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Photo by Henry Pan/Minnesota Reformer



Self-driving car, you're about to meet Minnesota winter

As part of a pilot project, these battery-powered vehicles provide free rides between the People's Food Co-op downtown with the Mayo Clinic campus about half a mile apart.

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President's Column



**MPTA President
Ryan Daniel**

Thank You! to everyone who participated in the Minnesota and Wisconsin Public Transit Conference held in Duluth in October! It was so great to see folks again and benefit from an in-person conference as we all navigate our way out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The conference featured great presentations and speakers. This year most of the sessions were recorded so if you missed a session or missed the conference, you can access these presentations on our MPTA web site: <https://www.mpta-transit.org/event/2021-mnwi-public-transit-conference>

Thanks so much to all of our conference sponsors – we really can't do it without you! We're already looking forward to next year's conference in St. Cloud.

With exciting passage of a major infrastructure bill at the federal level, MPTA will be busy working to be involved in the implementation and distribution of new funds. As we prepare for 2022, the MPTA Board will be working to develop a plan for advocating effectively with agencies and law makers. We will be assisting with an updated unmet needs assessment so we all understand the funding needs for transit in Minnesota and can advocate for revenue options that reduce the gap between what we need and the funding level available. We will need your help as we identify the needs among the various transit systems.

MPTA will be approving a Legislative Agenda for 2022. As always, we welcome your input. If you have any policy suggestions or ideas for inclusion in the Legislative Agenda, please be sure to let me know.

The MPTA Board appreciates the feedback we received from those attending the MPTA Annual Meeting. We heard that members appreciate the work of MPTA in advocating for transit with legislators and coordinating with MnDOT and the Metropolitan Council. You told us that you are struggling with driver and wage issues, that you have concerns about the local match requirement with the loss of revenue due to COVID and that you have technology and staffing needs. Our commitment is to take this input and do what we can to address these issues.

There is a lot of expectation surrounding the new federal infrastructure bill: the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). As more information becomes available, we will let you know about new funding levels, new discretionary grant programs and new opportunities to improve transit service in Minnesota. Stay tuned!

Again, thank you for your membership in MPTA and for your willingness to work with us to advocate on your behalf.

As we enter the holiday time of year, we're all focusing on a new year and a better 2022!

Ryan Daniel

MPTA President

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Ryan I. Daniel".

Legislative Report

The infrastructure package has been signed into law and is now a reality! Since the FAST Act first expired on September 30th of 2019, we've been anxiously waited for Congress to craft a new five-year surface transportation authorization act with increased funding levels. Today, we not only have a new five-year authorization, it includes huge jumps in funding for transit.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) passed the US House on November 5th on a vote of 228-206. Thirteen Republicans supported it, while six Democrats voted against it. President Biden worked hard to persuade law maker to go ahead and pass this legislation while negotiations continued on the social and economic investment plan – the Build Back Better bill.

"Finally, infrastructure week! I'm so happy to say that," a jubilant President Biden said the day after the vote. Biden called passage of the bill "a monumental step forward as a nation."

For transit systems all across the country, this legislation will be transformational. The funding increases are very significant and new programs are also included that provide opportunities for more discretionary grants.

The US Senate passed the IIJA in August on a bipartisan basis. Since then, the legislation had been languishing in the House while Democrats argued over the Build Back Better legislation that will need to be passed through the reconciliation process in the Senate.

The bill provides:

- **\$106.9 billion for public transit, an increase of \$41.1 billion (63 percent) from current levels, including:**

- \$69.9 billion of contract authority;

- \$15.8 billion of General Fund authorizations for Capital Investment Grants (CIG) and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA); and

- \$21.2 billion of advance appropriations for fiscal year (FY) 2022 through FY 2026;

