

T Transportation Committee
Meeting date: February 13, 2012
Metropolitan Council meeting: February 22, 2012

ADVISORY INFORMATION

Date: February 1, 2012
Subject: Adoption of the Regional Transitway Guidelines
District(s), Member(s): All
Policy/Legal Reference: Transportation Policy Plan
Staff Prepared/Presented: Arlene McCarthy, MTS Director (651-602-1754)
Amy Vennewitz, MTS Dep. Dir. Finance & Planning
(651-602-1058)
Mary Karlsson, Senior Planner (651-602-1819)
Cole Hiniker, Senior Planner (651-602-1748)
Division/Department: Metropolitan Transportation Services

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council adopt the *Regional Transitway Guidelines* dated February 2012 and available here:

<http://www.metrocouncil.org/planning/transportation/transitways/RegionalTransitwayGuidelines.pdf>

Background

In 2009, Metropolitan Council initiated development of the Transitway Guidelines in response to several conditions in the region's transit system:

- The region's transitway system is expanding and regional partners have learned a great deal from initial transitway implementation efforts that can guide future transitway development.
- Multiple agencies are involved in the planning and implementation of transitways in the Twin Cities region. It is important for the implementing agencies to make decisions that are regionally consistent and equitable, and supported by technically sound processes.
- The region is implementing its first bus rapid transit (BRT) lines, which provide flexibility in transitway implementation. However, the flexibility also raises questions about what constitutes a bus rapid transit corridor.
- The region is in the process of developing a new model for transitway development, through the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Sustainable Communities Grant / Corridors of Opportunity initiative, by aligning transitway planning and engineering with land use planning, affordable housing development, workforce development, and economic development.

Throughout 2010 and 2011, the Transitway Guidelines initiative worked to develop technical guidance, based in best practices, that supports the development and operation of transitways in a way that is consistent, equitable, and efficient, and delivers an effective, integrated, and user-friendly transit system throughout the Twin Cities region.

The Guidelines were developed based on existing practices in the region, best practices in other regions, and input from stakeholder groups including the Transitway Guidelines Advisory Committee, ten Transitway Guidelines Technical Committees, and Metropolitan

Council and Metro Transit senior staff. More than 100 participants and 25 agencies participated in the Guidelines initial development process. The Transitway Guidelines Advisory Committee consisted of members from the Metropolitan Council, Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB), Transportation Advisory Board (TAB), Suburban Transit Association (STA), and MnDOT.

The Council approved the Draft *Regional Transitway Guidelines* in September 2011 and staff provided extensive outreach efforts through the end of 2011 with regional transitway partners and interested stakeholder groups. A public comment period was held from September 14 through November 18, 2011 and final revisions were made to the proposed final *Regional Transitway Guidelines* based on some of the comments received. A summary of the public comments received and responses to those comments is available on the Council website at

<http://www.metrocouncil.org/planning/transportation/transitways/CommentSummaryReport.pdf>.

Comments on the *Regional Transitway Guidelines* included support for the extensive and collaborative process to developing the Guidelines.

The *Regional Transitway Guidelines* are organized into ten chapters that address the key technical and project management issues the region identified in transitway development.

1. Introduction – The introduction provides the background on the purpose and need for the Guidelines and the process through which they were developed.
2. Service Operations Guidelines – These provide operational guidelines for the design and planning of public transit service in transitway corridors. These guidelines will help shape transit service expectations during transitway project development, ensure transit service aligns with corridor travel demand in a cost-effective way, and promote consistent service expectations for transitway customers.
3. Station Spacing and Siting Guidelines – These guidelines establish criteria for identifying transitway station areas, station sites, and station area development staging. These guidelines will help shape expectations for community access and economic development that are balanced with transitway travel time and development market considerations.
4. Station and Support Facility Design Guidelines – These guidelines promote the development of attractive, functional, and cost-effective transitway stations that are regionally consistent. The guidelines encourage the development of an attractive, informative environment consistent with local community context and transitway identity.
5. Runningway Guidelines – These guidelines define and describe types of transitway runningways and establish key issues to be addressed during planning and design of runningways. The Runningway Guidelines promote a transitway's ability to provide competitive, reliable travel times while meeting transportation needs in a corridor.
6. Vehicle Guidelines – These guidelines focus primarily on vehicles providing BRT station-to-station service and establish the important factors to consider when identifying bus type and design for a transitway. The guidelines emphasize flexibility and illustrate opportunities for uniqueness in bus design.

7. Fare Collection Systems Guidelines – These guidelines promote a common understanding of the region’s fare collection system and establish key factors in fare collection system decisions for transitways. The guidelines promote efficient and effective fare collection systems that continue to meet fiduciary and regulatory requirements.
8. Technology and Customer Information Guidelines – These guidelines provide a process for exploring technologic solutions, both existing and new, in transitway development. They provide specific guidance on the implementation of existing technologies and also set minimum expectations for transitway technology, when appropriate.
9. Identity and Branding Guidelines – These guidelines identify a branding and identity approach to transitways that will promote customer abilities to distinguish between transit services in the region. The guidelines also provide more specific direction on implementation of the light rail transit (LRT) and Highway BRT station-to-station service Identity and Branding Framework adopted by the Council in December 2010.
10. Project Development, Leadership, and Oversight Guidelines – These guidelines promote effective coordination and consistent organization throughout transitway project development. They also promote a clear decision-making process and a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities for the lead agency and each partner involved in transitway development. Coordination, organization, and decision-making includes effective stakeholder and public involvement, making best use of available resources, ensuring quality outcomes, and consistent travel demand and ridership forecasting and reporting.

Per the recommendations of the technical and Advisory committees, Guidelines were not developed for transitway funding. Instead, financial management responsibilities are identified and discussed in the Project Development, Leadership, and Oversight Guidelines.

The Guidelines are intended to be adopted by the Metropolitan Council as a standalone document and any future updates to the Guidelines would be subject to Council adoption. Originally, the Guidelines were proposed to be an Appendix to the *Transportation Policy Plan*, but feedback from stakeholders, the Transitway Guidelines Advisory Committee, and Metropolitan Council members indicated a strong desire to keep the Guidelines as a separate document.

Rationale

Adoption of the *Regional Transitway Guidelines* will establish thorough technical support guidance for the development of the region’s transitway network in a consistent, equitable, and efficient manner.

Funding

This action is not anticipated to result in direct funding impacts.

Known Support / Opposition

No known opposition. See summary of public comments on Metropolitan Council website.