

ACTION TRANSMITTAL No. 2020-11

DATE: March 5, 2020

TO: Transportation Advisory Board

FROM: Technical Advisory Committee

PREPARED BY: Joe Barbeau, Senior Planner (651-602-1705)

SUBJECT: Scope Change Request for Metro Transit's Route 63 Service Improvement Project

REQUESTED ACTION: Metro Transit requests a scope change for its Route 63 service improvement project (SP # TRS-TCMT-21B) to reduce the number of buses purchased and add Route 323, which replaces a portion of Route 63 and extends new service into Maplewood and Woodbury.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: That the Transportation Advisory Board approve Metro Transit's request to change the scope of its Route 63 service improvement project (SP # TRS-TCMT-21B) including:

1. A reduction in the number of buses purchased and add Route 323, which would replace a portion of Route 63 and extend new service into Maplewood and Woodbury.
2. A reduction in the federal award of \$776,844 (from \$6,122,444 to \$5,345,600) to reflect a lower total project cost.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF ACTION: Metro Transit was awarded \$6,122,444 in Congestion Management Air Quality (CMAQ) Program funds to improve Route 63 (See Map 1) for the 2021 fiscal year in the Transit Expansion category as part of the 2016 Regional Solicitation. The project's primary purpose is to improve the frequency of service to every 15 minutes for most of the day on weekdays and Saturdays. Currently, the route operates at 20-minute intervals on weekdays and every 20 to 30 minutes on Saturdays and Sundays (See Table 1)

Table 1: Weekday/Saturday Service Frequency comparison (minutes)

Segment	Current	Original Application	Scope Change
West of Sun Ray	20, 20-30	15	15
East of Sun Ray	20, 20-30	15	30
Maplewood/Woodbury	N/A	N/A	30

In anticipation of the new service, Metro Transit completed public outreach in the summer of 2019. Feedback received from residents included a desire to extend the service to Maplewood and Woodbury into many areas not currently served by a suburban local route. The extension of service would connect new residents to several new destinations, including a hospital, commercial/retail area, express service to downtown St. Paul, and the future Gold Line.

Based on public input, Metro Transit is requesting a scope change that would reflect the following changes:

- End Route 63 at Sun Ray Transit Center, removing the easternmost 2.8 miles from the 16.9-mile route. See Maps 2 and 3.

- Establish a suburban-local route, Route 323, from Sun Ray Transit Center, along the removed portion of Route 63 and then extend service into Maplewood and Woodbury. This would run every 30 minutes. The route would be seven miles, including 4.2 miles of new coverage. See Maps 2 and 3.
- Reduce the number of buses purchased from five to three. The shortened Route 63 will be able to run improved service with no new buses. New buses are only needed for Route 323. See Table 2.
- Use \$526,551 of CMAQ funding available in 2020 due to a project completed under budget, enabling service to start in the summer of 2020.

The original cost estimate in the funding application, including local match, was \$7,653,055. It is currently in the 2020-2023 TIP at this amount. The proposed update would bring the cost to \$6,682,000 and reduce the federal allotment by \$776,844.

Table 2: Cost Estimates

	Original Application	Scope Change
Operating		
Route 63	\$4,163,000	\$2,028,000
Route 323	N/A	\$3,139,000
Vehicles		
Route 63	\$3,490,000	\$-
Route 323	N/A	\$1,515,000
TOTAL	\$7,653,000	\$6,682,000
Federal	\$6,122,444	\$5,345,600

RELATIONSHIP TO REGIONAL POLICY: Projects that receive funding through the Regional Solicitation process are subject to the Scope Change Policy. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the project is designed and constructed according to the plans and intent described in the original application. The scope change policy allows project sponsors to adjust their projects as needed while still providing substantially the same benefits described in their original project applications.

A TIP amendment request accommodates this request.

STAFF ANALYSIS:

Approval/Denial of the Scope Change: Staff recommends approval of the scope change and has provided the following analysis of the impact of the proposed changes in Table 3.

Five projects were funded in the Transit Expansion category. This project ranked third with 568 points, 130 points higher than the highest un-funded project. Therefore, it is probable that the project would have been funded had it been originally applied for as proposed in this request.

