



# Network**NOW**

## Draft Concept Plan

SEPTEMBER 2024



## CONTENTS

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
What is Network Now? .....	1
Project background .....	3
Developing the decision-making framework.....	3
Network Now principles .....	7
<b>Recent ridership and service changes.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Ridership and operating trends .....	8
Service changes in 2023.....	8
Service changes in 2024.....	9
<b>Resource and workforce to support growth .....</b>	<b>10</b>
Growing Metro Transit’s workforce .....	10
Fleet needs.....	10
Funding .....	10
<b>Draft Network Now concept plan.....</b>	<b>11</b>
Proposed service changes .....	12
METRO regional transitways .....	13
Metro micro service .....	16
Local and express bus service .....	18
Changes by subregion .....	26
Regional changes .....	37
Facilities impacts .....	42
Dial-a-Ride service impacts .....	47
Network Now trade-offs.....	47
Evaluation process and results .....	48
<b>Concept plan summary and next steps.....</b>	<b>61</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. What Network Now does.....	1
Figure 2. Transit providers in the Twin Cities region.....	2
Figure 3. Changes in ridership over time by time of day .....	5
Figure 4. Ridership by mode, 2014 to 2024.....	5
Figure 5. Concept plan development process .....	11
Figure 6. Network Now concept plan – summary of service changes.....	12
Figure 7. Network Now concept plan – summary of weekday midday frequency levels .....	13
Figure 8. 2027 Concept plan METRO network .....	15
Figure 9. Concept plan Metro micro zones.....	17
Figure 10. Concept plan discontinued service .....	19
Figure 11. Network Now concept plan – Local route and high frequency service.....	22
Figure 12. Commuter oriented service network.....	24
Figure 13. Change in Commuter Oriented Service Access.....	25
Figure 14. Network Now concept plan – Northeast Metro .....	27
Figure 15. Network Now concept plan – Northwest Metro .....	29
Figure 16. Network Now concept plan – Southeast Metro .....	31
Figure 17. Network Now concept plan – Southwest Metro .....	33
Figure 18. Network Now concept plan – downtown Minneapolis and University of Minnesota.....	35
Figure 19. Network Now concept plan – downtown St. Paul.....	36
Figure 20. Network Now concept plan – transit network by service type .....	37
Figure 21. Network Now concept plan - compared to December 2019 – December 2023 .....	38
Figure 22. Network Now concept plan by Number of Weekly Trips.....	40
Figure 23. Network Now concept plan – routes with improved frequency and new coverage .....	41
Figure 24. Percentage of annual in-service hours by service type .....	42
Figure 25. Annual Park & Ride survey, 2004 to 2023 .....	43
Figure 27. Low-income populations served by Metro Transit in 2023 (% of total residents).....	50
Figure 29. Zero-vehicle households served by Metro Transit in 2023 (% of total households) .....	52
Figure 30. Population with access to 10-minute service by time of day .....	53
Figure 31. Population with access to 15-minute service by time of day .....	53

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 32. Population with access to 60-minute service by time of day .....	54
Figure 33. Population with access to any transit service by time of day .....	54
Figure 34. Percent of March 2023 customers with access to transit by service level .....	55
Figure 35. Percent of people of color with access to transit by service level.....	56
Figure 36. Percent of low-income residents with access to transit by service level .....	57
Figure 37. Job access by demographic group .....	58
Figure 38. Job access by time of day .....	59

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Concept plan discontinued route numbers with most service restructured elsewhere .....	19
Table 2. Routes with some segments discontinued .....	20
Table 3. Park & Ride system capacity .....	43
Table 4. Park & Rides discontinued, 2019 to June 2024 .....	44
Table 5. Existing Park & Rides expected to be discontinued by 2027 .....	45
Table 6. Key Express Network .....	45
Table 7. New METRO Park & Rides planned by 2027 .....	47
Table 8. Low-income populations served by Metro Transit in 2023 .....	50
Table 9. People of Color served by Metro Transit in 2023 .....	51
Table 10. Zero-Vehicle Households served by Metro Transit in 2023 .....	52
Table 11. Change in weekday midday access to jobs per resident, relative to current service .....	60

# INTRODUCTION

## What is Network Now?

[Network Now](#) establishes Metro Transit’s service planning priorities through 2027. This plan documents the changes to the region’s transit network that have occurred since 2019, builds on the success of rail and bus rapid transit investments, and guides how Metro Transit will invest in transit service to expand service and improve mobility. Through Network Now, Metro Transit will:

- Expand transit service by more than 35% to help attract more riders.
- Improve access by providing new bus routes and microtransit service.
- Modify commuter and express service to meet today’s travel patterns.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by encouraging transit use.

The plan will resolve key questions related to service and facilities and improve bus, rail, and microtransit service, as shown in Figure 1.

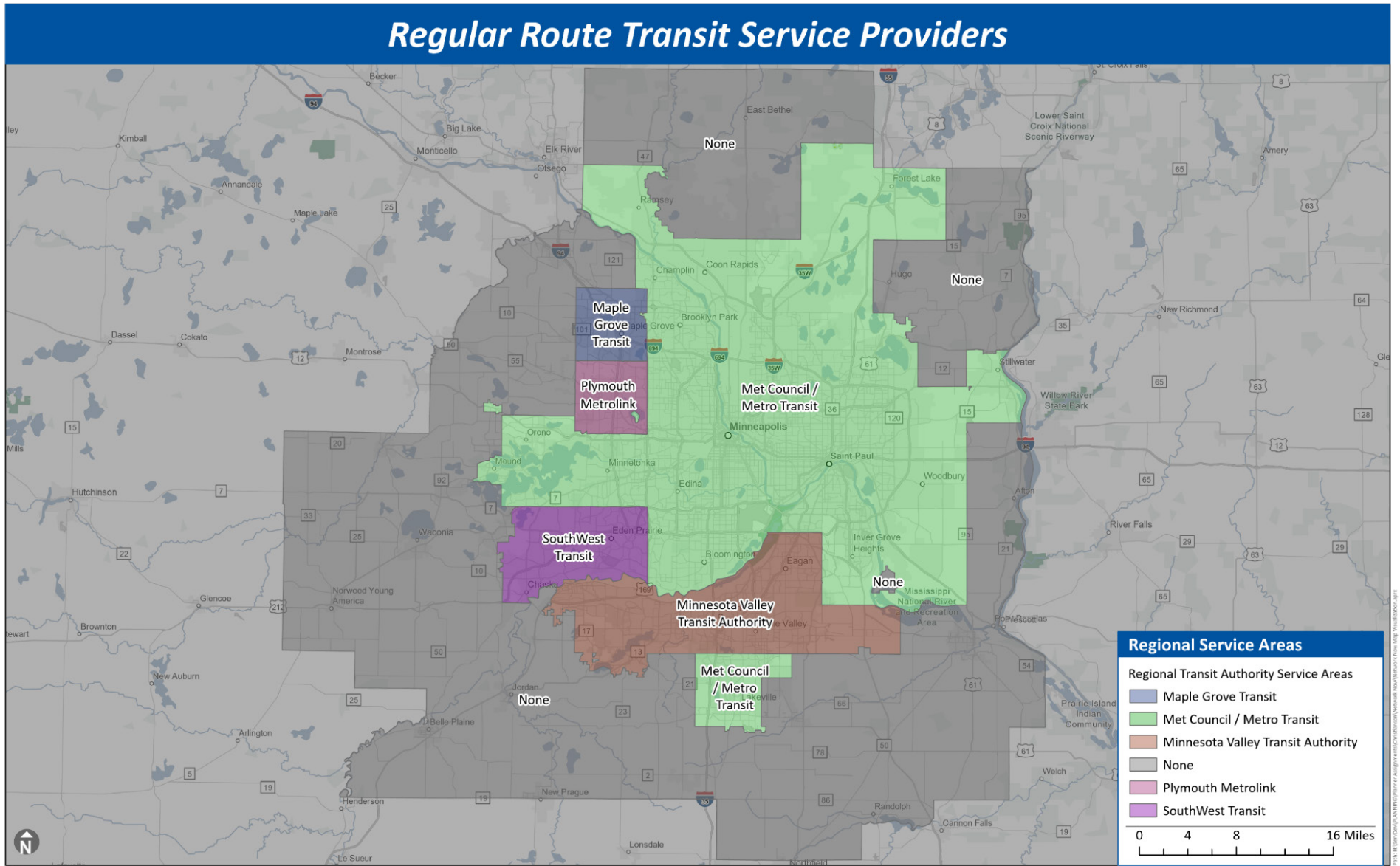
Figure 1. What Network Now does

What Network Now does:	
Resolves:	Improves:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Status of suspended bus routes</li><li>• Facility closure needs</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New or redesigned bus routes</li><li>• Frequent service at more times of day</li><li>• New METRO light rail and BRT lines</li><li>• Additional Metro micro service areas</li></ul>

Metro Transit will implement Network Now in phases as it continues hiring more operators, mechanics, and other support staff through 2027. Metro Transit will prioritize service improvements based on community feedback, resource availability, and operational needs.

Network Now describes changes to the Metro Transit service network within the Metropolitan Council service area, also referred to as the Twin Cities region. The plan includes routes operated directly by Metro Transit, as well as routes operated by private providers under contract with the Metropolitan Council. The plan does not include the service operated by the region’s other suburban transit agencies: Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA), Maple Grove Transit, Plymouth Metrolink, or SouthWest Transit. Figure 2 shows the service areas for each of these transit providers.

Figure 2. Transit providers in the Twin Cities region



Date: 6/13/2024

## Project background

Metro Transit has considered and integrated community feedback throughout the Network Now planning process to develop a concept plan that is driven by values, informed by data, and consistent with regional and local priorities.

In 2023, Metro Transit engaged customers, community members, cities and counties from across the Twin Cities region on their values and priorities for transit. While collecting this feedback, Metro Transit also reviewed regional policy guidance and assessed recent network performance to understand how existing services have been meeting customers' needs. This stakeholder input informed the development of a decision-making framework, including the five Network Now principles that guide the remainder of the project.

From late 2023 to early 2024, Metro Transit conducted an agency-wide process to develop, evaluate, and prioritize transit service improvements based on the Network Now principles. These efforts culminated in the draft concept plan, which is the focus of this report.

The concept plan details proposed service changes for implementation through 2027, including the opening of new regional transitways, addition of new and improved bus routes, and restoration or discontinuation of routes that are currently suspended.

Metro Transit is seeking formal comment on the draft concept plan and will revise the draft plan based on public and stakeholder feedback. Council approval of the final plan is expected this winter.



## Developing the decision-making framework

Metro Transit's Network Now decision-making framework is summarized in the [Establishing the Foundation](#) report released in Fall 2023. The decision-making framework is informed by regional policy guidance, recent transit system performance, and customer feedback, and includes three supporting chapters as follows:

- **Policy guidance:** Metro Transit's services are governed by regional policy documents adopted by the Metropolitan Council, as well as more detailed supporting standards and guidelines. These are summarized in detail in [Chapter 1: Regional Policy Guidance](#).
- **Network performance and opportunities:** Metro Transit has documented service changes from 2020 to 2023 and has analyzed changes in ridership and travel patterns since the pre-pandemic era. Network Now's evaluation of recent transit service performance is summarized in the [Chapter 2: Network Performance and Opportunities](#).
- **Engagement and customer feedback:** Metro Transit conducted extensive public outreach activities as part of the development of the Network Now decision-making framework. Engagement efforts reached more than 6,000 people, including customers from across Metro Transit's service area and from low-income groups and communities of color. Metro Transit also conducted internal engagement to incorporate feedback from front line staff in developing service options. Results of these engagement efforts are summarized in detail in [Chapter 3: Engagement and Customer Feedback](#).

More information on the decision-making framework, including an Executive Summary, can be found at [metrotransit.org/network-now](https://metrotransit.org/network-now).

## Policy guidance

Metro Transit uses policy documents to guide the development of transit service and performance measures. The agency uses the Council's Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) as its primary policy document informing service development. The Metropolitan Council is currently developing the 2050 TPP and plans to adopt a final version in late 2024. One of the key tenets of the new TPP is a focus on climate change by limiting greenhouse gas emissions in the region. Metro Transit and the Metropolitan Council actively coordinate to ensure Network Now reflects regional policy.

The TPP guidance for transit planning establishes the geography of Transit Market Areas for the levels and types of transit service that are appropriate for various contexts, based on land use patterns, population and job densities, and auto availability across the region. Service guidelines recommend minimum levels of frequency (the number of bus trips per hour) and span (the number of hours each route operates in a day) for different types of transit service. These standards emphasize the importance of higher service levels for METRO lines and core local routes, which carry most of Metro Transit's bus ridership.

In addition, Council policy establishes minimum levels of ridership (number of bus customers per day or year) and productivity (number of bus customers per in-service hour) for transit service so that resources are used responsibly. Additional policy guidance informs transit service and investments towards projects that advance equity and reduce regional disparities.

## Network performance and opportunities

Metro Transit's service planning decisions are partially informed by current and historical ridership and performance data. From that data we have identified areas of need and opportunity for future investment. Analysis conducted in summer of 2023 began with documentation of service changes between March 2020 and March 2023, as well as information on customer demographics. These data provide context for the evaluation of ridership and performance measures across Metro Transit's entire bus system (arterial BRT, highway BRT, commuter express, and local bus). The performance metrics evaluated include ridership, productivity, cost effectiveness, reliability and on-time performance, access to transit, and access to jobs. Key conclusions from this data are summarized below and described in greater detail in the [Chapter 2: Network Performance and Opportunities document](#).

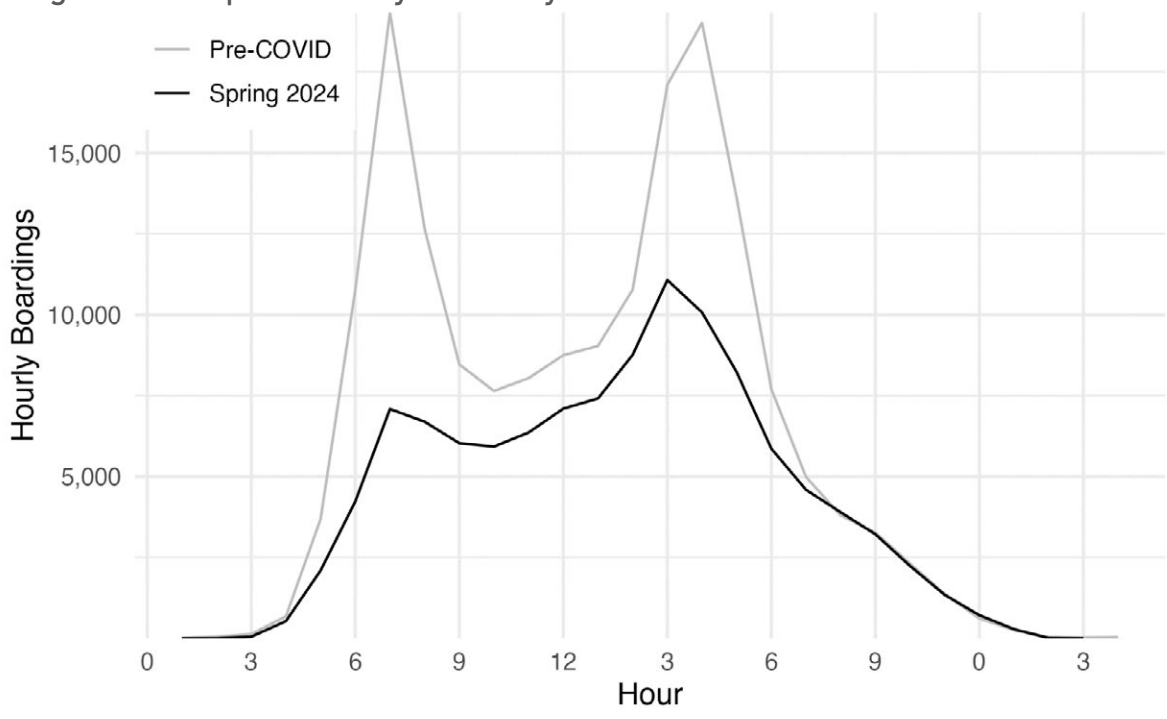
### Service reductions and COVID-19 pandemic response impacts

- Metro Transit reduced service by nearly 30% between March 2020 and March 2023. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, in response to stay-at-home orders issued by the State of Minnesota, Metro Transit made service reductions throughout the bus network. These reductions were made for the following reasons:
  - Metro Transit helped protect public health by limiting rides to essential trips only.
  - Metro Transit experienced uncertainty regarding the availability of federal funds to offset ridership declines and increases in operating costs.
  - Changes in travel patterns resulted in reduced fare revenue, which decreased the funding available to account for the system's operating costs.
- Subsequent workforce challenges caused further reductions in 2021 and 2022. Since 2021, Metro Transit has prioritized offering service in areas with proven demand, but the amount of service provided has been limited by workforce shortages.
- Service reductions affected the availability of transit across the Twin Cities region. Over time, Metro Transit has maintained or reinstated service on most core local routes, but many commuter express routes remain suspended.
- Large increases in remote work affected the traditional 9-to-5 downtown office job market, resulting in underused Park & Ride lots. Park & Ride use has declined since 2019 and has been slower to return to pre-pandemic levels than other types of transit facilities. Metro Transit has prioritized commuter express service at large Park & Ride facilities in each highway corridor.



- Regional travel patterns changed. Metro Transit's rush-hour ridership has become less pronounced since the pandemic, as shown in Figure 3, with midday ridership now exceeding the morning rush hour. The growth of traditional commuter trips has been slower than midday, evening, and weekend trips. Average daily ridership on Saturdays and Sundays is lower than on weekdays, although this difference is narrowing.

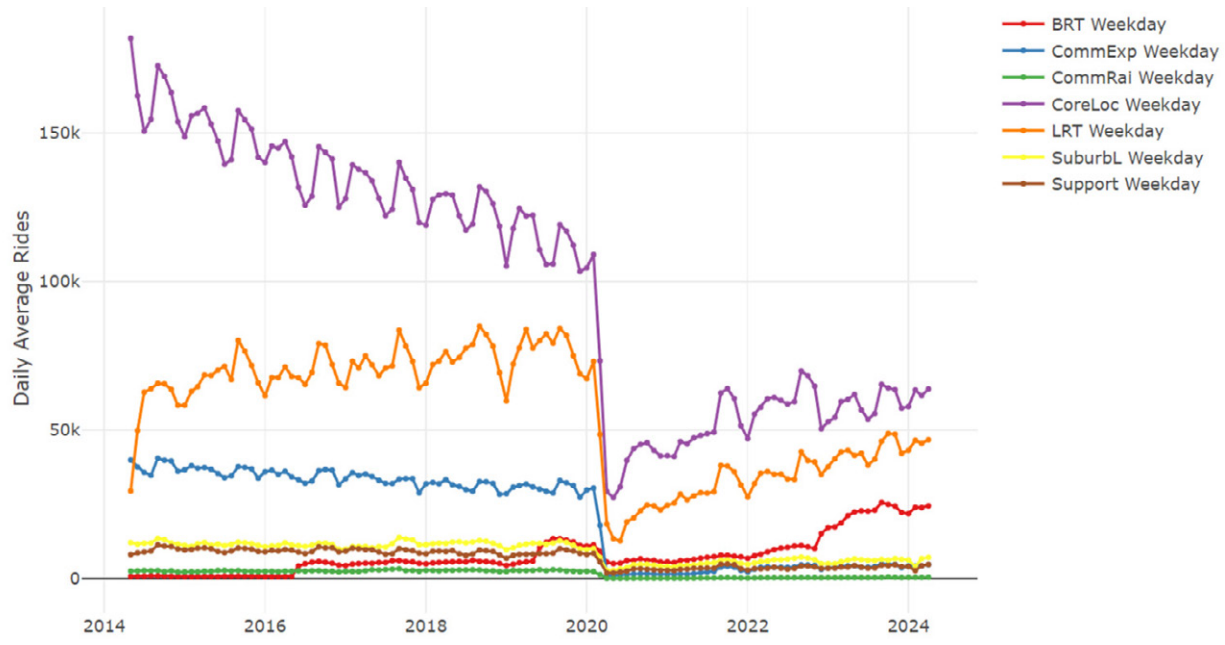
Figure 3. Changes in ridership over time by time of day



Performance trends

- Ridership is concentrated on core local routes which connect to major destinations. Ridership on core local routes rose as a proportion of the regional total. Ridership on arterial bus rapid transit services, such as the A, C, and D lines, has been the most resilient and experienced the smallest decline from 2019 to 2023, shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Ridership by mode, 2014 to 2024



- Productivity, the number of customers riding per hour each bus is in service, has declined across the bus network except on arterial BRT. While down from pre-pandemic levels, productivity on both arterial BRT and highway BRT has increased since the onset of the pandemic, in part due to the introduction of the Orange Line in 2021 and D Line in 2022. Local and commuter express routes have experienced the most significant productivity declines.
- High-ridership routes in the core tend to be the most cost-effective services. More rides are provided per dollar of public investment relative to other types of transit service. Revenue collected on all types of transit service has declined significantly since 2019.
- On-time performance has been declining, with core local routes experiencing the greatest impact. The most severe reliability issue, unscheduled trip cancellations, disproportionately affects communities of color in part because there is more service provided in those communities.

### **Access to transit**

- Approximately 35% of the residents in Metro Transit’s service area live within a 5-minute walk or roll of all-day transit service. Fewer people live within walking or rolling distance of frequent transit service. Many suburban residents live within a 10-minute drive of Park & Ride commuter express service.
- Access to jobs has decreased with reductions in service. These changes in accessibility have been driven primarily by fewer trips available on high frequency bus routes and Blue and Green light rail lines. These patterns indicate that access to jobs can improve with investments in frequency.
- Metro Transit launched Metro micro, a microtransit pilot project in north Minneapolis in September 2022. Metro micro offers shared-ride, door-to-door service to and from any location within a designated service area. Metro micro provides additional access to the broader system by expanding the reach of the fixed-route network.

## **Engagement and customer feedback**

Metro Transit uses customer feedback and public engagement to inform planning projects. For Network Now, input was gathered in 2023 using a variety of methods, including via direct customer engagement (on buses, on trains, or at transit centers), stakeholder meetings, public surveys, and customer relations records. Key themes from these public engagement efforts include the importance of service reliability, ridership, expanded geographic coverage, frequency and span of service, and equity.

### **Service reliability**

Reliability is a top concern across all engagement methods. Metro Transit’s customer service records include complaints regarding bus and rail delays that caused customers to be late for school, work, or appointments, or to miss transfers to other Metro Transit services. Survey responses indicated that customers and stakeholders view improving reliability as a priority, even when compared to increasing service frequency.

### **Ridership**

Public engagement participants prioritize transit that serves as many customers as possible. When deciding to cut or add service, Spring 2023 workshop participants prioritized ridership above other route characteristics. Survey respondents also indicated that serving the most customers was their top value when deciding how to best distribute transit service and resources.

### **Expanded geographic coverage**

Expanding geographic coverage is a common request, as reflected in up to 20% of Metro Transit’s customer relations comments. Coverage requests are particularly common in locations where service has been suspended since 2020. However, survey respondents generally support prioritizing service in areas of high ridership demand.

### **Frequency and span of service**

Many customers mentioned a desire for more frequent bus service, particularly on bus rapid transit lines and in wintertime. This was most often coupled with requests for more service at night and on weekends; however, when confronted with a trade-off between frequency and span of service in the survey, more respondents answered in favor of increased frequency.

## Equity

For survey respondents, providing good service in neighborhoods with people of color or low-income residents was one of their top values. Equity was also preferred in a trade-off with providing equal levels of service across the service area.

## Network Now principles

---

Building on the information gathered from the research and engagement processes, Metro Transit has established five Network Now principles to guide the project's planning efforts. These principles identify priorities that must be balanced by regional policy, service performance metrics, and customer and stakeholder feedback.

These principles are:

### **Adapt service to changes in transit markets and travel patterns.**

Understanding changes to travel patterns and transit demand over the past several years helps Metro Transit optimize the use of limited resources to effectively provide service to today's transit market. Metro Transit is adapting by testing Park & Ride alternatives and service types such as Metro micro. Additionally, rather than continuing to focus primarily on rush-hour work commutes, Metro Transit has adapted changes in travel patterns such as telecommuting and transit needs such as multi-purpose trips into an updated network.

### **Prepare for new METRO and high frequency routes.**

Metro Transit is planning to open four bus rapid transit lines and one light rail extension through 2027. Transitway investments involve substantial resources for operations, including bus operators, supervisors, and maintenance employees. Network Now will include future BRT corridors and related local bus service changes.

