1.0 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the lead federal agency, the Metropolitan Council, the local lead agency, and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), as a cooperating agency, have prepared this Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit (Central Corridor LRT) project in the cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis. The purpose of this FEIS is to evaluate and document social, economic, and environmental impacts of the project consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). A Central Corridor Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (AA/DEIS) was completed for the corridor in April 2006, and a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) was completed in August 2008. These documents are incorporated by reference and considered to be a part of this FEIS.

The FEIS consists of four separately bound volumes. Volume 1 contains the FEIS organized into chapters and sections according to topics required by NEPA, as amended. Volume 2 contains appendices to the FEIS. Volume 3 contains comments on the AA/DEIS and SDEIS and their responses. Volume 4 contains the plan drawings for the Central Corridor LRT Project's alignment and station locations, typical cross sections, and related project features.

This chapter summarizes the Central Corridor LRT Project's history and context. It also summarizes the project purpose and need.

Section 1.1 presents an overview of how the Central Corridor LRT Project was initiated.

Section 1.2 discusses the role of the SDEIS in supporting the overall project decision-making process.

Section 1.3 briefly describes the project, the purpose of the project, and why it is needed. An overview of Central Corridor characteristics is presented to demonstrate the need for the Central Corridor LRT and the expected benefit to the neighborhoods, transit-dependent individuals, businesses, institutions, and regional transportation system.

Section 1.4 describes how the Central Corridor LRT is an outcome of state, regional, and local transportation studies and plans, and the Central Corridor's role in the regional transportation network. Additionally, this section briefly outlines the environmental review and project development process that has been underway since 1999. The public involvement and agency coordination process, as well as the proposed schedule for completing the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process, are presented to round out the discussion of Central Corridor LRT's planning context.

1.1 Project History and Overview

Rail mass transit has been an issue in Minnesota for more than 25 years. In the 1970s, heavy rail and "downtown people movers" were studied as transit options for the Twin Cities. By the early 1980s, light rail transit was beginning to be seen as a possible alternative to other methods of mass transit. For the past 20 years, the Central Corridor has consistently been identified as a location where mobility and mass transit capacity should be improved. It has been the focus of several studies to determine the feasibility of various mass transit technologies and their potential alignments. Each of these studies identified the Central Corridor as the region's priority corridor for mass transit investment. Because the Central Corridor is the physical spine of the overall regional transportation network, its high transit ridership potential represents one of the region's best opportunities for a significant capital investment that can be leveraged to increase ridership and positively impact the region's transit system.

Rapid transit in the Central Corridor was initially explored in the *Midway Corridor Light Rail Transit Draft Environmental Impact Statement* (1991). Transit options were explored as alternatives to traditional roadway improvements in the Central Corridor because physical and funding constraints in this developed area would make expansion of the existing roadway system costly, as well as socially and environmentally disruptive. A few years later the idea of providing a rapid transit connection between downtown St. Paul and downtown Minneapolis was further evaluated in the *Twin Cities Metropolitan Commuter Rail Feasibility Study, Phase II, Final Summary Report*, which was prepared by the Office of Freight, Railroads, and Waterways of the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) (January, 1999).

To further evaluate those recommendations and respond to the continued need for transportation improvements in the Central Corridor, Ramsey County (with financial support from Hennepin County and the State of Minnesota), the Metropolitan Council, and FTA prepared the AA/DEIS. The AA/DEIS was published in April 2006 to document the evaluation of alternative transit improvements for the corridor.

As conceived by these studies, the Central Corridor LRT is an approximately 11-mile line that would serve the Minneapolis and St. Paul downtown areas, as well as the University of Minnesota (U of M) and the State Capitol complex. In downtown Minneapolis, it would integrate with the Hiawatha Light Rail Line, establishing the core of a seamless regional transit system.

The Central Corridor LRT was identified in 2005 as one of the candidate projects to receive federal funding from FTA under the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act—A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) for preliminary engineering, according to Sec. 3043, Project Authorizations for New Fixed Guideway Capital Projects, Subsection C – Preliminary Engineering and, in Sec. 3037. Alternatives Analysis Program, Subsection C – Projects:

> The following projects are authorized for preliminary engineering for fiscal years 2005 through 2009 under paragraphs (1)(A) and (2)(A) of section 5309(m) of title 49, United States Code: (134) Minneapolis-St. Paul—Central Corridor Transit Project.

NEPA requires federal agencies to consider the environmental consequences associated with all alternatives for a project involving federal action. This evaluation of environmental consequences is required to assist decision-makers and the public in evaluating the relative merits of the project (as compared to a No-Build Alternative) and in selecting a preferred course of action from the alternatives evaluated.

While NEPA sets a broad policy of disclosure, a more explicit statutory mandate for *mitigating adverse impacts* is set for the Federal Transit Laws (49 U.S.C. 5301 et seq.). Specifically, before approving a construction grant FTA must make a finding that:

> …the preservation and enhancement of the environment, and the interest of the community in which the project is located, were considered; and (iii) no adverse environmental effect is likely to result from the project, or no feasible and prudent alternative to the effect exists and all reasonable steps have been taken to minimize the effect. (49 USC 5324(b)(3)(A)).

The information presented in the AA/DEIS was based on technical studies documenting effects on the human and natural environments, and reflected comments or suggestions received over the course of public review and agency coordination activities conducted during the evaluation of alternatives. Based on the analysis in the AA/DEIS, public hearings (four hearings held at various locations in May 2006), and comments received on the AA/DEIS, the locally preferred alternative (AA/DEIS LPA) for the project was adopted by the Metropolitan Council in June 2006 (Resolution #2006-15). For details on the AA/DEIS LPA, please see Chapter 2.

1.2 Basis for the FEIS

An SDEIS was prepared because key changes to the AA/DEIS LPA as previously defined needed to be considered, as well as to update demographic and technical documentation previously prepared. In response to comments received on the AA/DEIS subsequent to the selection of the AA/DEIS LPA, several design options for key project elements were considered. These options reflected conditions that existed within the Central Corridor LRT study area, technical, operational and financial constraints, major infrastructure requirements that were not fully documented in the AA/DEIS, and physical conditions that changed within the Central Corridor LRT Study Area since the AA/DEIS.

The SDEIS documented and disclosed potential impacts relating to Key Project Elements that changed and/or remained uncertain since issuance of the AA/DEIS. The SDEIS process explored in a public setting the potentially significant effects of implementing proposed changes to the AA/DEIS LPA on the physical, human, and natural environment. Potential impacts were evaluated for both the short-term construction period and long-term operations. Measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any significant adverse impacts were identified.

After the publication of the SDEIS (Notice of Availability (NOA) was published in the *Federal Register* on July 11, 2008, and the *Minnesota Environmental Quality Board Monitor* (EQB) on July 14, 2008), and the end of the formal comment period (August 25, 2008), the Metropolitan Council adopted a Preferred Alternative based upon the analysis undertaken during preliminary engineering and the comments received on the SDEIS. LRT was selected as the preferred alternative for the Central Corridor operating at-grade on Washington and University Avenues, passing north of the State Capitol and turning south on Robert Street, turning west at 12th Street to Cedar Street, and then continuing south on Cedar Street into downtown St. Paul turning diagonally at 4th Street, and continuing east to end at St. Paul's Union Depot with tail track leading to an Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) farther east (Metropolitan Council Resolution No. 2008-26).

The FEIS addresses the impacts of this Preferred Alternative to human and natural resources at a higher level of detail, including project benefits and mitigation activities. The FEIS forms the basis for a Record of Decision (ROD) by FTA.

1.3 Purpose and Need

The purpose and need for the Central Corridor LRT was presented in the AA/DEIS and approved by FTA in 2006. A summary of the purpose and need as presented in the AA/DEIS, with updated social and economic data, is presented below. As growth in the U.S. shifted to the south and west over the past 30 years, the Twin Cities area was one of the few northern metropolitan regions that did not follow this trend. The Twin Cities have continued to grow, and the results of that growth are felt in the Central Corridor. The purpose of the Central Corridor LRT is to meet the future transit needs of the Central Corridor LRT Study Area and the region, and to support the economic development goals for the Central Corridor LRT Study Area. The Metropolitan Council's regional 2030 Transportation Policy Plan identified this corridor as a top priority for early implementation. Due to increasing traffic congestion and major redevelopment in the physically constrained Twin Cities Corridor, a need currently exists for a viable alternative to auto travel. The introduction of fixed guideway transit to the Central Corridor LRT Study Area is proposed as a cost-effective measure aimed at improving mobility by offering an alternative to auto travel for commuting and discretionary trips. The Central Corridor LRT would help to minimize congestion increases, offer travel time savings, provide better transit service and capacity to the diverse population of existing and future riders in the corridor, and optimize significant public investments in the regional transit system.

1.3.1 Corridor Description

The Twin Cities metropolitan area is unique among major metropolitan areas in that it has two contiguous central cities, Minneapolis and St. Paul, and two downtown central business districts, which are linked by the Central Corridor. The approximately 11-mile long Central Corridor LRT Study Area is a major transit and transportation link that runs from downtown St. Paul to downtown Minneapolis (Figure 1-1). For ease of discussion and analysis purposes, the Central Corridor LRT Study Area was divided into six planning segments that correspond to the geographic areas, landmarks, and land uses that characterize each of the segments. These segments are illustrated in Figure 1-2. The segments are:

- Downtown St. Paul
- Capitol Area
- Midway East
- Midway West
- University/Prospect Park
- Downtown Minneapolis

The Central Corridor LRT Study Area is vibrant, with strong neighborhoods, institutions, businesses, and cultural attractions. It is one of the strongest transit corridors in the Midwest, with ridership rivaling that of any transit corridor between Chicago and the West Coast. Coupled with the Hiawatha LRT, the Central Corridor LRT will provide convenient, reliable transit access to the major travel generators in the region, including the employment districts of downtown Minneapolis and downtown St. Paul, the U of M—Twin Cities campus, the Midway area, and the State Capitol.

Overall, according to the Metropolitan Council's 1999 State of the Region Report, the seven-county metropolitan area had a population in 1997 of 2,515,119 and ranked as the 16th most populated metropolitan area in the nation. By 2000, the population in the metropolitan area had risen to 2,642,062, a 5 percent increase within three years. The January 9, 2008, Metropolitan Council 2030 Regional Development Framework forecasts a nearly 37 percent increase in metropolitan area population by 2030 to 3,608,000.

The Central Corridor LRT Study Area is one of the region's most ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse areas and it is experiencing rapid growth in population, housing, and employment. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1-2001), 119,038 people lived in the Central Corridor LRT Study Area in 2000 (Table 1-1).

Table 1-1 Year 2000 Central Corridor Demographic Characteristics

	Twin Cities Metropolitan Area[a]	Hennepin County	Ramsey County	City of Minneapolis	City of St. Paul	Central Corridor LRT Study Area[a]	Central Corridor (percent of Metro Area[a])
Population	2,642,062	1,116,206	511,035	382,747	286,840	119,038	4.5
Persons below poverty level[b]	179,316	90,384	52,673	62,092	43,266	27,338	15.3
Number of households	1,021,456	456,131	201,236	162,363	112,109	63,574	6.2
Median household income	$54,332	$51,711	$45,722	$37,974	$38,774	$29,912[c]	N/A
Zero car households	87,091	48,930	23,666	31,991	18,866	15,502	17.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1) and Summary File 3 (SF 3), 2001.

[a] For this table, the Central Corridor LRT Study Area is defined as the land area one-half mile from the AA/DEIS LPA alignment and station areas. The Twin Cities Metropolitan Area is defined as the seven-county region under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Council. Thus, the Study Area is within the metropolitan area. The Study Area values were calculated using Census block group level data. To ensure the integrity of the data used, if only a portion of the Census block group was included in the Study Area, the entire Census block group was included in the analysis. The percent of Metro Area (last column) is calculated by dividing the values in the Study Area by the values in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area (first column) and multiplying by 100.

[b] U.S. Census Bureau Poverty Definition: "Following the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Statistical Policy Directive 14, the Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. If a family's total income is less than the family's threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty. The official poverty thresholds do not vary geographically, but they are updated for inflation using Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). The official poverty definition uses money income before taxes and does not include capital gains or noncash benefits (such as public housing, Medicaid, and food stamps)."

[c] This number represents the weighted average of median household incomes for the Census block groups located within the Central Corridor LRT Study Area. A weighted average was used because median household incomes for Census block groups within the corridor varied. To determine the median household income for the entire corridor, the total number of households in each Census block group were weighted against the median household incomes for the block group, and averaged across the entire number of households in the Study Area. The final amount was rounded to the nearest whole dollar value.

The Central Corridor LRT Study Area comprises one of the most densely populated parts of the Twin Cities metropolitan area and has some of the highest household growth rates (Figure 1-3).

