

CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS

# Nicollet Mall and downtown transit improvements

Metropolitan Council  
Equity Advisory Committee

# Topics for today

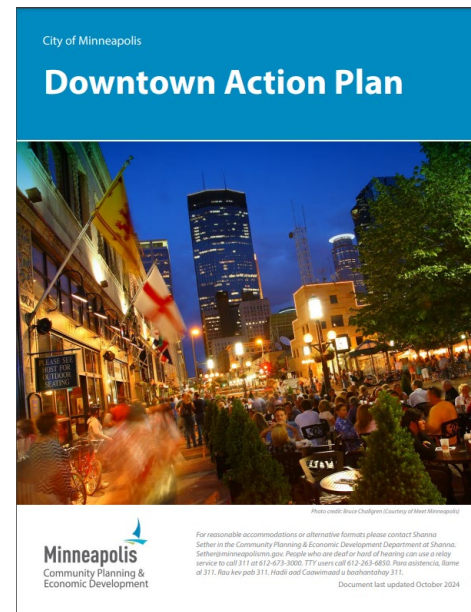
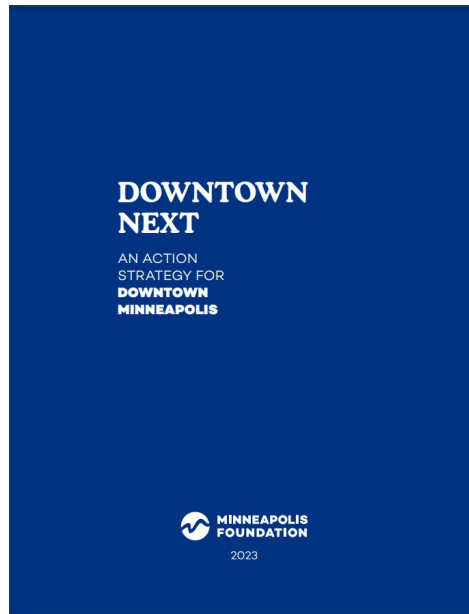
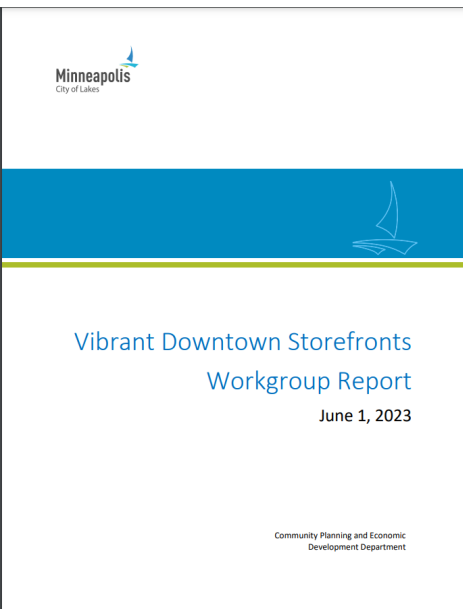
1. Project impetus + timeline
2. Phase 1 engagement results
3. 3 transit options
4. Phase 2 engagement
5. Nicollet Mall
6. Next steps
7. Discussion

# Project impetus

1. City vision for pedestrianized Nicollet Mall
2. Supported via City-led and outside-initiated efforts
3. City-backed policy initiative for improved transit downtown



# Momentum for a pedestrianized Nicollet Mall



*Happening now: Elevate Nicollet into a more dynamic place that puts people first*

*Evaluate the future of Nicollet Mall as a pedestrian-only zone - Explore alternative options for transit service elsewhere through downtown. Engage stakeholders to understand full range of impacts.*

*PEOPLE-CENTRIC NICOLLET MALL: A reimagined activated walkway with 24/7/365 must-see, hyper-local experiences connecting all the new places and users in downtown's core.*

*July 2024-2026: Elevate Nicollet Mall to a community-centered pedestrianized main street by creating a plan for future activation, placemaking, programing, beautification, and infrastructure needs that enhance community connection, fun and play.*

# City policy



Minneapolis  
City of Lakes

CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS

## Transportation Action Plan

December 4, 2020



## STRATEGY 2

Increase the speed and reliability of transit.

### Transit 2.4 **DO**

Improve transit speed and reliability throughout downtown; focus on Nicollet Mall and Marquette/2nd Avenue operations first.

Supported goals:



Climate



Equity



Prosperity



Mobility



Active Partnerships

Difficulty:

**High**

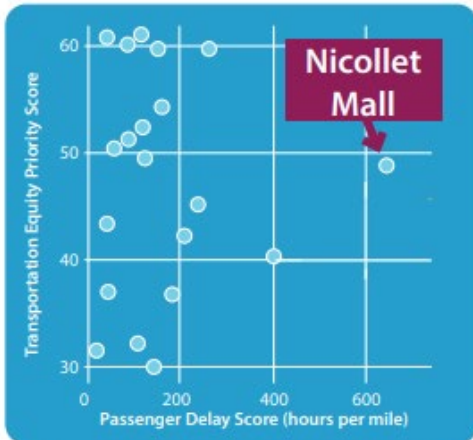
Timeframe:

2020-2023 (Years 0-3)

Status:

On-going

# Nicollet Mall transit today



Source: Metro Transit, Fall 2023 route data; and City of Minneapolis TEP score data.

This chart shows Nicollet Mall is an outlier in Minneapolis, with both a high Passenger Delay Score and high Transportation Equity Priority Score.



