



June 11, 2020

Elaine Koutsoukos  
TAB Coordinator  
390 N. Robert St.  
St. Paul, MN 55101

RE: Regional Solicitation Application Qualifying Review

Dear Ms. Koutsoukos:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Gold Line Downtown Saint Paul Transit Modernization project. Transit stations to be constructed as part of this project will provide over 1,900 existing daily passengers<sup>1</sup> with improved amenities such as enhanced shelters with light, heat, and security features; raised platforms for accessible boarding; real-time arrival information; offboard fare collection technology; waste receptacles; and seating.

In developing the application, Metro Transit staff and our project partners evaluated both Transit Expansion and Transit Modernization criteria. Through this review, and in consideration of the primary benefits of the proposed project, the modernization category best met key definitions in the solicitation materials:

- *A transit project that makes transit more attractive to existing riders by offering faster travel times between destinations or improving the customer experience.*
- *Modernization projects may also benefit new or future riders, but the projects will be scored primarily on the benefit to existing riders.*
- *Projects that benefit a wide range of services and users that includes... BRT lines may be eligible.*
- *If a project includes both expansion and modernization elements, it is the applicant's discretion to choose which application category the project would best fit.*

While these factors led us to a clear conclusion, we appreciate your feedback. In retrospect we recognize consultation with solicitation staff could have uncovered potential issues earlier. Thank you for the opportunity to share information clarifying the project and its benefits. In this response, I provide information from the original application and offer new clarifications on the project scope. With this clarification, I respectfully request that staff and qualifying review committees determine that the project qualifies under Transit Modernization.

As explained below, while the project prepares the corridor for separate future BRT service expansions, the proposed project improvements benefit the busiest transit corridor in

---

<sup>1</sup> Fall 2019 Passenger Boardings and Alightings

downtown Saint Paul and are consistent with past modernization grants for station construction. Multiple station improvements proposed within the project scope will be used by existing transit riders, and expanded bus stop capacity resulting from the project will benefit the speed and reliability for all corridor transit routes and users. These benefits are not limited to BRT or to the Gold Line project, and therefore best meet the Transit Modernization category.

In past solicitations, multiple projects planned for future BRT services have been funded through Transit Modernization. These projects have prepared the corridor for BRT by constructing enhanced stations and expanding stop capacity. Most recently downtown Minneapolis station improvements were funded by a Regional Solicitation grant, including stations served by all corridor routes. These opened with the METRO C Line in 2019. The proposed project follows this approach, preparing downtown Saint Paul for Gold Line BRT service, while also being of immediate use to passengers through improved facilities.

Most importantly, proposed stations will directly serve existing riders. As noted in the application, “proposed stations are planned to be constructed in preparation for bus rapid transit services, and several stations will serve all routes. The station locations used by all routes include Smith Avenue at 5th St, 5th St at Market, and 6th St at Washington”. These locations currently serve over 1,900 existing daily riders who will use these project stations.

Finally, the project benefits all routes and riders along the primary transit streets in downtown Saint Paul. A significant volume of bus trips (over 1,000 daily) and passengers (14,000 boardings and alightings) compete for access to a limited number of bus stops along 5th and 6th Streets. As stated in the application “the proposed project benefits all riders' service reliability and travel speed. This is accomplished through added bus stop capacity in downtown implemented through the project, allowing assignment of routes to downtown stops”. While this benefit is not as direct as existing customers' use of some stations, frequent backups at existing bus stops impact all corridor customers; proposed improvement will ease these capacity constraints.

In summary, through past precedent, through use of some project station infrastructure by all routes, and through benefits to all corridor routes customers' speed and reliability, Metro Transit requests the project be considered and scored within Transit Modernization. We welcome the opportunity to discuss the project with TAC Funding and Programming next week.

