Meeting Minutes

September 30, 2024, 4:00 p.m.
St. Paul Park City Hall

Commission Members	Agency	Present
Karla Bigham	Washington County RRA	X
Mai Chong Xiong (Alternate)	Ramsey County RRA	X
Monique Garza	City of Cottage Grove	X
Cheniqua Johnson	City of St. Paul	X
Char Whitbred-Hemmingson	City of St. Paul Park	
Dave Pemble	City of Hastings	X
Marvin Taylor	City of Newport	X

Staff	Agency	Present
Andrea Rehm	Washington County RRA	X
Lyssa Leitner	Washington County RRA	X

Other Attendees	Agency	Present
Susan Vento	Metropolitan Council	X
Adam Harrington	Metro Transit	X
Scott Thompson	Metro Transit	X

Agenda Item #1: Introductions / Roll Call

Chair Bigham called the meeting to order. Quorum was met.

Agenda Item #2: Pledge of Allegiance

The Commission stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Agenda Item #3: Comments from the Public

No comments.

Agenda Item #4: Approval of Agenda

Xiong made a motion to approve the agenda. Pemble seconded. All were in favor. **Approved.** Motion carried.

Agenda Item #5: Approval of January 2024 Minutes

Garza made a motion to approve the minutes. Pemble seconded. All were in favor. **Approved.** Motion carried.

Agenda Item #6: Presentation: Metro Transit's Network Now

Chair Bigham welcomed Sue Vento, Metropolitan Council member for District 12.

Vento said she was excited to hear the presentation, but more importantly, to hear feedback from the Commission. Network Now is an opportunity to broaden transportation options, particularly in the suburbs and outer ring. A main priority is improving quality of life, in both the professional and personal standpoint—transit has more and more become a part of that. She thanked the Commission for the invitation and welcomed commission members to reach out whenever.

Adam Harrington, Director of Service Development for Metro Transit, presented the attached presentation. At a high level, he described changes over the last few years that prompted Network Now, a vision on how to improve transit service through 2027. Network Now was guided by performance analysis of the transit network, policy from the Metropolitan Council, and input collected through public engagement activities in 2023.

Harrington described the draft concept plan. Overall, the plan will expand service by more than 35%, improve coverage and mobility by expanding bus routes and Metro micro service, and redesign express and commuter services to meet today's needs.

Harrington described the proposed changes in the Red Rock Corridor. He noted that Washington County will see a major increase in service hours largely due to Gold Line BRT, which will come online in March 2025. The Red Rock Corridor will see 2 new routes, 1 route with frequency improvements, and is adjacent to the METRO Gold Line and micro zone in Woodbury. Harrington noted that the public comment period will last through November 15, and then the draft concept plan will be brought before Met Council in early 2025 for approval.

Garza noted that area Park and Rides are underutilized, especially in Cottage Grove, and asked if there was opportunity to use those facilities for sporting events. Bigham noted Washington's County's interest in the idea of park and rides used for large events as well.

Harrington stated that the suggestion is an idea Metro Transit is aware of and that it comes with logistical challenges that they continue to work through.

Pemble noted in the 80s, a parking area was set aside in Hastings intended for transit purposes—but the area has not been used in that way, partially because of the inconvenience of getting off and on Hwy 61. He asked if there were any future plans or opportunities for this lot to give better access to people in eastern Dakota County.

Harrington described a trend Metro Transit has seen in recent years—the "downstream effect" is when people farther out will drive into a closer facility before getting on transit. He added that they will keep an eye on market changes for opportunities for the Hastings facility.

Bigham noted that Washington County is exploring the idea of circulator service in the Cottage Grove business park area to improve local access.

Xiong noted that service at McKnight has been discontinued but the need is still there. She provided the example of people that WIC-eligible not enrolling in the program because they lacked access to WIC offices. She asked how micro zones are determined.

Harrington stated that the 8 proposed micro zones are located near transit centers and where there will be METRO lines. There will likely be future opportunities for additional zones once Metro Transit gains more experience and insights in managing this newer element of the transit system.

Harrington described the 323 route which does serve the noted area, at least for commuters. He noted his appreciation for Commissioner Xiong highlighting this market and service need, which Metro Transit can look into further.

Garza suggested looking at the location of key service centers (like WIC offices) when improving or developing new routes, with the intention to create simple, direct routes.

Taylor stated his excitement about route 354 and for the east-west access transit users will gain. He noted his surprise at the lack of weekend service, as people do still need to access retail, jobs, etc on the weekend. He noted that Newport residents particularly do not have retail opportunities in town.

Harrington stated it was a consideration – but because it is a brand new market, there will be a period of adjustment figuring out how to best serve the area.

Taylor asked how the City of Newport can best prepare the developing part of their city adjacent to the Woodbury micro zone for future transit, and if there is a possibility of the micro zone expanding to include Newport.

Harrington noted that Metro Transit is continuing to work with their local partners on defining zone boundaries. He added that they will learn from operating these zones if expansion is possible while still maintaining their service time promise.

Johnson agreed with previous comments that weekend service is important to many people. She asked about check points or reporting schedules for usage of the new routes.

Harrington stated that Metro Transit will be closely monitoring new routes, and making adjustments and increasing promotion as needed.

Johnson asked that those findings be shared with local municipalities as they come out. She emphasized the importance of cities being involved as key partners in transit, and asked what Metro Transit's plan is to foster these partnerships.

Harrington stated that Metro Transit is happy to keep engaging with the Commission and the individual cities as service comes into these communities, from determining route logistics (e.g. where bus stops are located) though later parts of implementation (e.g. sharing ridership numbers / route performance).

Johnson noted her appreciation for the engagement conducted for this plan, and emphasized the importance of materials being translated into the different languages spoken across the metro and using trusted channels to distribute information.

Harrington agreed, and added there will be continued opportunities for feedback on routes as they roll out.

Bigham added that it's critical that City partners are included and have the necessary information, because they will be who residents go to with questions.

Bigham thanked East Metro Strong (Will Schroeer) and staff for their work on Red Rock's Vision Refresh. She thanked Chair Zelle and Metro Transit for responding to the Commission's concerns, and the recommendations that came out of the vision refresh. She shared her excitement for the east-west connection to the airport, and noted her suggestion that it start shortly after Gold Line service begins. She noted her desire for weekend service and a stop at the Mall of America, for both retail and employment opportunities. She emphasized that transportation is a top priority for Washington County. She asked that Metro Transit return to the Commission after the final plan is approved to provide an overview of any changes.

Vento noted that she serves on the Met Council's transportation committee, and again invited members of the Commission to reach out with any further comments. She also agreed with Johnson's comments on inclusivity in language, adding that the Met Council is also considerate of inclusivity for disabled and aging transit users.

Johnson agreed and reemphasized the importance involving cities so they can better plan their own supporting investments (e.g. new or improved traffic control measures, lighting, etc.).

Agenda Item #7: 2025 Red Rock Corridor Commission Work Plan and Budget

Rehm summarized the draft 2025 Work Plan and Budget included in the packet, noting that the budget was similar to the 2024 budget. She stated that the total budget is completely covered by fund balance.

Xiong asked about the history of the fund balance.

Rehm stated that the Commission has two funding members, Washington County and Ramsey County. She added that it's been several years since funding members have had to contribute funds as the Committee has been operating on a lean budget and within the fund balance. She noted that the current fund balance is around $38,000.

Bigham added that the items included look good for 2025, but noted that Dakota County, a previous member of the Commission, should be reengaged because of the east-west service proposed in Metro Transit's Network Now.

Johnson asked about historical federal and state engagement.

Bigham noted that the smaller scale of Red Rock is a challenge in receiving federal attention, but more effort has been directed at the state level—including requests to the state legislature for funding for demonstration routes.