Table 3: Scoring Analysis

#	Measure	Original Score	Scope Change	Notes
1A	Job/Manu/Education Connect	50	++	323 connects with a hospital, and several major retail and commercial centers
1B	Transit connectivity	34	++	323 connects with three express routes and the future Gold Line
2	New Annual Riders	76	+	
3A	Socio/Economic (Benefits/Impacts)	126	-	
3B	Housing	70	-	323 includes suburbs, which brings the average housing score down from the route only going through St. Paul
4A	Emissions reduction	153	+	
5A	Multimodal Connections/Elements	0	0	
6	Risk Assessment Form	50	0	
SUBTOTAL		559		
7	Cost Effectiveness	9	N/A	
TOTAL		568	+++	
* 0 = no change + = small improvement, ++ = moderate improvement, +++ = large improvement - = small diminishment, -- = moderate diminishment, --- = large diminishment				

The request is most likely an improvement to the project overall, as it covers more length and connects to more routes and destinations, including a hospital, major retail and commercial centers, and the future Gold Line. Note, however, that service will be diminished on the 2.8 miles being shifted from Route 63 to 323. This service will be reduced from 20- to 30-minute service and will require a transfer to get to the remaining Route 63.

Funding: Staff recommends reducing the original federal award of \$6,122,444 by \$776,844, (the new federal amount is recommended to be \$5,345,600). This reduction reflects 80% of the new, lower total cost of \$6,682,000. Given that the other changes to the project scope resulted in a “large improvement” of the project’s score and value to the region, it is difficult to justify an additional reduction in award amount due to these changes, some of which were positive (e.g., extending service into Maplewood and Woodbury with many new destinations) and some of which were not (i.e., reducing frequency on a portion of the route relative to the original application).

COMMITTEE COMMENTS AND ACTION: At its February 20, 2020, meeting, the Funding & Programming Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of Metro Transit’s request to change the scope of its Route 63 improvement to reduce the number of buses purchased, add Route 323, and reduce the federal award from \$6,122,444 to \$5,345,600.

At its March 4, 2020, meeting, the Technical Advisory Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of Metro Transit’s request to change the scope of its Route 63 improvement to reduce the number of buses purchased, add Route 323, and reduce the federal award from \$6,122,444 to \$5,345,600. There was discussion about whether a project should be able to move funding toward new project elements.

ROUTING

TO	ACTION REQUESTED	COMPLETION DATE
TAC Funding & Programming Committee	Review & Recommend	2/20/2020
Technical Advisory Committee	Review & Recommend	3/4/2020
Transportation Advisory Board	Review & Approve	

February 3, 2020

Mr. Paul Oehme
Chair, TAC Funding and Programming Committee
Metropolitan Council
230 East 5th Street
St. Paul, MN 55101

Re: Scope Change Request
05190 TE - Route 63 Service Improvement
Cities of St. Paul, Maplewood and Woodbury
Ramsey and Washington Counties

Dear Mr. Oehme:

Metro Transit respectfully requests that the Metropolitan Council TAC Funding and Programming Committee consider the attached Scope Change Request for the above reference project at its February 20 meeting. This request includes project scope modifications to Route 63 operating and vehicle requirements. Additionally, we plan to advance implementation of these improvements to 2020.

Metro Transit applied for federal funding through the 2016 Regional Solicitation and was selected to receive \$6.1 million in federal funds to improve service on streets currently served by Route 63. Specifically, the project scope was to increase weekday and Saturday frequency up to every 15 minutes, along with five additional buses to operate the new service along University Ave, Cretin Ave, Grand Ave, 5th/6th St, 3rd St East, and McKnight Rd in St. Paul.

Better Bus Routes

Since that application Metro Transit initiated the Better Bus Routes program and selected Route 63 as its second project. The goal of the program is to improve local bus routes by reducing stops, improving accessibility and providing more shelters. These changes, both on and off the bus, are done to make service better, faster and more reliable.

Beginning in 2019 project staff from Metro Transit and City of St. Paul reviewed Route 63 and identified several areas for improvement. Among other items, project staff recommended changes to Route 63 east of the Sun Ray Transit Center. The existing route structure is confusing for both operators and customers. Service levels exceed demand, while there was no service at all to major destinations just east of McKnight Rd.