Sincerely,



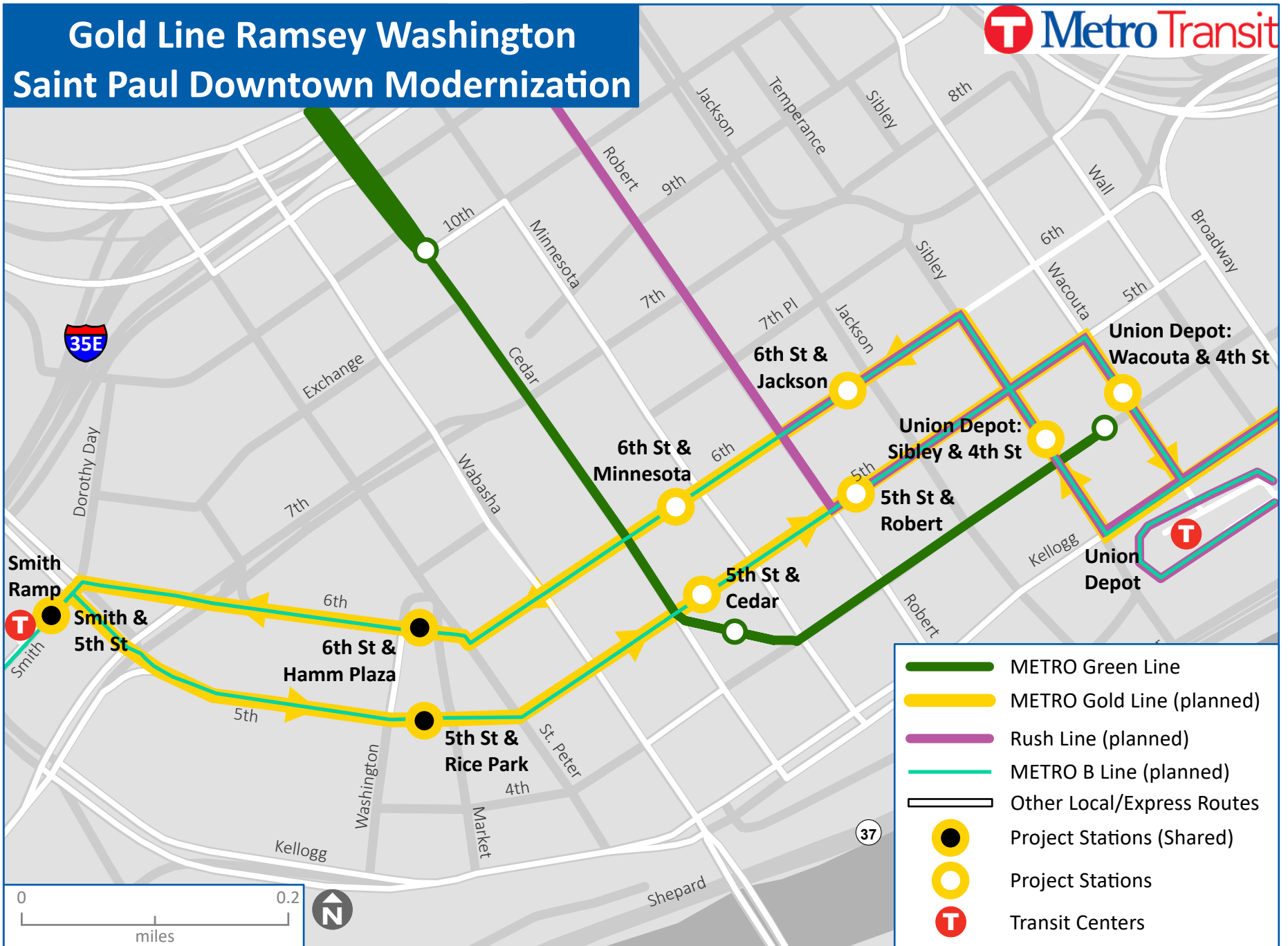
Charles Carlson









Director, BRT Projects

Metro Transit

Attachment: Project map

# Gold Line Ramsey Washington Saint Paul Downtown Modernization



-  METRO Green Line
-  METRO Gold Line (planned)
-  Rush Line (planned)
-  METRO B Line (planned)
-  Other Local/Express Routes
-  Project Stations (Shared)
-  Project Stations
-  Transit Centers