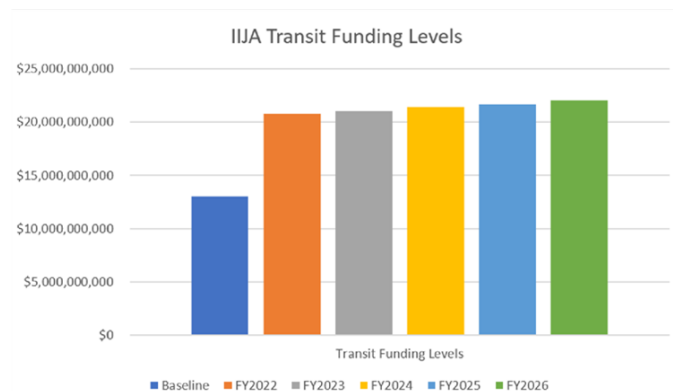
- **\$102.1 billion for passenger and freight rail, an increase of \$86.7 billion (561 percent) from current levels, including:**

- \$36.1 billion of General Fund authorizations;

- \$66.0 billion of advance appropriations for FY 2022 through FY 2026.

For Minnesota, the IIJA provides \$820 million over 5 years in transit formula funds, a significant increase over current funding levels. A break-down by state and another for urbanized areas is available on the MPTA web site.

The legislation also emphasizes investments in electric vehicles and modernizing the electric grid. The bill would spend \$7.5 billion for electric vehicle charging stations, which the administration says are critical to accelerating the use of electric vehicles to curb climate change. It would also provide \$5 billion for the purchase of electric school buses and hybrids, reducing reliance on school buses that run on diesel fuel. Funding is also included for airports, water and wastewater systems and broadband service expansion.



More information will be available as MPTA Board members work with the Office of Transit and Active Transportation at

Legislative Report

MnDOT and the Metropolitan Council on the implementation of the new law here in Minnesota.

The other big piece of legislation – the Build Back Better bill also includes funding for transit.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, the bill provides:

- \$10 billion for a new, innovative program providing competitive grants for public transit access to affordable housing and to enhance mobility for low-income riders and residents of disadvantaged communities;
- \$10 billion for the planning and development of public high-speed rail projects; and
- Additional investments in climate incentive grants and neighborhood access and equity grants.

The latest increases in funding that we anticipate when Congress finally gets these bills passed will be in addition to recent increases over the baseline funding at the federal level that were included in COVID relief legislation.

Federal Funding For Transit – Passed by Congress

CARES Act

- \$227M Metropolitan Area Transit
- \$54M Greater MN Transit (5311 funds - \$42M)
- \$27M 5307 funds

CRRSA

- \$185M Metropolitan Area Transit
- \$14.6M Greater MN Transit
- \$5M Duluth Transit Authority
- \$2.2M St. Cloud Metro Bus

American Rescue Plan

- \$313M Metropolitan Area Transit
- \$10M Duluth
- \$7.5M St. Cloud
- \$13M 5311 Allocation
- Southwest Light Rail project will receive about \$30 million of additional CIG funding



Legislative Report

Minnesota

At the state level, tax collections are running higher than anticipated so we're likely in for another session with a significant general fund surplus.

The state has collected \$657 million or 12% more during the past three months than projected by the February forecast. The state began a new fiscal year in July. It finished the previous one with revenues outpacing estimates by more than \$2.67 billion.

The economic outlook for the rest of 2021 has tapered a bit due to the continued COVID-19 threat and supply chain issues, but the economy is still growing at a strong pace. Collections are up across all categories of state taxes: individual income taxes, sales taxes and the corporate income tax, known as the franchise tax. In addition, high car prices mean that we should see higher revenue levels from the Motor Vehicle Sales Tax (MVST) of which 40% is dedicated to transit.

Taken together, the extra tax collections for the seven months since the February forecast are \$3.3 billion more than state economists predicted.

The 2022 Session is not a budget year – the legislature passed a two-year budget in May of 2021 – but rather the traditional bonding year. Given that the legislature finally broke the \$1 billion threshold in 2020 by passing a \$1.8 billion bonding bill, we expect another large bonding bill in 2022.

State agencies have submitted requests for bonding programs and projects to the administration. The governor's office will review all of the requests and will develop the governor's recommended capital budget sometime in early 2022.