Instead, Route 63 will end at the Sun Ray Transit Center, with coverage east of Sun Ray provided by a new suburban local route, Route 323. Route 323 would then be extended to serve new markets in Maplewood and Woodbury. Rider outreach showed strong support for these changes.

Key benefits of the project as amended:

- Provides new access to employment and retail destinations, including Woodwinds Hospital and Woodbury Village

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- Improves connections at Sun Ray Transit Center with other local bus routes
- Provides reliable restroom facility for operators at Sun Ray Transit Center
- Simplifies Route 63's alignment and schedule
- Serves all the same streets as indicated in Regional Solicitation application
- Maintains frequency improvements along the core segments of Route 63 (Transit Market Areas I & II) as originally proposed
- Provides appropriate level of service east of Sun Ray (largely Transit Market Area III)

Other considerations:

- Riders on new Route 323 will require a transfer for destinations west of Sun Ray Transit Center (can be mitigated by timed connections)
- Reduced frequency on Route 323 relative to existing Route 63 service

These improvements will provide better service for our customers, but necessitate a change to the original project scope. The enclosed information provides more detail on our request. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me at 612-349-7797 or adam.harrington@metrotransit.org.

Sincerely,

Adam Harrington
Director, Service Development
Metro Transit

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Scope Change Request
05190 TE – Route 63 Service Improvements

Project Location

See enclosed maps.

Project Scope – Original

Improve the frequency of Route 63 up to every 15 minutes for most of the day on weekdays and Saturdays. The request included five additional buses to operate the increased service.

Project Scope – Amended

Improve the frequency of Route 63 up to every 15 minutes for most of the day on weekdays and Saturdays. End Route 63 at Sun Ray Transit Center, with coverage east of Sun Ray provided by a new suburban local route, Route 323. Route 323 would then be extended to serve new markets in Maplewood and Woodbury.

Table 1: Comparison of Weekday/Saturday Frequencies by Segment

	Original	Amended
West of Sun Ray	15	15
East of Sun Ray	15	30
Maplewood/Woodbury	-	30

Table 2: Revised Cost Estimates

	Original	Amended
Operating		
Route 63	\$4,163,000	\$2,028,000
Route 323	\$-	\$3,139,000
Vehicles		
Route 63	\$3,490,000	\$-
Route 323	\$-	\$1,515,000
Total	\$7,653,000	\$6,682,000

Figures include 20% local match

Operating Changes

- Service on Route 63 will be improved per the original project scope, but the route will be shortened to end at Sun Ray Transit Center.
- Route 323 was not included in the original project scope. Approximately 47 percent of Route 323 will be replacement service of Route 63, while the other 53 percent is new all-day local service east of McKnight Rd.

