Dakota County
Eastern Transit Study

Executive Summary

May 2019

Study Purpose

The purpose of the Dakota County Eastern Transit Study was to evaluate present and future needs for a variety of transit service and facilities in northeastern Dakota County. Recommendations resulting from the study concentrate on linking the residential, employment, and educational centers within eastern Dakota County to those in adjacent communities and the broader region.

Today, the study area is served by fixed-route local and express, and demand response bus service. However, level and type of service provided varies greatly throughout the study area. Previous studies relevant to this project include recommendations for additional express service and the potential for bus rapid transit (BRT).

Study Area

This study evaluated needs and potential services within an area including Hastings, Inver Grove Heights, Nininger Township, Rosemount, South St. Paul and West St. Paul. Representatives from these municipalities as well as Metro Transit and the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA) provided oversight and guidance to the study process through a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) that met regularly through the course of the study. Options for new services included areas beyond these cities where connections to major employment and activity concentrations, as well as other transit services, have the potential to increase the overall effectiveness of service.

Public and Stakeholder Engagement

Engagement efforts included several activities to help the study gain citizens' and stakeholders' perspectives and provide for two-way communication throughout the process. The engagement process took on several steps to educate, engage, and integrate the public. To help publicize the study, a website was created to direct and organize information about upcoming public events and results of the project. To help inform the public about the study, existing social media platforms were leveraged.

In order to have an in-depth discussion about transit in the study area, two rounds of outreach meetings were held with stakeholders from groups prioritized by the study. The first was an outreach meeting with stakeholders representing transit dependent populations across the study area and the second was a meeting with stakeholders from Hastings that emphasized needs specific to their residents. The second round of meetings was dedicated to sharing the results of the study with the stakeholders and gaining feedback on the service concepts developed.

Transit Need and Market Analysis

The study evaluated social, economic and land use measures for this area that generally correlate with transit demand to identify areas of focus. These measures included population and employment density, income, age, disability, automobile availability, physical characteristics such as walkability, and local land use designations. Additionally, the study incorporated data on travel patterns to help understand corridors with the highest volumes where new or expanded transit services may be able to have an expanded role in addressing travel needs. The analysis revealed three areas of higher transit need:

- **West St. Paul and South St. Paul** Both cities have a relatively higher share lower income, disabled and elderly population among which transit need is generally higher. These cities also have higher concentrations of employment and key destinations identified by the TAC, areas rated higher than much of the study area in land use intensity and pedestrian accessibility which are both critical to the feasibility of transit service.

- **Downtown Rosemount** Areas near downtown Rosemount and along 150th St. (CSAH 42) had higher population density and lower automobile availability than much of the study area.

- **Hastings** Much of the City of Hastings rated high on the social and physical characteristics used to determine possible transit demand, particularly employment density, income, and walkability. The travel data used in the study also indicated high volumes of travel on TH 55 and TH 61 out of Hastings towards regional employment centers, suggesting the potential for commuter express service.

