

Better Bus Route 4

Engagement Summary

May 2024

Background

Route 4 is a local bus route providing service in Columbia Heights, St. Anthony, Minneapolis, Richfield, and Bloomington. It operates north-south between Silver Lake Village Shopping Center and Southtown shopping district, primarily along Johnson St. NE, SE 8th St., Hennepin Ave. S, Lyndale Ave. S, Penn Ave. S, and W. 50th St.

Metro Transit's Better Bus Route program improves the customer experience through better accessibility at the bus stop, adding shelters where warranted, and simplifying the route alignment and schedule. Proposed changes include:

- Consolidating bus stops for up to a quarter-mile spacing ([see map](#) for specific bus stop locations)
- Relocating select stops past a signalized intersection to reduce delays
- Expanding the no-parking zone around select stops to ensure buses can fully pull to the curb at the bus stop
- Adjusting the route schedule
- Installing concrete pads to improve accessibility for customers
- Installing new shelters at qualifying bus stops

Purpose and Goal

The purpose of this public engagement effort is to seek feedback on proposed changes to Route 4. Among the items for consideration:

- Education around the Better Bus Route program
- Understanding how proposed bus stop and route alignment changes would affect customers
- Identifying infrastructure, community spaces, organizations, or other factors that would change decisions around stop locations



Methods of Engagement

The target audience is customers, especially those that use the stops that are proposed for removal or consolidation. Outreach methods included:

- Rider Alerts with a QR code to the survey were posted at bus stops proposed for removal
- Emails to current Go-To Card, mobile app users, Riders Club subscribers
- Emails to senior living facilities, multifamily properties, and schools along the route
- In-person outreach on the route at various times throughout the engagement period to talk to customers and operators about the proposed changes and survey



Communications

Date	Activity
2/15	Website posted with information about Better Bus Route project and link to survey
2/12	Bus stop signage posted with survey info in Spanish, Somali, and Hmong translations
2/19	Text and email sent to Rider Alert subscribers
2/19	Email blast to registered Go-To Card holders
2/21	Social media posts: Facebook, X, Instagram
2/29	Riders Club e-newsletter with project update and link to website (2,000 subscribers)
3/14	Shared in MCTC College Connect and Student Connect e-newsletters

Stakeholder Engagement

Project staff presented to several neighborhood groups and government stakeholders to introduce the project, answer questions, and help get the word out about the survey.

Date	Activity
2/20	Lowry Hill East Neighborhood Association (LHENA) Board Meeting
2/29	Waite Park Community Council Board Meeting
3/8	Transit Accessibility Advisory Committee (TAAC) presentation
3/8	Richfield Transportation Commission Meeting
3/13	Fulton Neighborhood Board Meeting
3/14	Lynnhurst Neighborhood Association Board Meeting
3/14	Waite Park Community Council Annual Meeting & Resource Fair

Survey Respondents

Over the course of four weeks, we received 506 survey responses and 7 emailed comments. Nearly 350 survey respondents provided additional written comments about Route 4 and other topics. The demographics of customers surveyed were self-identified as follows:

Race/Ethnicity	Percent	Age	Percent
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.54%	Under 18	1.3%
Asian or Asian American	5.48%	18-24	10.9%
Black, African, African American	6.14%	25-34	27.9%
Hispanic, Latinx, Latino	6.36%	35-44	22.3%
Middle Eastern or North African	0.2%	45-54	13.7%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.2%	55-64	12.2%
White	83.5%	65-74	10.1%
Other race, ethnicity, or origin	2.19%	75-84	1.3%
Prefer not to answer	9.8%	85+	0.4%

For context, in a 2022 Metro Transit On-Board Survey, there were 422 origin-destination surveys on Route 4 which showed a similar profile for age groups (the largest group of those surveyed being 25-34) but the racial demographics showed a higher percent of Black, African, or African American respondents (26%).

Out of 506 surveys collected, 448 responded to the question about disability status. Of those who responded, approximately 28% identified as having a disability or impairment. This is a higher representation than the 2022 On-Board Survey which showed 10% of Route 4 riders self-identified as having a disability.

Nearly 80% of survey respondents ride Metro Transit at least a few times a week, with 43% riding almost daily.

The top three zip codes represented were 55408 (19.14%), 55418 (18.28%), and 55419 (13.55%). These include much of Southwest and Northeast Minneapolis.

