

# T Transportation Committee

## Metropolitan Council meeting of February 22, 2012

**Date Prepared:** January 31, 2012

**Subject:** Light Rail Transit/Bus Rapid Transit System Name and Identity Recommendations

### **Proposed Action:**

That the Metropolitan Council:

Approve "METRO" as the new name for the region's system of light rail and highway bus rapid transit services.

Approve the new METRO logo, vehicle designs and station signage concepts as recommended in the attached drawings.

### **Summary of Committee Discussion / Questions:**

Bruce Howard, Director of Customer Services and Marketing and Charles Decker, Senior Graphic Designer at Metro Transit presented the item.

The Council previously approved an overall branding framework for LRT and BRT transitways including positioning LRT and BRT as one system operating with similar service attributes, and naming the LRT and BRT lines using colors to communicate clear service distinctions. Approving an LRT and BRT system name and identity is the final part of the strategy for branding the expanding transitway network.

Councilmember Reynoso asked about the Northstar line signage and depiction on maps. Howard responded by saying Northstar will always be shown on transitway and METRO system maps using a consistent blue and yellow pinstripe line, however Northstar will retain its name and branding so its signage and other materials will not be affected by adoption of the METRO name.

Councilmember Munt asked about the potential for advertising being placed on the new BRT vehicles and how that might affect the new METRO vehicle branding. Howard responded that a final decision on whether or not advertising will be allowed on the new BRT vehicles has not been made, but that staff designed the BRT vehicle graphics so that bus side advertising would have minimal impact on the METRO branding. Howard also said the Council and partners might want to take the approach of not allowing advertising on the new BRT vehicles for the first year or so in order to allow the new BRT graphics to have maximum impact in the marketplace during service launch.

Councilmember Brimeyer asked how soon it would be before elements of the new METRO system would be in use. General Manager Lamb responded that they will be in use with the opening of BRT on Cedar Avenue, the Red Line, in late 2012 and perhaps on Hiawatha LRT, the Blue Line, as signage is changed out beginning late 2012.

The item was unanimously approved by the Transportation Committee.

Post meeting note: Following action by the Transportation Committee, Dakota County advised the Council of concerns regarding the proposed branding scheme. The Council is continuing to meet with Dakota County commissioners and staff. An update will be provided at the February 22 Council meeting.

# T Transportation Committee

**Meeting date: January 23, 2012**

Metropolitan Council meeting: February 8, 2012

## **ADVISORY INFORMATION**

<b>Date:</b>	January 17, 2012
<b>Subject:</b>	Light Rail Transit/Bus Rapid Transit System Name and Identity Recommendations
<b>District(s), Member(s):</b>	All
<b>Policy/Legal Reference:</b>	None
<b>Staff Prepared/Presented:</b>	Brian J. Lamb, General Manager, 612-349-7510 Bruce Howard, Director of Customer Services and Marketing, 612-349-7694 Charles Decker, Senior Graphic Designer, 612-349-7795 Arlene McCarthy, MTS Director, 651-602-1754 Michelle Fure, Outreach Coordinator, 651-602-1545
<b>Division/Department:</b>	Metro Transit/Metropolitan Transportation Services

### **Proposed Action**

That the Metropolitan Council:

Approve "METRO" as the new name for the region's system of light rail and highway bus rapid transit services.

Approve the new METRO logo, vehicle designs and station signage concepts as recommended in the attached drawings.

### **Background**

The Metropolitan Council previously approved a branding framework for the developing system of light rail transit (LRT) and highway station to station bus rapid transit (BRT) lines. Elements of that branding approach include naming LRT and BRT lines using colors and branding the system with a unique name and identity. In 2011, specific colors were approved as names for the region's LRT/BRT lines that are in operation or have a locally preferred alternative selected.

Over the past few months, staff has conducted significant outreach with regional stakeholders gathering input on the development of the METRO identity and listening to feedback regarding key identity design questions. In addition, final designs were vetted through a survey of 200 regional residents to further ensure they resonate with the public. Results showed that residents liked the circle "M" logo, felt it worked well on the new BRT vehicle design, was new, relevant, contemporary, not confusing and fit well with the other regional transit logos.

The recommended METRO name and identity use the existing regional public transit colors and design elements. METRO fits into the overall Metropolitan Council transit branding approach for consistency and ease of recognition as part of the family of public transit options that include local and express bus service, general public dial-a-ride, ADA paratransit, vanpools, commuter rail and the LRT and highway BRT services.

### **Rationale**

Timing for development and approval of the new METRO brand coincides with construction of the region's second light rail line opening in 2014 and the projected opening of the region's first highway BRT line in late 2012 or early 2013.

These significant regional transit improvements must be marketed so the new services mean something different to riders, potential riders and the communities being served, while at the same time being recognized as part of a regional system. Best practices from around the country indicate the intangible perception of rail transit as a mode of choice for those who have choice in the way they commute has enjoyed an advantage over regular bus service in attracting new riders. This “bias” often times cannot be explained by traditional factors such as time savings, frequency, or span of service. Capitalizing on this rail bias to help introduce BRT as “rail-like” and to attract new riders is part of the rationale for developing the new METRO system brand. Using colors to name the lines and the METRO name and identity will allow these services to be distinguished as unique from other services in the region, communicate service expectations more effectively, and establish consistency for naming those services that serve the broader region across multiple jurisdictions. This approach is also flexible enough to accommodate system expansion.

### **Funding**

There is no direct funding being requested with this action.

### **Known Support / Opposition**

Significant stakeholder outreach was conducted in the development of the METRO name and identity. Staff considered and incorporated input received from CTIB board and staff, Dakota County, MVTA, Cedar Avenue Group and the City of Minneapolis.