



Regional Railroad Authority Agenda

15 West Kellogg Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55102
651-266-9200

March 17, 2026 - 10 a.m.

Council Chambers - Courthouse Room 300

ROLL CALL

1. **Agenda of March 17, 2026 is Presented for Approval** [2026-103](#)
Sponsors: County Manager's Office
Approve the agenda of March 17, 2026.
2. **Minutes from January 27, 2026 are Presented for Approval** [2026-104](#)
Sponsors: County Manager's Office
Approve the January 27, 2026 Minutes.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

3. **2026 Funding Commitment to the Great River Rail Commission** [2026-053](#)
Sponsors: Public Works
 1. Accept the Great River Rail Commission's 2026 Work Plan and Budget.
 2. Approve the payment of \$16,400 to the Great River Rail Commission as the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority funding commitment to the Great River Rail Commission 2026 Work Plan and Budget.
 3. Authorize the County Manager to establish a project budget for the Great River Rail Commission in the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority budget.
4. **Support for the METRO J Line Arterial Bus Rapid Transit** [2026-091](#)
Sponsors: Public Works
 1. Support the METRO J Line Arterial Bus Rapid Transit, contingent upon:
 - a. Multi-jurisdictional commitment and collaboration between the Minnesota Department of Transportation, Metro Transit, city of Saint Paul, and Ramsey County to invest in significant infrastructure improvements along West 7th Street that addresses safety, mobility, transit reliability, and long-term functionality of the corridor.
5. **Support for the Revised Locally Preferred Alternative for the METRO Bronze Line Bus Rapid Transit Project** [2026-094](#)
Sponsors: Public Works
 1. Support the revised Locally Preferred Alternative for the METRO Bronze Line Bus Rapid Transit Project.
 2. Support amendment of the Metropolitan Council's Imagine 2050 Transportation Policy

Plan to incorporate the revised METRO Bronze Line project definition.

3. Authorize Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority Chair to transmit the resolution to the Metropolitan Council to amend the Metropolitan Council's Imagine 2050 Transportation Policy Plan to incorporate the revised project definition, and direct that this action be transmitted to the Metropolitan Council and Metro Transit.

CORRIDOR UPDATES

ADJOURNMENT



Regional Railroad Authority

Request for Board Action

15 West Kellogg Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55102
651-266-9200

Item Number: 2026-103

Meeting Date: 3/17/2026

Sponsor: County Manager's Office

Title

Agenda of March 17, 2026 is Presented for Approval

Recommendation

Approve the agenda of March 17, 2026.



Regional Railroad Authority

Request for Board Action

15 West Kellogg Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55102
651-266-9200

Item Number: 2026-104

Meeting Date: 3/17/2026

Sponsor: County Manager's Office

Title

Minutes from January 27, 2026 are Presented for Approval

Recommendation

Approve the January 27, 2026 Minutes.

Attachments

1. January 27, 2026 Minutes

January 27, 2026 - 10 a.m.

Council Chambers - Courthouse Room 300

The Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority met in regular session at 10:45 a.m. with the following members present: Jebens - Singh, Miller, Xiong and Chair Ortega. Commissioner McGuire joined the meeting remotely pursuant to Minnesota Statutes 13D.02, Subdivision 2. Commissioner Moran arrived at 10:46 a.m. and missed roll call. Commissioner McMurtrey was excused. Also present were Ling Becker, County Manager, and Kathleen Ritter, Assistant County Attorney, Ramsey County Attorney's Office.

ROLL CALL

Present: Jebens-Singh, McGuire, Miller, Moran, Ortega, and Xiong
Excused: McMurtrey

1. Agenda of January 27, 2026 is Presented for Approval [2026-038](#)

Sponsors: County Manager's Office

Approve the agenda of January 27, 2026.

Motion by Miller, seconded by Jebens-Singh. Motion passed.

Aye: Jebens-Singh, McGuire, Miller, Moran, Ortega, and Xiong

Excused: McMurtrey

2. Minutes from January 6, 2026 are Presented for Approval [2026-039](#)

Sponsors: County Manager's Office

Approve the January 6, 2026 Minutes.

Motion by Moran, seconded by Miller. Motion passed.

Aye: Jebens-Singh, McGuire, Miller, Moran, Ortega, and Xiong

Excused: McMurtrey

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

3. Purchase of 1840 English Street from Wanless, LLC [2026-028](#)

Sponsors: Public Works

1. Approve the Purchase and Sale Agreement of land with Wanless, LLC, 1840 English Street, Maplewood, MN 55109, for the purchase of parcel 152922320083, in the amount of \$325,000.
2. Authorize the Chair to approve and execute the purchase and sale agreement, settlement statements, closing documents, and any other documents necessary to complete the transaction, in a form approved by the County Attorney's Office.
3. Authorize the County Manager to execute future amendments to the agreement that do not have a financial impact.
4. Authorize Property Management to pursue a sale of the combined surplus property,

- parcels 152922320083, 152922320093, 152922320094, and 152922320095 in accordance with the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority Real Estate Management Plan and to return to the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority with the negotiated terms of sale for approval.
5. Approve the transfer of \$325,000 plus closing costs from Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority tax levy fund balances to the 2026 Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority capital budget to be used for this purchase.

Discussion can be found on archived video.

Motion by Miller, seconded by Moran. Motion passed.

Aye: Jebens-Singh, McGuire, Miller, Moran, Ortega, and Xiong

Excused: McMurtrey

Resolution: R2026-005

CORRIDOR UPDATES

Discussion can be found on archived video.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Ortega declared the meeting adjourned at 10:52 a.m.

Regional Railroad Authority

Request for Board Action

Item Number: 2026-053

Meeting Date: 3/17/2026

Sponsor: Public Works

Title

2026 Funding Commitment to the Great River Rail Commission

Recommendation

1. Accept the Great River Rail Commission's 2026 Work Plan and Budget.
2. Approve the payment of \$16,400 to the Great River Rail Commission as the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority funding commitment to the Great River Rail Commission 2026 Work Plan and Budget.
3. Authorize the County Manager to establish a project budget for the Great River Rail Commission in the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority budget.

Background and Rationale

The Great River Rail Commission (Commission) is a joint powers board established under Minnesota Statutes, Section 471.59. Member parties on the Commission include the regional railroad authorities from Ramsey County, Goodhue County, Wabasha County, Washington County and Winona County, the La Crosse Area Planning Committee, the cities of Cottage Grove, Goodview, Hastings, Lake City, Newport, Red Wing, Saint Charles, Saint Paul, Saint Paul Park, Utica, Wabasha and Winona, and Wacouta Township.

The *Borealis* is a daily round-trip passenger train that serves 13 cities between Union Depot in Saint Paul and Chicago Union Station. The *Borealis* is state-supported service meaning operations financially supported by Minnesota, Wisconsin and Illinois and through ticket sales, but the train is operated by Amtrak. The *Borealis* began service on May 21, 2024, and surpassed 250,000 riders in July 2025, far exceeding annual forecasts of 150,000. The *Borealis* overnights at Union Depot where it receives light maintenance, cleaning and restocking of the café by an Amtrak contractor before its eastbound daily trip.

The Commission actively supported the development of the *Borealis* by using its communication resources to inform the public of the benefits of increased passenger rail service and activating their support. The Commission successfully lobbied state legislators to provide \$10 million as Minnesota's share to match a federal grant for track and signal improvements. The Commission also provided an opportunity for public engagement at their regular meetings during the development of the *Borealis* service.

Pursuant to the members' Joint Powers Agreement (JPA), the five regional railroad authorities and the La Crosse Area Planning Committee are financial parties, responsible for payment of annual dues that fund the Commission's annual work plan. The dues are based on a formula established in the JPA that includes population, existing passenger rail route mileage, and station stops within the jurisdiction of each financial party and a base amount shared equally among all financial parties.

The Commission considered several revenue options and adopted a 2026 Work Plan and Budget of \$50,000 on November 6, 2025. The budget will be supplemented with \$10,000 from its funding reserves. Within the Commission's final adopted budget, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority's 2026 funding commitment was identified as \$16,400.

More information about the Great River Rail Commission can be found at: <https://www.greatriverrail.org/>

County Goals (Check those advanced by Action)

- Well-being
- Prosperity
- Opportunity
- Accountability

Racial Equity Impact

The Commission advocates for the implementation of faster and more frequent passenger train service in the Canadian Pacific Kansas City Southern route along the Mississippi River between Saint Paul, Minnesota and Chicago, Illinois. The *Borealis* added another affordable and accessible travel option that is well connected to urban centers and other destinations. Demographic data for the entire service area is undetermined; however, Union Depot is the only passenger train station in the Twin Cities, serving all of Ramsey County and the entire metro area population. Contracts for construction of track and signal improvements will comply with federal rules for hiring of disadvantaged and minority-owned businesses.

Community Participation Level and Impact

The Commission discussed the draft 2026 Work Plan and Budget at their meetings on July 10 and September 4, 2025, and adopted the final version at its meeting on November 6, 2025. Commission meetings are held in a hybrid format and are open to the public. Commission meetings are advertised on its website and meeting packets are distributed upon request. This board action serves to inform the public of the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority’s funding commitment to the Commission.

In 2025, the Commission promoted the *Borealis* through its social media channels, at in-person events and through distribution of printed material in partnership with business roundtable groups in Red Wing, Winona, and La Crosse. The Commission provides an opportunity for public feedback on the *Borealis* operations at their regular meetings. The Commission also monitors progress on other passenger rail studies so it can provide an opportunity for public engagement about those studies that could add faster and more frequent passenger train service along the Mississippi River route. The Commission has a contract with a state lobbyist should the need arise to engage legislators to advocate for passenger rail projects, studies, policy changes, or funding needs.

- Inform
- Consult
- Involve
- Collaborate
- Empower

Fiscal Impact

Funding in the amount of \$16,400 for Ramsey County’s funding commitment to the Commission is available in the 2026 Public Works Multimodal Planning operating budget.

Last Previous Action

On March 18, 2025, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority approved a payment of \$16,400 to the Great River Rail Commission for its financial commitment to the 2025 Commission budget (Resolution R2025-009).

Attachments

1. Great River Rail Commission Adopted 2026 Work Plan and Budget

Great River Rail Commission

Approved 2026 Work Plan and Budget

Strategic Planning

Conduct strategic planning to potentially confirm or revise commission goals and identify activities and measures against those plans.”

Passenger and Freight Rail Advocacy Activities

The Great River Rail Commission (Commission) will work with the Minnesota Department of Transportation, Amtrak, state and local government stakeholder partners, and others to continue the advancement and development of more frequent and faster passenger train service between Chicago and Saint Paul along the *Borealis* and Amtrak *Empire Builder* passenger rail corridor. To accomplish this, the Commission will do the following:

- Facilitate meetings of the Business Roundtable groups in the Twin Cities, Red Wing, Winona, and La Crosse to assist in their development into a marketing and advocacy subcommittee to the Commission.
- Monitor the quality of the *Borealis* service perhaps through the development of a dashboard of information regarding on time performance and other measures of service quality.
- Monitor progress, offer guidance and provide a means for public engagement on the development and implementation of other passenger rail service initiatives and studies that would add service in the *Borealis* and Amtrak *Empire Builder* passenger rail corridor.
- Monitor progress and offer guidance on freight rail studies that impact the *Borealis* and Amtrak *Empire Builder* passenger rail corridor and rail activities in the United States that could have an impact on the *Borealis* service.

General activities will be led by Commission staff working with agency staff to advise the Commission on when its involvement is needed.

Legislative Advocacy and Coordination

As needed, the Commission will continue to develop policy positions and work cooperatively with the Minnesota Department of Transportation and other passenger rail stakeholders to continue the advancement and development of more frequent and faster passenger train service in *Borealis* and Amtrak *Empire Builder* passenger rail corridor. To accomplish this, the Commission will do the following as needed:

- Lobby the Minnesota legislature and the Governor’s Office in support of Minnesota Department of Transportation passenger rail project and program funding requests and policy initiatives, or to write separate bills.
- Develop advocacy materials and messaging to support Minnesota Department of Transportation passenger rail project and program funding requests and policy initiatives, or separate bills written by the Commission.
- Lobby the Minnesota legislature and Governor’s Office in opposition to funding cuts or policy initiatives that could be detrimental to the Commission’s position on passenger rail in the *Borealis* and Amtrak *Empire Builder* passenger rail corridor.
- Attend legislative hearings and arrange for Commission members to testify.
- Advocate for rail crossing improvements and other improvements that improve speed, safety and reliability of passenger and freight trains.
- Advocate for customer service staff and capital investments at stations to provide a better customer experience.

- Coordinate lobbying efforts and advocacy efforts with government affairs staff from the Minnesota Department of Transportation, Amtrak, state and local government stakeholder partners, and others.
- Consider membership in similar advocacy organizations such as the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission and Rail Passengers Association.

