10. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT, LEADERSHIP, AND OVERSIGHT GUIDELINES

It is important to note that the Transitway Guidelines are not intended to be prescriptive, but rather to provide a consistent basis for planning, designing, constructing, and operating Commuter Rail, LRT, and BRT services in the metropolitan area. The guidelines should be considered collectively when making project development, leadership, and oversight (PDLO) decisions for transitways.

10.1. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

State and federal funds may only be used for transitway development if the transitway is part of the regional Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) adopted by the Metropolitan Council.

Project development should follow the principles of professional due diligence for large capital projects and of likely funding partners, including potential federal partners, to ensure the project will be eligible for funding from all likely sources.

The locally preferred alternative (LPA) is reviewed and approved by the Metropolitan Council and amended into the TPP.

All transitway projects need to be developed using a planning and design process that carefully evaluates alternatives and weighs costs, benefits, and impacts. Many agencies and stakeholders will need to coordinate throughout the project development process. The complexity of the process and level of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)/Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) review should be reflective of the size, complexity, and any potential controversy of the project. While similar evaluation criteria and a similar project development process may be used, federal agency review and involvement is only required when federal funding is being used for the project.

The roles and responsibilities for individual project partners can change throughout a transitway project development process, but it is important to ensure that the process followed is consistent with existing or future funding requirements. For example, although local municipalities (e.g. regional railroad authority, city) often initiate projects in the early phases, such as scoping or Alternatives Analysis (AA), and often do so with local funds, a project development process must be used that is consistent with likely funding sources, including federal, state, and local sources.

10.2. COORDINATION OF AGENCIES AND STAKEHOLDERS

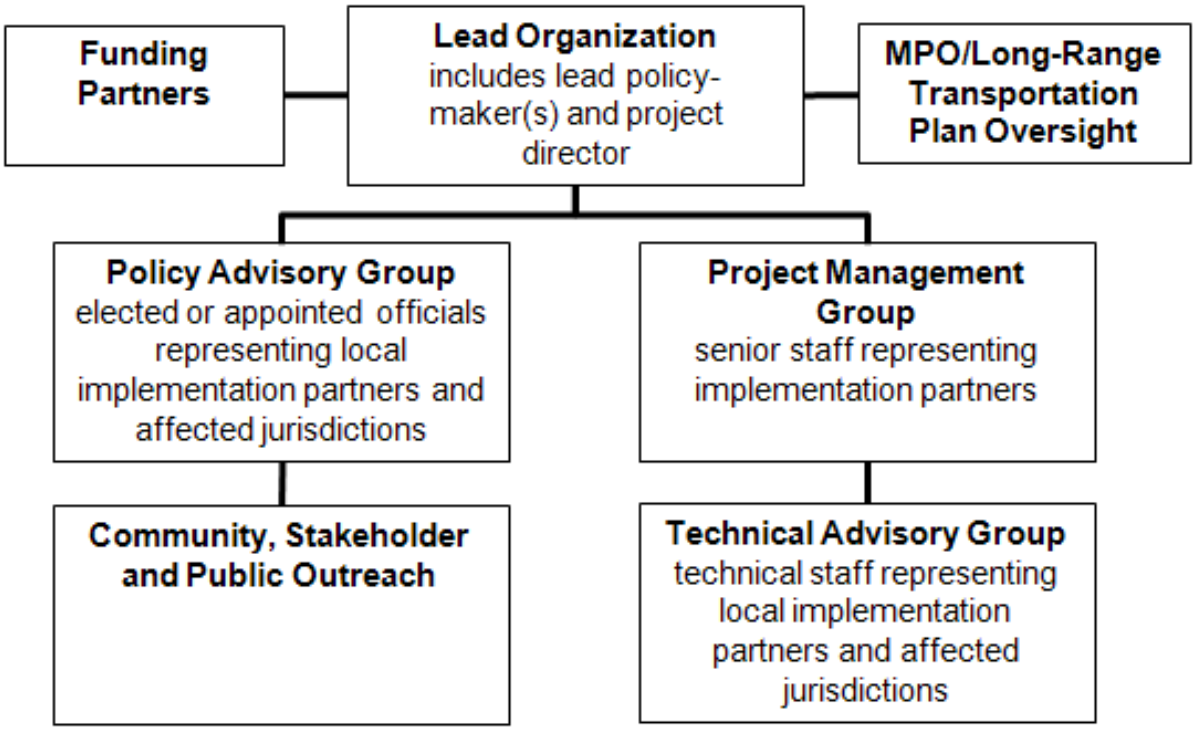
All major transitway capital investment projects should have a coordination structure that reflects the following functions:

- **Coordination with, and reporting to, funding partners**
- **Coordination with the Metropolitan Council and MnDOT**
- **A clearly identified lead agency determined by Metropolitan Council with input from funding partners and the Commissioner of Transportation**
- **Coordination with the elected/appointed officials of the implementation partners (policy advisory group) (for design and construction of LRT projects, Minn. Stat. 473.3994 Subd. 10 requires a corridor management committee)**
- **Coordination with the management and technical staff of the implementation partners (technical advisory group and/or project management group)**
- **Effective outreach to, and involvement of, external stakeholders and the general public**

When both a county that is a member of the Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB) and CTIB are represented on the policy advisory group, the lead agency should request that CTIB appoint a member to the policy advisory group who represents an area outside the geographic boundaries of the transitway project.

All transitway projects will likely have multiple agencies and stakeholders involved in planning, design, and construction. Therefore, a clearly defined means of interagency coordination, stakeholder outreach, and decision-making will be needed. Figure 10-1 illustrates typical project leadership and oversight roles and relationships in a transitway development process. Each project and each stage in the project development process may have different needs for coordination and interagency involvement. For example, it is useful to have an interagency marketing/communications team that supports start-up and ongoing operations. It is also often useful to have an interagency team that coordinates land development and land use planning activities and should include the appropriate local land use authorities.

Figure 10-1 – Typical Project Leadership and Oversight Functions



10.3. LEAD AGENCY CANDIDATES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The lead agency is an important component of project delivery and coordination in all phases of transitway implementation. The following guidelines relate to lead agency candidates and responsibilities:

- **There must be a clearly identified lead agency for a major transitway capital investment projects. The lead agency must accept all of the responsibilities for delivering the transitway project. The lead agency has the option of delegating responsibilities to other agencies/entities but is responsible for ensuring that all necessary tasks are completed. The lead agency may change as a project progresses from one phase to the next.**
- **When multiple agencies are involved in transitway development, interagency agreements (or other similar formal agreements) are strongly recommended to clearly identify roles, responsibilities, authorities, deadlines, budgets, and funding sources.**
- **MnDOT is the lead agency for implementing Commuter Rail following selection of the LPA (MnDOT may delegate this authority).(Minn. Stat. 174.82)**
- **MnDOT or the Metropolitan Council/Metro Transit, at the discretion of the governor, is the lead agency for implementing light rail following selection of the LPA. (Minn. Stat. 473.3994, subd. 1a)**
- **The Metropolitan Council/Metro Transit is the preferred lead agency for implementing BRT following selection of the LPA but, with Council agreement, the lead agency may be a joint powers board, a county, or a city. MnDOT may be the lead agency on BRT projects requiring construction in trunk highway right-of-way.**
- **MnDOT, regional railroad authorities, joint powers boards, counties, cities or the Metropolitan Council may be the lead agency for transitway capital projects prior to the selection of a LPA.**

