EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The concept plan for the West Suburban Service Changes project carries forward the recommendations contained in the 2012 Minnetonka Transit Study to improve local circulation and access for transit-reliant communities. Additionally, it proposes consolidating express services, eliminating segments of route duplication and addressing areas of low productivity on express routes.

As shown in Figure 1, the study area of the West Suburban Service Changes project includes the cities of St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, Deephaven, Greenwood, Excelsior, Shorewood and Tonka Bay. Local routes 9N, 615 and a new local route along with express routes 664, 665, 667E, 670 and 671 are the focus of study.

Figure 2 highlights the route changes proposed in this concept plan. Details regarding these changes are provided in Chapter 4, which outlines the proposed West Suburban Service Changes.

TRANSIT MARKET AREAS AND EXISTING SERVICE

While several factors influence the propensity to use transit, the primary predictors of transit productivity are the density of development at the origin and destination of trips. The region has five distinct Transit Market Areas with Area I having the highest density of population, employment and people who rely on transit and Area V having the lowest population and employment densities. The level and type of service appropriate for each market varies accordingly—based on its level of population, employment and transit-reliant residents. Specific implementation of transit services depends on available resources, detailed analysis of transit demand, consideration of complementary and competing services, and other factors.

The eastern portion of the study area, including much of St. Louis Park and Hopkins, is in Transit Market Area II. As identified in Appendix G of the regional 2030 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP), suitable transit services for Area II include regular-route service, cross-town routes and limited-stop service linked to major destinations. The northern tier of the study area west of Texas Avenue, as well as a small area just west of I-494 and north of County Road 62, are in Market Area III and can support a similar variety of service, but at lower intensity than Market Area II. The central and western portion of the study area is in Market Area IV, which may be able to support express service provided there is sufficient concentration of commuters along a corridor. Figure 3 provides a map of Transit Markets in the study area.

Existing service in the eastern portion of the study area, within Market Area II, includes regular-route service, cross-town service, express routes and limited-stop service. The northern tier of the study area along I-394, in Market Area III, includes lower frequency regular-route service. It also includes cross-town service, express service and limited-stop service. The central and western portion of the study area, in Market Area IV, is served principally by express service. Transit Link, the region's dial-a-ride service, serves areas that are not served by fixed routes, regardless of the Market Area.

Additional detail and information for existing service in the study area and its Transit Market Areas is provided in Chapter 1.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN WEST SUBURBAN SERVICE CONCEPT PLAN

The service changes proposed in this concept plan were developed with stakeholder input and public engagement. To date, input has been received through surveys distributed on routes serving the study area, at senior and low-income residential complexes and at a May 2012 open house held at the Ridgedale Library. Participation in the planning process has also been solicited on the Council's website and through emails distributed to those expressing an interest in the project. As the project moves forward, stakeholder involvement will continue to be encouraged. Additional detail and information on public involvement in the project is provided in Chapter 2.

KEY OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

The two principal objectives of the West Suburban Service Changes project are to improve local circulation and access for transit-reliant communities and to improve overall performance of existing express service by eliminating segments of route duplication or low productivity and fringe of the peak period trips with low ridership. Other objectives include strengthening the regional network, enhancing off-peak service frequency, improving service to major destinations and in general providing levels of service appropriate for each specific area.

Service delivery strategies include reducing areas of service redundancy, improving regional connectivity and anchoring routes at nodes of retail, employment and population density.

The recommended improvements for local service will increase access and regional connectivity for transit-reliant communities in the study area. The recommended changes for express service will improve productivity by reducing areas of service duplication and eliminating segments and trips with low ridership. Additional detail and information regarding impacts of the plan and its key objectives and strategies in provided in Chapter 3.

PROPOSED SERVICE CHANGES, RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS AND IMPACTS

The proposed local service changes include adding a new local service (Route 614) between Ridgedale and Minnetonka Heights, increasing the hours of service on Route 615, and extending two Route 9 evening roundtrips to the "N" terminal in the County Road 73 and Greenbrier Road area of Minnetonka.

The proposed changes to express services include consolidating five express routes into four routes, eliminating segments of service duplication, route segments with low ridership and low ridership trips on the fringe of the rush hour.

The recommended plan will increase service on local routes by approximately 16 weekday in-service hours and six Saturday in-service hours. Weekday express service will be reduced by approximately 12 in-service hours.

Additional detail and information on the proposed service changes and resource requirements can be found in Chapter 4.