## Transit Corridor Snapshot

### Nicollet Mall

**Transit Routes**

5

**Buses per Day**

654

**Average Speed**

5 mph  
(10 mph speed limit)

## Demographic Profile

### Nicollet Mall Transit Riders

**Total Riders per Day**  
*(getting on and off)*

11,700

**Experiencing poverty**

41%

Household income below:

**\$35,000 per year**

42%

**\$60,000 per year**

58%

**No household vehicle**

63%

**With a disability**

18%

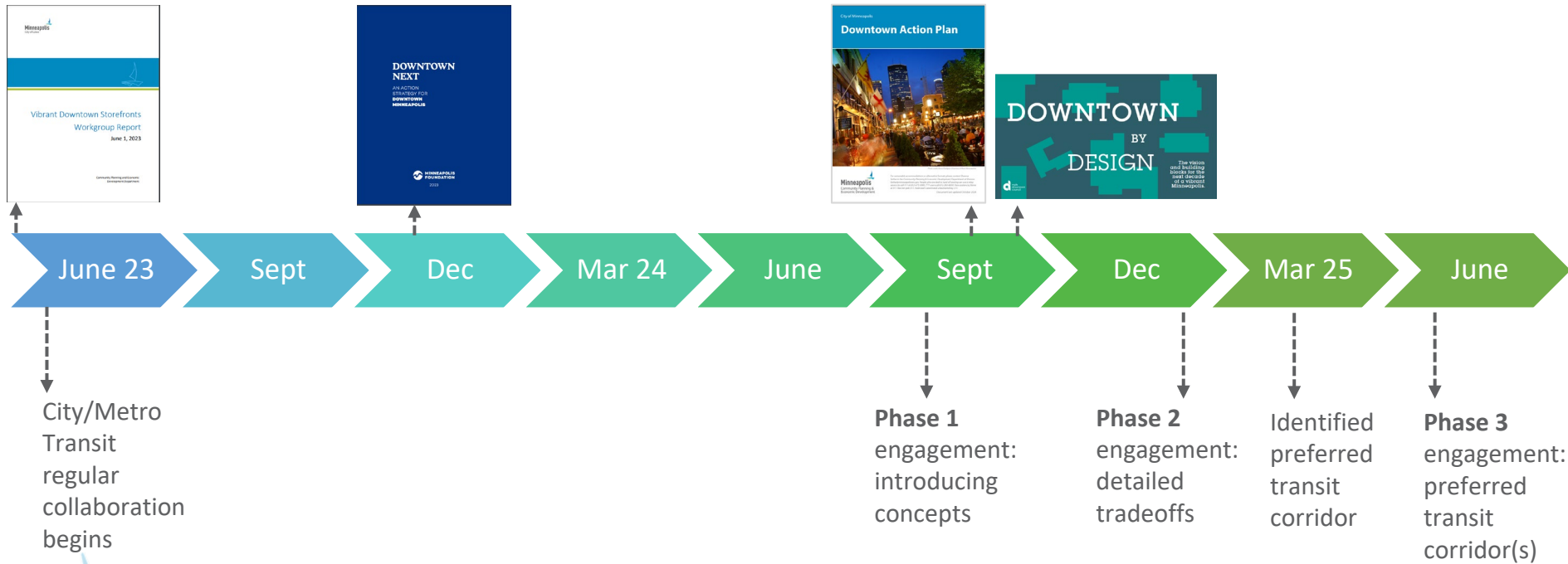
**Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)**

58%

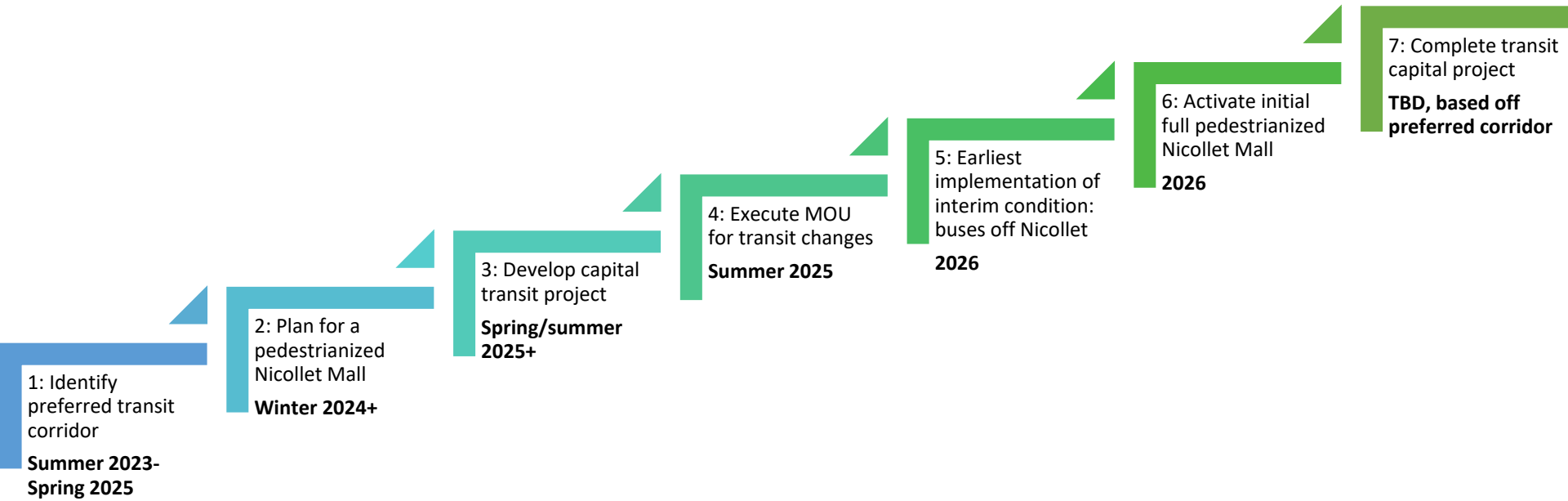
**Male**

52%

# Project timeline



# Project timeline





# Project goals

- **Improve downtown transit**
  - Improve the speed and reliability of downtown transit service
  - Provide convenient, safe, and comfortable access to destinations
  - Provide waiting experience that is safe, comfortable, and clean
  - Provide a transit experience that is simple and easy to use
  - Plan for growth of local, express, and future bus rapid transit (BRT) service in downtown
- **Increase downtown vibrancy**
  - Improve walking, rolling, biking, and transit to and within downtown
  - Increase greening to support a comfortable experience
  - Improve curb space for activation and access
  - Maintain parking and delivery access to buildings on new routes
  - Improve perceived and real safety on the street

