

Central Corridor Transit Study

Public Involvement in the Pre-Concept Plan Phase of the Planning Process

Metro Transit

INTRODUCTION: STUDY PURPOSE AND PROCESS

The Central Corridor light-rail transit (LRT) project will open in 2014 and operate between downtown Minneapolis and downtown St. Paul, serving the University of Minnesota and University Avenue corridor. The new line – known as the METRO Green Line – is expected to provide an estimated 13.2 million annual rides by 2030 and models project that about 40 percent of Green Line customers will ride bus service to LRT stations.

Prior to implementation of Green Line LRT service, Metro Transit is conducting a study of bus service in the Central Corridor. The Central Corridor Transit Service Study concept plan report outlines the proposed expansion and integration of the current bus service network with Green Line service to maximize the overall effectiveness and efficiency of transit service in the area and ensure that overall transit service is maintained or improved for neighborhoods along the line.

As part of evaluating existing service and gathering community input for the concept plan, Metro Transit worked with stakeholders, including transit customers and community/neighborhood groups, to share the Central Corridor Transit Service Study objectives, gather feedback on how transit is currently performing and identify opportunities for improvements to transit service. This included gathering data regarding existing travel behaviors in the study area.

The four primary ways used to gather public input for the study were:

1. A series of meetings with neighborhoods and community groups, residents and businesses
2. Three public open houses
3. A public input form on the Metro Transit website
4. Trusted Advocates hired by the District Councils Collaborative of the Saint Paul and Minneapolis (DCC)

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN CONCEPT PLAN DEVELOPMENT

A commitment to community engagement is a guiding principle at Metro Transit and public involvement is at the core of the Central Corridor Transit Service Study. Metro Transit spent significant effort identifying key stakeholders and connecting with the communities of the Central Corridor transit study area to inform development of the concept plan.

Metro Transit met with more than 40 community/neighborhood groups and 700 individuals to review previous transit service restructuring efforts, share the study objectives and gather feedback on how transit is currently performing. This effort brought stakeholders into the planning process at the earliest possible time. In addition, an important piece of the pre-concept plan work included gathering data regarding existing travel behaviors in the study area.

The concept plan reflects travel behavior information and comments about current bus service received from customers and other stakeholders, sought by Metro Transit staff to inform the

plan. Over 3,300 on-line and paper public input forms were received through early May 2012. Additional comments were collected more casually during more than 91 meetings and engagement sessions.

STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

Key stakeholders in the Central Corridor Transit Service Study Area include the Minneapolis neighborhood associations and St. Paul District Councils. The study area includes nine Minneapolis neighborhoods (Marcy Holmes, Downtown East, Downtown West, Loring Park, Elliot Park, Cedar-Riverside, Seward, University, Prospect Park) and twelve St. Paul District Councils (St. Anthony Park, Como, North End, Hamline-Midway, Thomas-Dale, Union Park, Summit-University, Capital River, Macalester-Groveland, Summit Hill, West Seventh and, Highland Park). All of these key stakeholder groups were offered an opportunity to get involved in the Central Corridor Transit Service Study. The following groups received briefings and offered significant input during the pre-concept plan phase of the planning process. This list does not include the work of the District Councils Collaborative of Saint Paul and Minneapolis through the Trusted Advocate Project, which is included in a separate section of this report. A complete list of community, internal and collaborating agency stakeholder meetings is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Stakeholder Outreach

Community Stakeholders	Number of Attendees
Summit Hill (District Council 16) Executive Director, Pedestrian Safety & Traffic Calming Committee Co-Chairs	3
District Councils Collaborative of Saint Paul and Minneapolis (DCC)	16
Southeast Como Improvement Association Annual Meeting	92
Union Park (District Council 13) Board	45
St. Anthony Park / SECIA Environment Committee (Combined)	23
Elliot Park Neighborhood Building, Land Use and Housing Committee	21
University District Alliance	2
Seward Neighborhood Board	20
Summit Hill (District Council 16) Residents hosted by the Pedestrian Safety	12
Hamline-Midway (District Council 11) Board	17
Macalester-Groveland Transportation Committee	15
West Bank Community Coalition	40
Highland Park District Council Transportation Committee	11
Elliot Park Neighborhood Building, Land Use and Housing Committee	31