Advocacy and legislative coordination activities will be led by Commission staff working with the Chair to identify which items merit Commission involvement. If Commission involvement is merited and time allows, the items will be brought to the Commission for discussion. If time does not allow, the Chair will determine whether the Commission shall be involved. In all instances, the Chair shall be the first option as spokesperson for the Commission.

Public Engagement

The Commission's public engagement activities will be developed to promote and increase public awareness of the *Borealis* and any future phases of work, the larger Midwest Regional Rail Plan as it connects to and complements passenger rail service in the *Borealis* and Amtrak *Empire Builder* passenger rail corridor, and the importance of investing in more frequent and faster passenger rail service. These activities will be separate from but often coordinated with the public engagement activities by Minnesota Department of Transportation, Amtrak and others. Specific Commission activities will include:

- Promote the *Borealis* service to build awareness of the service and boost ridership.
- Promote the implementation of proposed passenger rail service in the *Borealis* and Amtrak *Empire Builder* passenger rail corridor that is shown in the Federal Railroad Administration's Midwest Regional Rail Plan, Amtrak's Connects US plan and the Federal Railroad Administration's Long-Distance Service Study.
- Maintain a Commission website, social media channels. Send e-newsletters to a list of key stakeholders and news releases to media.
- Develop advocacy materials for distribution to legislators, key stakeholders, and the public.
- Revise the Strategic Communications Plan as needed.
- Assist in planning and holding special events, including presentations to civic and community groups throughout the River Route.
- Support for similar organizations (e.g. All Aboard Minnesota).
- Media recognition of Commission meetings and events through print, radio, and public access television.

Public engagement activities will be led by Commission staff working with the Commission's public communications consultant. Public engagement strategies will continue to be discussed with the Chair before being brought to the Commission.

Management, Policy, and Administrative Activities

Commission activities will include but not be limited to the following:

- Prepare and adopt the 2027 Work Plan and Budget.
- Review insurance needs and procure appropriate insurance.
- Provide Commission and staff administration.
- Manage Commission finances and expenses.

Management, policy, and administrative activities will be led by Commission staff. The deliverables will continue to be brought before the Commission for their approval.

2026 Budget/Expenditures

Expenditure Category	Amount
Advocacy and Legislative Coordination	
- Materials	\$900
- Special Events/Mileage ¹	\$100
Subtotal	\$1,000
State Legislative Lobbying	\$15,000
Public Communications Assistance	
- Implement 2026 GRRC Work Plan	\$32,500
Management/Administration	
- Insurance	\$1,250
Contingency	\$250
Total	\$50,000

¹ Travel to out of state events/conferences would be the responsibility of each individual member.

Note: Multiple Financial Parties currently have contracts with federal and state lobbyists. These lobbyists may provide federal and state lobbying services as an in-kind contribution of the Financial Party members to the Commission.

2026 Revenue

Revenue Source	Amount
Federal Appropriations	\$0
State Appropriations	\$0
Use of Unspent Funds	\$ 10,000
Subtotal	\$10,000

Financial Party	Percentage ¹	2025 Contribution
Goodhue County	11.5%	\$4,600
La Crosse Area Planning Committee	14.7%	\$5,880
Ramsey County	41.0%	\$16,400
Winona County	12.9%	\$5,160
Wabasha County	4.7%	\$1,880
Washington County	15.2%	\$6,080
Financial Party Total	100.0%	\$40,000
Grand Total		\$50,000

¹ Per the Amended and restated Joint Powers Agreement (adopted 2017) and rounded to the nearest tenth, the Financial Parties' contribution is based on the following formula: 50% based on the proportionate share of population among all Financial Parties; 10% based on the proportionate share of corridor mileage among all Financial Parties; 31% based on the location of existing or planned passenger rail stations within the Financial Parties' jurisdiction; and 9% allocated equally among the Financial Parties.

Item Number: 2026-091

Meeting Date: 3/17/2026

Sponsor: Public Works

Title

Support for the METRO J Line Arterial Bus Rapid Transit

Recommendation

1. Support the METRO J Line Arterial Bus Rapid Transit, contingent upon:
 - a. Multi-jurisdictional commitment and collaboration between the Minnesota Department of Transportation, Metro Transit, city of Saint Paul, and Ramsey County to invest in significant infrastructure improvements along West 7th Street that addresses safety, mobility, transit reliability, and long-term functionality of the corridor.

Background and Rationale

The METRO J Line is a 12.5-mile route that will connect downtown Saint Paul, Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (MSP), and the Mall of America (MOA) - operating primarily along West 7th Street/State Highway 5. This corridor has been identified through Metro Transit's [Arterial Bus Rapid Transit \(ABRT\) Plan Update <https://www.metrotransit.org/arterial-brt-plan>](https://www.metrotransit.org/arterial-brt-plan) and is one of the top scoring corridors for future ABRT based on the technical evaluation criteria. ABRT is high-frequency, upgraded bus service that operates on roadways with general traffic while providing a faster, more reliable, and comfortable transit experience through enhanced station amenities, fewer stops, and transit signal priority along the route.

The West 7th Street corridor has long been identified as a priority for transit investment and remains one of the highest ridership corridors in the region without dedicated BRT service. Years of planning and engagement through the [Arterial Transitway Corridors Study <https://www.metrotransit.org/data/sites/1/media/pdfs/atcs/atcs%20final%20report.pdf>](https://www.metrotransit.org/data/sites/1/media/pdfs/atcs/atcs%20final%20report.pdf), the Saint Paul Streetcar Feasibility Study (attached) and the [Riverview Corridor Study <https://www.ramseycountymn.gov/residents/roads-transportation/transit-corridors-studies/riverview-corridor>](https://www.ramseycountymn.gov/residents/roads-transportation/transit-corridors-studies/riverview-corridor) have demonstrated strong community interest in improved transit connections along West 7th Street, underscoring the importance of advancing this project now.

West 7th Street is a critical link between downtown Saint Paul, MSP, and MOA serving thousands of daily transit riders and supporting economic vitality across the region. It is one of the oldest roads in Saint Paul with some of Saint Paul's oldest utilities lying beneath it. Despite its significance, the corridor has faced persistent challenges that have delayed transformative improvements. Ownership of the road resides with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), utilities with the city of Saint Paul, and intersecting streets with MnDOT, Ramsey County, and the city of Saint Paul. This complex relationship has historically made it challenging to make major improvements along this corridor. For the J Line to be successful, this will require multijurisdictional commitment to investing in significant infrastructure improvements along West 7th Street that will address safety, mobility, transit reliability, and long-term functionality of this corridor.

Ramsey County supports the J Line with the understanding that its implementation will occur in tandem with broader West 7th Street improvements to enhance mobility, safety, transit reliability, and address critical infrastructure needs. Coordinating the J Line with these once-in-a-generation upgrades ensures a

comprehensive approach that benefits residents, businesses, and visitors alike. This project represents a pivotal step toward meeting regional transportation goals and creating a more connected, resilient, and accessible corridor for generations to come.

In addition to supporting the J Line, Ramsey County remains committed to advancing transit-friendly investments across the county and would like to see future ABRT projects and/or high-frequency transit along critical corridors to better serve the community. Priority corridors for the county include Larpenteur Avenue, an extension of the A Line into Rice Creek Commons, Lowry Avenue/County Road B2, and County Road C to Little Canada. These corridors represent opportunities to improve safety, add pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and integrate transit advantages into roadway designs, ensuring that future ABRT routes are well supported by local infrastructure improvements

County Goals (Check those advanced by Action)

- Well-being
- Prosperity
- Opportunity
- Accountability

Racial Equity Impact

The J Line improves equitable access to high-quality, reliable public transit in underserved areas of the West 7th Street/State Highway 5 corridor, particularly for transit-dependent populations and communities of color in both Ramsey and Hennepin counties.

Community Participation Level and Impact

Public engagement related to the J Line and transit improvements along the West 7th Street corridor has been extensive. Metro Transit has gathered input through its Arterial BRT Plan Update, while the city of Saint Paul, Metro Transit, and MnDOT have led a series of engagement events focused specifically on the West 7th Street corridor. Feedback from these efforts consistently shows strong community interest in faster, more reliable transit service along the corridor, paired with other multimodal and infrastructure improvements. There is also a clear sentiment that residents and businesses are eager to see tangible progress after decades of studies and engagement.

- Inform
- Consult
- Involve
- Collaborate
- Empower

Fiscal Impact

This action affirms policy support for METRO J Line Arterial Bus Rapid Transit and does not authorize additional county expenditures beyond those previously approved. Any future capital funding commitments or modifications to the county’s financial participation will require separate board action.

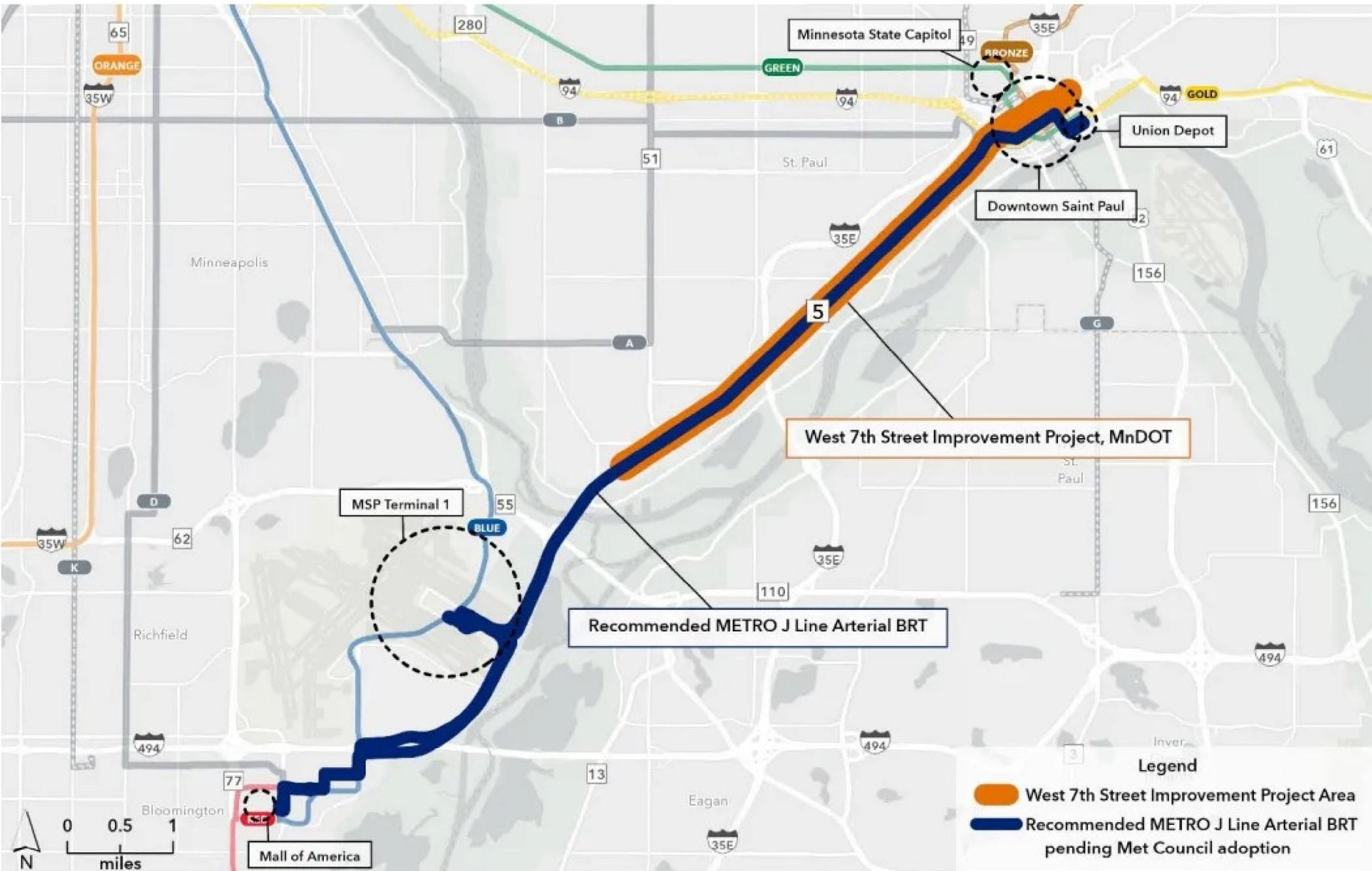
Last Previous Action

None.