*Transit as good or better than what exists on Nicollet Mall today.*

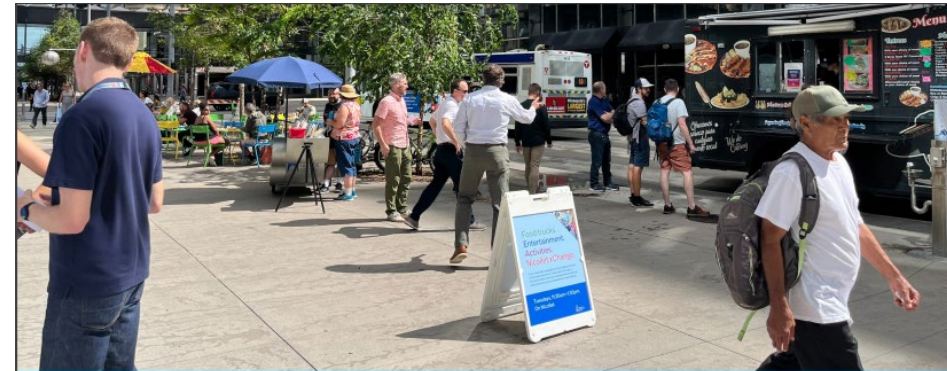
# Phase 1 activities

- Survey: 1,780 responses
  - August 26 – October 22
- Pop ups on Nicollet Mall
  - August 27 & 29
- Bus stop/onboard bus outreach – 35 shifts
  - Month of September
- Great Day in Transit
  - 70-100 Metro Transit volunteers throughout downtown
  - September 18: 6 AM – 10 PM
- Presentations
  - City Council and Metropolitan Council
  - BAC/PAC non-engineering joint meeting
- Open House: Downtown Central Library
  - September 24: 4 – 6 pm
- Promotions
  - Project webpage
  - City and Metro Transit social media outreach
  - Email outreach to 117 key stakeholders
  - Signs at select transit stops
  - Rider alerts



# Phase 1 summary

- 5 page document on [website](#)
- Two appendices
  - Full survey results including all comments (154 pages)
  - Comment report – summary of themes



## NICOLLET MALL AND DOWNTOWN TRANSIT

Phase 1 Engagement Summary | August-October 2024



### Project & Engagement Overview

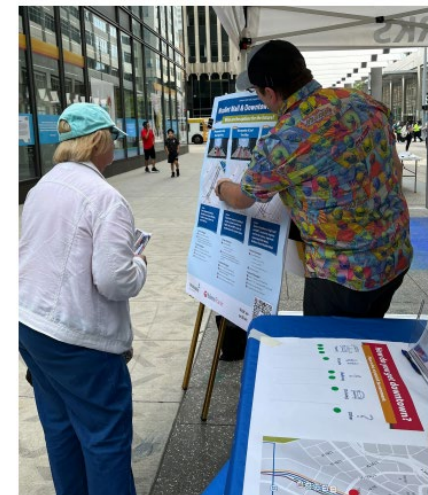
*The City of Minneapolis is relocating transit off Nicollet Mall to enhance downtown transit service and create a more dynamic Nicollet Mall.*

This City-led project is informed by existing City transportation policy and recent recommendations for downtown vibrancy. Mayor Jacob Frey created the Vibrant Downtown Storefronts Workgroup in December 2022, as a response to the increase in vacant storefronts in the downtown core.

The objective of the project is to make transit as good or better than it is today on Nicollet Mall. This work has two goals: to improve downtown transit and increase downtown vibrancy.

Three options for moving transit service have been developed in partnership between the City of Minneapolis and Metro Transit.

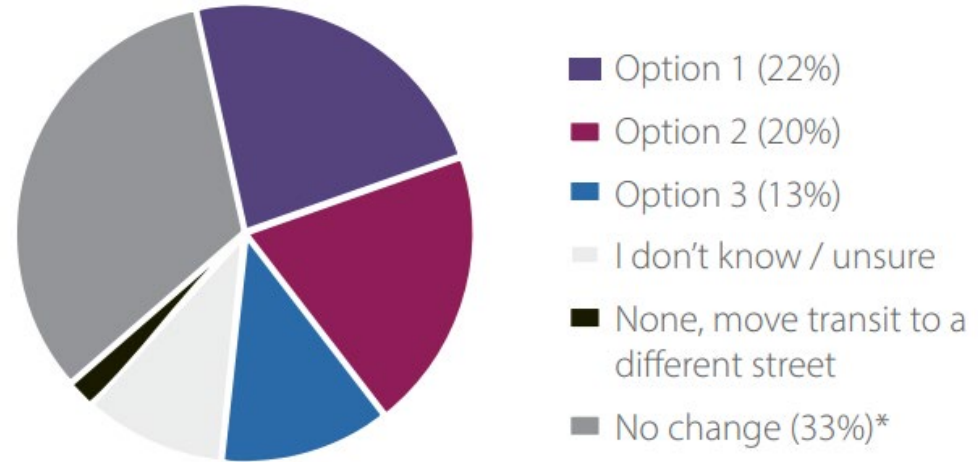
Phase 1 of Nicollet Mall & Downtown Transit Engagement focused on introducing the project to the public and seeking feedback on the three options under consideration for relocation of downtown transit routes. Input received will inform the analysis approach and frame further technical data to compare the options in Phase 2. Future engagement will address tradeoffs between the options and visioning for a pedestrianized Nicollet Mall.