Service Concepts

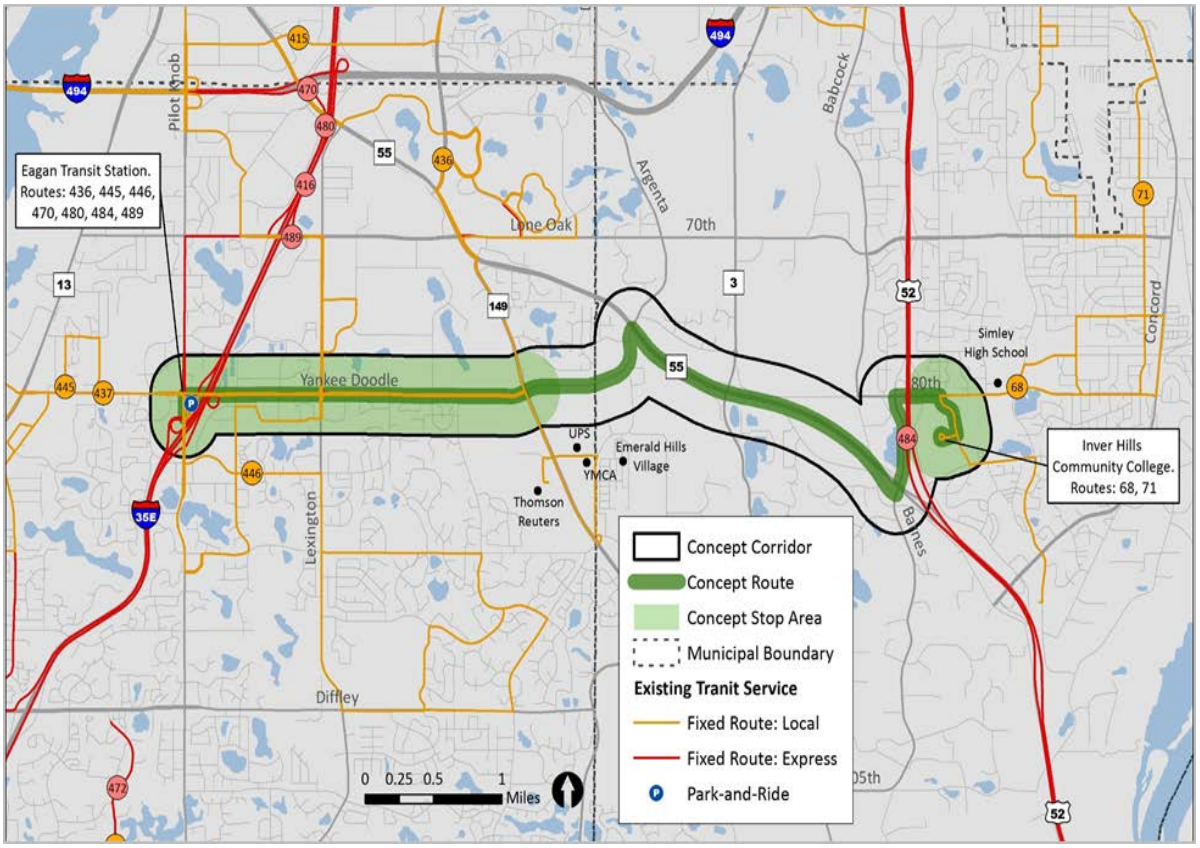
The Eastern Transit Study developed eight service concepts based on the technical analysis, engagement with stakeholders and the general public, and guidance from the TAC. General service parameters were developed for each concept that intend to address the needs that were identified, provide maximum connectivity with the regional transit network, and understand the resources required to provide service. These concepts are intended for further consideration by Dakota County, local cities, MVTA and Metro Transit in their respective planning processes.

Concept 1: Eagan Transit Station to Inver Hills Community College

- All-day, limited stop, bi-directional service connecting Eagan Transit Station (park-and-ride) and IHCC via Yankee Doodle Rd. and MN-55.