Attachments

1. METRO J Line Route Map
2. Saint Paul Streetcar Feasibility Study

Project area map



GO BY STREETCAR



SAINT PAUL STREETCAR FEASIBILITY STUDY

Summary Report
January 3, 2014



Table of Contents

	Page
1 Introduction/Overview	1
2 What is Streetcar Service?	3
3 Development of Long-Term Network	7
Identification of Potential Corridors	7
Phase 1 Screening Process	8
Phase 1 Results.....	9
Phase 2 Evaluation Process	12
Phase 2 Evaluation Results.....	14
Service to Similar Areas.....	16
Recommended Long-Term Network.....	17
4 Streetcar Phasing and Proposed Starter Line	19
Phase 3 Evaluation Process and Results.....	19
Identification of Proposed Starter Line.....	22
Recommended Starter Line	25
5 Potential Funding	29
How are Other Streetcar Projects Being Funded?.....	29
Overview of capital Funding Options.....	30
Federal Funding Options	31
Regional	33
State.....	34
County and City.....	35
Potential New Funding Sources	35
Other.....	37
Summary	37

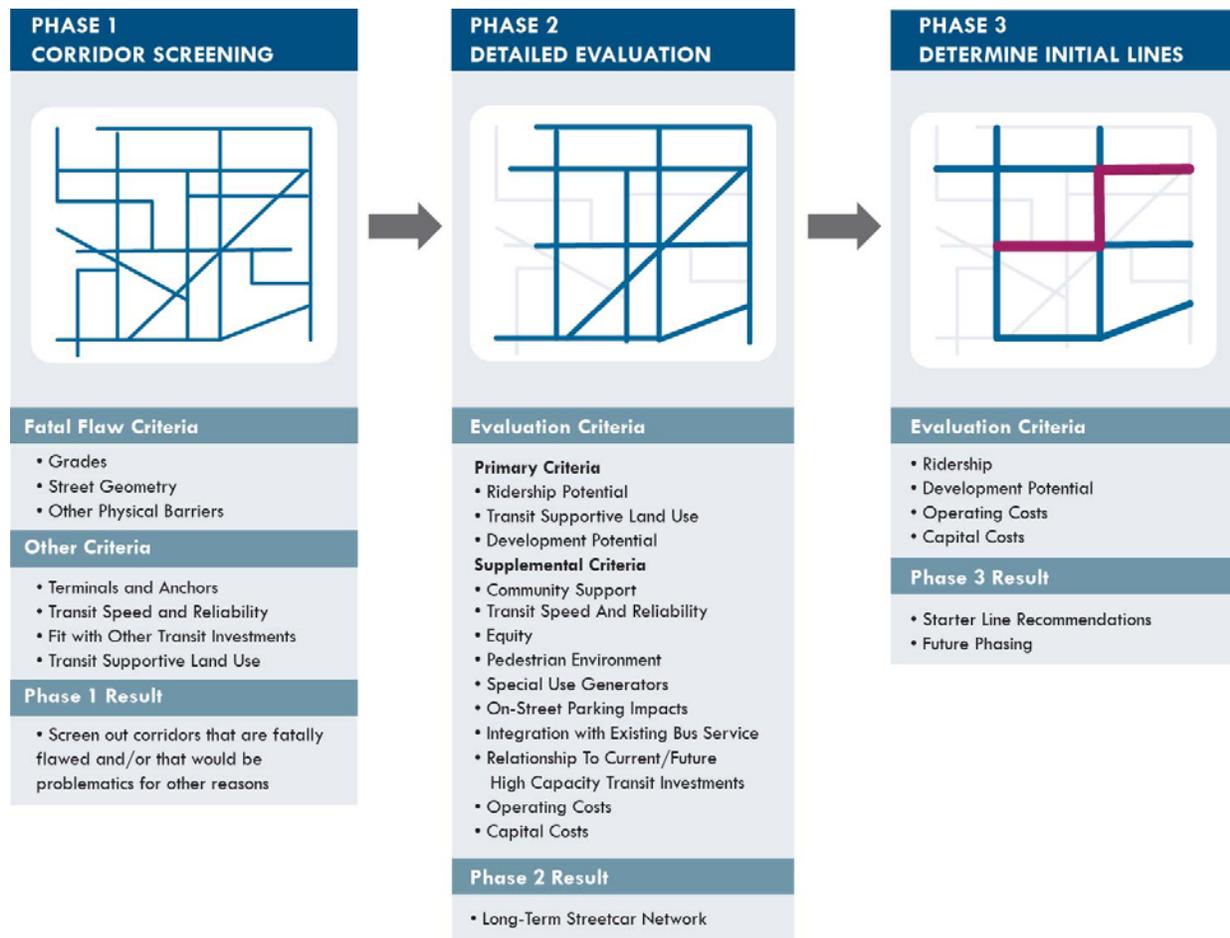
1 INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

Since late 2012, the City of Saint Paul has been conducting a streetcar feasibility study to:

- Evaluate the feasibility of developing streetcar services in Saint Paul.
- Identify a long-term network of proposed lines where streetcar could improve transit options and stimulate development, and where the types of changes that streetcar could bring would be desired by the communities that it would serve.
- Prioritize potential initial segments for streetcar investment.

The study is being conducted in three phases, which are (see also Figure 1):

Figure 1: Evaluation Framework



- A **Phase 1 Corridor Screening** that screened the universe of candidate *corridors* to where streetcar could provide the benefits described above.
- A **Phase 2 Detailed Evaluation** that consisted of the development of potential streetcar lines that could serve the individual corridors or combinations of corridors, and the evaluation of those lines. This phase culminated in the development of the proposed Long-Term Network.
- A **Phase 3 Evaluation of the Individual Lines in the Long-Term Network** to determine the proposed “Starter Line,” and potential phasing for future lines.

A variety of other related work was also conducted, including the evaluation of vehicle types and funding options. This document presents an overview of the study and its recommendations.

2 WHAT IS STREETCAR SERVICE?

Put simply, in most respects, streetcar service is scaled-down light rail service. It is scaled back to the extent that it typically operates in mixed traffic rather than in a dedicated right-of-way, operates for shorter distances, and has smaller stations that are spaced more closely together (see Figures 2 and 3).

Figure 2: Streetcar in Mixed Traffic and Light Rail in Dedicated Right-of-Way



Figure 3: Streetcar and Light Rail Stations



Beyond those basic differences, streetcar service is also very flexible in that it can operate in many different ways. One of the most visible differences is with the type of vehicles used. As is envisioned for Saint Paul, most new streetcar services that are being developed do or will use “modern streetcars” (for example, Portland, Seattle, Minneapolis, and Kansas City) that are very similar to light rail vehicles, but sometimes narrower and that usually operate as single vehicles (see Figure 4). However, many older streetcar services use historic vehicles. This is usually done to maintain the same type of service that has always been run and/or to appeal to tourist markets (for example, New Orleans, Memphis, and San Francisco’s Embarcadero Line). Streetcars can also operate as a hybrid of the type of service described above and light rail service. For example, lines that operate in tunnels as light rail in downtown Boston, Pittsburgh, and San Francisco operate as streetcar service in mixed-traffic outside of downtown. Other differences are summarized in Table 1.

Figure 4: Streetcar Vehicles



Table 1: Typical Differences between Streetcar and Light Rail

Service Element	Streetcar	Light Rail
Vehicles	Modern or Historic Streetcar	Modern LRV
Train length	One	Two to three
Line Length	Shorter	Longer
Running Way	Mixed-traffic	Dedicated right-of way
Fare Collection	On station platform or on vehicle	On station platform
Stations	Short platforms; modest facilities	Long platforms; significant facilities
Station Spacing	2 to 3 blocks	½ to 1 mile
Speed	Slower	Faster
Development Benefits	Along line	Around stations
Construction impacts	Minor to moderate	Major

Over the past decade, streetcar service has become increasingly popular. There are now over 45 different lines in various stages of development throughout the United States, including in Minneapolis on Central and Nicollet Avenues. The current desire to develop streetcar service is for two reasons. First, newer shorter lines have proven to be very effective at serving shorter trips within neighborhoods and downtowns and thus add a new type of transit service that can fill gaps in existing bus services. Second, it has also proven to be very effective in stimulating development. Most new streetcar services are being developed to both stimulate development and improve transportation (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Development Occurring Along Seattle's South Lake Union Streetcar Line



South Lake Union Streetcar Corridor, Seattle

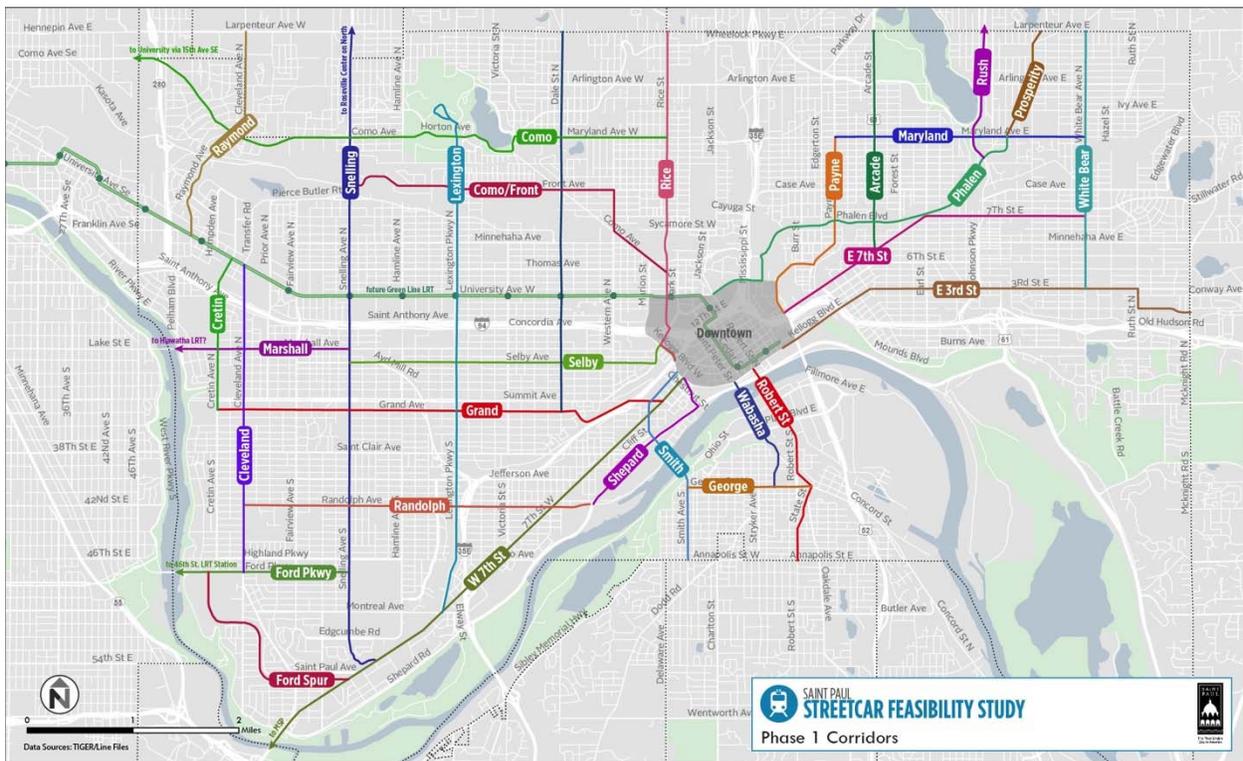
3 DEVELOPMENT OF LONG-TERM NETWORK

As described earlier, the proposed Long-Term Network was developed through a process that began with the identification of the universe of potential corridors, and an evaluation process to determine which lines would be feasible and produce the desired outcomes.

IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL CORRIDORS

The development of the Long-Term Network began with the development of a long list potential streetcar corridors that included nearly all major arterial corridors in Saint Paul (see Figure 6). These corridors were identified and selected through the work of the project team, the project’s advisory committees, and input from other stakeholders.

Figure 6: Phase 1 Corridors



PHASE 1 SCREENING PROCESS

Once the Phase 1 corridors had been identified, they were then screened using seven criteria:

- **Grade.** Saint Paul has a number of steep grades that could inhibit streetcar operation, or make streetcar operation too expensive. While modern streetcars can climb grades as much as 9% for short distances (approximately 700-800 feet), sustained grades over 7% are generally discouraged, particularly in climates where snow and ice are regular occurrences. Thus, corridors with grades between 7 and 9% would be carried forward to Phase 2 only if they passed all other screening criteria.
- **Street Geometry.** Especially between downtown and the neighborhoods, there are a number of streets in Saint Paul where streetcars could be difficult to operate due to street geometry. This criterion identifies whether street geometry would *inhibit* streetcar operation, or require significant capital investments that make operation infeasible. These include major modifications to interchanges, exclusive right-of-way needs or other types of transit infrastructure that would be required (such as bridges, underpasses, etc.).
- **Other Physical Barriers.** Other physical barriers besides grade and street geometry could inhibit streetcar operations without significant capital expenses. Examples include low bridges or skyways, streets that are too narrow and at-grade freight railroad crossings.
- **Transit Supportive Land Use.** As a major transit investment, it is important to ensure that any new streetcar investments serve areas that are “transit supportive.” Transit supportive land uses are generally medium or high intensity development, and can also be major activity center such as colleges and universities.
- **Terminal Locations.** As with any transit service, a strong destination—or terminal—helps improve the attractiveness of service. Thus, this measure evaluated whether there could be strong anchor locations at each end of potential lines—for example, downtown Saint Paul, colleges and universities, and the Green Line.
- **Transit Speed and Reliability.** Since streetcar service would operate entirely or largely in mixed traffic, it will be important to ensure that service would be able to operate with at acceptable speeds and reliability.
- **Compatibility with Other Transit Investments.** There are a number of new or potential additional transit investments that are currently being considered in Saint Paul. Additionally, some projects may already be under construction or in design, which could conflict with a potential streetcar alignment. This measure examined the degree to which streetcar service would compliment those other efforts, duplicate them, or potentially replace them.