### **Maintain the reliability of scheduled service consistently over time.**

Metro Transit has received consistent feedback on the importance of reliability to the customer experience. Metro Transit is making investments to reduce delays, improve bus speeds, and minimize unscheduled trip cancellations. Improving speed and reliability will make transit more useful by improving transfer connections, avoiding congestion bottlenecks, and reducing travel time. In addition, Metro Transit recognizes the importance of reliability to driver satisfaction and aims to ensure bus routes have adequate running time and scheduled recovery periods.

### **Build on success to grow ridership by adding service where people use transit the most.**

Focusing resources on existing markets can help Metro Transit ensure that service meets current demand. At the same time, planning incrementally for growth in emerging markets, beginning with basic service, allows for service to be expanded or improved as demand grows. Transit-supportive land uses, such as dense residential and commercial areas with limited parking, are most likely to generate additional transit demand and should be viewed as opportunities for adding service.

### **Provide access to opportunities and services with a focus on advancing equity and reducing regional disparities.**

In addition to focusing resources where ridership is already highest, Metro Transit will allocate resources to routes that may provide lifeline access to people and locations with few transportation options. Improving transit access to key destinations like grocery stores, pharmacies, shopping centers, libraries, schools, daycares, and medical and social services can help reduce disparities in economic, social, and health outcomes.

# RECENT RIDERSHIP AND SERVICE CHANGES

Since the beginning of the Network Now planning process, Metro Transit has continued to implement service changes that are consistent with performance trends and compatible with the Network Now principles. The following section documents changes between March 2023, where [Establishing the Foundation](#) report left off, and August 2024. These changes will form the baseline for the Network Now concept plan, which describes proposed changes through 2027.

As Metro Transit's workforce situation has improved, modest service improvements have been implemented to aid the system's recovery from pandemic-era service levels. Recognizing the ongoing planning process, most routes that were suspended in early 2020 have not been restored pending the full evaluation of changes in travel patterns and transit needs completed in Network Now.

As noted in the [Establishing the Foundation](#) report, Metro Transit is using temporary guidelines for service changes while the Network Now planning process is underway. These include the following:

1. Maintain service reliability so that all scheduled trips operate.
2. Build on success by improving frequency on the routes with the highest ridership or where ridership is growing quickly.
3. Prioritize access for those who rely on transit the most, including lower-income groups and communities of color.
4. Prepare for transitways under construction or planning to open by 2025.
5. Consider customer input in route planning decisions.
6. Prioritize routes where customers have few or no alternative transit options.
7. Balance network frequency and coverage improvements.

## Ridership and operating trends

Since early 2023, Metro Transit has increased service, hiring, and ridership across all transit services. From March 2023 to June of 2024, Metro Transit increased service by 10%, aided by the addition of nearly 80 net bus operators in 2023. Customers have responded positively to these service improvements, with 2023 overall system ridership up 16% year-over-year.

Ridership has continued to increase in 2024. The largest ridership increases have occurred on BRT, which grew by more than 20% in the first half of 2024 compared to the same period in 2023. Local bus ridership increased by 6%, and light rail ridership increased by 8%.

## Service changes in 2023

Metro Transit made modest service improvements in 2023 as it began to successfully recruit and hire more bus operators. Key improvements included ensuring that all-day bus routes operate at least every 60 minutes, as well as improving service on high-ridership BRT and local bus routes.

In Spring 2023, Metro Transit made schedule adjustments on some routes to accommodate delays due to road construction. The C and D lines received additional resources to adjust for detours on Osseo Rd., and routes serving downtown St. Paul were adjusted due to the reconstruction of Minnesota St.

In June 2023, Metro Transit improved service frequency on 13 local bus routes, as well as on the Orange Line, which improved from every 30 minutes to every 15 minutes during weekday midday hours. Other significant changes included adding more trips to some commuter express routes and restoring some branches on suburban local bus routes.

In August 2023, Metro Transit implemented the Route 17 Better Bus Route project, which improved speed, reliability, and service frequency in northeast Minneapolis and along Minnetonka Blvd. Metro Transit improved service frequency on 17 routes, including the A Line, which improved to 10-minute service. Other routes received schedule adjustments or extended service hours.

In Fall 2023, Metro Transit implemented minor service changes to improve weekday frequency and schedule reliability on routes still affected by construction. Due to a continuing shortage of rail operators, there were no frequency improvements to light rail service. Metro Transit added two trips per direction on Northstar Line commuter rail service.

In December 2023, Metro Transit continued implementing frequency improvements and schedule adjustments to improve reliability. Metro Transit upgraded Route 724 to service every 15 minutes from every 30 minutes and extended service on Route 21 in preparation for Uptown construction and the opening of the B Line in 2025. The completion of various major construction projects, including the reopening of 3rd Ave./Central Ave. bridge in Minneapolis, allowed nine routes to end their long-term detours. Express route improvements in the east metro were made in advance of the opening of the Gold Line in 2025.

By the end of 2023, Metro Transit operated 77% of trips scheduled prior to the pandemic, an increase of 7% in since 2022. Local bus routes and BRT lines were operating at 89% of 2019 service levels.

## Service changes in 2024

---

By April 2024, Metro Transit was operating 78% of 2019 service levels. The breakdown of this service composition of modes is as follows:

- Local bus and bus rapid transit: 89%
- Light rail: 67%
- Commuter express: 25%

In Spring 2024, Metro Transit again implemented service changes to accommodate construction. In St. Paul, changes were made in response to construction on Minnesota St., Kellogg Blvd., and at various locations along the Gold Line project. In Minneapolis, changes were made in response to construction on Osseo Rd., along Hennepin Ave. in the Uptown neighborhood, and at various locations along the B Line. These changes affected 15 bus routes.

Additional bus service changes included resuming east-west service through the intersection of 38th St. & Chicago Ave. and extending a new route to Rosedale Transit Center. Schedule adjustments were completed on 16 routes.

In June 2024, service changes continued to focus on mitigating construction impacts for operators and customers. Notably, workforce growth allowed for service increases on multiple bus routes. Service improvements included restoring midday service on Route 25, increasing frequency on Route 32 from every 30 minutes to every 20 minutes, and resuming all-day service to County Rd. H Park & Ride in Mounds View. Other schedule adjustments and alignment changes affected 22 routes.

In August 2024, light rail service on the Blue and Green lines improved from every 15 minutes to every 12 minutes. Sunday service on the Orange Line improved from every 30 minutes to every 15 minutes.

# RESOURCE AND WORKFORCE TO SUPPORT GROWTH

Implementing the Network Now concept plan depends on Metro Transit's ability to hire employees, purchase vehicles, and obtain funding. This section highlights the resources and workforce that Metro Transit needs to implement the plan.

## Growing Metro Transit's workforce

Metro Transit has addressed the bus operator shortage that led to trip cancellations and service reductions in 2021 and 2022. Since December 2022, Metro Transit has increased scheduled service by more than 10% and continues to see growth in hiring trends.

Implementing the Network Now concept plan will require around 370 additional bus operators – 280 Metro Transit and 90 contracted – as well as 90 microtransit operators. Expanding service will also require additional support staff.

Metro Transit has started implementing strategies to grow its workforce, recognizing that improvements in both recruitment and retention will be needed to implement future service improvements. Among other efforts, strategies such as increased pay, flexible job requirements, bonuses, and paid training are expected to enhance the quality of life for employees across the organization.

Metro Transit has also convened a dedicated workforce committee to track progress and develop additional strategies as needed. Metro Transit is firmly committed to delivering effective service for customers and will continue to implement changes that allow it to attract and retain high-quality employees, including operators, maintenance staff, safety and presence staff, and other support staff.

## Fleet needs

In addition to workforce considerations, vehicle availability is another important resource that influences Metro Transit's ability to expand bus and rail service. There are various aspects of the bus fleet that need to be considered, including size of the vehicle, propulsion (diesel or electric) and whether it is specially branded for BRT service. Adequate facilities to store and maintain these resources are also important to Metro Transit's ability to grow. This plan's proposed increase in scheduled service requires more than 125 additional fixed route buses and 50 additional microtransit vehicles, which represents an increase of about 20% over today's fleet. Metro Transit has ordered 27 additional light rail vehicles to operate the Green Line Extension, which represents an increase of about 25% over today's fleet.

Metro Transit implemented its Zero Emission Bus (ZEB) transition plan<sup>1</sup> in 2022, identifying short, medium, and long-term opportunities, risks, and implementation strategies to transition Metro Transit's bus fleet to zero-emission technology. This plan will be updated every five years and will guide Metro Transit as it intends to make a meaningful impact on climate change. Future fleet purchases, including those that will be made as part of the implementation of the Network Now concept plan, will comply with the ZEB transition plan.

## Funding

When the Network Now project began in 2022, Metro Transit's funding future was uncertain, making it challenging to plan reliably for expansion. However, in the 2023 session, the Minnesota Legislature passed a new sustainable revenue source for region's transportation system. A three-quarter-cent regional transportation sales tax went into effect in October 2023. These funds are split between the region's counties (17%) and the Met Council (83%). The Met Council share will primarily go toward transit operations, maintenance, and capital projects, with 5% focused on active transportation like walking and biking.

<sup>1</sup> [metrotransit.org/electric-buses](https://metrotransit.org/electric-buses)

Metro Transit benefits from that investment by being able to reliably plan for the future through this project and other endeavors. Use of funding is represented in the Network Now plan in the form of service expansion. A significant portion of sales tax revenues eliminated a structural operating deficit for the agency, which allows this plan to focus on investments, instead of possible future reductions. The funding also allows the agency to operate and monitor the system for safety, and replace and expand fleet and facilities, all of which are needed to deliver service with an exceptional customer experience. These improvements include investments in zero-emission buses and accessibility.

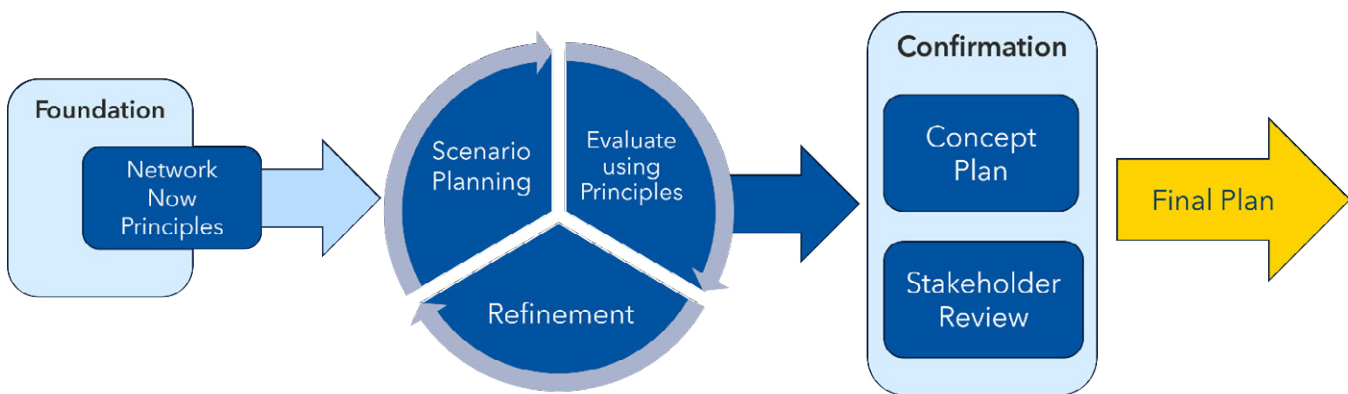
## DRAFT NETWORK NOW CONCEPT PLAN

Network Now outlines Metro Transit’s proposed service changes through 2027. The draft Network Now concept plan includes investments in BRT service, local routes, and commuter express service. Improvements to related transit modes, including light rail and Metro micro, are also addressed, but resources for these services are considered separately.

The concept plan was developed through an agency-wide process that integrated ridership and performance data, public input, and regional policy priorities, as shown in Figure 5. Staff evaluated public feedback, corridor ridership, productivity metrics, and efficiency opportunities to identify improvement opportunities throughout the Metro Transit service area. The plan integrates changes to travel patterns and transit market demand that have evolved since 2020. Service changes in the concept plan are based on a consistent regional approach to resource investment, service levels, and ridership growth.

Individual service changes were identified through an iterative process involving extensive analysis of customer benefits, including transit availability, usefulness, and equity. Metro Transit staff evaluated multiple scenarios of service improvements that invested more heavily in different areas, such as ridership, coverage, time of day, and service type. The concept plan represents the combination of route-level improvements that are projected to create the largest increase in availability and usefulness of transit service for residents while achieving equity goals.

Figure 5. Concept plan development process



All changes and improvements proposed in Network Now are planned for implementation by the end of 2027. Service changes will be phased based on performance, public input, and project construction timelines.

The following sections outline service changes for each transit mode considered in Network Now. Service changes are shown at both regional and subregional scale, and evaluation comparisons are shown relative to 2019 and 2023 service.

# Proposed service changes

The Network Now concept plan calls for frequency and/or span improvements on most local routes, while express bus routes will be consolidated to offer more frequent service in major travel corridors. The METRO network will see significant service expansion as new light rail and bus rapid transit projects are implemented. Coverage will be supplemented by expansion of Metro micro, the agency’s microtransit service, to eight new zones within the Metro Transit service area.

Figure 6 and Figure 7 summarize the service and frequency changes that will be implemented as part of the Network Now concept plan. More detail on each of these changes can be found in subsequent sections and the appendices.

Figure 6. Network Now concept plan – summary of service changes

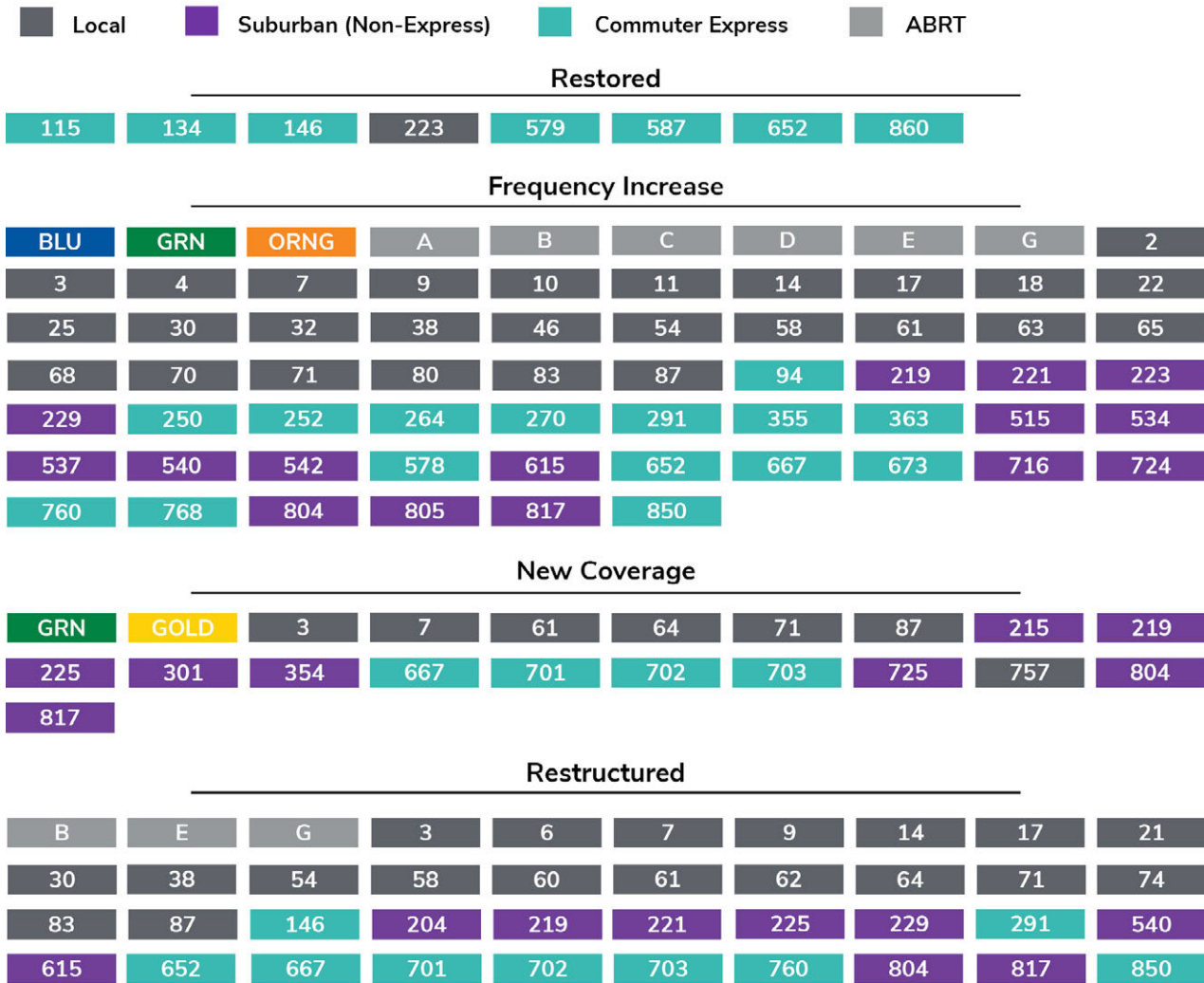




Figure 7. Network Now concept plan – summary of weekday midday frequency levels



## METRO regional transitways

The METRO network (Figure 8), which includes arterial BRT, highway BRT, guideway BRT, and light rail transitways, represents a significant portion of Metro Transit’s planned investment in regional transit service. The Network Now concept plan includes frequency and span improvements on existing transitways, as well as the implementation of four new BRT transitways and extension of one light rail corridor by 2027.

The changes listed below will all occur within the timeframe of Network Now. Other transitways are planned beyond 2027, including the implementation of the F Line, Phase 2 of the G Line, H Line, Purple Line, and Blue Line Extension. Specific supporting service decisions have yet to be finalized for these lines, but decisions made as part of Network Now for local and regional service will affect their planning and development.

## Arterial BRT service

- **A, C, and D lines:** These existing arterial BRT lines will receive 10-minute service during more times of day, including from morning rush hour into the early evening on weekdays
- **B Line:** The B Line is planned to open in June 2025. It will provide 10-minute weekday, Saturday, and Sunday service between Minneapolis' Uptown neighborhood and downtown St. Paul via Lake St., Marshall Ave., and Selby Ave. The existing Route 21 will continue operating as supporting service every 60 minutes between Hennepin Ave. and Minnehaha Ave., and the new Route 60 will operate every 30-60 minutes between Selby Ave. and the Midway shopping district in St. Paul. Route 83 will also be adjusted to serve the Midway shopping area and have increased frequency.
- **E Line:** The E Line is planned to open in late 2025, providing service between University of Minnesota and Southdale Transit Center via University Ave. & 4th St., Hennepin Ave., and France Ave. in Minneapolis and Edina beginning in 2025. Service will operate every 10 minutes on weekdays and every 12 minutes service on weekends. The existing Route 6 will continue to operate every 30 minutes as supporting service south of Southdale Transit Center and along Xerxes Ave. in Minneapolis. Route 6 will end at the Uptown Transit Center, where connections can be made to the B and E lines.
- **Phase 1 of G Line:** Phase 1 of the G Line is planned to open in 2027 in coordination with Ramsey County's reconstruction along Rice St. It will provide 15-minute service on Rice St. between Little Canada and downtown St. Paul beginning in 2027. Phase 1 of the project will substantially replace Route 62 along Rice St., and new Route 229 will provide a connection from the G Line to Shoreview.

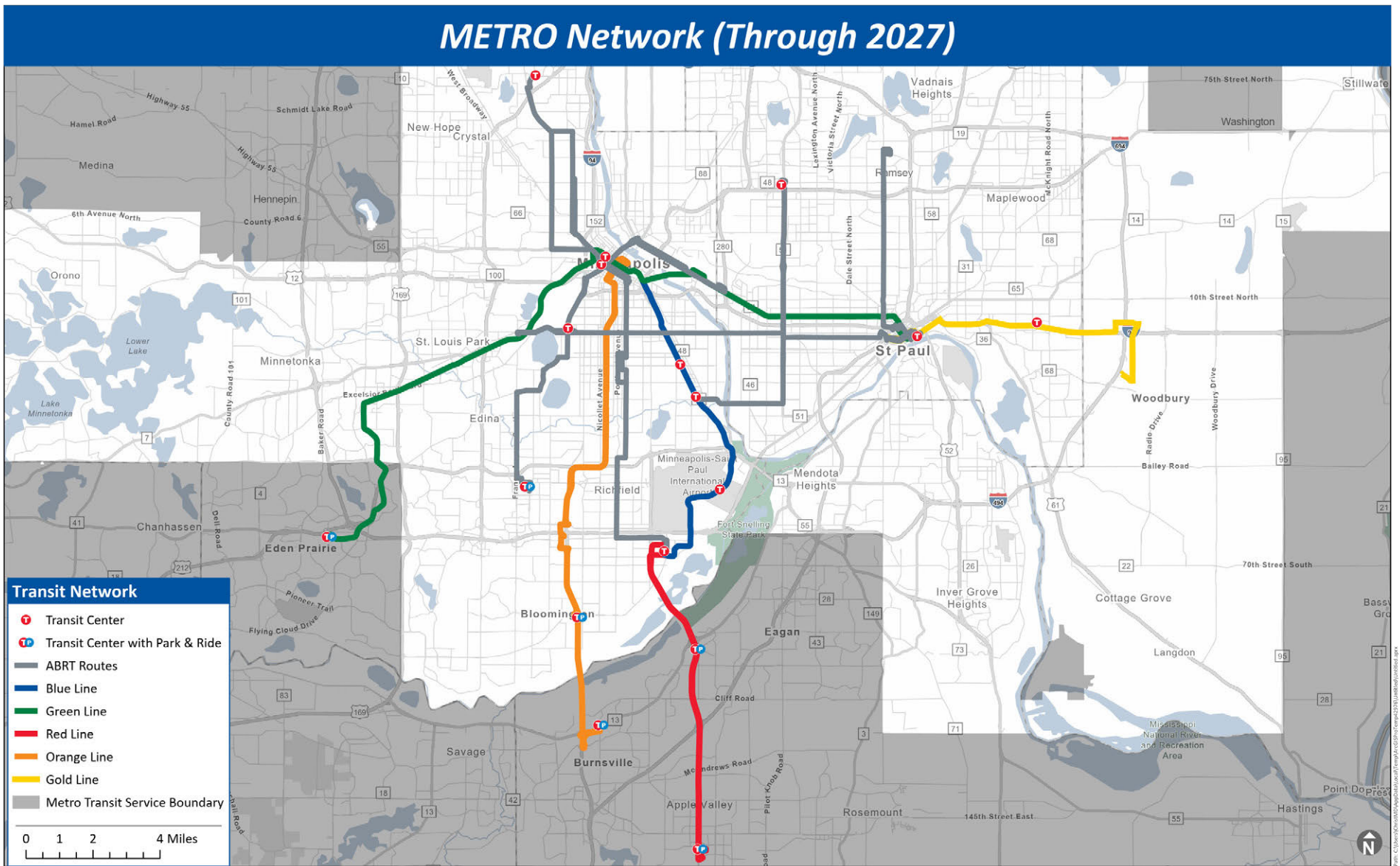
## Highway and guideway bus rapid transit service

- **Gold Line:** The Gold Line is a new guideway BRT that is planned to open in March 2025. It will provide 10-minute weekday and 15-minute weekend service between Woodbury and downtown St. Paul. The Gold Line will connect with a new microtransit zone at four suburban stations.
- **Orange Line:** This existing highway BRT line will receive frequency improvements to every 10 minutes during rush hour and every 15 minutes on weekends. A new microtransit zone will provide connections at I-35W & 98th St. Station.
- **Red Line:** No changes are planned on this existing highway BRT line.

## Light rail service

- **METRO Green Line Extension:** The opening of the Green Line Extension is scheduled for 2027. This project will extend light rail service from Target Field to Eden Prairie. The project's implementation plan will include changes to supporting bus routes as described in the Local Bus Service section. Fixed-bus route changes associated with the Green Line Extension will be implemented with the start of rail service, planned for 2027. Changes include improved access to destinations for Route 9 customers on Louisiana Ave., as well as improved Sunday service. On Route 17, 15-minute service will be extended west of Uptown to the new Blake Rd. Station. New Route 38 will cover most of the existing Route 612 alignment in Hopkins and Minnetonka, while Route 615 will have Sunday service added and will be rerouted to serve the Beltline Station. A new microtransit zone will provide connections at light rail stations in Minnetonka.
- **Frequency and span improvements on Blue and Green lines:** The Blue and Green lines currently operate every 12-15 minutes from 5 a.m. to 10:30 p.m., and every 30 minutes from 10:30 p.m. to midnight. Under Network Now, light rail service will improve to 10-minute frequency during the rush hour, midday, and early evening. Service will operate every 15 minutes during the evening and night periods, and every 30 minutes during late-night hours. As with fixed-route service, there are changes to rail service that are expected to take place after 2027, namely, the METRO Blue Line Extension. Supporting bus service changes for the rail network expansion are in development and will be informed by bus service decisions included in Network Now.

