

Committee Report

Transportation Committee



Committee Meeting Date: September 9, 2024

For the Metropolitan Council: September 11, 2024

Business Item: 2024-215 SW

Public Hearing on Proposed Network Now Concept Plan Service Expansion and Discontinuation of Suspended Routes

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council authorizes a public hearing to accept comments on the proposed Network Now Concept Plan service expansion and discontinuation of suspended routes

Summary of Transportation Committee Discussion/Questions

Metro Transit Service Development Director Adam Harrington presented this item, and reviewed in presentation the Network Now background, to provide the context of proposed action.

CM Dolkar asked that staff consider adding virtual options, extending some meeting dates into November and expanding meeting locations to communities outside of Minneapolis and Saint Paul. CM Dolkar asked how the areas for Micro transit were selected. Harrington stated that areas were selected in lower density communities to provide improved access into the transit system at Transit Centers and METRO stations. Harrington added that staff have collaborated on Metro Micro areas in Woodbury and Roseville leading up to end of 2024 opening. Detailed conversations with cities in remaining Metro Micro projects will occur as they are sequenced in over the next three years. CM Chamblis asked about the phased implementation looks like. Harrington stated the goal is to advance two additional Micro transit service areas per year but depends on the available workforce. Council members expressed support for expansion and acknowledged changes to service.

Motion by Carter, Toni, seconded by Vento. Motion carried.

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- District(s), Member(s):** All
- Policy/Legal Reference:** PIC 2-2 Accountability to the Public Policy; PIC 2-2b Public Hearings Procedure; PIC 2-2e Public Involvement in Transportation Service Changes and Restructuring
- Staff Prepared/Presented:** Lesley Kandaras, General Manager, 612-349-7513
Adam Harrington, Director of Service Development, 612-349-7797
Cyndi Harper, Manager of Route Planning, 612-349-7723
- Division/Department:** Metro Transit

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council authorizes a public hearing to accept comments on the proposed Network Now Concept Plan service expansion and discontinuation of suspended routes.

Background

Network Now is Metro Transit's vision to establish service planning priorities through 2027. The proposed Concept Plan will **expand service by more than 35%** to grow ridership, improve coverage and mobility with new routes and eight new microtransit zones, and redesign commuter express services to match today's travel needs.

Network Now recommended discontinuing 53 routes suspended since 2020 during the COVID-19 state of emergency and subsequent workforce shortages. Among many service improvements across the Metro Transit network, eight suspended routes to be restored.

Commute patterns have dramatically changed since 2020 with establishment of remote-work options and schedule flexibility primarily in office employment. Network Now focuses commuter express service with more frequent service and midday trips on primary highway corridors anchored on larger parking facilities for customers. This "Key Express Network" will offer service every 15 minutes or better during the rush hour and midday service.

44 suspended commuter-oriented routes had lower levels of service in 2019, operating only in the rush hour. 19 Park and Ride facilities associated with suspended service would also be closed. The travel patterns of traditional downtown office workers have changed significantly, resulting in lower transit demand, and many of these customers have vehicles available to reach the Key Express Network.

Eight suspended local routes of low-ridership were also suspended in 2020, most with alternate service. Only current Route 501 planned for discontinuation is currently operating today.

The recommendation to discontinue a route is based on travel market, route performance, available alternatives and public input.

The Network Now plan proposes to replace four route numbers (23, 612, 717, 801) with restructured service and are not included in the list of 53 routes below.

Currently Suspended Routes Proposed to be Discontinued

Local Routes 12, 16, 19, 27, 84, 415, 417, 547

Commuter oriented routes 53, 59, 111, 118, 129, 135, 141, 156, 261, 262, 263, 265, 272, 288, 350, 361, 364, 365, 375, 452, 552, 553, 554, 558, 588, 589, 643, 663, 664, 668, 670, 671, 672, 677, 679, 756, 758, 762, 765, 767, 825, 831, 854, 865

Currently Operating Routes Proposed to be Discontinued

Route 501

Rationale

A public hearing is required when a transit route is proposed for elimination without alternate service available. Council policy requires authorization for a public hearing 45 days before the hearing begins. State law requires public notice of the public hearing at least 30 days in advance. The public hearing will be part of a more extensive public engagement process including five Metro Transit sponsored meetings and other community meetings. Proposed hearing:

Public Hearing for Date

Tuesday, October 29th, 2024

5:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.

Metro Transit Heywood Office Building-Chambers
560 6th Ave N, Minneapolis MN

This location is served with frequency transit service in the evening is provided on the METRO Blue, Green, C and D Lines, as well as Route 22.

In addition to providing comments at the public hearing, the public will be invited to submit comments via comment card, telephone, e-mail and the Council website. All feedback will be considered regardless of whether it was given at the public hearing or through other engagement opportunities, such as community meetings, pop-up events at transit centers and when staff rides buses and trains to talk with customers.

Modification of the plan will be considered based on comments. A final plan will be recommended to the Council in early 2025.

Thrive Lens Analysis

Stewardship: Managing finite resources (including workforce) in a responsible way is necessary to equitably grow transit service and expand mobility within the region.

Equity: An annual Title VI Service Equity Analysis (SEA) was performed on all service changes implemented in 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023, including the suspension of these 53 bus routes. The SEA reports indicated there was no disparate impact or disproportionate burden to low-income populations or communities of color.

Funding

The public hearing will be funded through existing operating budgets.

Small Business Inclusion

This is not a monetary transaction so there are no direct impacts to small businesses with this item. However, many of the subcontractors working with the Network Now project consulting staff are small businesses, generally classified as DBE's and community-based organizations.

