

Transportation Committee

Meeting date: February 24, 2020

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of March 11, 2020

Subject: Public Hearing for Orange Line Connecting Bus Study Concept Plan

District(s), Member(s): District 5- Molly Cummings, District 6 Lynnea Atlas-Ingebretson, District 7 Robert Lilligren, District 8 Abdirahman Muse

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

Staff Prepared/Presented: Wes Kooistra, General Manager 612-349-7510; Adam Harrington, Director of Service Development 612-349-7797; Cyndi Harper, Manager of Route Planning 612-349-7723; John Dillery, Senior Planner 612-349-7773

Division/Department: Metro Transit/Service Development

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council authorize a public hearing to accept comments on proposed service changes outlined in the Orange Line Connecting Bus Study Concept Plan.

Background

METRO Orange Line BRT is scheduled to open in late 2021 between Minneapolis and Burnsville. The 17-mile Orange Line will replace Route 535 Minneapolis – Bloomington with frequent, all-day service between downtown Minneapolis and Burnsville. South of downtown Minneapolis, stations are planned at Lake Street, 46th Street (existing), 66th Street, 76th Street, American Boulevard, 98th Street (South Bloomington Transit Center), and in Burnsville, at Heart of the City and Burnsville Parkway. Many Orange Line riders are expected to transfer from bus or rail service to reach a BRT station, so high-quality connecting bus service will be essential.

Metro Transit's Orange Line Connecting Bus Study evaluates existing service and opportunities for improvements and new connections at Orange Line stations. The study area includes the I-35W corridor area in south Minneapolis, Richfield, Bloomington and Edina, as shown on the attached map. This study does not include Burnsville but staff is coordinating changes with the service provider in this area, Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA).

Goals of the study include simplifying the route network, retaining existing riders and growing ridership, complementing the existing commuter express service in the corridor and linking the Orange Line with residents, jobs and services. The Orange Line Connecting Bus Study has reviewed existing conditions, conducted an initial round of public engagement (including a survey) and analyzed ridership patterns, unmet needs, and existing and projected land use patterns and demographics. Staff is currently working on a draft plan outlining proposed service changes, which may include introducing new routes, improving frequency and span on existing routes and/or eliminating existing routes or route branches and will be presented to the Council in advance of the public hearing.

Project timeline:

- Late March: present concept plan to Council; release to the public
- April 1- May 9: public comment period
- Summer: Modify concept plan based on public comment
- Fall: present final plan to Council for approval
- Late 2021: implementation of service changes (in conjunction with opening of Orange Line)

Rationale

Council policy requires authorization for a public hearing 45 days in advance. State law requires public notice of the hearing at least 30 days in advance. In order to improve public review and participation, staff is proposing two community meetings in addition to the official public hearing. The proposed hearing and meeting locations, dates and times are listed below. Additional community meetings may be added as details of the concept plan are finalized.

Public Hearing

Wednesday, April 29, 2020

11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Minneapolis Central Library

300 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis

Community Meetings

Tuesday, April 21, 2020

5:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.

Southdale Library

7001 York Ave S, Edina

Wednesday, April 22, 2020

5:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.

Bloomington Civic Plaza

1800 W. Old Shakopee Rd, Bloomington

Thrive Lens Analysis

A public hearing and community meeting to discuss the Orange Line Connecting Bus Study Concept Plan aligns with the Equity outcome by engaging a full cross-section of the community in decision-making. The Orange Line Connecting Bus Study Outreach Plan will ensure all members of the community, especially historically under-represented populations, can weigh in on the proposed changes.

Funding

The public hearing, community meetings and service changes resulting from the project will be funded within the Metro Transit Council-approved operating budget.

Known Support / Opposition

There is no known opposition to scheduling a public hearing for this study.