Summary and Analysis

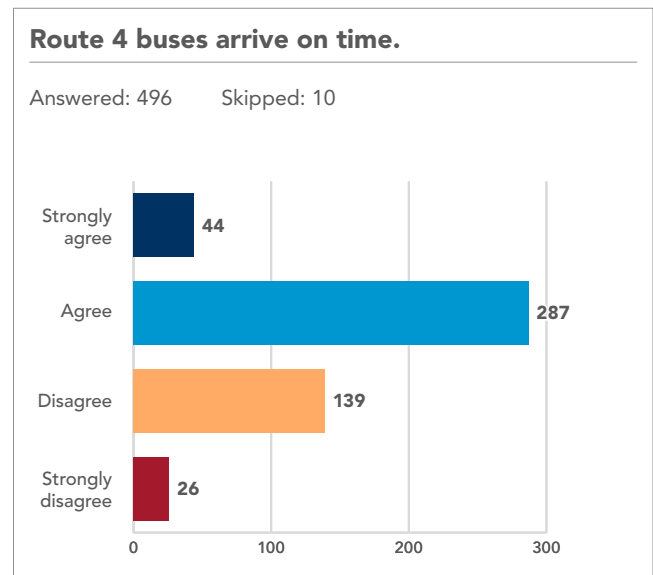
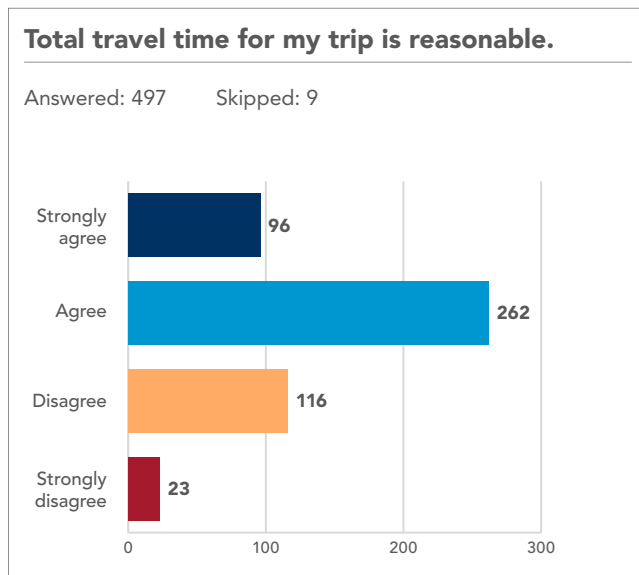
Overall, customers were generally happy with the performance of Route 4 – most thought it was reliable and fast enough to meet their needs. However, both the span and frequency of service were viewed as deficient. Most customers were willing to walk further for more reliable service.

Specific to the changes being proposed through the Better Bus Route project, we received 67 written comments about 35 different bus stops. Most bus stops received a single comment, however some bus stops – notably Lyndale Ave. S. at 22nd St. W., and on 50th St. W at Bryant Ave. S. – had multiple comments.