Internal or Collaborating Advocacy Stakeholders	Number of Attendees
Metro Transit Senior Staff	35
Metropolitan Council Transportation Committee	10
Metro Transit Street Operations/Transit Control Center Supervisors	20
Metro Transit Street Operations Staff	35
Metro Transit Service Development Staff	31

Metro Transit Garage Meetings (5 total)	5-7 (each)
Central Corridor Management Committee	26
St. Paul Communications Committee (CCPO hosts)	12
Central Corridor Project Office Outreach Staff	9
Trusted Advocates (contracted) and DCC Staff	11
Metro Transit Customer Services and Marketing Staff	25
Metro Transit Engineering and Facilities Staff	12
Metro Transit Safety and Security Committee	26
Metropolitan Council Staff (Sector Reps., Communications & Outreach)	8
Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee (TAAC)	8
Transit for Livable Communities Staff	12
University Transportation Services	1
ACTC (St. Thomas, Hamline, St. Cate's, Macalester, Augsburg) Board Staff	1
City of Falcon Heights Planning Staff	2
City of St. Paul Planning and Public Works Staff	5
City of Minneapolis	1
City of Roseville	4
City of Lauderdale	1

OPEN HOUSES

The three open houses presented information on the important aspects of existing demographic data and current transit service within the Central Corridor Transit Study Area. A dot map exercise in which open house attendees placed dots on maps indicating their home, work, and two other commonly traveled destinations helped to start conversations and engage the public in the planning process. Metro Transit staff came away with a few key themes repeated by many open house attendees. First, there was general satisfaction with existing transit service for major destinations such as the University of Minnesota, the two downtowns, and the Midway shopping area. Also, open house attendees mentioned the need to improve evening and weekend service span and frequency in the more peripheral corridors in the study area, as well as existing gaps in north-south transit service in St. Paul. The geographic focus of open house attendees varied by open house location, but these themes were common at each open house.

Figure 2

Open House Location	Open House Date	# of Attendees
Coffman Memorial Union (University of Minnesota)	March 3, 2012	28
Rondo Community Outreach Library (461 N. Dale)	March 8, 2012	28
J.J. Hill Magnet School (998 Selby Ave.)	March 20, 2012	23

PUBLIC INPUT FORM

Paper and on-line versions of the Central Corridor Transit Service input form were created to collect data regarding where people travel within the study area. The input form asked

questions regarding transit utilization, transfers, origin and destination, start and end times, trip purpose, and suggested locations for new transit service. The input form is included at the end of this report as Attachment A, and some of the results are in Attachment B.

PUBLIC INPUT FORM METHODOLOGY

Over 2,500 survey responses listed the University of Minnesota as either an origin or destination. Over half of the trips to the University of Minnesota started outside the study area and would have little impact on transit routes in the study area. In order to focus on the non-University of Minnesota responses, on-line survey responses were filtered into five categories. All paper surveys were included when tabulating results.

1. There were 191 on-line responses with origins and destinations within the study area not associated with the University of Minnesota.
2. There were 56 on-line responses with origins in the study area and destinations at or near the St. Paul campus of the University of Minnesota.
3. There were 1,194 on-line responses with an origin in the study area and a destination at the Minneapolis campus of the University of Minnesota. These responses were coded as "study area to Minneapolis campus".
4. There were 1,482 on-line responses with an origin outside the study area and a destination within it. These responses were coded as "outside to study area".
5. There were 38 on-line responses that had origins and destinations completely outside the study area or were unreadable. These responses were not included in tabulating comments or mapping.