Xiong made a motion to approve the 2025 Work Plan and Budget. Pemble seconded. All were in favor. **Approved.** Motion carried.

Agenda Item #8:2025 Red Rock Corridor Commission Meeting Schedule

Rehm presented the 2025 proposed meeting schedule included in the packet.

Pemble made a motion to approve the 2025 Proposed Meeting Schedule. Garza seconded. All were in favor. **Approved.** Motion carried.

Agenda Item #9: Communications Update

Rehm reviewed the information provided in the packet.

Johnson asked if there are existing goals for the Commission's social media and how the Commission is gauging success of engagement efforts.

Rehm stated that in recent years, the Commission's Facebook page has seen a gradual increase in followers, but that no specific goals have been set. She added that staff can draft goals for the next Commission meeting.

Bigham agreed that setting specific goals is a good idea, and suggested that staff use the Facebook page to share Metro Transit's posts regarding Network Now public comment and highlighting the changes in the Red Rock Corridor.

Pemble added that Red Rock posts could also passed along to corridor cities to reshare to their audiences.

Agenda Item #10: Other

No Commissioner reports.

Agenda Item #11: Adjourn

Chair Bigham adjourned the meeting.

Network Now: Draft Concept Plan

Red Rock Corridor Commission

September 30, 2024

Why Network Now?

Pivotal time in our history

- Ridership dropped 50% between 2019 and 2020 but is now growing again
- 30% less service, with 60+ routes suspended

Travel patterns are **changing**

- Fewer downtown commuters and more diverse needs
- Customers increasingly need all-day, all-purpose transit

Workforce is a top priority

- Bus and rail service expansion requires operators and support staff
- Service design can impact employee satisfaction

Metro Transit is **growing**

- New regional sales tax
- 4 new transitways under construction and more in planning
- New transit modes (microtransit)

Network Now Vision

Resolves:

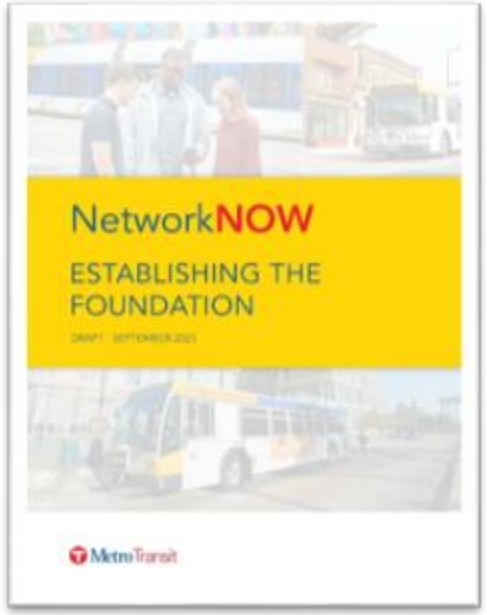
- Status of routes that are currently suspended (some since 2020)
- Facility closure needs

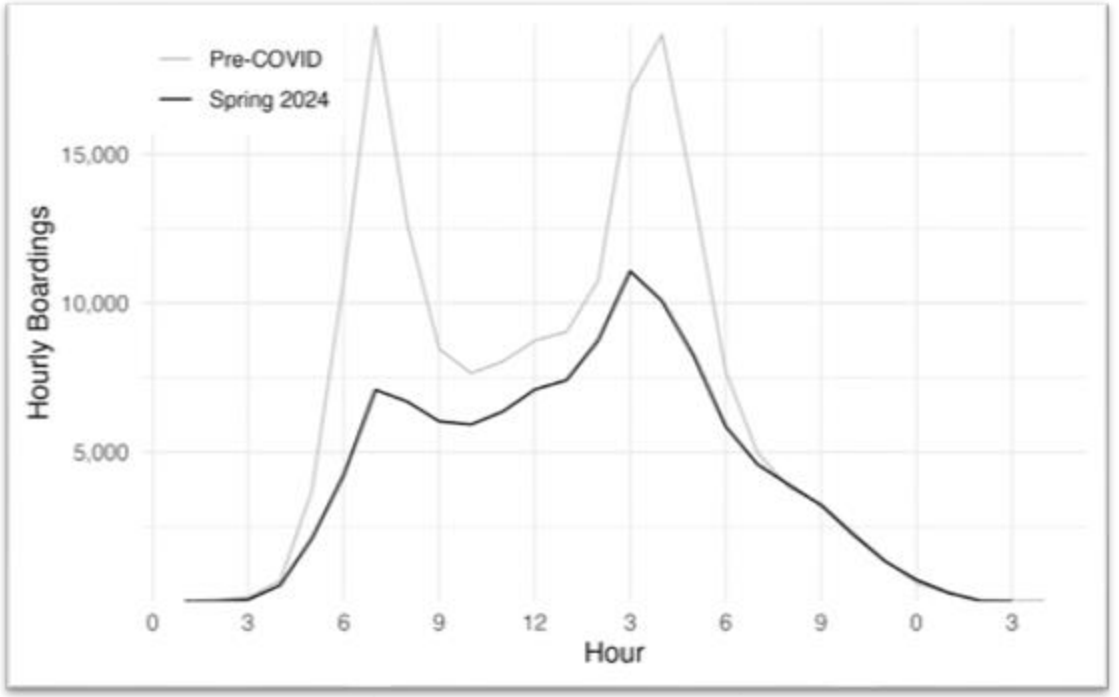
Improves:

- New or redesigned routes
- Frequency or span improvements
- METRO line investments
- Microtransit

The foundation for network modification

- **Performance**: details network performance, changes since 2019, and opportunities
- **Policy**: regional policy guidance from the Metropolitan Council applied
- **Engagement**: 2023 captured values and thoughts, surveys, workshops, customer contacts, 6,000 comments





Network Now Principles

Adapt	**Adapt** service to changes in transit markets and travel patterns.
Prepare	**Prepare** for new METRO and high-frequency routes.
Maintain	**Maintain** the reliability of our scheduled service consistently over time.
Build on success	**Build on success** to grow ridership, adding service where people use transit the most.
Provide access	**Provide access to opportunities** and services with a focus on advancing equity and reducing regional disparities.