There are no legal precedents governing lead agency candidates for certain aspects of transitway development, including planning and BRT implementation. This was identified as a project implementation gap that should be addressed by the Transitway Guidelines given the importance of the role of the lead agency in project delivery and coordination. The lead agencies for Commuter Rail and LRT following selection of the locally preferred alternative (LPA) are established by legislation. For BRT or for earlier stages in the project development process for LRT and/or Commuter Rail, the Metropolitan Council and MnDOT are responsible for determining the lead agency in consultation with funding partners. The LPA is usually selected at the end of the Alternatives Analysis (AA) process and legally confirmed at the end of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) process. Metropolitan Council has the statutory responsibility for Commuter Rail development in a corridor after commencement of revenue service, including planning, design, acquisition, construction, and equipping of any improvement of a line. The responsibilities associated with the role of lead agency are significant and the agency desiring to assume this role should understand the full range of these responsibilities and the cost and staffing requirements necessary to fulfill this role. Coordination with all affected agencies is required and many tasks may be accomplished by partner agencies through interagency agreements. It should be noted that local land use authorities have the responsibility and

authority for land use planning and regulation and, as such, need to be involved in issues related to land development.

10.4. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

The lead agency is responsible for financial management of the transitway project including:

- **Securing funds**
- **Financial oversight and reporting**
- **Financial planning and budgeting**
- **Interagency coordination**
- **Accounting**
- **Cost estimating and cost control**
- **Any other aspects of financial management**

Financial management is extremely important and is often very complex on transitway projects due to exacting federal requirements and multiple funding sources and agencies. It is the responsibility of the lead agency to manage all financial aspects of the project or to enlist the assistance of partner agencies to provide these services through interagency agreements. Some examples of the most important elements of financial management include:

- Seeking funding for the project, including preparing and submitting grant applications
- Understanding and implementing all requirements of funding agencies including securing matching funds, monitoring and oversight, providing required reporting, ensuring legal requirements are met, and any other expectations of the funding agencies
- Ensuring that all legal requirements and funding agency requirements are met when procuring services, vehicles, materials, etc.
- Completing timely and accurate financial planning, including the preparation of financial management plans that may be required by funding agencies
- Completing timely and accurate cost estimates for construction, procurement, operations, and maintenance
- Managing all accounting functions, including budgeting and cash flow management
- Assessing financial risk and identifying strategies for addressing those risks
- Monitoring and managing costs to stay within budgets

10.5.TRANSIT OPERATOR SELECTION

The following guidelines relate to the selection of the transit operator for a transitway:

- **The transit operator for Commuter Rail located in whole or in part in the metropolitan area will be Metro Transit. (Minn. Stat. 473.4057 subd. 1)**
- **Metro Transit will be the transit operator for all LRT in the metropolitan area. (Minn. Stat. 473.4051 subd. 1)**
- **Metro Transit and Suburban Transit Providers will continue to operate BRT express services within their respective jurisdictions.**
- **Metropolitan Council will determine the transit operator for highway BRT station-to-station services with input from funding partners. The Metropolitan Council will directly operate these routes through Metro Transit, bid them competitively or award a sole source contract in the case of a Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) grant or other special circumstances.**
- **Metro Transit will operate Arterial BRT within its jurisdiction.**

According to the agreed-upon funding formula for new rail and Highway BRT service, Highway BRT station-to-station service in both the Cedar Avenue and the I-35W South corridors will be funded by CTIB (50 percent) and Metropolitan Council (50 percent). Because Highway BRT services are not wholly within a Suburban Transit Provider's jurisdiction; and they are funded with regional funds; the CTIB has deferred transit operations to the Metropolitan Council. Therefore, the responsibility for the selection of a transit operator rests with the Metropolitan Council. The Metropolitan Council makes the determination of whether to competitively bid services based on the amount of service to be procured, and the anticipated benefits and costs of a competitive procurement, or to award a sole source contract.

10.6.TRANSIT SERVICE PLANNING

Metropolitan Council/Metro Transit will lead or delegate transit service planning for transitway service in the region, including Commuter Rail, LRT, Highway BRT station-to station, and Arterial BRT services.