PUBLIC INPUT FORM RESULTS

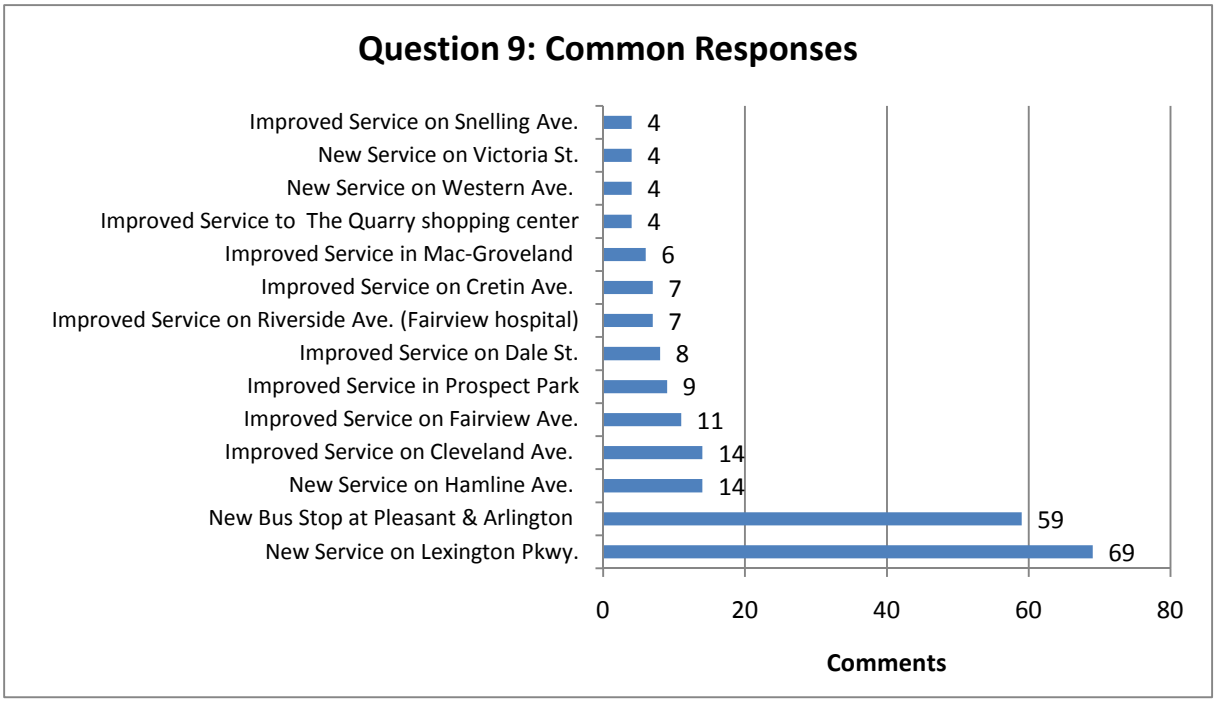
There were over 3,000 responses to the on-line and paper input forms. The on-line survey generated 2,961 responses (some with multiple responses). There were 381 responses from several different types of paper surveys, including some surveys made by Trusted Advocates. Not all respondents answered all the questions or provided origin and destination data.

Over half of all the respondents (about 67%) ride transit to destinations in the study area at least five days a week, while 11% use transit six days a week and 14% use transit every day. Only 3% of respondents indicated that they do not use transit. Around 90% of respondents travel on a weekday, while 16% make trips on Saturdays and 10% travel on Sundays. The seemingly contradictory responses to these two questions indicate a degree of non-traditional working schedules by some respondents. The most commonly referenced bus routes by respondents were the Routes 2, 3, 16/50, 21, 87 and 144. About 44% of respondents transfer at least once and 16% transfer at least twice on their transit trip. Common trip purposes for trips in the study area are school (49%), work (39%), appointments and shopping (5%) and other (7%).

The results from the two open-ended questions are discussed below. A sample of the public input form and more specific detail on the survey responses can be found in figures 3 and 4.

Is there a location in the area currently not served by buses where service should be added?