Figure 8. 2027 Concept plan METRO network



Date: 7/26/2024

## Metro micro service

---

Metro micro is the Met Council's shared ride, curb-to-curb microtransit service allowing customers to be picked up and dropped off at any location within a designated service area. Customers can request a trip by phone or using a smartphone app, similar to the experience of using private transportation services like Uber and Lyft. Trips are shared, which means that during any given ride, other individuals requesting service to or from nearby locations may also be picked up or dropped off. Metro micro uses ADA-accessible mini-buses to accommodate small groups. The program initially began as a 24-month pilot within a single North Minneapolis zone, and Metro Transit has confirmed that the program will be implemented permanently in October 2024. Expansion zones are planned to be piloted as part of a phased process, with a goal of up to two new zones implemented each year through 2027.

## Integration with fixed route network

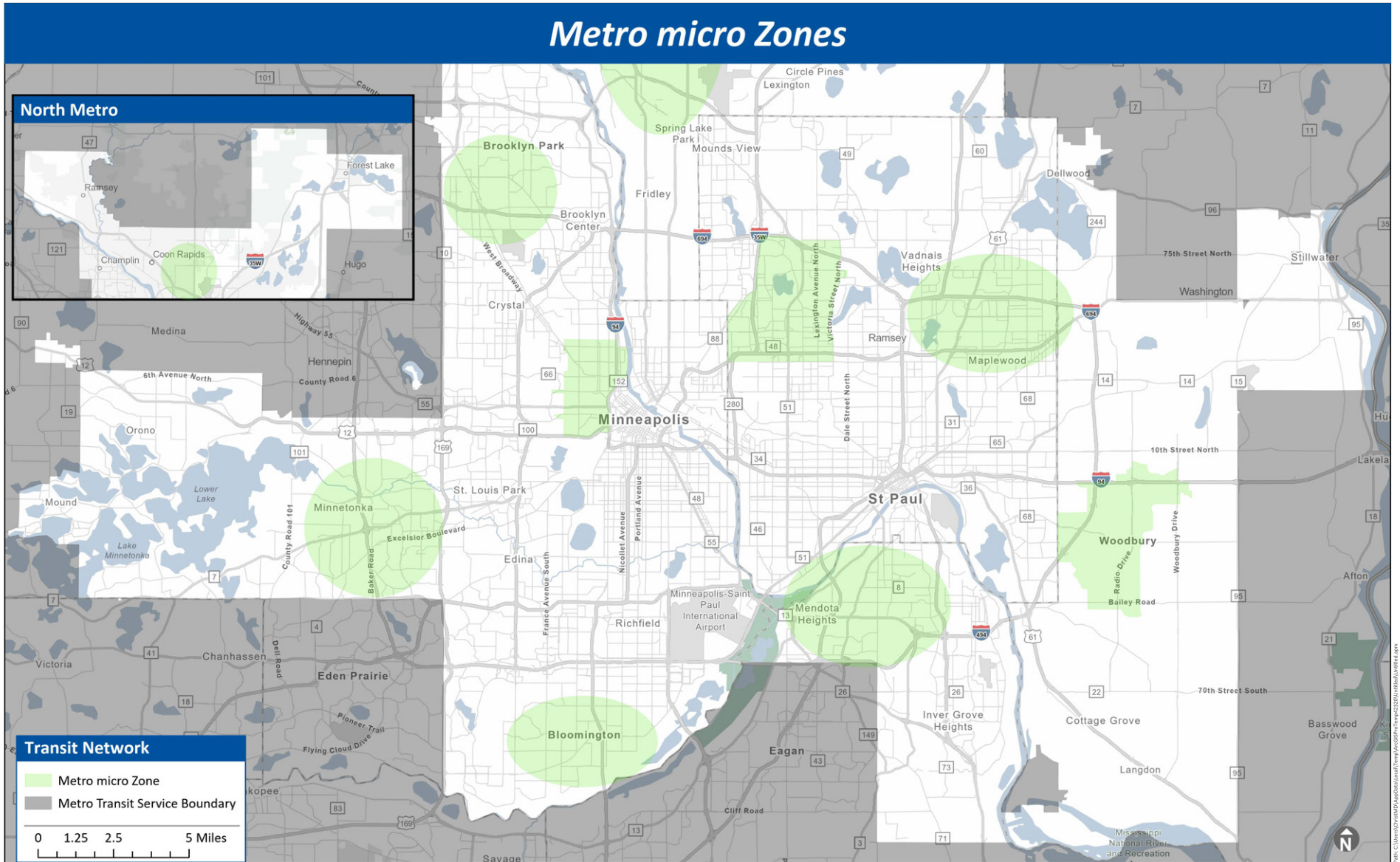
Eight pilot project areas have been identified to serve different travel markets than the current North Minneapolis project. These projects will serve lower density areas that are more difficult to serve with regular bus route service, providing access to the transit network at transit centers or transit stations, as well as access throughout the project area. Transfers between Metro micro and local buses are free and valid for 2 1/2 hours from the time of fare activation. The initial Metro micro zone in North Minneapolis includes multiple transfer points to the C and D Lines, as well as to several local bus routes.

## Expansion plan and prioritization

Metro Transit plans to implement up to two new zones annually through the end of 2027. Each of these zones is designed to be served by five vehicles given the anticipated demand. Figure 9 shows the full extent of the future Metro micro network. The first two new zones to be implemented are in the Roseville and Woodbury areas in late 2024 anchored at Rosedale Transit Center on the A Line and Queens Drive Station on Gold Line respectively. Metro Transit will develop zone boundaries based on engagement with stakeholder cities and counties.

Each of the planned Metro micro zones will be evaluated on various metrics to ensure appropriate prioritization. These include coordination with transitways, access to bus routes and transit centers, auto ownership statistics, demographic and land use attributes, employment opportunities and affordable housing sites, as well as connectivity with the broader transit network. Metro Transit is also developing measures for success for each zone to continue monitoring progress as the Metro micro system grows. Each zone shown on the map is subject to change, though it does represent the general area where Metro Transit plans to invest in microtransit service.

Figure 9. Concept plan Metro micro zones



Date: 7/26/2024

## Local and express bus service

---

The Network Now concept plan includes service changes for every type of bus service operated by Metro Transit. Proposed changes will address the status of routes that are currently suspended, increase service on local bus routes, restructure service, and consolidate commuter-oriented bus routes into a new Key Express Network, which will provide frequent, reliable service to a limited number of Park & Ride locations in major freeway corridors. These changes are described in the following sections, first by service category and then by geographic subregion.

### Suspended service

Metro Transit suspended service on 63 bus routes and segments of 18 other routes, many starting in 2020. The Network Now concept plan includes restoration of a limited number of bus routes and discontinuation of others. Route restoration is considered based on performance and public input, as well as service design and the presence of alternatives. Guidelines for restoration include the following:

- Prioritizing service to large Park & Ride facilities with sufficient capacity for service expansion. Many Park & Ride customers have the flexibility to drive to a different facility in the corridor to access a better level of service.
- Reviewing the performance of the route in 2019 and expected performance today given changes in travel patterns and transit demand.
- Prioritizing service on routes where there are no reasonable alternatives for customers. For Network Now, an alternative is defined as a trip that requires no more than one transfer and where the new travel time does not exceed the original trip length by more than 50%. For a commuter express customer an alternative may require driving to a different Park & Ride in the same highway corridor.

Many routes and branches that are proposed for discontinuation are in areas where alternatives are available, as defined above. Conversely, bus routes slated for discontinuation are primarily those with lower ridership, inefficient travel times, or where higher-frequency alternatives are available. All proposed discontinuation of service is subject to a public hearing prior to implementation.

Route 501 is the only route currently operated that is proposed for discontinuation without replacement. Route 766 will be discontinued but replaced by alternative service as part of Network Now. Five additional routes (Routes 39, 133, 353, 535, and 597) have already had official public hearings to discontinue or replace service as part of earlier service changes. A full list of routes that are planned for discontinuation can be found in Figure 10, with additional detail on discontinued segments in Table 1 and Table 2.

Figure 10. Concept plan discontinued service

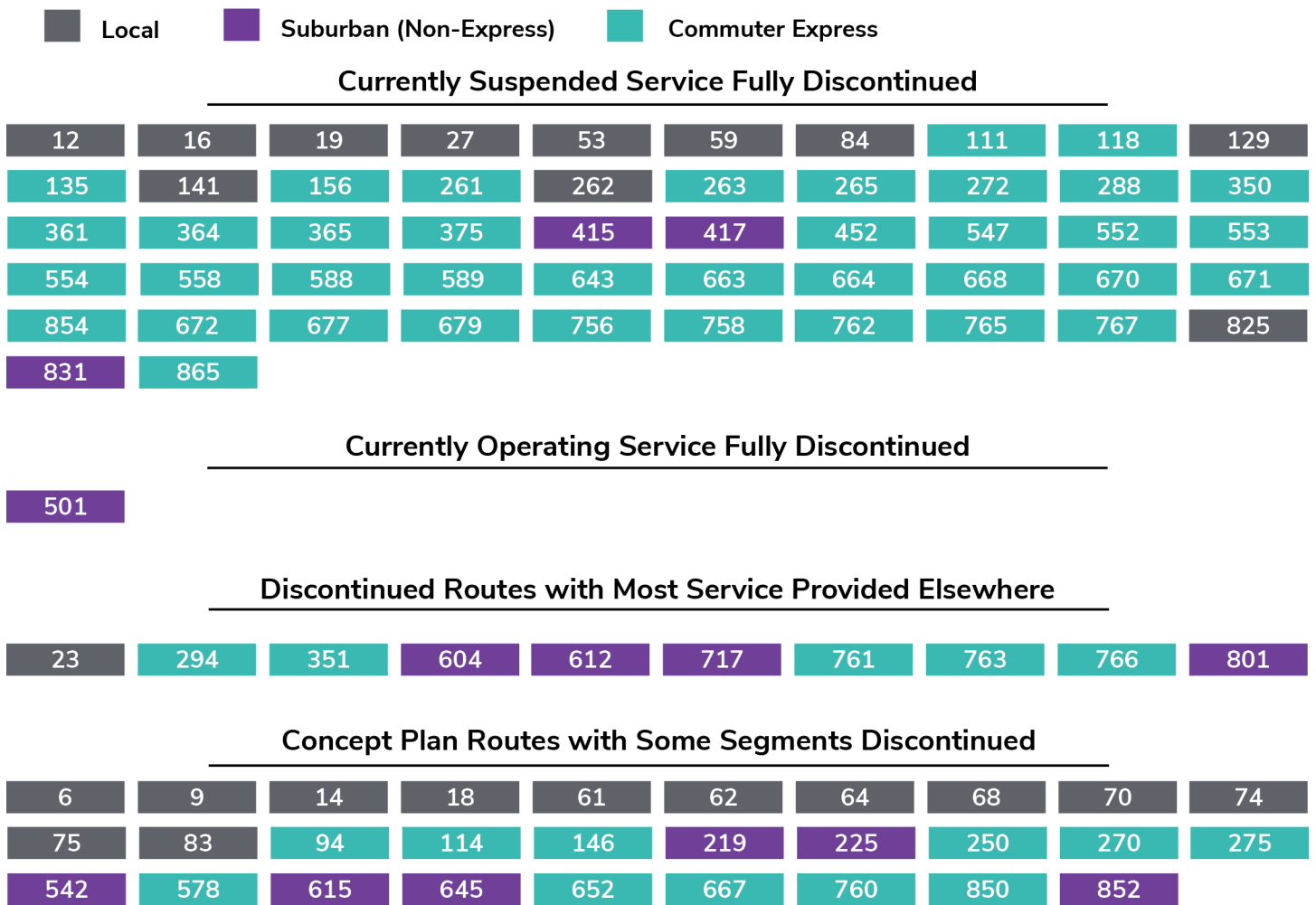


Table 1. Concept plan discontinued route numbers with most service restructured elsewhere

Route	Discontinued Segment
23	36th St. (Hennepin Ave. to Bryant Ave.)
294	Conway Ave. (McKnight Rd. to Century Ave.), 10 <sup>th</sup> St. (Century Ave. to Hadley Ave.), Stillwater Blvd. (Hadley Ave. to Curve Crest Blvd.), Curve Crest Blvd. (Stillwater Blvd. to Greeley St.), Pine St. - 3rd St. - Myrtle St. - Main St. - Water St. - Mulberry St. loop
351	Radio Dr. (I-94 to Hudson Rd.), Hudson Rd. (Radio Dr. to Bielenberg Dr.)
604	Louisiana Ave. (Cedar Lake Rd. to Louisiana Transit Center)
612	Mainstreet (Shady Oak Rd. to 11th Ave.), Excelsior Blvd. (Shady Oak Rd. to 11th Ave.), Smetana Dr. (Opportunity Ct. to Opportunity Ct.), Bren Rd. (Opportunity Ct. to Shady Oak Rd.), Yellow Circle Dr. / Blue Cir. Dr. (Shady Oak Rd. to Bren Rd. E)
717	Rockford Rd. (Boone Ave. to Nathan Ln.)
761	49th Ave. (I-94 to Humboldt Ave.), 69th Ave. / Shingle Creek Pkwy. (France Ave. to Xerxes Ave.), Woodbine Ln. (Noble Ave. to Halifax Ave.)
763	Dupont Ave. (57th Ave. to 65th Ave.), Xerxes Ave. (Lad Pkwy. to 85th Ave.)
766	W. River Rd. (97th Ave. to Ferry St.), Noble Pkwy (97th Ave. to W. River Rd.), 117th Ave. (W. River Rd. to Business Park Blvd.)
801	Route number change

**Table 2. Routes with some segments discontinued**

Route	Discontinued Segment
6	France Ave. (44th St. to 39th St.), 39th St. (France Ave. to Sheridan Ave.), Wooddale (54th St. to Valley View Rd.)
9	Glenwood Ave. (Penn Ave. to Xenia Ave.), Louisiana Ave. (Cedar Lake Rd. to Wayzata Blvd.), 9th St. (Park Ave. to Hennepin Ave.)
14	Noble Ave. (36th Ave. to Golden Valley Rd.), Cedar Ave. (38th St. to 42nd St.), 42nd St. (Cedar Ave. to 28th Ave.), 28th Ave. (42nd St. to 38th St.)
18	Grand Ave. (31st St. to 46th St.)
46	Vernon Ave (Bren Rd to Eden Ave), St Paul Pkwy (Cleveland Ave to Edgcumbe Rd)
61	Arcade Ave. (Maryland Ave. to Larpenteur Ave.)
62	W Demont Ave. (Rice St. to Canabury Dr.), Canabury Dr. (Dermont Ave. to Co. Rd. B2), Co. Rd. B2 (Canabury Dr. to Rice St.)
64	Prosperity Ave. / Hazelwood St. (Maryland Ave. to Larpenteur Ave.), English St. (Frost Ave. to Co. Rd. B E), Co. Rd. B E (English St. to White Bear Ave.)
68	Oakdale Ave. (Marie Ave. to Thompson Ave.), Thompson Ave. (Oakdale Ave. to 12th Ave.), 12th Ave. (Thompson Ave. to Southview Blvd.), Southview - 3rd Ave. - 5th Ave. loop
70	Cretin Ave. (Ford Pkwy. to St. Clair Ave.), St. Clair (Cretin Ave. to W 7th St.)
74	Minnehaha Ave. (Ruth St. to McKnight Rd.), McKnight Rd. (Minnehaha Ave. to Stillwater Rd.), Stillwater Rd. (McKnight Ave. to Hazel St.), Nokomis Ave. (Stillwater Rd. to Maryland Ave.), Maryland Ave. (Nokomis Ave. to Century Ave.), Century Ave., Ivy Ave., Ferndale St., Edgewater Blvd., Edgcumbe Rd. - Jefferson Ave. - Lexington Pkwy. loop
75	Mendota Rd. (Dodd Rd. to Delaware Ave.), Delaware Rd. (Mendota Rd. to Marie Ave.), Marie Ave. (Delaware Ave. to Carlton St.), Carlton St. (Marie Ave. to Thompson Ave.)
83	Lexington Ave. (University Ave. to Selby Ave.)
94	Robert St. (5th St. to Fillmore Ave.), River Park Plaza (Fillmore St. to Fillmore St.)
114	Lake St. (Hennepin Ave. to Excelsior Blvd.), Excelsior Blvd. (Lake St. to Quentin Ave.)
146	Vernon Ave. (Bren Rd. to Eden Ave.)
219	McKnight Rd. (Lydia Ave. to Co. Rd. E), 15th St. (Century Ave. to Hadley Ave.), Conway Ave. (Howard St. to Century Ave.), 3rd St. (Howard St. to Ruth St.), Ruth St. (3rd St. to Old Hudson Rd.), Pederson St., Wilson Ave.
225	Victoria St. (Co. Rd. E to Co. Rd. F), Co. Rd. F (Lexington Ave. to Victoria St.)
250	95th Ave. (Naples St. to Lexington Ave.), Lexington Ave. (95th Ave. to North Rd.), North Rd. (Lexington Ave. to Sunset Ave.), Sunset Ave. (North Rd. to Elm St.)
270	Bellaire Ave. (Lydia Ave. to Co. Rd. F), Wildwood Rd. (County Line Rd. to Hickory St.)
275	Running Aces P & R, Forest Lake Transit Center
615	Monterey Dr. (Beltline Blvd. to Excelsior Blvd.)
542	78th St. (Washington Ave. to Bush Lake Rd.)
578	70th St. (York Ave. to Antrim Rd.), Valley View Rd. / Tracy Ave. (70th St. to Benton Ave.), Benton Ave. (Tracy Ave. to Normandale Rd.)
645	Ford Rd. (Shelard Pkwy. N to Shelard Pkwy. S)
652	Plymouth Rd. Park & Ride



## Route Discontinued Segment

667	Co. Rd. 101 (Hwy 7 to Townline Rd.), 36th St. (Hwy 169 to Texas Ave.), Texas Ave. (36th St. to Minnetonka Blvd.)
760	Candlewood Dr. (Broadway Dr. to Douglas Dr.), Douglas Dr. (Candlewood Dr. to 85th Ave.), Neddersen Pkwy. (Zane Ave. to Setzler Pkwy.), Setzler Pkwy. (Neddersen Pkwy. to Broadway Ave.), Broadway Ave. (Setzler Pkwy. to 85th Ave.)
850	Hanson Blvd. (Coon Rapids Blvd. to Robinson Dr.), Crooked Lake Blvd. / 124th Ave. (Northdale Blvd. to Riverdale Station)
852	Thurston Ave. - Lund Blvd. - McKinley St. loop

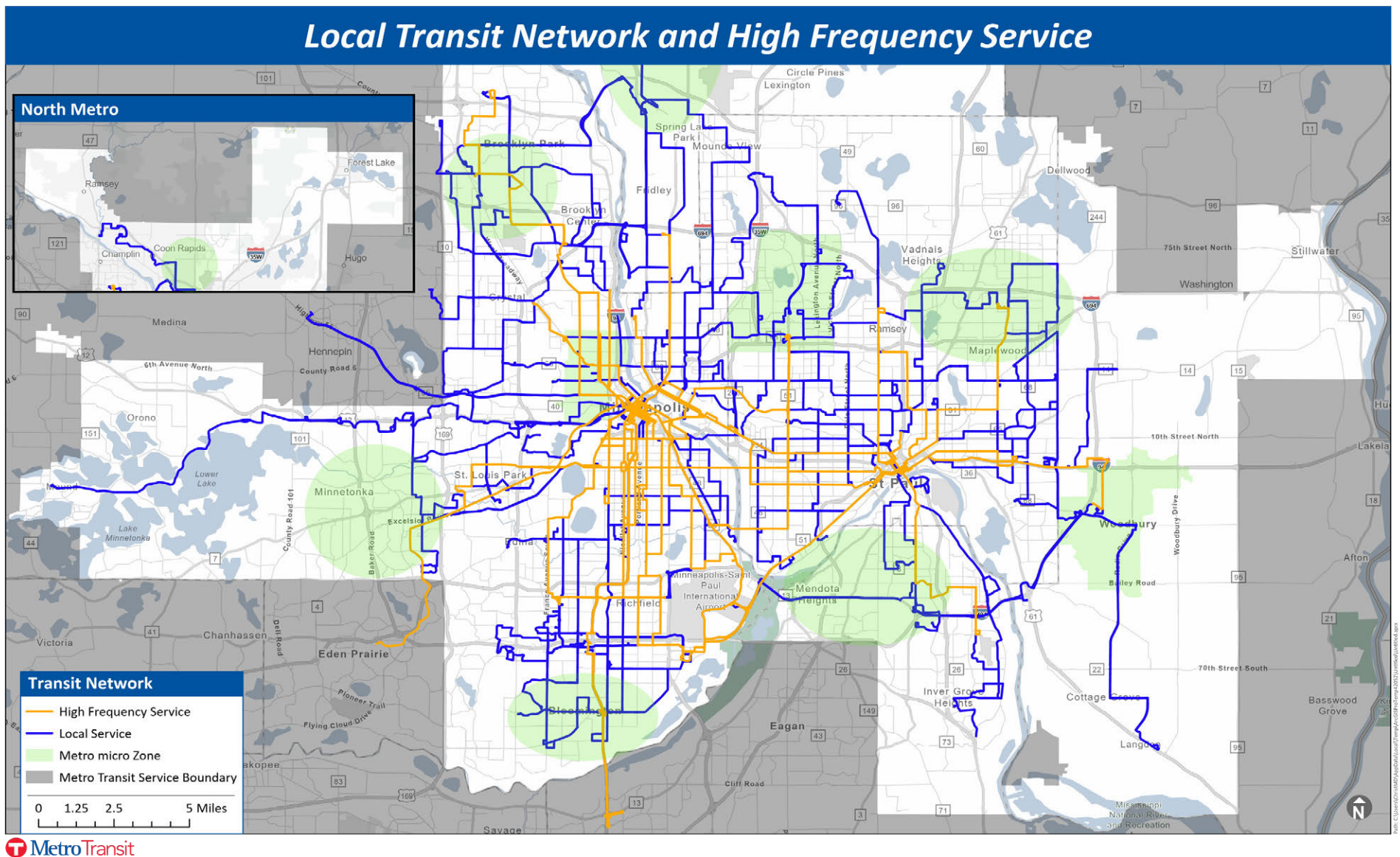
Some communities in the region that had bus service available prior to 2020 will not have fixed-route service under the Network Now concept plan. These communities are primarily located in the northeast metro and near Lake Minnetonka. In all cases, the number of trips available in these communities was relatively low, ranging from two to eight trips per direction per weekday. Cities in the Transit Capital Levy District that will no longer have fixed-route bus service: Forest Lake, Columbus, Circle Pines, Lino Lakes, Mahtomedi, St. Paul Park, Maple Plain, Long Lake, Orono, Minnetonka Beach, Deephaven, Tonka Bay, and Shorewood. Residents of these communities may be able to use the Metropolitan Council's Transit Link program, which provides demand-response transit service in areas where no fixed-route service is available.

## Local bus routes

To focus on providing frequent, reliable service on local routes in the region's core and suburban areas, Network Now includes strategic changes to the existing system to provide coverage where it is most needed and increase frequency where it is most effective. Many routes will also be restructured to some degree to improve their performance and create better connections to high frequency transitways. Improvements to specific routes are detailed in the appendices. Key changes include the following:

- **More routes with service every 10 minutes:** Five more local routes including the 4, 11, 54, 63, and 724 will be improved to have periods of weekday 10-minute service. Customers in parts of south Minneapolis, northeast Minneapolis, St. Paul, Brooklyn Center, and Brooklyn Park will have service upgraded.
- **More high frequency routes:** The high frequency network (Figure 11), comprised of routes or sections of routes offering service every 15 minutes or better on weekday middays, will expand to include transitways such as the Green Line Extension, Gold Line, and B, E, and G lines. The network will also expand to include local routes 4, 14, 17, 22, 58, 68, 515, and 724, as well as the restructured Route 64. Existing high frequency local routes with as good or better service include routes 2, 3, 10, 11, 18, 54, 63, 64, and 71. Routes 6 and 21 will be mostly replaced by the E Line and B Line, respectively, but will be maintained as local service operating every 30-60 minutes. Customers in parts of Bloomington, Richfield, St. Louis Park, Brooklyn Park, St. Paul, West St. Paul, South St. Paul, and Maplewood will see improved service.
- **60-minute minimum frequency:** All suburban local routes will operate at least every 60 minutes.
- **New or restored local bus routes:** New local routes will provide coverage in some areas of Brooklyn Park, Osseo, Oakdale, Cottage Grove, and Woodbury that do not currently have service. Route 223 will be restored to provide connections with routes in Roseville, Little Canada, and Maplewood.
- **Establishing new crosstown connections:** New Route 354 will connect Woodbury, Newport, South St. Paul, West St. Paul, and Inver Grove Heights with Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, offering connections with Blue Line, Gold Line, G Line, and routes 68 and 75. Routes 717 and 801 will be combined into the new Route 817, creating a better crosstown connection for customers in Plymouth, New Hope, Crystal, Robbinsdale, Brooklyn Center, Columbia Heights, St. Anthony, and Roseville. Route 3A will be restructured to provide crosstown service on Maryland and White Bear avenues to Sun Ray Transit Center in advance of the H Line. Service to downtown St. Paul will be available via a transfer to the G Line at Maryland Ave. & Rice St.
- **Discontinuation of current service:** Due to very low ridership, Route 501 will be discontinued. as will Saturday service on Route 33.