The first three criteria—Grade, Street Geometry, and Physical Barriers—were used to ensure that there were no fatal flaws that would preclude the development of streetcar service or make it prohibitively expensive. The second four criteria—Terminal Location, Transit Speed and Reliability, Other Transit Investments, and Transit-Supportive Land Use—were used as an initial screening of how well streetcar service would likely perform.

For each criterion, the screening was designed to evaluate corridors using both qualitative and quantitative data, as well as comparing and contrasting the corridors against each other. Based on the result, for each criterion, a rating of Best, Good, and Fair was assigned. The ratings reflected relative, rather than absolute, scores.

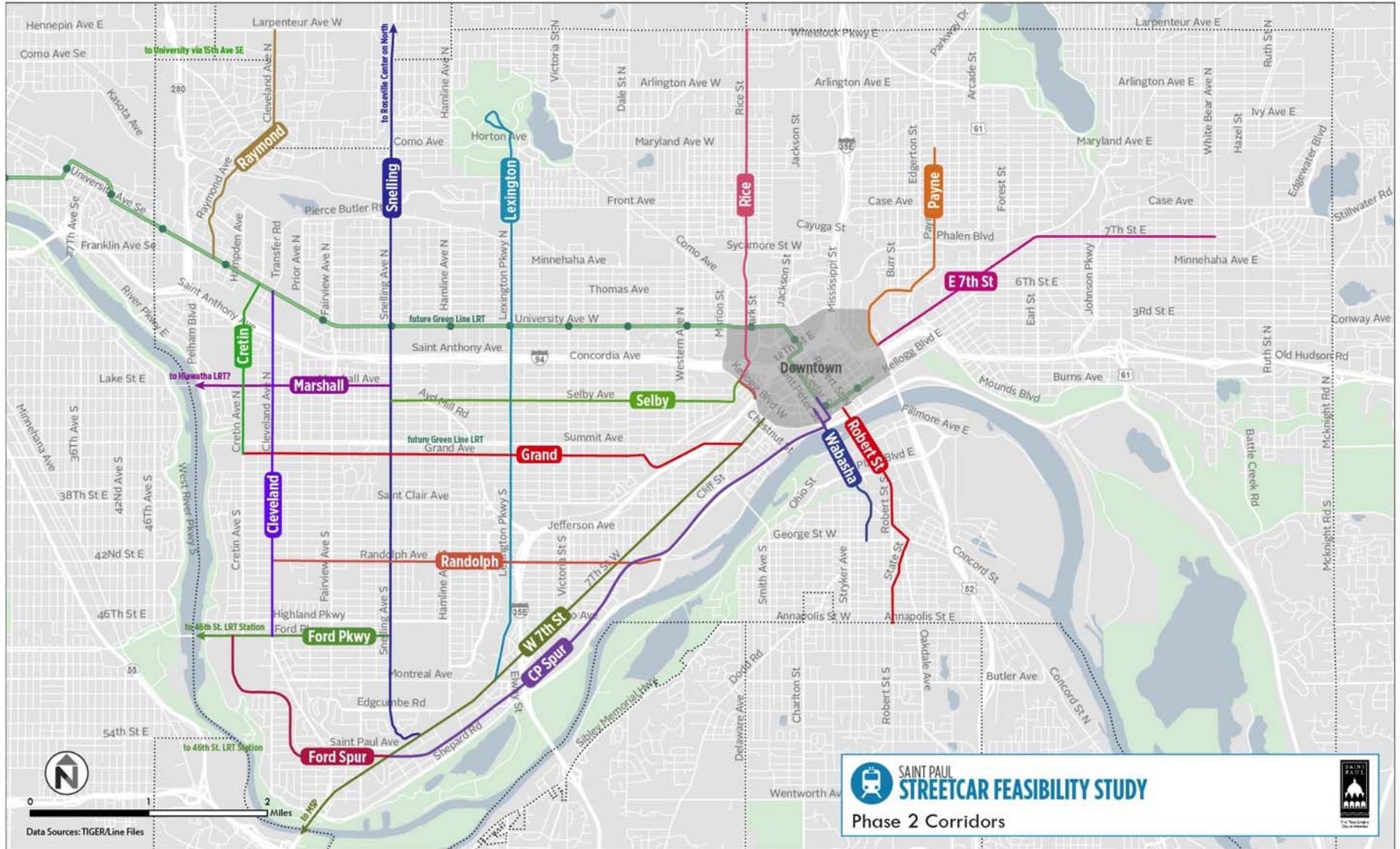
PHASE 1 RESULTS

It was determined that none of the corridors would have construction-related fatal flaws. Thus the Phase 1 recommendations were based on the four effectiveness criteria, and all corridors that received at least three best or good rankings were brought forward into Phase 2 (see Table 2 and Figure 7). On this basis, 16 of 28 corridors were brought forward into Phase 2. These corridors were:

Table 2 – Summary of Phase I Screening Ratings

Corridor	Physical Criteria			Other Criteria				Carry Forward
	Grade	Street Geometry	Physical Barriers	Transit-Supportive Land Use	Terminal Locations	Transit Speed and Reliability	Other Transit Investments	
Arcade	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	▲ Fair	▲ Fair	✓ Good	✓ Good	
Cleveland	✓✓ Best	▲ Fair	▲ Fair	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	✓ Good	✓ Good	Yes
Como	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	▲ Fair	▲ Fair	▲ Fair	✓ Good	✓ Good	
Como/Front	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	✓✓ Best	▲ Fair	▲ Fair	✓ Good	✓ Good	
Cretin	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	▲ Fair	✓ Good	✓ Good	▲ Fair	✓ Good	Yes
Dale	▲ Fair	✓✓ Best	▲ Fair	▲ Fair	▲ Fair	✓ Good	✓ Good	
E 3 rd St	▲ Fair	▲ Fair	✓✓ Best	▲ Fair	✓ Good	✓✓ Best	▲ Fair	
E 7 th St	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	✓ Good	▲ Fair	✓ Good	✓ Good	✓✓ Best	Yes
Ford Pkwy	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	▲ Fair	✓ Good	✓ Good	✓ Good	✓✓ Best	Yes
Ford Spur	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	▲ Fair	✓ Good	✓ Good	✓✓ Best	▲ Fair	Yes
George St	▲ Fair	▲ Fair	✓✓ Best	▲ Fair	▲ Fair	✓ Good	✓ Good	
Grand	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	▲ Fair	✓ Good	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	✓✓ Best	Yes
Lexington	✓ Good	✓ Good	▲ Fair	▲ Fair	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	✓ Good	Yes
Marshall	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	✓ Good	✓ Good	✓✓ Best	Yes
Maryland	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	▲ Fair	▲ Fair	▲ Fair	✓ Good	✓ Good	
Payne	✓ Good	✓ Good	▲ Fair	▲ Fair	✓ Good	✓ Good	✓ Good	Yes
Phalen	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	✓ Good	▲ Fair	▲ Fair	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	
Prosperity	✓✓ Best	▲ Fair	✓✓ Best	▲ Fair	▲ Fair	✓ Good	✓ Good	
Randolph	✓✓ Best	▲ Fair	▲ Fair	✓ Good	✓ Good	✓ Good	✓ Good	Yes
Raymond	✓✓ Best	▲ Fair	▲ Fair	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	✓ Good	✓ Good	Yes
Rice	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	▲ Fair	✓ Good	✓ Good	Yes
Robert St	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	▲ Fair	✓ Good	▲ Fair	✓ Good	✓✓ Best	Yes
Rush	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	▲ Fair	▲ Fair	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	
Selby	▲ Fair	▲ Fair	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	✓ Good	Yes
Shepard	▲ Fair	✓✓ Best	▲ Fair	▲ Fair	▲ Fair	▲ Fair	✓ Good	
Smith	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	✓✓ Best	▲ Fair	▲ Fair	✓ Good	✓ Good	
Snelling	▲ Fair	✓✓ Best	▲ Fair	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	✓✓ Best	Yes
W 7 th St	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	▲ Fair	✓ Good	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	✓✓ Best	Yes
Wabasha	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	▲ Fair	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	Yes
White Bear	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	▲ Fair		▲ Fair	✓ Good	✓ Good	

Figure 7: Phase 2 Corridors



- Cleveland
- Cretin
- Grand
- East 7th
- Ford Parkway
- Ford Spur
- Lexington
- Marshall
- Payne
- Randolph
- Raymond
- Rice
- Robert
- Selby
- Snelling
- Wabasha
- West 7th

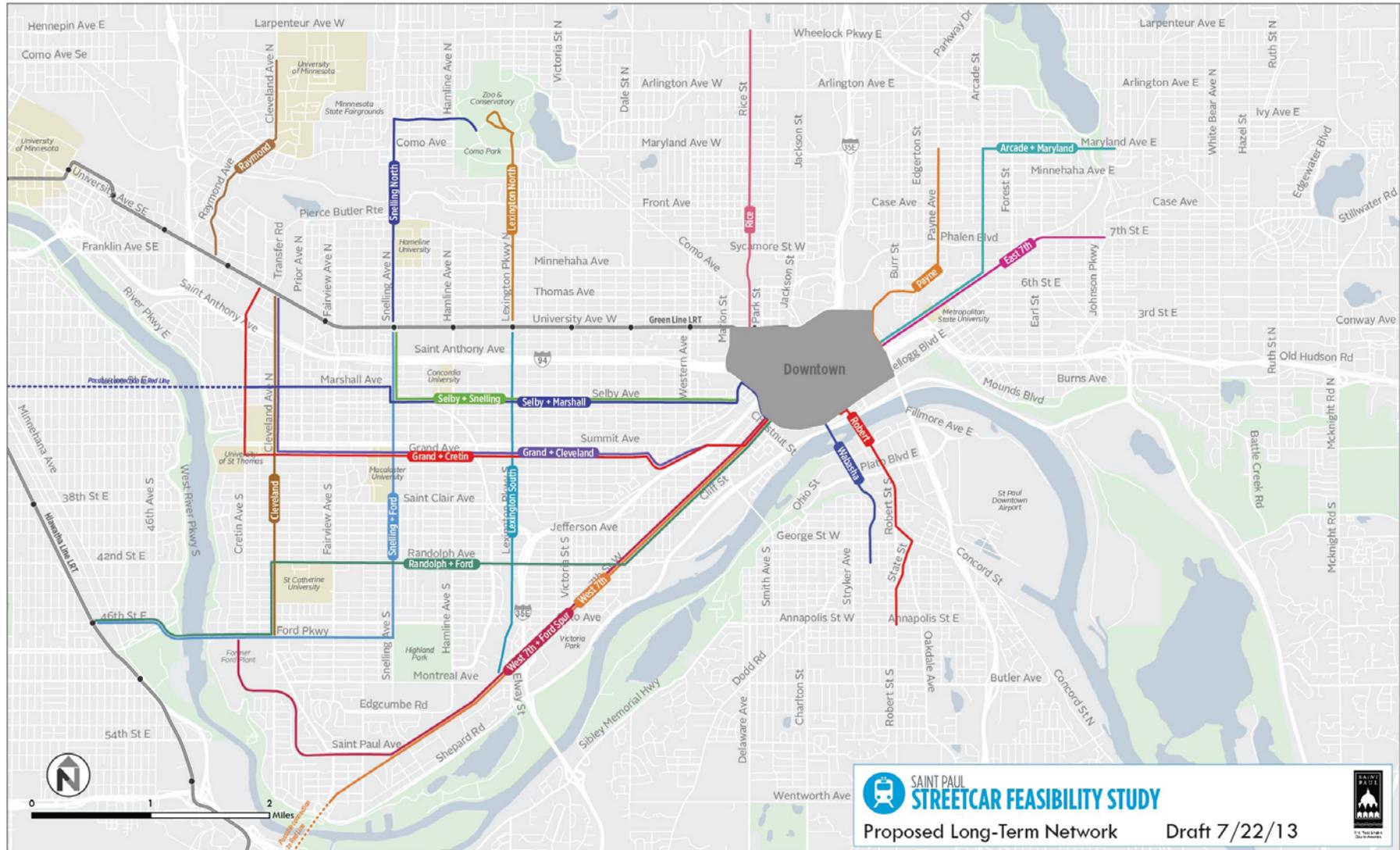
PHASE 2 EVALUATION PROCESS

Once the Phase 2 corridors had been determined, the next step was to determine how streetcar service could logically operate within the corridors. In this respect, important considerations were service within the corridor, logical terminal points, and connections to downtown Saint Paul, other transit services (particularly the Green Line), and major activity centers. The 19 potential lines that were developed are shown in Figure 8.

