



# Nicollet Mall & Downtown Transit Changes

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# Agenda

- Project background & City plans to pedestrianize Nicollet Mall
- Nicollet Mall today
- Three options for alternatives to Nicollet Mall
- Engagement approach
  - Phase 1 (Aug – Sep) activities and summary
  - Phase 2 (Dec – Jan) activities
- Next steps



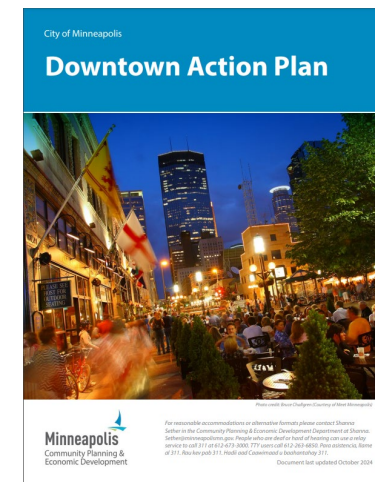
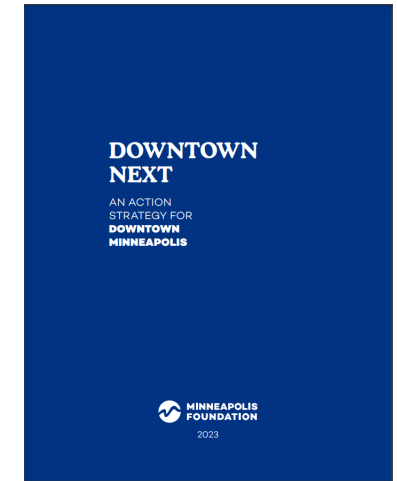
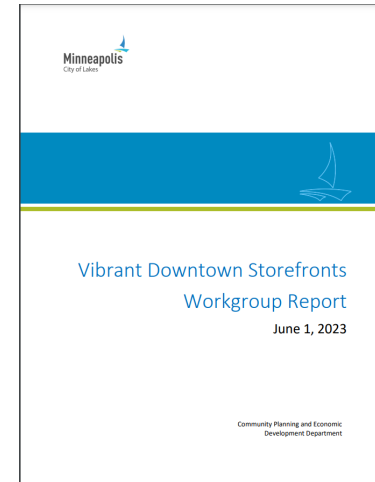
## Project background

- City of Minneapolis vision for a pedestrianized Nicollet Mall
  - The City is moving forward with a fully pedestrianized Mall that would require buses to use an alternative roadway
- Pedestrianization of Nicollet Mall supported by City-led and outside-initiated efforts
- City policy for improved transit in downtown



# Plans supporting a pedestrianized Nicollet Mall

- Vibrant Downtown Storefronts Workgroup Report, June 2023
  - Evaluate the future of Nicollet Mall as a pedestrian-only zone - Explore alternative options for transit service elsewhere through downtown. Engage stakeholders to understand full range of impacts.
- Minneapolis Foundation, Downtown Next, December 2023
  - **PEOPLE-CENTRIC NICOLLET MALL: A reimagined activated walkway with 24/7/365 must-see, hyper-local experiences connecting all the new places and users in downtown's core.**
- City of Minneapolis, Downtown Action Plan, October 2024
  - July 2024-2026: Elevate Nicollet Mall to a community-centered pedestrianized main street by creating a plan for future activation, placemaking, programming, beautification, and infrastructure needs that enhance community connection, fun and play.
- Mpls Downtown Council, Downtown by Design, November 2024
  - **Happening now: Elevate Nicollet into a more dynamic place that puts people first**



## City of Minneapolis policy for improved transit downtown




- Improving speed and reliability of transit is a key strategy in the City of Minneapolis Transportation Action Plan
- Nicollet Mall and Marquette/ 2nd Avenue are identified as focus areas

