

Chapter 1. Purpose

Legislative Requirement

In 1996, the Minnesota State Legislature adopted a statute requiring the Metropolitan Council to perform an evaluation of the Twin Cities transportation system every four years beginning in 1997 and an evaluation of the transit system every four years beginning in 1999. The statute was amended in 2008 to require an evaluation of the transportation system prior to each update of the Transportation Policy Plan with an update of the regional transit system evaluation every two years. The portion of the statute relating to this report reads as follows:

473.1466 Transportation System Performance Evaluation.

(4) include an evaluation of the regional transit system, including a comparison with peer metropolitan regions with regard to key operating and investment measurements.

(b) The council must update the evaluation of the regional transit system every two years.

The Metropolitan Council completed the first Transit System Audit (previously referred to as an “Audit”) in 1999, per the legislative direction, and updated it in 2003 and 2007. This report is an update of the first three reports. In addition, the Council conducted a Transportation System Audit in 1997 and an update to the Transportation System Audit in 2001 and 2005, all of which had chapters on transit. This report is also an update of information in these reports.

Purpose

The Twin Cities transit system is complex, with approximately 22 separate entities providing public transit service in the region. Service is provided in both urban and rural areas and includes fixed-guideway, regular-route, and dial-a-ride services. Routes are classified as express, urban local, and suburban local for the purposes of this report. The mixture of transit services varies by provider and location. One of the primary focuses of this report is to aggregate information from individual jurisdictions to give a picture of overall transit trends in the region.

The Metropolitan Council is not only the largest transit service provider in the region; it is also the region's federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization. In this capacity, it is responsible for developing long-range and short-range plans for all transportation modes in the region, including transit. This report provides performance information and trend information for the Twin Cities transit system to provide context for these planning activities. It also provides feedback on goals set in transportation planning documents and a longitudinal perspective on transit issues.

Another purpose of this report is to provide a national context for the Twin Cities transit system. This report provides comparative information with other peer regions and for other peer transit agencies to provide a national perspective on Twin Cities’ transit issues.