The Metropolitan Council requested \$60 million in GO bonds to implement capital projects along regional busway corridors. Requested funds would be used for design,

environmental work, acquisition of right-of-way interests, preliminary engineering, engineering, acquisition, and construction of projects including arterial bus rapid transit lines.

The Council has identified more than \$60 million in transitway projects that would be eligible to receive capital funding over the next two years. Several projects are anticipated to receive funding from other sources such as federal funds. The state bond funds will be used to both match other sources of funds and advance other projects' funding opportunities.

The 2020 Legislature appropriated \$55 million for Busway Capital Improvement Program. The 2021 Legislature appropriated \$57.5 million in general fund cash for arterial bus rapid transit in the omnibus transportation bill.

MnDOT has requested \$5 million in GO bonds for transit facilities in Greater Minnesota.

In September of 2020, OTAT completed a solicitation for capital projects to be scheduled in calendar years 2024 and 2025. MnDOT received 37 applications for major rehabilitation/expansion of existing facilities or construction of new facilities with an estimated total cost of greater than \$40 million. MnDOT has developed a four-year program of candidate projects.

MPTA is in the process of developing its 2022 Legislative Agenda. If you have any ideas or suggestions for inclusion in the legislative agenda, please be sure to contact us.



MINNESOTA PUBLIC TRANSIT ASSOCIATION

Link BRT Opens at Mayo Civic Center

By: City of Rochester

On Monday, Sept. 13, officials from the City of Rochester and Destination Medical Center Economic Development Agency (DMC-EDA) toured an installation built to demonstrate how bus rapid transit (BRT) will be a major part of the future of public transit in Rochester.

LinkLogoColorRochester's rapid transit project is now "Link." The new name and logo are integrated into a full-scale, branded BRT station model located at the future Mayo Civic Center stop on the future 2.6-mile route. The station model promises to be an immersive experience where members of the public can visit, walk through, and learn more about Greater Minnesota's first BRT line.

At Monday's opening, members of City Council and project staff were joined for a first look by representatives from the project's community co-designers—a group that shaped the design and features of Link's seven stations through a months-long effort to make the stations more representative of the values of the Rochester community.

"There are several features unique to bus rapid transit that are on display," shared City Project Manager Jarrett Hubbard. "The most

striking is the platform size," he continued. "At 80 feet in length, Link's platform will allow the larger, 60-foot vehicles to open three doors simultaneously at a level boarding platform to allow for efficient boarding and alighting."

Other features demonstrated by the Link station model include generous enclosed spaces to provide shelter from the elements, off-board fare payment, and passenger information screens. The model will also have informational displays with details about Link's planned service features, and renderings of each of seven stations along the route.



"Link will provide essential service along one of Rochester's busiest corridors," states Council President Brook Carlson. "In doing so, the service will accommodate future growth and provide a quality service for quality living—a council priority. We want to thank the co-designers who brought unique community perspectives to the station design process."

Patrick Seeb, Executive Director of DMC-EDA adds "The bold look of the Link brand reflects the dynamism and



Link BRT Opens at Mayo Civic Center

interconnectedness of Rochester's expanding portfolio of mobility options."

State lawmakers visited the model on Tuesday, Sept. 14. Groups interested in a guided tour can send a request to rapidtransit@rochestermn.gov.

The City held a Mobility Fair on Saturday, Sept. 18 from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. The free public event was a block party on Second Street SE between the Rochester Public Library and the Link station model. In addition to the model, City mobility partners such as Lime Scooter, HourCar, Med City Mover, Arrive Rochester, and more were on hand providing information, demonstrations, and opportunities to sign up and contribute to the city's future mobility plans.

Due to begin service in 2025, Link will span the length of Second Street, connecting downtown Rochester, the Mayo Civic Center, Cascade Lake, Mayo Clinic campuses, and the Rochester-Olmsted Government Center.

The Link BRT project has been submitted to the Federal Transit Agency to fund 49% of the \$114 million through Capital Investment Grant – Small Starts program. The remaining funds will come from state and local DMC transportation funding.