### STRATEGY 2

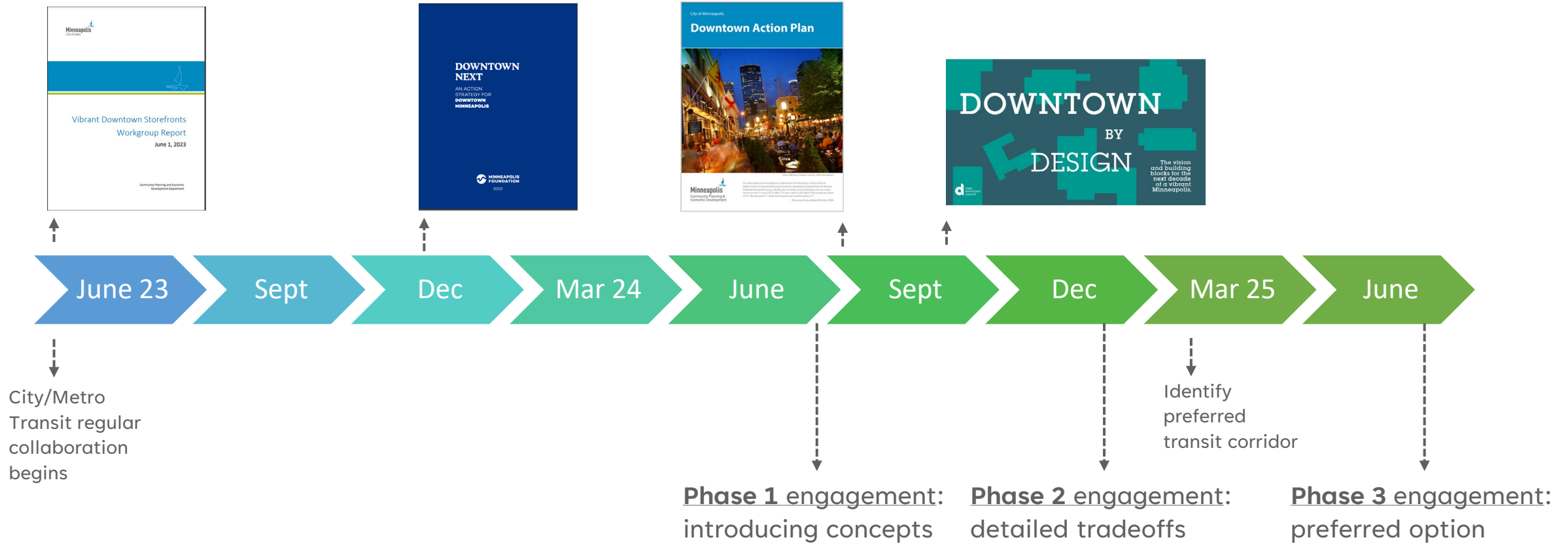
Increase the speed and reliability of transit.

#### Transit 2.4 **DO**

Improve transit speed and reliability throughout downtown; focus on Nicollet Mall and Marquette/2nd Avenue operations first.