Once these lines had been developed, they were evaluated and the proposed long-term network developed as part of a three-step process:

1. First, each line was evaluated based on three primary criteria, which were potential demand, land use, and development potential. These three criteria were considered to be the most important for the following reasons:
 - **Potential Demand:** First and foremost, streetcar lines provide transportation, and to be successful, they must be implemented in areas where there is sufficient demand for the type of service that they provide.
 - **Land Use:** Streetcar lines are most successful when they operate in areas where there is activity throughout the day and night, which are areas with mixed-use development. In areas with dominated by a single land use type (for example, residential or industrial), most activity occurs during commute hours, with much less activity during the midday and at night.
 - **Development Potential:** A second major benefit of streetcar service is that it can stimulate economic development, and this is an explicit goal for streetcar service in Saint Paul. Areas that would provide the greatest potential are those where there is local demand for development, potential for mixed-use development, and a significant amount of undeveloped or underdeveloped land that could be redeveloped to higher value transit-oriented uses.

Figure 8: Phase 2 Streetcar Lines



2. For the lines that met all three primary criteria, each was further examined to determine whether all three conditions would be met along the entire line. In cases where they would not, the lines were shortened to the lengths that would meet all three.
3. Finally, the lines were further screened using the supplemental criteria. This was done for two reasons:
 - To determine whether there are issues that could preclude the development of a specific line.
 - In cases where two lines would serve a similar area (Robert and Wabasha, and Payne and Maryland+Arcade) to determine which of the two would be more desirable.

In many respects, this was a process of elimination—the elimination of lines that did not meet the primary criteria, and the elimination of lines that would largely duplicate others. The remaining lines then became the recommended long-term network described below.

PHASE 2 EVALUATION RESULTS

As described above, the lines, or segments of lines, included in the long-term network are those that ranked well (Best or Good) in terms of potential demand, land use, and development potential (see Table 3). In terms of the primary criteria, these lines and segments would be:

- **Arcade+Maryland** overall rated Best for ridership and development potential and Good for Land Use. However, potential demand along Maryland Avenue is relatively low, leaving the segment between Maryland Avenue and downtown as the best suited for streetcar service.
- **East 7th Street** overall also rated Best for ridership and development potential and Good for land use. However, ridership and development potential is low beyond Hazelwood Street, leaving the segment between Hazelwood Street and downtown as the best suited for streetcar service.
- **Grand+Cleveland** overall rated Best for ridership and land use and Good for development potential. However, ridership and development potential past the University of Saint Thomas is low, and land use becomes much more residential. Thus, the segment best suited for streetcar service is between University of Saint Thomas and downtown.
- **Grand+Cretin** rated essentially the same as Grand+Cleveland, with strong potential performance between University of Saint Thomas and downtown, and low potential beyond there. The segment best suited for streetcar service is between University of Saint Thomas and downtown or the same as Grand+Cleveland.
- **Payne** rated Best for potential demand and Good for land use and development potential, with strong potential through the end of the line at Maryland Avenue.
- **Rice** rated Best for potential demand and land use, and Good for development potential. The potential for each criterion varies throughout the line, but overall is good or better throughout the entire line between the city line and downtown.
- **Robert** overall ranked Best in all three categories. However, potential demand would be relatively low south of George Street, leaving the segment between George Street and downtown as providing the best potential for streetcar service.
- **Selby+Marshall** ranked Best for potential demand and land use, and good for development potential. However, the potential in all three areas, although somewhat variable, would be much lower west of Snelling Avenue, and thus the segment between Lexington Parkway and downtown would have the highest potential.

Table 3: Phase 2 Primary Criteria Ratings and Strongest Segments

Alternative	Ridership Potential	Land Use	Development Potential	Bring Forward?	Streetcar Supportive Segment
Arcade+Maryland	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	✓✓ Best	Yes	Maryland Ave – Downtown
Cleveland	✓ Good	▲ Fair	▲ Fair		
East 7 th	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	✓✓ Best	Yes	Hazelwood St - Downtown
Grand+Cleveland	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	Yes	University of Saint Thomas - Downtown
Grand+Cretin	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	✓ Good	Yes	University of Saint Thomas - Downtown
Lexington North	▲ Fair	▲ Fair	▲ Fair		
Lexington South	▲ Fair	▲ Fair	▲ Fair		
Payne	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	✓ Good	Yes	Maryland Ave - Downtown
Randolph+Ford	▲ Fair	✓ Good	▲ Fair		
Raymond	▲ Fair	✓ Good	▲ Fair		
Rice	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	Yes	City Line/Larpenteur Ave - Downtown
Robert	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	Yes	George St - Downtown
Selby+Marshall	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	Yes	Snelling Ave - Downtown
Selby+Snelling	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	✓ Good	Yes	Hameline University - Downtown
Snelling+Ford	▲ Fair	✓ Good	✓ Good		
Snelling North	▲ Fair	✓ Good	▲ Fair		
Wabasha	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	Yes	George St - Downtown
West 7 th	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	Yes	Victoria Park - Downtown
West 7 th +Ford Spur	✓ Good	✓ Good	✓✓ Best	Yes	Victoria Park - Downtown

- **Selby+Snelling** ranked Best in all three categories, and better than Selby+Marshall because of much stronger potential along Snelling Avenue between Selby Avenue and University Avenue than along Marshall Avenue west of Snelling Avenue, and because of the connection with the Green Line. The entire line would provide strong potential for streetcar service.
- **Wabasha**, similar to Robert overall ranked best in all three categories, and also with potential demand relatively low south of George Street. The rankings would be similar because both the Robert and Wabasha lines would serve much of the same area.
- **West 7th** ranked Best for potential demand and land use and Good for development potential. Potential is strong from the planned Victoria Park development (south of Otto Avenue) to downtown.

- **West 7th+Ford** ranked Good for potential demand and land use and Best for development potential. Compared to West 7th, potential demand and compatible land use are lower due to lower performance between Victoria Park and the former Ford plant, and development potential ranks higher due to the inclusion of the former Ford plant. In spite of the former Ford plant at the outer end, demand between there and Victoria part would be too low to justify the entire line, and the segment with strong streetcar potential would be the same as for West 7th, which would be between Victoria Park and downtown.

These lines were then further screened using the supplemental criteria. While there would be some issues with all of the potential lines, none would be seen as sufficiently significant to preclude a line from further consideration, and thus the last step in developing the long-term network was to select between lines that would service similar areas.

Finally, it should be noted that many of the Transit Integration and Relationship with High Capacity Transit (HCT) ratings were only Fair. This is largely because streetcar lines would serve a local market for shorter trips while most Metro Transit routes and new high capacity routes would serve longer and more regional trips. The evaluation framework had initially anticipated that streetcar service could replace more local bus service and supplement more HCT than it now appears would be the case, and the ratings were developed to reflect potential savings. The resulting findings instead indicate that streetcar would serve new markets rather than replace other existing and planned services.

SERVICE TO SIMILAR AREAS

Two sets of lines would serve very similar areas, and as a result, ranked essentially the same (see Figures 9 and 10):

- On the east side of Saint Paul, Arcade+Maryland, Payne, and East 7th.
- In the West Side neighborhood, Robert and Wabasha.

Figure 9: East Side Phase 2 Lines

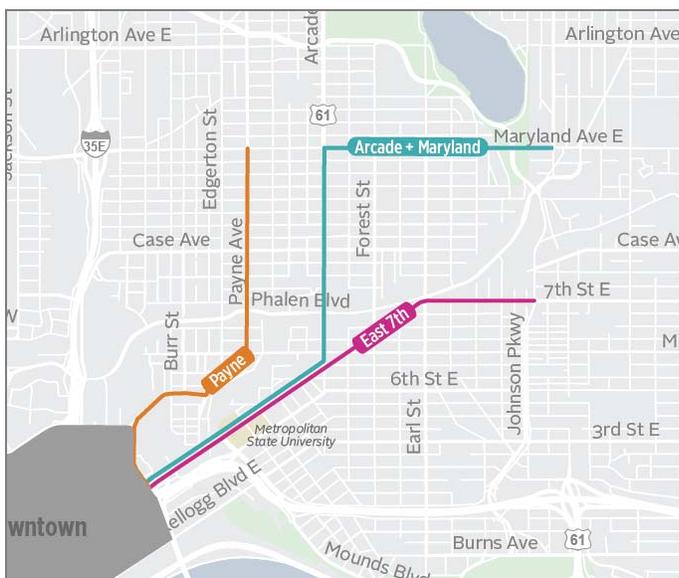


Figure 10: West Side Phase 2 Lines



The lines were compared in a number of ways that resulted in the selection of Payne and Robert:

- Between **Arcade+Maryland, Payne, and East 7th**, there were a number of considerations. First, Arcade+Maryland would operate along the same alignment as East 7th from downtown to

Arcade Street, and between there and Maryland, largely “splits the difference” between Payne and East 7th. The area where Arcade+Maryland would provide the most unique service would be along Maryland Avenue, but as described above, potential demand in this area would be low. Finally, there appears to be greater community support for streetcar service along Payne Avenue and West 7th Street than along Arcade Street. On this basis, to avoid duplication but also to maximize coverage, Payne and East 7th were selected to provide east side service.

- Between **Robert and Wabasha**, Robert was selected due to greater ridership and development potential, and greater community support.

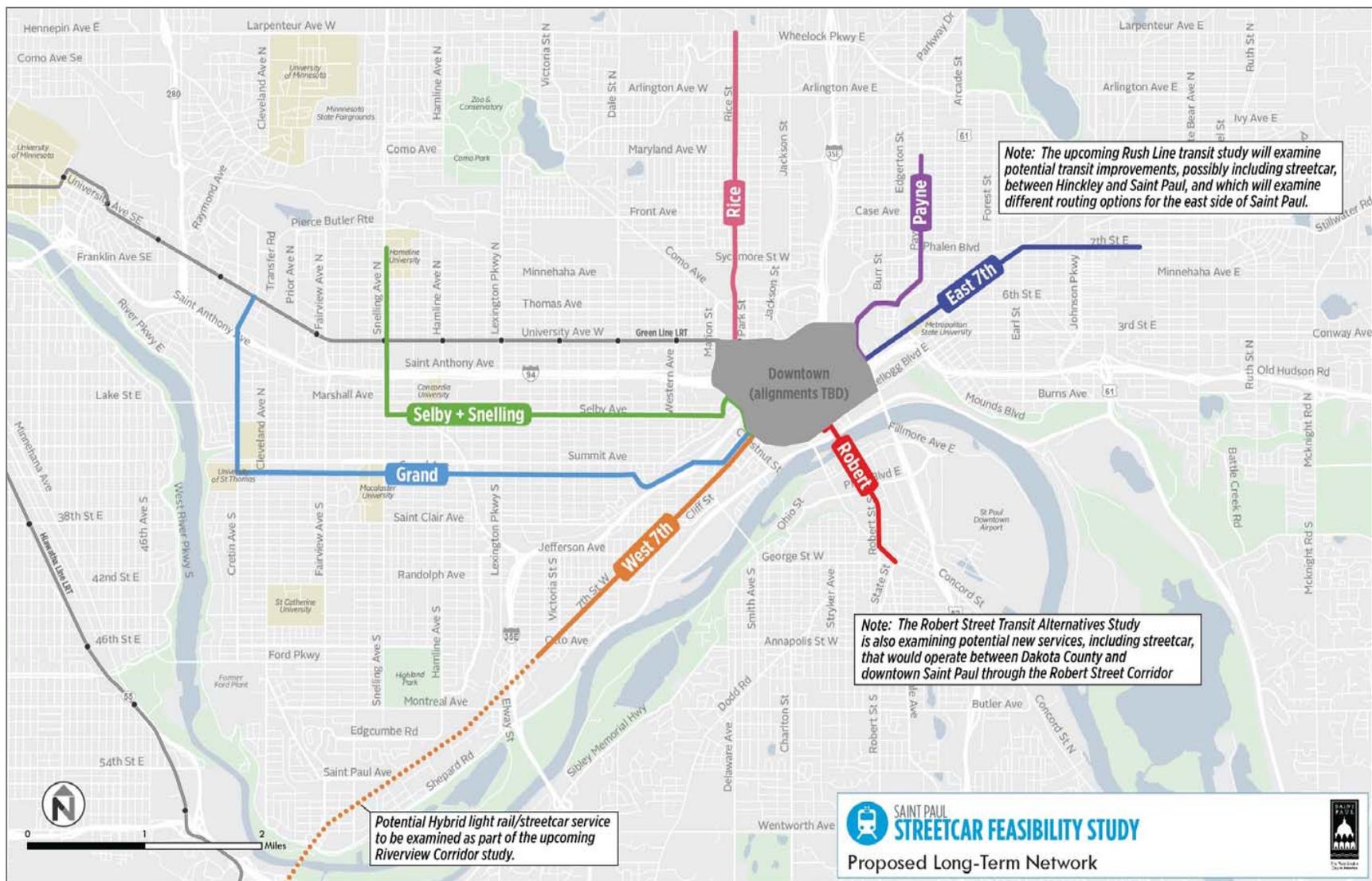
RECOMMENDED LONG-TERM NETWORK

Based on the above evaluation, the recommended long-term network consists of seven lines. With names revised to reflect proposed origins and destinations, and as illustrated in Figure 11, these would be as follows:

<u>Line</u>	<u>Origin-Destination</u>
East 7th	Hazelwood Street - Downtown
Grand+Cretin	University Avenue - Downtown
Payne	Maryland Avenue - Downtown
Rice	City Line/Larpenteur Avenue - Downtown
Robert	George Street - Downtown
Selby+Snelling	Hamline University - Downtown
West 7th	Victoria Park - Downtown

Most of these lines would be subsets of the Phase 2 lines, and would represent the segments that would provide strong potential for streetcar service. Exceptions are Grand+Cretin, Payne and Rice, which would be the same as the Phase 2 lines, and Selby+Snelling, which would be extended to Hamline University.

