

Transportation Committee

Meeting date: April 10, 2017

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of April 26, 2017

Subject: Approve West End and Route 9 Recommended Plan, including the Title VI Service Equity Analysis

District(s), Member(s): District 3-Jennifer Munt, District 6-Gail Dorfman, District 7-Gary Cunningham, District 8-Cara Letofsky

Policy/Legal Reference: Public Accountability Policy 2-1, Public Hearing Procedure 2-1b, Transportation Service Changes and Restructuring 1-3a, Public Involvement in the Transportation Planning Process 1-3b

Staff Prepared/Presented: Brian Lamb, General Manager 612-349-7510; Adam Harrington, Director Service Development 612-349-7779; Cyndi Harper, Manager Route Planning 612-349-7723; Steve Mahowald, Senior Planner 612-349-7775

Division/Department: Metro Transit/Service Development

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council approve the West End and Route 9 Recommended Plan, including the Title VI Service Equity Analysis

Background

Metro Transit's West End and Route 9 Recommended Plan targets improvements and efficiencies along Routes 9 (west of downtown Minneapolis), 25, 604, 649, 675 and near the growing high-density job and residential opportunities in the West End area development near Highway 100 and I-394. Goals of the plan include simplifying the structure of Route 9, improving service reliability, improving route performance by eliminating low-ridership segments and providing better connectivity between the West End and Minneapolis.

Study Area

As shown on the attached map, the study area includes parts of Minneapolis, Golden Valley, St. Louis Park and Minnetonka. It is bordered by I-94 to the east, Glenwood Avenue on the north, County Road 73 (Hopkins Crossroad) to the west and Cedar Lake Road/26th Street to the south.

Recommended Plan

The plan includes routing and frequency changes on Routes 9, 25, 604, 649 and 675:

- Route 9 will be simplified, with fewer route variations and the elimination of service on some route segments. Service frequency during the peak period will be reduced and Route 9B service on Glenwood west of Penn Avenue will be reduced to two trips per peak period.
- Route 25 at France and Cedar Lake avenues will be rerouted to serve 26th Street (now served by Route 9H) and Cedar Lake Road east of Highway 100 (now served by Route 649). Six low ridership reverse commute trips will be eliminated.
- Route 604 between Louisiana Transit Center and Park Place Park & Ride will be replaced by Route 645 with a transfer. A morning trip and an afternoon trip will be added to serve Methodist Hospital work shifts.
- Route 649 is proposed for elimination and be replaced by Routes 9, 25 and new Route 645.

- Route 675 will become a new limited-stop Route 645, serving the West End and providing a fast connection to downtown Minneapolis.

Details of proposed changes are included in the attached Executive Summary.

Public Input Process and Modifications to Plan

Several outreach strategies were used to ensure broad public engagement. In addition to creating and broadcasting a project website, holding three public meetings to explain and answer questions regarding the plan, staff boarded buses to ensure that customers were aware of the proposed changes and responded to nearly 200 comments. Staff also reached out to the affected cities and community-based organizations to help spread the word about the proposed service change. In addition to commenting in person, the public was invited to submit comments via telephone, fax, email and the Metropolitan Council website.

Most comments/concerns centered on the proposed elimination of the 9H and 9B branches. Staff revised the plan, after comments received in September on the Concept Plan and again in March after comments were received on the Recommended Plan, to address concerns heard. The 9H concerns were addressed after September's outreach by rerouting Route 25 to serve 26th Street and the 9B concerns were addressed after the March outreach by adding back limited Route 9B service which will be operated on a demonstration basis.

Title VI Service Equity Analysis

The Title VI analysis of the Recommended Plan shows no potential for disparate impacts for minority populations or disproportionate burden for low-income populations. Additional detail regarding the analysis is provided in Chapter 4 of the project report.

Rationale

The budget neutral Recommended Plan improves transit service within the region by reinvesting low-productivity service into transit supportive market areas, eliminating service overlap, making service easier to understand and improving access between downtown Minneapolis and growing concentration of jobs and residents in the West End TOD complex.

Thrive Lens Analysis

The plan addresses the five Thrive outcomes by leveraging transit investment in TOD areas (Stewardship), encouraging redevelopment and infill development (Prosperity), reducing the need to drive (Sustainability), supporting TOD development (Livability), and using investment to build a more equitable region by improving access to low-wage jobs (Equity).

Funding

The Recommended Plan was developed and will be operated within existing Metro Transit and Metropolitan Council transit service resources.