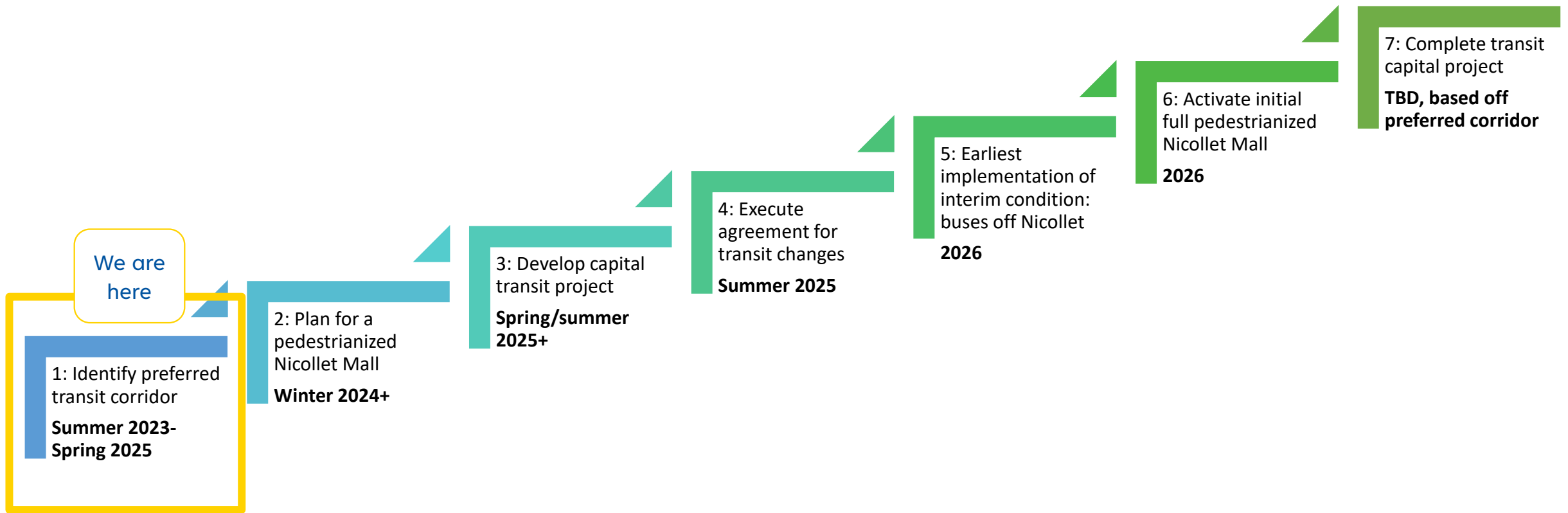
Supported goals:	 Climate  Equity  Prosperity		
	 Mobility  Active Partnerships		
Difficulty:	<b>High</b>		
Timeframe:	2020-2023 (Years 0-3)	Status:	On-going

# Planned project timeline





# Overall project context



# Transit context of Nicollet Mall

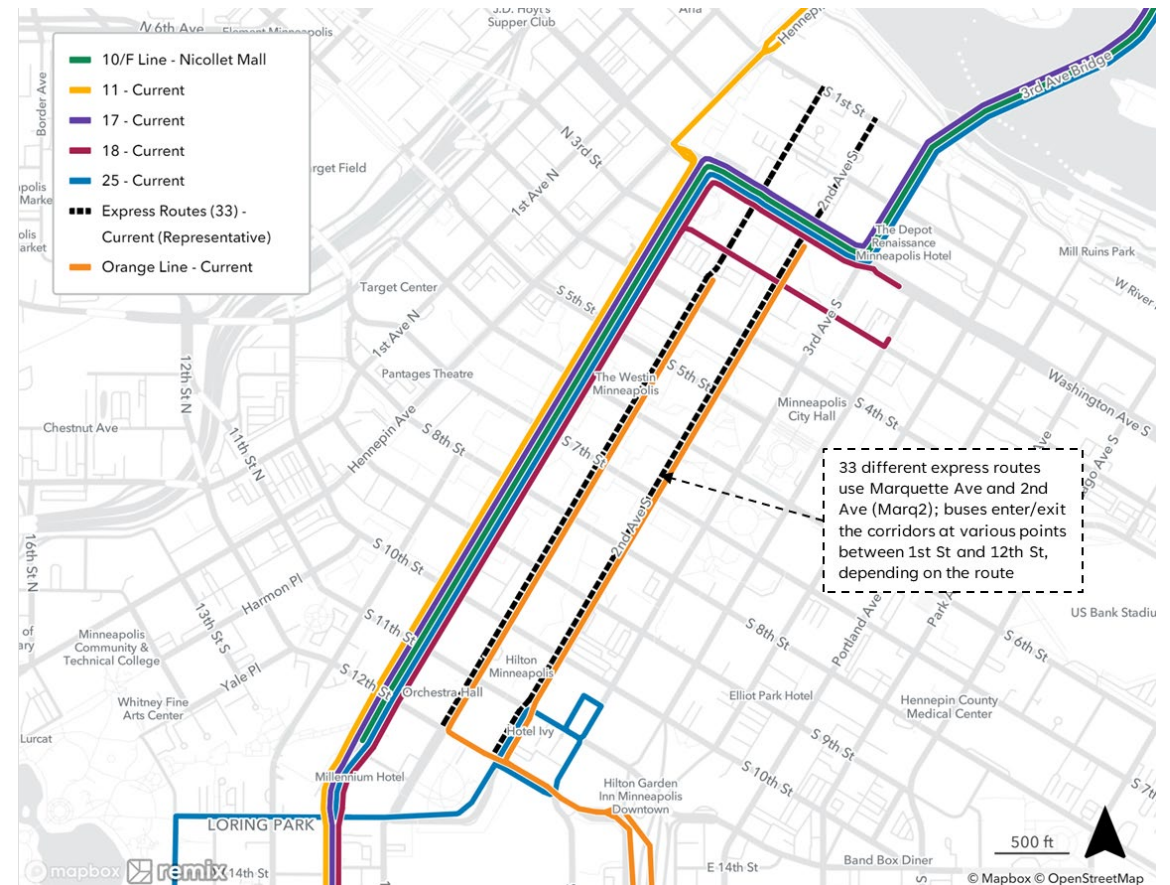
- Nicollet Mall is one of the **busiest transit corridors** in the region
  - About 11,600 people getting on or off the bus along Nicollet Mall
  - About 650 buses per day use the corridor
- Nicollet Mall is the alignment of two **planned METRO BRT Lines**
- Nicollet Mall is also among the **slowest and least reliable** segments in the transit network
- Buses are **frequently detoured** today to accommodate planned events on Nicollet Mall