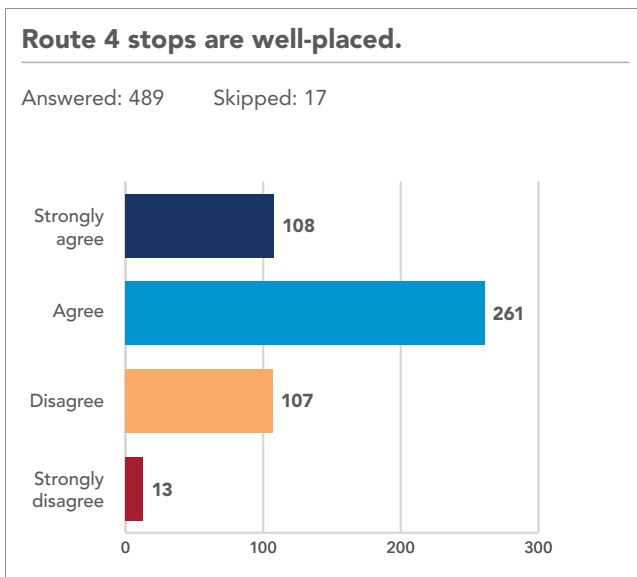
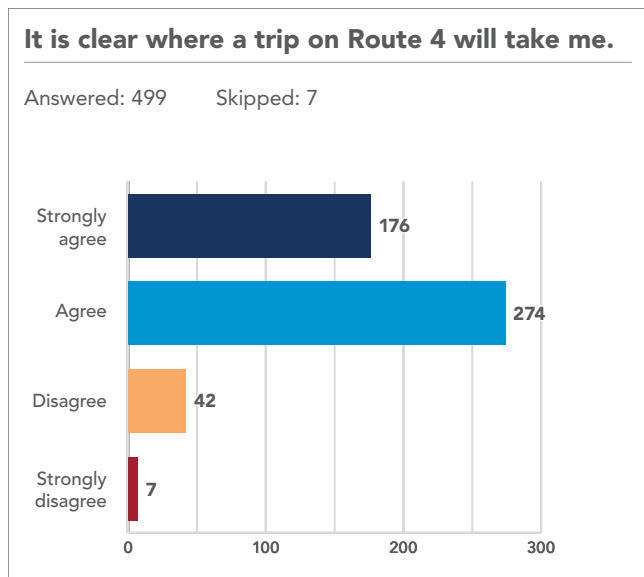
Finally, we also received many comments about other aspects of Route 4 including bench placement, snow removal, alignment changes, or trip time adjustments. While these may not be specifically addressed through the Better Bus Route project, they can help inform future decision-making on Route 4 and other local bus service.

Survey Data

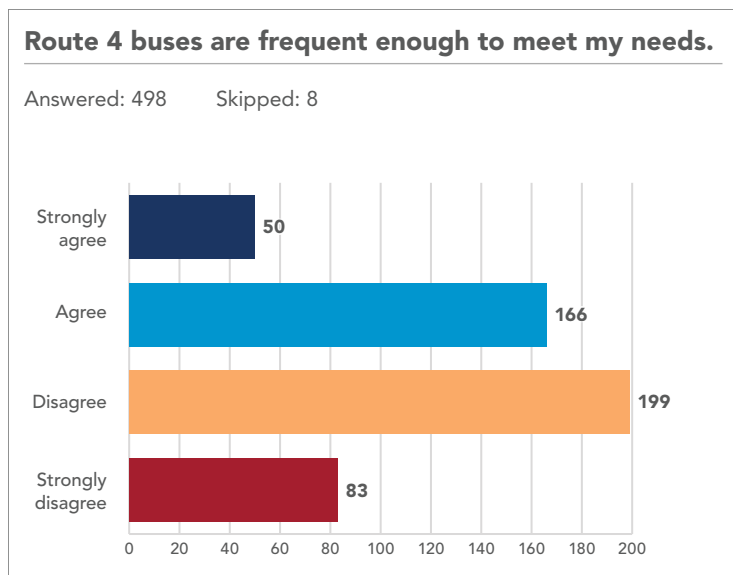
Respondents had a favorable view of Route 4 service, with 72% agreeing that the total travel time was reasonable, and 66% answering that Route 4 buses arrive on time.



Respondents also reported positive responses on clarity of route (90% agree or strongly agree) and placement of stops (75% agree or strongly agree).