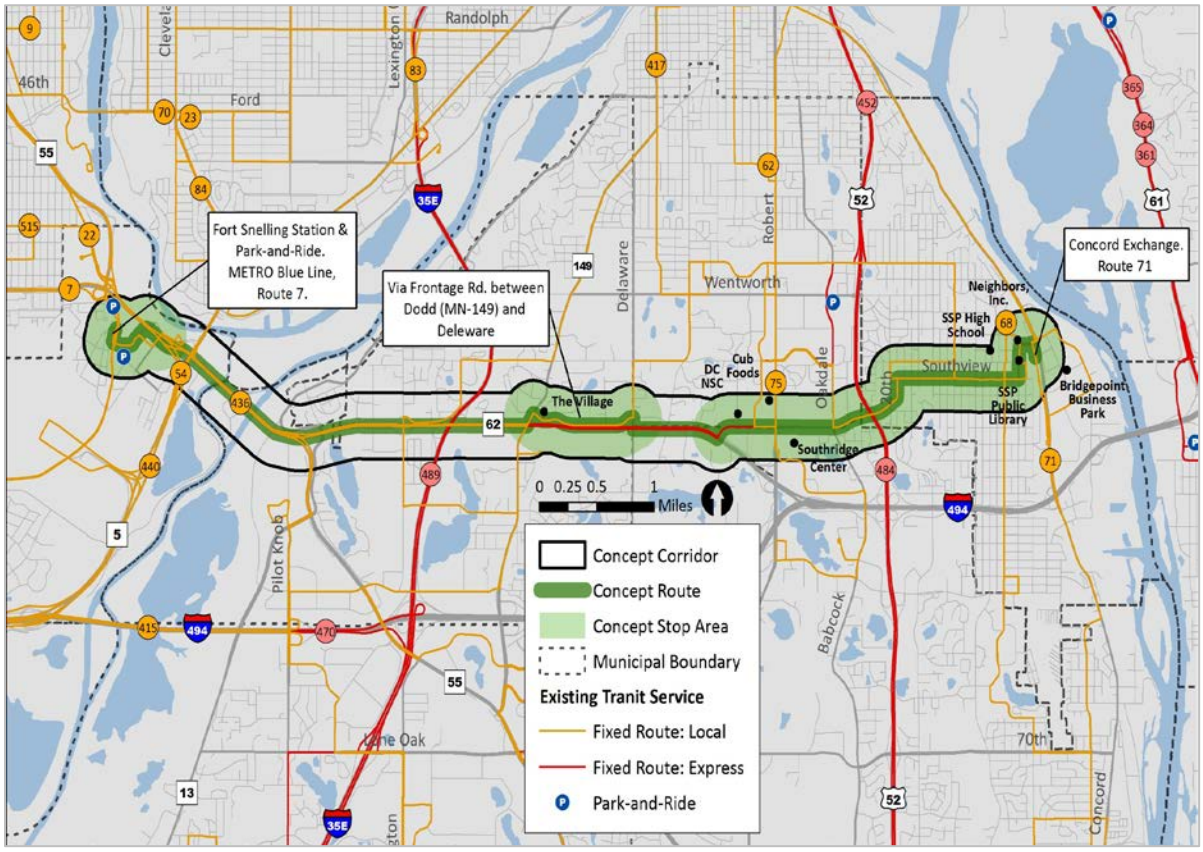
- Increases transit access to Inver Hills Community College (IHCC), retail centers in Eagan, and the MVTA network via connection to Eagan Transit Station.

- Addresses missing link between MVTA and Metro Transit fixed route networks.



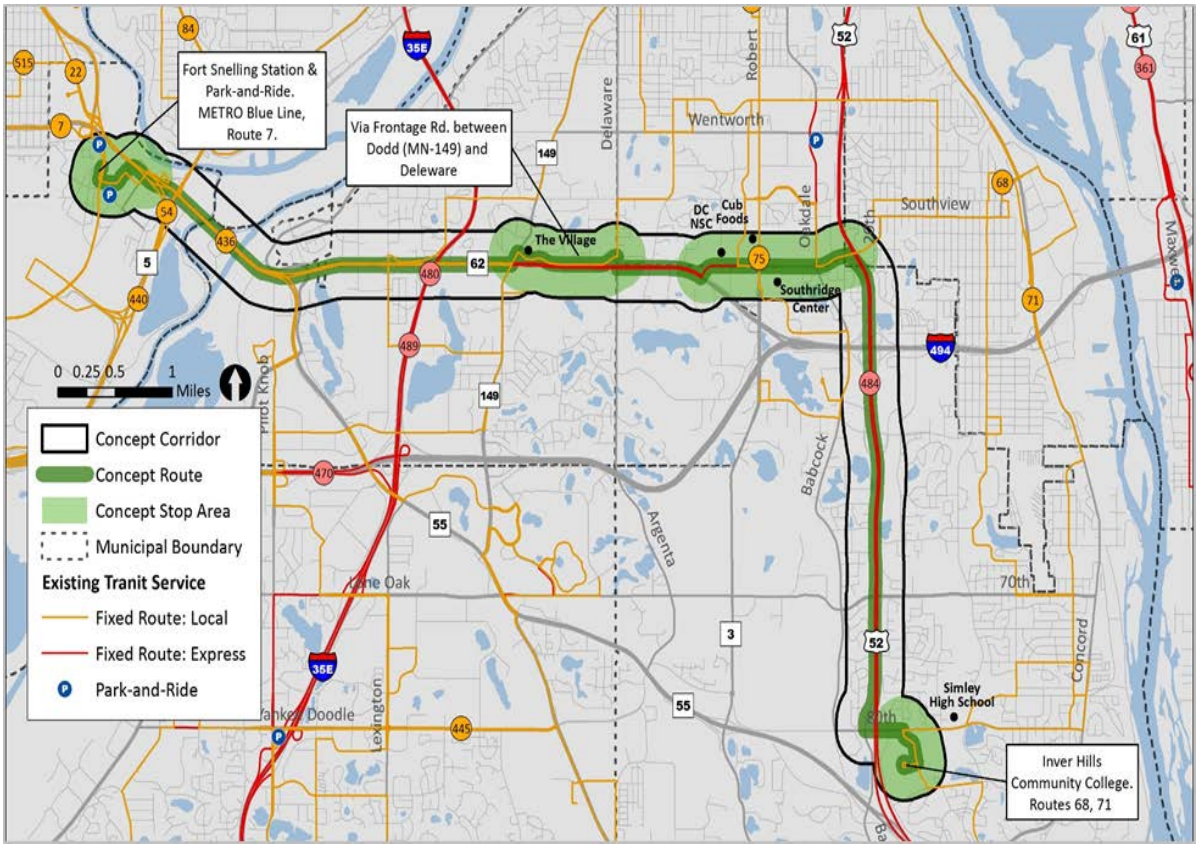
Concept 2: METRO Blue Line to Concord Avenue