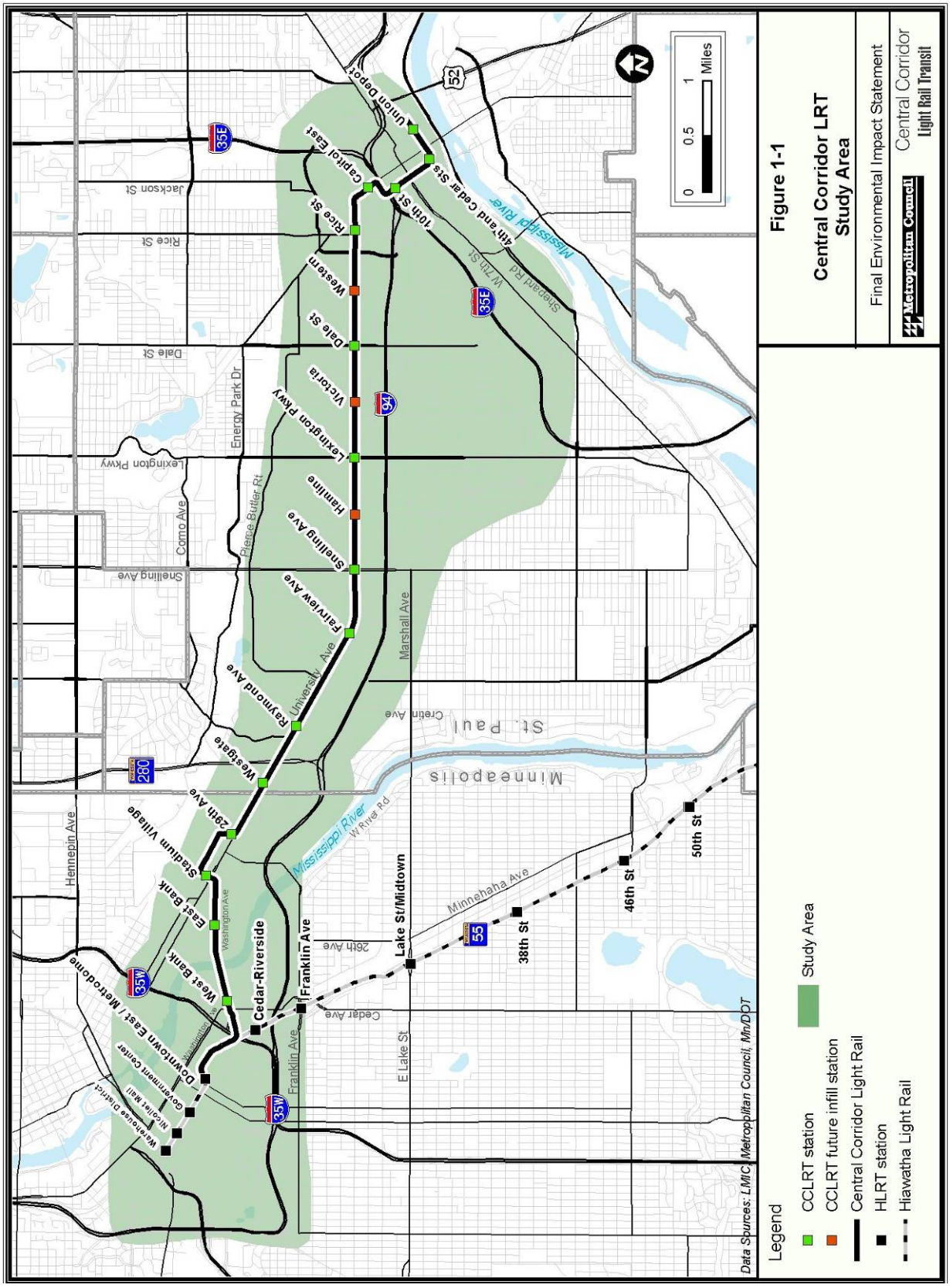
Figure 1-1
Central Corridor LRT
Study Area
Final Environmental Impact Statement
Metropolitan Council
Central Corridor
Light Rail Transit
0 0.5 1 Miles
Legend
CCLRT station
CCLRT future infill station
Central Corridor Light Rail
HLRT station
Hiawatha Light Rail
Study Area
Data Sources: LMIC, Metropolitan Council, MnDOT
Union Depot
Capitol East
Rice St
Western
Dale St
Victoria
Lexington Pkwy
Hamline
Snelling Ave
Fairview Ave
Raymond Ave
Westgate
29th Ave
Stadium Village
East Bank
West Bank
Cedar-Riverside
Franklin Ave
Lake St/Midtown
38th St
46th St
50th St
Minnehaha Ave
Mississippi River
10th St
4th and Cedar Sts
Shepard Rd
W 7th St
Energy Park Dr
Pierce Butler Rt
Como Ave
University Ave
Marshall Ave
Cretin Ave
St. Paul
Minneapolis
Hennepin Ave
Washington Ave
26th Ave
Cedar Ave
E Lake St
Downtown East / Metrodome
Government Center
Warehouse District
Jackson St
Rice St
Dale St
Lexington Pkwy
Snelling Ave
W River Rd

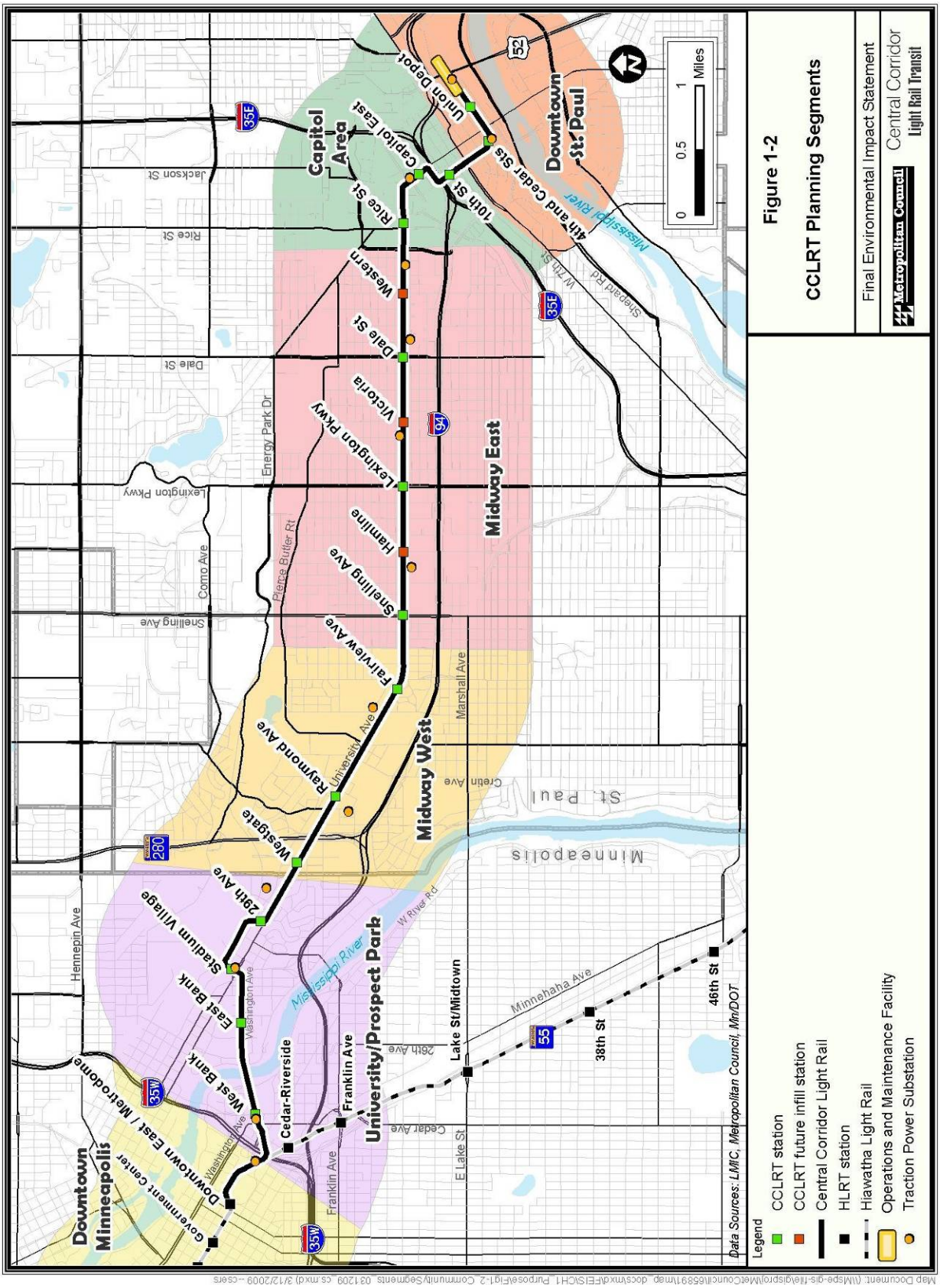
Figure 1-2
CCLRT Planning Segments
Final Environmental Impact Statement
Central Corridor
Light Rail Transit
Metropolitan Council
Downtown Minneapolis
Capitol Area
Downtown St. Paul
Midway East
Midway West
University/Prospect Park
Union Depot
Capitol East
10th St
4th and Cedar Sts
Rice St
Western
Dale St
Victoria
Lexington Pkwy
Hamline
Snelling Ave
Fairview Ave
Raymond Ave
Westgate
29th Ave
Stadium Village
East Bank
West Bank
Cedar-Riverside
Franklin Ave
Lake St/Midtown
38th St
46th St
Minnehaha Ave
Downtown East / Metrodome
Government Center
Jackson St
Energy Park Dr
Como Ave
Pierce Butler Rt
Marshall Ave
University Ave
W River Rd
Mississippi River
Minneapolis
St. Paul
Hennepin Ave
Washington Ave
Cedar Ave
E Lake St
Shepard Rd
W 7th St
Miles
0
0.5
1
Legend
CCLRT station
CCLRT future infill station
Central Corridor Light Rail
HLRT station
Hiawatha Light Rail
Operations and Maintenance Facility
Traction Power Substation
Data Sources: LMIC, Metropolitan Council, MnDOT
Map Document: (\\Mspe-gis-file\gisproj\MetCouncil\65891\map_docs\mxd\EIS\CH1_Purpose\Fig1-2_Community\Segments_03 1209_cs.mxd) 3/12/2009 -- csers

The Central Corridor LRT Study Area also has a high percentage of minorities, households without automobiles, people with low incomes, and households below poverty level. Much of the population in the Study Area depends on transit for mobility and access to jobs. As shown in Table 1-1, where the "number of persons below poverty level" and "zero car households," are surrogates for transit dependency, 17.8 percent of the households in the Study Area are without a car. The presumption is that a substantial percentage of that population depends on transit to get to work, healthcare facilities, shopping destinations, schools, and recreational facilities.

The last few years have seen a surge in residential development in downtown Minneapolis, with the addition of 9,968 new residential units from 2000 to 2006. Another 9,295 more are proposed. The Draft Central Corridor LRT New Starts Application (page A-2-2) states the downtown Minneapolis neighborhood has added the most housing units in recent years of any neighborhood in Minneapolis or St. Paul. Table 1-2 compares current population in the six corridor segments to projected 2010 and 2030 populations. Population growth is anticipated in all six segments. Of particular note are the population projections for Downtown St. Paul, Capitol Area, and Downtown Minneapolis, where population in 2030 is projected to increase by 114 percent, 31 percent, and 59 percent, respectively.

Table 1-2 Central Corridor Population by Segment

Central Corridor LRT Study Area Segment[a]	2000	Projected 2010[b]	Percent change from 2000	Projected 2030b	Percent change from 2000
Downtown St. Paul	7,310	10,530	44	15,620	114
Capitol Area	5,810	6,640	14	7,600	31
Midway East	45,460	47,100	4	49,930	10
Midway West	18,090	20,270	12	22,960	27
University/Prospect Park	32,670	33,600	3	37,150	14
Downtown Minneapolis	19,850	27,390	38	31,570	59
Total Corridor	129,190	145,530	13	164,830	28

Source: The Metropolitan Council, MetroGIS Datafinder, Transportation Analysis Zones 2000, Updated June 2008

[a] For this table, the Central Corridor LRT Study Area is defined as the land area one-half mile from the AA/DEIS LPA alignment and station areas. Small differences exist between the New Starts Application and the FEIS analysis of population, housing, and employment totals in the Study Area. The differences occur because the New Starts Application includes the 10th Street Station among the other Downtown St. Paul stations, whereas the FEIS analysis places the 10th Street Station among the Capitol Area stations.

[b] All population forecast data were derived from the most recent TAZ data supplied by the Metropolitan Council on 06/05/2008.

Household growth is projected throughout the Central Corridor LRT Study Area, especially in the downtowns and their riverfront areas where new developments are under construction with many already open for occupancy. Figure 1-4 and Figure 1-5 illustrates the relative population density projected in the Central Corridor LRT Study Area for 2010 and 2030. Notice that in comparison to 2000 the areas of higher density increase in size around downtown St. Paul and downtown Minneapolis. By 2030, the Twin Cities region is expected to add approximately one million people to its population base of 2.7 million.