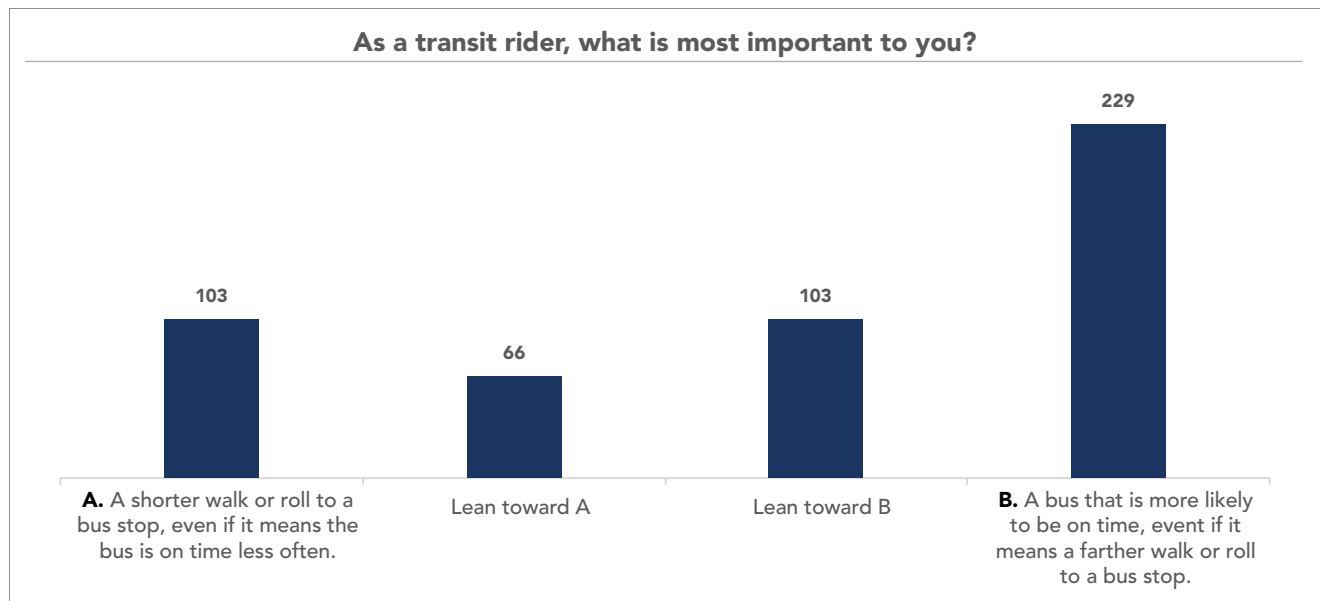


Fifty-six percent of respondents said Route 4 does not operate with enough frequency to meet their needs.