## WHICH OPTION DO YOU LIKE BEST?

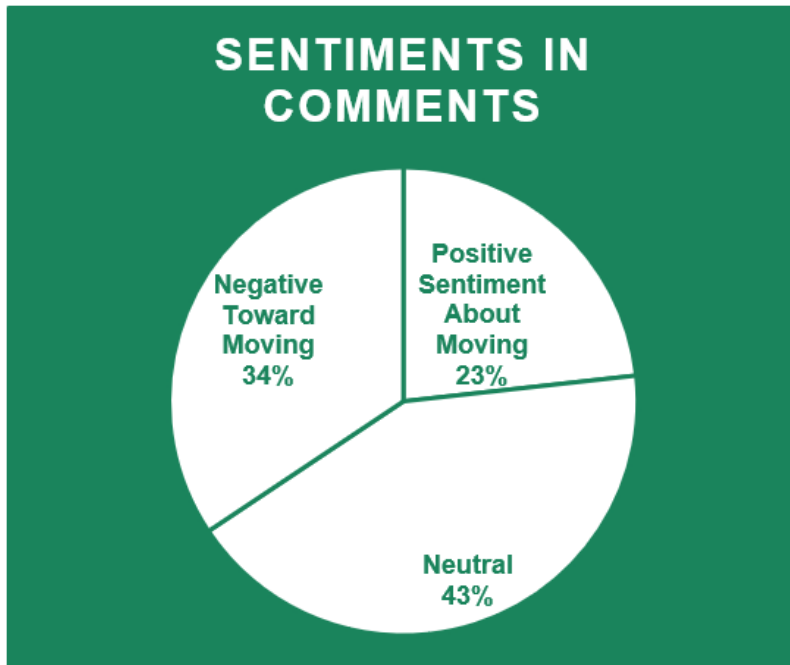
# Mixed reaction

- Lots of uncertainty
- Mixed support for 3 options
  - Option 1: Mar2 one-way pair
  - Option 2: Marq2 two way
  - Option 3: 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave

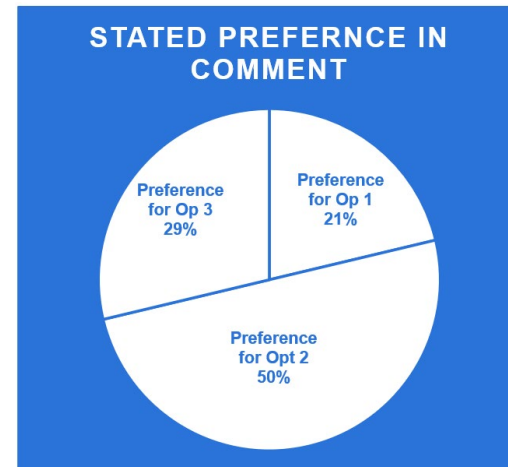


\*People who use Nicollet Mall and transit every day or a few times a week are overrepresented in selecting the "No change" option.

**Responses to direct question in survey  
(1,279 responses)**



**Preferences expressed in open ended comments  
(882 preferences expressed in 948 comments)**



**Preferences expressed in open ended comments  
(94 preferences expressed in 948 comments)**

# What we heard: top themes

## 1 | Distance to Destinations

The walking distance to destinations is a top priority for transit riders. Many riders are concerned with moving transit further from key destinations like Target, the library, and clinics.

*"We are nurses at the clinic on Nicollet and lots of other people work on Nicollet. Our patients rely on easy access to the services at our clinic and many of them have mobility issues that would make it hard to go further."*

## 2 | Pedestrian First Street

People shared excitement for a vision for a pedestrianized street in downtown Minneapolis.

*"Buses absolutely need to be removed from Nicollet in order to bring vibrancy back to that street."*

*"Get buses off Nicollet Mall to make it more pedestrian-friendly as other major cities have done."*

## 3 | Familiar & Convenient

People like the way Nicollet Mall operates today with familiar bus routes and easy access to downtown places.

*"Like how it is now - it's convenient. You can't control how fast the bus comes, I'm not really sure it'd be faster on these other streets with the traffic and everything."*

#### 4 | Bus Riders Help Nicollet Mall

People see bus riders as foot traffic that supports Nicollet Mall vibrancy. There is concern that removing bus routes and bus riders from Nicollet would affect safety by diminishing activity on the Mall.

*“On weekends no one is here without the bus. Bus keeps Nicollet busy. Without it, Nicollet would get dangerous after 5pm after office workers leave and on the weekends.”*

#### 5 | Address Negative Activity

A top concern with Nicollet Mall today is the presence of negative activity, and there's desire to address that to bring vibrancy downtown.

*“It's a good effort, but how would that not just increase the actual issues of no one being down here and all this bad stuff being here?”*

#### 6 | Places on Transit Route

The top concern with the new transit corridors centered on the lack of service and retail destinations on Marquette, 2nd, and 3rd Avenues.

*“People are not traveling to the areas in Options 1, 2, or 3--they need to get along Hennepin, Nicollet, the streets between... If you don't put transit where the people are and where they want to go, then it's gonna fail.”*

## 7 | Nicollet Future Needs Retail

The most popular desire for the future of Nicollet Mall is the addition of more ground floor retail.

*“Nicollet Mall provides people no reason to visit currently - not enough shops, restaurants, green space. And one off festivals won't do the trick or create a sustainable model for downtown life. Focus on developing small businesses and housing and people will gladly mill about in the area.”*

## 8 | Transit Improvement Options

Many comments on improving transit speed downtown voiced support for additional transit signal priority measures or light timing.

*“What about transit signal priority? Not currently on Nicollet. We should try more on Nicollet before moving the busses.”*

## 9 | Improve Safety

People want to see safety improved broadly - in downtown, on Nicollet Mall, on transit, and at transit stops. Many commenters noted that streets with more people on them feel safer.

