington and Anoka County Transit Link serve Fairview Lakes Medical Center in Chisago County.*
  - *Expansion of dial-a-ride services will be evaluated in a future study*
- Reduce the weight of the transit equity criterion for routes in suburban areas and emphasize productivity and system connectivity.
  - *Response: No change recommended to criteria weighting. The methodology used to score system connectivity was revised to allocate more points to connections with transitways and the high frequency bus network.*

24 improvements were either added or modified based on comments received, including

- New limited stop services in north and south Minneapolis
- New local and express routes serving south and east metro
- Transitway connecting routes adjusted for Gateway, Green and Blue Line LRT extensions
- Improved frequency/span on 10 additional local routes

The final plan includes 148 projects that scored high and medium, including arterial BRT, and would require an additional \$98.3 million annually by 2030 to operate, a 30 percent increase over the 2015 Metro Transit bus operating budget. These projects are estimated to generate 29 million new rides annually, a 40 percent increase from 68 million bus rides in 2014.

While not including capital projects or costs, all improvements would require a 200 space bus garage.

Upon completion of a Title VI review on the SIP, no disparate or adverse impact to low income or minority populations were found.

The SIP will be updated every four to five years to reflect changing demographics, new development patterns and travel demand patterns.

All documents are available at [www.metrotransit.org/sip](http://www.metrotransit.org/sip)

## Rationale

The Service Improvement Plan (SIP) is required by the 2040 *Transportation Policy Plan*. The SIP is intended to establish a framework for identifying and evaluating potential bus service improvements within a transit service area. The Metro Transit SIP will also inform the upcoming update to the regional service improvement plan, which will identify and evaluate potential short-term bus service improvements for the region's five public transit providers.

## Funding

Projects in the SIP will be developed and implemented as additional operating funds are identified.

## Known Support / Opposition

Substantial support (172 comments about specific items) was voiced for the overall plan and there is no known opposition to the overall plan.