- All-day limited stop, bi-directional service connecting the Fort Snelling Station and Park-and-Ride, Dakota County Northern Service Center, downtown South St. Paul, and Bridgepoint Business Park via MN-62, Mendota Rd., and Southview Blvd.
- Connects to METRO Blue Line and planned Robert Street transitway.
- Enhanced east-west service between West St. Paul and South St. Paul.
- Peak-period service to accommodate traditional work shifts in Bloomington, Minneapolis, West St. Paul, South St. Paul, and Bridgepoint Business Park.



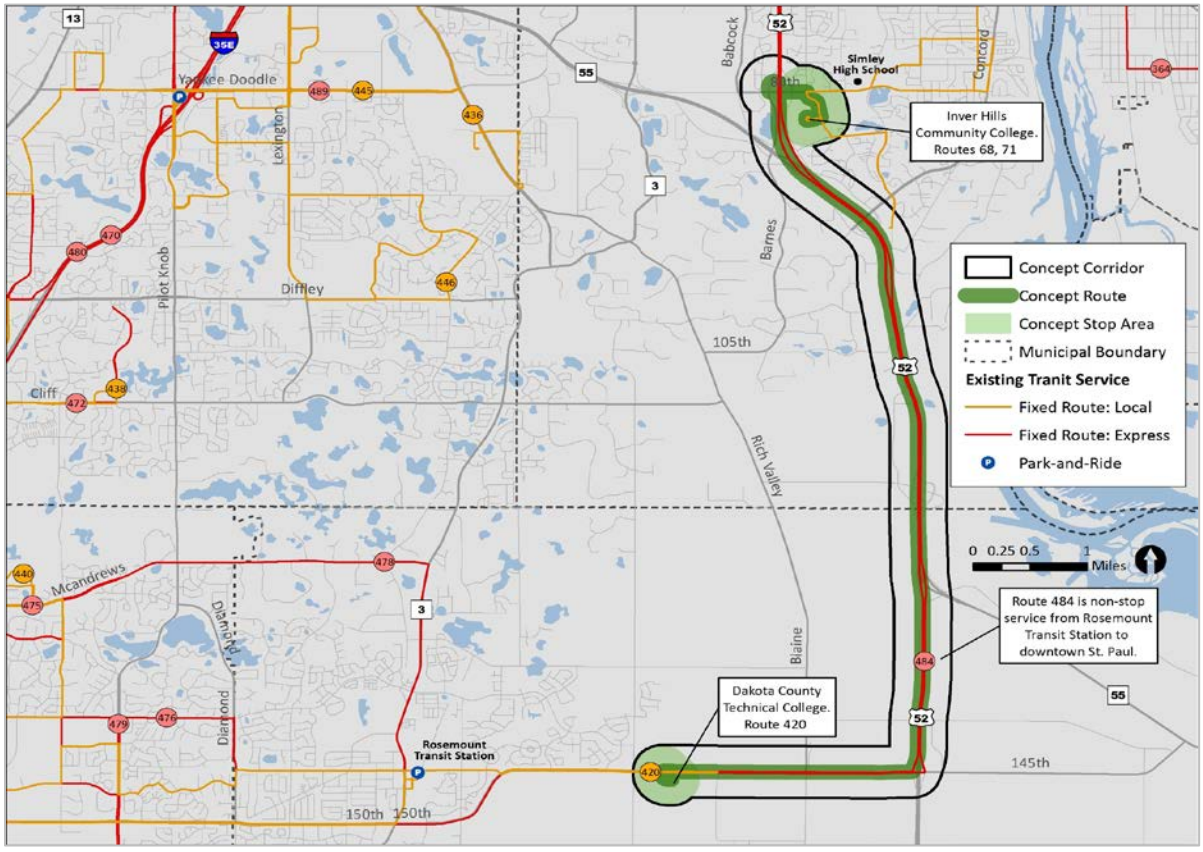
Concept 3: METRO Blue Line to Inver Hills Community College