Figure 11: Proposed Long-Term Network



4 STREETCAR PHASING AND PROPOSED STARTER LINE

As with the development of any network, a fundamental question is “where to start?” For this effort, the proposed approach is to start with the strongest potential project, and to then build from that. It was also recognized that the strongest initial line could be either a single line in the Long-Term Network, a subset of a single line, or as with the approach in Minneapolis, a combination of a subset of two lines.

PHASE 3 EVALUATION PROCESS AND RESULTS

The Phase 3 evaluation process used to determine the “Starter Line” and phasing was similar to and consistent with the Phase 2 evaluation, which was to focus primarily on ridership and development potential, and to use supplemental criteria as needed to distinguish between similarly performing lines. In this case, the supplemental criteria were capital costs and operating costs.

Ridership

Ridership estimates were developed for each of the lines in the Long-Term Network using a methodology that considered existing transit ridership, other available transit options, changes in overall transit service levels, improvements in comfort and legibility, and the amount of new activity that would result from new development. The resulting projections represent order of magnitude estimates once the systems have matured and induced development has occurred, and were designed to provide for reasonable comparisons between lines; more detailed estimates would subsequently be developed during the project development phase for each line.

Based on this process, the East 7th and West 7th Lines would attract the highest number of total riders and new riders. On a line-by-line, basis, and relative to each other, key findings were (see also Table 4):

Table 4. Ridership Projections (Weekday)

Line	Total Riders	New Riders	Rating
East 7th	2,500	1,700	✓✓ Best
Grand+Cretin	2,800	1,200	▲ Fair
Payne	2,100	1,400	✓ Good
Rice	2,300	1,300	✓ Good
Robert	2,200	1,600	✓ Good
Selby+Snelling	3,100	1,200	▲ Fair
West 7th	2,900	1,800	✓✓ Best

- **East 7th** would carry would have among the strongest development-related ridership increases and would carry approximately 2,500 total passengers and 1,700 new transit riders, and would be the second best performing line (after West 7th).
- **Grand+Cretin:** The Grand+Cretin Line would carry among the highest ridership of all lines (approximately 2,800). However, most of these riders would shift from existing bus services, and coupled with lower development related increases than other lines, this line would carry among the fewest new transit riders (1,200). Consequently, the Grand+Cretin Line was rated as Fair, with the rating based largely on the lower number of new transit riders that the line would carry.
- **Payne:** The Payne Line would carry would carry approximately 2,100 total riders and 1,400 new transit riders. This would among the lowest total ridership, while new transit ridership would be in the middle of the range. The combination of total ridership that would be on the lower side of the range, but relatively high numbers of new transit riders combined to produce a Good rating.
- **Rice:** The Rice Line would carry approximately 2,300 total riders and 1,300 new transit riders. All of these figures placed the Rice Line in the middle of the range, with a rating of Good.
- **Robert:** The Robert Line would carry 2,200 total riders and 1,600 new transit riders, and was also rated as Good. However, it should be noted that a much larger proportion of Robert would be new ridership produced by new development, and that initial ridership would be lower on this line than on most others.
- **Selby+Snelling:** Similar to the Grand+Cretin Line, the Selby+Snelling Line would carry among the highest ridership of all lines (approximately 3,100). However, most of these riders would shift from existing bus services, and coupled with lower development related increases than on other lines, this line would carry among the fewer new transit riders ((1,200). Also similar to the Grand+Cretin Line, the Selby+Snelling Line was rated as Fair.
- **West 7th:** The West 7th Line would carry among the highest total ridership (approximately 2,900) and new transit riders (1,800), and consequently was rated as Best.

Development Potential

The Phase 3 evaluation used the same development potential estimates as the Phase 2 evaluation. A recap of the results for the lines in the Long-Term Network is that the East 7th, Robert, and West 7th Lines would provide the greatest development potential (see also Table 5).

Operating Costs

Annual net operating costs for the seven lines would range from \$6.9 million (East 7th and West 7th Lines) per year to \$10.5 million (Grand+Cretin Line) (see Table 6). In general, these costs are most related to two factors: (1) the length of the line, and (2) the potential for offsetting local bus service costs. The two lines with the greatest offsetting bus savings—Grand+Cretin and Selby+Snelling—would have annual net operating costs of \$1.4 million and \$1.3 million per mile, respectively. Four lines—East 7th, Payne, and West 7th—would have operating costs of between \$1.8 and \$2.0 million per year. The Robert Line would have the highest cost per mile at \$2.6 million.

Table 5 – Development Potential

Line	Desire for Development Rating	Redevelopment Potential Rating	Redevelopment Value/ Mile	Overall Rating
East 7 th	Best	Good	\$48.2 M	✓✓ Best
Grand+Cretin	Fair	Good	\$46.88	✓ Good
Payne	Good	Good	\$61.4 M	✓ Good
Rice	Best	Fair	\$20.4 M	✓ Good
Robert	Best	Best	\$136.1 M	✓✓ Best
Selby+Snelling	Fair	Good	\$63.8 M	✓ Good
West 7 th	Best	Good	\$50.2 M	✓✓ Best

Table 6. Annual Operating Cost Estimates (\$2013)

Alternative	Streetcar Operating Cost	Bus Operating Cost Savings	Net Operating Cost	Net Operating Cost/ Route Mile
East 7th	\$6.9 M	--	\$6.9 M	\$1.9 M
Grand+Cretin	\$12.5 M	\$2.0 M	\$10.5 M	\$1.4 M
Payne	\$6.3 M	--	\$6.3 M	\$2.0 M
Rice	\$6.9 M	\$0.2 M	\$6.7 M	\$1.8 M
Robert	\$3.9 M	--	\$3.9 M	\$2.6 M
Selby+Snelling	\$10.1 M	\$2.4 M	\$7.7 M	\$1.3 M
West 7th	\$6.9 M	--	\$6.9 M	\$2.0 M

Capital Costs

In 2013 dollars, capital costs for all lines would be in a relatively narrow range of \$59.9 to \$61.7 million per mile. This range is narrow because there are no particular characteristics along any of the lines that would greatly increase or reduce costs. The one possible exception is downtown, where the specific alignment would be determined during more detailed project development, and where costs could be higher or lower. Costs could be higher if particular challenges are identified at that time (although none were identified during the initial screening conducted for this study), or could be lower if streetcar service were to use Green Line tracks and stations. For the purposes of these estimates, downtown costs were assumed to be \$60 million per mile, consistent with costs outside of downtown.

Because the range of the cost per mile estimates was so small, the primary determinant of total capital costs would be the length of the streetcar line. Thus, the shorter lines—Robert and Payne—would have the lowest total capital costs, at \$110 and \$182 million), and the longer lines—Selby+Snelling and Grand+Cretin—would have the highest costs, at \$353 and \$439 million (see Table 7). (Note that all cost estimates are in \$2013, and that due to inflation, year of expenditure costs would be higher.)

Table 7 – Capital Cost Estimates (\$2103)

Alternative	Length (Route Miles)	Cost Per Mile	Total Cost
East 7 th	3.6	\$59.9 M	\$215.5 M
Grand+Cretin	7.1	\$61.7 M	\$438.9 M
Payne	3.0	\$61.1 M	\$183.2 M
Rice	4.1	\$61.5 M	\$253.3 M
Robert	1.8	\$60.8 M	\$110.3 M
Selby+Snelling	5.9	\$60.1 M	\$352.7 M
West 7 th	3.6	\$59.9 M	\$216.1 M

Overall Ratings

Based on the primary criteria—ridership potential and development potential—East 7th and West 7th were rated the highest, followed by Robert, Payne, and Rice (see Table 8).¹

Table 8 – Summary of Phase 3 Part 1 Evaluation Ratings

Long-Term Network Streetcar Line	Primary Criteria		Secondary Criteria	
	Ridership	Development Potential	Capital Costs	Operating Costs
E 7 th Street	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	\$215.5 M	\$6.9 M
Grand+Cretin	▲ Fair	✓ Good	\$438.9 M	\$10.5 M
Payne	✓ Good	✓ Good	\$183.2 M	\$6.3 M
Rice	✓ Good	✓ Good	\$253.3 M	\$6.7 M
Robert	✓ Good	✓✓ Best	\$110.3 M	\$3.9 M
Selby+Snelling	▲ Fair	✓ Good	\$352.7 M	\$7.7 M
W 7 th Street	✓✓ Best	✓✓ Best	\$216.1 M	\$6.9 M

IDENTIFICATION OF PROPOSED STARTER LINE

As described above, of the lines in the Long-Term Network, the East 7th and West 7th Lines would perform best in terms of ridership and development potential, and thus they would be logical starting points for the redevelopment of streetcar service in Saint Paul. Either line could be constructed in its entirety as a “starter line,” or as is being done in Minneapolis with the Nicollet-Central streetcar line, the inner ends of the East 7th and West 7th Lines could be developed first with service through downtown. In this manner,

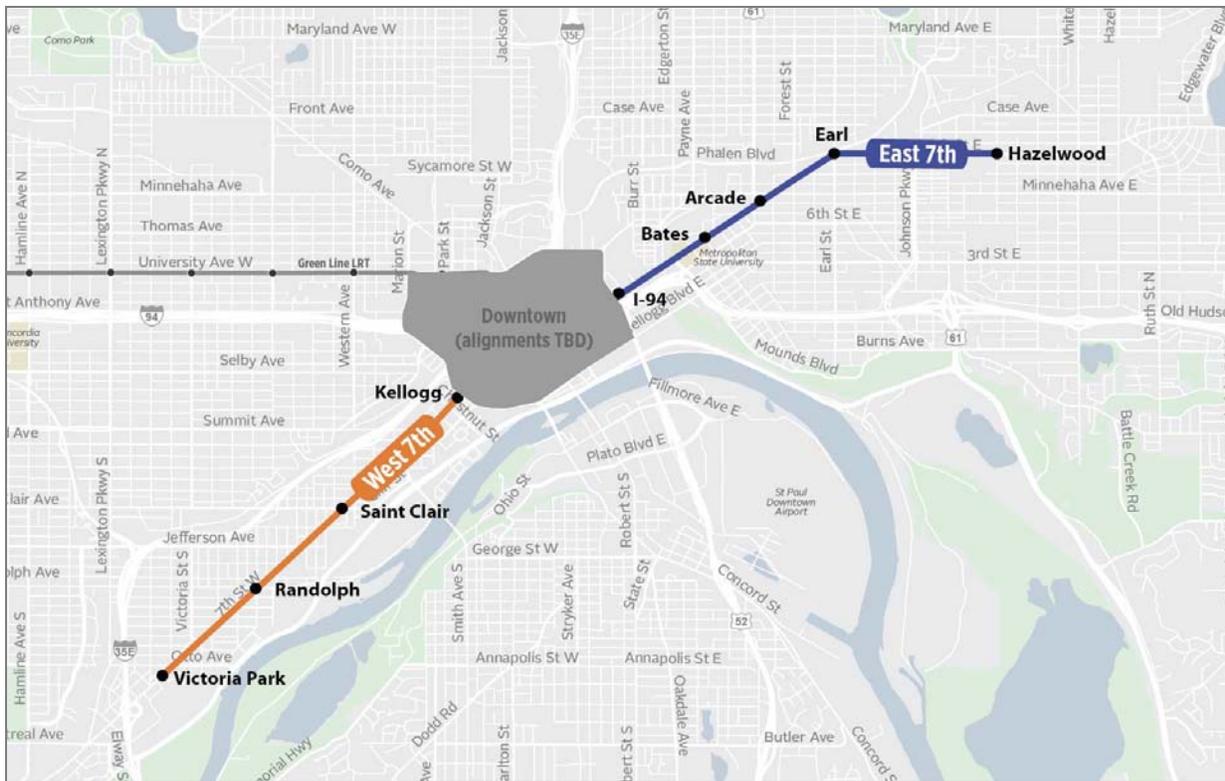
¹ Note that as described at the beginning of this chapter, the ratings are relative within the Long-Term network. Thus, a Fair rating indicates that a lines performance would be “fair” relative to better performing lines, and not in absolute terms.

the strongest segments of those lines could be constructed first, in order to provide the greatest benefits from the start, spread the benefits to different parts of the city, and provide the strongest foundation for future growth.