Draft Concept Plan

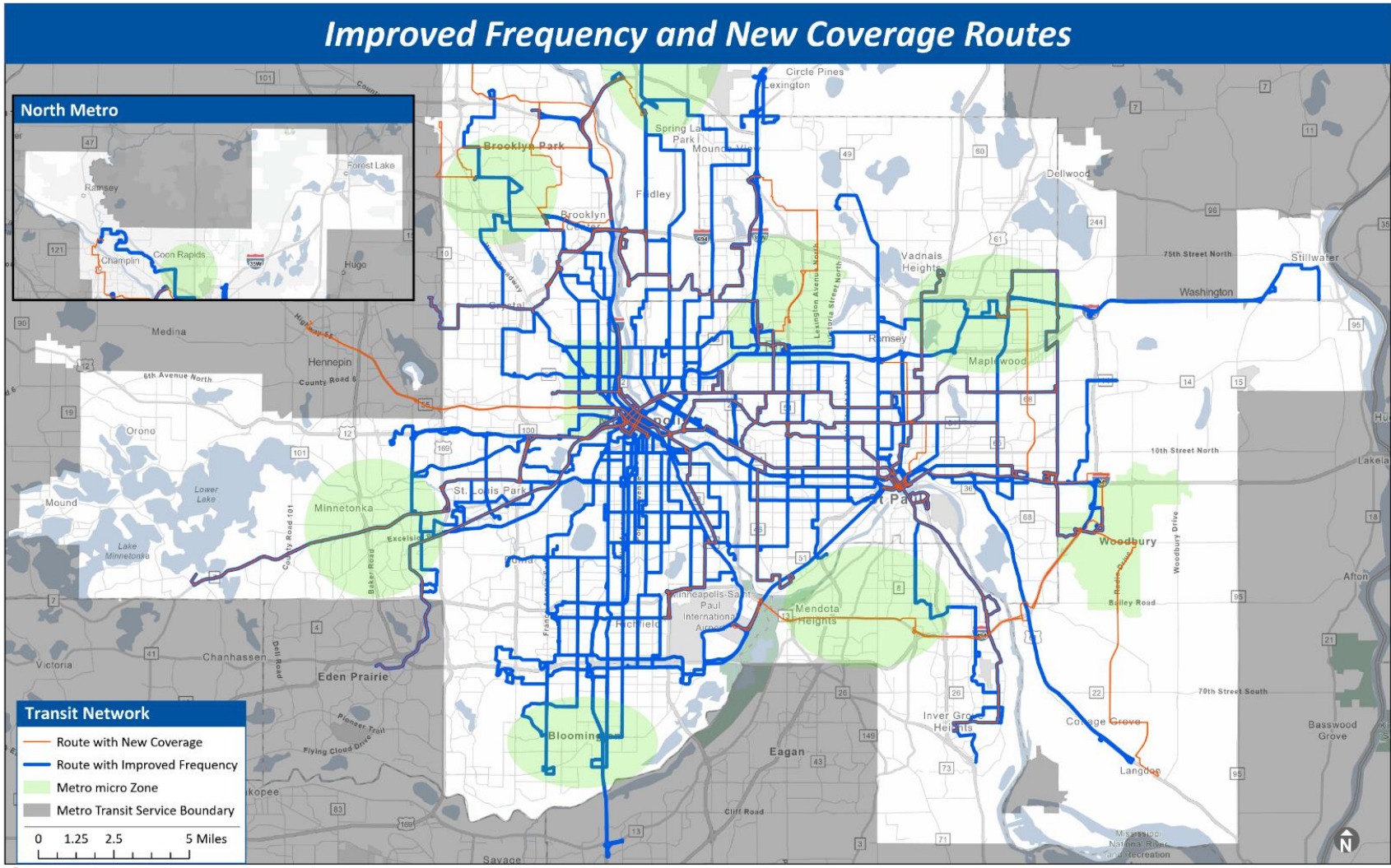
Network Now

- Metro Transit's vision through 2027
- The proposed plan will:
  - Expand service in our network by more than 35% to grow ridership
  - Improve coverage and mobility by expanding bus routes and Metro micro service
  - Redesign our express and commuter services to meet the travel needs of our region now

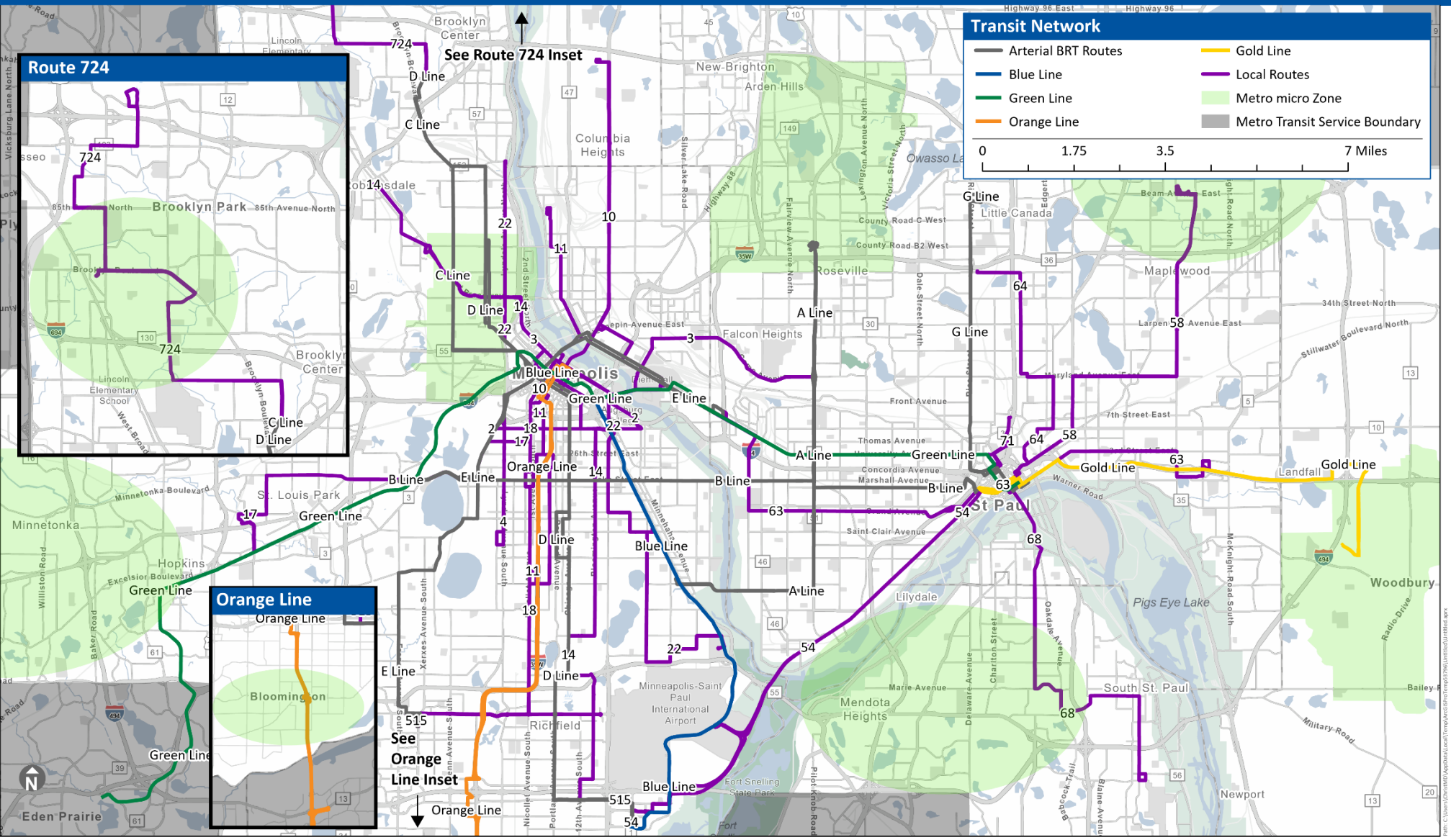


2027 Concept Plan Results

- **Grow ridership**
  - 65+ routes improved frequency & span
  - 15 routes with service 15” or better with added trips
  - LRT 10-minute frequency
- **Additional service coverage**
  - 8 new micro zones
  - 20+ routes with new areas of coverage
  - 25% increase in jobs accessible within 45 minutes to the average resident