Known Support / Opposition

The West End and Route 9 Recommended Plan has received support from many stakeholders in the project area. Elements of the plan that remain a concern for some riders are: longer travel times for existing Route 675 riders as well as Route 649 riders on Cedar Lake Road; a new downtown routing for those now riding Route 649; and, the number of riders beyond ¼ mile of alternative service.

However, staff believes that this plan does the best job of improving overall transit service in the study area within available transit operations resources while minimizing impacts to existing riders and positioning transit as an attractive transportation choice for existing and new riders.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: WEST END AND ROUTE 9 TRANSIT STUDY

The West End and Route 9 Transit Study focuses on the changing travel patterns in parts of north Minneapolis, Golden Valley, St. Louis Park and Minnetonka and proposes modifications to the transit network to address this new demand. While downtown Minneapolis is still a major regional employment area, most of the region's jobs are in dispersed car-oriented suburban employment zones. However, recently more emphasis has been placed on creating suburban areas that integrate residential and employment development together in a pedestrian and transit friendly environment. The West End development near I-394 and Highway 100 in St. Louis Park and Golden Valley is a good example of this type of transit-oriented development.

Study Area

The project examines existing transit service and opportunities for improvements along Route 9 (west of downtown Minneapolis) and near the growing high-density job and residential opportunities in the West End development. Specifically, the study area is bordered in general by I-94 to the east, Glenwood Avenue on the north, County Road 73 (Hopkins Crossroad) to the west and Cedar Lake Road/26th Street to the south. Routes under review for this project include Route 9 west of downtown, Route 25 along France Avenue, Route 604 east of Louisiana Avenue Transit Center, and routes 649 and 675 east of the Louisiana Avenue Transit Center.

Project Goals

Goals of the study include simplifying the route structure, providing better connectivity between the West End and downtown Minneapolis, improving the performance and productivity of service in the study area, and ensuring that under-represented communities that rely on transit share in the benefits of service improvements:

- Route 9 currently has six branches. Simplifying the route structure to eliminate some of these variations will make the route easier for customers to understand.
- Creating efficient schedules that provide more reliable and cost-effective service
- Improving the performance of these routes by reducing or eliminating service on under-utilized or duplicative route segments
- Focusing on opportunities to grow ridership and increase transit market share by recognizing the demographic and development changes that are taking place. This includes providing a faster connection between downtown and the significant mixed use development at the West End as well as ensuring that under-represented communities that rely on transit share in benefits of proposed improvements.

Recommended Plan

The Recommended Plan proposes routing and frequency changes on Routes 9, 25, 604, 649 and 675. Route 9 will be simplified, with fewer route variations and elimination or reduction of service on low ridership segments. Route 25 will be rerouted to cover eliminated segments of routes 9 and 649. Route 604 will no longer operate between Louisiana Avenue Transit Center and Park Place Park & Ride. Route 649 is proposed for elimination and will instead be served by routes 9, 25 and new route 645. Route 675 will become a new limited-stop route (Route 645) serving the West End and providing a fast connection to downtown Minneapolis.

Route 9

Route 9 will be simplified from six branches to three branches. Service is proposed to be eliminated on Cedar Lake Road between Penn and Glenwood and on the 9H branch along Cedar Lake Parkway, Cedar Lake Road, Ewing and France. Sixty one-way trips by 30 riders are affected by these changes; 14 of these riders are more than a quarter-mile from other service. Route 9D service along Wayzata Boulevard, Zarthan and 16th Street will be replaced by new Route 645 service, resulting in a 33 percent increase in service on this segment. Route 9H service along 26th Street and Barry Street will be replaced by Route 25 with 8 trips as compared to the current

11. Route 9B service along Glenwood and Xenia west of Penn will be reduced to 4 trips as compared to the current 13 and will operate as a demonstration service.

All trips will serve the intersection of Glenwood and Penn avenues in the Bryn Mawr neighborhood, providing a more consistent routing and improving the frequency of service to the area of highest ridership. All trips will also serve Laurel and Upton avenues and the West End via Wayzata Boulevard, Utica, 16th Street and Park Place. Also, for the entire route, south of downtown as well as west of downtown, the weekday frequency will be adjusted on the fringe of the AM and PM rush hours from every 20 to 30 minutes, and in the peak hour from 15 to 20 minutes.

Service on Route 9N on Cedar Lake Road west of Louisiana Avenue to the Greenbrier area in Minnetonka will be improved in the off-peak and will be available hourly on weekdays to match the weekend schedule. During peak periods this area will continue to be served by express routes 643 and 663.