More information is available on the project [website, www.rochestermn.gov/rapidtransit](http://www.rochestermn.gov/rapidtransit).



Rainbow Rider's Values

By: Jennifer Olson, Rainbow Rider



Rainbow Rider recently came together as a team to discuss the company values. We have never had a set list of values that all of the employees felt invested in and wanted to change that. An email was sent out to all employees asking them for help with coming up with some. It was important to get their feedback on which were meaningful to them.

It was noted that in essence, many of them said the same thing. Below is an accumulation of what our employees of Rainbow Rider hold valuable to them.



Pictured above is a photo of the flags for each of the counties that Rainbow Rider serves. It begins with the American Flag, that we pledge our allegiance to prior to every meeting, then the Minnesota Flag, the Rainbow Rider flag, Douglas County, Grant County, Pope County, Stevens County, Todd County, and Traverse County flags. We wanted to honor our board members by displaying each of their county flags.

Service with Pride & Professionalism



We greet each other and our passengers with a smile on our face, speaking and acting in a positive manner, and presenting ourselves and our equipment in a clean and professional manner.

Kindness and Respect



We show our appreciation for each other and our passengers through considerate acts, treating everyone as an individual, regarding each of their needs.

Safety & People-Oriented



We share a commitment to our communities by having a desire to help others and do everything we can to ensure our passenger's safety.

Integrity & Compassion



We outwardly display our strong moral principles by being honest about our work, our actions and our intentions and are driven to do so because of the compassion we feel for one another and the people we serve.

Dependability



We show up to work on time and are ready to give 100% and strive to follow through with our job duties and responsibilities.

Teamwork



We realize that pitching in where you can, helps make everyone's job a bit easier and that being a part of a team means removing the "me" mentality and adopting the "we" mentality.

MN/WI Public Transit Conference

Thank you to everyone that attended, volunteered, participated in, and sponsored the 2021 joint Minnesota/Wisconsin Public Transit Conference and Expo in Duluth, Minnesota this October. At MPTA's Annual Meeting, we announced the winners of this year's Transit Awards. They are as follows:



Management Innovation

Maple Grove Transit

(accepted by Mike Opatz)

Transit Professional of the Year

David Green, St. Cloud Metro Bus

Transit System of the Year

TRUE Transit (accepted by Ron Decker)

Distinguished Career

LuAnn Bleiler, Paul Bunyan Transit
Helen Pieper, Timber Trails Transit
(not pictured)

Minnesota Bus Operator of the Year

Daniel Debraske, Prairie Five Rides
Harry Mandik, Metro Transit
(not pictured)



Congratulations to all of our winners! If you'd like to view this year's session presentations, please visit our website:

<https://www.mpta-transit.org/event/2021-mnwi-public-transit-conference>

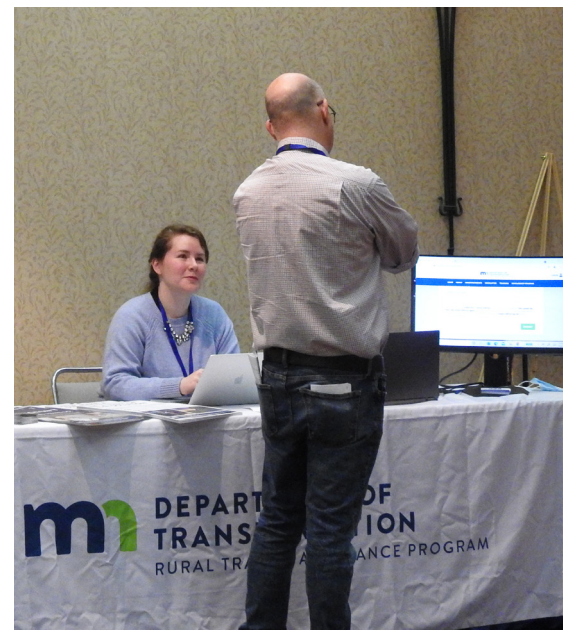
MN/WI Public Transit Conference

We had over 60 vendors, providing access to products and services that benefit Greater Minnesota's transit systems as well as numerous educational sessions given by a variety of transit professionals and keynote speakers.