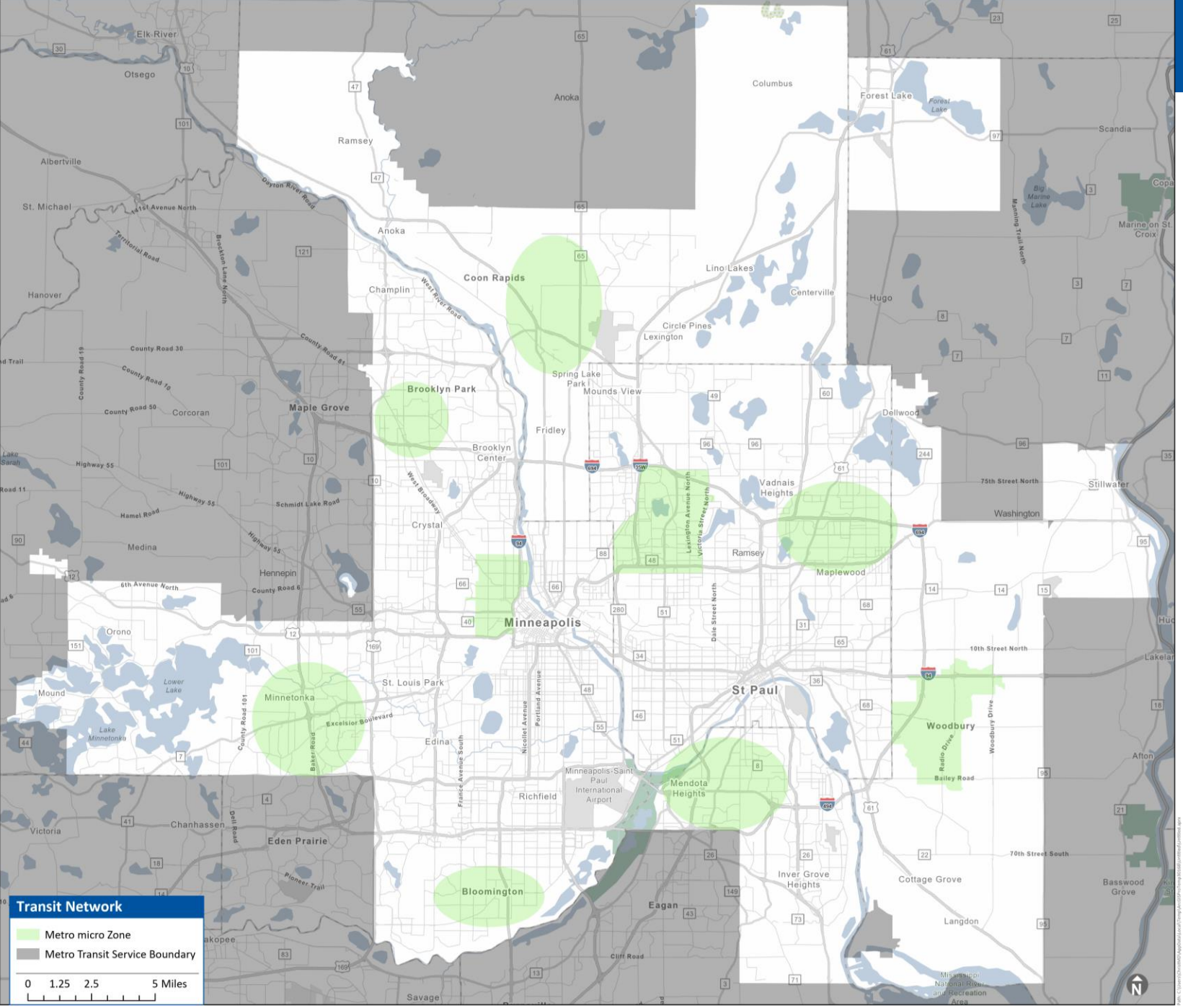
High Frequency Routes



New high frequency service on Gold Line, Green Line Extension, B Line, E Line, G Line, Routes 4, 14, 17, 22, 58, 64, 68, 515, and 724

Metro Transit

Date: 8/13/2024


Transit Network
Metro micro Zone
Metro Transit Service Boundary
0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles
Elk River
Otsego
Albertville
St. Michael
Hanover
Corcoran
Maple Grove
Medina
Hennepin
Orono
Mound
Minnetonka
St. Louis Park
Edina
Minneapolis
Anoka
Ramsey
Columbus
Forest Lake
Scandia
Champlin
Coon Rapids
Lino Lakes
Centerville
Hugo
Circle Pines
Lexington
Spring Lake Park
Mounds View
Brooklyn Park
Fridley
Brooklyn Center
Crystal
Vadnais Heights
Dellwood
Stillwater
Washington
Maplewood
Ramsey
St Paul
Woodbury
Mendota Heights
Richfield
Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport
Inver Grove Heights
Cottage Grove
Eagan
Bloomington
Eden Prairie
Chanhassen
Victoria
Savage
Langdon
Afton
Lakeland
Basswood Grove
Marine on St Croix
Lake Minnetonka
Lower Lake
Lake Sarah
Anoka
Coon Rapids
Brooklyn Park
Maple Grove
Minneapolis
St Paul
Woodbury
Eagan
Bloomington
Eden Prairie
Minnetonka
Edina
St. Louis Park
Richfield
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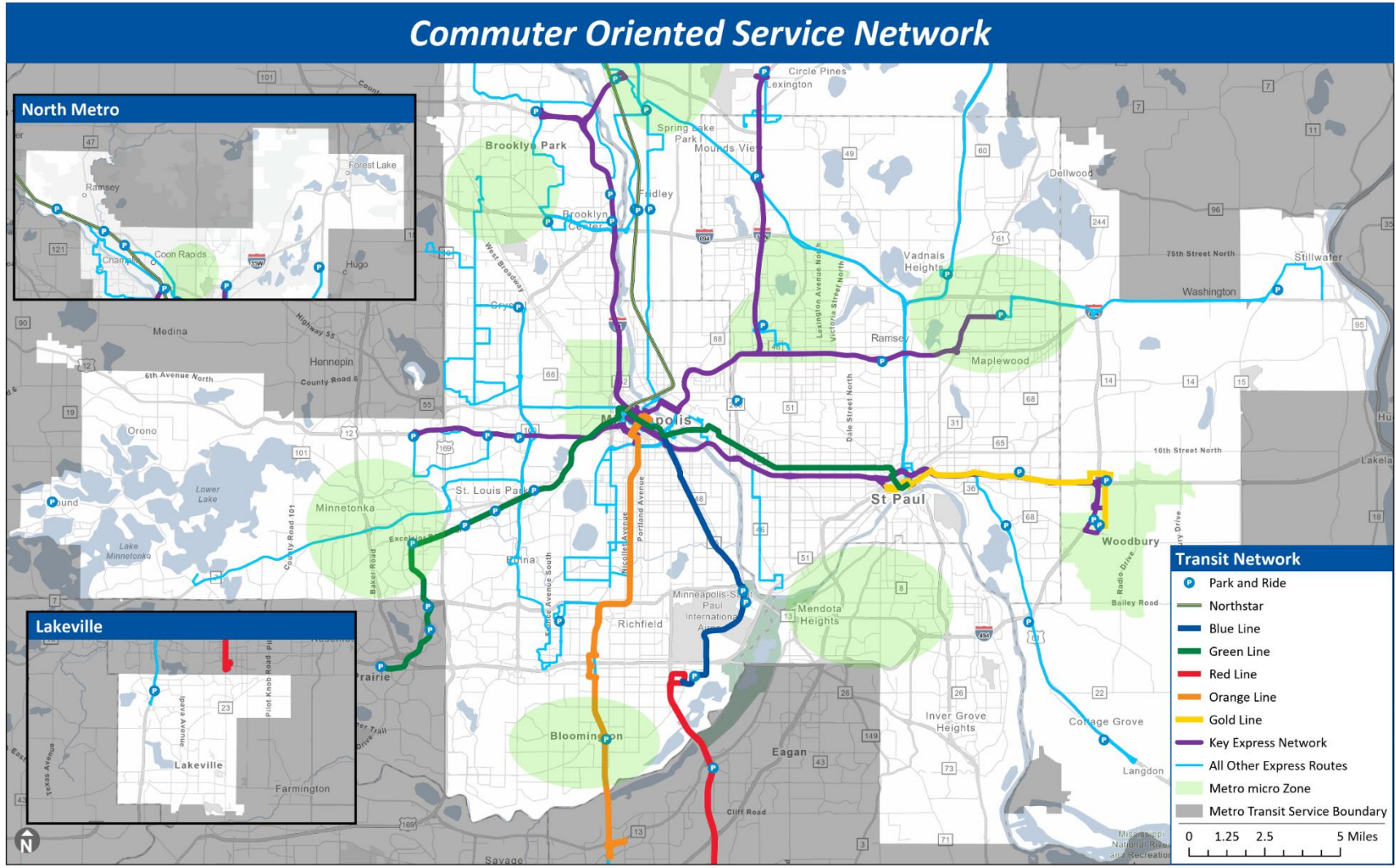
Champlin
Anoka
Ramsey
Albertville
St. Michael
Hanover
Corcoran
Maple Grove