Vehicle Changes



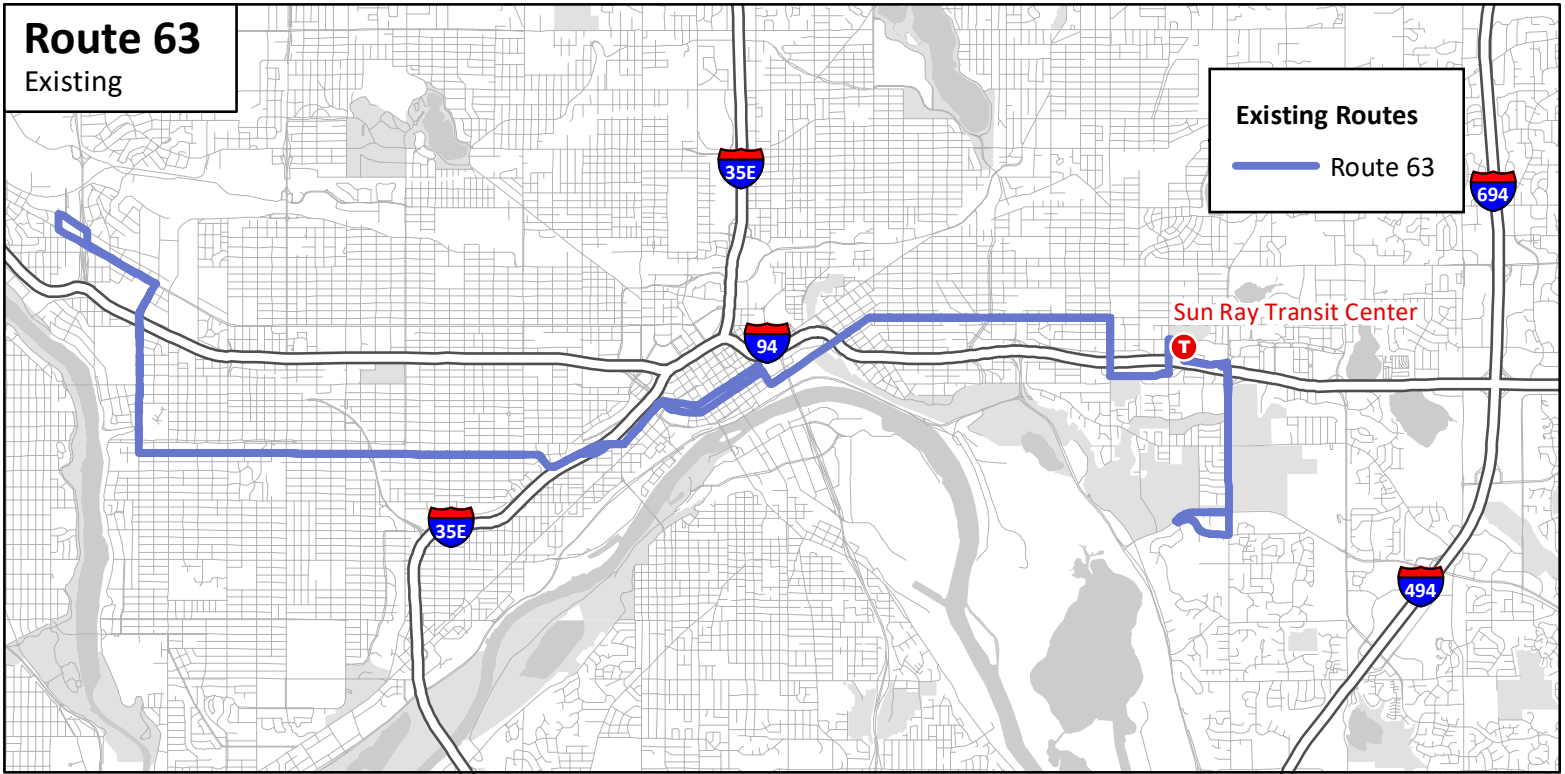
- The original project scope included (5) 40' hybrid-electric buses. Through a combination of shorting the route and improving the speed of service we can increase the frequency without the need for additional vehicles.
- Route 323 will require (2) 30' buses, plus one additional spare.