Figure 3



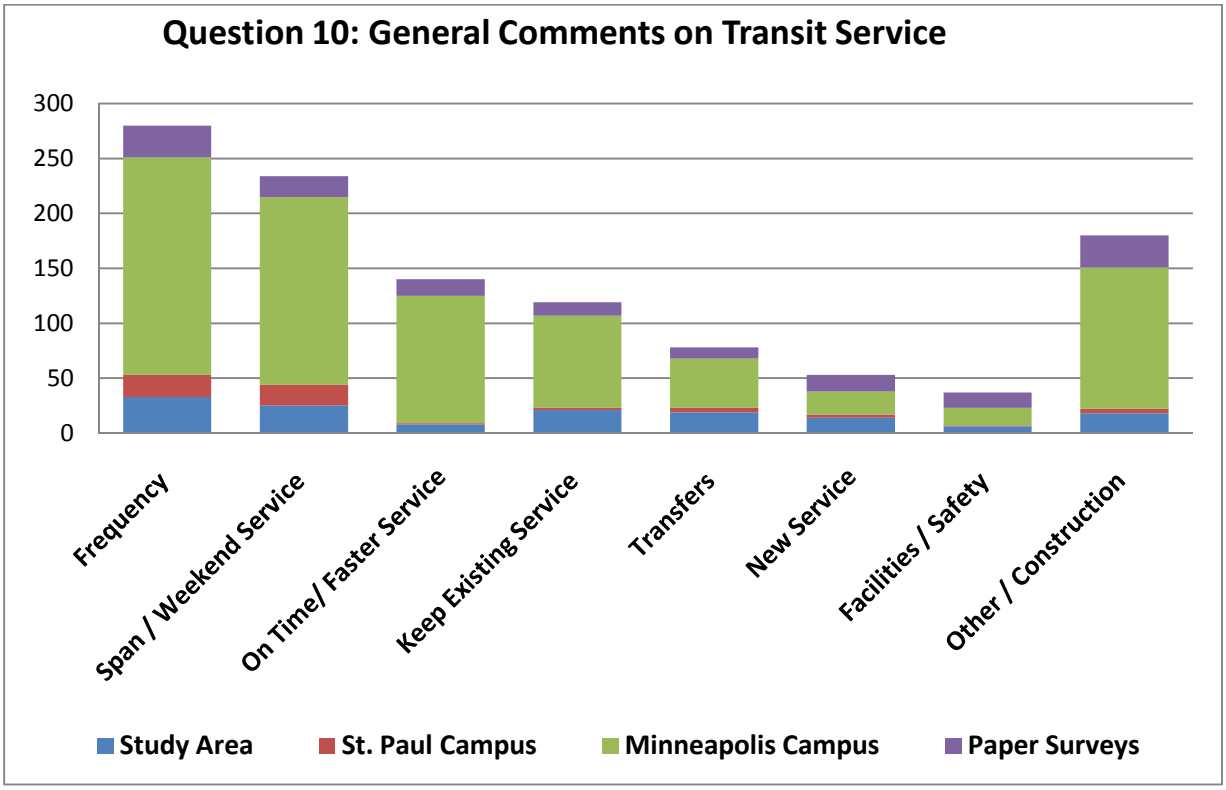
Responses varied from general ideas to specific corridor and bus stop suggestions for improving transit access. Many respondents called for better north-south transit service in St. Paul in general, without naming specific corridors, while some listed many corridors or singled out specific corridors or areas.

The most common location-specific response was to add transit service on Lexington Parkway to connect destinations south of University Avenue or near Como Park with the Green Line. The second most common location-specific comment was for a new bus stop on the U of M's East Bank along Pleasant Street SE between Pillsbury Street SE and the Washington Avenue Bridge.