Metro Transit and Suburban Transit Providers will continue service planning for BRT express and local services within their respective jurisdictions.

Metropolitan Council/Metro Transit and the affected Suburban Transit Provider(s) must coordinate closely when planning and operating services in BRT corridors to ensure that local, express and station-to-station services are well coordinated, not duplicative, transfers are timely, and stations are used efficiently.

Infrastructure corridor planning remains a local responsibility through selection of a LPA. After LPA selection, the lead agency is responsible for coordinating with the appropriate service providers for service planning to support facility planning. Close coordination between service and facility planning is

critical for determining appropriate station locations and sizes and other facility needs within individual corridors.

10.7.TRANSITWAY TRAVEL DEMAND FORECASTING

The following guidelines relate to travel demand forecasting for transitway projects:

- **The Regional Transit Demand Forecast Model, maintained by the Metropolitan Council, is the preferred method for developing transitway travel demand forecasts. Exceptions should be justified and documented by the requesting agency and approved by Metropolitan Council forecasting staff.**
- **A project's lead organization is responsible for directing travel demand forecasting performed by consulting firms and for involving Metropolitan Council forecasting staff. Metropolitan Council forecasting staff has oversight responsibility for ensuring quality and defensible ridership forecasting. Council staff should be consulted during all stages of forecast development for any phase of a transitway project.**
- **The travel demand forecasting model should be validated on a corridor level against observed data before using it for forecasting. Forecasting input data for the base model should be based on the latest planning assumptions including:**
  - **The most recent adopted socio-economic data**
  - **Highway and transit networks in the adopted Transportation Policy Plan**
- **The presentation of ridership for transitway projects is an important aspect of overall project delivery, including presentation to decision-makers and the public. It is important that ridership results are presented in a manner that is clear and consistent, regardless of mode. At a minimum, the following ridership results should be separately presented for each mode:**
  - **LRT: Rides taken using the LRT service**
  - **Commuter Rail: Rides taken using the Commuter Rail service**
  - **BRT:**
    - **Rides taken using the BRT station-to-station services**
    - **Rides taken on local or express services that utilize a defined transitway runningway for at least 50 percent of the route and use at least one non-downtown transitway station**
  - **Local feeder service ridership should not be included in any transitway ridership figures.**

The Regional Transit Demand Forecast Model (Regional Model) is the preferred method for travel forecasting because the model:

- Reflects all geographic and trip markets

- Is sensitive to future development scenarios
- Can analyze trips by station/stop
- Can follow trips from origin to destination
- Can measure trip-based user benefits

There may be situations where a rule-based modeling tool is appropriate to use. The use of such models should be thought through carefully and the reasons for using a rule-based model should be justified and documented.

Consultation with Metropolitan Council staff should include, at a minimum, development of the proposed scope of work, review of modeling methodology prior to beginning any modeling work, review of no-build or baseline input assumptions, review of model validation prior to proceeding with forecasts, and review of draft forecasts prior to their presentation to project stakeholders, including policy makers and the general public. This consultation is meant to be part of a collaborative process. Staff will provide current guidance on the use and validation of the Regional Model. The Travel Demand Forecast User Guide can serve as a starting point for the forecasting process and consultation. When forecasting is complete, electronic copies of the developed model and all data should be sent to the Metropolitan Council.

Land use and socio-economic forecasts for the horizon year should be based on approved Metropolitan Council municipal totals and should be consistent with the latest planning assumptions and local comprehensive plans, including comprehensive plan amendments. Highway and transit networks should be consistent with the adopted TPP. Sensitivity tests of input data are worthwhile but not required. Service planning assumptions should be reviewed by appropriate transit agencies and Metropolitan Council staff.