2027 Concept Plan Results

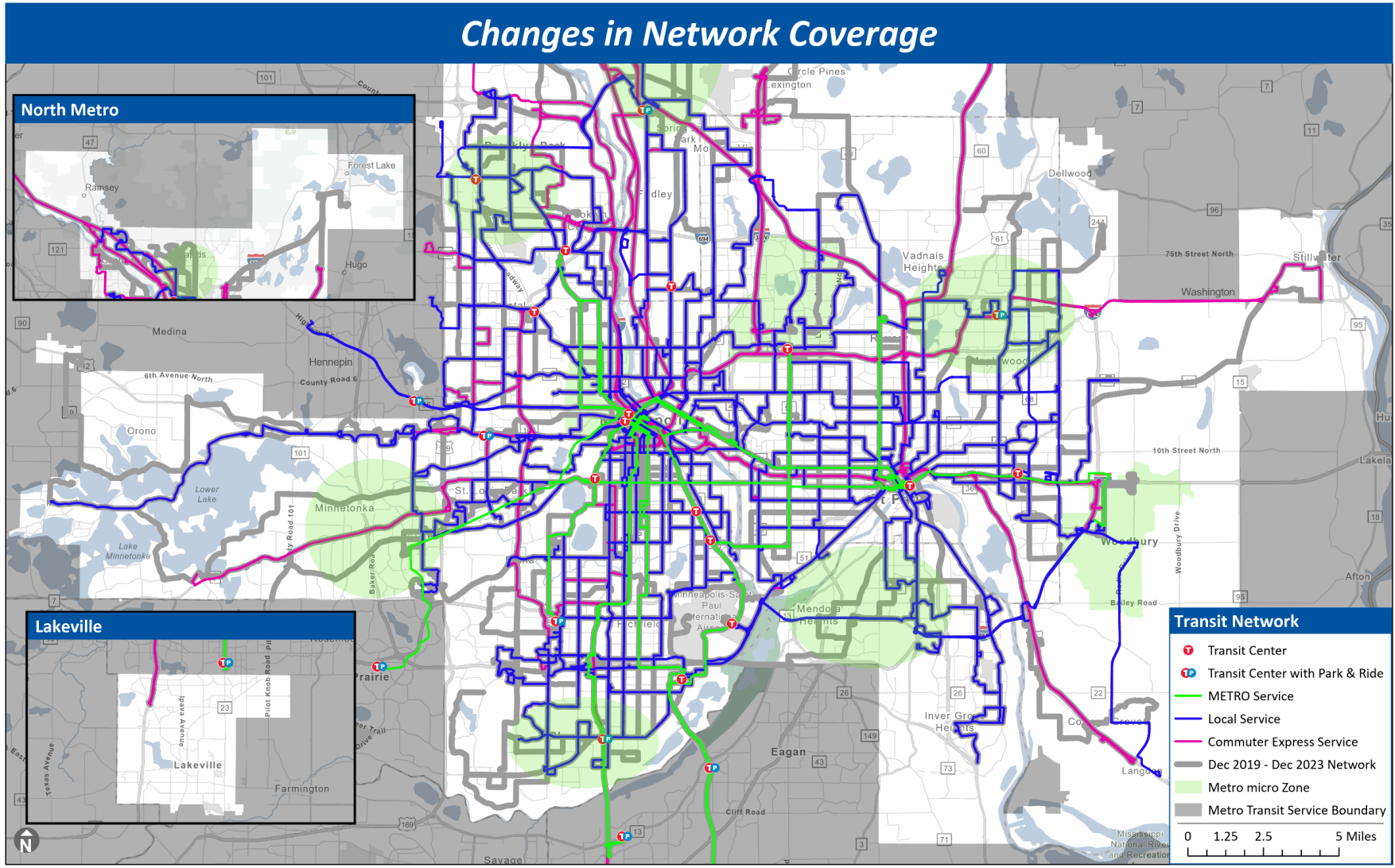
- **Adapt service** to travel patterns
  - **Key Express Network** all day service
  - 15” service during highest ridership of rush hours
  - Service to all major highway corridors

Key Express Network Routes
94
250
270
355
673
768
850



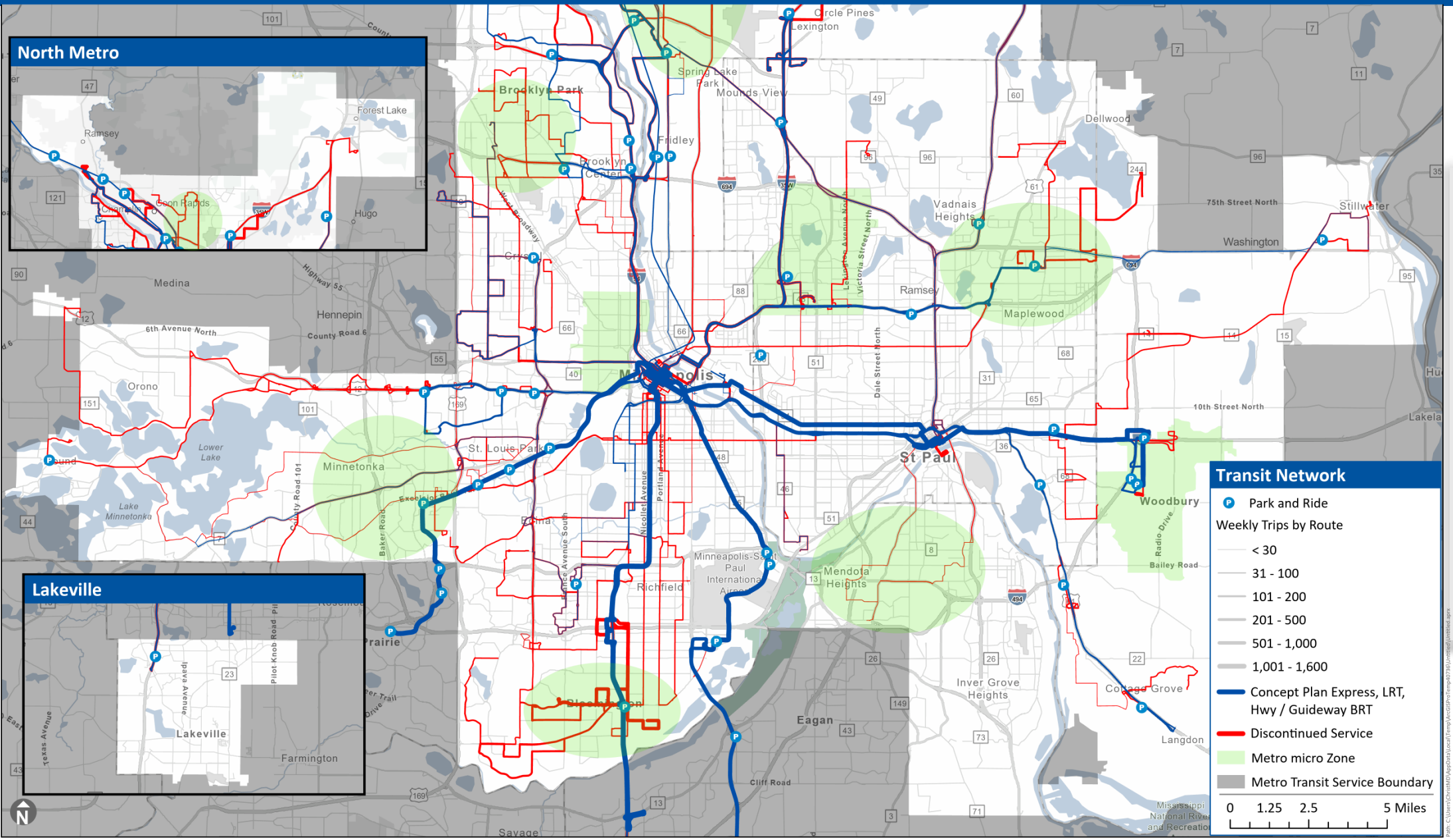
2027 Concept Plan Results

- **Adapt service** to travel patterns
  - 40+ routes restructured or adjusted
  - 53 suspended routes officially discontinued
  - 8 routes restored



