

## Transportation Committee

Meeting date: March 25, 2013

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of March 27, 2013

**Subject:** Establish METRO Red Line Station-to-Station BRT Service start date

**District(s), Member(s):** 5-Steve Elkins, 15-Steven Chávez, 16-Wendy Wulff

**Policy/Legal Reference:** Regional Transitway Guidelines

**Staff Prepared/Presented:** Arlene McCarthy, Director (651-602-1754),  
Pat Jones, Asst. Dir. Facilities Engineering  
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**Division/Department:** Transportation; Metropolitan Transportation Services and Metro Transit

### Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council establish the start date for revenue service on the METRO Red Line as Saturday, June 22, 2013.

### Background

The METRO Red Line will be the first BRT transitway in the Twin Cities region, providing service between the Apple Valley Transit Station and the Mall of America where it will connect with the METRO Blue Line. In addition to the stations at either end of the line, the Red Line will provide service to the Cedar Grove Station in Eagan, and stations at 140<sup>th</sup> Street and 147<sup>th</sup> Street in Apple Valley.

The Cedar Avenue/Highway 77 corridor is one of the busier roads in the state, with more than 90,000 vehicles crossing the Minnesota River each day and 70,000 vehicles per day through the intersection of Cedar Avenue with County Highway 42 in Apple Valley.

The METRO Red Line will utilize bus-only shoulders to provide all-day service at 15-minute frequencies from approximately 5 a.m. to midnight, Monday through Friday, and 7:30 a.m. to midnight on Saturdays and Sundays. Estimates show an annual ridership for the METRO Red Line of 480,000. The Council is contracting with the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA) to operate this service as part of the regional METRO system.

The construction cost for roadway improvements and transit facilities on the corridor is \$112 million, benefitting both autos and transit. The improved transit facilities provide advantages for both the METRO Red Line service and existing express bus service in the corridor. Costs breakdown as follows:

- 4-mile highway and bus shoulder project: \$57 million
- Express service facilities, vehicles, and technology: \$34 million
- Station-to-station facilities, vehicles, and technology: \$21 million

MVTA provides express service to downtown Minneapolis, downtown St. Paul, and the University of Minnesota, and local bus service to surrounding communities. The express service, with approximately 650,000 rides annually, will continue.

MVTA is restructuring seven local routes to enhance coordination and connectivity with the new METRO Red Line. Changes to the routes included eliminating service that will now be provided by the Red Line, improving frequency and span (hours of service) on connecting routes, new weekend and off-peak midday service providing better access to the Minnesota Zoo and other destinations, and improved connections to Burnsville Center, the

Rosemount Transit Center and VA Medical Center. MVTA recently completed its public process to adjust service and will publish changes to service in early April.

Annual operating costs for METRO Red Line service, including fare enforcement by Metro Transit police, are estimated at \$3.2 million per year.

The Council is leading efforts, in coordination with Dakota County, MVTA, local communities, and community organizations, to plan for activities to promote the service prior to launch, activities on launch day, and providing for free rides to promote the service in the days following the launch of the Red Line service. The Council is reaching out to employers, business owners, community organizations, and other attractions, including the Minnesota Zoo and the Mall of America, to capitalize on opportunities to promote the service.

### **Rationale**

The recommended June 22, 2013 start-up date is influenced by several factors. Roadway construction on Cedar Avenue is significantly complete with the final layer of pavement to be applied to the roadway in early June. The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) is planning significant construction work near the Cedar Avenue/Highway 77 corridor this summer, and the remaining paving work is being coordinated to assure the roadway will be open, both when either I-35W or I-35E are closed, and when the METRO Red Line service begins.

In addition, the 140<sup>th</sup> Street and 147<sup>th</sup> Street stations are under construction and nearing completion. Construction on the stations will continue through early June, but will be substantially complete in early April to allow for MVTA to begin the 60-day period of training operators on the unique vehicles that will operate in the corridor.

Significant technology improvements are also being made at or near the stations and on the vehicles to provide the METRO system experience of real-time signage for customers, and traffic signal priority to assure on-time performance and competitive travel times.

A June 22, 2013 launch date is recommended to accommodate the paving, final construction and technology improvements at the stations, and training of METRO Red Line operators. Marketing plans include a period of free rides to accompany the launch of service, including several days following the launch.

### **Funding**

METRO Red Line service and operations and maintenance costs are funded 50% by CTIB and 50% by the Council (except for the 2012-2013 biennium when CTIB funds 75%). The METRO Red Line service will also use federal CMAQ funds for the first three years of operation. CTIB has granted the Council 2013 operating funds for the Red Line services. The Council's funding share is included in the adopted operating budget.

### **Known Support / Opposition**

No known opposition. MVTA and the Dakota County Regional Railroad Authority (DCRRA) staff support and recommend the proposed action. The DCRRA board is scheduled to receive an update on the start date at its March 26 meeting. The MVTA Board will be updated at its March 27 meeting.