The BRT ridership definition is intended to ensure that transitway ridership is calculated consistently for all transitways in the region. This definition includes all riders that benefit significantly from the transitway investment while ensuring that riders are not double-counted between feeder service and transitway service and that riders that do not benefit significantly from the transitway investment are excluded. The FTA does not have a formal definition of BRT ridership, since their measures primarily look at system-wide impact and user benefit calculations. However, the definition of utilizing the transitway runningway for at least 50 percent of the route is structured after FTA's definition of a fixed-guideway for major capital investment funding eligibility.

10.8. CAPITAL INVESTMENT CRITERIA

Any major transitway investment project that will seek funding through federal programs must use the appropriate federal process for the evaluation of capital investment.

Evaluation of all major transitway investment projects, whether funded with federal, state or regional funds, should consider at least the following quantitative factors for both opening year and the planning horizon year:

- **Ridership including total riders, new transit riders, and number of transit dependent riders**
- **Land use as measured by population, employment, and affordable housing units within ½ mile of stations**
- **Cost-effectiveness including annualized capital and operating cost/ride, passengers/service mile, passenger miles/service mile**
- **Transit travel-time savings over existing local bus service**
- **Congestion as measured by congested roadway miles in corridor**

Evaluation of all transitway projects should consider at least the following qualitative factors for both opening year and the planning horizon year:

- **Environmental benefits and impacts**
- **Economic development impacts, including regional competitiveness and benefit to local residents, businesses and communities**
- **Impacts on the well-being of elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and low-income and/or minority people and families**
- **Sustainability related to economic, environmental and equity (low-income people and families) concerns**
- **Extent of collaboration between regional and local leadership and stakeholders**
- **Innovative approaches**
- **Integration of the principles of the Corridors of Opportunity initiative**

The capital investment criteria are intended to provide a basis for a balanced, comparative evaluation of multiple transitway projects throughout the region. These criteria should also be used to evaluate the performance of transitways after construction to assess their effectiveness and provide input to future projects. Projects that seek to use specific funding sources will need to address the evaluation criteria required for those funding sources. The quantitative criteria identified here are intended to be relatively easy (and less costly and time consuming) to measure than more detailed federal criteria but to still provide sound technical guidance. The qualitative evaluation criteria are intended to weigh the commitment to transit-oriented development and sustainability principles in the respective transitway corridors and to better align transit and land use planning. These qualitative criteria are difficult to

measure, but are important to increasing transit ridership and expanding access to jobs, affordable housing, and essential services for residents of all incomes and backgrounds.

10.9.PHASED DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSITWAYS

Transitways may be built in phases over time. For all modes, each phase should include the minimum elements identified in these guidelines for transitway service, station spacing and siting, stations and support facilities, runningways, vehicles, fare collection systems, technology and customer information, and identity and branding. The minimum elements are summarized in Table 10-1 – Minimum Elements from Transitway Guidelines.

Within our region, across the nation, and beyond, transitways of all modes are built in phases, sometimes called initial or minimum operable segments. Examples from within the region include Hiawatha LRT (Blue Line) and Northstar Commuter Rail. Hiawatha Phase I between downtown Minneapolis and Fort Snelling opened in June 2004, Phase II between Fort Snelling and the Mall of America opened in December 2004, and the American Boulevard station opened in December 2009. Northstar Phase I between downtown Minneapolis and Big Lake opened in November 2009, and a Ramsey Station is scheduled to open in late 2012. For each of the region's examples, all transitway phases included or are positioned to include the minimum elements of transitways. The inclusion of minimum transitway elements is especially important for BRT projects due to their flexible nature to protect the transitway brand promise. Guideline 3.9. Staged Development of Stations provides additional, station-specific information.