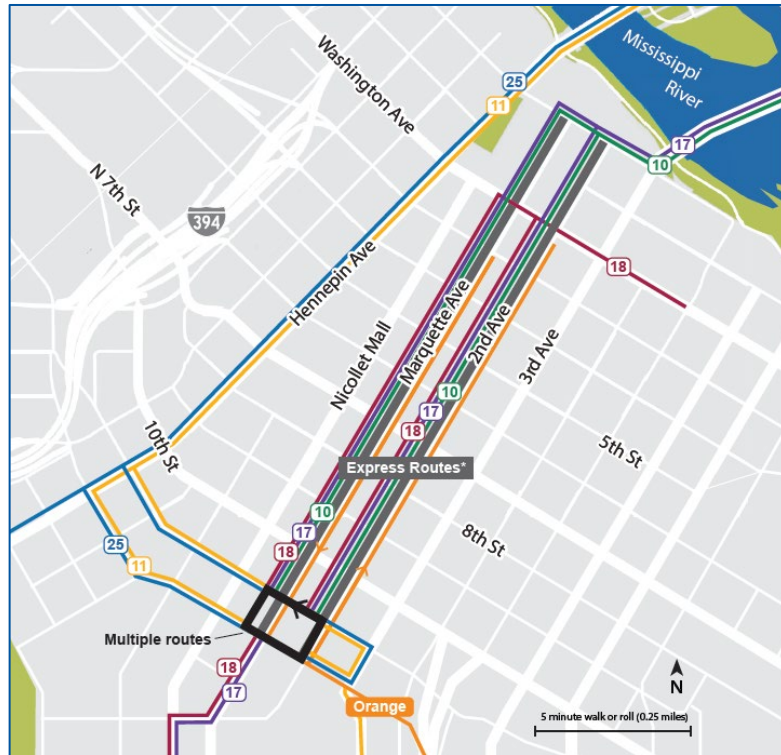
# Existing transit on Nicollet Mall and Marq2

- Nicollet Mall is served by 5 routes today
  - Route 10, Route 11, Route 17, Route 18, and Route 25
  - Planned alignment for METRO F Line and future Nicollet arterial BRT
- METRO Orange Line and 33 express routes use the Marq2 corridor
- **Based on City direction to close Nicollet Mall to transit, Metro Transit and the City are working on alternative options**