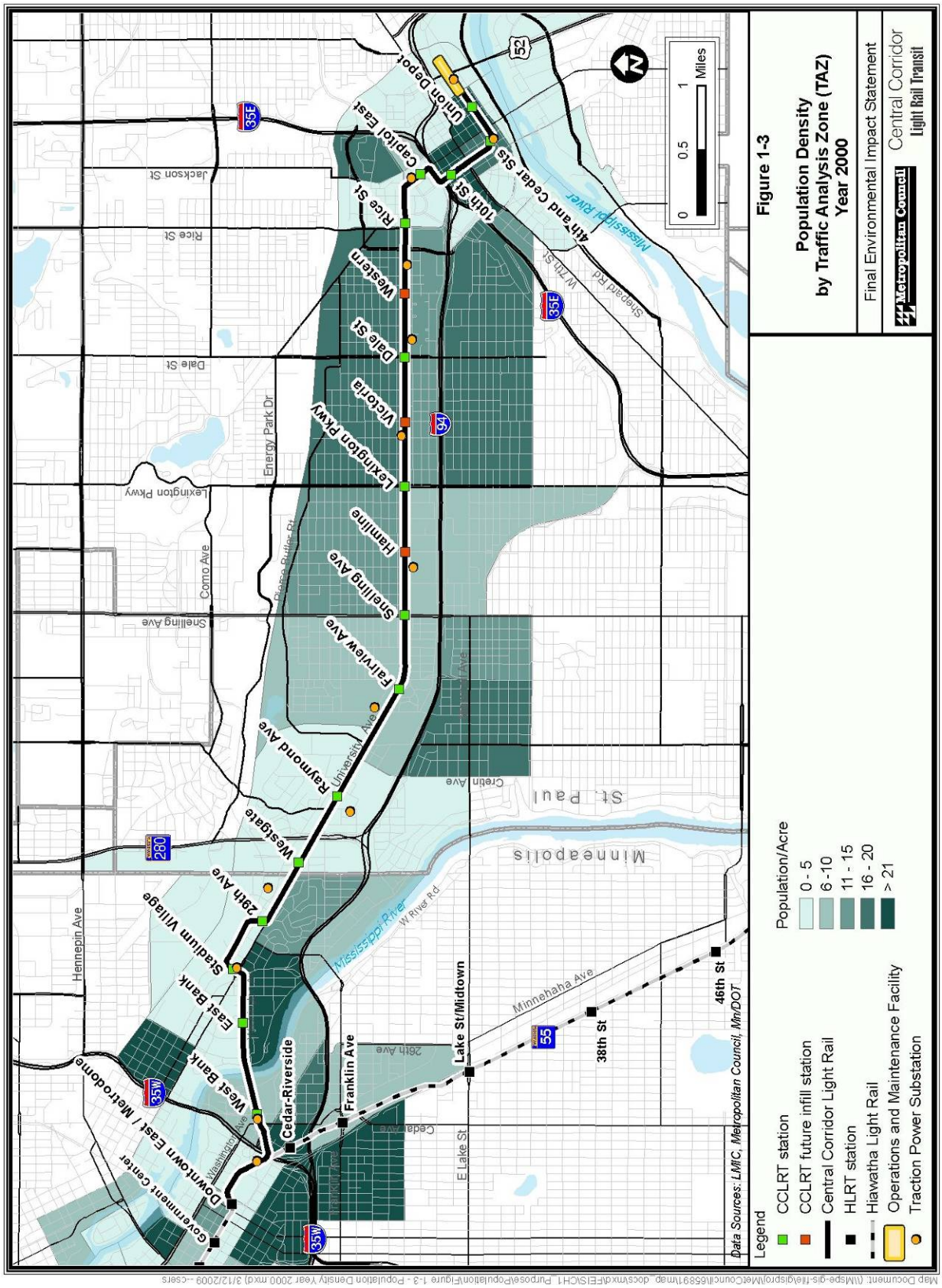
Figure 1-3
Population Density
by Traffic Analysis Zone (TAZ)
Year 2000
Final Environmental Impact Statement
Metropolitan Council
Central Corridor
Light Rail Transit
Legend
CCLRT station
CCLRT future infill station
Central Corridor Light Rail
HLRT station
Hiawatha Light Rail
Operations and Maintenance Facility
Traction Power Substation
Population/Acre
0 - 5
6 - 10
11 - 15
16 - 20
> 21
Miles
Data Sources: LMIC, Metropolitan Council, MnDOT
Map Document: (\\Mspe-gis-file\gispro\MetCouncil\655891\map_docs\mxd\FEIS\CH1_Purpose\Population\Figure 1-3 - Population Density Year 2000.mxd) 3/12/2009 --csers

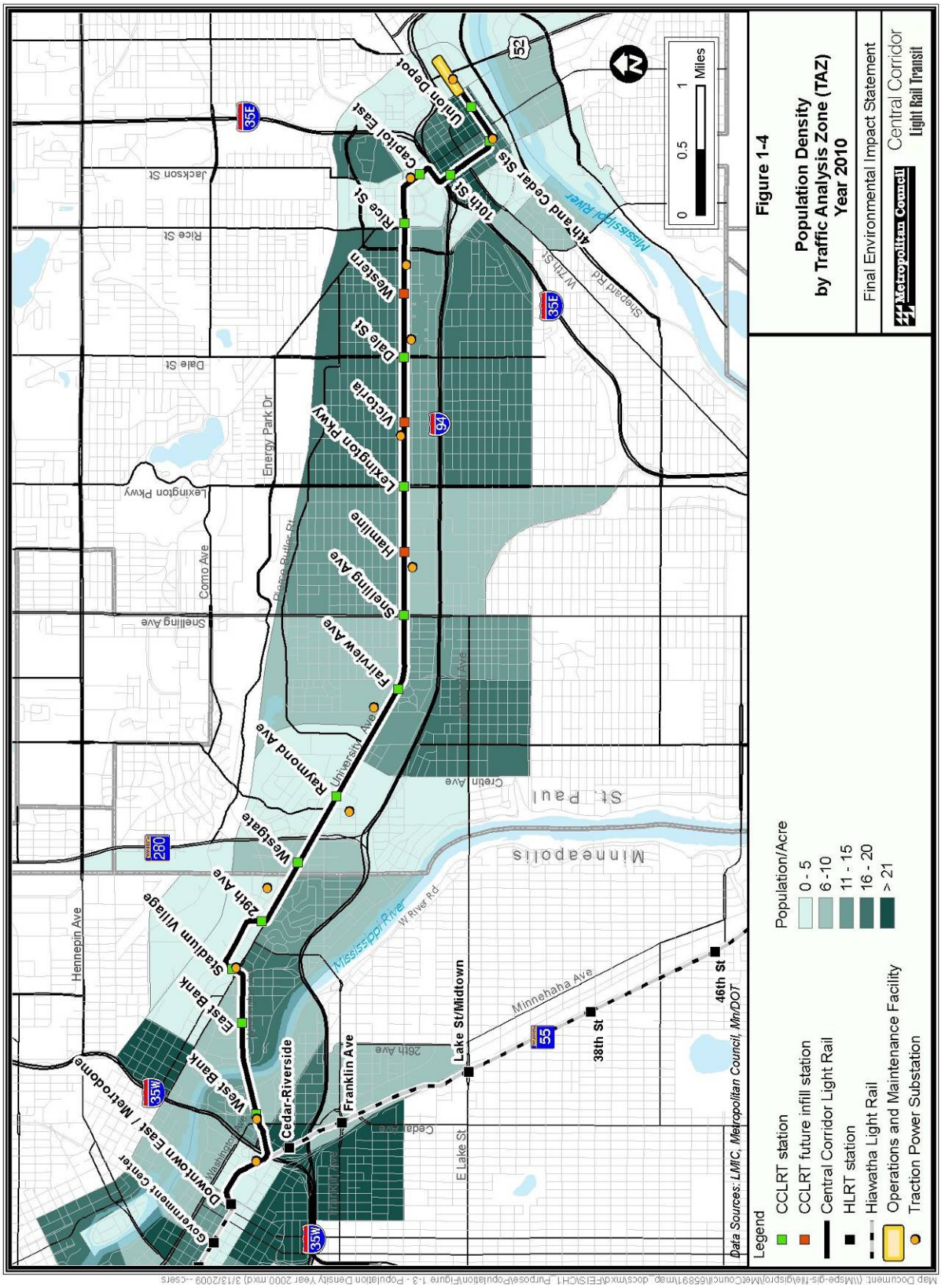
Figure 1-4
Population Density
by Traffic Analysis Zone (TAZ)
Year 2010
Final Environmental Impact Statement
Central Corridor
Light Rail Transit
Metropolitan Council
Legend
CCLRT station
CCLRT future infill station
Central Corridor Light Rail
HLRT station
Hiawatha Light Rail
Operations and Maintenance Facility
Traction Power Substation
Population/Acre
0 - 5
6 - 10
11 - 15
16 - 20
> 21
Data Sources: LMIC, Metropolitan Council, MnDOT
Miles
Union Depot
Capitol East
10th St
4th and Cedar Sts
Rice St
Western
Dale St
Victoria
Lexington Pkwy
Hamline
Snelling Ave
Fairview Ave
Raymond Ave
Westgate
29th Ave
Stadium Village
East Bank
West Bank
Cedar-Riverside
Franklin Ave
Lake St/Midtown
38th St
46th St
Minnehaha Ave
Downtown East / Metrodome
Government Center
Hennepin Ave
Mississippi River
W River Rd
Minneapolis
St. Paul
Como Ave
Energy Park Dr
Lexington Pkwy
Jackson St
Rice St
Dale St
Snelling Ave
Cretin Ave
University Ave
E Lake St
Cedar Ave
26th Ave
Washington Ave
Shepard Rd
W 7th St
35E
35W
94
280
55
52

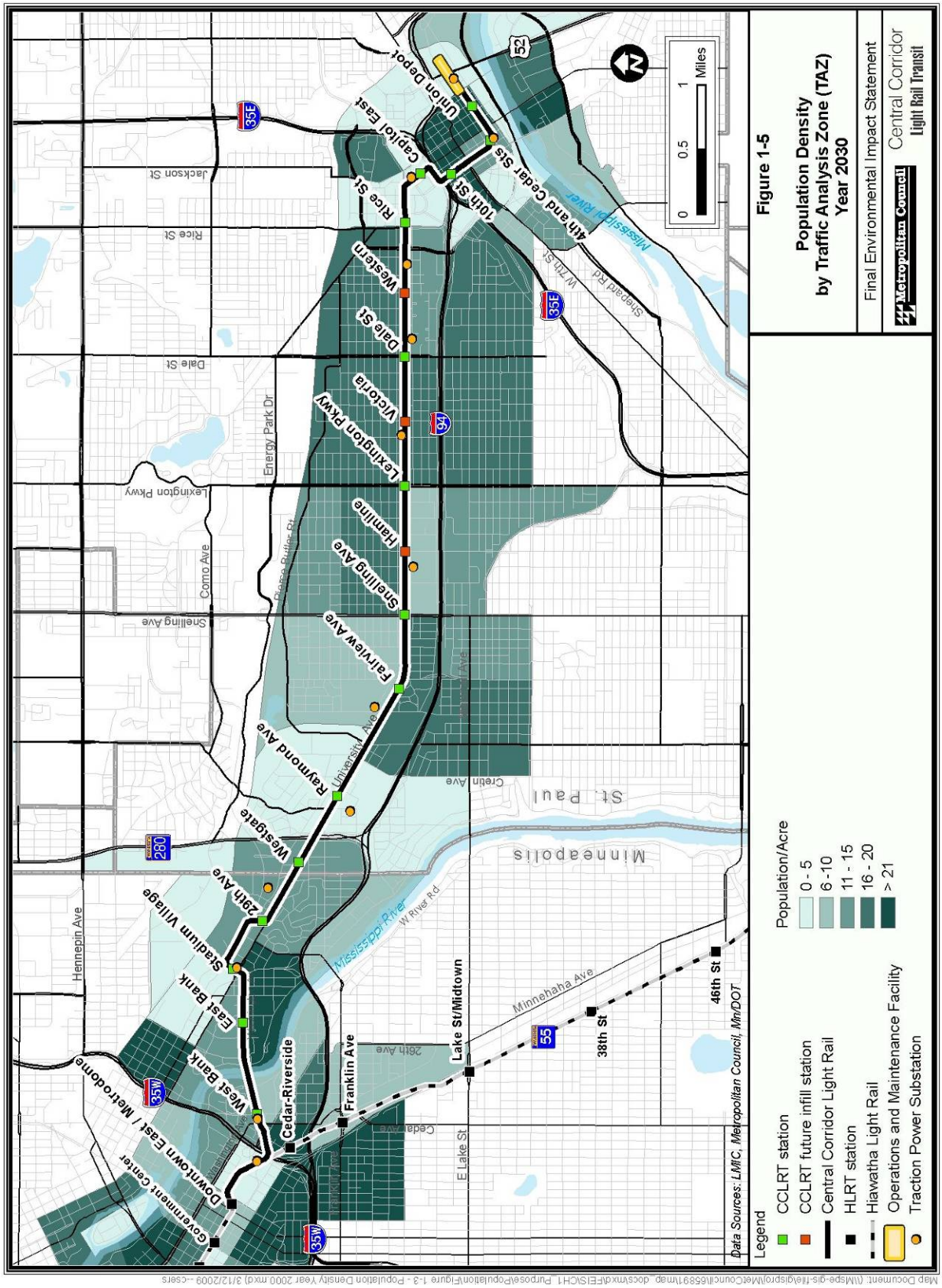
Figure 1-5
Population Density
by Traffic Analysis Zone (TAZ)
Year 2030
Final Environmental Impact Statement
Metropolitan Council
Central Corridor
Light Rail Transit
Legend
CCLRT station
CCLRT future infill station
Central Corridor Light Rail
HLRT station
Hiawatha Light Rail
Operations and Maintenance Facility
Traction Power Substation
Population/Acre
0 - 5
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11 - 15
16 - 20
> 21
Data Sources: LMIC, Metropolitan Council, MnDOT
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Miles
Minneapolis
St. Paul
Mississippi River
Union Depot
Capitol East
10th St
4th and Cedar Sts
Rice St
Western
Dale St
Victoria
Lexington Pkwy
Hamline
Snelling Ave
Fairview Ave
Raymond Ave
Westgate
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Stadium Village
East Bank
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Downtown East / Metrodome
Government Center
Cedar-Riverside
Franklin Ave
Lake St/Midtown
38th St
46th St
Minnehaha Ave
E Lake St
Hennepin Ave
Como Ave
Energy Park Dr
Jackson St
Sheperd Rd
W River Rd
University Ave
Map Document: (\\Mspe-gis-file\gispro)MetCouncil\6589\1\map_docs\mxd\FEIS\CH1_Purpose\Population\Figure 1-3 - Population Density Year 2000.mxd) 3/12/2009 --csers