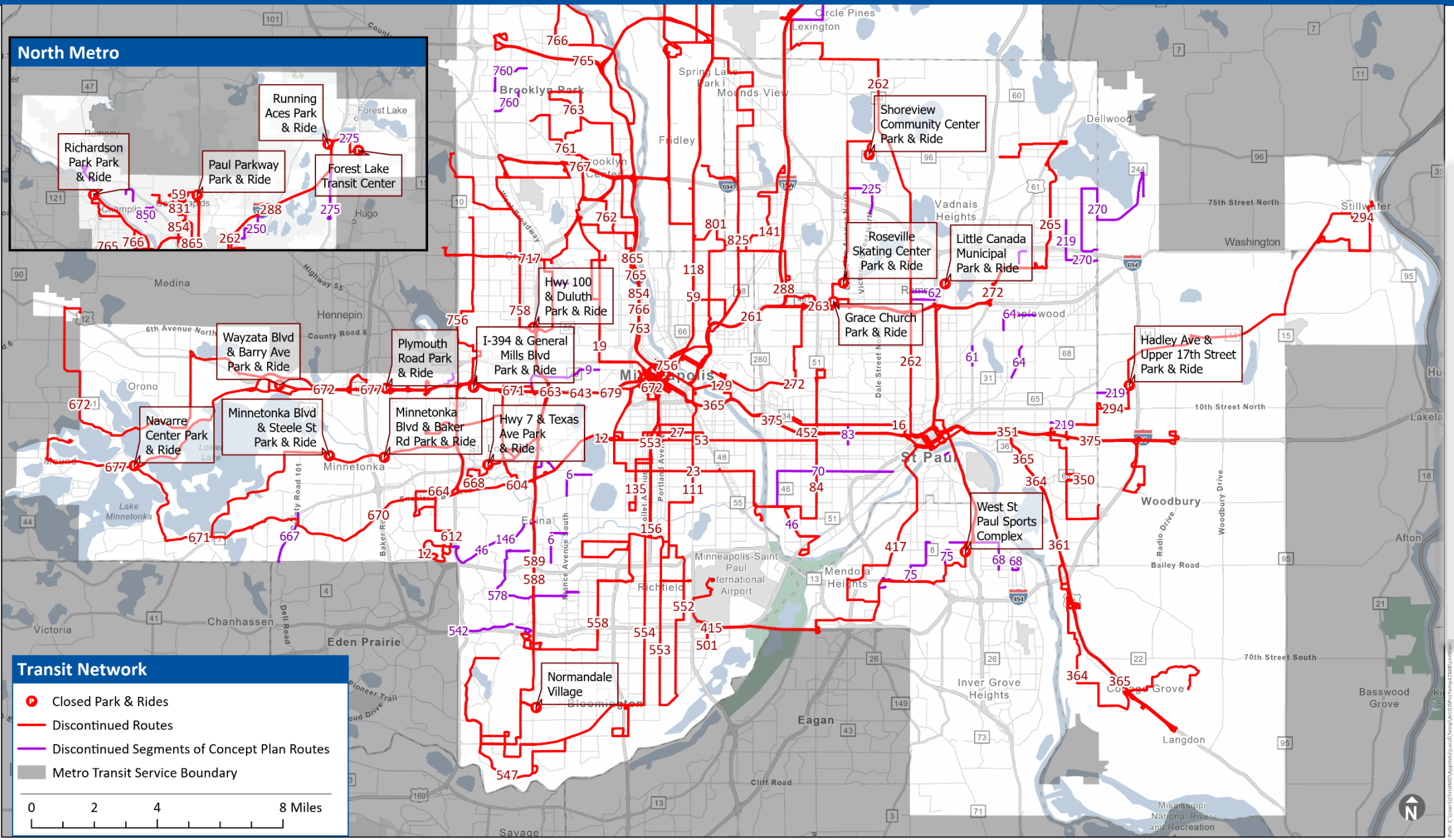
Metro Transit

Change in Commuter Oriented Service Access



Commuter Oriented Service proposed offers robust access

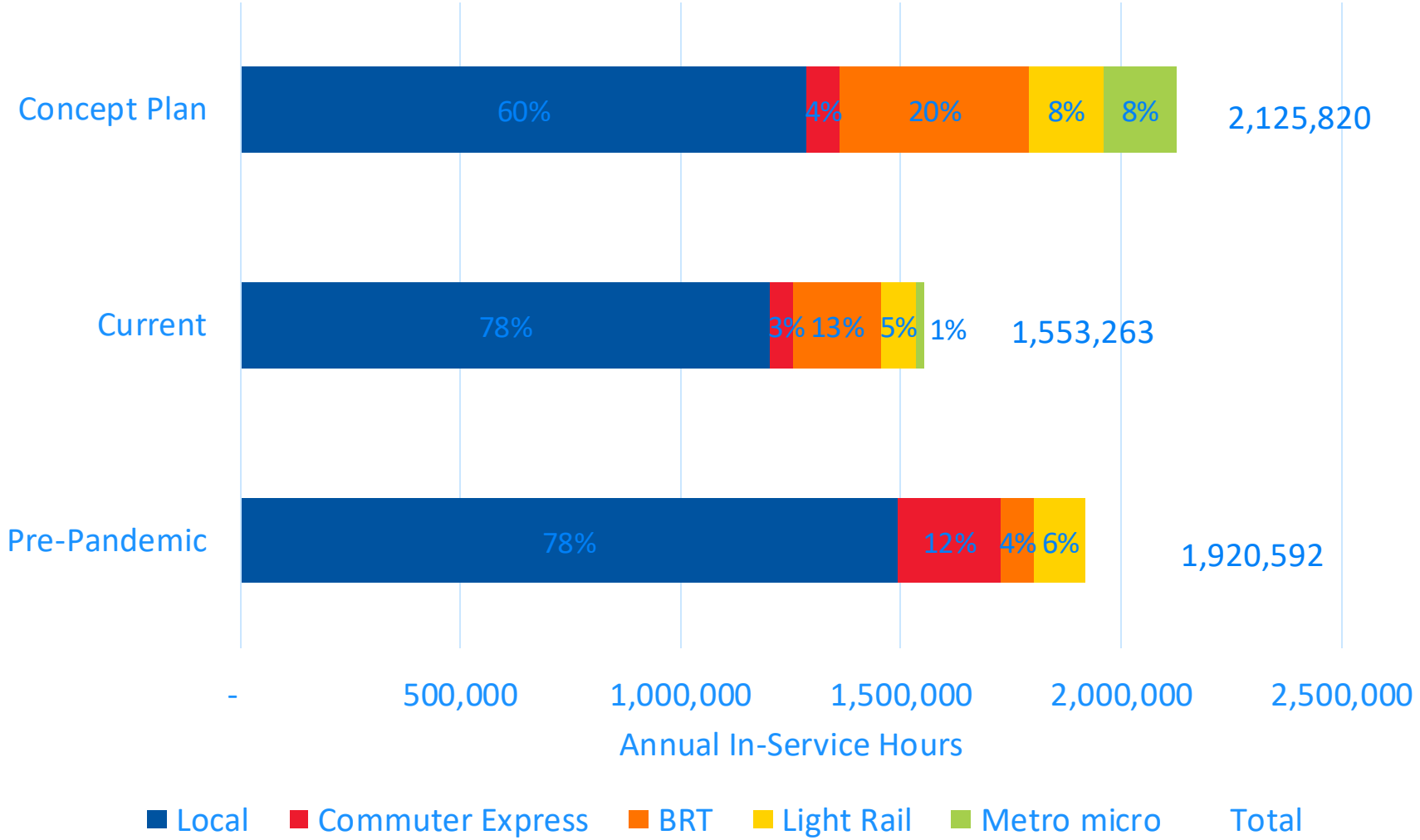
Discontinued Routes, Segments, and Facilities