Other major north-south streets were also noted, ranging from requests to improve existing transit service on Snelling, Dale Street, and Raymond/ Cleveland avenues to requests for new service on streets such as Fairview Avenue, Hamline Avenue, Western Avenue, and Victoria Street. Some respondents specified locations on the U of M campus for new bus stops, including Appleby Hall, the Science Teaching and Student Services building, Smith Hall, Walter Library, and the Scholar's Walk. A smaller number of respondents commented on general areas to improve transit service connectivity, with the most common being the Macalester-Groveland neighborhood in St. Paul.

Please provide any suggestions you have that would help improve bus service in the Central Corridor. For example, is your service frequent enough, go where you wish, go early enough, late enough? Are transfers easy to make?

Figure 4



The most common service improvements were related to frequency of service, more hours of service (including weekends), faster service, better transfer connections, new service, safety, and improved waiting facilities.

Frequency: Frequency was the most common comment type in the on-line public input form. Many respondents specifically mentioned improving the frequency of weekend and evening services. Ninety respondents requested more frequency on routes 2, 3, 6 and 87.

Hours of Service / Weekend Service: Respondents called for increased hours of service and new or improved weekend frequency levels for almost every route in the study area, as well as future light rail service. Common requests include improving weekend service frequency on the Route 3, adding evening and weekend service on routes 87 and 144, and better weekend and late night service on Route 63.

On Time Performance: Another common comment was buses running late, particularly on routes 2, 3 and 16. Many respondents noted the frustration of overcrowded or late buses followed by empty buses or “bus bunching”.

Transfers: Respondents commenting on transfers either noted a difficult existing transfer or emphasized the need for good connections with the Green Line. Ten respondents stated that transfers between the Route 87 and most east-west routes in the study area were badly timed, and several respondents said they would not use transit if forced to transfer between Route 84 and the Green Line rather than use the Route 144.

New Service: Better service at the Huron Station was a common request, as was the desire for a direct, one-seat service between Highland Park, Fort Snelling and the airport. Corridor-specific comments are included in the results for question nine.

Facilities / Safety: Many of the safety comments related to personal safety conditions on buses, but some noted feeling unsafe at bus stops along Snelling and near the Sky Line Towers in St. Paul. Other facilities comments related to winter conditions at bus stops without heated shelters.

A large number of respondents noted satisfaction with existing transit service and coverage, with some noting a reluctance to change service, particularly with Route 16. Many respondents in this category commented on looking forward to the end of light rail construction and the start of Green Line service.

SPATIAL RESULTS

The origins and destinations from input form respondents were mapped and used to identify major trip movements, which helped inform planners draft the Concept Plan Report. All legible paper survey responses were tabulated, and a sample of on-line survey responses were mapped. On-line responses from within the study area were prioritized, but a number of responses with origins outside the study area were also mapped to give planners a context of riders with trips that have transfers in the study area. Figure 5 shows all of the mapped responses, while Figure 6 shows only the respondents whose destination was not the Minneapolis campus of the University of Minnesota.

Figure 5 Origin and Destination Pairing Map (Including the Minneapolis campus of the University of Minnesota)