Figure 11. Network Now concept plan – Local route and high frequency service



## Commuter-oriented bus routes

Commuter-oriented routes connect suburban areas to major employment centers and destinations, including downtown Minneapolis, downtown St. Paul, and the University of Minnesota. Since 2020, express routes have been most affected by changes in commuting patterns due to the COVID-19 pandemic and investments in regional transitways. These routes experienced the biggest loss in percentage of riders in 2020 and have been the slowest to rebound as ridership recovers on other types of service in the region.

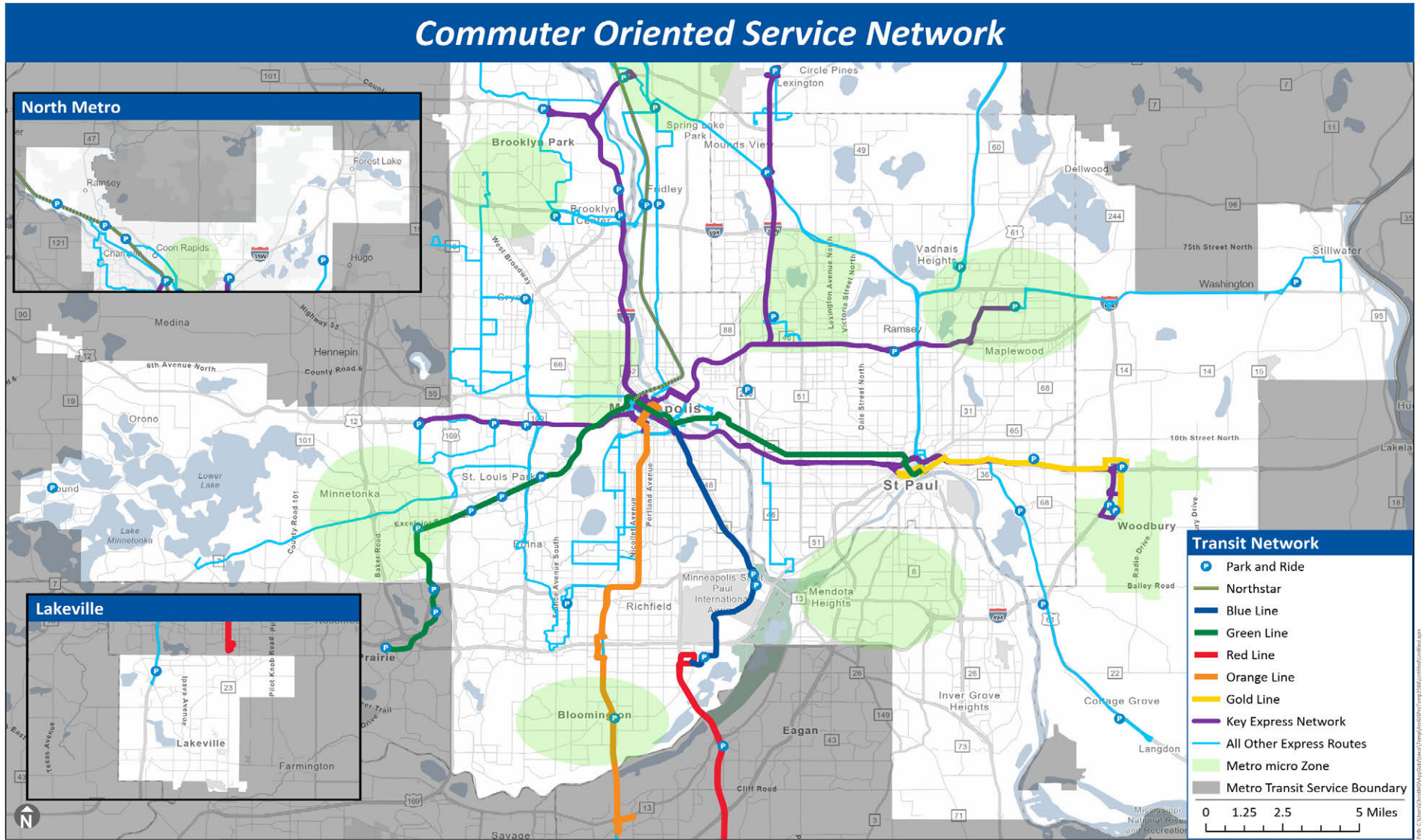
Rush-hour commuter express routes are designed for the primary purpose of bringing suburban residents to traditional 9-to-5 jobs in congested areas where parking is inconvenient and may be expensive. The growth in telecommuting at least some days of the week means that ridership on Mondays and Fridays is less than half of the ridership in the middle of the week, and more people are choosing to drive because parking has become less expensive. Metro Transit has evaluated these conditions in the development of the concept plan.

Through 2027, Metro Transit will increase service on commuter-oriented routes by over 50% compared to current levels, which will allow for more frequent and reliable trips. Proposed commuter-oriented service in the concept plan, including regular bus service, bus rapid transit, commuter rail and light rail is shown in Figure 12. The plan primarily focuses on restoring suspended service, network expansion, and improved connectivity, but it also proposes the discontinuation of some service, primarily on commuter express routes with few trips that have not operated for several years. On Figure 13, the number of weekly trips offered on a route proposed to be discontinued, which are shown in red, reflects the level of service before it was suspended. Key Express Network, light rail, guideway BRT and highway BRT routes are shown in purple and are also weighted by the number of weekly trips. Park & Ride lots that will close are shown in red.

Changes to commuter-oriented routes are summarized as follows:

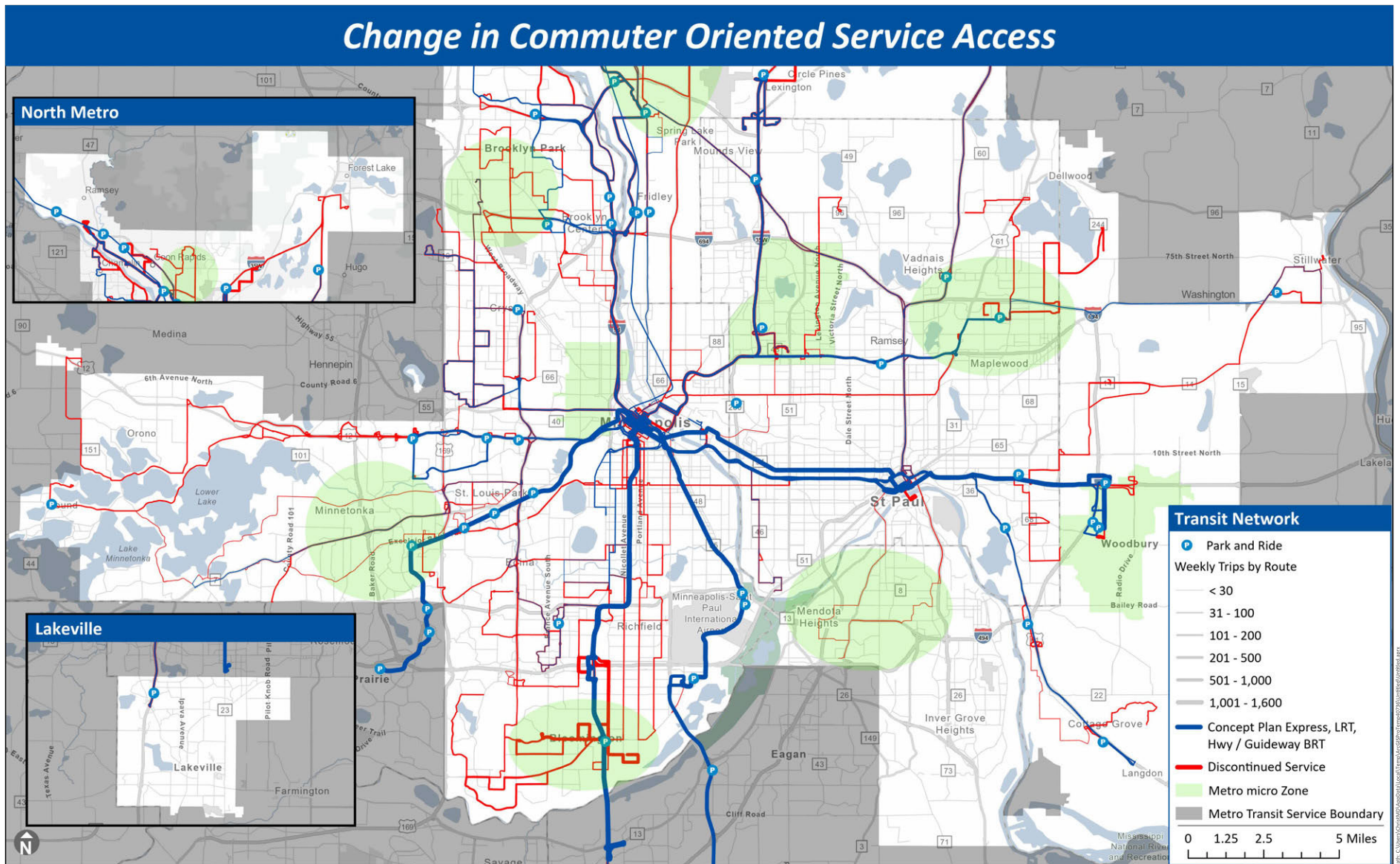
- **Maintain existing express service:** Most express routes operating as of June 2024 will continue to operate. Service on routes 761, 763, and 766, which are currently operating in Brooklyn Park, Brooklyn Center and Champlin, will be replaced by alternate routes. Route 766 will also be discontinued due to very low ridership on local stops and alternate commuter express service available on Route 768.
- **Service restoration:** Service on seven routes that are currently suspended will be restored: Routes 115, 134, 146, 579, 587, 652, and 860. These routes will offer improved service for customers in south Minneapolis, St. Paul, Edina, Minnetonka, Mounds View, and Coon Rapids.
- **Expand service to University of Minnesota:** Due to the significant increases in ridership experienced since students, faculty and staff at the University of Minnesota were given a Universal Transit Pass, more service to the Minneapolis campus will be added:
  - New Route 352 will be added serving Woodbury to replace Route 355U trips.
  - One additional trip in each direction will be added on Route 252 in Blaine.
  - Additional frequency will be provided on Route 115, which provides service to south Minneapolis.
- **Creating the Key Express Network:** By opening the Gold Line and Green Line Extension and consolidating service on key highway corridors, Metro Transit will offer more reliable, frequent, and convenient service throughout the region in a way that adapts to the market. This results in the development of the Key Express Network, made up of highway corridors that extend from the center of the service area and provide frequent, reliable service to a limited number of Park & Ride locations. Routes 94, 250, 270, 355, 673, 768, and 850 are planned to be upgraded to form the Key Express Network, which is shown in purple in Figure 12. Customers who travel to a Park & Ride served by a Key Express Network routes will be offered service every 15 minutes or better during rush hour and also have midday service.

Figure 12. Commuter oriented service network



Date: 7/16/2024

Figure 13. Change in Commuter Oriented Service Access



## Changes by subregion

---

Metro Transit serves a broad and diverse set of communities throughout the Twin Cities metropolitan area. To more easily communicate key transit service changes proposed as part of Network Now, this section explores the concept plan in four different quadrants of the region, defined below, as well as the downtowns and the University of Minnesota.

The following sections describe transit service changes planned for each quadrant, as well as developments that helped guide route planning decisions for Network Now.

### Northeast metro

The Northeast metro, as shown in Figure 14, generally includes areas north of I-94 and east of Hwy 280.

- **METRO Service:** The A Line on Snelling Ave. is already in operation. The Gold Line will operate from Woodbury to downtown St. Paul, operating primarily on dedicated right of way. G Line Phase 1 will operate from Union Depot in St. Paul to Little Canada Transit Station, operating primarily on Rice St. and replacing Route 62.
- **Key Express Network:** Route 270 provides express service from Maplewood Mall and Hwy. 36 Park & Ride to downtown Minneapolis and Route 250 provides express service from I-35W & 95th Ave. Park & Ride and I-35W & Co. Rd. H Park & Ride to downtown Minneapolis. These routes will operate every 15 minutes during the rush hour and also offer midday service.
- **Restructured Service:** Many Eastside routes are being restructured to create a better grid network that relies on improved frequencies for better transfer connections. In addition to St. Paul, route restructuring will also affect other northeast suburban communities, such as Maplewood, Oakdale, Little Canada, and Vadnais Heights. Affected routes are as follows:
  - Route 54 will be split into two routes (Route 54 between downtown St. Paul and Mall of America and Route 58 between downtown St. Paul and Maplewood Mall).
  - Routes 3 and 61 will be rerouted to serve as crosstown routes rather than ending in downtown St. Paul.
  - Route 64 will cover parts of Route 71 and operate primarily straight north of downtown St. Paul on Payne Ave. and McMenemy St. to County Rd. B Park & Ride. Route 64N in North St. Paul will be replaced by new Route 204.
  - With the opening of the G Line Phase 1, the northern terminal of Route 62 will be moved to 12th St. & Robert St.
  - New Route 229 will connect customers from Little Canada Transit Station to Shoreview Community Center.
  - Regular Route 74 service will be simplified in St. Paul to offer more direct service to Sun Ray Transit Center.
  - Route 219 will remain on Century Ave. south of I-94 and will have Sunday service added.
  - New Route 291 service between Stillwater, Maplewood, and downtown St. Paul will replace parts of routes 265 and 294.
- **Restored service:** Route 223 will be restored along the previous alignment between Rosedale Transit Center in Roseville and Maplewood Mall Transit Center in Maplewood.
- **New service:** Route 71K will be extended to provide all-day service to the Wal-Mart in Vadnais Heights. New Route 215 will serve McKnight Rd. between Maplewood and Sun Ray Transit Center. New Route 221, will connect to Gold Line stations and primarily serve Oakdale. Route 225 will be extended to offer access to destinations at Rice Creek Commons. Three new Metro micro zones will be proposed in the northeast metro, with service in the Woodbury area connecting to Gold Line, the Roseville area connecting to A Line, and Maplewood connecting with Maplewood Mall Transit Center.



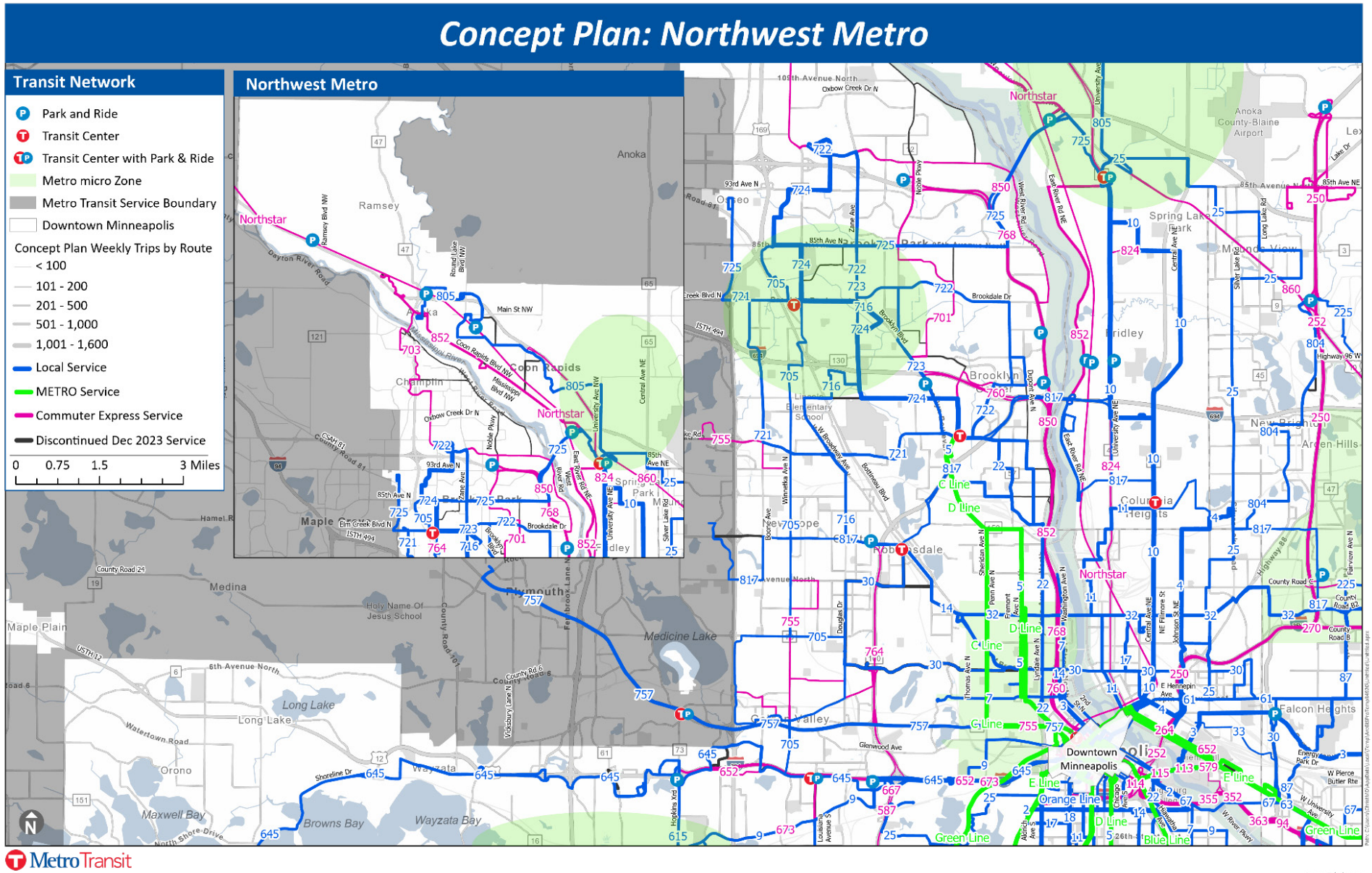
## Northwest metro

The Northwest metro, as shown in Figure 15, includes the western suburbs, the area around north Minneapolis, and extends as far north as Anoka and Blaine.

- **METRO service:** The C and D lines are already in operation, and there are no new METRO lines planned in this subregion by the end of 2027. The F Line will largely replace Route 10 from downtown Minneapolis to Northtown Transit Center, with an adjusted timeline outside the scope of Network Now, subject to coordinated reconstruction of Central Ave. The Blue Line Extension is also slated to open beyond the timeframe of Network Now, but will also add more fast-frequent, all-day service in this region.
- **Key Express Network:** Route 768 provides express service from Hwy. 610 and Noble Park & Ride, Church of the Nazarene Park & Ride, and Hwy. 252 and 66th Ave. Park & Ride to downtown Minneapolis. Route 850 provides express service from Foley Park & Ride to downtown Minneapolis. Route 673 provides express service from Co. Rd. 73 Park & Ride and Louisiana Ave. Transit Center to downtown Minneapolis. These routes will operate every 15 minutes during the rush hour and also offer midday service.
- **Restructured service:** Current commuter express routes (including Routes 761, 763, and 766, and portions of Route 760) will be replaced by new local routes operating during rush hour only (Routes 701, 702, and 703) with a connection to downtown at Noble Park & Ride or 65th & Brooklyn Park & Ride. Route 850 will be restructured to reduce duplication. Routes 717 and 801 will be combined into new route 817 and serve E. River Rd. between I-694 and 44th Ave. (Northern Stacks) in Fridley as well as 36th Ave. and Lancaster Ln. in Plymouth. Route 804 service between Silver Lake Village and Northtown Transit Center will be discontinued and replaced by improved service on Route 25. Route 14 will be restructured so all trips remain on West Broadway Ave. west of Knox Ave. to serve North Memorial Hospital and Robbinsdale. Route 30 will be extended to replace Route 14 along Golden Valley Rd., Duluth St., and Douglas Dr.
- **Restored service:** Route 860 will be restored to connect customers in Coon Rapids, Blaine, and Mounds View to downtown St. Paul.
- **New service:** Metro micro service will continue in North Minneapolis, with new planned zones in portions of Blaine and Coon Rapids, as well as in Brooklyn Park near Starlite Transit Center. Route 7 will have an added branch to the City of Minneapolis' Upper Harbor Terminal redevelopment, located along the west side of the Mississippi River between Lowry and Dowling avenues. New Route 725 will run between Osseo, Brooklyn Park, and Blaine via Jefferson Hwy., 85th Ave. N. and Hwy. 610. New Route 757 will run limited-stop service on Hwy. 55 between downtown Minneapolis. North Minneapolis, Golden Valley, and Plymouth as a pilot for potential future bus rapid transit service.



Figure 15. Network Now concept plan – Northwest Metro

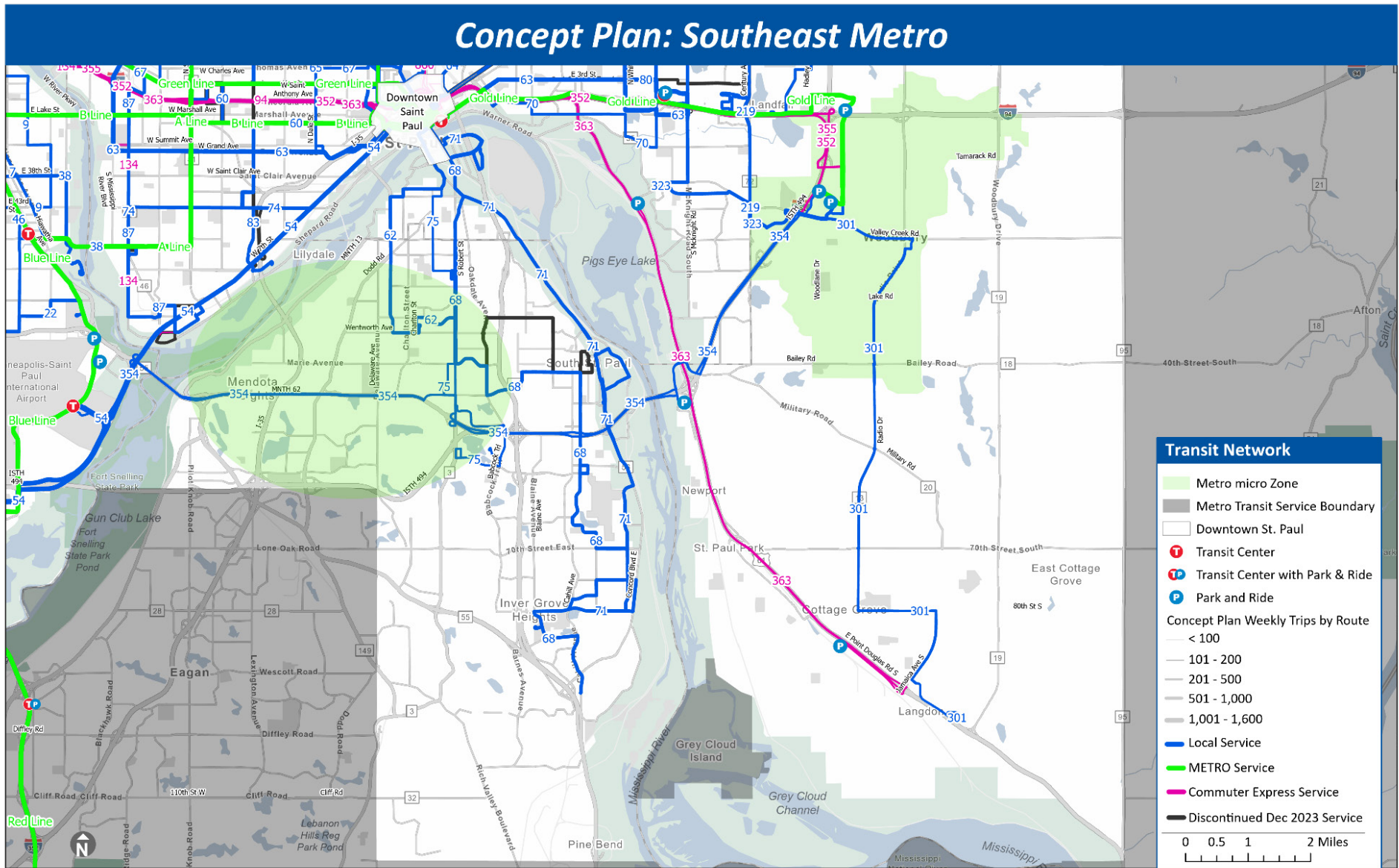


## Southeast metro

The southeast metro, as shown in Figure 16, includes areas south of I-94 and east of Hwy. 280 and the Mississippi River.