# Three Nicollet Mall alternatives under consideration

Option 1: Marquette and 2nd Ave – One way pair



Option 2: Marquette and 2nd Ave – Two way



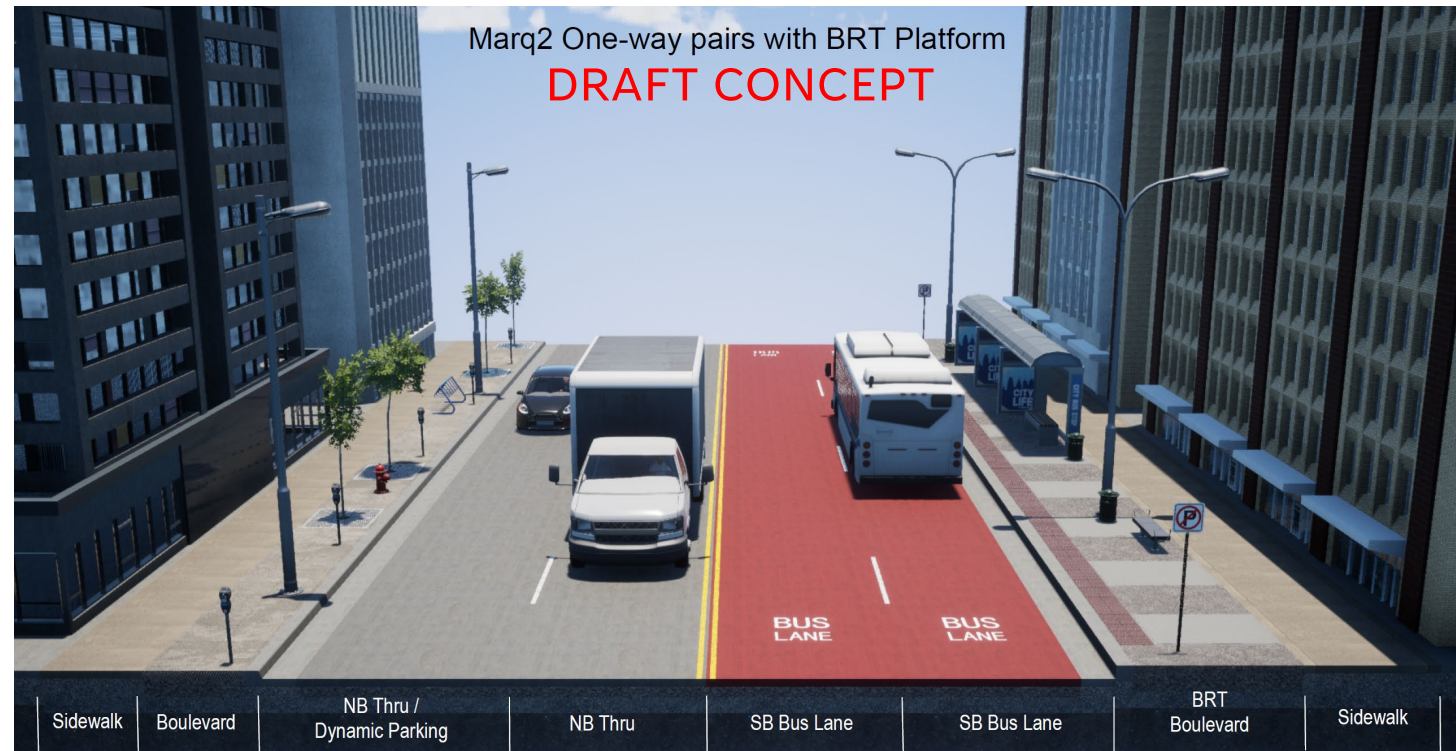
Option 3: 3rd Ave – Two way





# Option 1: Marquette & 2nd Avenue – One-way Pair

- Faster and more reliable service than Nicollet Mall
- More consistent service with no recurring event detours
- Space for comfortable sidewalks and bus shelters
- Transfer connections are less convenient
- Distance to destinations on Nicollet Mall further than today, most remain within 1/4 mile





## Option 2: Marquette & 2nd Avenue – Two-way

- Faster and more reliable service than Nicollet Mall
- More consistent service with no recurring event detours
- Express service likely to be slower and less reliable, express passenger waiting areas will be narrower and less comfortable
- Convenient transfer connections are maintained
- Distance to destinations on Nicollet Mall further than today, most remain within 1/4 mile



