



Regional Transitway Guidelines

Twin Cities Region

Publication no. 35-12-006



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Table of Metropolitan Council Actions on Transitway Guidelines

Action	Date
Original Adoption	February 2012
Amended Section 6.1 – added references to new state law relating to light rail vehicle design.	February 2015
Amended Section 5.1 – added guideline language on light rail transit noise mitigation.	March 2016



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. GUIDELINES PURPOSE

The purpose of the Regional Transitway Guidelines is to provide technical guidance, based in best practices, that supports the development and operation of transitways in a way that is **consistent, equitable, and efficient**, and delivers an **effective, integrated, and user-friendly** transit system throughout the Twin Cities region. Several important developments in the metro area transit system led to the Regional Transitway Guidelines process:

- **The region's growing transitway system.** The region's transitway system is growing quickly and the region has learned a great deal from the implementation of the first commuter rail and light rail lines. Those lessons will help to guide the implementation of future transitways. This is important for leveraging future investments, for proceeding efficiently through planning and design (not reinventing the wheel each time), and for achieving the regional goal of doubling ridership by 2030.
- **Multiple agencies involved in transitway implementation.** There are multiple agencies involved in planning and implementing transitways in the Twin Cities region. Local governments, particularly counties and regional railroad authorities, play a lead role in the planning of transitway corridors and recommending locally preferred alternatives. The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), Metropolitan Council and Metro Transit, Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB), counties, and cities are involved in the funding, design, and construction of transitway facilities and services. There are also several agencies involved in transitway operations. As the region moves toward implementation of multiple transitway corridors, it is important that the assumptions used to plan transitways and the decisions made to implement them are consistent and equitable throughout the region.
- **The region is taking initial steps to implement BRT.** The region is implementing its first bus rapid transit (BRT) corridors in which a family of services will operate. These corridors also have the flexibility to be implemented in phases as ridership develops over time. While this can be beneficial from a funding perspective, it can lead to confusion about what constitutes BRT service and BRT facilities and the appropriate timing of implementation in phases.
- **Better alignment of transit, land use planning and sustainable communities.** The Metropolitan Council is in the process of developing a new model for transitway development, through the HUD Sustainable Communities Grant / Corridors of Opportunity initiative, by aligning transit planning and engineering with land use planning, affordable housing, workforce development and economic development. The Transitway Guidelines will clarify transit planning and engineering factors and demonstrate their linkage to land use initiatives in transitway corridors. The Metropolitan Council's Guide for Transit-Oriented Development is a companion document to the Transitway Guidelines and addresses land use planning guidance.

The document is organized with the guidelines highlighted in callout boxes. The text following the highlighted guideline provides additional explanation and supporting documentation related to that guideline.



1.2. GUIDELINES DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The Transitway Guidelines were developed based on existing practices, best practices in other regions, and input from stakeholder groups including the Transitway Guidelines Advisory Committee, the Transitway Guidelines Technical Committees, and Metropolitan Council and Metro Transit senior staff.

The Transitway Guidelines address four transitway modes: (1) Commuter Rail, (2) Light Rail Transit (LRT), (3) Highway BRT, and (4) Arterial BRT. Where BRT is used in the document, the guidelines apply to both Highway and Arterial BRT. Where guidelines are unique to one or the other, the terminology Highway BRT or Arterial BRT is used. More detail on the definitions of these modes can be found in the long-range Transportation Policy Plan (TPP). The Transitway Guidelines currently do *not* directly address Express Bus with Transit Advantages, Dedicated Busway, or Streetcar modes. However, transitway projects in planning stages where these modes are being considered can use the general information in the Transitway Guidelines as a basis for decision-making.

During the development of the Transitway Guidelines, several topics of discussion were raised that are not included in this document. These topics may be addressed in the Transitway Guidelines in the future as the need for them and the technical basis is more developed. These topics include:

- Modes not addressed including Dedicated Busway, Express Bus with Transit Advantages, and Streetcar
- Findings from the *Arterial Transitway Corridor Study* to be completed in early 2012
- Additional detail on the relationship between land use and transitways, specifically focusing on transit-oriented development or redevelopment along transitway corridors

The Metropolitan Council will periodically amend the Transitway Guidelines as best practices evolve over time. Stakeholder agencies will be notified when an update is planned and will be involved in the amendment process. Stakeholder agencies are encouraged to share information about new best practices with Council staff as they become known.

More information on the initial development of the Transitway Guidelines can be found in the Transitway Guidelines Technical Report. A list of additional resources is provided at the end of this document.

1.3. DEVIATIONS FROM THE GUIDELINES

The Regional Transitway Guidelines are meant to guide transitway project implementation in a consistent, equitable, and efficient manner throughout the Twin Cities region. As such, proposed deviations from the Transitway Guidelines that have significant cost and/or operation implications should be scrutinized by the regional funding partners to ensure that development of transitways is consistent across similar projects.

Guideline 10.10 Deviations from Transitway Guidelines addresses the process for assessing deviations from the Transitway Guidelines.



Deviations from the Regional Transitway Guidelines that have significant cost and/or operation 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.