

Selected comments from the public process for the draft update to the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan September 2018

Comment: Electrify the Regional Fleet

Background from Comment Report

Plans to transition the regional bus fleet to zero emissions vehicles fall under transit operations, and are not directly addressed in the long-range transportation plan. However, given that this policy plan contains information about challenges and opportunities related to the transportation system, it's important to acknowledge work that is being done to assess technologies and create operational plans to implement additional electric vehicles.

Change Recommended to the Overview, page 27, in the Challenges and Opportunities Section.

Plan Response Text (includes excerpt and new text)

Sustainability

Our transportation system, and how we use transportation, significantly affects the well-being of our natural environment. Challenges and opportunities include:

- Greenhouse gas emissions from on-road vehicles cause nearly a quarter of air pollution emissions, although they are decreasing. Emission levels will continue to improve as vehicle technology, including hybrid or electric vehicles, progresses. Improving vehicle technology has been, and is likely to continue to be, the most effective way to reduce emissions.
- Changing our transportation behaviors, like reducing single-occupant vehicle trips, increasing transit use, choosing housing in communities with amenities close by, and encouraging ride-sharing can also have an impact.
- People living in neighborhoods adjoining major highways have higher-than-average exposure to transportation-generated air pollution. Many experience adverse health consequences, such as asthma, at greater rates than the general population. Housing costs are often lower in urban, highway-bounded communities; so many people in these neighborhoods have low or modest incomes, resulting in these health disparities disproportionately affecting poor people.
- As electric vehicles continue to grow in popularity and share of the overall market, communities will need to consider the implications of more electric vehicles – whether to support public plug-in stations, and other local decisions, including investing in electric vehicles for their fleets. There are currently more than 200 public charging stations in Minnesota and estimates suggest many more will be necessary over the term of this plan. Many cities are already leading the way on establishing guidelines and ordinances to be ready for electric vehicles. From a regional perspective, the Council will monitor how electric vehicles are contributing to the overall vehicle miles traveled in the metro area.
- Emerging electric bus vehicle technologies are promising, but there are still complications for transit operations. By mid-2019, Metro Transit will have a plan related to expanding its fleet of electric vehicles and an analysis of related issues, including where in the system to install supportive technology for effective operations, challenges related to capacity for charging vehicles overnight,

and the limitations of current technology that only provide only 25% of the power needed to operate before the bus must return to the garage. A pilot project to evaluate these issues is planned through 2025. And though there may be operating savings over time, capital budgets are limited and do not have capacity for this significant expenditure. There is more to learn, but the Council's hope is that the region's transit fleet will eventually benefit from market development that is yet to come. In addition, electric vehicle technology brings other environmental hazards that need to be dealt with carefully, including disposing of used batteries. These considerations require planning and resources to manage.

Comment: Disappointment with Diesel Leak (related to fleet electrification issue)

Background from Comment Report

While the diesel leak at the Ruter Bus Garage site was unfortunate, it is a rare occurrence. Metro Transit has been safely using diesel fuel for more than 70 years and has a proven record of implementing solid environmental protection operating procedures. The Council believes in the positive benefits of moving beyond non-renewable fuels and has a plan to do so.

Plan Response Text (includes excerpt and new text)

No change recommended.

Comment: Implement a Free Fare System

Background from Comment Report

Currently about 25% of the Council's transit revenue comes from fares. Without another source of revenue to make up that portion, the Council would not be able to support the existing level of service without cuts. At this point, there are no plans to implement a system without transit fares. The Council does have a Transit Assistance Program (TAP) as an important equity program for the region to support low-wealth communities, reliant on transit. We will continue to

Plan Response Text (includes excerpt and new text)

No change recommended.

promote information about this program to potential users throughout the system.

Specific fare policies are not addressed in the TPP as they are viewed as operating issues that must proceed outside of the long-range plan.

Comment: More Equitable Policing Procedures

Background from Comment Report

The Council appreciates the concerns cited by a number of people who participated in the Transportation Policy Plan update process or have otherwise noted their concerns about the presence of Metro Transit police on regional routes.

To the specific point about fare enforcement, though those are operational issues, there are legal requirements that fare enforcement be conducted by a police officer.