Table 1-3 compares the current number of households in the Central Corridor LRT Study Area to the number projected for 2030. Although growth in the number of households is projected for each of the six segments, Downtown St. Paul and Downtown Minneapolis, at 134 percent and 74 percent respectively, have the highest projected growth. The overall percentage of housing growth for the Central Corridor LRT Study Area is projected to be 38 percent.

Table 1-3 Central Corridor Households by Segment

Study Area Segment[a]	2000	Projected 2010[b]	Percent change from 2000	Projected 2030[b]	Percent change from 2000
Downtown St. Paul	3,560	5,400	52	8,320	134
Capitol Area	2,580	2,940	14	3,410	32
Midway East	16,630	17,260	4	18,500	11
Midway West	7,330	8,340	14	9,630	31
University/Prospect Park	10,940	11,900	9	13,030	19
Downtown Minneapolis	11,040	16,600	50	19,180	74
Total Corridor	52,080	62,440	20	72,070	38

Source: The Metropolitan Council, MetroGIS Datafinder, Transportation Analysis Zones 2000, Updated June 2008

[a] For this table, the Central Corridor LRT Study Area is defined as the land area one-half mile from the AA/DEIS LPA alignment and station areas. Differences exist between the New Starts Application and the FEIS analysis of population, housing, and employment totals in the Study Area. The difference is the result of how the data were allocated across the Study Area, with one analysis considering station areas, and the other considering planning segments. Specifically, the New Starts Application includes the 10th Street Station with all the other Downtown St. Paul stations, whereas the FEIS analysis places the 10th Street Station with the Capitol Area stations. This would mean that certain Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZ) might have been excluded from one analysis and included in another, changing the totals.

[b] All household forecast data were derived from the most recent TAZ data supplied by the Metropolitan Council on 06/05/2008.

As reflected in the population and household growth tables, and the figures illustrating population density, the highest regional concentrations of urban activity, government, commerce, education, regional services, transit, and highways are all located in the Central Corridor LRT Study Area. Each of the six Central Corridor segments includes employment opportunities, as presented below:

- **Downtown St. Paul** is a major employment center with office towers and retail businesses.
- **Capitol Area** is the location of state government offices and administration facilities and Regions and Bethesda hospitals.
- **Midway East** is home to a large number of successful, independently owned retail businesses. Many of these businesses are owned and operated by recent immigrants, as well as entrepreneurs who have long been residents of this area.
- **Midway West** employers include large retail shopping centers, commercial offices, and the West Midway Business Park. West Midway is the location of light industrial, manufacturing, shipping and warehousing, and technology research businesses.

- **University / Prospect Park's** largest employer is the U of M, with its administrators, faculty, and hospital staff, specifically, those from the Fairview Hospital and Clinics. Additional employers are Augsburg College, and heavy to light industries in the Southeast Minneapolis Industrial (SEMI) area, which is just north of University Avenue. The U of M also provides many services to the public including a vast number of medical services, entertainment opportunities, and sporting events, which bring numerous visitors to the campus each day.
- **Downtown Minneapolis** is a major employment center with office towers, retail businesses, and major sports venues.

Employment within one-half-mile of the corridor was 324,410 in 2000 and is projected to increase to 428,320 in 2030. Projected employment figures for 2010 indicate that the Central Corridor LRT would serve approximately 150,010 employees as potential transit riders in Downtown Minneapolis, 49,420 in Downtown St. Paul, and 50,880 in the Midway East and West areas. In addition, according to Metropolitan Council data, it would serve approximately 46,130 faculty, staff, students, and visitors at the U of M.

As shown in Table 1-1, many residents of the Central Corridor LRT Study Area are transit-dependent. While effective transit is required to bring employees to jobs in the Central Corridor LRT Study Area, it is also needed to provide access to jobs for transit-dependent residents within the Study Area. Overall, the entire Central Corridor LRT Study Area is projected to experience 32 percent growth in employment (jobs) through 2030 (Table 1-4).

Figure 1-6, Figure 1-7, and Figure 1-8, Employment Density by Traffic Analysis Zone Year 2000, 2010, and 2030, respectively, illustrate how the growth in jobs is anticipated to be distributed along the Central Corridor LRT Study Area. When one compares the employment density maps with the population density maps it is possible to identify some changing land use patterns, for example, from industrial and institutional to higher-density residential in some of the Central Corridor LRT Study Area neighborhoods.

Table 1-4 Central Corridor Employment by Segment

Study Area Segment[a]	2000	Projected 2010[b]	Percent change from 2000	Projected 2030[b]	Percent change from 2000
Downtown St. Paul	46,920	49,420	5	72,610	55
Capitol Area	33,180	31,060	-6	31,910	-4
Midway East	16,500	19,810	20	20,070	22
Midway West	30,840	31,070	1	30,990	0
University/Prospect Park	44,980	46,130	3	46,990	4
Downtown Minneapolis	151,990	150,010	-1	195,260	28
Total Corridor Study Area	324,410	327,500	1	428,320	32

Source: The Metropolitan Council, MetroGIS Datafinder, Transportation Analysis Zones 2000, Updated June 2008

[a] For this table, the Central Corridor LRT Study Area is defined as the land area one-half-mile from the AA/DEIS LPA alignment and station areas. Differences exist between the New Starts Application and the FEIS analysis

of population, housing, and employment totals in the study area. The difference is the result of how the data were allocated across the Study Area, with one analysis considering station areas, and the other considering planning segments. Specifically, the New Starts Application includes the 10th Street Station with all the other Downtown St. Paul stations, whereas the FEIS analysis places the 10th Street Station with the Capitol Area stations. This would mean that certain TAZ might have been excluded from one analysis and included in another, changing the totals.

[b] All employment forecast data were derived from the most recent TAZ data supplied by the Metropolitan Council on 06/05/2008.

1.3.2 Travel Patterns

The current and future-year travel patterns in the Central Corridor study area were analyzed using trip data generated by the Metropolitan Council travel demand model. For this analysis, the study area was divided into eight subdistricts: Minneapolis central business district (CBD), U of M, Prospect Park, Raymond, Fairview/Snelling, Lexington, Dale Street, Rice Street and Capitol, and St. Paul CBD (see Figure 1-9). These districts roughly correspond to the study area planning segments, which are Downtown Minneapolis, Prospect Park/University, Midway West, Midway East, Capitol Area, and Downtown St. Paul (see Figure 1-2).

In the base year (2009), the travel model indicates that approximately 337,500 trips per day have their origins and destinations entirely within the study area. By the forecast year (2030), these trips are expected to increase 31 percent to 441,700 trips a day. The strongest desire for travel—65 percent of these trips—will be in the east-west and west- east directions. Primary destinations will be downtown Minneapolis, downtown St. Paul, the U of M Campus, and several small and medium sized employers and retail centers located in the University Avenue corridor.

The U of M is a major trip generator in the Central Corridor LRT Study Area. The trips attracted by the U of M have origins distributed all over the Twin Cities metro area. Most of these trips, once they enter the study area, will go east or west towards both U of M campuses. The travel model indicates that in the year 2030 east-west U of M trips would range between 75,000 and 100,000 trips a day.

The model indicates that in 2030 the Hiawatha Corridor subdistrict will produce nearly 23,000 trips per day, which will be attracted to the U of M. This pool of trips presents an opportunity for the Central Corridor LRT because of its connectivity to the Hiawatha LRT line.

Between 2009 and 2030, non-work trips within the study area are expected to increase from 186,800 to 252,000. Again, travel model results indicate that the strongest desire for travel—about 40 percent of these trips—will be in the east-west and west-east directions.

When trips by all purposes (work, non-work, and college) are combined, the total demand for travel in the east-west direction in this corridor is projected to exceed 300,000 trips a day in the year 2030. For this pool of trips, the proposed LRT line would offer an excellent high-capacity transit alternative.

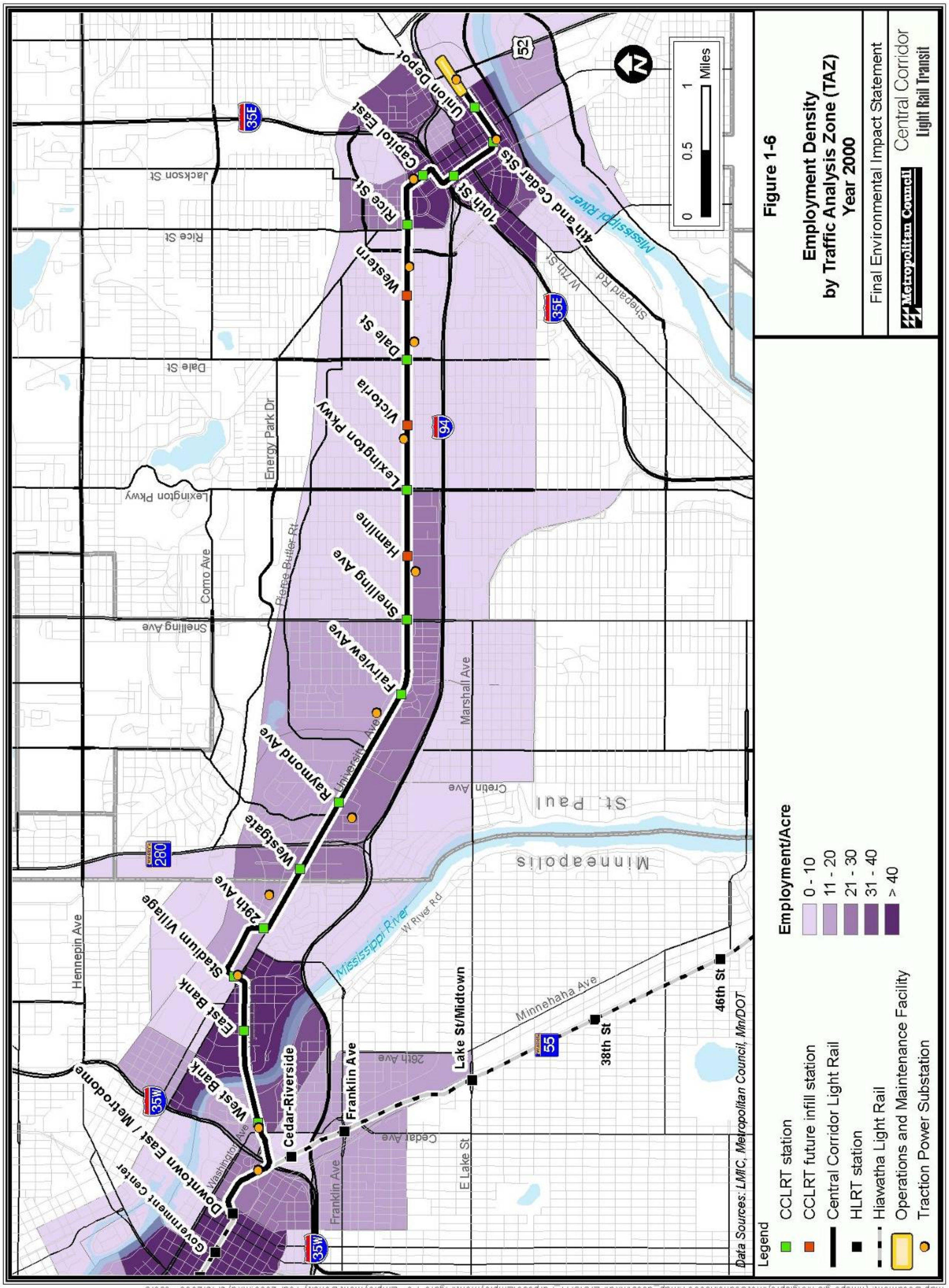


Figure 1-6
Employment Density
by Traffic Analysis Zone (TAZ)
Year 2000
Final Environmental Impact Statement
Metropolitan Council
Central Corridor
Light Rail Transit
0
0.5
1
Miles
Legend
CCLRT station
CCLRT future infill station
Central Corridor Light Rail
HLRT station
Hiawatha Light Rail
Operations and Maintenance Facility
Traction Power Substation
Employment/Acre
0 - 10
11 - 20
21 - 30
31 - 40
> 40
Data Sources: LMIC, Metropolitan Council, Mn/DOT
Union Depot
Capitol East
4th and Cedar Sts
10th St
Rice St
Western
Dale St
Victoria
Lexington Pkwy
Hamline
Snelling Ave
Fairview Ave
Raymond Ave
Westgate
29th Ave
Stadium Village
East Bank
West Bank
Downtown East / Metrodome
Government Center
Cedar-Riverside
Franklin Ave
Lake St/Midtown
38th St
46th St
St. Paul
Minneapolis
Mississippi River