MN/WI Public Transit Conference

Next year's conference will be at the St. Cloud River's Edge Convention Center, from October 23 to October 25th.



Self-Driving Car, You're About to Meet Minnesota Winter

By: Suzanne Rook, Northfield News

By the time the twee orange-painted vehicles officially made their debut in Rochester on a sunny morning in late September, Akec Garang had already ridden them twice. He stepped on about half an hour before they stopped running for the day, because he wanted to see them handle rush hour traffic. The shuttles, which operate on a route called the Med City Mover, are the first to compete for road space with other people driving, trucking, biking and walking.

The slow-moving vehicles are battery-powered and about the size of an average SUV, seating up to six people. As part of a pilot project, they provide free rides between the People's Food Co-op downtown with the Mayo Clinic campus about half a mile apart. The pilot, which will cost the state \$1.5 million over the next year, will help transportation planners figure out how to move people around with autonomous vehicles as well as how to keep them going during the winter.

Autonomous vehicles have many potential benefits. They may eliminate the need to own a car, because autonomous vehicles can drive around 24/7, taking people to wherever they need to go. That means less demand for parking and more land for everything else. And if they're proven to work in the Minnesota winter, they might prevent deadly crashes. They could also wear less on our roads because they follow the same route, to the inch.

Not everyone is excited about autonomous vehicles. Sen. Jim Abeler, R-Anoka, remains uneasy after hearing about crashes involving autonomous vehicles outside of Minnesota. He's introduced legislation requiring systems that allow a vehicle to drive itself be disabled.

Chief among Abeler's concerns is their ability to navigate on icy road conditions during a Minnesota winter. "The minute you take a driver out from behind the wheel, I mean just, you got to know, Minnesota weather being what it is, [winter] road conditions. I don't know how on earth some GPS robot is going to react to an icy road slick," Abeler said.

Owing to the vehicles' precision, planners may be able to redesign our roads to be cheaper, leaner, and greener. "The roads [may] look more like the tracks that you would find under a railway, for example, and you could plant the middle of the road the where the tires are not going," said professor Tom Fisher, who directs the Minnesota Design Center at the University of Minnesota and recently finished a project that gauges its advantages.

Rochester is no stranger to autonomous vehicles, having been part of a consortium to create specifications for autonomous buses. Outside of Rochester, Ann Arbor-based May Mobility will operate a \$3.5 million 18-month pilot with MnDOT and the city of Grand Rapids next summer to understand how autonomous vehicles can operate in rural areas, especially during the winter.

MnDOT is concerned Abeler's legislation would stifle innovation, scaring companies working on automated vehicles.

"Not only would it impact our ability to work in this public private-partnership to deploy more fully automated vehicles in Minnesota, but it actually would affect current business going on in Minnesota," said MnDOT Commissioner Margaret Anderson Kelliher at a recent press conference. "And that's when we lose out on technological advances."

Self-Driving Car, You're About to Meet Minnesota Winter

Abeler wants autonomous vehicles to be tested on Minnesota roads for three years without accidents. “I think the whole process needs to slow down and do some demonstrations. And show me no accidents.”

The state has committed to testing them — though not for three years — because of what information they could bring. “It’s important to remember these are pilot projects that will both help Minnesotans learn about and experience these emerging technologies and help MnDOT better understand how they work in real-world conditions,” said MnDOT spokesperson Jake Loesch.

Tammy Meehan Russell, a consultant who works with cities on emerging technologies, said pilots like the forthcoming one in Grand Rapids are important for allaying concerns like those Abeler raises.

“We know there’s a lot to learn,” said Russell, adding that it’s hard for autonomous vehicles to operate on rural roads, especially in the winter, because, like humans, they need to recognize landmarks more discernible from trees to understand where they are going.