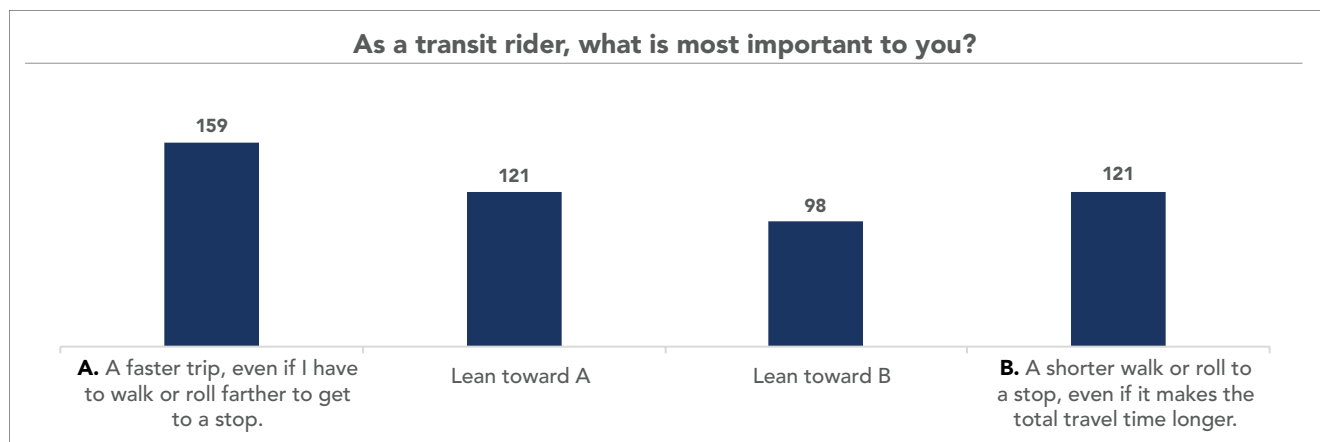


Customer Priorities

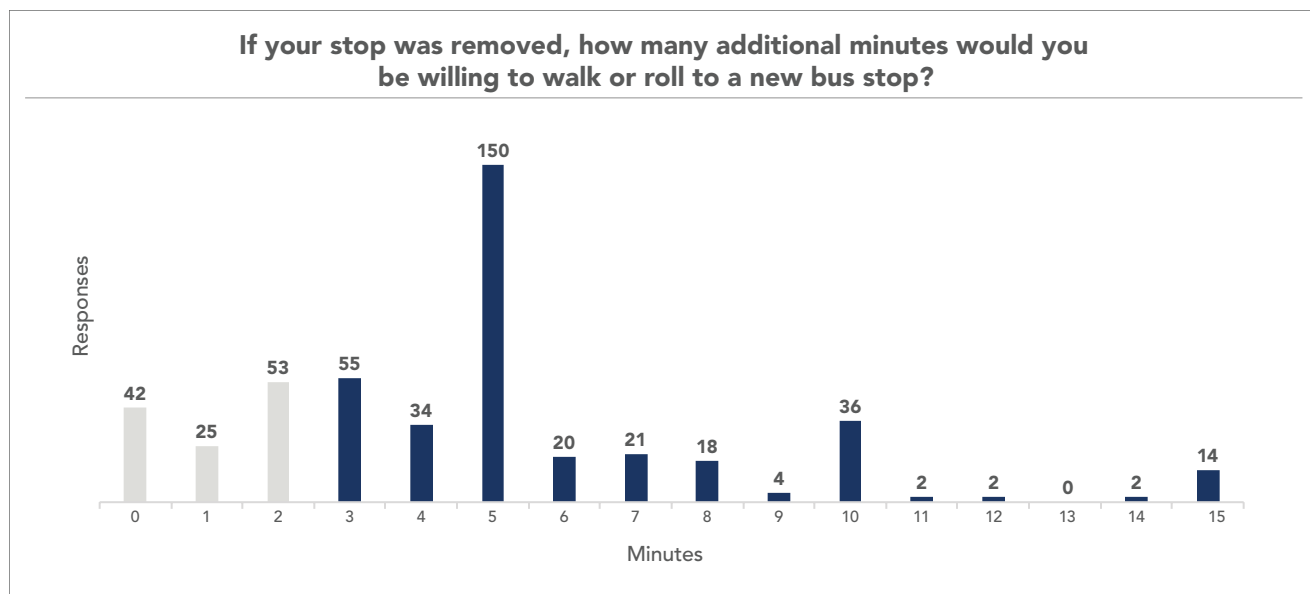
Nearly two-thirds of respondents told us they preferred a service that is more likely to be on time over a shorter walk or roll to the bus stop.



Fifty-six percent of respondents preferred a faster trip over a shorter walk or roll to their bus stop.



Most respondents (75%) would be willing to walk or roll at least 3 additional minutes to a new bus stop if their current stop were removed. For reference, walking one long block (1/8 mile) takes about 2.5 minutes at a casual pace.



How We are Using What We Heard

Transit planners are using this feedback to examine the proposed stop locations prior to finalizing their recommendations. This report will be shared at metrotransit.org and Route 4 changes will go into effect mid-August.

Appendix A: Sample quotes from Survey Responses

Stop spacing changes

- Overall good changes, and very needed. In my experience, Route 4 buses slow to a crawl in the traffic between Lake Street and downtown. Anything that can be done to improve trip reliability there, such as bus lanes or signal priority, would be a great help. Improving service frequency would also be nice, especially in Richfield, where 4L and 4P run half-hourly at best.
- Spreading out these stops would impact myself and many of my coworkers negatively. I already have to walk a ways and in the winter, it's tough. Buses are reasonably on time and reliable. If so many stops were removed it would make transportation to and from work quite difficult, even a few extra minutes in freezing weather is a lot.

Improve frequency

- Would like to see it run more frequently during the morning and afternoon commutes. Though I understand this poses additional issues such as having enough drivers.
- It would be great to have higher frequency, especially now with the construction and delays on the 6. Whenever I take the 4, it is packed. I strongly support the proposed changes.

Other sample comments

- 20 minute frequency would be great, but the biggest issue is delays coming back from downtown. The bus was almost always 10-15 minutes late due to car traffic around Washington and the library. Bus shelters in areas with little shade would be great too.
- Bus lanes on Lyndale please, north of Lake Street! The parked cars make it so the bus can't pull over to pick us up and we get stuck behind a loooong line of cars during morning commutes especially. Sometimes my commute can take 3x longer based on this. There is ample parking near Lyndale businesses on side streets and in lots nearby despite what some people will say - bus riders will have a faster route with no parking or less parking.
- I think more bus shelters are important particularly along Lyndale Ave south of Minnehaha Creek. It gets very windy because the street is so wide. Also, the more concrete pads the better. I hope that will help slow vehicular traffic! Cars drive too fast along Lyndale especially south of the creek. Better signage would help too. Thanks!