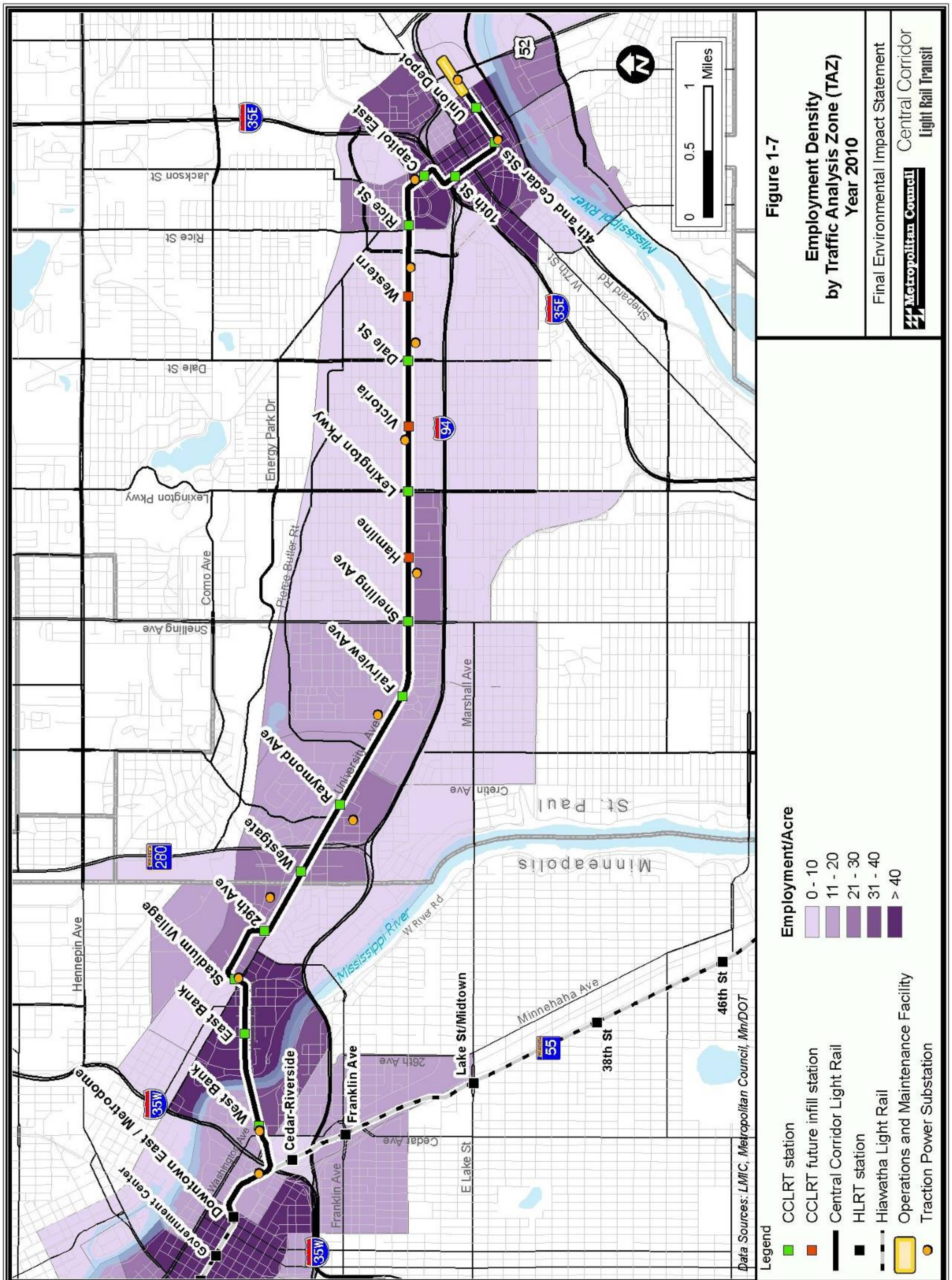


Figure 1-7
Employment Density
by Traffic Analysis Zone (TAZ)
Year 2010
Final Environmental Impact Statement
Metropolitan Council
Central Corridor
Light Rail Transit
0 0.5 1 Miles
Employment/Acre
0 - 10
11 - 20
21 - 30
31 - 40
> 40
Legend
CCLRT station
CCLRT future infill station
Central Corridor Light Rail
HLRT station
Hiawatha Light Rail
Operations and Maintenance Facility
Traction Power Substation
Data Sources: LMIC, Metropolitan Council, Mn/DOT
Union Depot
Capitol East
4th and Cedar Sts
10th St
Rice St
Western
Dale St
Victoria
Lexington Pkwy
Hamline
Snelling Ave
Fairview Ave
Raymond Ave
Westgate
29th Ave
Stadium Village
East Bank
West Bank
Downtown East / Metrodome
Government Center
Cedar-Riverside
Franklin Ave
Lake St/Midtown
38th St
46th St
Mississippi River
St. Paul
Minneapolis
Map Document: (\\Mspe-gis-file\gisproj\MetCouncil\6589\map_docs\mxd\EIS\CH1_Purpose\Employment\Figure 1-7 - Employment Density Year 2010.mxd) 3/13/09

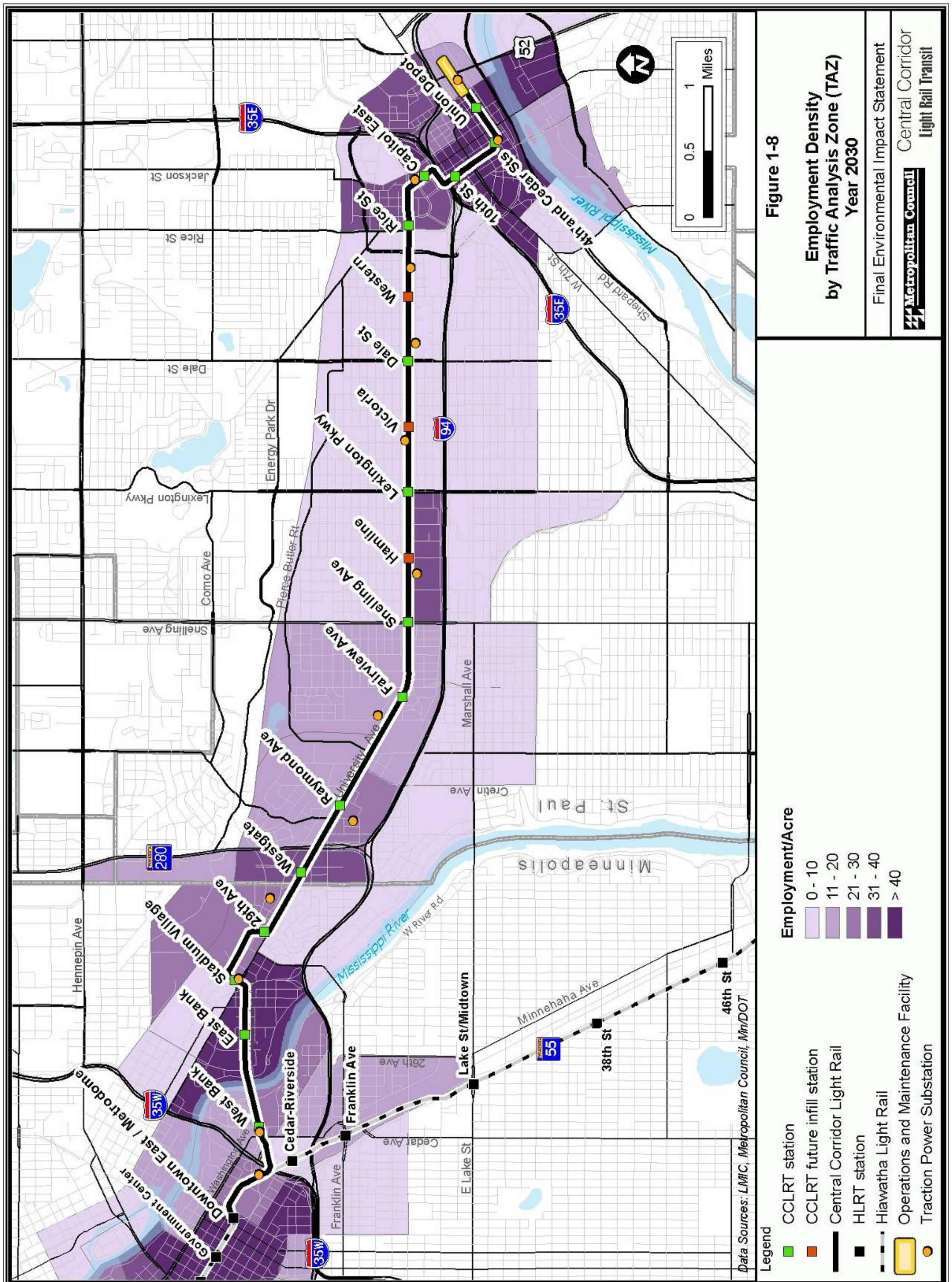
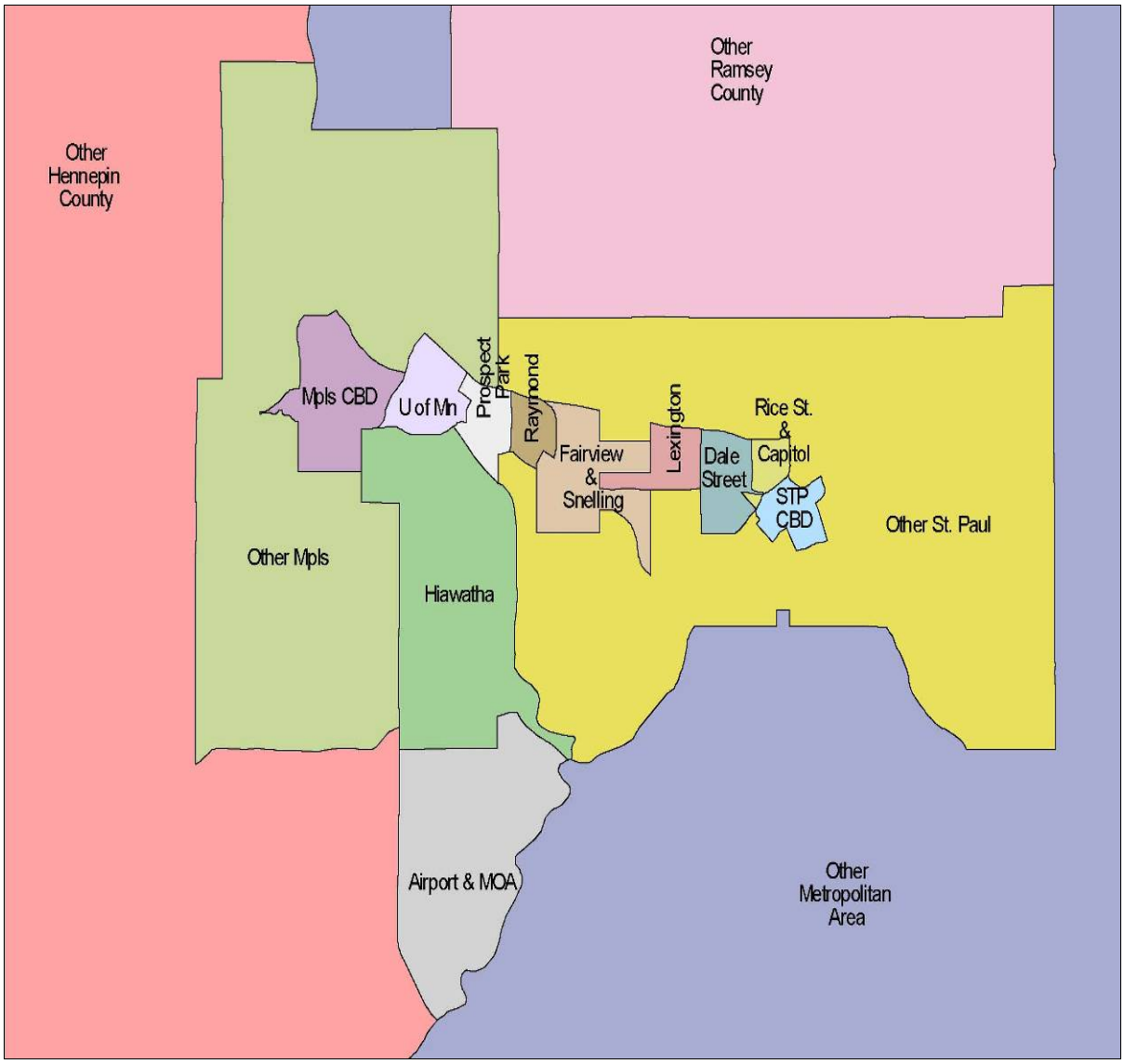