- **METRO service:** The A Line on Snelling Ave. and Ford Pkwy./46th St. is in operation. The B Line and Gold Line are planned to open in 2025. G Line Phase 2 on Robert St. south of downtown St. Paul will open with an adjusted timeline outside the scope of Network Now, subject to coordinated reconstruction of Robert St.
- **Key Express Network:** Route 94 provides express service between downtown Minneapolis and downtown St. Paul. Route 355 provides express service from Woodbury Theatre Park & Ride to downtown Minneapolis. These routes will operate every 15 minutes during the rush hour and also offer midday service.
- **Restructured service:** Route 21 service from Hiawatha Ave. in Minneapolis to Union Depot in St. Paul will be mostly replaced by B Line, with new Route 60 offering connections to Midway destinations on Selby Ave in St. Paul. Route 83 will deviate to offer service to Midway. Route 87 will be adjusted to better serve multifamily housing and senior buildings south of W. 7th St. in St. Paul.
- **Restored service:** Route 134 will be restored with limited-stop service from Highland Park in St. Paul to downtown Minneapolis along Cleveland and Cretin avenues.
- **New service:** New all-day local route Route 301 will connect to Gold Line stations and serve Cottage Grove. Metro Transit will also implement two new Metro micro zones, one in parts of Mendota Heights and South St. Paul to support Phase 2 of the G Line and one in Woodbury and Oakdale to support the Gold Line. Woodbury express service changes include the addition of a new route between Woodbury Theatre Park & Ride and the University of Minnesota and new Route 354 all-day local service in the I-494 corridor between Woodbury, Newport, South St. Paul, West St. Paul, Inver Grove Heights, and the airport.

Figure 16. Network Now concept plan – Southeast Metro



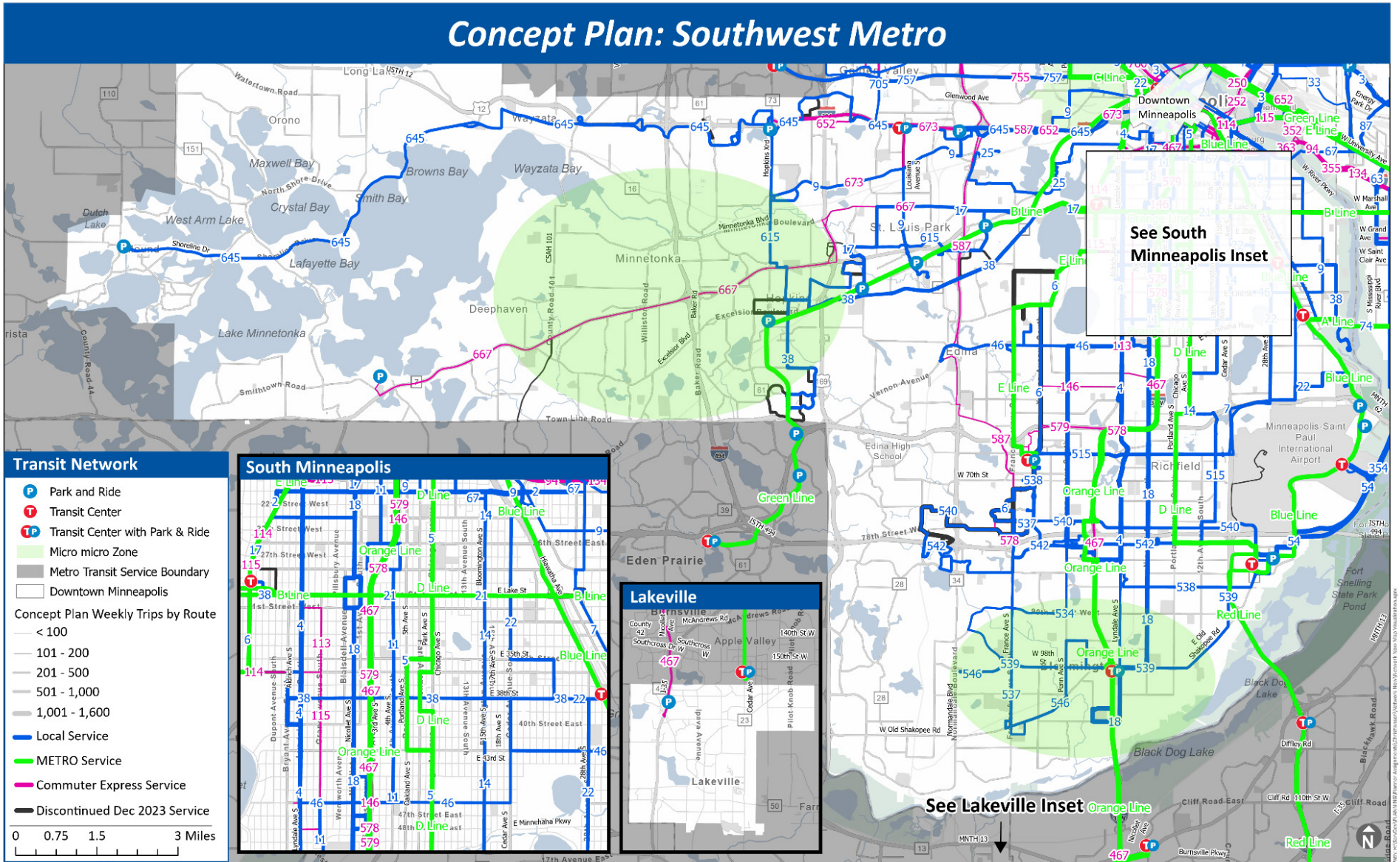
Date: 6/14/2024

## Southwest metro

The southwest metro, shown below in Figure 17, includes areas west of the Mississippi River and south of I-394. Communities in the subregion include south Minneapolis, Bloomington, Richfield, Lakeville, and Edina, as well as west suburban St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Golden Valley, Minnetonka and communities surrounding Lake Minnetonka and Minnetonka.

- **METRO service:** Changes to service in the southwest metro are largely driven by the addition of the Green Line Extension from Eden Prairie to downtown Minneapolis and the resulting consolidation of express service. The southwest metro will also be served by the E Line beginning in 2025 traveling between Southdale Transit Center, downtown Minneapolis and the University of Minnesota.
- **Key Express Network:** No Key Express Network routes serve the southwest metro.
- **Restructured service:** The Green Line Extension includes supporting bus service improvements on routes 9, 17, and 615, as well as new Route 38 to replace existing routes 23 and 612. In the far west metro, Route 667 will be rerouted from Hwy. 101 to Excelsior via Hwy. 7. Route 6 will be restructured with the northern terminal at Uptown Transit Station. Route 540 will be adjusted to offer new coverage on 77th Street.
- **Restored service:** Route 46 service west of the Blue Line will be restored on all days. Route 146 will be restored, with a restructured local segment extending to 60th Street between Lyndale and Xerxes avenues in south Minneapolis to serve part of former Route 156. Route 652 will be restored with service from Co. Rd. 73 Park & Ride to downtown Minneapolis and University of Minnesota. Route 115 will be restored with limited-stop service to Uptown from the University of Minnesota. Route 579 will be restored with express service from Southdale Transit Center to the University of Minnesota. Route 587 will be restored with limited-stop service from Bloomington to downtown Minneapolis.
- **New service:** The Orange Line's 98th St. Station will be included in a future microtransit zone and serve areas of southwest Bloomington formerly covered by Route 547. Minnetonka will be served by a future microtransit zone to connect with the Green Line Extension.

Figure 17. Network Now concept plan – Southwest Metro



Date: 6/25/2024

## Downtown Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, and downtown St. Paul

Route changes in downtown Minneapolis and on the campus of the University of Minnesota (Figure 18), as well as route changes in downtown St. Paul (Figure 19), are guided by major transitway investments, City-led developments, and changes to the express bus travel market, as well as improvements to crosstown and weekend service.

- **METRO service:** The Green Line Extension will provide a direct connection between both downtowns, the University, and Hopkins, St. Louis Park, Minnetonka, and Eden Prairie. The Orange, C, and D Lines already serve downtown Minneapolis, and the E Line will be added in 2025. The E Line also will serve the University. The Gold, B and G lines will serve downtown St. Paul, with the Gold and B lines sharing stations along 5th and 6th streets.
- **Restructured service:** In downtown Minneapolis northbound Route 9 will move from 9th St. to 7th St. Potential changes involving routes on Nicollet Mall are under discussion with the City of Minneapolis but outside the scope of Network Now. Route 6 will no longer serve downtown Minneapolis. In downtown St. Paul, Route 54 will end at Union Depot and Route 54M will become Route 58. Routes 3A and 61 will no longer serve downtown St. Paul. Routes 265 and 294 will be combined into new Route 291, serving Maplewood and Stillwater.
- **Restored service:** Routes 134 and 146 serving downtown Minneapolis will have one to two trips added in each direction during morning and evening rush hours, while Route 860 serving downtown St. Paul will have two trips during morning and evening rush hours. Limited service will be restored during the University of Minnesota school session on express routes 115, 579, and 652.
- **New service:** Route 352 will provide new express service between Woodbury and the University of Minnesota, with connections to Gold and Green lines. Route 757 will provide new limited-stop service between downtown Minneapolis, Golden Valley, and Plymouth via Hwy. 55, offering connections to the Blue, Green, Orange, C, D, and E lines.

Figure 18. Network Now concept plan – downtown Minneapolis and University of Minnesota

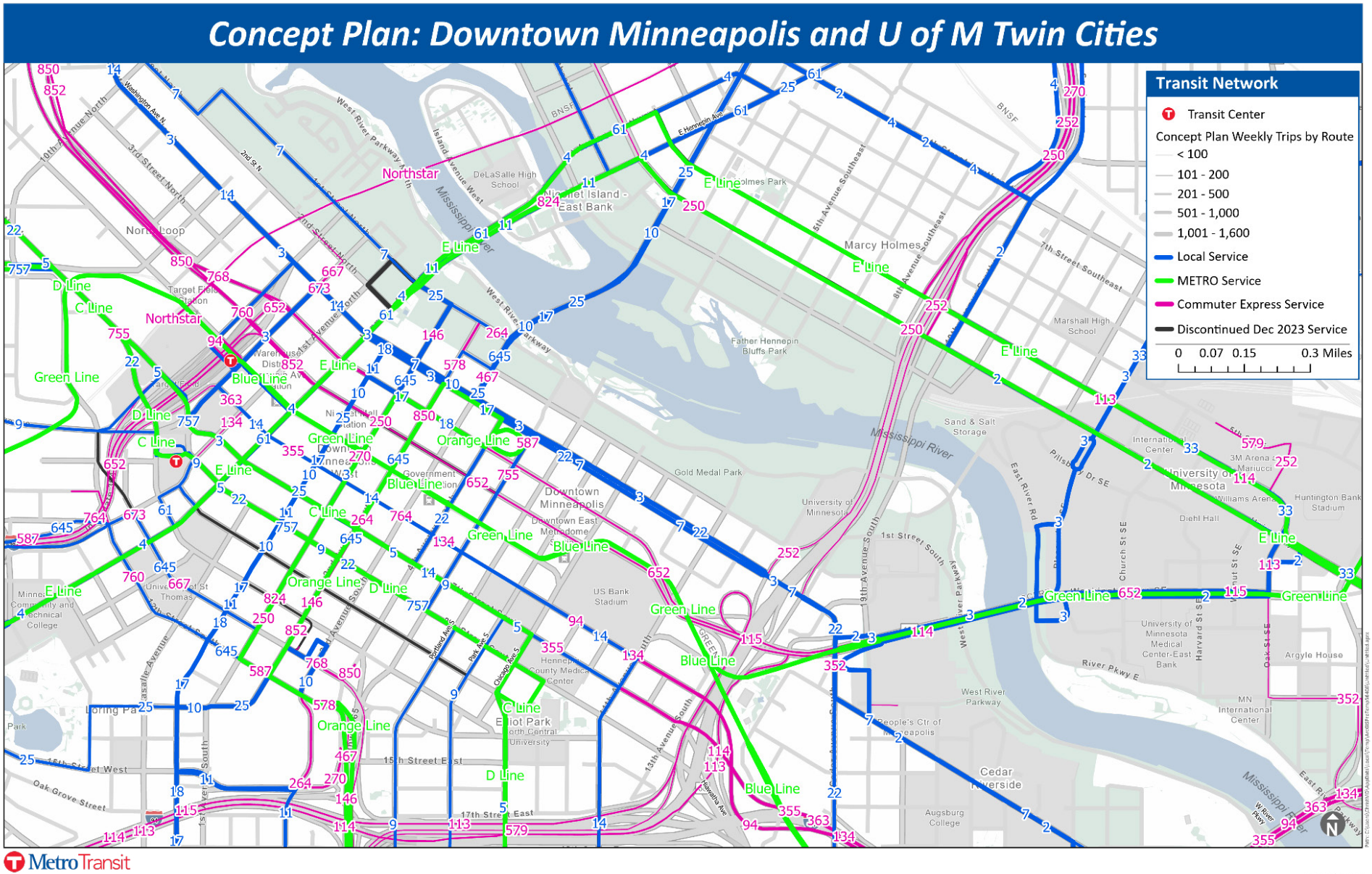
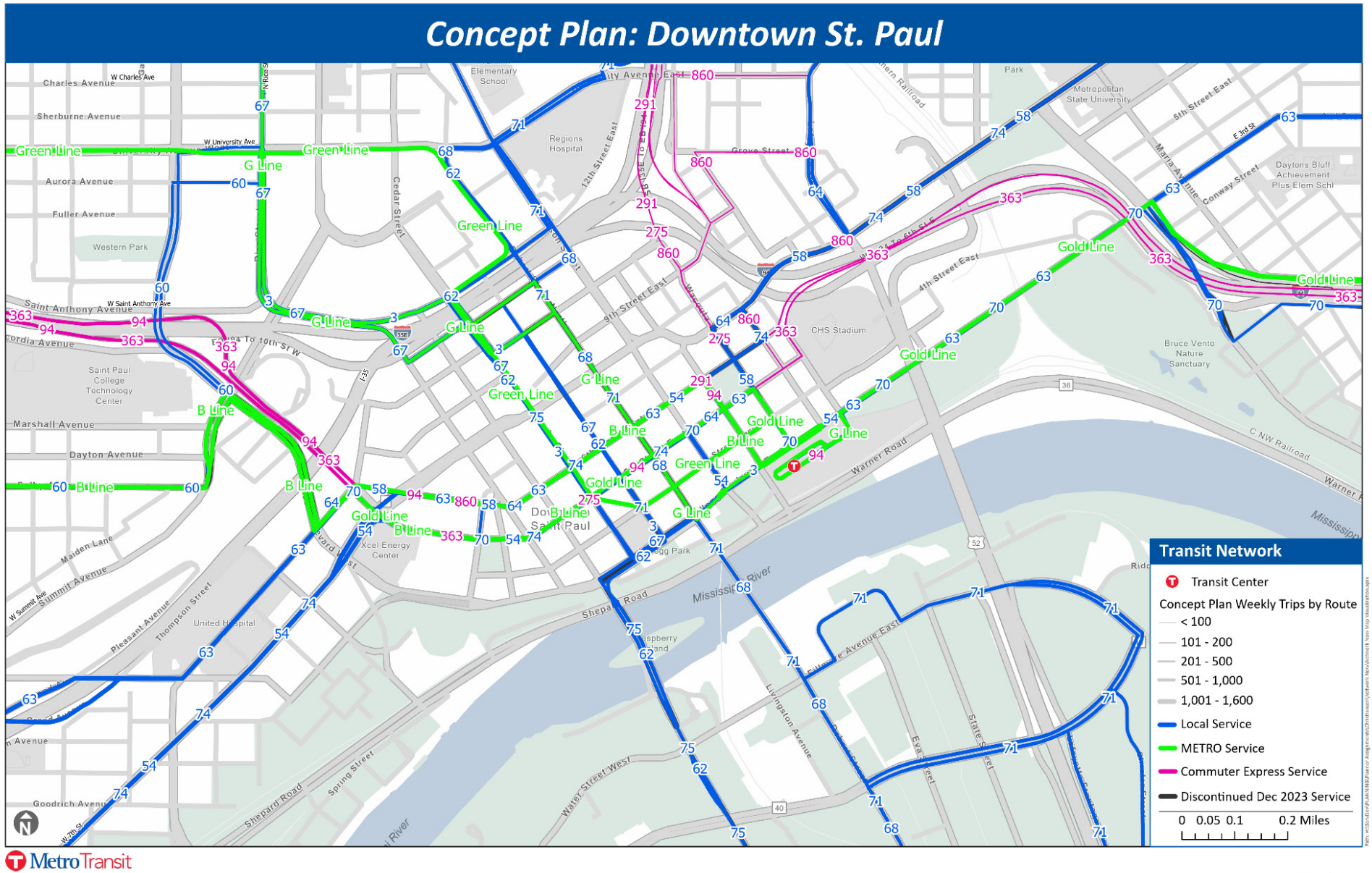


Figure 19. Network Now concept plan – downtown St. Paul





## Regional changes

This section aggregates and summarizes concept plan changes across the network. Figure 20 shows the Network Now concept plan by route classification. Each route class (Local, Commuter Express, and METRO service) is shown in a distinct color.

Figure 20. Network Now concept plan – transit network by service type

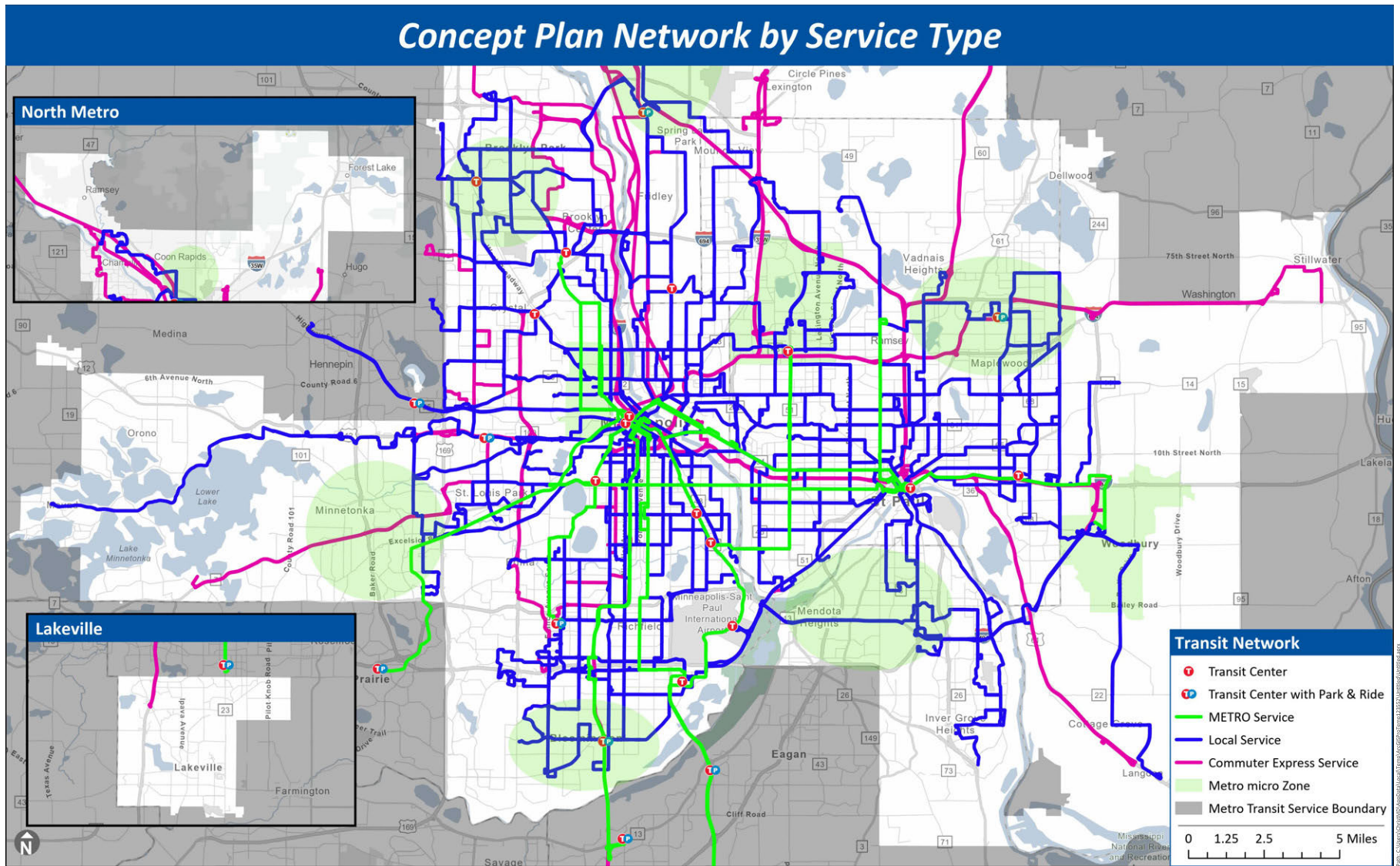
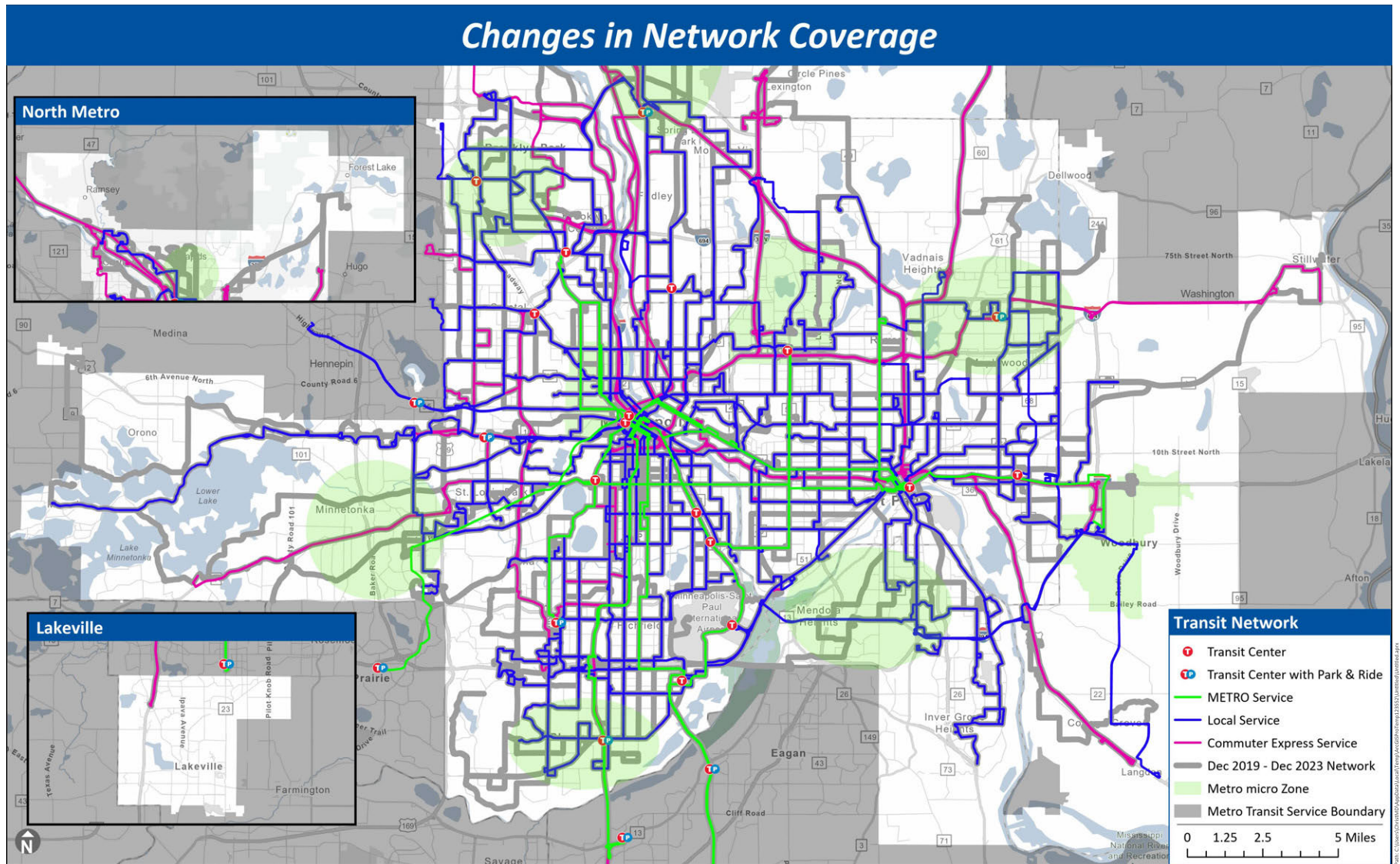


Figure 21 shows the Network Now concept plan in relation to service coverage provided from December 2019 through December 2023. Routes continuing to operate on the same street network are shown in color underlaid by a grey line, while areas no longer covered are shown as a distinct grey line. New areas of coverage are shown as a distinct line in color. Coverage changes are primarily in areas currently served by low-frequency express bus routes. New Metro micro areas are shown in light green, providing additional access for customers without fixed route service.