Table 10-1 – Minimum Elements from Transitway Guidelines[3]

	Arterial BRT	Highway BRT[4]	LRT	Commuter Rail
Service Operations	*WEEKDAY* Combined frequency for Arterial BRT and local service should be 10-min. peak period, 15-min. midday/evening, 30- to 60-min. early/late *WEEKEND* 15-min. day/evening, 30- to 60-min. early/late	*WEEKDAY* Combined frequency for station-to-station and express services should be 10-min. peak period and 15-min. midday *WEEKEND* Frequency based on demand	*WEEKDAY* 10-min. peak period, 15-min. midday/evening, 30- to 60-min. early/late *WEEKEND* 15-min. day/evening, 30- to 60-min. early/late	*WEEKDAY* 30-min. peak period Off-peak frequency as needed At least 5 trips each peak period
Stations	Transitway stations justified by proven, documented demand that: • Achieve a functional, cost-effective outcome that balances aesthetics with funding availability • Are attractive and informative environment for passengers at stations that is consistent with local community context, transitway identity, and passenger waiting times • Achieve functional integration with the surrounding land uses, which may include forming a nucleus for transit-oriented development at stations • Balance travel time, access and station demand relative to travel markets at the time of implementation • Promote a safe and secure environment by designing all elements to enhance passive security by maintaining visibility to and within the station and station area • Implement an interdisciplinary approach to station and facility design that incorporates advancements in technology			
Runningway	Full-sized mixed-traffic lanes (10-12 feet) that provide transit with travel-time advantages under congested roadway conditions	Full-sized (12 feet) managed lanes or bus-shoulder lanes that provide transit with travel-time advantages under congested roadway conditions	Adequate, exclusive trackage for safe and reliable operation	Adequate trackage (or trackage rights) for safe and reliable operation
Vehicles	Sleek, modern, premium-styled buses appropriately sized and configured to service characteristics		Compatible with existing rail and infrastructure systems	
Fare Collection	Modern and proven fare collection systems that integrate well within the regional system and fit the needs of the region and transitway			
Technology	Automatic vehicle location (AVL) on all vehicles and automatic passenger counters (APC) on all LRT, Commuter Rail, and BRT station-to-station vehicles Real-time schedule information at all high-volume stations and real-time parking availability at major park-and-ride facilities			
	Proven communications link compatible and coordinated with regional transit control center		Compatible with existing rail systems technology and control centers	
Identity and Branding	TBD	Color line names for station-to-station services Unique system name Consistent signage and branding using regional transit system color scheme Unique vehicle designs distinguished from local bus		Unique line name that does not conflict with color lines or LRT/Highway BRT system name

10.10. DEVIATIONS FROM TRANSITWAY GUIDELINES

Deviations from the Regional Transitway Guidelines that have significant cost and/or operational implications should trigger discussion with funding partners (e.g., the Metropolitan Council, MnDOT, CTIB, and Regional Railroad Authorities).

The Regional Transitway Guidelines should apply whenever investments are being studied, planned, and made in a transitway corridor identified as such in the Transportation Policy Plan. In general, the Transitway Guidelines are intended to establish a baseline for transitway facilities and services while providing flexibility to lead agencies in managing the broad array of issues that must be balanced during the planning and design process. The Transitway Guidelines provide parameters for decisions relating to planning, designing, building and operating transitways. While some of the Transitway Guidelines set clear thresholds, there will be times when greater flexibility is needed than is found in the guidance. Issues that arise which have significant cost and/or operation implications should trigger discussion and negotiation between the lead agency and funding partners, including Metropolitan Council, CTIB and others. The lead agency, in consultation with technical and policy advisory groups, is responsible for initiating discussions and negotiations with the funding partners as to the need for a deviation and whether a deviation is warranted. Where appropriate, local land use authorities and/or transit operating agencies may also need to be involved in these discussions.

3 Guidelines are not provided for Dedicated Busway, Express Bus with Transit Advantages, or Streetcar. Dedicated Busway and Express Bus with Transit Advantages are transitway modes recognized in the Transportation Policy Plan (TPP). Streetcars are not yet recognized in the TPP because their application in the region requires additional study.

4 For Table 10-1, Highway BRT Station-to-station and Express services should be considered as part of a Highway BRT transitway as a whole but the various elements may apply differently by service type