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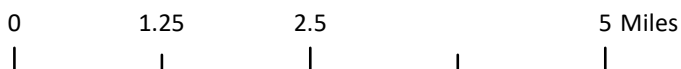
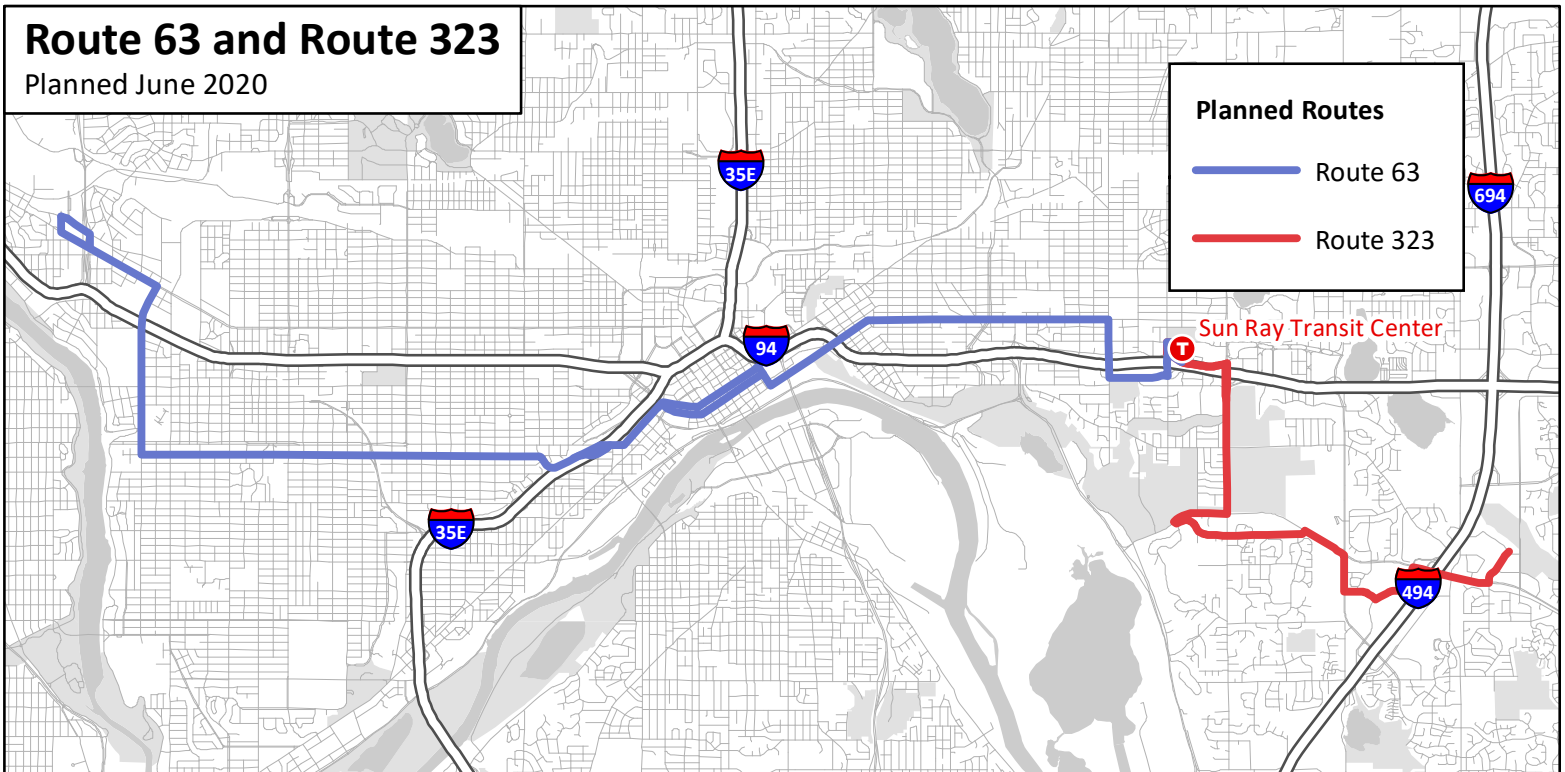
Scope Change Request