Figure 21. Network Now concept plan - compared to December 2019 – December 2023



Date: 7/1/2024

Figure 22 shows the Network Now concept plan in terms of the number of weekly trips proposed. Relative to pre-pandemic service, the concept plan includes a more significant reduction in express bus service, particularly in the outer parts of the region where many routes have been suspended since March 2020. Most of the service discontinued (shown in red) has not operated in at least two years. There are limited areas where service runs currently that will see discontinued service compared to December 2023 (shown in orange).

Service frequency is measured as the number of weekly trips operated on each route. 1,000 – 1,800 weekly trips indicate service every 15 minutes or better; 500 – 1,000 weekly trips indicate service every 30 minutes or better, and 200 – 500 weekly trips indicate service every 60 minutes or better. For express routes operating during rush hour only, 100 – 200 weekly trips indicate frequent service, 31 – 100 weekly trips indicate demand-oriented service, and less than 30 weekly trips indicate limited service availability. Frequency for each route is shown at the route level, so certain segments or branches may offer fewer trips.

Figure 22. Network Now concept plan by Number of Weekly Trips

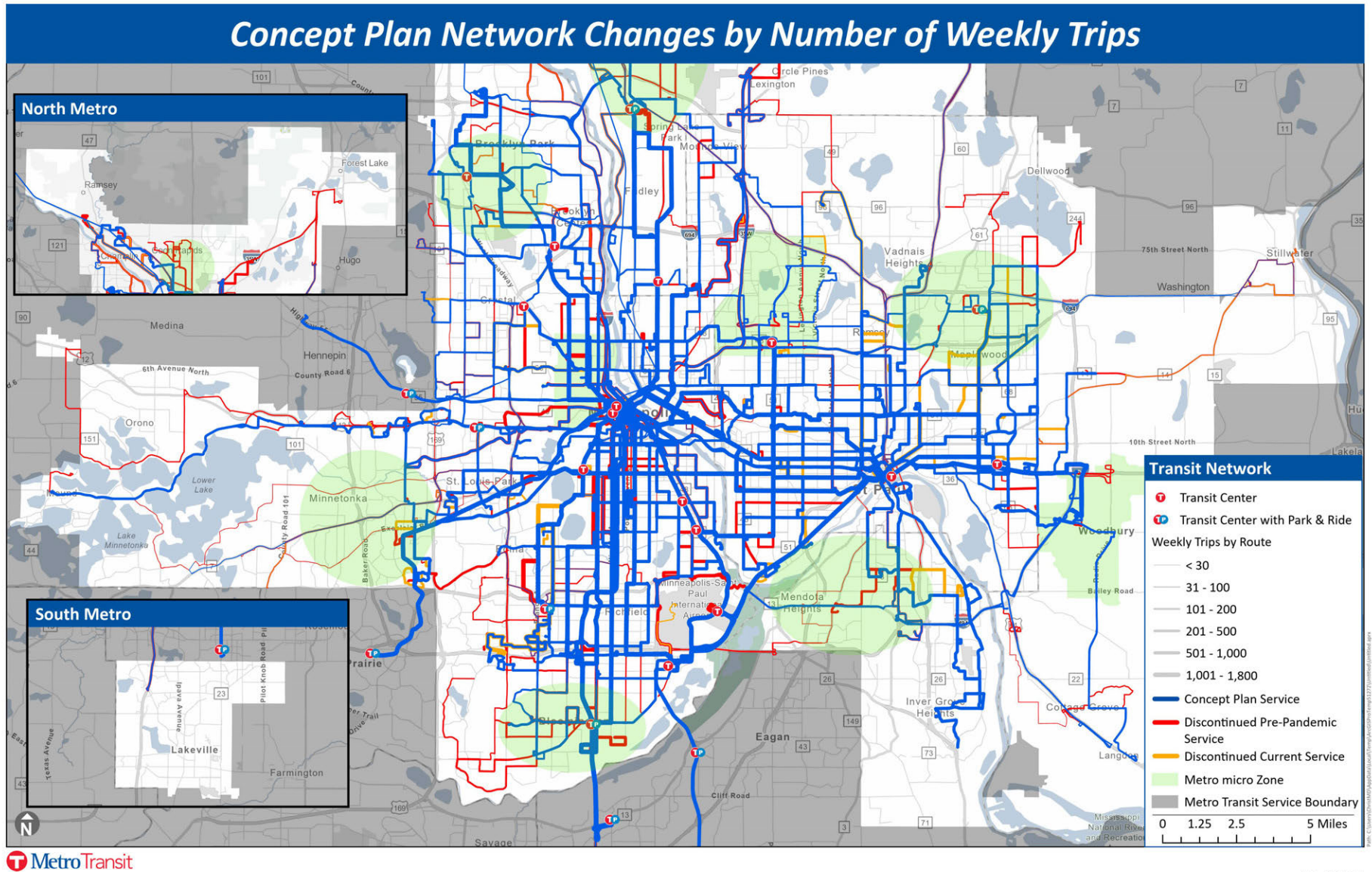
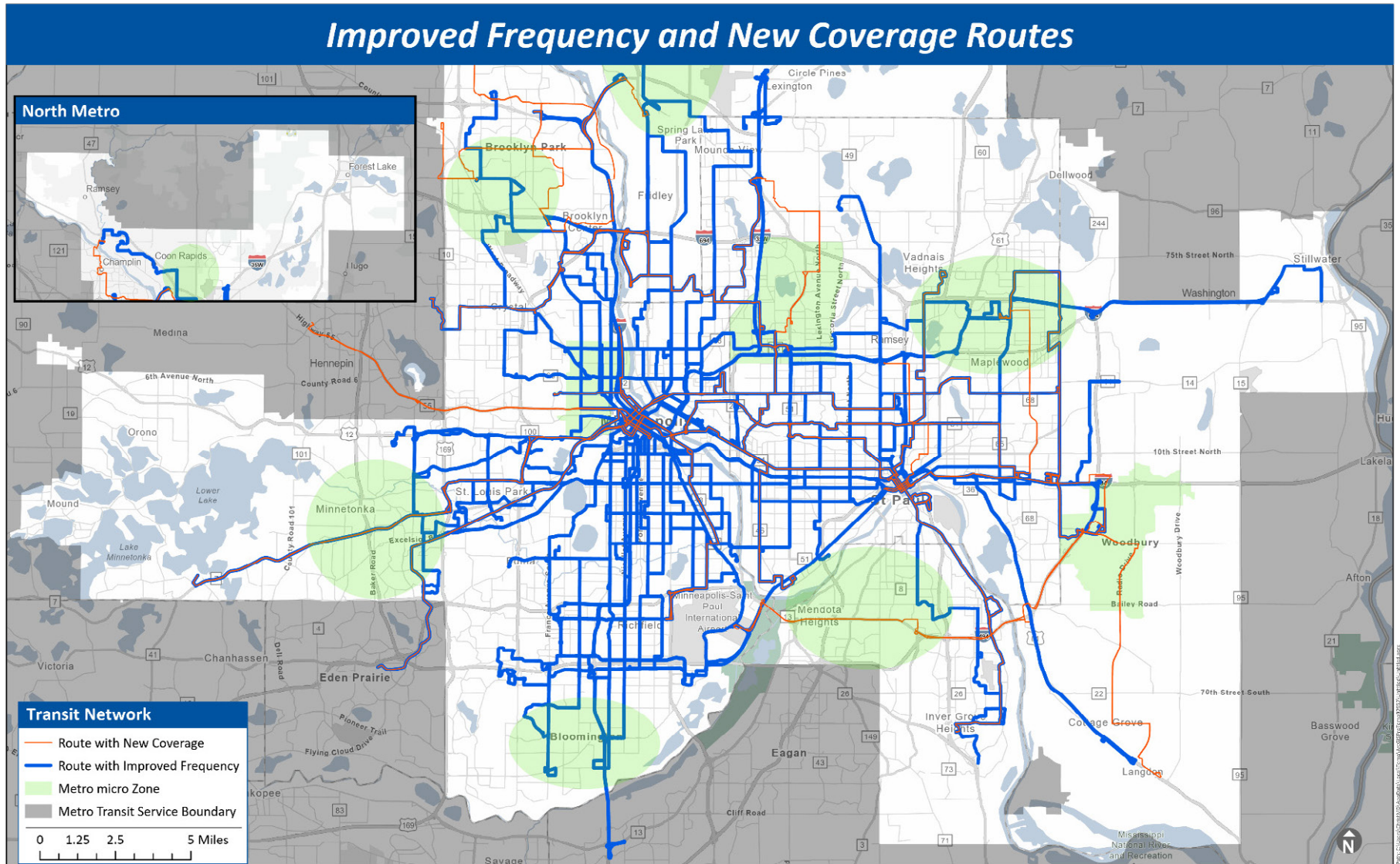


Figure 23 shows routes within the concept plan that will see increases in frequency and/or new geographic coverage. Lines shown in blue will see frequency increases during at least part of the week on at least the main portion of the route, while lines in orange will offer access to new destinations on streets that did not have transit service in December 2019. Frequency will improve on more than 60 routes. Many routes will experience both an increase in frequency and new geographic coverage; these are shown in both colors. Investing in more frequent service and new geographic coverage will help Metro Transit reduce wait times, improve transfer connections, and provide new customers with efficient access to destinations across the Twin Cities region.

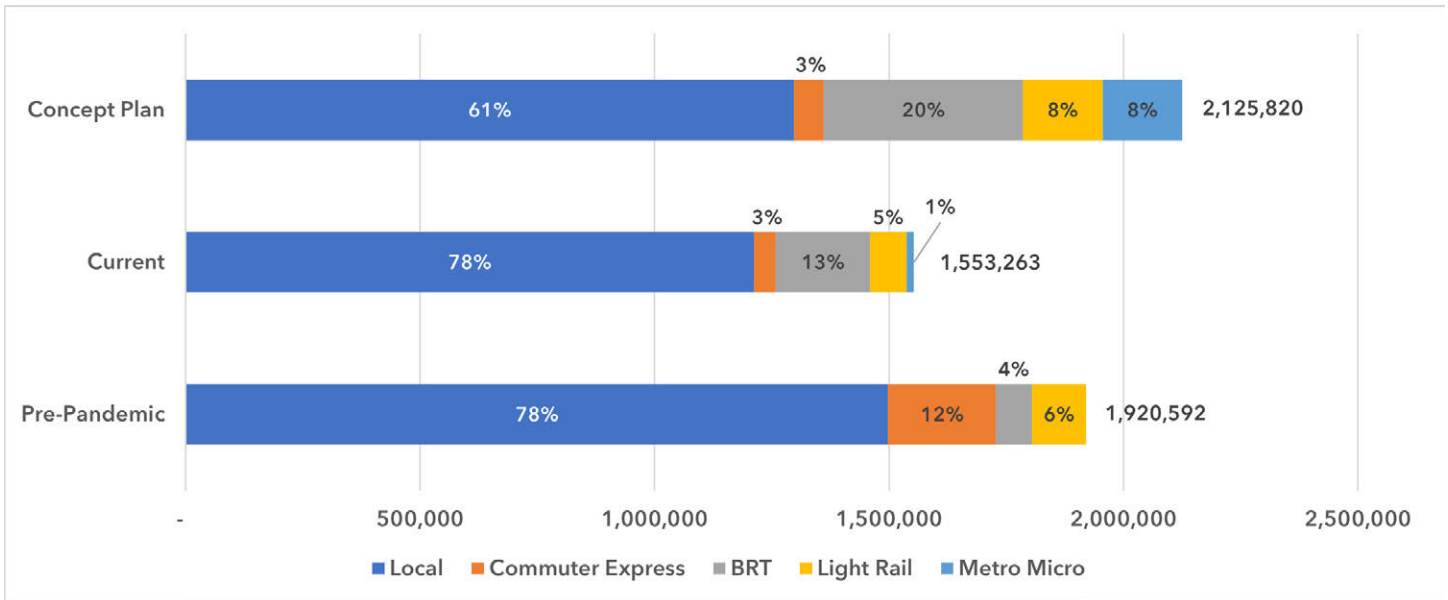
Figure 23. Network Now concept plan – routes with improved frequency and new coverage



Date: 7/8/2024

Figure 24 shows the percentage of in-service hours by service type for December 2019, December 2023, and December 2027 as outlined in the Network Now Concept Plan. While the proportion of local service has remained the same from 2019 to 2023, local service as a percentage of total service hours will decrease by 17 percentage points within the Concept Plan. Network Now service increases relative to the total number of in-service hours in 2023 include a seven percentage-point increase in bus rapid transit service, a three percentage-point increase in light rail service, and a seven percentage-point increase in Metro micro. Commuter express service will be maintained at the same proportion of service as the 2023 level.

Figure 24. Percentage of annual in-service hours by service type



## Facilities impacts

Based on the service changes proposed in the concept plan, Metro Transit plans to close some current facilities and add new facilities that are used for bus and rail service. This concept plan sub-section addresses affected facilities, including light rail and bus rapid transit stations, bus stops, passenger facilities, operations and maintenance facilities, and Park & Rides.

### Stations and stops

Metro Transit currently serves approximately 10,000 active bus stops, a 10% decrease since 2019. As the concept plan is implemented, Metro Transit will need to add stops in areas of new route coverage. Bus stop signs on all routes and segments that will be discontinued will be removed, and where necessary, curbside space at bus stops will be returned to the roadway owner. As changes are made to existing routes, Metro Transit will review bus stop spacing and consolidate some existing stops to better balance access needs and average speed. Bus stops on routes that are currently suspended but are planned for restoration will remain in place until service is restored.

- **Transit centers:** No changes are needed at existing transit centers to accommodate the service improvements in the Network Now concept plan.
- **Bus shelters and amenities:** As bus route improvements are made, Metro Transit will coordinate service changes with shelters and other customer amenities. Metro Transit’s current guidelines call for new shelters to be considered at stops with at least 30 customer boardings per day. A heated shelter is considered at locations with more than 100 boardings per day. Metro Transit is currently reviewing these guidelines to see if they are still appropriate given existing ridership, funding, and workforce resources.

- **Light rail stations:** The Green Line Extension will include 14 new light rail stations by 2027.
- **Bus rapid transit stations:** The Gold Line will add 15 new bus rapid transit stations to the network in 2025, and the B, E, and the first phase of the G lines will add 74 more stations by 2027.

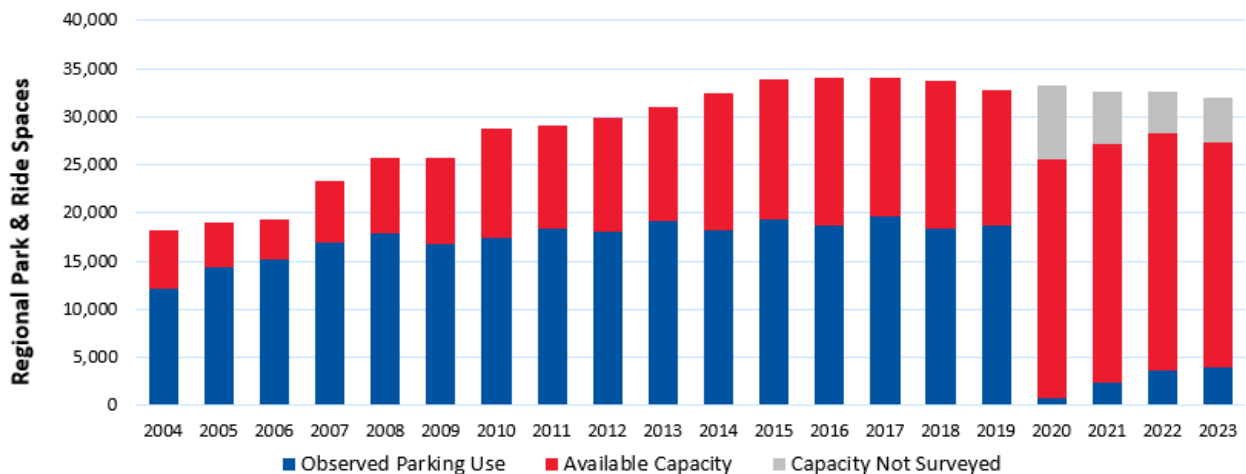
## Operations and maintenance facilities

As the transit network expands, Metro Transit will invest in operations and maintenance facilities to store and maintain buses and trains. Existing garage facilities can accommodate the additional buses needed to implement the Network Now changes by the end of 2027. By 2027, Metro Transit will also need to have facilities for the Green Line Extension. A Green Line Rail Support Facility is currently under construction in Hopkins and will complement existing light rail operations and maintenance facilities in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

## Park & Rides

Park & Ride usage has declined due to changes in commute patterns since 2019, as shown in Figure 25. While ridership has declined on all transit services compared to pre-pandemic levels, commuter-oriented routes have been the slowest to recover. The rate of workers in downtown Minneapolis and St. Paul who telecommute at least some of the time is still significantly higher in 2024 than in 2019, and this trend is expected to be one of the more permanent changes to the region’s travel patterns and transit needs.

Figure 25. Annual Park & Ride survey, 2004 to 2023



By the end of 2027, the number of Park & Ride facilities in the Metro Transit service area is expected to decline from 72 to 48, as shown in Table 3. This includes 15 facilities discontinued between 2019 and 2024, as well as 19 additional facilities expected to be discontinued by 2027. The Gold Line and Green Line Extension will add 10 total Park & Ride stations to the METRO network. Overall capacity will decrease from 21,063 to 19,537 parking spaces, a decline of 7.2%.

Table 3. Park & Ride system capacity

Status	Number of Facilities	Parking Capacity
2019 Park & Ride System	72	21,063
Park & Rides Discontinued 2019 through June 2024	-15	-1,982
Park & Rides Expected to be Discontinued 2025-2027	-19	-1,927
New METRO Station Park & Rides opening 2025-2027	10	2,383
<b>2027 Park &amp; Ride System</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>19,537</b>

Although the number of overall spaces available will not drop significantly, many of the region’s smaller Park & Rides will be consolidated as part of the Key Express Network. Table 4 shows the facilities that have closed since 2019, and Table 5 lists the additional locations expected to close by late 2027 because they will no longer be served by commuter express service.

**Table 4. Park & Rides discontinued, 2019 to June 2024**

Facility Name	City	Generalized Ownership	Parking Spaces
Christ Episcopal Church	Woodbury	Church	100
Excelsior City Hall	Excelsior	City & County	20
Guardian Angels Catholic Church	Oakdale	Church	415
Hopkins Municipal Park & Ride Lot	Hopkins	City	52
Hwy. 61 & Co. Rd. C	Maplewood	Met Council & MnDOT	229
Hwy. 7 & Vinehill Rd.	Shorewood	Met Council & MnDOT	27
Knox Ave. at Best Buy	Richfield	City & Best Buy	426
Maple Plain	Maple Plain	City	150
Salem Covenant Church	New Brighton	Church	70
St. Edward’s Catholic Church	Bloomington	Church	100
St. Joseph’s Church	Lino Lakes	Church	12
St. Luke’s Lutheran Church	Bloomington	Church	100
West River Rd. & 117th Ave.	Champlin	Met Council	151
Westwood Lutheran Church	St. Louis Park	Church	40
Woodbury Lutheran Church	Woodbury	Church	90
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>1,982</b>



Table 5. Existing Park & Rides expected to be discontinued by 2027

Facility Name	City	Generalized Ownership	Parking Spaces
Forest Lake Transit Center	Forest Lake	County	308
Grace Church	Roseville	Church	115
Hadley Ave. & Upper 17th St.	Oakdale	City	58
Hwy. 100 & Duluth*	Golden Valley	MnDOT	50
Hwy. 7 & Texas Ave.	St. Louis Park	MnDOT	10
I-394 & General Mills Blvd.	Golden Valley	Met Council & MnDOT	123
Little Canada Municipal Lot	Little Canada	City	20
Minnetonka Blvd. & Baker Rd.	Minnetonka	City	16
Minnetonka Blvd. & Steele St.	Minnetonka	County	25
Navarre Center	Orono	City	25
Normandale Village*	Bloomington	Shopping Ctr	25
Paul Parkway	Blaine	Met Council	411
Plymouth Rd. Park & Ride	Minnetonka	Met Council & MnDOT	113
Richardson Park	Champlin	City & Met Council	66
Roseville Skating Center	Roseville	City	51
Running Aces	Columbus	Racetrack	300
Shoreview Community Center*	Shoreview	City	10
Wayzata Blvd. & Barry Ave.*	Wayzata	Met Council	101
West St Paul Sports Complex	West St. Paul	City	100
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>1,927</b>

\* While the Park & Rides at Hwy. 100 & Duluth, Normandale Village, Shoreview Community Center, and Wayzata Blvd. & Barry Ave. are expected to be discontinued, the bus layover function will need to remain in place.

Table 6 lists the facilities that will continue to be served by the Key Express Network. These Transit Centers and Park & Ride locations represent those currently in operation that will remain open after the consolidation of commuter express routes in the region as part of the Network Now Concept Plan. These facilities will be served in addition to the several new facilities planned in conjunction with new transitway projects.

Table 6. Key Express Network

Route	Cities Served	Transit Facilities Served
94	Minneapolis, Saint Paul	5th St. Transit Center, Union Depot Transit Center
250	Blaine, Shoreview, Mounds View, Minneapolis	95th Ave. Park & Ride, Co. Rd. H Park & Ride
270	Little Canada, Maplewood, Minneapolis	Maplewood Mall Transit Center and Park & Ride, Rice St. Park & Ride
355	Woodbury, Minneapolis	Woodbury Theatre Park & Ride, 5th St. Transit Center
673	Minnetonka, St. Louis Park, Minneapolis	Co. Rd. 73 Park & Ride, Louisiana Ave. Transit Center and Park & Ride
768	Brooklyn Park, Brooklyn Center, Minneapolis	Hwy. 610 and Noble Pkwy. Park & Ride, Church of the Nazarene Park & Ride, Hwy 252 and 66th Ave. Park & Ride
850	Coon Rapids, Minneapolis	Foley Park & Ride

Figure 26 shows the location of all commuter express routes and Park & Rides open in Metro Transit's service area by the end of 2027. Nearly 2,400 new spaces are expected to open as part of transitway projects such as the Gold Line and Green Line Extension, detailed in Table 7. All facilities that were open in 2019 and are not included in Table 4 or Table 5 are planned to remain open.