## Option 3: 3rd Avenue Two-way

- Faster and more reliable service than Nicollet Mall
- More consistent service with no recurring event detours
- No change to express service
- Convenient transfer connections are maintained
- Narrow sidewalks and bus stops at several locations along the corridor
- Distance to destinations on Nicollet Mall further than today, most are outside of 1/4 mile





## Phase 1 engagement activities (Aug - Sep 2024)

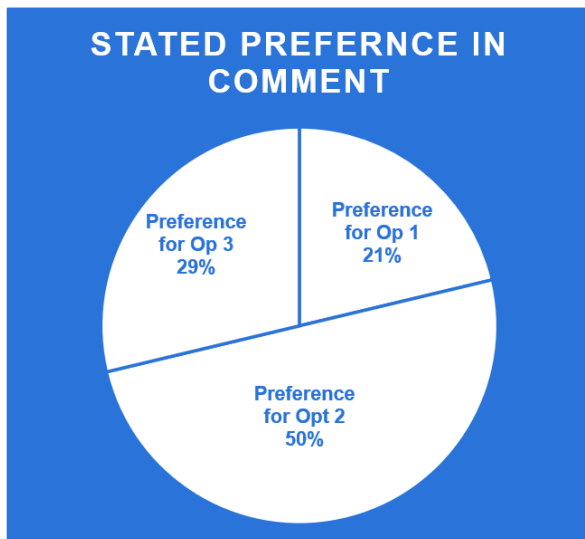
- Survey: 1,780 responses
- Pop ups on Nicollet Mall
- Bus stop/onboard bus outreach
- Great Day in Transit
- Open House: Downtown Central Library
- Promotions online and through newsletters



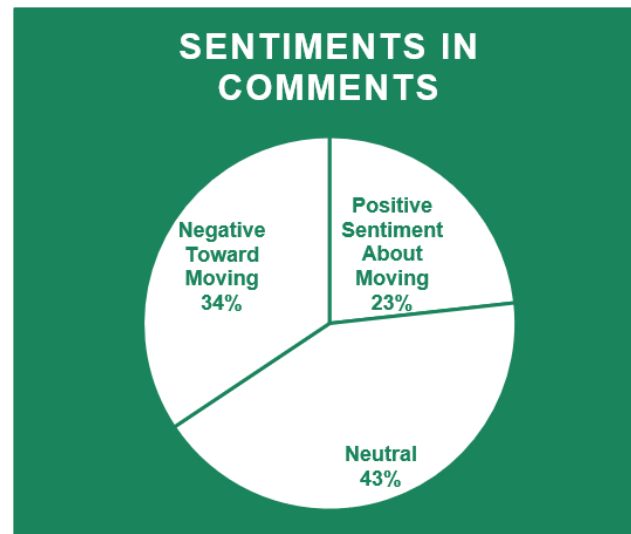


# Phase 1 engagement results

- Mixed reaction
- Lots of uncertainty
- Mixed support for the three options

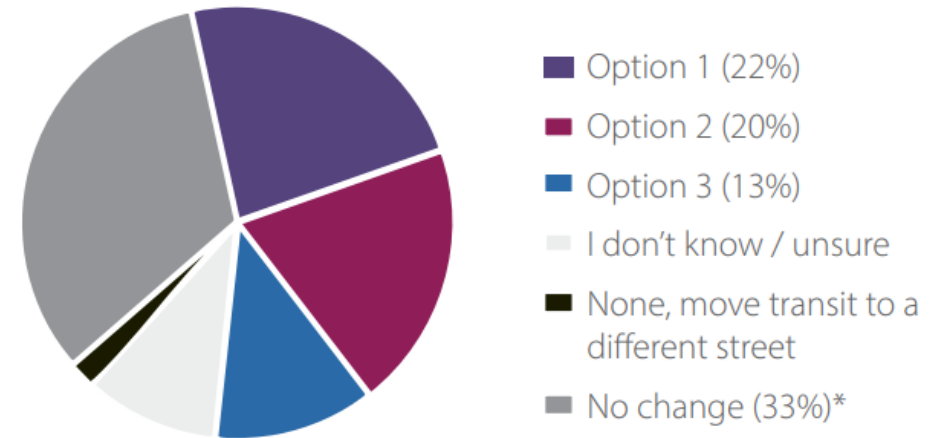


Preferences expressed in open ended comments (94 preferences expressed in 948 comments)



Preferences expressed in open ended comments (882 preferences expressed in 948 comments)

## WHICH OPTION DO YOU LIKE BEST?



\*People who use Nicollet Mall and transit every day or a few times a week are overrepresented in selecting the "No change" option.