*“I have visited Nicollet Mall with the buses present, and also at times that the buses were detoured away and am sure that I always felt safer and more welcome with the buses present.”*

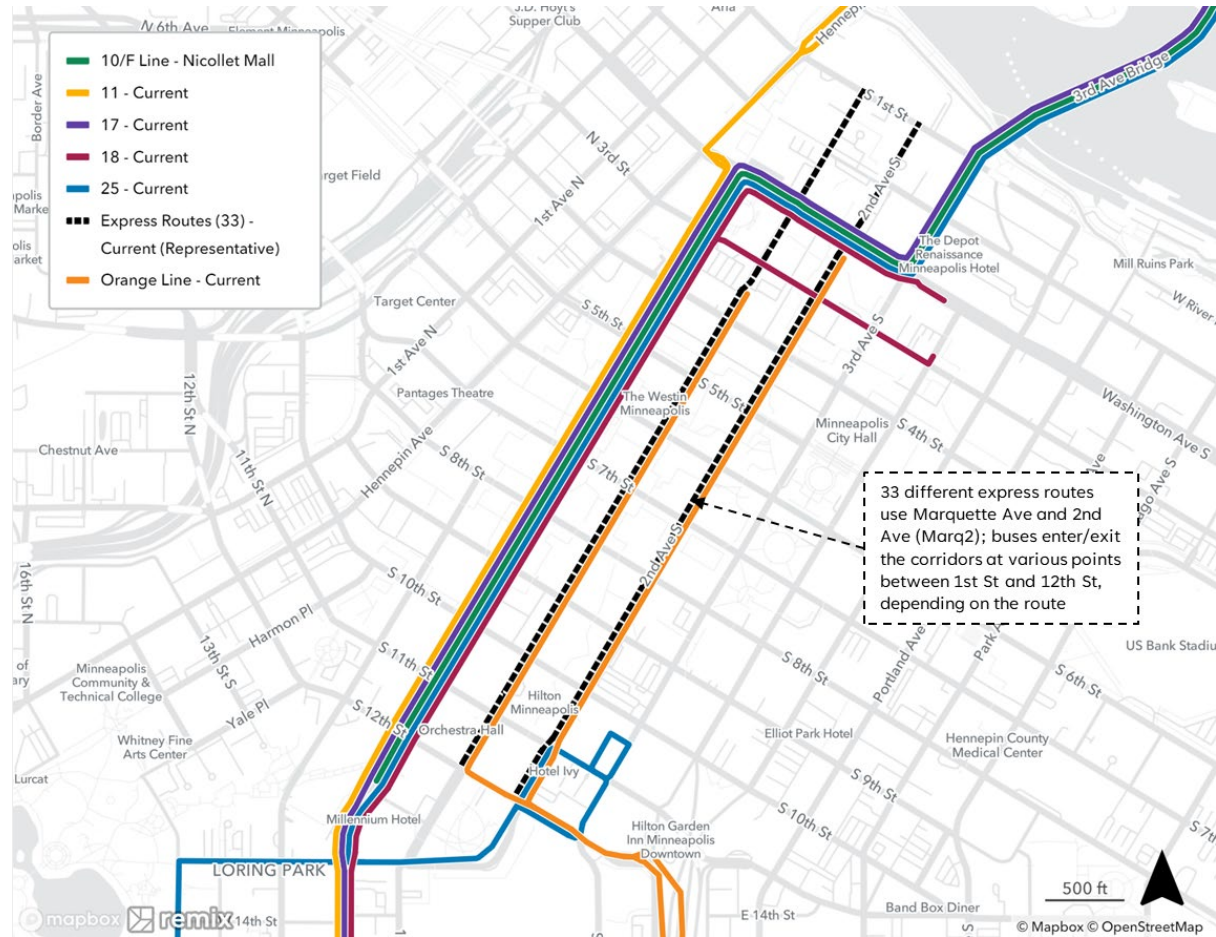
# 3 options to move transit

- 3 options
  - Marquette and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenues: one-way pair
  - Marquette and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenues: two way
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue: two way
- In all options routes 11 and 25 move to Hennepin Avenue
- Focus is on where routes 10 (future F Line), 17 and 18 (future Nicollet BRT) move to



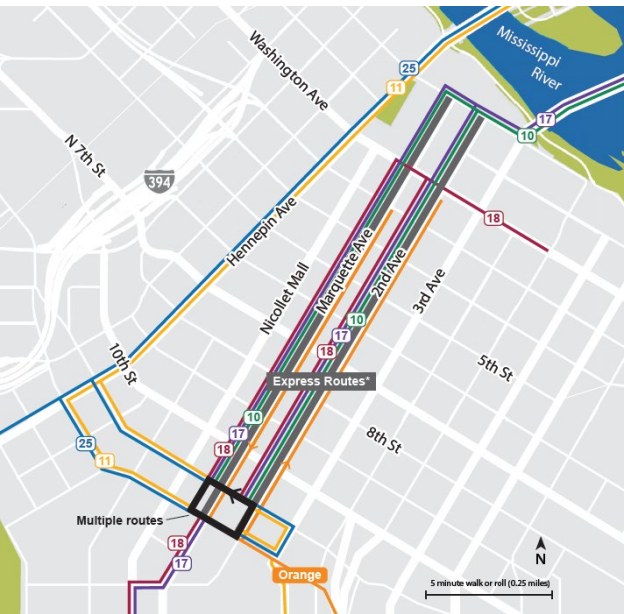
# Current Nicollet/Marq2 transit

- 10 (future F Line), 11, 17, 18, and 25 serve same stops along Nicollet Mall
- Orange Line + 33 express routes on Marq2
  - Southbound on Marquette
  - Northbound on 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave



# 3 transit options under consideration

**Option 1: Marquette and 2nd Ave – One way pair**



**Option 2: Marquette and 2nd Ave – Two way**

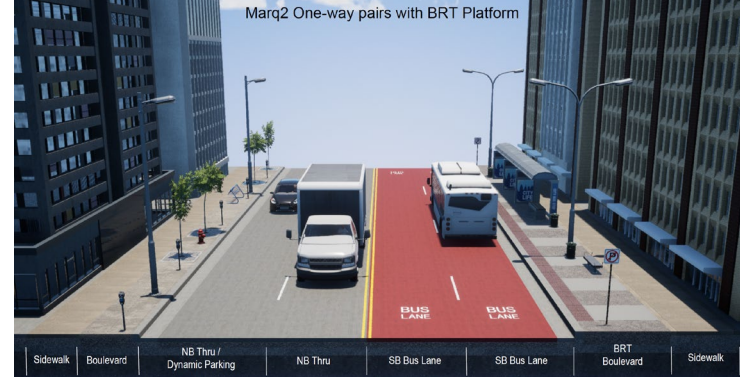


**Option 3: 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave – Two way**



# Marq2 one-way pair

*Concepts draft; dimensions not final  
Graphics for illustrative purposes only*

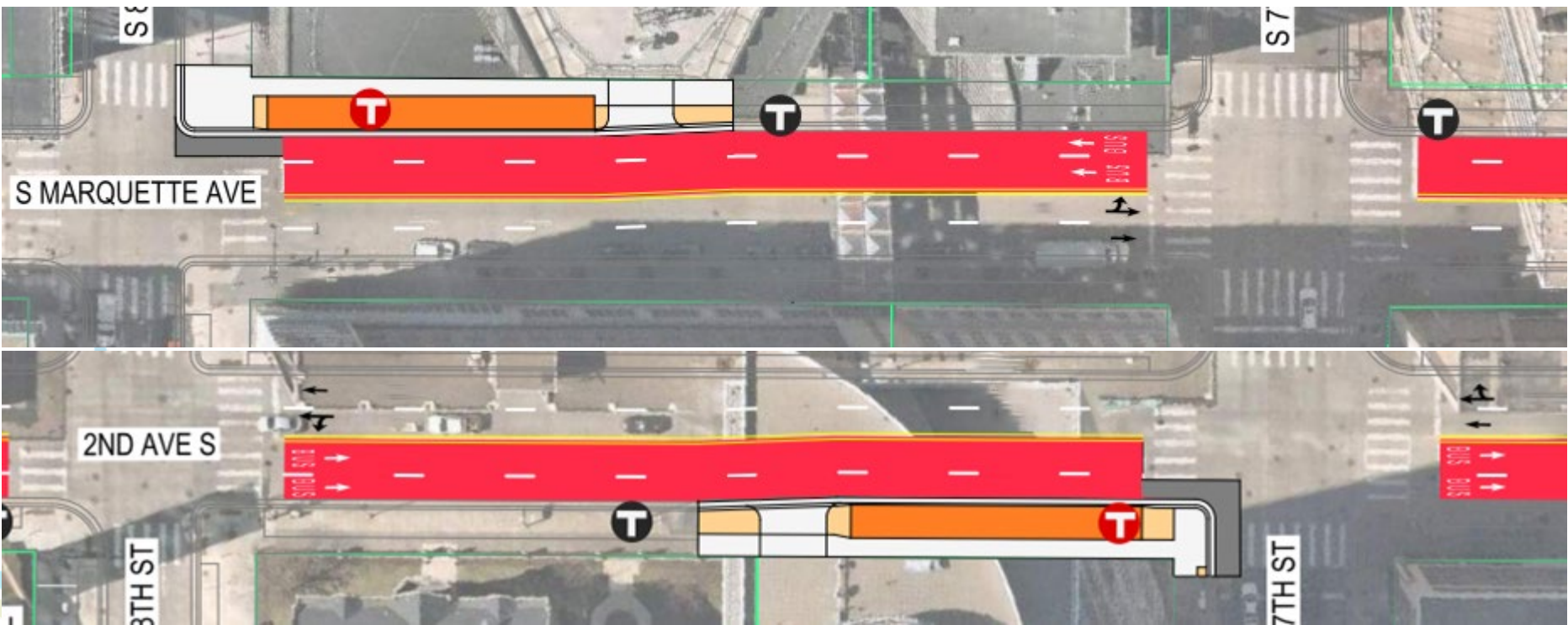


## Proposed changes:

- Lanes painted red
- BRT stops added

## Major impacts:

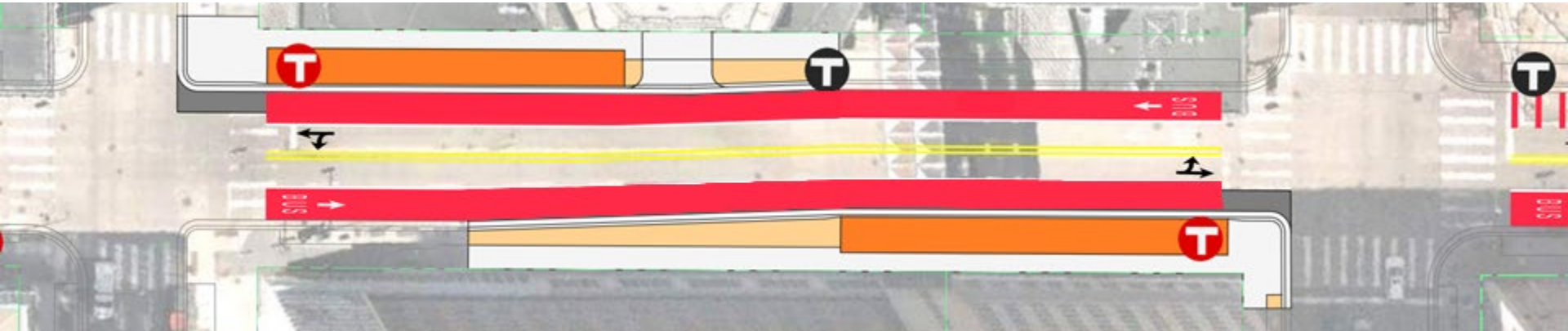
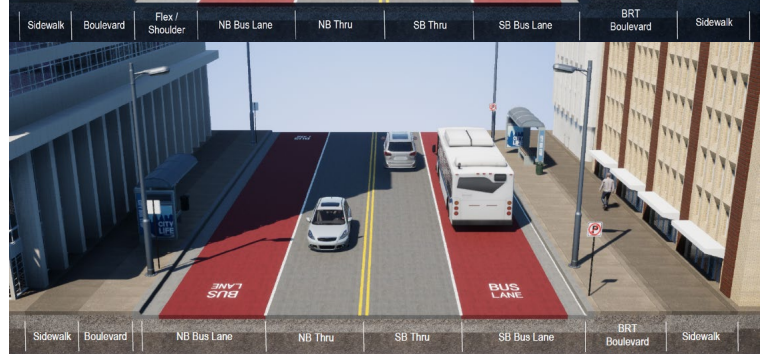
- Express stops consolidated
- Added station on 7th/8th Streets to minimize walk to BRT stations
- Walk to LRT connections remains longer than other options