A big question remains: Who will be held responsible if the autonomous vehicle is involved in a collision and found to be at fault? A bill introduced in 2019 by three Republican senators recommended assigning the liability to the manufacturers.

Although the nation is contending with a transit driver shortage, drivers across the nation have raised concerns about losing their jobs when our way of getting around is fully automated. Industry experts stress the need to retrain those who will lose jobs so they can be productive in other aspects of the profession.



Gov. Tim Walz in 2019 established by executive order the Council on Connected and Automated Vehicles, comprising experts representing trade groups, government agencies, labor and the disabled, who are helping the state prepare for connected and automated vehicles. The council is divided into five subgroups that strategize how safety, data, infrastructure, labor and education for autonomous vehicles will look.

Southwest Transit, which serves Eden Prairie and the eastern third of Carver County, received around \$350,000 from MnDOT and the federal government to purchase Teslas to eventually test their autonomous operating capabilities.

Officials there don’t envision doing away with drivers, even once their system is fully automated.

“We get a little uncomfortable at the notion of there being no human presence on our vehicles just from that person-to-person contact customer service aspect of things,” Matt Fyten said. “So it’s [not that] we don’t necessarily see a world without drivers in an autonomous world, we just see the role of the driver shifting.”

Duluth Transit Authority's 15-minute service dubbed 'Go Lines'

By: Duluth News Tribune, Minn.

The Go Lines will represent the backbone of the DTA's service, and be distinguished from the DTA's other services, which are also being pared to 14 simplified routes versus the network's existing 33 routes.

The Duluth Transit Authority has a name for its upcoming high-frequency service routes: blue and green Go Lines.

"These Go Line routes will play a key role in forging an attractive new system," DTA General Manager Rod Fournier said. "We are very excited to give the public a taste of these routes, which will have their own branding, simple navigation, and offer very attractive and efficient trips with 15-minute frequencies during key travel times."

The Go Lines will represent the backbone of the DTA's service, and be distinguished from the DTA's other services, which are also

being pared to 14 simplified routes versus the network's existing 33 routes. In addition to appearing at stops every 15 minutes, the Go Lines will feature limited stops, creating a more rapid service "to get you from point A to B quicker," a DTA news release said.

The blue line will operate from Spirit Valley to downtown and on to the University of Minnesota Duluth by traveling on Grand Avenue, Superior Street and 21st Avenue East. The green line will operate from downtown to Miller Hill Mall and on to Walmart by traveling on Superior Street, Sixth Avenue East and Central Entrance.

— Duluth Transit Authority addresses pedestrian safety issues raised by fatality at mall

— DTA bus driver keeps the city moving during pandemic



Duluth Transit Authority's 15-minute service dubbed 'Go Lines'

Beginning next summer, the Go Lines will be part of a broader DTA vision to transform those routes into arterial bus rapid transit lines, which, the DTA says, will require large capital investments in buses, stops and stations, and technology.

Bus rapid transit comes at a fraction of the cost of installing light rail, while carting some of the benefits. BRT lines, as they're commonly called, can preempt traffic signals, use larger buses, rely on prepayment machines, and feature boarding stations level with bus floors — efficiencies that add up to a shorter ride.

"With the combination of the two Go-Line routes, and the increased frequency all day and on the weekends, we are looking forward to seeing how these system improvements will benefit the communities we serve," said Chris Belden, the DTA's director of planning.

The DTA board of directors approved a redesigned network last summer. The network will expand its well-utilized weekend service by 25% and prioritize connecting more people to key destinations, including high-density focus areas, including the Spirit Valley neighborhood in West

Duluth, Lincoln Park, downtown Duluth and Superior, where riders are expected to see improvements in wait times.

Back in Duluth, one proposed new line would provide a continuous route running the length of the city from the Gary-New Duluth to Lakeside neighborhoods. The current system doesn't allow a rider to do that without alighting.

In terms of equity, the DTA says the plan better serves minority and low-income households by providing increased access to frequent service.