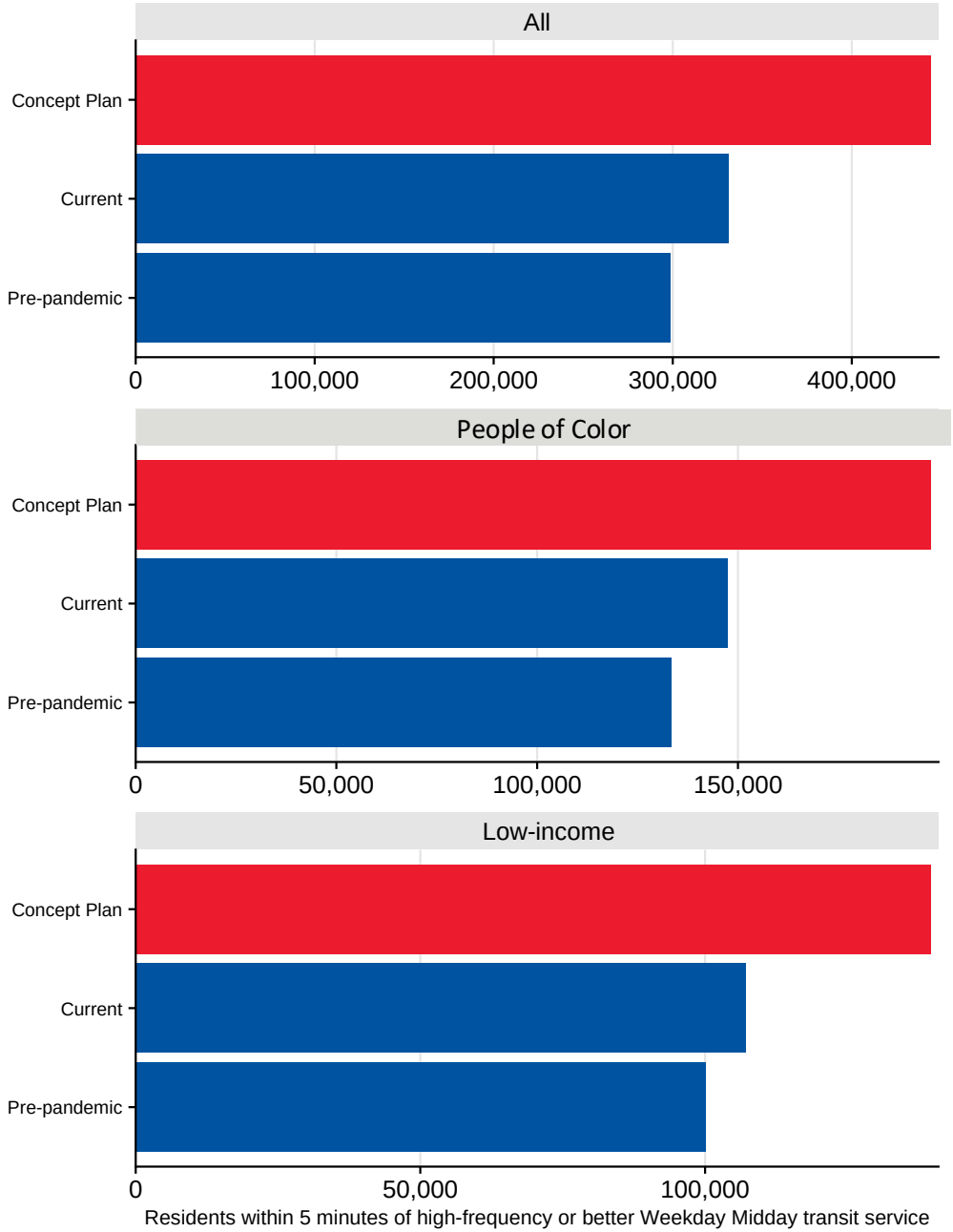
Discontinuing service to meet travel demand and strengthen network

Date: 8/8/2024

In-Service Hour Changes



- 35% more service than 2023
- Doubling investment in **METRO Lines** from current levels
- 9x investment Metro micro over today



Results: Improvements in access to high-frequency network

- More of our region can access frequent all-day service in walking distance

What's required?

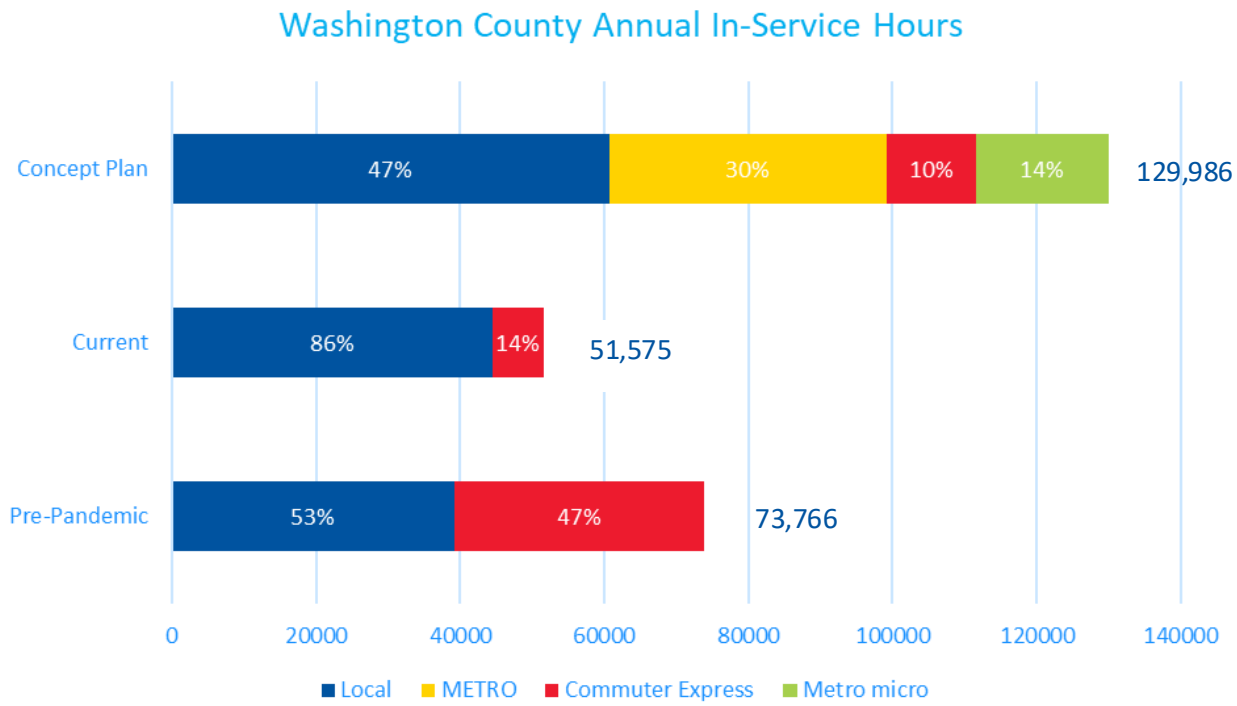
- Over 500 bus operators plus support staff will be needed to implement the improvements in this plan