Route 25

At France Avenue and Cedar Lake Avenue the route will be revised to serve eliminated segments of routes 9H and 649 via 26th Street and Cedar Lake Road east of Hwy 100. The four-block segment of Route 25 on France Avenue between Cedar Lake Avenue and Lake Street will be eliminated. Alternate service is available at Lake Street and France via Route 17.

Six reverse commute trips, four coming from downtown to southwest Minneapolis in the morning rush hour and two going to downtown in the afternoon rush hour, will be eliminated. The six trips have a combined ridership of fewer than six riders beyond a quarter-mile of an alternate bus stop.

Route 604

The portion of the route between Louisiana Avenue Transit Center and Park Place Boulevard and Wayzata Boulevard is proposed for elimination and will be replaced by new Route 645. Twenty-four one-way trips by 12 riders who currently ride east of Louisiana Avenue Transit Center will instead have to transfer between Route 604 and new Route 645. This route change will eliminate route duplication and allow for better timed connections.

Route 649

To avoid route duplication, Route 649 will be eliminated and replaced by routes 9, 25 and new Route 645. Customers currently boarding on Cedar Lake Road west of Park Place will instead be served by Route 9. The number of trips on this segment will more than double. Route 25 will serve Cedar Lake Road east of Highway 100 in the area of Cedar Trails Condos with four round trips as compared to the current five on Route 649. Travel time for existing Route 649 riders using routes 9 and 25 will increase by 16-20 minutes. Seventy one-way trips by 35 riders are affected by this change; all 35 are more than a quarter-mile from alternate express service.

Customers using the Park Place Park & Ride and those using Route 649 to commute to jobs in the West End will be served by new Route 645 have no increase in travel time and will see a 32 percent increase in trips between downtown and the West End. All Route 649 customers will continue to have a one-seat ride to downtown Minneapolis and buses will travel on Marquette and 2nd avenues through downtown (existing Route 675 alignment)

Route 675/new Route 645

A significant improvement proposed in this concept plan is all-day limited-stop service between downtown Minneapolis and the West End via I-394 all days of the week, providing a 32 percent increase in service to the West End and a trip that is 16 minutes faster than currently provided on Route 9. Existing Route 675 would be

modified to create this connection east of the Louisiana Avenue Transit Center by traveling on Wayzata Boulevard, Zarthan Avenue, 16th Street, Park Place and I-394. The route is no longer an express route, so it will be renumbered to Route 645 and a less-expensive local fare will be charged.

This reroute adds two to four minutes of travel time for existing riders. Most customers board at park-and-ride lots with alternate express service, but there are 72 riders boarding east of Ridgedale Shopping Center during the morning rush hour who do not have an alternative and will be affected by the longer travel time.

Title VI Service Equity Analysis

The recommended changes are classified as a major service change requiring a Title VI Service Equity Analysis to determine if the changes create a disparate impact or disproportionate burden on minority or low-income populations. While the plan is a mix of service increases and service reductions, overall it will result in a 2.8 decrease in transit service, as measured by the change in number of trips, across the study area.

As shown in the table below, minority populations will see a smaller decrease in transit service than non-minority populations and low-income populations will see a smaller decrease than non-low-income populations. Thus, there are no disparate impacts for minority populations or disproportionate burden for low-income populations.

Average Service Level Change by Population Group

| Population Group | Average Percent of Service Change |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Minority | -0.7% |
| Non-Minority | -3.6% |
| Low-Income | -1.5% |
| Non-low-income | -2.8% |

Public Outreach and Next Steps

Several outreach strategies were used to ensure broad public engagement. In addition to creating and broadcasting a project website, there were three public meetings to explain and answer questions regarding the plan. Metro Transit staff boarded buses to ensure that customers were aware of the proposed changes and responded to nearly 200 comments. Staff also reached out to the affected cities and community-based organizations to help spread the word about the proposed service changes. In addition to commenting in person, the public was invited to submit comments via telephone, fax, email and the Metropolitan Council website.

Most comments/concerns centered on the proposed elimination of the 9H and 9B branches. Staff revised the plan, after comments received in September 2016 on the Concept Plan and again in March 2017 after comments were received on the Recommended Plan, to address concerns heard. The 9H concerns were addressed after September’s outreach by rerouting Route 25 to serve 26th Street and the 9B concerns were addressed after the March outreach by adding back limited Route 9B service which will be operated on a demonstration basis.

The plan will be presented to the Metropolitan Council in April 2017 for final approval. Implementation is planned for August 2017.