# Marq2 two way

*Concepts draft; dimensions not final  
Graphics for illustrative purposes only*

- Proposed changes:
  - BRT/local service on Marquette; Express service to 2<sup>nd</sup>;
  - Two transit lanes on each corridor
- Major impacts:
  - Parking removal on Marquette; reduction on 2<sup>nd</sup>
  - Major curb work on Marquette
  - Express service on 2nd Avenue likely slower than today
  - Smaller/narrower shelters required on west side of 2nd Avenue

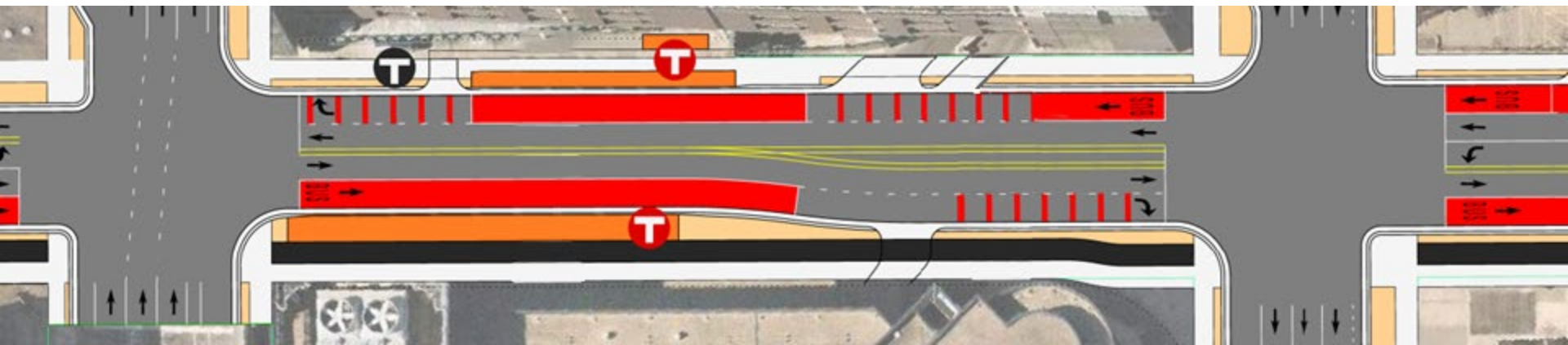


# 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave

*Concepts draft; dimensions not final  
Graphics for illustrative purposes only*



- Proposed changes:
  - Two new bus-only lanes
  - Reduction in general purpose lanes to one-thru and spot left turn
  - Behind the curb 2-way bikeway
- Major impacts:
  - Loss of most parking bays
  - ROW easements needed for pedestrian throughway
  - Limited boulevard space
  - Longer walk to most common destinations for Nicollet Mall riders
  - Transit riders waiting on street with limited other uses and pedestrian activity through all times of day



# Local transit impacts

- Local transit service on each option is likely faster and more reliable than on Nicollet Mall
  - Average time to travel through downtown anticipated to be ~40% faster (6 min. compared to 10 min.)
  - Travel times are expected to be more consistent and reliable
- Transit service on each option will no longer be regularly detoured due to events on Nicollet Mall, leading to a more consistent experience for riders



# Express transit impacts

- Option 1:
  - Operations continue similar to today
  - Express stops consolidated to make room for new BRT stations
- Option 2:
  - All express service moves to 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue (Orange Line to Marquette)
  - West side of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue has narrower sidewalks than current west side of Marquette
- Option 3:
  - Express service stops and operations same as today



# Phase 2 engagement: Dec

- Business outreach
  - MDC
  - BOMA
  - Regional Chamber
- Holiday pop up





# January engagement

- Neighborhood organizations
  - DMNA - Jan 7 Land Use Committee
  - Elliot Park – Jan 8 Land Use + Transpo. Comm.; Jan 27 Board meeting
  - Loring Park – Jan 9 Community Safety Committee
  - Stevens Square – Jan 16 Neighborhood Dev. Comm.
  - North Loop – Jan 29 Annual meeting table/pop up
- Open houses
  - 1 virtual – Jan 21
  - 2 in person – Jan 22 at Central Library; Jan 28 at IDS Crystal Court
- Pop ups
  - Downtown Tuesdays – Jan 14
  - Atrium apartments – Jan 14
  - At specific spots with high transit ridership
- Intercept surveys
  - On board and at stations – T/W/Ths – all 4 weeks of Jan
- Advisory Committees
  - City: Pedestrian (1/9) + Bicycle Advisory Committees (1/7); MACOPD (1/15)
  - Met Council: Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee (2/5) and Equity Advisory Committee (1/21)
- Met Council Transportation Committee Jan 27



# Nicollet Mall

City of Minneapolis

## Downtown Action Plan



**Minneapolis**  
Community Planning & Economic Development

For reasons  
Sethler in the  
Sethler@mncity  
service to call  
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### New Initiatives

#### INITIATIVE: Activate the Streets, Sidewalks, and Alleys

*Strategy #1: Elevate Nicollet Mall to a community-centered pedestrianized main street by creating a plan for future activation, placemaking, programming, beautification, and infrastructure needs that enhance community connection, fun and play.*

**Timeframe:** July 2024 - 2026

**Action Step:** The Mayor will create a public and private workgroup to plan for the future of Nicollet Mall, with the following objectives:

- Establish a tactical plan for placemaking and programming of a fully pedestrianized Nicollet Mall.
- Collaborate and strategize on storefront activation, skyway use, and wayfinding.
- Identify opportunities and target areas for investment along Nicollet Mall.
- Identify innovative strategies and opportunities for marketing Nicollet Mall.
- Generate a long-term infrastructure plan for improvements, including but not limited to, green infrastructure, ice skating, and additional landscaping.