Strongest Segments of East 7th and West 7th

To determine which segments of the East 7th and West 7th Lines would produce the most effective starter line, three considerations were used: (1) ridership, (2) development potential, and (3) capital costs. In terms of ridership and development potential, the criteria was simply which segments would produce the highest ridership and help spur the greatest amount of development. In terms of capital costs, an important consideration is to develop a project that would be eligible for FTA Small Starts funding, which has a cap of \$250 million in total project costs. The segments that were considered are shown in Figure 12.

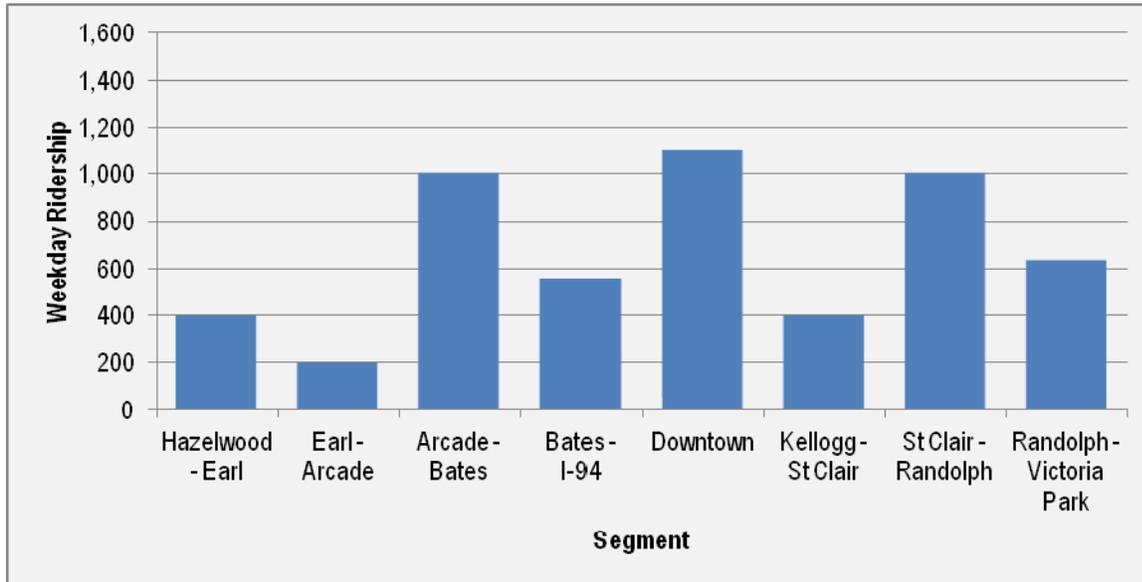
Figure 12: East and West 7th Segments



Ridership

In terms of ridership per route mile, the heaviest ridership segments along the East 7th and West 7th lines would be in downtown, on East 7th between Arcade Street and Bates Avenue (Metropolitan State University), and on West 7th between Saint Clair Avenue and Victoria Park (see Figure 13).

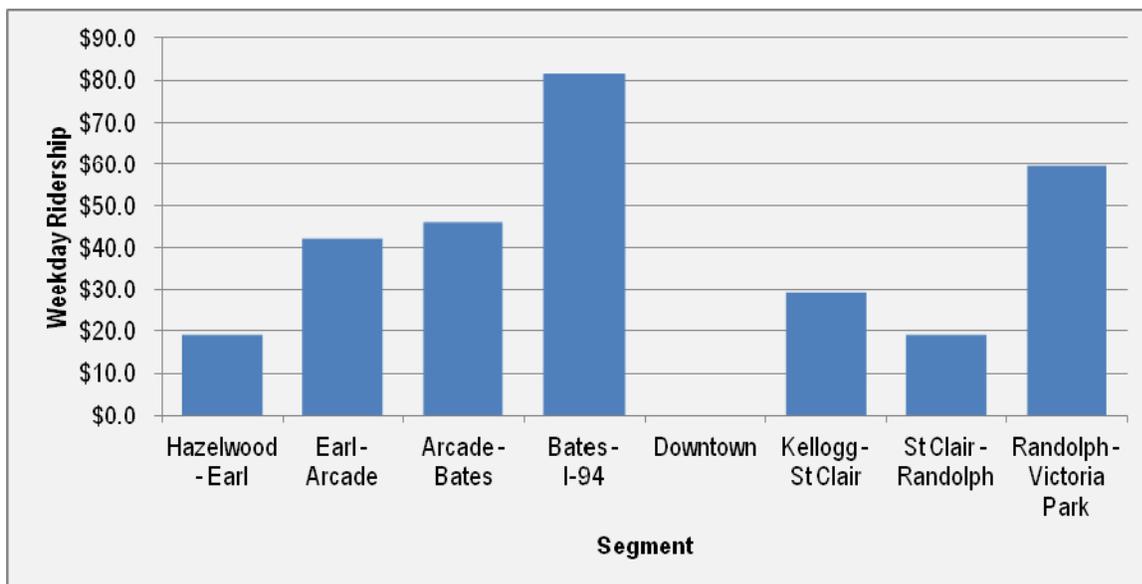
Figure 13: Ridership by Route Mile along East 7th and West 7th Lines



Development Potential

Outside of downtown,² the greatest potential for new development would be along East 7th south of Earl Street, and the outer end of the West 7th Line between Randolph Avenue and the vicinity of Victoria Park (see Figure 14).

Figure 14: Development Potential per Mile along East 7th and West 7th Lines



² As described previously, this study did not include the impacts of new development in downtown, as most of the routes that were examined would operate to and from downtown, and the inclusion of those figures would have made the comparison of impacts outside of downtown more difficult.

Capital Costs

By segment, capital costs would range from \$23 million to \$77 million, and the cost to build both lines in their entirety would be \$367 million in 2013 dollars (see Table 8). With the objective to keep the cost of the starter line at less than \$250 million, and to provide service both north and south of downtown, the cost to construct service between Arcade Street to the north and Randolph Avenue to the south would be \$230 million.

Table 8 – Capital Cost Estimates (\$2103)

Segment	Both Lines End-to-End	Arcade - Randolph
Hazelwood - Earl	\$56.7	
Earl - Arcade	\$34.0	
Arcade - Bates	\$22.7	\$22.7
Bates – Lafayette	\$34.0	\$34.0
Downtown	\$77.0	\$77.0
Kellogg – Saint Clair	\$56.7	\$56.7
Saint Clair - Randolph	\$39.7	\$39.7
Randolph – Victoria Park	\$45.4	
	\$366.7	\$230.2

(Important notes about these capital costs are that they are in 2013 dollars, and that ultimate construction costs will be higher based on the amount of inflation that occurs between now and the time of construction. Also, the FTA \$250 million total cost threshold in year of expenditure dollars, and this threshold may or may not be raised to reflect inflation.)

Operating Costs

Operating costs would largely reflect the length of the line. The full line would cost over \$11 million per year to operate, while an Arcade - Randolph Line would cost \$8.0 million (in 2013 dollars).

RECOMMENDED STARTER LINE

As stated above, important objectives for the city’s first streetcar line are that it would maximize ridership and development benefits, provide service to multiple neighborhoods, and that total capital costs be kept within \$250 million. A starter line that operates along East and West 7th Streets between Arcade Street and Randolph Avenue via downtown, as shown in Figure 15, would best achieve these objectives:

- It would serve 3,100 passengers per weekday, or 72% of the riders of the full lengths of both the East 7th and West 7th Lines. These ridership levels would compare favorably with other U.S. streetcar lines (see Figure 16).
- It would support development in many of the areas with the greatest potential, including between Arcade Street and downtown. It would also support further development along West 7th Street, south of downtown, and set the stage for subsequent extension further south where development potential would be the highest.

Figure 15: Proposed Starter Line

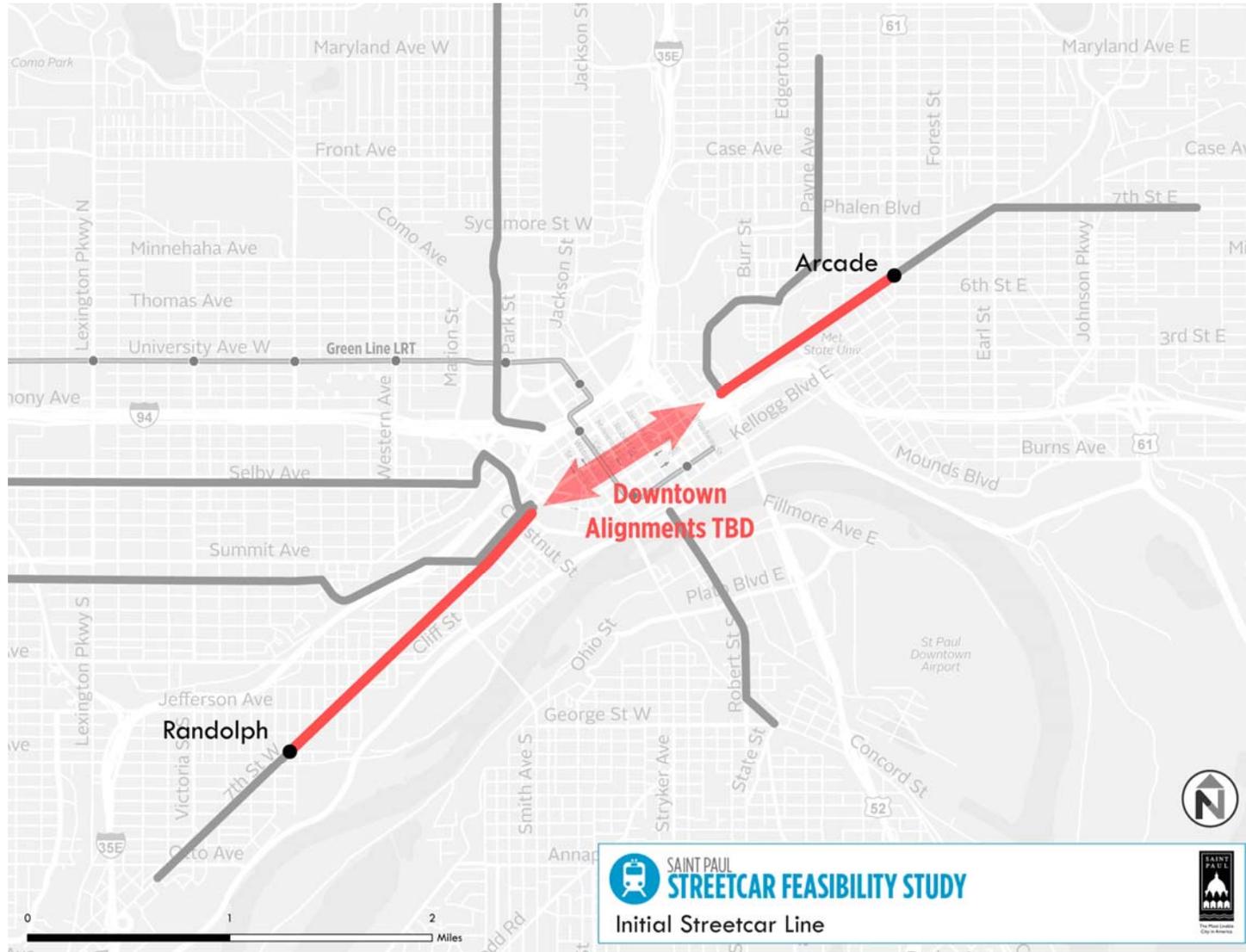
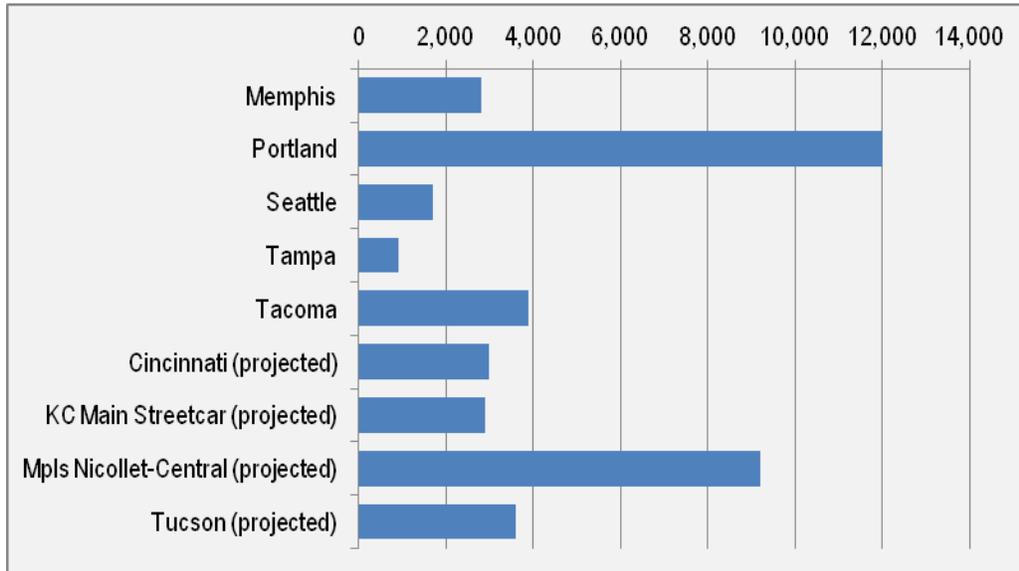