Figure 26. Commuter oriented service network Park & Rides

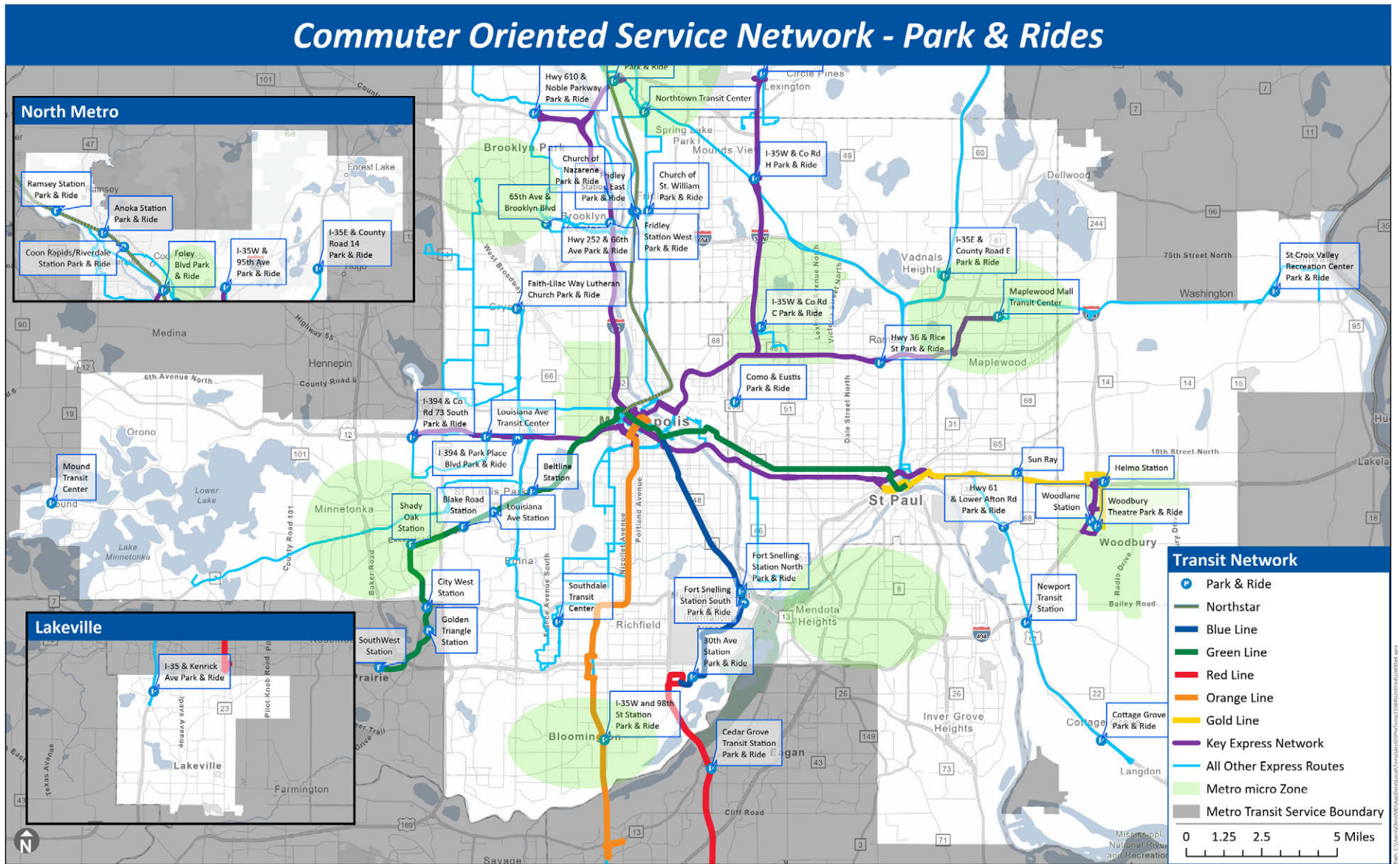


Table 7. New METRO Park & Rides planned by 2027

Facility Name	City	Future METRO Line	Parking Spaces
Beltline Station	St. Louis Park	Green Line	268
Blake Road Station	Hopkins	Green Line	89
City West Station	Eden Prairie	Green Line	160
Golden Triangle Station	Eden Prairie	Green Line	74
Helmo Station	Oakdale	Gold Line	138
Louisiana Ave. Station	St. Louis Park	Green Line	348
Shady Oak Station	Hopkins	Green Line	182
SouthWest Station (expansion)	Eden Prairie	Green Line	456
Sun Ray Station	Maplewood	Gold Line	150
Woodlane Station	Woodbury	Gold Line	518
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>2,383</b>

## Dial-a-Ride service impacts

The Met Council operates two types of service to supplement fixed routes. Transit Link is a dial-a-ride service that is available to the public in areas where fixed route service is at least ¼ mile away. Expanded fixed route coverage will reduce the availability of Transit Link service but enhance opportunities to transfer to fixed route, while areas where fixed routes are discontinued may be newly eligible.

Metro Mobility is the complementary paratransit service for persons with disabilities that are unable to ride regular fixed-route service. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires transit agencies to provide service in areas that are within ¾ mile of all-day fixed route service when the regular route service is operating. Minnesota state law expands the geographic coverage of Metro Mobility service beyond the ADA to include the Transit Taxing District as it existed in 2006 plus the city of Lakeville. Changes to fixed-route services may either reduce or increase the hours of availability of Metro Mobility service in a community and/or change the geographic designation for service between federal (ADA) and state (non-ADA), impacting the applicable regulatory requirements and service guarantees.

Network Now would not affect the availability of other transportation options, such as Metro Move and Metro Vanpool.

## Network Now trade-offs

Service planning decisions involve trade-offs. To inform the service allocation decisions made in Network Now, Metro Transit asked the public to rank their priorities for transit service during engagement exercises conducted in Spring and Summer 2023. Key results that informed the concept plan are described in the following section.

**70%**  
favored **ridership**  
over coverage

**When asked what was more important — coverage or ridership — 70% favored ridership.**

Metro Transit is investing in areas with the highest ridership potential, including in the densest and most diverse parts of the Twin Cities region. The concept plan improves service on routes that carry the most riders, including bus rapid transit, light rail, and core local bus routes.

**61%**  
favored **ridership**  
over geographic  
evenness

When asked what was more important — geographic evenness or focused ridership — 61% favored ridership.

While there are several routes with increased frequency and span on high ridership routes today, additional service is provided across the network with new bus route coverage service in the East Metro and North Metro. New Metro micro service is planned in eight new suburban areas to improve access to the fixed-route network.

**66%**  
favored **equity**  
over geographic  
evenness

When asked what was more important — geographic evenness or equity — 66% favored equity.

Many recommended route changes – urban and suburban – to improve service, frequency, span and weekend service to communities of color, low-income and low auto ownership areas. This is clearly highlighted in the access evaluation section below.

The trade-offs above are a sample of the feedback Metro Transit gathered during 2023. The complete summary of engagement is available in [Chapter 3: Engagement and Customer Feedback](#).

## Evaluation process and results

The concept plan was developed to address changing market conditions and transit needs as expressed through public input. Before developing the concept plan, Metro Transit conducted a detailed evaluation of how future service scenarios would compare to the transit network in 2019 and 2023. Evaluation measures were designed to assess service based on the Network Now guiding principles, with the goal of improving the customer experience on transit across the Twin Cities region.

### Evaluation metrics

Metro Transit organized evaluation metrics into two categories: service availability and usefulness. Each metric was also assessed for service equity impacts to ensure that benefits of service improvements are experienced by customers who need transit the most. The evaluation process is described in the following sections.

#### Availability

Service availability metrics describe the **services available to residents and customers** in the Network Now concept plan. Service is considered to be available if it is reachable within a five-minute walk or roll of a transit stop. Availability is calculated for residents, demographic subgroups, and current customers, as well as for different service periods throughout the day and week.

Availability is also calculated for different frequency levels in a standard service window.

- **10-minute or better service**, or very frequent transit
- **15-minute or better service**, or frequent transit
- **60-minute or better service**, the minimum standard for local service in Network Now, and
- **Any service**, including all above categories and service that may not currently meet Network Now standards.

## Usefulness

Useful transit service is defined by its **ability to connect people to opportunities**. For this analysis, opportunities are measured in terms of access to jobs. In this region, jobs are often co-located with other desirable destinations like shopping and healthcare, so that access to jobs stands in for access to all the destinations individuals may need to reach.

By quantifying the number of jobs reachable during weekday midday, weekday rush hour, Saturday midday, and Sunday midday, differences in usefulness can be measured across service periods. If access to jobs is high across multiple time periods, the transit system more effectively connects customers to opportunities even as the locations and schedules of those opportunities might evolve over time.

## Service equity

Metro Transit evaluates how well its transit serves the public and specific equity populations, including people who are low-income, communities of color, and households that do not own a vehicle.

- Availability metrics assess the percent of the service area population with access to transit at various frequency levels. Availability is calculated for current transit riders, low-income populations, and people of color.
- Usefulness metrics measure the average number of jobs accessible via transit across various population subgroups. Job access is calculated for the overall service area population, low-income populations, people of color, and households without a vehicle.

To the extent feasible, definitions of each demographic group are based on existing policy established in Metro Transit's Title VI Program and rely on publicly available information.

## LOW-INCOME POPULATIONS

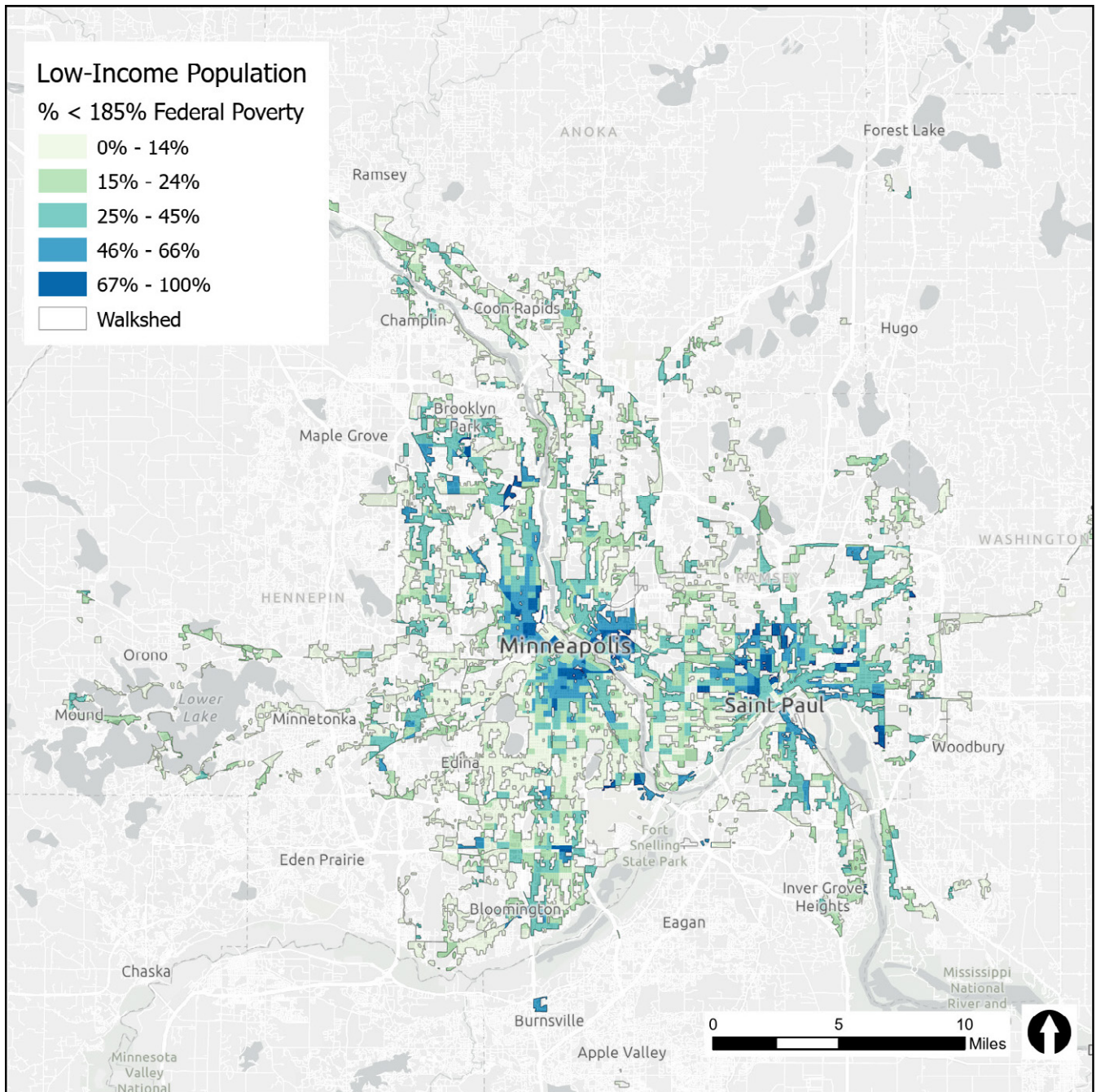
Low-income populations are defined as individuals with incomes below 185% of the federal poverty level. Low-income populations located within walking or rolling distance of the current transit system are shown in Figure 27 and Table 8.

**Table 8. Low-income populations served by Metro Transit in 2023**

Low-Income Population	246,798	27%
Non-Low-Income Population	654,959	73%
Total Population*	901,757	100%

\*Population for which poverty status is determined

**Figure 27. Low-income populations served by Metro Transit in 2023 (% of total residents)**



## PEOPLE OF COLOR

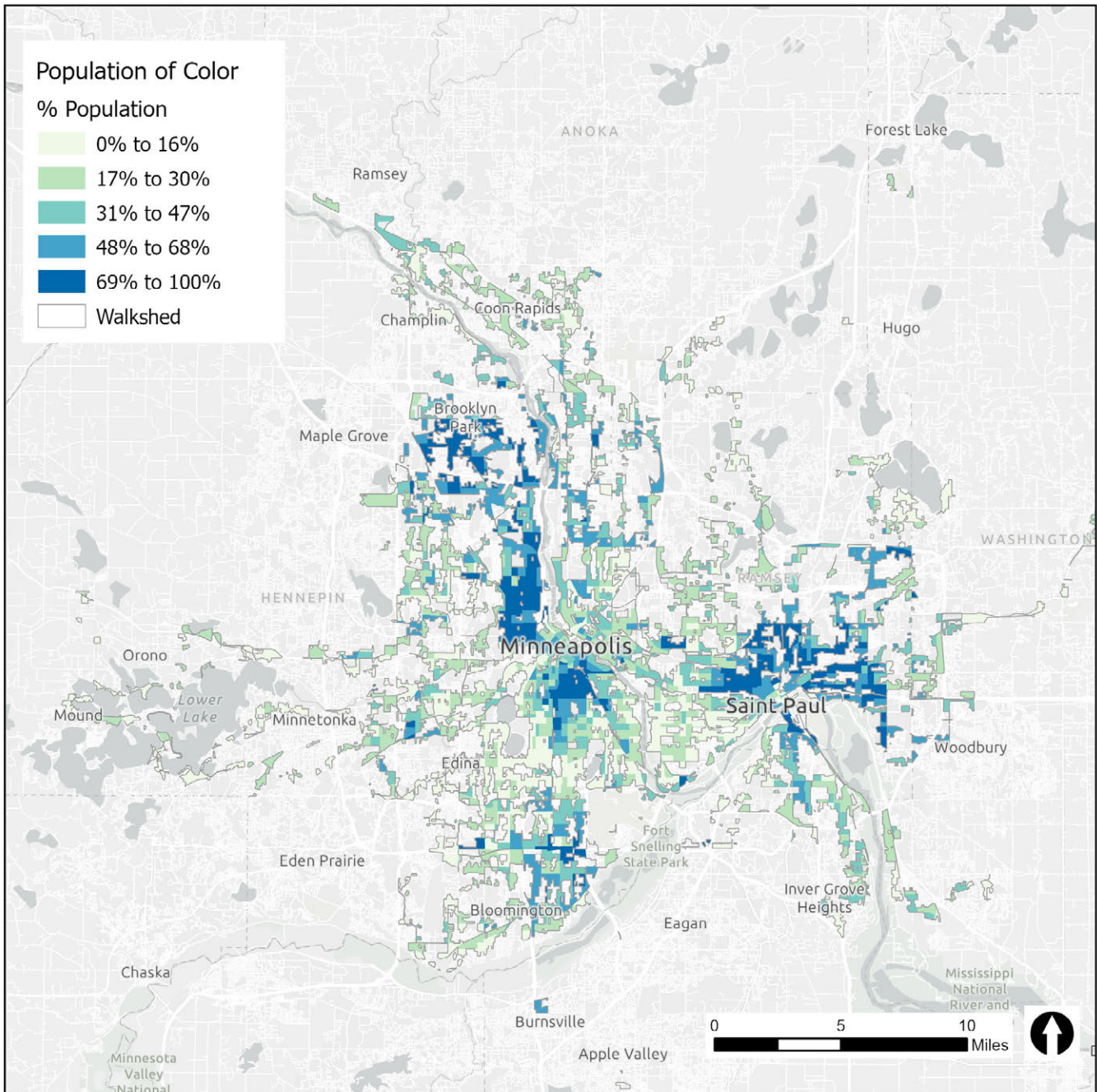
People of color, sometimes referred to as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color communities, are defined as individuals who self-identify with a race and/or ethnicity other than non-Hispanic white. People of Color located within walking or rolling distance of the current transit system are shown in Figure 28 and Table 9.

**Table 9. People of Color served by Metro Transit in 2023**

People of Color*	377,035	41%
White, not Hispanic or Latino	546,877	59%
Total Population	923,913	100%

\*Total of all races and ethnicities other than non-Hispanic white

**Figure 28. People of Color served by Metro Transit in 2023 (% of total residents)**



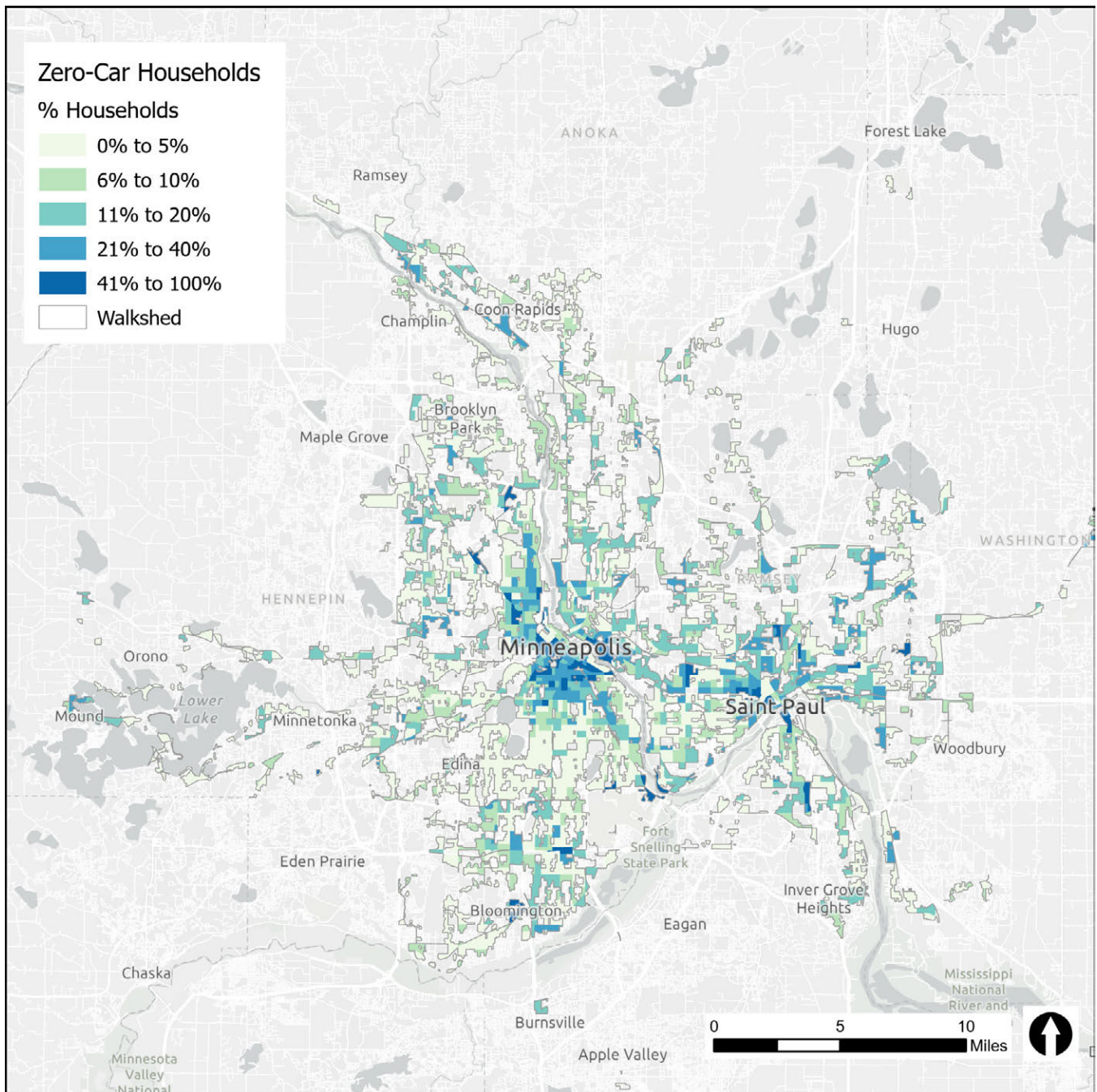
## ZERO-VEHICLE HOUSEHOLDS

Households without access to a vehicle, often referred to as zero-vehicle households, tend to rely on transit for more of their daily needs. Zero-vehicle households located within walking or rolling distance of the current transit system are shown in Figure 29 and Table 10.

Table 10. Zero-Vehicle Households served by Metro Transit in 2023

Zero-Vehicle Households	48,495	12%
Households with Vehicles	339,601	88%
Total Households	388,096	100%

Figure 29. Zero-vehicle households served by Metro Transit in 2023 (% of total households)





## Results

Results for each evaluation category — availability and usefulness — are shown in the following sections. All results compare the draft concept plan to current (December 2023) and pre-pandemic (December 2019) scenarios.

### Availability

Results of transit availability are organized first by day type and time of day, population group, then existing customers. All availability results are organized by service categories: 10-minute or better service, 15-minute or better service, 60-minute or better service, and any service.

#### AVAILABILITY BY TIME OF DAY

Regardless of race or income, the Network Now concept plan makes at least as much transit service available to residents in the region as the current service and pre-pandemic service, across most service levels and time periods, except for weekday p.m. rush.

Since 2019, demand has shifted away from rush-hour office commutes towards all-day, all-week trips. Figure 30 through Figure 33 show how much of the population has access to each of the four service levels by time of day.

For 60-minute service and any level of service (Figure 32 and Figure 33), access during the weekday p.m. rush hours decreases from pre-pandemic levels, but it increases at least moderately or stays the same for all other service windows. These changes can in part be attributed to decreases in rush-hour express service.

In addition to maintaining service availability across the day and week, the concept plan improves the availability of 15-minute service by 15–80% and 10-minute service by 20–50% over the pre-pandemic service. High frequency services support the broad array of trip purposes that have overtaken work commutes in the wake of the pandemic.