- All-day, limited stop, bi-directional service connecting the Fort Snelling Station and Park-and-Ride, Dakota County Northern Service Center, and IHCC via MN-62, Mendota Rd., and US-52.
- Improves regional access to IHCC, with connections to the METRO Blue Line and planned Robert Street transitway.
- Peak-period service to accommodate traditional work shifts at IHCC and in West St. Paul, Bloomington and Minneapolis.



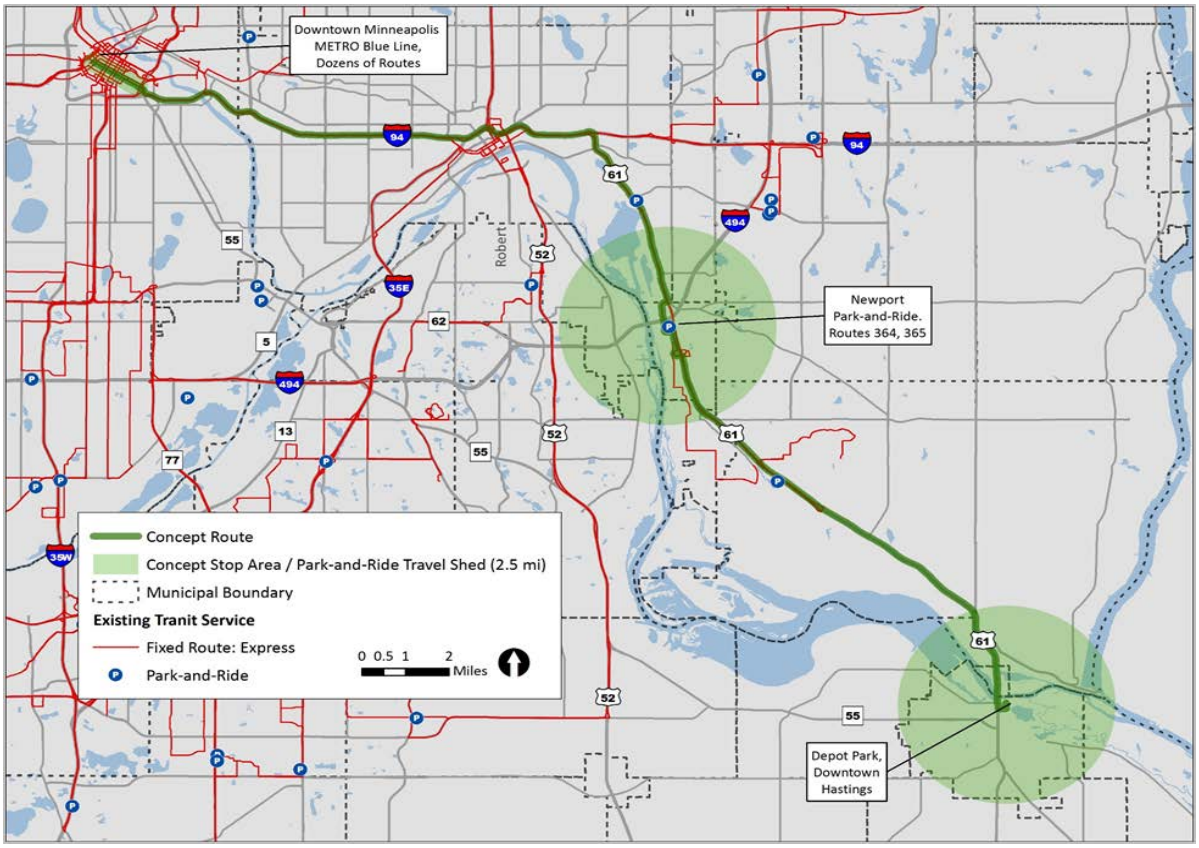
Concept 4: Inver Hills Community College to Dakota County Technical College

- Shuttle service between IHCC and DCTC.
- Non-stop, bi-directional service operates only when classes are in session.
- Addresses needs of transit-dependent students seeking transportation between the two campuses.