#### City Departments:

- Public Works
- Arts and Cultural Affairs
- Community Planning and Economic Development

#### Partners and Stakeholders:

- Metro Transit
- Minneapolis Foundation
- Minneapolis Downtown Council
- Downtown Improvement District
- Meet Minneapolis
- Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Minneapolis Building Owners and Managers Association
- Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association
- Target

#### Success Metrics:

- New activations, festivals, and street fairs along Nicollet Mall.
- Reduced residential, commercial, and office vacancies along Nicollet Mall.
- Improved economic landscape, including reduction in distressed sales, short sales, and foreclosures.
- Increased tax revenue generated by downtown properties and businesses.
- New development and investments downtown.

### HAPPENING NOW

## Elevate Nicollet into a more dynamic place that puts people first.

#### WELCOME TO MINNESOTA'S LIVING ROOM.

Hold on to your hat, Mary Tyler Moore - this is actually happening. Raised up by the 2025 Plan as a "must-see destination" and discussed and modified with the best of intentions for two generations before that, it's Nicollet Mall's time to rise. The primary reason? The change from a M-F 9-5 audience with a little nightlife to an evolving, omnipresent mix of folks living, working, and playing downtown.

This plan envisions responding to that mix in a way only Nicollet Mall can: as an indoor-outdoor "living room" for all.

Nicollet Mall is a natural connector, but also has many positives of a pedestrian-friendly asset. We feel confident advocating for this change in the near term for the following four reasons:

- Our current Nicollet Mall has had a string of successes we can build upon:
  - Strong financial support from public and private sources.
  - Enhanced streetscape elements like trees and beds, plan seating.
- Programming like Downtown Thursdays, Nicollet xChange, Street Show, the Aquatennial parade, and the Downtown Minneapolis Street Art Festival.
- Special events like the Olympics gymnastics trials activations and Taste of MN.

- GUIDING PRINCIPLES:**
- Connected and Represented Community
  - Sustainability
  - Uniquely Downtown Minneapolis

"Nicollet Mall is the heart of our city, and its future reflects our shared vision of a vibrant, welcoming, and accessible downtown - a place where people gather, connect, and enjoy the best Minneapolis has to offer."

- Mayor Jacob Frey



- Nicollet's recent redesign has great elements to build on:
  - Continuous 10-foot-wide walkways along the buildings inspired by the original Lawrence Halprin 1967 design - this continuity is rare, and accessibility advocates regularly cheer it.
  - Hundreds of trees finding their footing and growing into their own.
  - A design that supports wildly popular sidewalk cafes.
  - A flexible streetscape that supports major events.
  - The most public art of any street in the city.
  - Large planting beds at the north and south end.

- The physical updates needed to go fully pedestrian and become "Minnesota's living room" seem tantalizingly doable.
  - In the near term:
    - Convert the transit shelters to serve other purposes.
    - Add decorative fencing around planting beds.
    - Remove pavement and grates around trees.
    - Retrofit the Theater in the Round with design concepts already in hand.

- In the longer term:
- Removable bollards for blocking vehicle access (while preserving emergency and operational access).
  - Dog park.
  - Secure bike storage.
  - More dedicated space for sidewalk cafes.
  - Water fountains.
  - Enhanced power sources.
  - More public seating.
  - Better public restroom access.

- Budgeting for this living room remodel is doable, too.
  - We already raise hundreds of thousands of dollars from private sources to activate Nicollet with free programming in the summer.
  - The mayor has proposed significant funding for activating Nicollet further in coming years.
  - Funding for capital improvements can be relatively minor by focusing on high-impact changes.
  - Property owners will feel more supportive of funding activations on their ground-floor spaces and the sidewalks outside of them with these commitments flowing.

#### What to watch for:

- Leadership from the City of Minneapolis.
- Coordination with Metro Transit.
- Advocacy for the funding needed to make this vision a reality.
- Ongoing community engagement.
- Realistic assessments of what's possible physically and financially.
- Lift up what's already happening.
- A strong focus on the needs of residents, workers, and visitors.

#### Critical partners:

City of Minneapolis Public Works  
City of Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development  
Minneapolis Police Department  
Metro Transit  
Nicollet property and business owners  
Property and business owners on corridors that would get more bus routes with this change  
Meet Minneapolis  
Minnesota Sports and Events



# Anticipated next steps

- January engagement events
- Spring decision on preferred corridor(s) for transit
- ~April open houses – phase 3
- Earliest implementation of interim condition/buses off Nicollet – 2026



# Join our mailing list and take the new survey

- Take the online survey through 1/31/25

- <https://linktr.ee/downtowntransit>

- Or via QR code:



- Join our project mailing list

- [Minneapolis.mn.gov/downtown-transit-changes](https://minneapolis.mn.gov/downtown-transit-changes)

- Or via QR code:



# Three open houses

## Online, Tuesday, January 21, 2025

- 12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.
- Meeting details can be found on the project website:

[minneapolismn.gov/downtown-transit-changes](https://minneapolismn.gov/downtown-transit-changes)

## In-person, Wednesday, January 22, 2025

- 4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
- Minneapolis Central Library, Atrium
- 300 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis, MN 55401

## In-person, Tuesday, January 28, 2025

- 12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.
- Crystal Court at IDS Center
- 717 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis, MN 55402



# Thank you!

## Discussion/questions

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City of Minneapolis