Figure 30. Population with access to 10-minute service by time of day

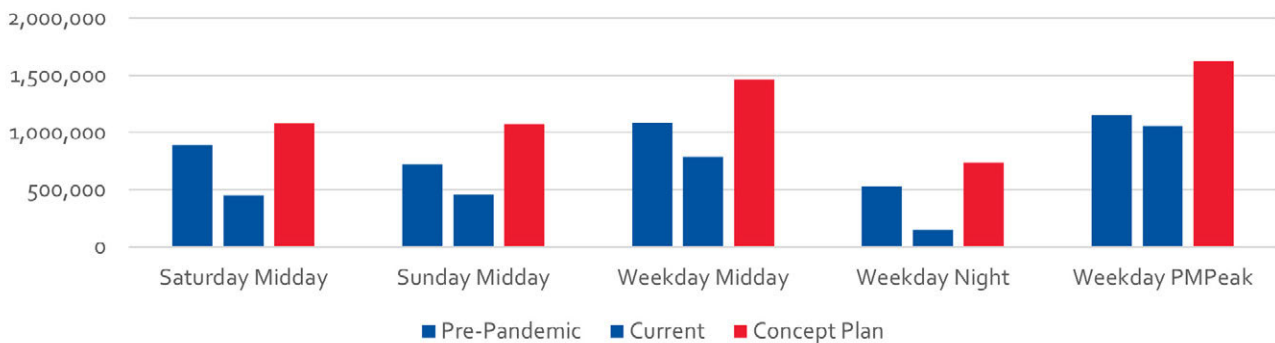


Figure 31. Population with access to 15-minute service by time of day

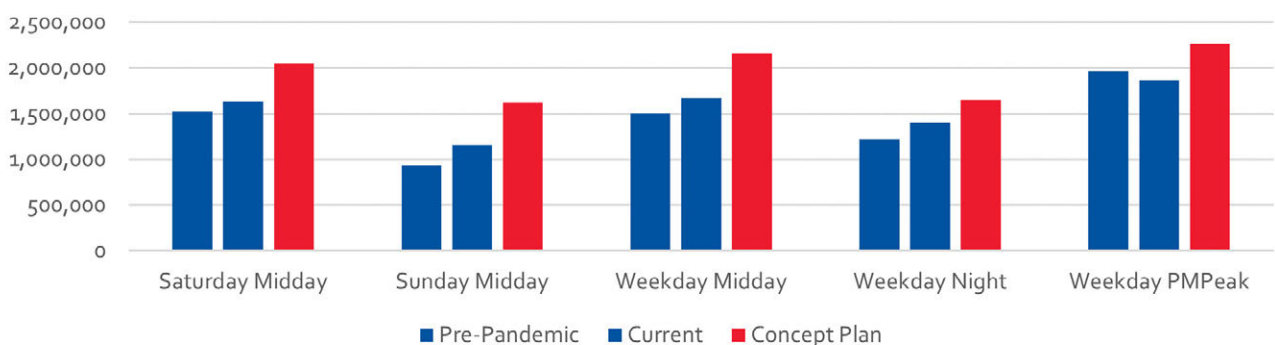


Figure 32. Population with access to 60-minute service by time of day

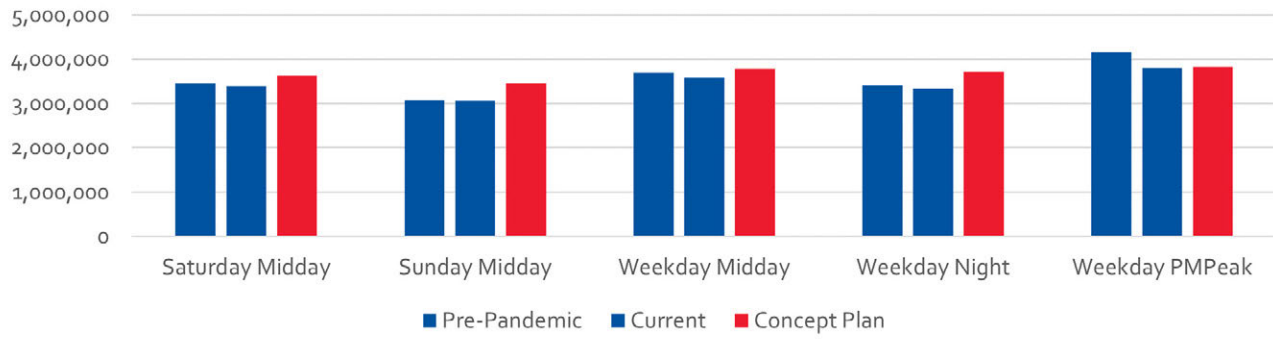
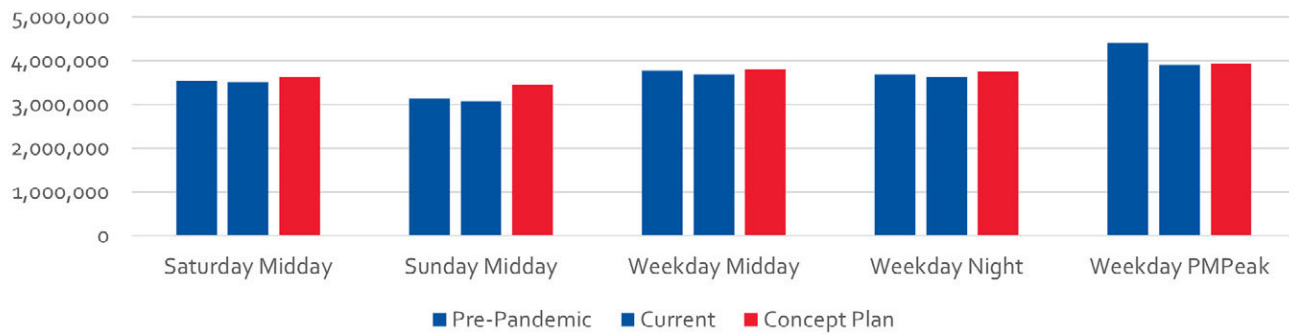


Figure 33. Population with access to any transit service by time of day

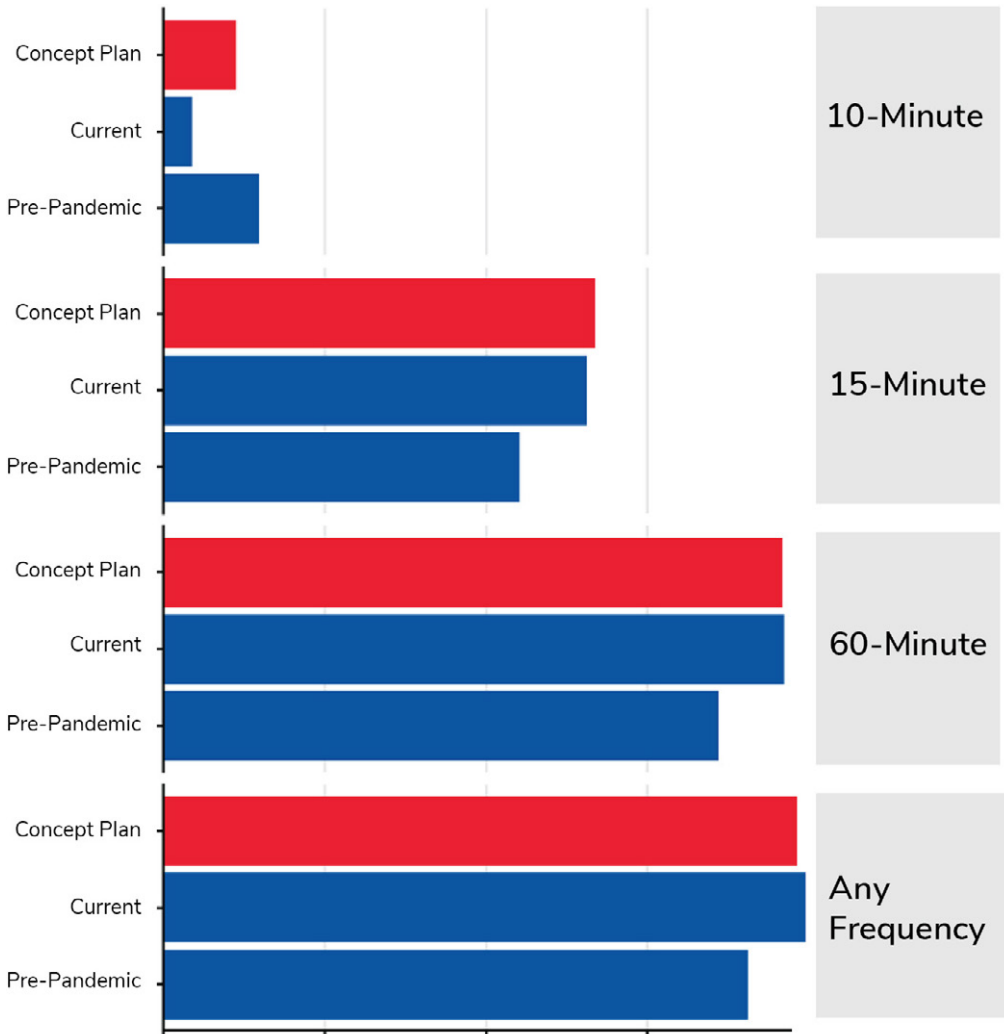


## AVAILABILITY BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP

The following figures show the number of people or customers living within a five-minute walk or roll of transit service for the Network Now concept plan, current service, and pre-pandemic service.

The Network Now concept plan makes at least as much transit service available to current customers as existing service and improves upon pre-pandemic service (Figure 34). Under the concept plan, 15-minute service will be available to approximately 65% of existing customers. The concept plan improves availability across all service categories relative to current service, and nearly matches pre-pandemic availability of 10-minute service.

**Figure 34. Percent of March 2023 customers with access to transit by service level**



The Network Now concept plan performed better across all metrics in making service available to people of color (Figure 35) and low-income populations (Figure 36) when compared to the current system. Availability of service for these populations was equivalent or better when compared to pre-pandemic service for 10-minute, 15-minute, and 60-minute frequency levels.

**Figure 35. Percent of people of color with access to transit by service level**

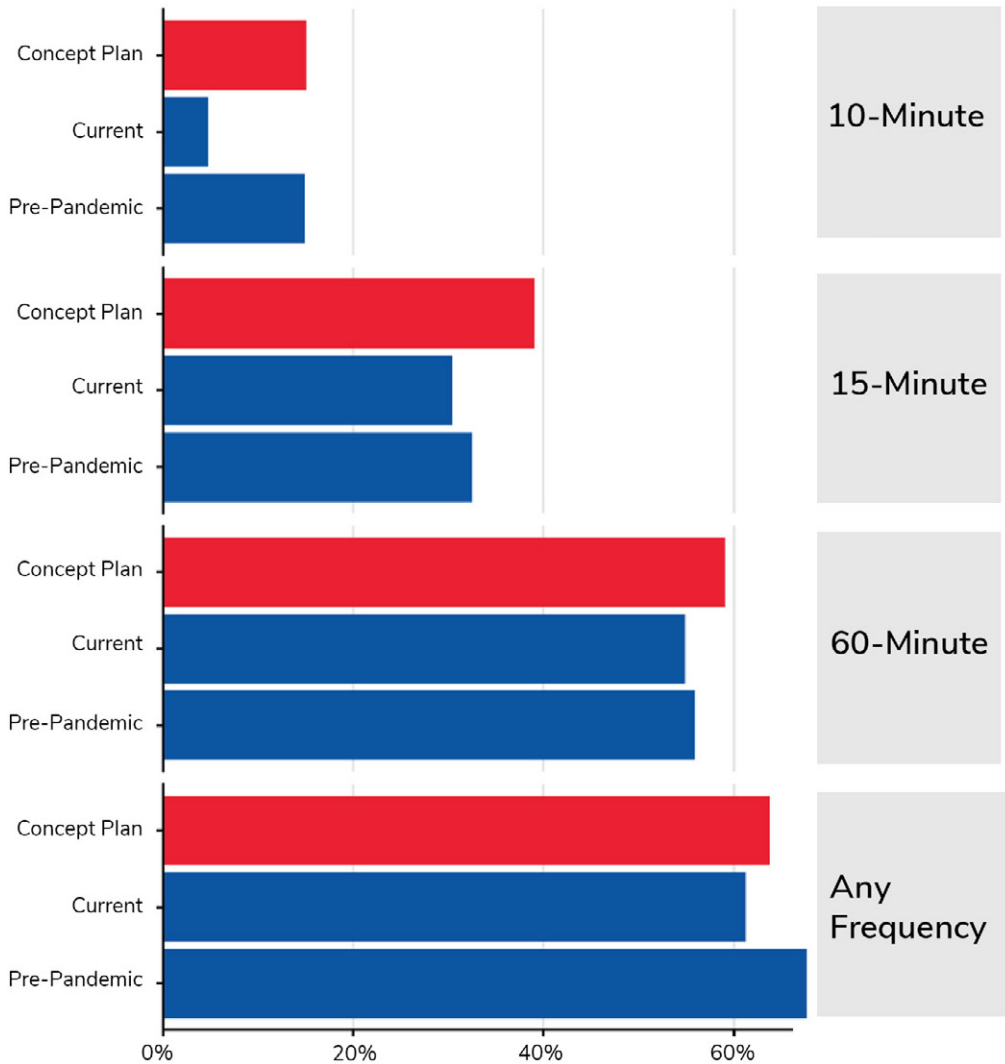
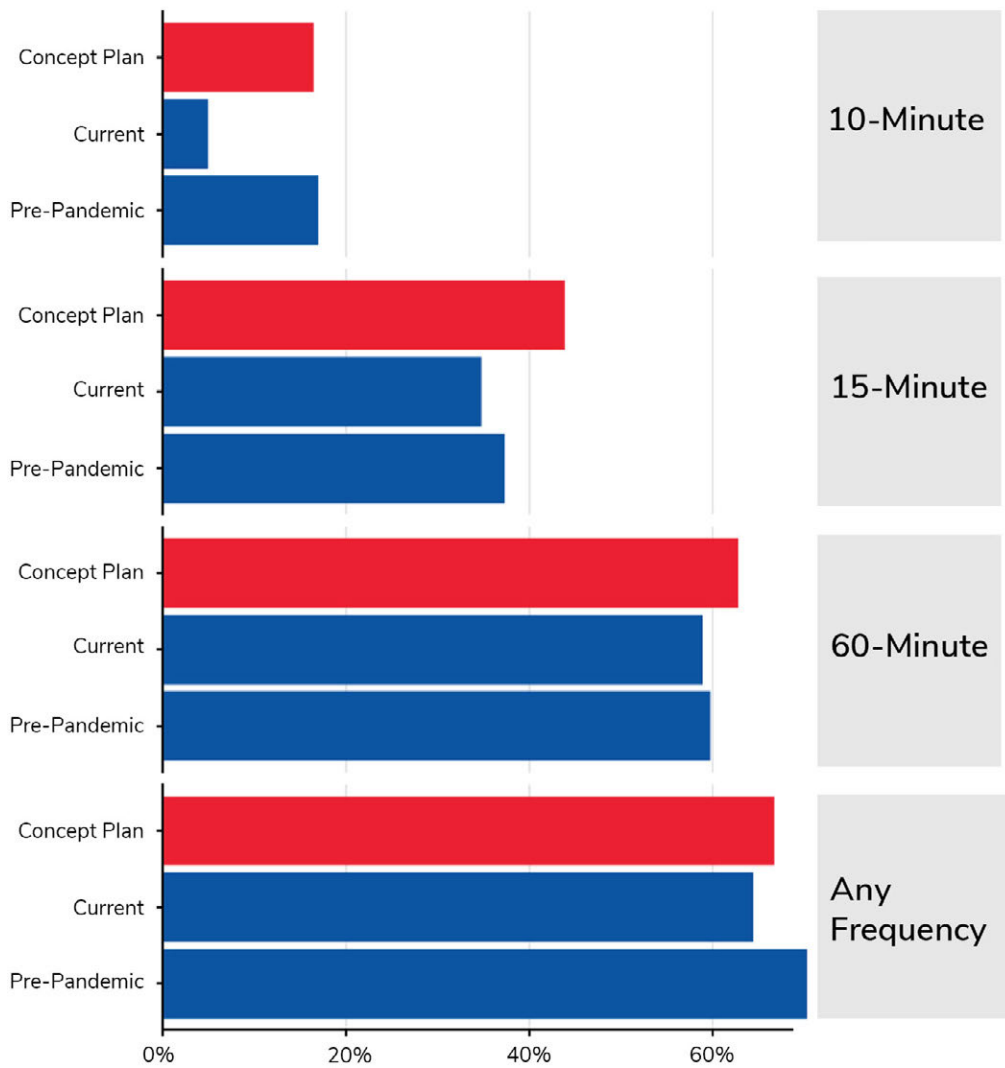


Figure 36. Percent of low-income residents with access to transit by service level



### Usefulness

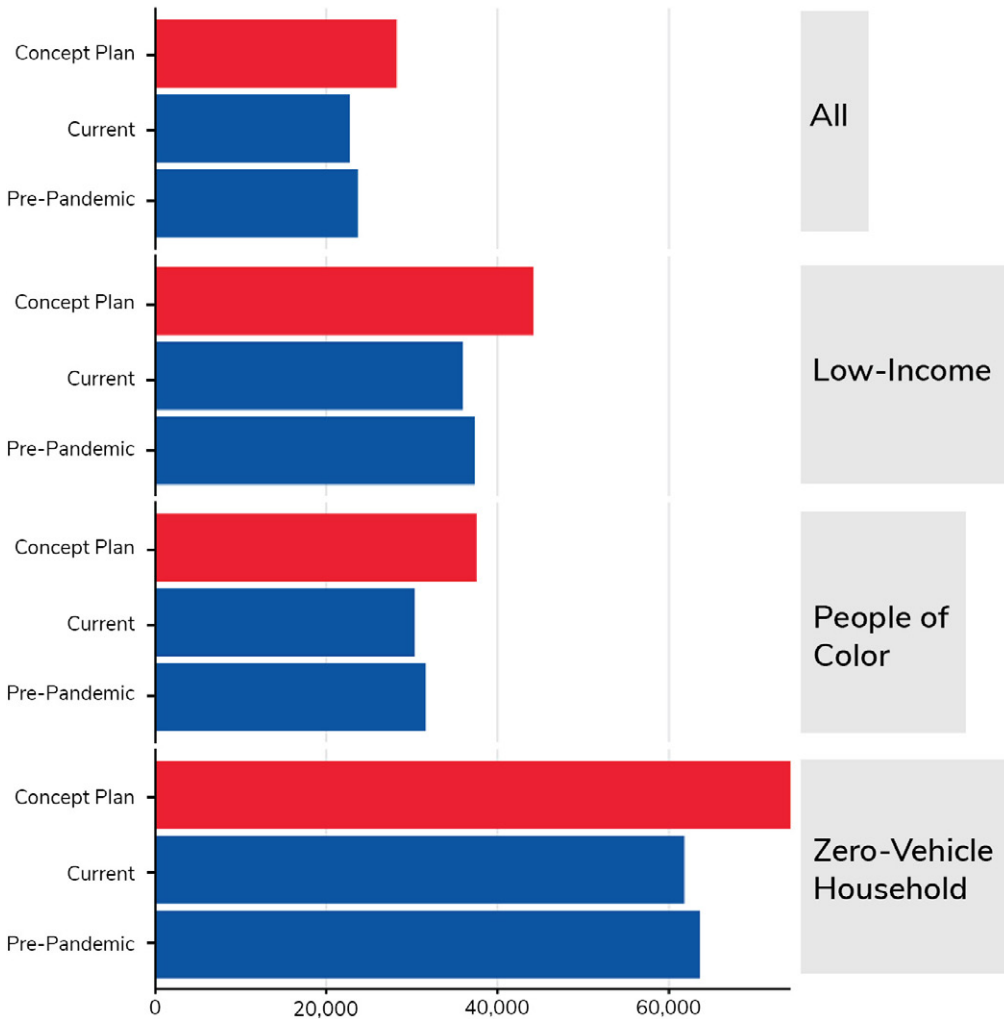
While availability describes how many people could reasonably use transit service, usefulness describes what can be done with the transit network. Usefulness was assessed as the average number of jobs available within approximately 45 minutes of travel time. Analyses are included for different demographic groups, times of day, and days of week. Each analysis compares the Network Now concept plan to current and pre-pandemic service.

## JOB ACCESS BY POPULATION GROUP

Usefulness was assessed for the general population, as well as for low-income populations, people of color, and households without a vehicle. The concept plan shows better job access for low-income populations, people of color, and zero-vehicle households than for the general population (Figure 37). These results highlight how strategic investments in core transit markets can create improvements in job access across the region.

Zero-vehicle households show the greatest increase in access relative to pre-pandemic and to current service levels. Under the concept plan, zero-vehicle households can access more than twice the number of jobs accessible to the average regional household, indicating that the concept plan provides effective service to people who are already living without a car. By providing access to many more jobs for these residents, the concept plan achieves its goal of providing access opportunity and reducing regional disparities.

**Figure 37. Job access by demographic group**



## JOB ACCESS BY TIME OF DAY

Access to jobs by time of day and day type is shown in Figure 38. The Network Now concept plan increases access to jobs across all service windows over pre-pandemic and current services. The increase in job access on Sunday is particularly notable.

Differences in weekday travel patterns are considered in the concept plan. Weekday travel is less concentrated in rush hours, especially the morning, than it was pre-pandemic. The concept plan provides access to more jobs and areas, recognizing many job types have hours outside standard office hours, and workers need access at more times of day and more days of the week relative to pre-pandemic service. The results highlight that Saturday and Sunday access to jobs do not lag far behind weekday midday and PM rush hours, supporting these changes in travel behavior.

Figure 38. Job access by time of day

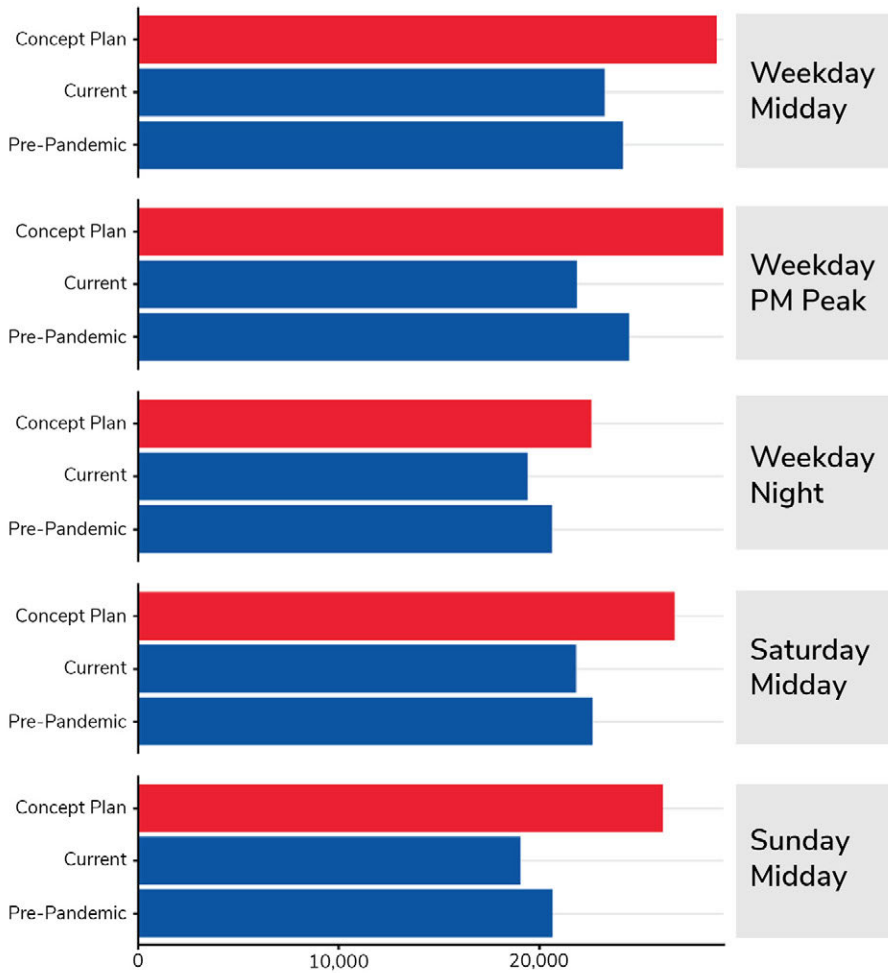


Table 11 shows the change in access to jobs per resident of the region, on average per in-service hour added for walk-up fixed-route service during the midday on weekdays. The concept plan offers a nearly 25% increase of access to jobs per resident on average, substantially higher than if the pre-pandemic network was restored. While the pre-pandemic network included a higher percentage increase of in-service hours compared to the concept plan, it would offer lower increases in jobs per resident on average compared to the current level of service. Network Now includes improvements that are adapting to the changing travel demand and travel patterns of residents to offer the most efficient use of resources.

**Table 11. Change in weekday midday access to jobs per resident, relative to current service**

Service level	Change in service hours	Change in access to jobs
Pre-pandemic	24%	4%
Network Now Concept Plan	22%	24%

## Evaluation summary

The Network Now evaluation process was designed to measure how well the concept plan succeeds in addressing the five Network Now principles when compared to current and pre-pandemic service. This evaluation was completed using ridership, accessibility, and demographic data. Key findings of the individual criteria are summarized as follows:

- **Availability:** The concept plan expands the availability of high frequency transit service compared to both current and pre-pandemic networks, with particular improvements for people of color and low-income residents. The availability of high frequency transit expands most dramatically on weekend and non-rush hours, reflecting Metro Transit’s goal to expand the reach of all-day, all-purpose transit service.
- **Usefulness:** The concept plan delivers significant improvements in job access for residents across the Twin Cities region, and even more significant improvements for low-income residents, people of color, and households without access to a vehicle. Access expands across all time periods relative to both current and pre-pandemic service.



# CONCEPT PLAN SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

The Network Now concept plan is designed to meet the needs of Metro Transit's customers and the community we serve today. Metro Transit's goal is to adopt a final plan that reflects the region's top priorities for transit.

Through this plan, Metro Transit will:

- Expand transit service by more than 35% to help attract more riders
- Improve mobility by providing new bus routes and microtransit service
- Modify commuter and express service to meet today's travel needs
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by encouraging transit use

Now that the concept plan has been released, Metro Transit is asking for community feedback to ensure that Network Now reflects the community's needs and priorities. Metropolitan Council policy requires a public hearing for all major service changes. Major service changes must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- For existing routes, one or more service changes resulting in at least a 25% change in the weekly in-service hours within a 12-month period (minimum of 3,500 annual in-service hours)
- A new route in a new coverage area
- Restructuring of transit service throughout a sector or sub-area of the region
- Elimination of a transit route or branch without alternate fixed route service
- The following service changes are exempt:
  - Seasonal service changes
  - Route number or branch letter designation
  - Any change or discontinuation of a demonstration route within the first 24 months of operation
  - Route changes caused by an emergency

To comply with the requirement, one of the community meetings hosted by Metro Transit in Fall 2024 will be officially designated as a public hearing. All comments collected as part of the engagement process will be treated as if they were submitted at the public hearing. The content for all the meetings will be similar, and all proposed changes will be considered together, whether or not individually they meet the definition of a major service change.

Please check Metro Transit's Network Now website or call Customer Relations at 612-373-3333 for the date, time and location of community meetings, including the designated public hearing. To comment or to attend upcoming meetings, visit [metrotransit.org/network-now](https://metrotransit.org/network-now). If you have additional questions on the plan or would like to invite Metro Transit to a community gathering or meeting, contact Metro Transit staff at [NetworkNow@metrotransit.org](mailto:NetworkNow@metrotransit.org).

Once the comment period closes, Metro Transit will review comments and make modifications to the draft concept plan where appropriate. The final plan will be presented to the Metropolitan Council this winter. Following adoption, Metro Transit will transition toward implementing the Network Now concept plan between 2025 and 2027.