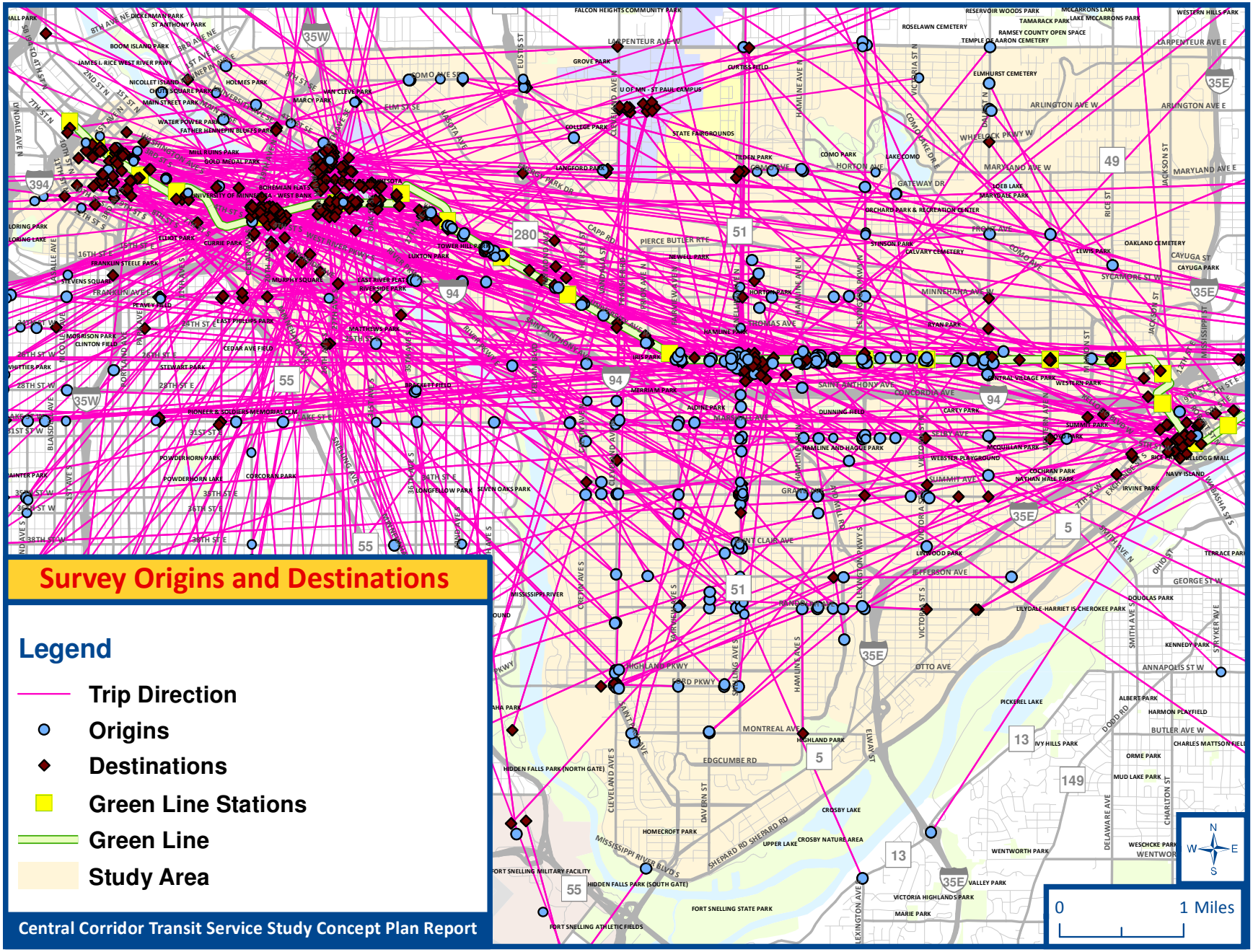