Figure 1-8
Employment Density
by Traffic Analysis Zone (TAZ)
Year 2030
Final Environmental Impact Statement
Metropolitan Council
Central Corridor
Light Rail Transit
0 0.5 1 Miles
Employment/Acre
0 - 10
11 - 20
21 - 30
31 - 40
> 40
Legend
CCLRT station
CCLRT future infill station
Central Corridor Light Rail
HLRT station
Hiawatha Light Rail
Operations and Maintenance Facility
Traction Power Substation
Data Sources: LMIC, Metropolitan Council, Mn/DOT
Union Depot
Capitol East
4th and Cedar Sts
10th St
Rice St
Western
Dale St
Victoria
Lexington Pkwy
Hamline
Snelling Ave
Fairview Ave
Raymond Ave
Westgate
29th Ave
Stadium Village
East Bank
West Bank
Downtown East / Metrodome
Government Center
Cedar-Riverside
Franklin Ave
Lake St/Midtown
38th St
46th St
St. Paul
Minneapolis
Mississippi River
Jackson St
Rice St
Dale St
Lexington Pkwy
Snelling Ave
Como Ave
Energy Park Dr
Pierce Butler Rt
Marshall Ave
Cretin Ave
University Ave
Hennepin Ave
Washington Ave
W River Rd
Minnehaha Ave
26th Ave
Cedar Ave
Franklin Ave
E Lake St
W 7th St
Shepard Rd

FIGURE 1-9 DISTRICTS IN THE STUDY AREA



1.3.3 Roadway System

The AA/DEIS acknowledged that traffic congestion is a problem for the Central Corridor LRT Study Area, especially on Interstate (I-94), which is a critical link in the Twin Cities road network. Completed in 1966, I-94 is part of the Interstate highway connecting Port Huron, Michigan, to Seattle, Washington. Through the Twin Cities, its route also relieves congestion on University Avenue. I-94 is currently the most direct transportation link between the three major activity centers in the Central Corridor LRT Study Area, but the freeway is reaching its capacity. As reported in the AA/DEIS and cited in the Draft Central Corridor LRT New Starts Application, I-94 has experienced a 107 percent increase in average daily traffic in Minneapolis in the last 25 years. Between 1990 and 1998, daily traffic volumes increased between 29,000 and 40,000 vehicle trips at seven locations along I-94 within the Central Corridor LRT Study Area. Daily traffic volume is projected to continue to grow. Based on

travel demand forecasts for 2020, cited in the Metropolitan Council's 2020 Long Range Transportation Plan, nearly all portions of I-94 located in the Central Corridor LRT Study Area will reach capacity. Adding lanes would present difficult engineering, cost, and environmental issues. According to the Draft Central Corridor LRT New Starts Application, expansion plans are not included in the region's long-range plans. Figure 1-10, Historic and Projected Traffic on University Avenue, I-94, and Washington Avenue, illustrates 1995 to projected 2030 traffic volumes.

Continued demand increases may cause a breakdown of the transportation system served by I-94. Drivers are expected to seek relief by taking parallel routes, potentially causing system-wide congestion. University and Washington avenues are the main east-west arterial routes located in the Central Corridor LRT Study Area and serve as Reliever-type "A" Minor Arterials. Half of the locations on both University and Washington avenues were projected to be operating near capacity in 2000 (Metropolitan Council, 2000), and the projections for 2030 show traffic growth at most locations along these arterial roadways. Although none of the roadways is projected to reach the existing roadway capacity, it is likely that both Washington and University Avenues will experience periods of congestion more frequently, causing increased travel times and safety concerns within the Central Corridor LRT Study Area.

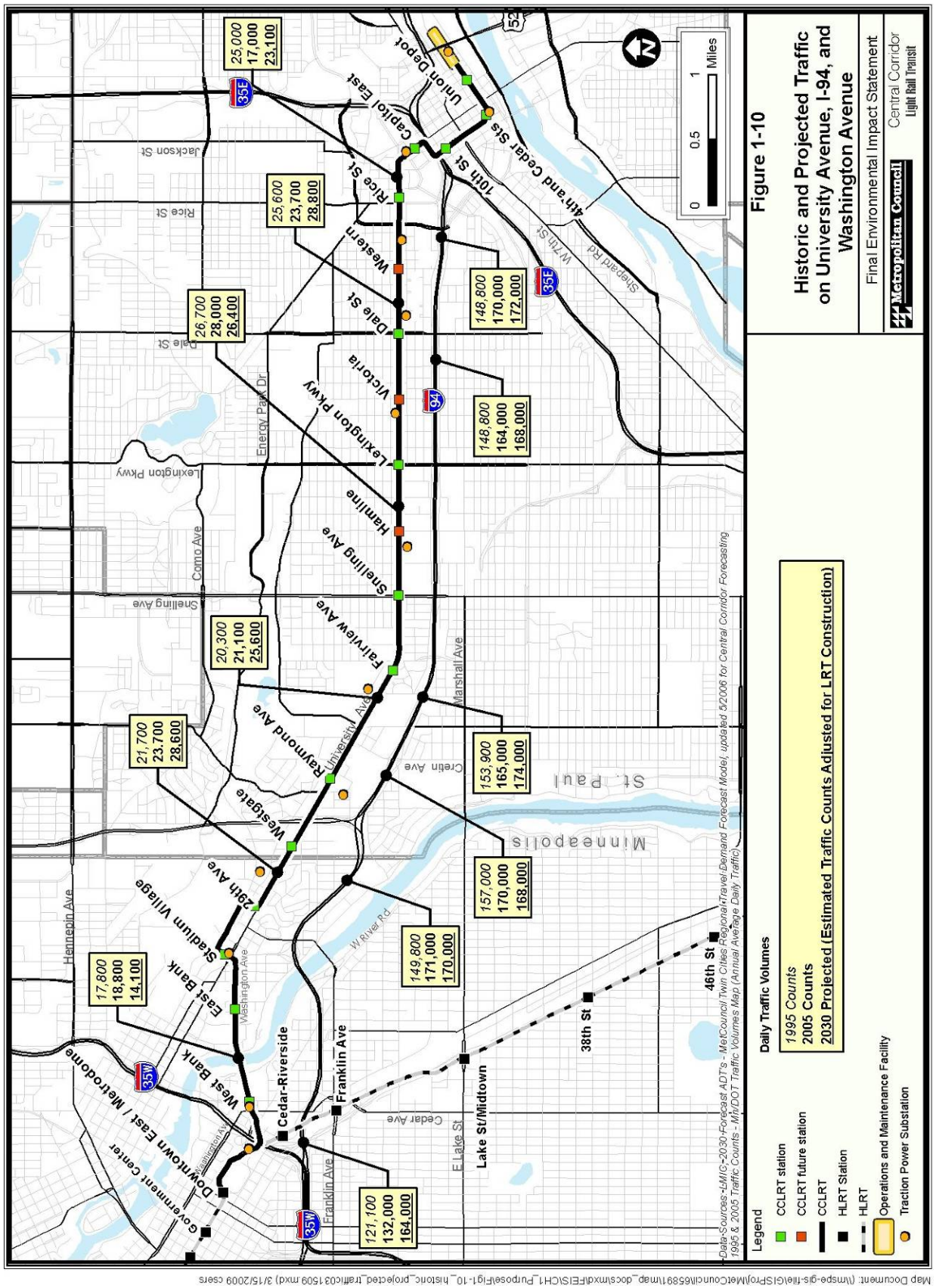
1.3.4 Transit

Existing transit service, facilities, and future needs in the Central Corridor LRT Study Area are fully described in the AA/DEIS. In summary, the corridor is currently served by several bus routes, including Route 16, Route 50, and express service on I-94, which parallels University Avenue.

The combined average weekday ridership on Routes 16 and 50 and the I-94 express service in 2007 was more than 27,800. Figure 1-11 shows the location of park-and-ride facilities and bus routes, and how the proposed Central Corridor LRT would fit into the overall system.

Unlike other typical radial route corridors, University Avenue has multiple major origins and destinations along the entire length of the Central Corridor LRT Study Area. Employer transit pass programs and student transit pass programs have increased ridership and caused overloads, bus bunching, and passing up passengers. In response to these problems in service quality and reliability, a variety of service changes have been made. Articulated buses are used on the route to add capacity. In 1998, Route 50 was added to provide limited stop service. Additional bus trips from the two downtowns to the U of M were added, and buses on Routes 50 and 16 now provide six-minute headways at major stops. Additional running time continues to be required because increased boardings and alightings from high ridership have resulted in greater dwell times, and thus, slower service.

A variety of other routes serve segments of the Central Corridor LRT Study Area, particularly in the downtowns and the U of M. Thirty-five percent of U of M students have a semester transit pass and approximately 40 percent of downtown Minneapolis employees are transit customers today.



Map Document: (\\mspe-gis-file\GISProj\MetCouncil\6589 1\map_docs\mxd\FEIS\CH1_Purpose\Fig1-10_historic_projected_traffic03 1509.mxd) 3/15/2009 csers

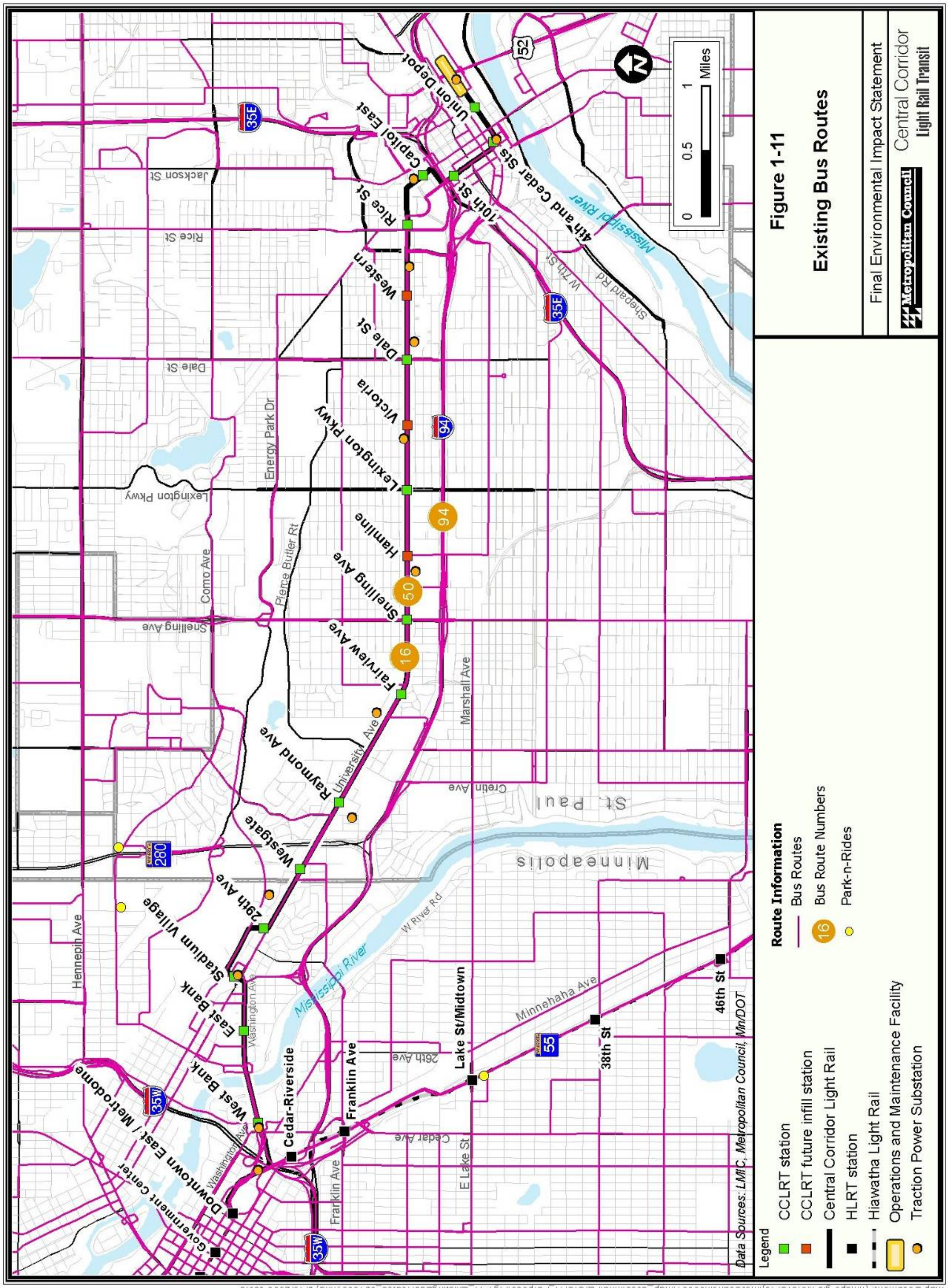


Figure 1-11
Existing Bus Routes
Final Environmental Impact Statement
Central Corridor Light Rail Transit
Metropolitan Council
Legend
CCLRT station
CCLRT future infill station
Central Corridor Light Rail
HLRT station
Hiawatha Light Rail
Operations and Maintenance Facility
Traction Power Substation
Route Information
Bus Routes
Bus Route Numbers
Park-n-Rides
Data Sources: LMIC, Metropolitan Council, Mn/DOT
0
0.5
1
Miles
Union Depot
Capitol East
10th St
4th and Cedar Sts
Rice St
Western
Dale St
Victoria
Lexington Pkwy
Hamline
Snelling Ave
Fairview Ave
Raymond Ave
Westgate
29th Ave
Stadium Village
East Bank
West Bank
Downtown East / Metrodome
Government Center
Cedar-Riverside
Franklin Ave
Lake St/Midtown
38th St
46th St
St. Paul
Minneapolis
Mississippi River
94
50
16