The proposed redesign followed a survey conducted by the DTA earlier this year, which showed respondents favoring a less complicated system with higher frequency service.



Metro Purple Line Clears Environmental Hurdle

By: Metropolitan Council

The Purple Line (formerly the Rush Line) — a bus rapid transit project planned to start service to the northeast metro area in late 2026 — has received environmental clearance from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Achievement of this major milestone helps to clear the way for the transfer of the project from Ramsey County to the Metropolitan Council in late 2021 or early 2022.

This month, the FTA issued a favorable environmental decision based on the project's Environmental Assessment. The decision document, called a Finding of No Significant Impact (PDF), is the final stage of the environmental review process for the Purple Line project under the National Environmental Policy Act. In addition, Ramsey County has issued a Findings of Fact and Conclusions document (PDF) to comply with the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act.

The 15-mile METRO Purple Line will connect Saint Paul, Maplewood, White Bear Township, Vadnais Heights, Gem Lake, and White Bear Lake.

Corridor cities, residents weighed in on preliminary design plans

Ramsey County has been in charge of planning the project until now. In 2017, the corridor communities endorsed the selection and recommendation of the

locally preferred alternative, following which the Met Council adopted it into the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan.

Over the past three years, county project staff have taken in thousands of comments from the community, connecting with more than 3,400 people at events, pop-up meetings, open houses, virtual events, and a variety of other efforts. In 2020, the cities of Saint Paul, White Bear Lake, Vadnais Heights, and Maplewood passed resolutions of support for the project's preliminary design plans.

Purple Line will advance equity, access to jobs

As part of the regional METRO system, the Purple Line will connect people to jobs, housing, services, and key destinations such



Metro Purple Line Clears Environmental Hurdle

as Union Depot and downtown Saint Paul, Regions Hospital, Hmong Village, Phalen Regional Park, St. John's Hospital, Maplewood Mall, and downtown White Bear Lake.

"The Purple Line is a major investment in equity and mobility for this part of the metro region," said Met Council Member Susan Vento. "Nationwide, 20% of households at or below the federal poverty line lack access to a car. The percentages of low-income African American and Latino households without a car are even higher at 33% and 25%, respectively. Public transportation allows these families to meet their daily needs. Purple Line will be a major step forward in improving access to jobs, medical care, and other opportunities for residents along this route.

"The Purple Line will be a critical connector for residents, workers, and businesses," said Ramsey County Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt. "We're pleased by the progress this project is making to advance equity and access to jobs in Ramsey County by providing another transportation option in areas that are underserved by transit. Successful completion of the federal environmental process is a testament to the careful and collaborative planning work undertaken since the environmental phase began in 2018."

Met Council prepared for handoff

In August and September, the Met Council took several steps to prepare for taking over the project. One was approving a capital grant agreement under which Ramsey County will pay the Met Council \$39.9 million for agency and consultant staff support over the next two years to get to 100% design, begin purchasing right of way, and for related project management services. Ramsey County approved the agreement on October 5.

Another step was approval of cooperation and master funding agreements with the Minnesota Department of Transportation to support the project, since some of their technical and professional staff will work on the project. The line includes a segment along Highway 61 in White Bear Lake.

On October 12, the Met Council issued a request for proposals for engineering and project management consultant services for the project. This winter the Met Council anticipates that the project will be accepted into the federal Capital Investment Grant Program, which would provide approximately half of the capital funds for the project.

METRO Purple Line scheduled to open in 2026

As currently designed, the line has 21 stations. It will run largely along Robert Street and Phalen Boulevard in Saint Paul, then join Ramsey County rail right-of-way now occupied by the Bruce Vento Regional Trail, which terminates at the border of White Bear Lake and Maplewood near Highway 61. The right-of-way has enough room to fit the trail, the bus line, and other elements such as landscaping. From there, the line will continue into downtown White Bear Lake on Highway 61.

Capital funding for the \$457 million to \$474 million bus rapid transit project will come from a combination of county and federal funds. Based on the project's estimated cost and ridership, financial plan, environmental and congestion relief benefits, and impacts on land use and economic development, the Purple Line is expected to qualify for federal funding and be competitive with other projects around the country for funding.