05190 TE - Route 63 Service Improvements
Comparison of Project Locations

MAP 1



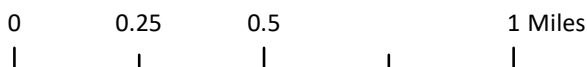
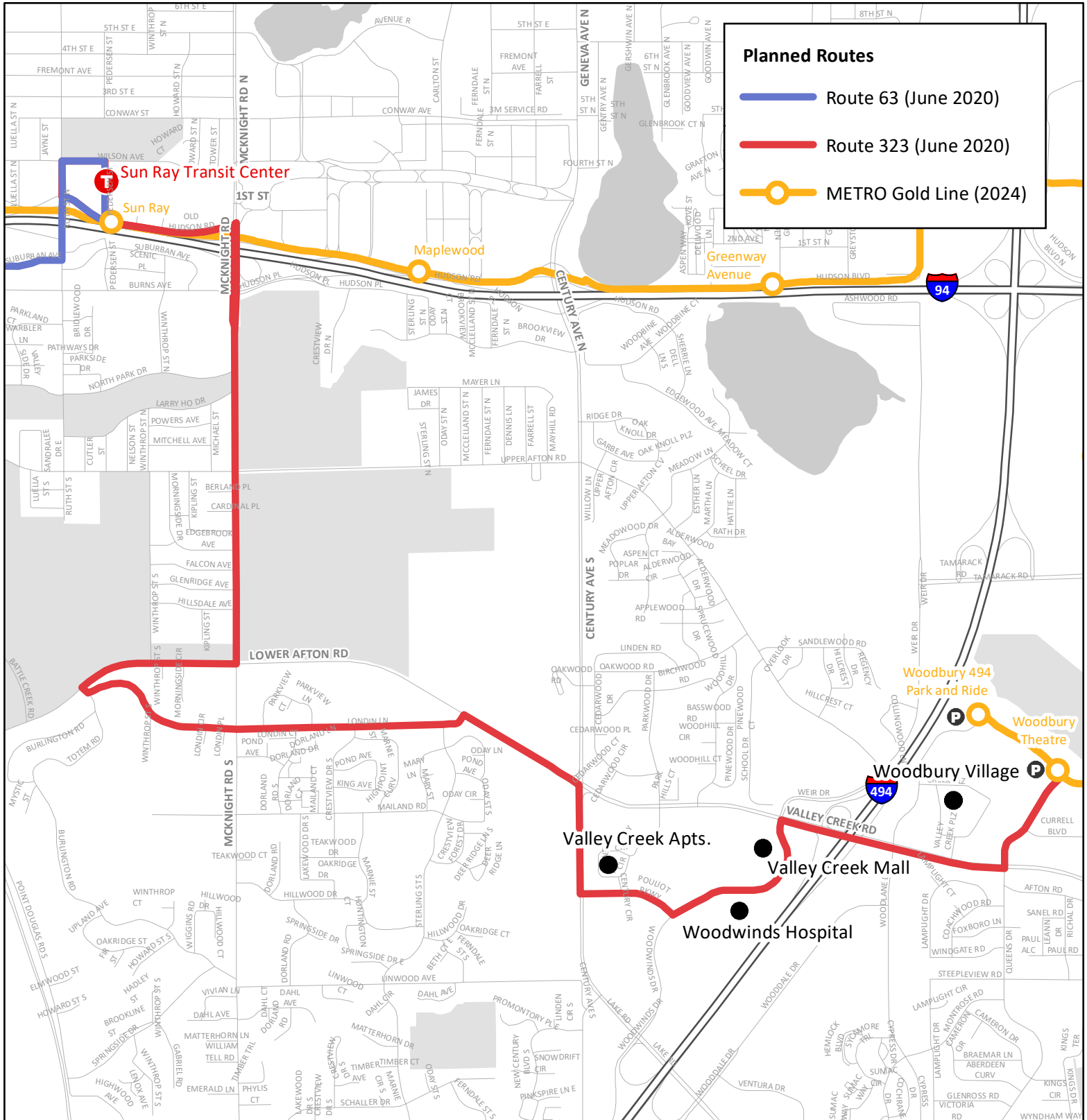
MAP 2



Scope Change Request

05190 TE - Route 63 Service Improvements Route 323 Key Destinations and Connections

MAP 3



Scope Change Policy

Projects awarded federal funds by the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) as part of the Regional Solicitation or Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) are often concepts that are further developed in the period from project application to implementation. Project sponsors work on activities after funds are awarded such as preliminary and final design, environmental studies, and public involvement. Sometimes during this project development process, the project sponsor wants to make changes to the scope of the project. Changes to a project's scope could affect its benefits to the region. It is important to the TAB that any change in a project's scope does not substantially reduce these benefits.

Scope Changes

A scope change is any revision that changes the physical characteristics of the project and has the potential to add to or detract from the project's benefits to the region. The project description in the original funding application serves as the project's scope for the purpose of determining whether a scope change is needed.

Three Levels of Scope Changes

There are three types of scope changes described below. The TAB Coordinator, the MnDOT Metro District Federal Aid Program Coordinator (for Federal Highway Administration-administered projects), and the Transit Federal Grants Manager (for Federal Transit Administration-administered projects) will determine the type of scope change.