# Phase 1 engagement themes (1 of 3)

## 1 | Distance to Destinations

The walking distance to destinations is a top priority for transit riders. Many riders are concerned with moving transit further from key destinations like Target, the library, and clinics.

*“We are nurses at the clinic on Nicollet and lots of other people work on Nicollet. Our patients rely on easy access to the services at our clinic and many of them have mobility issues that would make it hard to go further.”*

## 2 | Pedestrian First Street

People shared excitement for a vision for a pedestrianized street in downtown Minneapolis.

*“Buses absolutely need to be removed from Nicollet in order to bring vibrancy back to that street.”*

*“Get buses off Nicollet Mall to make it more pedestrian-friendly as other major cities have done.”*

## 3 | Familiar & Convenient

People like the way Nicollet Mall operates today with familiar bus routes and easy access to downtown places.

*“Like how it is now – it’s convenient. You can’t control how fast the bus comes, I’m not really sure it’d be faster on these other streets with the traffic and everything.”*

## Phase 1 engagement themes (2 of 3)

### 4 | Bus Riders Help Nicollet Mall

People see bus riders as foot traffic that supports Nicollet Mall vibrancy. There is concern that removing bus routes and bus riders from Nicollet would affect safety by diminishing activity on the Mall.

*“On weekends no one is here without the bus. Bus keeps Nicollet busy. Without it, Nicollet would get dangerous after 5pm after office workers leave and on the weekends.”*

### 5 | Address Negative Activity

A top concern with Nicollet Mall today is the presence of negative activity, and there's desire to address that to bring vibrancy downtown.

*“It's a good effort, but how would that not just increase the actual issues of no one being down here and all this bad stuff being here?”*

### 6 | Places on Transit Route

The top concern with the new transit corridors centered on the lack of service and retail destinations on Marquette, 2nd, and 3rd Avenues.

*“People are not traveling to the areas in Options 1, 2, or 3--they need to get along Hennepin, Nicollet, the streets between... If you don't put transit where the people are and where they want to go, then it's gonna fail.”*



# Phase 1 engagement themes (3 of 3)

## 7 | Nicollet Future Needs Retail

The most popular desire for the future of Nicollet Mall is the addition of more ground floor retail.

*“Nicollet Mall provides people no reason to visit currently - not enough shops, restaurants, green space. And one off festivals won't do the trick or create a sustainable model for downtown life. Focus on developing small businesses and housing and people will gladly mill about in the area.”*

## 8 | Transit Improvement Options

Many comments on improving transit speed downtown voiced support for additional transit signal priority measures or light timing.

*“What about transit signal priority? Not currently on Nicollet. We should try more on Nicollet before moving the busses.”*

## 9 | Improve Safety

People want to see safety improved broadly - in downtown, on Nicollet Mall, on transit, and at transit stops. Many commenters noted that streets with more people on them feel safer.

*“I have visited Nicollet Mall with the buses present, and also at times that the buses were detoured away and am sure that I always felt safer and more welcome with the buses present.”*

## Phase 2 engagement activities (Dec 2024 – Jan 2025)

- Survey: ongoing
- Business outreach
  - Direct meetings with organizations
- Neighborhood organization meetings
- Open houses
- Pop up events
- Intercept surveys and bus stop/onboard bus outreach
- City and Metropolitan Council Advisory Committees



## Anticipated next steps

- January engagement events
- Spring decision on preferred option
- Spring/summer engagement on preferred option
- Earliest implementation of interim condition/buses off Nicollet – 2026
- Initiation of capital project on preferred option – timing TBD