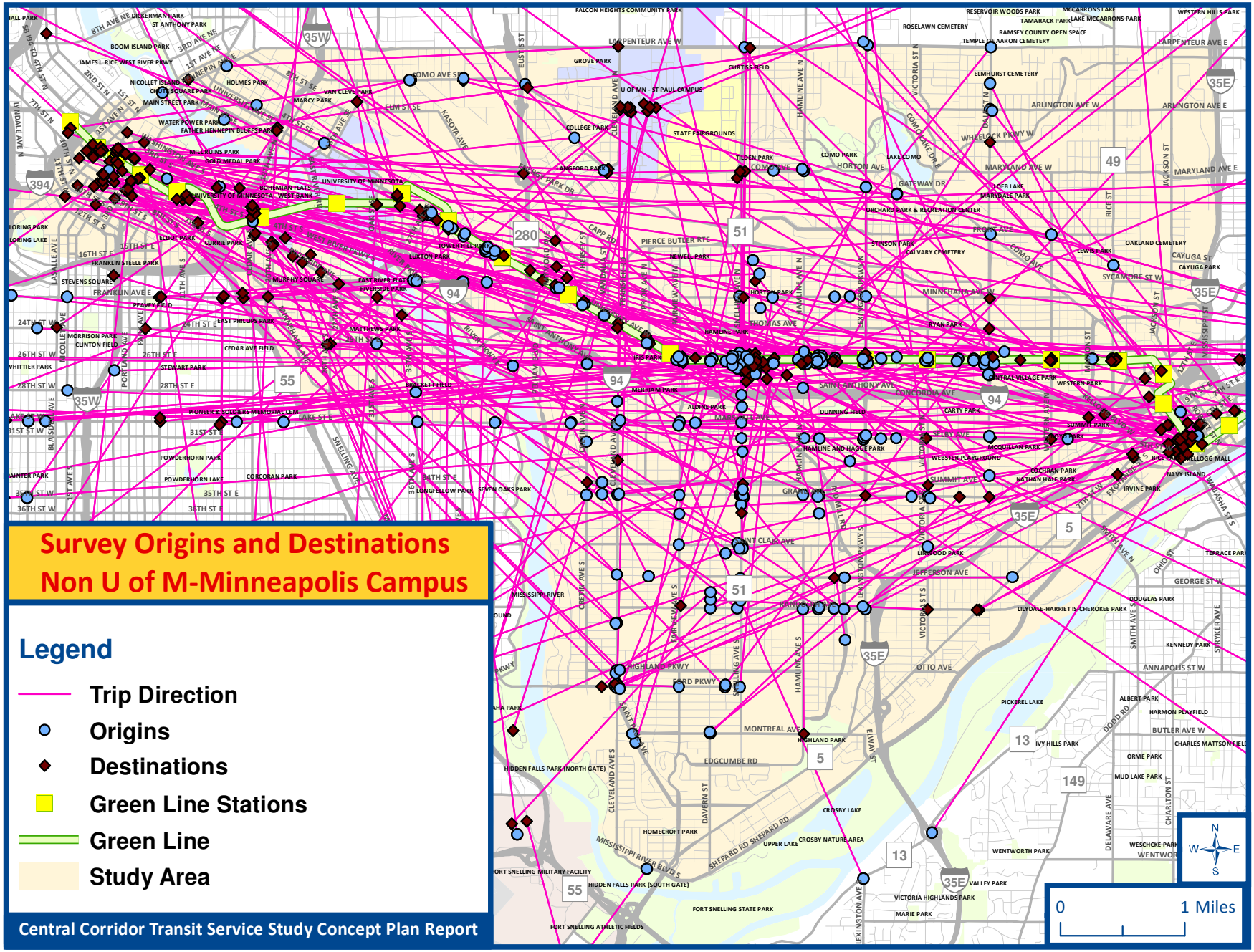