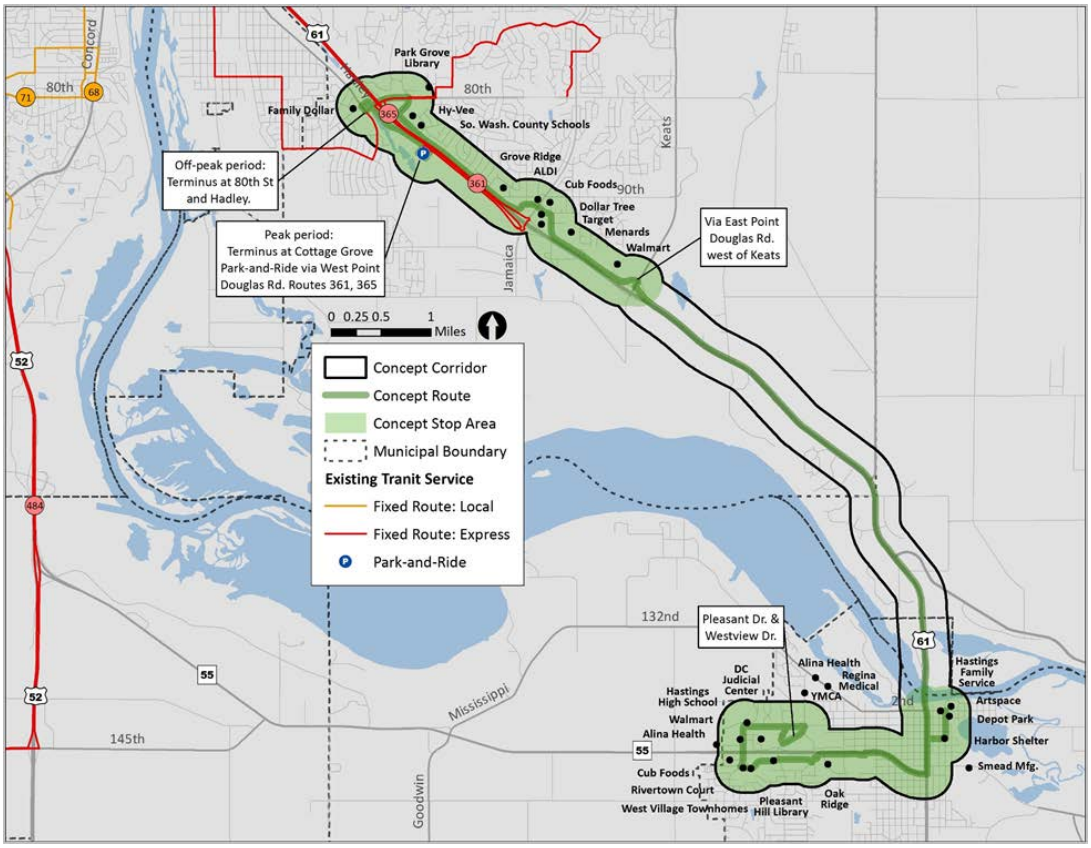
Concept 5: Hastings Express to Downtown Minneapolis

- Peak-period commuter express service connecting downtown Hastings and the Newport Transit Station Park-and-Ride to downtown Minneapolis via US-61 and I-94.
- Connects Hastings to the regional transit network.
- Would require change in the metropolitan transit taxing district or contract with the Metropolitan Council if part of the Twin Cities regional public transit system.