The transportation plan deals with policing issues as part of the response to the goal of providing a safe and secure regional transportation system for all. Two strategies in the plan -- Strategy B6 and B5 -- identify specific information about how local police agencies - including Metro Transit - should ensure that police actions do not create or perpetuate racial inequities. The section also acknowledges that people of color have had a different experience with law enforcement.

Plan Response Text (includes excerpt and new text)

Change recommended, including additional context about interactions with law enforcement, under strategies for Goal B: Safety and Security in the Transportation System. (This text appears in “Chapter 2, Transportation Strategies.”)

Strategy B6: Regional transportation partners will support the state’s vision of moving toward zero traffic fatalities and serious injuries, which includes supporting educational and enforcement programs to increase awareness of regional safety issues, shared responsibility, and safe behavior.

While engineering and emergency response are important for highway safety, other important areas include education, enforcement and legislation. Efforts in these areas are typically led by agencies whose jurisdiction extends beyond transportation, but transportation entities can be important partners in these efforts. Collaborative interdisciplinary efforts to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries currently include the state’s Toward Zero Deaths program, which also includes coalitions at the county level, and local Vision Zero programs at the city level. The Department of Public Safety leads state education efforts focused on giving drivers information they need to avoid hazardous driving practices and choose responsible behavior. Enforcement efforts focus on ensuring compliance with traffic laws to change driver behavior and reduce unsafe driving practices. In recent years, key highway safety education, enforcement, and legislative efforts have focused on aggressive driving, distracted driving, speeding, impaired driving, reducing the number of people traveling without seatbelts or appropriate car seats, and motorcycle driver training.

In addition to general traffic safety, local and state agencies are encouraged to coordinate with state safety efforts to educate the public in the proper use of sidewalks and crosswalks by pedestrians and proper use of shared lanes, bicycle lanes and trails by bicyclists. These safety programs include the “Safe Routes to School” programs that promote bicycling and walking safety for school students. Programs should educate motorists regarding bicycle and pedestrian roadway and trail crossing laws (including

intersection and mid-block crossings), how to safely interact with bicyclists riding legally in the roadway, and to be aware of pedestrians and bicyclists.

It is important to note that not everyone has the same experience using the region's transportation system; analyses of enforcement data show that people of color experience disproportionate traffic stops or enforcement on transit. The 2003 Minnesota Statewide Racial Profiling Study, done by the University of Minnesota Law School at the request of the state legislature, found that "drivers of color are over-represented among those stopped; over-represented among those searched; and under-represented among those found to have contraband on their person or in their vehicle as a result of being searched." In 2015, Metro Transit analyzed its police incident data by race and found disparities in its treatment of people of color. Because Minnesota does not require local police departments to collect traffic stop data, there is currently no consistent database to use for routine analysis on potential racial disparities across jurisdictions, although individual cities may track their traffic stop data and include race.

Supportive local actions:

- Identify and implement local programs and strategies to support the state's vision of moving toward zero traffic fatalities and serious injuries.
- Ensure that enforcement programs do not create or perpetuate racial inequities.

Strategy B5. The Metropolitan Council and regional transit providers will provide transit police services and coordinate with public safety agencies to provide a collaborative approach to safety and security.

The transit system employs and carries large numbers of people and can be both an important system in responding to threats, and a target for serious threats. An important emphasis for the transit system is responding to safety and security concerns in a timely manner. The transit system covers a large geographic area, and many jurisdictions and incidents often occur on moving vehicles. This requires significant coordination between transit providers and public safety agencies. Most of the transit system is supported by Metro Transit Police, which is dedicated to providing police services to transit safety and security. In addition to Metro Transit Police, all regional transit providers coordinate with local public safety agencies, ensuring a safe and secure environment in and around the transit system.

The transit system also has security systems to monitor possible threats to people on and around transit vehicles and facilities. This system will continue to play an important role in improving the real and the perceived safety and security for transit employees and customers.

Supportive Local Actions:

- Coordinate local public safety agencies with regional transit providers to respond to incidents on the regional transit system.
- Use local public events as an opportunity to educate residents about potential security threats and natural disaster response procedures.
- Ensure that police and public safety agency actions do not create or perpetuate racial inequities.