Figure 6 Origin and Destination Pairing Map Excluding the Minneapolis campus of the University of Minnesota



TRUSTED ADVOCATES

The District Councils Collaborative of Saint Paul and Minneapolis (DCC) adapted the Trusted Advocate community engagement model used in Seattle, WA to support the Central Corridor Transit Service Study and increase the capacity to gather community input and create opportunities for long-term, sustainable engagement and interaction between Metro Transit and the diverse community in the study area. Trusted Advocates are "members of a specific ethnic, racial, cultural and/or other underrepresented group who are recognized by other members as trustworthy, approachable and effective, particularly navigating distance between the group and the majority community. " -- *Innovative Public Tools in Transportation Planning: Application and Outcomes*

Trusted Advocates have strong connections to their communities, a background in community engagement, and the ability to advocate and educate within their communities. Nine individuals were contracted by the DCC to connect with individuals who lived, worked, attended school or participated in other activities within the study area. During engagement sessions to document travel behavior, some advocates chose to use the same tools as Metro Transit (public input forms, interactive activity) while others tailored their work to their own individual style of outreach and the individuals of their community.

Methods of engagement include one-on-one interviews, door knocking, tabling (staffing a table at a heavily trafficked location or event), kitchen table meetings/home visits, small-group meetings and community gatherings. The total number of individuals to be reached by each advocate ranged from 60 to 200. The trusted advocates held engagement sessions throughout the study area but were concentrated along the corridor. Engagement sessions were held in over 40 locations throughout the corridor including Cedar-Riverside, Prospect Park, Summit-University, Frogtown, Union Park, Como area and Macalester-Groveland.

In addition to gathering travel behavior data, trusted advocates documented other feedback during each engagement session. Some of these comments or concerns that were frequently shared by participants were related to overcrowded buses, operator behavior, safety concerns, travel time, the lack of availability of transit information due to language barriers or lack of internet access, waiting conditions, and a desire for more frequent service all days of the week.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT – NEXT STEPS: Concept Plan Phase

In the next phase of the Central Corridor Transit Service Study, staff will reconnect with the key stakeholders relationships established in the pre-Concept Plan phase. In addition, we intend to extend our outreach to additional constituencies in areas most impacted by changes proposed in the Concept Plan. The public will have several ways to get involved in the Concept Plan phase, including attending one of five public meetings, submitting comments on a postage-paid comment card available on buses, leaving comments on a voicemail, or sending an e-mail, fax, or letter.

ATTACHMENT A

Central Corridor Transit Service Study Input Form

Metro Transit is conducting a study to inform the bus service planning in the "Central Corridor" area in Minneapolis and St. Paul. We hope to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of transit service in the area and to provide a strong connection to new light-rail transit service on University Avenue.

Public participation throughout the study is important. Please take a few moments to provide information about the trips you make most frequently, whether by transit or not. Using the travel data collected, initial service recommendations will be developed and presented for comment this spring (2012). Final changes will be implemented with the expected opening of new Green Line light-rail service in 2014.

1. **Do you ride transit? If so, how many days each week do you ride transit?**

Less than 1
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
I do not currently ride transit. Please skip to Question 3.

2. **Please tell us about a trip you take regularly. What route number(s) do you typically ride to complete this trip? Please list in sequence.**

2.a **Transfer to:**

2.b **Transfer to another route?**

3. **Name the nearest intersection for the start of a trip you take regularly.**

3.a **City:**

4. **Name the nearest intersection for the destination of your trip**

4.a **City:**

5. **What time do you usually start this trip? (ex. 6:30 am)**

6. **What time do you usually start your return trip? (ex. 5:00 pm)**

7. **What days of the week do you usually take this trip?**

Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday
Saturday
Sunday

8. **What is the usual purpose for this trip?**

Work
School
Appointment
Shopping
Other

9. **Is there a location in the area currently not served by buses where service should be added? Please explain.**

10. **Please provide any suggestions you have that would help improve bus service in the Central Corridor. For example, is your service frequent enough, go where you wish, go early enough, late enough? Are the transfers easy to make?**

If you would like to tell us about another trip you take regularly, please fill out another survey. Thanks!

ATTACHMENT B

Central Corridor Transit Input Form Responses Questions 1-2, 7-8

1.

2. Do you ride transit? If so how many days a week do you ride transit?

2%	Less than once a week
2%	Once a week
6%	Twice a week
8%	Three times a week
11%	Four times a week
42%	Five times a week
11%	Six times a week
14%	Seven times a week
3%	I do not currently ride transit

3. Please tell us about a trip you take regularly. What route number(s) do you typically ride to complete this trip?

Route 3	535
Routes 16/50	470
Route 2	295
Route 144	64
Route 87	53
Route 21	66

2.a & b Transfers

44% of respondents transfer at least once. 16% of respondents transfer two or more times.

Questions 3 though 6 relate to time of trips as well as origins and destinations.

7. What days of the week do you usually take this trip?

Monday	92%
Tuesday	91%
Wednesday	92%
Thursday	91%
Friday	86%
Saturday	16%
Sunday	10%

8. What is the usual purpose of your trip?

Work	39%
School	49%
Appointment	2%
Shopping	3%
Other	7%