Metro Purple Line Clears Environmental Hurdle

“Feedback from residents, businesses, workers, and students along the route has shaped this project and will continue to do so in the future,” Vento said. “Transit service like Purple Line has generated significant economic development in Minnesota and across the U.S. We look forward to the opportunities that will come with this route.”

The project’s current timeline anticipates construction will begin in 2024 and the bus rapid transit line would start operations in late 2026.

“The transition from Rush Line to Purple Line represents years of work, and we’re hopeful that we will continue moving forward on schedule to deliver fast, frequent service to residents between White Bear Lake and Saint Paul,” Craig Lamothe, Metro Transit project manager, said. “We appreciate Ramsey County’s work on the project and look forward to taking the next steps that will bring us to opening day.”



Council Approves Final Metro B Line Plan

By: Metropolitan Council

On Oct. 13, the Metropolitan Council approved the final corridor plan for the METRO B Line, including all 33 stations and routing. The project now moves into the detailed design phase, which will occur into 2022, with construction in 2023 and service anticipated to begin in 2024.

The B Line is a \$65 million bus rapid transit line that will substantially replace local bus route 21. The B Line will connect Uptown in Minneapolis with Union Depot in Saint Paul, operating primarily along Lake Street in Minneapolis and Marshall and Selby avenues in Saint Paul.

The approved plan built upon over 2,500 community comments and coordination with cities and counties.

[Read a summary report of engagement activities and what we heard \(PDF\)](#)

B Line map showing the route from West Lake Station to downtown St. Paul via Lake, Marshall, and Selby.

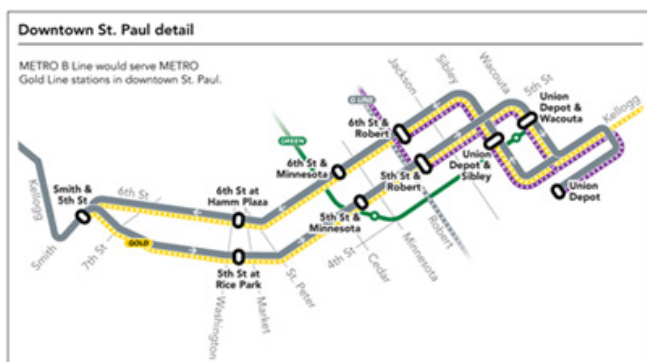
Potential bus lanes on Lake Street still being evaluated

The final plan does not include any changes to station locations included in the July 2021 recommended corridor plan, but does include updates based on feedback from project partners and community members:

- Responses to comments about specific station locations, including issues to address throughout the detailed engineering phase.
- More on continued evaluation of bus lanes on Lake Street in partnership with Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis.



Final Corridor Plan
October 2021



Council Approves Final Metro B Line Plan

Approval of the plan does not finalize decisions about bus lanes, but sets stations in the best locations to accommodate them. Metro Transit, Hennepin County, and the City of Minneapolis are continuing to work together to address multiple goals for the Lake Street corridor, including:

- Transit speed and reliability
- Pedestrian and traffic safety
- General mobility improvements

Project managers anticipate that county-led advanced technical analysis will be completed by end of 2021 with additional public communication to follow.

B Line service projected to be 20% faster

Route 21 is Metro Transit's second busiest bus route with about 10,000 daily rides in 2019, but it runs in a corridor with an average speeds as low as 8 miles per hour during rush hour. The B Line aims to make service about 20% faster.

BRT improves the transit experience by providing faster, reliable service every 10 minutes, seven days a week during the day and most of the evening, on streamlined routes with upgraded stations and onboard amenities.

Upcoming Events:

2022 Bus Rodeo
July 15-16, 2022



Contact Us:

Have a story for us?
Want to nominate
someone for "Meet the
Director?"

Reach out to us here:

[Program Email](#)
[651-659-0804](tel:651-659-0804)

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