Administrative scope changes:

Minor changes that typically occur when projects move into detailed design or minor additions such as project amenities or aesthetic items do not need TAB Coordinator/Metropolitan Council staff review. The MnDOT Metro District Federal Aid Program Coordinator or Metropolitan Council Transit Federal Grants Manager can review and approve minor changes including, but not limited to:

- Removing or adding of minor items, such as benches, waste receptacles, signage, etc.
- Changing the design of aesthetic items, such as lighting, railings, benches, etc.
- Adding items due to normal detailed design of a project such as noise walls, retaining walls, storm sewers, bike racks, wi-fi, etc.
- Adding new project elements/improvements funded through another source (e.g., a change to a more fuel-efficient bus) or combining a TAB-funded project with one or more separate non-TAB funded projects to improve efficiency and reduce construction impacts (e.g., combining a roadway project with an adjacent mill and overlay project). These changes should not detract from the original scope.
- Changing the width of a bike path (must still meet standards).

Informal scope changes:

Scope changes that exceed the standards of administrative scope changes are brought for a consultation between the TAB Coordinator; the MnDOT Metro District Federal Aid Program Coordinator or Metropolitan Council Transit Federal Grants Manager; and Council staff. The consultation will determine if the scope change can be approved through an informal process or if a formal scope change request is needed due to the potential negative impacts of the changes. An informal scope change may include, but is not limited to:

- Slightly changing a bike or pedestrian trail route alignment while still making the major connections.

- Combining two separate TAB-funded projects, provided this does not threaten to negatively impact either project.
- Changing the termini of a project, provided this does not threaten to negatively impact the project.
- Changing a pedestrian overpass to an underpass; or an underpass to an overpass.
- Changing an intersection treatment (e.g., a traffic signal to a roundabout) or an interchange design.
- Changing bus length, fuel source, type, or number, provided there is no resulting decrease in transit service.
- Reversion to the original scope (or a previously approved scope change). Note that any federal funds taken away in a previous scope change cannot be returned; the entire scope would need to be completed with the reduced federal contribution.

Formal scope changes:

Any change that may significantly alter the estimated benefits to the region (particularly if altered to the degree where the revised scope may not have justified its original selection) must go through the formal committee process and be approved by TAB. A formal scope change request process is likely to be needed in instances including, but not limited to:

- Removing significant elements such as a trail, sidewalk, pedestrian bridge, traffic signal, transit stop, transit vehicle, etc.
- Adding elements that detract from the value or intent of the original application.
- Removing proposed access closures, if the closures are described in the project description and used to score points in the application.
- Reducing the frequency or hours of transit service.
- Reducing the number of parking spaces in a park-and-ride facility.
- Changing the number of travel lanes.
- Shifting from a bridge replacement project to a bridge rehabilitation project.
- Changing designs from an off-road trail to on-road bicycle route.

Ineligible Requests

The TAB Coordinator may inform the project sponsor that the proposed revisions exceed the limits of a scope change and that the proposed change constitutes a new project. Such requests will not be processed through the TAC and TAB and that the original project should either be completed or withdrawn. If the project is to be withdrawn, the project sponsor should submit a formal letter to the TAB Coordinator stating that the project is being withdrawn and federal funds are being returned to the region for reallocation. A proposed change will be considered a new project and therefore not eligible for a scope change if it is:

- Relocating the project away from the defined problem, need, or location, such as switching transit start-up service from one market area to another
- Moving funding from one project to another, such as moving funds awarded to a project on County Road A to the same, similar, or different work on County Road Z.
- Eliminating the primary improvement proposed in the project description (e.g., a bridge will not be improved for a project submitted in the bridge application category or a trail will not be improved in the multiuse trails application category).

Steps and Requirements to Determine Scope Change Type and Request a Formal Scope Change

The following steps must be followed to determine a scope change type and whether the proposed change needs to go through the formal scope change request process. It should be noted that once a MnDOT Metro District State Aid project has been authorized, the project scope cannot change.