Proposed Service in the Red Rock Corridor

Washington County Stats

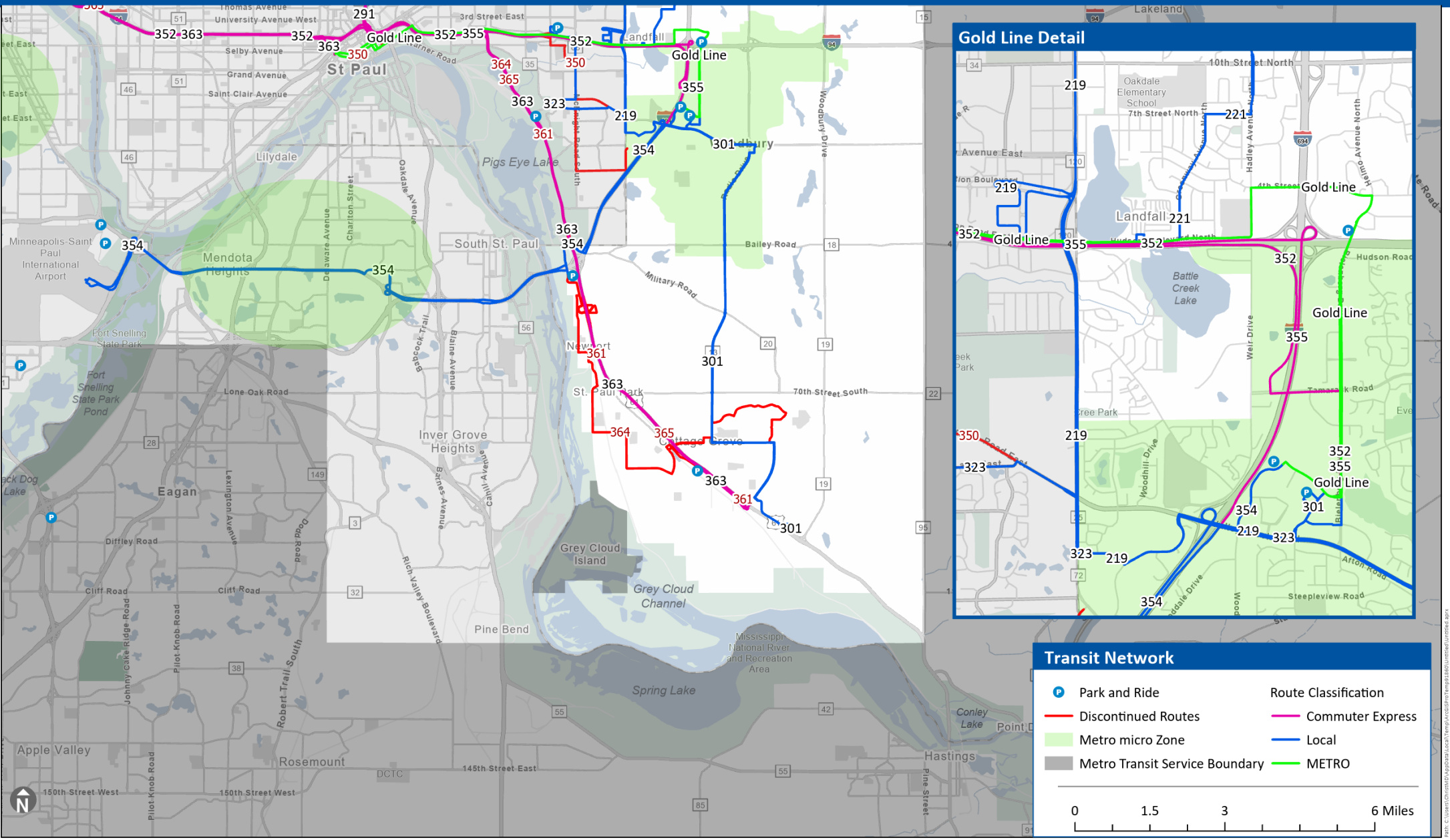
- Network Now changes result in a 152% increase in weekly in-service hours over Dec 2023 levels.
- 4 new routes *(221, 301, 352, 354)*
- 4 areas of new coverage *(61, 219, 301, 354)*
- 6 routes with frequency improvements *(61, 219, 221, 291, 355, 363)*
- 4 restructured routes *(61, 219, 221, 291)*
- 7 routes will be discontinued *(288, 350, 351, 361, 364, 365, 375)*



Red Rock Corridor Stats

- Service in St. Paul (Hwy 61 corridor), St. Paul Park, Newport, Cottage Grove and Hastings
- 2 new routes (301, 354)
- 1 route with frequency improvements (363)
- 4 express routes will be discontinued (350, 361, 364, 365)
- METRO Gold Line opening March 2025
- 1 new micro zone in Woodbury

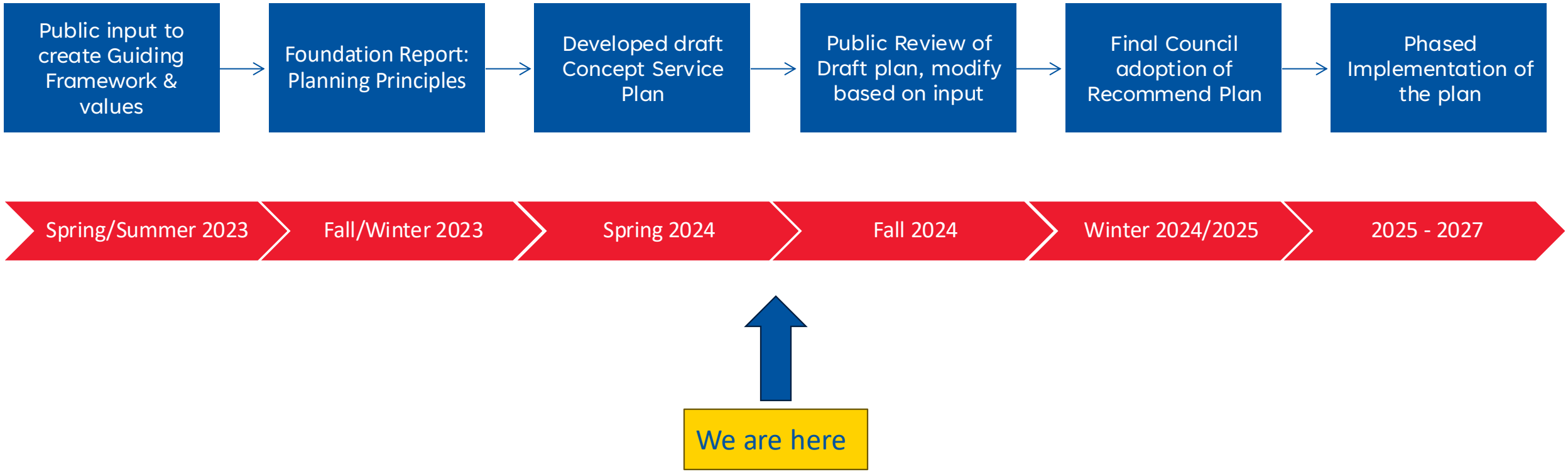
Network Now Concept Plan Routes - Red Rock Corridor



Metro Transit

Date: 9/19/2024

Network Now development timeline



Engagement Process

- Online comment form
  - Paper version available for customer intercept and community work
  - Comments also accepted via email
- Community meetings
  - Public hearing on October 29
  - Virtual and in-person events around the metro
- Pop-up and customer intercept events
- Social media, rider alerts, and information shared across our system
- Direct reach out to government partners and community organizations
  - Do you have organizations or individuals that you want us to reach?

Thank You!

To learn more or subscribe for updates, visit metrotransit.org/network-now.