TITLE VI ANALYSIS OF POTENTIAL DISPARATE IMPACTS

This concept plan has been evaluated in accordance with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Title VI requirements and Metropolitan Council guidelines to understand its impacts on minority and low-

income populations. This evaluation finds that the proposed changes do not have a potential for disparate impact on minority populations. Potential for disproportionate burden on low-income populations does exist. As development of the service plan proceeds, staff will continue to analyze the specific impacts of the concept plan on low-income populations to ensure that any disproportionate burdens can be avoided or mitigated in the Recommended Plan. Further detail on the Title VI service equity review is available in Chapter 5.

STUDY TIMELINE AND IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

Recommendations contained in this concept plan were developed through stakeholder outreach between 2010 and 2012 and are scheduled to be implemented in August 2013. Additional detail concerning the study timeline and implementation schedule can be found in Chapter 6.

Figure 1 West Suburban Study Area and Focus Routes

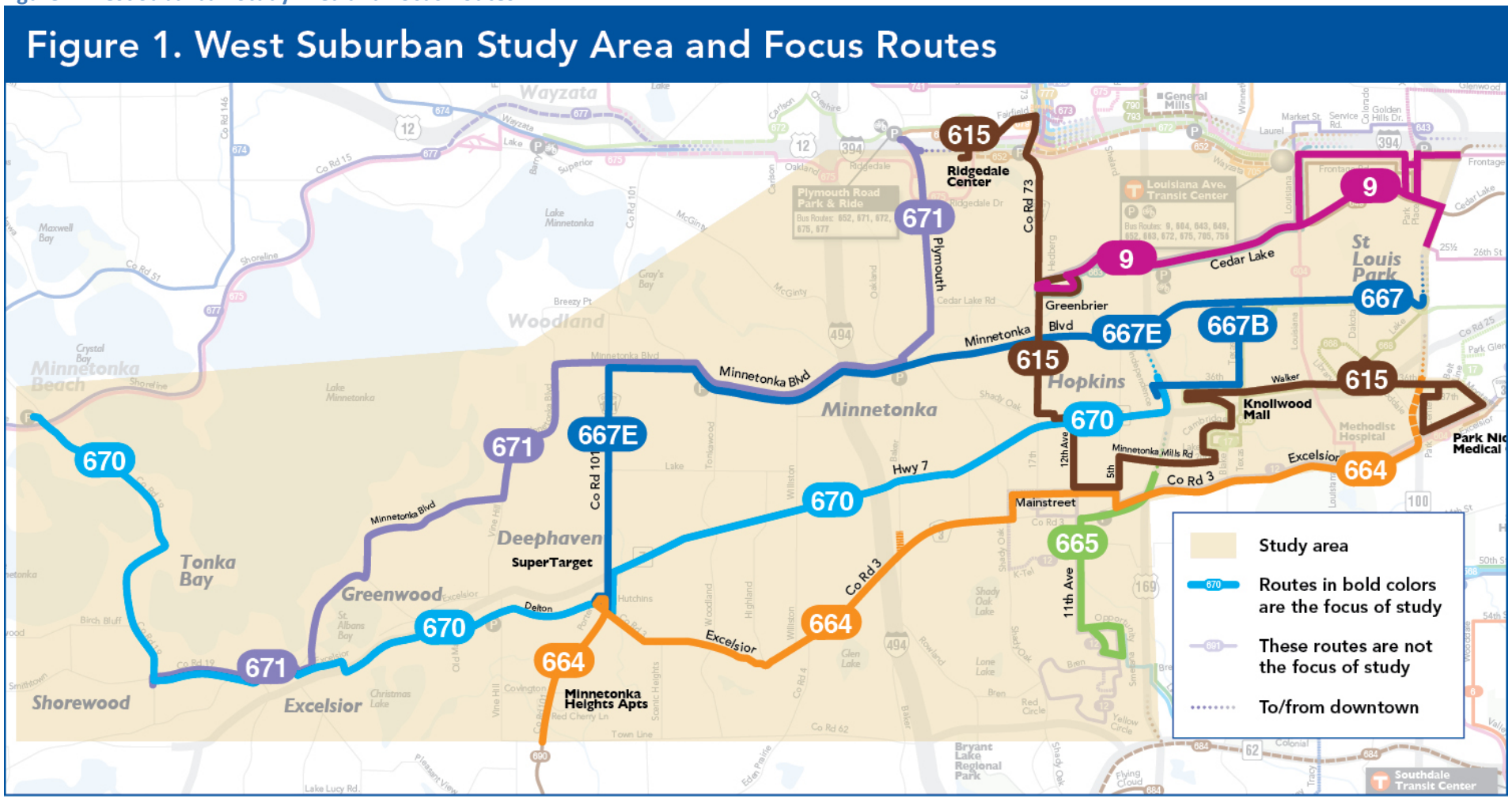


Figure 2 West Suburban Proposed Service Changes