1. The project sponsor informs the TAB Coordinator and the MnDOT Metro District Federal Aid Program Coordinator or the Metropolitan Council Transit Grants Manager that it wants to change a project. At this time, the MnDOT Metro District Federal Aid Program Coordinator or the Metropolitan Council Transit Federal Grants Manager may determine that the change is minor in scope and no further action is needed. If the requested change is more substantial, the project sponsor will be asked to provide a written description of the proposed scope change and a map or schematics showing how the proposed scope change affects the project.
2. Upon this submittal, the TAB Coordinator will consult with the MnDOT Metro District Federal Aid Program Coordinator or the Metropolitan Council Grants Manager to discuss the extent of the changes and whether the scope change will require a formal scope change request. The TAB Coordinator will contact the project sponsor and inform them whether the proposed modification can be accomplished administratively or whether it will trigger a formal scope change request and/or TIP amendment¹ request.
3. For a formal scope change request, the project sponsor must provide data on the revised project scope to the TAB Coordinator, including a complete project description; location map; project layout, sketches, or schematics; and a discussion of project benefits being retained, gained, or lost. Applicants must provide a cost breakdown of the TAB-eligible items proposed for removal and addition (in the year of costs used in the original application) using the attached project cost worksheet. Failure to do so can result in the request not being included on the TAC Funding & Programming Committee's agenda.
4. Council staff and will conduct an analysis of the requested change, including the background information provided by the project sponsor for consideration by the TAC Funding & Programming Committee. The Committee will discuss the staff analysis and recommend one the following to TAC and TAB (see detailed sections below and on the following page about determining scope change and federal funding amount recommendations):
 - Approval of the scope change as requested;
 - Approval of the scope change request with modifications to the scope and/or a recommended reduction of federal funds; or
 - Denial of the requested change

Determining the Scope Change Approval Recommendation

To determine whether the scope change request should be approved, the TAC Funding & Programming Committee will discuss the merits of the proposed changes and weigh the overall

¹ A TIP amendment request is only required to accompany a scope change request if the project is in the current fiscal year and either the project description changes in the TIP, the project termini change by 0.3-mile or greater, or the funding amount changes enough to meet federal TIP amendment thresholds.

benefits or reduction of benefits to the region. Council staff will provide a written analysis regarding the potential impacts of the proposed changes. The affected scoring measures, except for cost-effectiveness (any cost increases are paid for by the local agency and not federal funds), will be analyzed by Council staff to determine if each sub-score would have likely increased, decreased, or stayed the same with the scope change (a precise rescoring of the application is not possible since applications were scored against each other at a specific moment in time). Council staff will then evaluate whether the total score would have likely increased, decreased, or stayed roughly the same based on the summation of the sub-score changes. This relative change in the total score will be compared to the scoring gap between the project's original score and the highest unfunded project in the same application category. The TAC Funding & Programming Committee may consider recommending denial of the scope change request if it is clear that the project would have scored fewer points than the highest-scoring unfunded project (i.e., the project would have been undoubtedly below the funding line). Council staff may confirm their findings with the original scorer of the measure and/or request additional information of the applicant, if necessary. Project sponsor must attend TAC Funding & Programming, TAC, and TAB meetings, where the item is on the agenda.

Determining the Federal Funding Amount Recommendation

To determine whether federal funds should be recommended to be removed from a project, Council staff will assess the project elements being reduced or removed and provide this information to the TAC Funding & Programming Committee. While adding eligible project elements is permitted, federal funds cannot be shifted away from any removed elements to new project elements unless the removed elements are being done as part of some other programmed project. Federal funds cannot be added to a project beyond the original award.

Applicants must provide a revised cost estimate including a cost breakdown of the items proposed for removal using the attached project cost worksheet. Any removed or added items should use the costs in the year requested in the original application instead of the year of construction costs. Regional Solicitation projects must continue to maintain at least a 20% non-federal match, while HSIP projects must continue to maintain at least a 10% non-federal match.

Staff may recommend funding reduction options, if applicable, based on the federal share of the cost of the project elements being removed or the proportionate reduction of project benefits in cases in which that is discernable (e.g., number of parking spaces or length of sidewalk) and/or another method developed by staff or the TAC Funding & Programming Committee. A recommendation will move from TAC Funding & Programming Committee to the TAC and TAB for approval. If applicable, a TIP amendment request will also be moved for approval through the Metropolitan Council.

ATTACHMENT 1: FUNDING DATA FOR SCOPE CHANGE REQUEST

Original Application:

Regional Solicitation Year	
Application Funding Category	
HSIP Solicitation?	Yes No
Application Total Project Cost	
Federal Award	
Application Federal Percentage of Total Project Cost	

Project Elements Being Removed:

	Original Application Cost

New Project Elements:

	Cost (Based on Year of Costs in Original Application)