

Business Item

Transportation Committee



Committee Meeting Date: March 10, 2025

For the Metropolitan Council: March 26, 2025

Business Item: 2025-30

Discontinue Suspended Bus Routes and Endorse the Network Now Framework

District(s), Member(s):	All
Policy/Legal Reference:	PIC 2-2 Accountability to the Public Policy; PIC 2-2e Public Involvement in Transportation Service Changes and Restructuring
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Lesley Kandaras, General Manager, 612-349-7513 Adam Harrington, Director of Service Development, 612-349-7797 Sophia Ginis, Director of Community Affairs, 612-349-3853 Cyndi Harper, Manager of Route Planning, 612-349-7723
Division/Department:	Metro Transit

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council approve the discontinuation of 50 bus routes as outlined in Network Now framework and endorse the Network Now framework.

Background

Network Now is a vision for transit service that best meets the needs of our region through 2027. The framework represents the region's top priorities for transit as represented in over 8,000 comments over multiple years, coupled with policy guidance, and technical evaluation.

Through the Network Now framework, Metro Transit investments will:

- Expand transit service by more than 40% to help attract more riders.
- Improve access by providing new bus routes and Metro micro service.
- Modify commuter and express service to meet today's travel patterns.

This investment includes:

- Frequency improvements to 70+ routes.
- High frequency service every 15 minutes or better for 26 routes.
- LRT service will return to 10-minute frequency.
- Creation of eight new micro zones.
- Restoration of 12 suspended routes
- 15-minute service during rush hours and hourly midday service for five key commuter express routes.
- Weekday frequency of every 30 minutes or better for most suburban routes.

These investments will yield a 27% increase in access to jobs per resident in the region, on average.

Metro Transit will officially discontinue 50 routes, and the resources will be reinvested into the transit network. Most of the discontinued routes have been suspended since 2020. Concurrently, 16 Park and Ride facilities associated with these suspended routes will also be closed. The travel patterns of traditional downtown office workers have changed significantly, resulting in lower transit demand, and many of these customers have vehicles available to reach other Park & Ride facilities.

Currently Suspended Routes to be Discontinued

- Local routes 12, 16, 19, 84, 415, 417, 547
- Commuter-oriented routes 53, 59, 111, 118, 129, 135, 141, 146, 261, 262, 263, 265, 272, 288, 350, 361, 364, 365, 375, 452, 552, 553, 554, 558, 588, 589, 643, 663, 664, 668, 670, 671, 677, 679, 756, 762, 767, 825, 831, 854, 865

Currently Operating Routes to be Discontinued

- Routes 501, 761

Rationale

The Network Now draft concept plan was the topic of significant public outreach and engagement efforts in fall 2024 and nearly 1,600 comments were received. Public input demonstrated support for investments in the METRO network and speed and reliability initiatives, emphasizing all-day service and route simplification, and express service that operates for more of the day. The most common requests included more frequency, late-night service, suburb-to-suburb routes and microtransit. The Network Now framework has been modified based on this feedback.

The changes and improvements align with expansion resulting from new transitways, revenues, expected workforce, and fleet projections.

Thrive Lens Analysis

The Council adopted Imagine 2050 on February 12, 2025, which builds on policy direction in Thrive MSP 2040. Under the Thrive lens, Network Now advances two of these outcomes.

Stewardship: Managing finite resources (including workforce) in a responsible way is necessary to equitably grow transit service and expand mobility within the region.

Equity: A Title VI Service Equity Analysis (SEA) was conducted to ensure the Network Now investments are made in an equitable way. Results indicate that there is no potential for disparate impacts to communities of color or disproportionate burden to low-income groups when reviewing the absolute change in weekly trips. The full SEA report is available online.

Funding

Transit service changes are supported by the existing operating budget.

Small Business Inclusion

There are no financial transactions, and therefore no small business inclusion, associated with this action.