1.4 Planning Context

As indicated in the many state, regional, and local transportation and transit-oriented development (TOD) studies and plans that have been prepared over the years, transit improvements and developments are important to the Twin Cities. State and regional studies have long recognized the importance of the Central Corridor LRT Study Area as a critical link in the existing transit system that serves the most intense all-day transit ridership in the metropolitan area. The Central Corridor LRT Study Area has been addressed in the following studies:

- *Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth,* City of Minneapolis, comprehensive plan to be approved 2009
- *Cedar Riverside Small Area Plan,* City of Minneapolis, adopted 2008
- *University Avenue SE and 29th Avenue SE Development Objectives and Design Guidelines,* City of Minneapolis, 2005-6
- *City of St. Paul Central Corridor Development Strategy,* City of St. Paul, adopted as a chapter of the Comprehensive Plan on October 24, 2007
- *St. Paul on the Mississippi Development Framework,* City of St. Paul, 1997
- *Downtown St. Paul Development Strategy*, City of St. Paul, 2003
- *Fitzgerald Park Precinct Plan*, City of St. Paul, adopted as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan on August 16, 2006, addresses LRT as part of balancing modes in downtown
- *Intermodal Station Siting and Feasibility Study,* Hennepin County, 2006
- *2030 Regional Development Framework*, Metropolitan Council, January 2004
- *2030 Transportation Policy Plan*, Metropolitan Council, December 2004
- *Downtown East/North Loop Master Plan,* City of Minneapolis, adopted 2003
- *Transit 2020 Master Plan*, Metropolitan Council, February 2000
- *Twin Cities Metropolitan Commuter Rail Feasibility Study, Phase II, Final Summary Report*, Office of Freight, Railroads and Waterways, Minnesota Department of Transportation, January 1999
- *Commuter Rail System Plan*, Minnesota Department of Transportation, January 1999
- *Twin Cities Metropolitan Commuter Rail Feasibility Study, Phase I, Summary Report*, Office of Freight, Railroads and Waterways, Minnesota Department of Transportation, January 1998
- *Central Corridor Alternatives Analysis/Draft Environmental Impact Statement*, 2006
- *Midway Corridor Light Rail Transit Draft Environmental Impact Statement*, 1991

To demonstrate how the principles and guidelines of the *City of St. Paul Central Corridor Development Strategy* (CCDS) could be more specifically applied to station areas, the City of St. Paul prepared seven Station Area Plans, which were adopted in 2008. The selected stations are those on University Avenue in St. Paul: Westgate Station, Raymond Avenue

Station, Fairview Avenue Station, Snelling Avenue Station, Lexington Parkway Station, Dale Street Station, and Rice Street Station. Plans for downtown station areas and the three Future Infill Stations at Western Avenue, Victoria Street, and Hamline Avenue are expected to be adopted in 2009.

Transit 2020, Regional Transit Master Plan, February 2000

In response to a directive by the 1999 Minnesota Legislature, the Metropolitan Council published *Transit 2020 Master Plan* on February 1, 2000. The plan describes strategies and an implementation program for the Twin Cities region's future transportation system. Evolving from earlier regional transportation plans, the Transit 2020 plan includes the goal to "develop dedicated transitways, (including) exclusive busways, light rail transit, and commuter rail" as components of an integrated, region-wide system.

2030 Transportation Policy Plan, December 2004

In 2004, the Metropolitan Council adopted the *2030 Transportation Policy Plan* for the region. It identifies several high priority corridors for implementation in the near term, including the Central Corridor LRT Study Area. It also includes the Cedar Avenue and Interstate 35W (I-35W) bus rapid transit (BRT) corridors that would indirectly connect with the Central Corridor. The plan also calls for improvements to arterial bus services that feed these corridors. Since the 2030 *Transportation Policy Plan* was adopted, a re-evaluation of the transit needs in the Bottineau Corridor (formerly called the Northwest Corridor) has occurred. Plans to serve this corridor with BRT have been deferred, and the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) is currently sponsoring an Alternative Analysis study to determine the best mode and alignment.

The Metropolitan Council's *2030 Transportation Policy Plan* is intended to provide a guide for doubling transit ridership by 2030, slowing the growth in traffic congestion, and improving mobility for everyone. The strategies include developing a network of rail and bus "transitways," with mode choices based on a careful cost-benefit analysis. The region now has two such transitways: a high occupancy toll lane on Interstate 394 (I-394) and light rail transit in the Hiawatha corridor linking downtown Minneapolis, the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, and the Mall of America. Under the Metropolitan Council's plan, additional transitways will be built by 2020.

Figure 1-12 illustrates the planned transitways. Transit facilities being constructed or planned in the metropolitan area are described below.

- As the region moved to upgrade its transit network, the **Hiawatha Corridor** was the first light rail corridor in the region. This 12-mile LRT line was opened in phases in June and December 2004 and serves downtown Minneapolis, the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, and the Mall of America. A reorientation of local and regional bus routes that were providing downtown-oriented capacity in this corridor has allowed Metro Transit to better meet other transportation needs in the region and attract additional riders to the total transit network. The Hiawatha LRT has exceeded ridership expectations by more than 60 percent and has promoted private investment and growth along the corridor.
- The **Southwest Transitway** is a proposed high frequency transit line connecting Eden Prairie, Minnetonka, Hopkins, St. Louis Park, Minneapolis neighborhoods, and the Minneapolis downtown area. The HCRRA has led the preparation of studies and

plans for a multi-modal facility that includes two community amenities—a trail and transit—to serve this growing part of the Metro Area. A Draft Environmental Impact Statement is presently being prepared to help officials make a final route selection (Southwest Transitway Web Site, November 13, 2008). The DEIS is expected to be complete in 2009.

- The **Northstar Commuter Rail** project, as described on the Northstar Commuter Rail Web site, is being constructed along a 40-mile-long transportation corridor that runs along Highway 10 from Big Lake to downtown Minneapolis using the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF) right-of-way. This corridor is one of the fastest growing urban-to-suburban corridors in the nation and needs the support of better transportation services. Project planners hope to extend the line to the full 82-mile corridor in the future.
- A feasibility study for the **Red Rock Corridor** analyzed the potential for commuter rail passenger service between downtown Minneapolis, downtown St. Paul (Union Depot Station) and Hastings, Minnesota. The main purpose of the Red Rock Corridor line is to foster a more sustainable development pattern to accommodate the expected growth in the area.
- Several **BRT corridors** are in various stages of planning and development, including the Cedar Avenue Corridor and I-35W. The Central Corridor will serve as an indirect distributor for these corridors.

The eastern terminus of the Central Corridor LRT would be at the Union Depot in downtown St. Paul. The redevelopment of the Union Depot as a multi-modal hub for downtown St. Paul has been designated by Congress as a project of national and regional significance (Sec. 1301, Projects of National and Regional Significance, August 10, 2005) and the Ramsey County Railroad Authority (RCRRA) is preparing an environmental assessment. The environmental assessment is currently not available to the public, but Metropolitan Council is coordinating with the RCRRA because the Regional Transportation Plan includes several transit corridors, including the Central Corridor LRT, that would converge at Union Depot.

An additional corridor of note is a future line running southeast from downtown St. Paul toward Hastings and Red Wing, which will contain the **Upper Midwest High Speed Rail** connection from Chicago. The federal government has designated the St. Paul Union Depot as the northern terminus for high-speed rail.

1.4.1 Environmental Review and Project Development Process

In accordance with federal regulations, full consideration of environmental effects, as disclosed during the NEPA process, is required before a project can advance to the funding stage for final design, right-of-way acquisition, equipment and facilities, and system construction. The overall environmental review process and schedule for the Central Corridor LRT are shown in Table 1-5. Because of modifications to the project resulting from public and agency coordination in 2007 and 2008, an SDEIS was prepared to provide the basis of further public discussion of the potential effects of the project on the human and natural environment associated with key changes and design options to the AA/DEIS LPA.

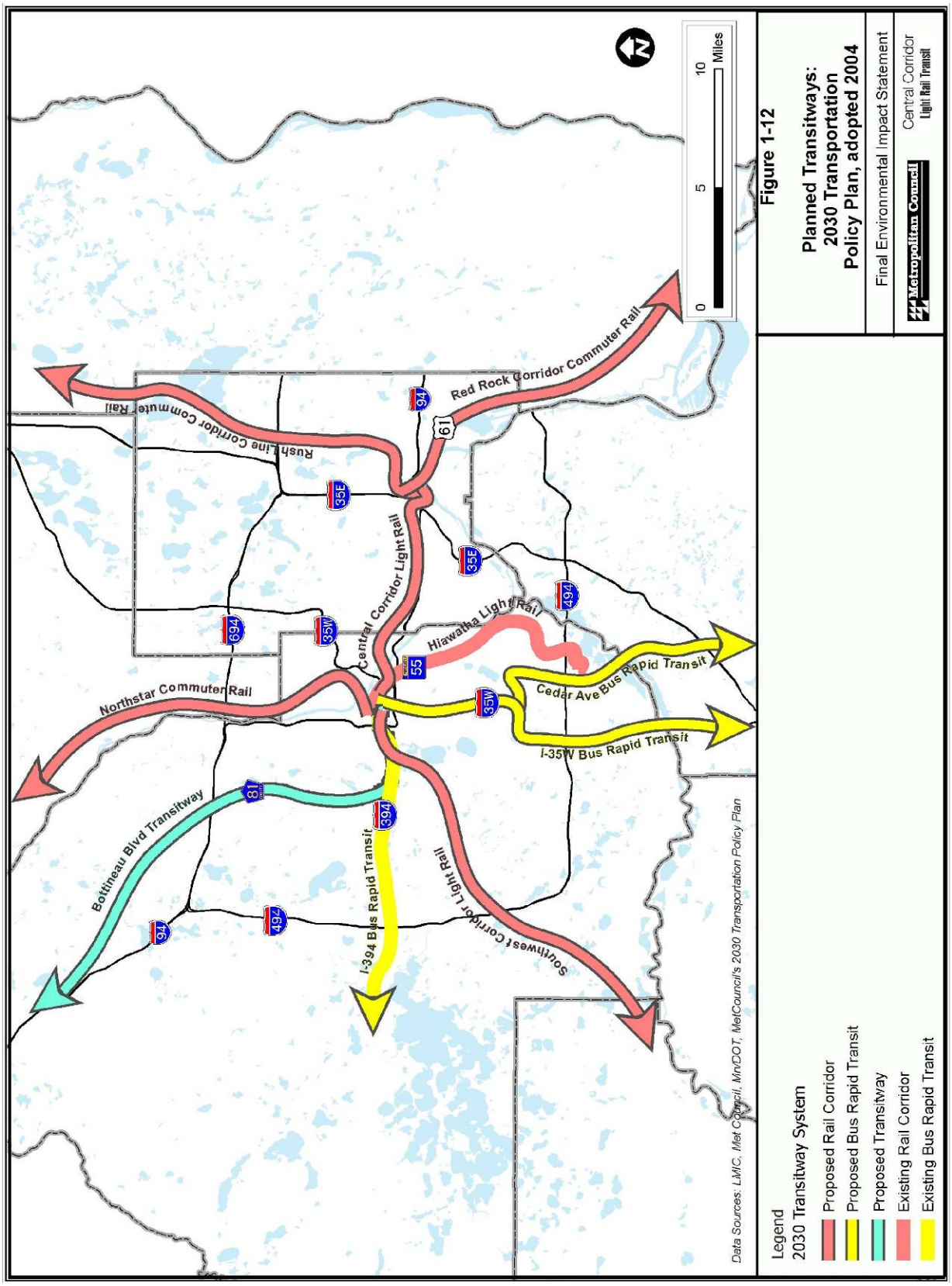


Figure 1-12
Planned Transitways:
2030 Transportation
Policy Plan, adopted 2004
Final Environmental Impact Statement
Metropolitan Council
Central Corridor
Light Rail Transit
0
5
10
Miles
Red Rock Corridor Commuter Rail
Rush Line Corridor Commuter Rail
Central Corridor Light Rail
Hiawatha Light Rail
Cedar Ave Bus Rapid Transit
I-35W Bus Rapid Transit
Northstar Commuter Rail
Bottineau Blvd Transitway
I-394 Bus Rapid Transit
Southwest Corridor Light Rail
Legend
2030 Transitway System
Proposed Rail Corridor
Proposed Bus Rapid Transit
Proposed Transitway
Existing Rail Corridor
Existing Bus Rapid Transit
Data Sources: LMIC, Met Council, MnDOT, MetCouncil's 2030 Transportation Policy Plan