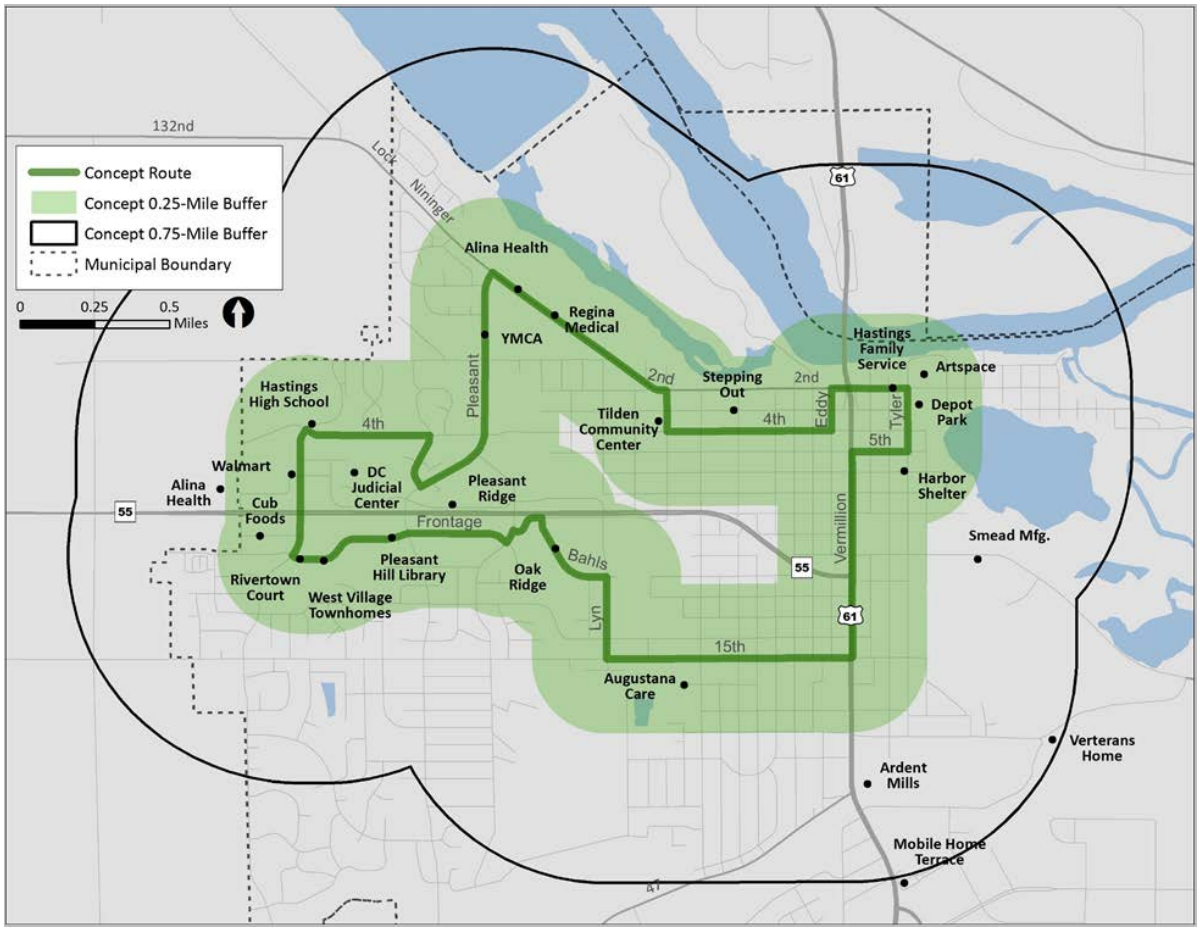
Concept 6: Hastings to Cottage Grove

- Limited stop, bi-directional service between Hastings and Cottage Grove via US-61 and East Point Douglas Rd.
- Connects Hastings to the regional transit network via Cottage Grove Park-and-Ride
- Would require change in the metropolitan transit taxing district or contract with the Metropolitan Council if part of the Twin Cities regional public transit system



Service Concept 7: Hastings local service

- All-day Circulator service operating in both directions.
- Coverage-oriented service, prioritizing service to more places rather than direct and fast travel
- Would require change in the metropolitan transit taxing district or contract with the Metropolitan Council if part of the Twin Cities regional public transit system



Service Concept 8: I-494 between METRO Blue Line and Woodbury

- Express service with limited stops connecting jobs and residents in Woodbury, South St. Paul, West St. Paul and Bloomington.
- Limited schedule with trip times aligned with major shift times.
- Connections to major employment centers including Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, Mall of America, Tamarack Village and CityPlace.