After consideration of the comments received during circulation of the SDEIS, the Metropolitan Council selected a Preferred Alternative to meet the defined purpose and need of the Central Corridor. This FEIS includes a detailed description of this Preferred Alternative, its alignment and components, as well as responses to comments received during circulation of both the AA/DEIS and the SDEIS. Based on this FEIS, the FTA will issue a ROD and the Metropolitan Council, as the responsible governmental unit, will issue an "adequacy determination." The ROD will describe the proposed project, summarize the environmental findings, and identify the mitigation requirements associated with project implementation.

State law requires cities, counties, and regional rail authorities to hold public hearings on preliminary engineering plans for the Central Corridor LRT Project. This is known as the municipal consent process. The first series of public hearings was held by MnDOT, the HCRRA, and the RCRRA on May 29, 2008, at the Goodwill Easter Seals building on University and Fairview avenues from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. In June, St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Hennepin and Ramsey counties held public hearings prior to their city councils and county boards approving the plans in June 2008. The hearings focused on preliminary design plans for stations, tracks, and electrical systems. The hearing dates and locations were posted under Meetings at www.centralcorridor.org.

The project milestones and proposed schedule for completion of the EIS for a Central Corridor LRT are outlined in Table 1-5.

Table 1-5 Project Milestones

Activity	Date
NOI to Prepare EIS	June 5, 2001
Notice of Availability (NOA) of Scoping Booklet and Scoping Meetings in *EQB Monitor*	June 11,2001
Interagency Scoping Meeting	June 26,2001
Public Scoping Meetings (3)	June 26, 2001 8:00 AM June 26, 2001 5:00 PM June 27, 2001 5:00 PM
Close of Scoping Comment Period	July 20,2001
Scoping Decision	October 11, 2001
AA/DEIS NOA	April 2006
Public Hearings on AA/DEIS	May 22, 2006 at 6:30 p.m. May 23, 2006 at 5:00 p.m. May 24, 2006 at 8:00 a.m. May 24, 2006 at 6:30 p.m.
AA/DEIS Comment Period Ends	May 2006
Adoption of AA/DEIS LPA	June 2006
NOI to Prepare SDEIS	*Federal Register* Vol. 73, No. 37, publication date February 25, 2008, and *Minnesota EQB* Vol. 32, No. 4 Publication Date: February 25, 2008
SDEIS NOA	July 11, 2008
Public hearings	August 4, 2008 at Noon

Activity	Date
	August 7, 2008 at 6:00 p.m. August 9, 2008 at 2:00 p.m.
Public and agency comment period	July 11 to August 25, 2008
FEIS NOA published in the *Federal Register*	Early 2009
FTA ROD	Early 2009
Metropolitan Council Adequacy Determination	Early 2009
Minnesota Adequacy Determination	Early 2009

Given the issues in the Central Corridor LRT Study Area today, local and regional governments recognized that alternatives needed to be developed to address those needs and further growth. Goals and objectives were developed to serve as the framework for the study and for decision making for the future of the Central Corridor. The full text of the goals and objectives is provided in the AA/DEIS, and is summarized below.

Goal 1: Economic Opportunity and Investment

Objectives

- Support investments in infrastructure, business, and community that sustain the heart of the region.
- Promote a reliable transit system that allows an efficient, effective land use development pattern in major activity centers that minimizes parking demand, facilitates the highest and best use of adjacent properties, and gives employers confidence that employees can travel to/from work.

Goal 2: Communities and Environment

Objectives

- Facilitate the preservation and enhancement of neighborhoods in the Central Corridor LRT Study Area.
- Acknowledge the individual character and aspirations of each place served, and of the region as a whole.
- Support regional goals for cleaner air and water, more efficient energy use, and a safer and healthier environment.

Goal 3: Transportation and Mobility

Objectives:

- Create transportation improvements that add people-carrying capacity, minimize operating costs, improve operating efficiency, provide high-quality modal alternatives, and reinforce the region's transportation system.
- Expand opportunities for all users to move freely to, through, and within the Central Corridor LRT Study Area.
- Enhance the existing transportation infrastructure to serve the high number of transit dependent persons in the Central Corridor LRT Study Area.

1.4.2 Public Involvement and Agency Coordination

A comprehensive public involvement program was implemented at the beginning of the preliminary engineering (PE) process and has been continued throughout planning, project development, and environmental review process to support decision-making. The program is guided by a public involvement plan that is described in full in Chapter 11.

Briefly, the plan has been to:

- Communicate with and involve local residents in refining the proposed alternatives;
- Communicate with and educate the public, neighborhoods, and agencies in the Central Corridor LRT Study Area on the opportunities and impacts the proposed project presents for their community or area of interest;
- Gain insights into issues of greatest concern or interest to the public and municipalities of the Central Corridor LRT Study Area and incorporate them into the decision-making process;
- Involve local residents in the decision-making process thereby creating a sense of public ownership of the project; and
- Meet and exceed the requirements and intent of federal, state, and local public involvement policies in a manner that is consistent with the federal NEPA process.

The Central Corridor Transit Study (Transit Study) process was completed in two parts: 1) a feasibility study for commuter rail, which was completed in 2001, and 2) an AA/DEIS for baseline, LRT, and BRT in the corridor, which was completed in 2006. During the initial stages of the Transit Study, the public was invited to participate in the process through public information meetings, telephone surveys, and other outreach activities.

As detailed in Chapter 11, the following outreach techniques are used throughout the project development process:

- Web site—Updated frequently with Central Corridor LRT information
- Newsletters—Published periodically
- PowerPoint presentation—For public presentations
- Media alerts and news releases—To generate interest in, and educate the public on, Central Corridor LRT progress
- Interviews with key stakeholders
- Survey of residents within the Central Corridor LRT
- Presentations at meetings of neighborhood and business groups within the Central Corridor LRT Study Area

1.4.2.1 Scoping

The initiation of the EIS for the proposed Central Corridor LRT began with a formal scoping process, which was used to publicly announce the alternatives being considered for inclusion in the AA/DEIS and to seek out additional alternatives to examine. The scoping process provides opportunities to inform the public, government agencies, elected officials,

organizations, and businesses that the EIS process is commencing, to hear about issues of concern, and identify issues to be considered and/or resolved.

An NOI to prepare an EIS on the project was published in the *Federal Register* on June 5, 2001. An NOA of the Central Corridor Scoping Booklet and announcement of the scoping meetings were published in the Minnesota EQB Monitor on June 11, 2001. Public notices were placed in twelve newspapers in May and June 2001. Letters of invitation to the scoping meetings were sent to federal, state, and local agencies, and to elected officials involved in the Central Corridor LRT Study Area. Three public scoping meetings and one agency scoping meeting were held in the Central Corridor LRT Study Area. The formal scoping comment period extended from June 11 to July 20, 2001.

The Central Corridor Scoping Booklet, with meeting notices, was mailed to approximately 800 people on the RCRRA mailing list, which includes federal, state, and local agencies having jurisdiction in the project, and all interested parties, elected officials, neighborhood organizations, and civic groups.

All written and verbal comments received at the formal public scoping meetings, by mail, or via the Web site during the scoping period, are recorded and addressed in the Central Corridor Scoping Summary Report. The report is available from RCRRA. Comments made during the scoping process were:

- Incorporated into the selection of the proposed alternatives for inclusion in the EIS;
- Incorporated into the design of the impact assessment criteria used in evaluating the alternatives;
- Used to help define the social, economic, environmental, and transportation factors addressed in the EIS; and
- Used to determine the types of technical analyses to be completed.

1.4.2.2 AA/DEIS

The AA/DEIS was released for public and agency comment on April 3, 2006. Public hearings were held at four locations from May 22 to May 24, 2006. The comment period was from April 21, 2006 to June 5, 2006. All of the 933 comments received on the AA/DEIS were compiled into a database. The responses to the comments are included in this FEIS. On June 28, 2006, the Metropolitan Council adopted an LPA for the Central Corridor LRT operating on Washington and University Avenues (Metropolitan Council Resolution No. 2006-15).

1.4.2.3 SDEIS

Public Involvement

Upon completion of the AA/DEIS, the Metropolitan Council became the local lead agency responsible for the Central Corridor LRT Project's oversight and implementation. In February 2007, the Metropolitan Council drafted the Central Corridor LRT Communication and Public Involvement Strategic Plan, which is described completely in Chapter 11. After considering comments received during circulation of the AA/DEIS and the public hearing, a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and Business Advisory Council (BAC) were established by the

Council in partnership with local stakeholders to consider the resolution of outstanding issues.

The Metropolitan Council has also established a Central Corridor Communications Office, which consists of a manager of public involvement, a communications manager, seven community outreach coordinators, and a public involvement intern. Each community outreach coordinator is assigned to one of seven geographic areas, approximately 1 to 2 miles in length. The coordinator is familiar with the area's technical issues and community characteristics. It is his or her responsibility to share information with the community about the Central Corridor LRT Project's progress, and to collect feedback and information on critical aspects of the Central Corridor LRT.

Ongoing outreach activities and stakeholder coordination have continued since October 2006—the outreach team has communicated with more than 25,000 people in more than 1,000 meetings, community events, and informal contacts. The Web site is continuously updated, project publications are continuously distributed, and project news is released to the media. Of particular note are listening sessions held in February 2008, where public comments were solicited by members of the Metropolitan Council prior to decision-making on key project elements. Four listening sessions were held at various venues along the Central Corridor LRT Study Area with a total of 288 comments submitted. These comments were collected and presented to the Central Corridor Management Committee (CCMC) and Metropolitan Council members prior to February 27, 2008. On February 27, 2008, the Metropolitan Council approved the scope of the proposed LRT project for inclusion in the SDEIS.

The SDEIS was prepared to provide the basis of further public discussion of the potential effects of the project on the human and natural environment associated with key changes and design options to the AA/DEIS LPA. The comment period for the SDEIS formally began with publication of an NOA in the *Federal Register* on July 11, 2008 and the Minnesota EQB Monitor on July 14, 2008. In accordance with federal and state requirements, the SDEIS was circulated between July 11 and August 25, 2008. Three public hearings were held between August 4 and August 9, 2008, to provide a forum for agency and citizen comments. After closing of the comment period on August 25, 2008, the Metropolitan Council formally approved the proposed revisions to the AA/DEIS LPA and adopted the Preferred Alternative (Metropolitan Council Resolution No. 2008-26). Responses to these comments and any resulting changes to the project are documented in this FEIS (see Chapter 11 and Appendix K).

Agency Coordination

In the planning, design, and construction of the Central Corridor LRT, the Metropolitan Council is working closely with the FTA, MnDOT, Ramsey and Hennepin counties, the cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, and the U of M. The FHWA has also been part of this process as a cooperating agency. The project draws on several advisory committees that bring together and present input from policy makers, government entities and community groups, businesses, and residents. These committees, described in Chapter 11, are the CCMC, CAC, Central Corridor Partnership (CCP), BAC, Central Corridor Project Office (CCPO), Project Advisory Committee (PAC), Communication Steering Committee (CSC), and the Land Use Coordinating Committee (LUCC).

In addition to the ongoing coordination with stakeholders and the public, the CCPO has had ongoing coordination with other federal, state, and local agencies and interested parties, including the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board (CAAPB), the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Administration, the Department of Commerce, the Minnesota EQB, the Department of Health, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), the Board of Water and Soil Resources, the State Archaeologist, the Minnesota Historical Society, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council. Ongoing public input on historic and archaeological resources, including development of a Programmatic Agreement, will continue throughout the remainder of the project development process. Selected documentation of coordination with stakeholders, the public, and federal, state, and local agencies and interested parties is located in Appendix E.