Figure 16: Ridership on Other Streetcar Projects (Weekday)



- In 2013 dollars, capital costs would be below the FTA’s \$250 million threshold for Small Starts funding. While year of expenditure costs will certainly be higher, especially if the first line is built later rather than sooner, there are potential savings that were not fully explored in this study such as the joint use of Green Line tracks in downtown. These could keep year of expenditure costs below \$250 million. As part of further project development, additional steps could also be taken to reduce costs by shortening the line somewhat.

Phase 2

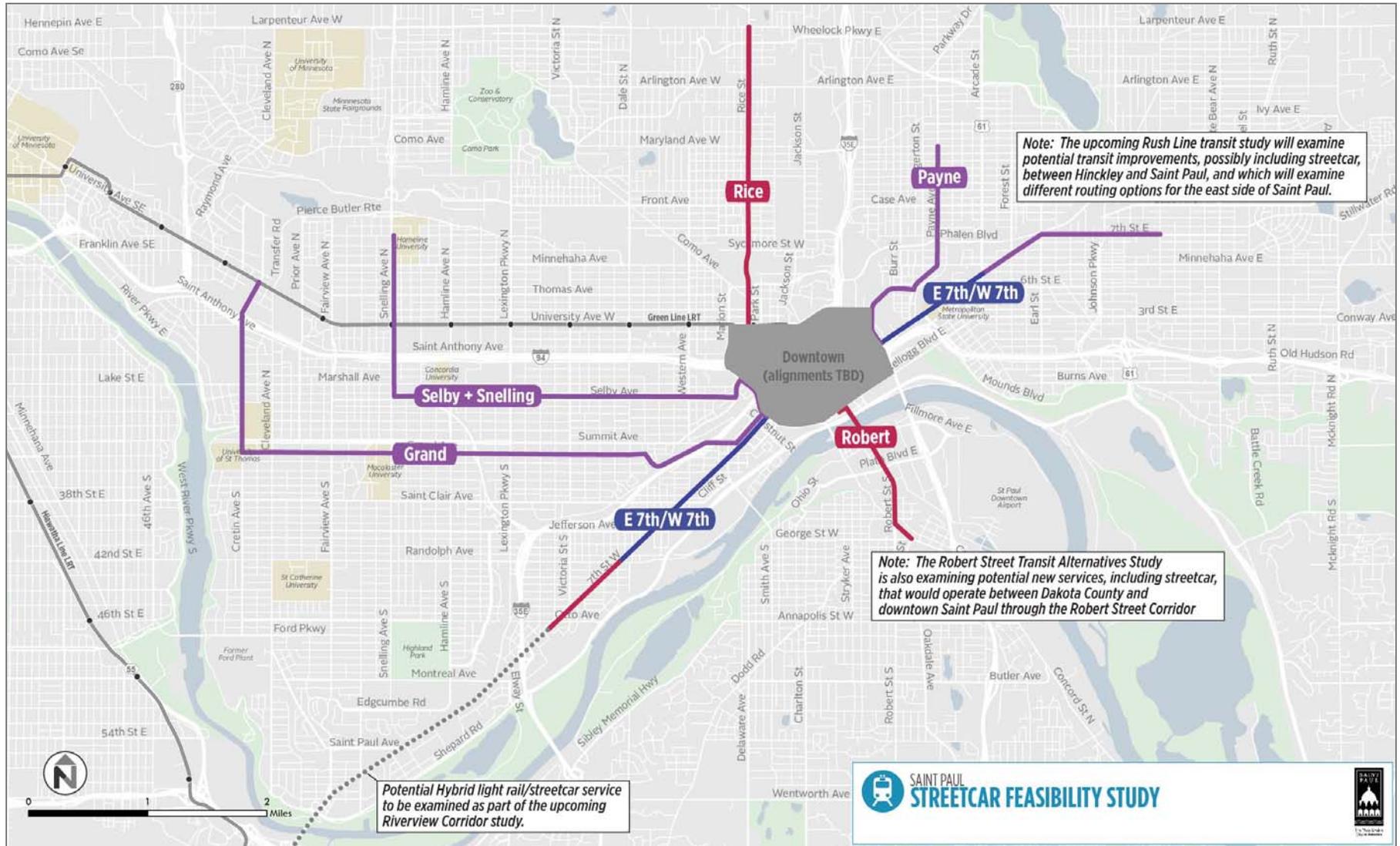
An East 7th/West 7th Starter Line would represent the starting point toward the development of the Long-Term network. Based on the work described above, and to achieve the greatest benefits soonest, Phase 2 of streetcar development should consist of (see Figure 17):

- An extension of West 7th Street further southward to the vicinity of Victoria Park
- Development of the Robert Line
- Development of the Rice Line.

Phase 3

The remaining lines would then follow those, with specific timing to be determined as the city’s streetcar program continues to evolve.

Figure 17: Streetcar Network Phasing



5 POTENTIAL FUNDING

Pursuing capital funding for streetcar projects is challenging for a number of reasons. First, there is fierce competition for funding at both the federal and local levels. The largest source of capital funds for transit projects is the Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA’s) New and Small Starts discretionary program. This is the largest discretionary program in the federal government and includes upwards of \$2 billion in capital funding for transit projects annually. Second, and particularly in the Twin Cities area, modern streetcar represents a new transit mode, and policy makers are still working to determine how it fits within the region’s family of transit services. Finally, and also because it is a new transit mode, it has not been considered in previous regional planning efforts and thus the addition of new streetcar lines to the regional planning program is often viewed as at the expense of other planned transit services, especially new arterial BRT lines.

For these and other reasons, recent streetcar projects have sought new funding mechanisms than those generally used for major capital transit projects, at both the federal and local levels. This chapter describes potential capital funding sources for streetcar service in Saint Paul, and provides examples of how those sources have been used to fund other recent streetcar projects

HOW ARE OTHER STREETCAR PROJECTS BEING FUNDED?

Most current and recent streetcar services are funded with local public funding, supplemented with federal funding, and in limited cases with state funding and private donations (see Table 9).

Table 9: Funding Sources for Capital Costs of Recent Streetcar Projects (in Millions)

City	Federal	State	Local Public	Local Private	Total
Fort Lauderdale	53%	25%	22%	0%	100%
Kansas City*	30%	0%	70%	0%	100%
Cincinnati	34%	0%	66%	5%	100%
St. Louis	72%	0%	28%	13%	100%
Tucson	41%	0%	59%	2%	100%
Washington DC (22-mile system)	2%	0%	98%	0%	100%

On a percentage basis for the sample projects shown in Table 1, local funding has ranged from a low of 28% for Saint Louis’ 1.1 mile \$43 million project to a projected 98% for Washington D.C.’s 22 mile \$913 million planned streetcar system. However, the most common proportion of local funding is 60 to 70%.

Federal funding has ranged from a projected 2% for Washington D.C.’s system to 72% for Saint Louis. In recent years, additional federal funding sources have become available to develop and build streetcar service. A significant example of these funding sources is the United States Department of Transportation’s discretionary funding Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER). TIGER funding is allocated to a wide range of transportation projects, and so the proportion

that is awarded to transit projects is small; and streetcar projects is smaller still. As more streetcar projects are in development, the pool of discretionary funds is split between more projects and individual grants awards have been reduced, which has in turn reduced the share of federal funding. As a result, it is likely the future streetcar projects will need to rely to a greater extent on local funding than those that are either in construction or nearing construction.

Capital funding sources for streetcar projects at the state and local level can vary widely. State funding is only being used in Florida, while local public funding covers between 20% and 98% of capital costs. Local sources range from general funds to local assessment districts. Private contributions have also been used in some projects, providing 2% to 13% of project costs in Saint Louis, Cincinnati, and Tucson.

OVERVIEW OF CAPITAL FUNDING OPTIONS

For Saint Paul, there are a large number of capital funding options, some of which are already utilized in other cities, some that are currently used to fund transit projects but not streetcar projects, some that are not currently being used to fund transit projects that could be, and some that would be entirely new sources (see Table 10).

Table 10: Overview of Potential Funding Sources

	Federal	Decision-Making Agency	Currently Used for Streetcar in Other Cities?
Federal			
TIGER funds		USDOT	Yes
FTA Section 5303 Planning		Met Council	Yes
FTA Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula		Met Council	No*
Section 5309 New Starts		FTA	Yes
CMAQ/STP		Met Council	Yes
Twin Cities Regional			
Motor Vehicle Sales Tax		Met Council	NA
Regional Transit Capital Bonds		Met Council	NA
RRA Property Tax		Ramsey County RRA	NA
State			
Various State Sources		Typically Legislature/state DOT	NA
County			
Various County Sources		County Board	NA
City			
Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District		City Council	Yes
Special Assessment District		City Council or District	Yes
Fees and Taxes (Parking, Entertainment, Lodging, etc.)		City Council	Yes

* Not used for streetcar projects but used as funding for other capital transit projects in new and small starts project development pipeline

FEDERAL FUNDING OPTIONS

There are a number of sources of federal funding available to fund streetcar capital costs. However, as a practical matter, most current funding is through the TIGER program, with funds allocated at the USDOT's discretion, and through the flexing of flexible CMAQ and STP funds, which is done at the discretion of each region's Metropolitan Planning Organization, which for the Twin Cities is the Metropolitan Council (Met Council).

Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Funds

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 created funding for a variety of short-term infrastructure investment programs, including the Transportation Investment Generating Economy Recovery (TIGER) program. With the economic recovery underway, the TIGER program has shifted its emphasis from stimulus and job creation to longer-term national infrastructure investments, and has provided much of the recent federal funding for streetcar projects:

- Atlanta: \$47.7 m
- Cincinnati: 20.0 m
- Dallas: \$26.0 m
- Detroit: \$25.0 m
- Fort Lauderdale: \$18.0 m
- Kansas City: \$20.0
- New Orleans: \$45.0
- Salt Lake City: \$26.0 m
- Tucson: \$63.0 m

The future of the program is uncertain, but given its popularity, there are widespread expectations that it will be continued.

Section 5309 Fixed Guideway Capital Investment Grants (New Starts/Small Starts)

The Section 5309 New Starts/Small Starts program awards grants on a competitive basis for major transit investments for new and expanded rail, bus rapid transit (BRT), and ferry services.

Small Starts

Small Starts projects are those with total capital costs of less than \$250 million and a federal share of less than \$75 million, which encompasses most streetcar projects. Small Starts projects are evaluated using the following criteria:

- Project Justification, which represents 50% of a project's overall rating and is based on cost effectiveness, land use, economic development, congestion relief, environmental benefits, and mobility improvements.
- Local Financial Commitment, which represents the other 50% of a project's overall rating and is based on:
 - Current capital and operating conditions (25% of the local financial commitment rating)
 - Commitment of capital and operating funds (25% of the local financial commitment rating)
 - Reasonableness of capital and operating cost estimates and planning assumptions / capital funding capacity (50% of the local financial commitment rating)

As a conservative approach, most streetcar projects are developed according to FTA project development guidelines so that they will be eligible for New Starts/Small Starts funding. Since 2000, only Portland and

Tucson have received Small Starts funding (\$75.0 and \$6.0 million, respectively), with other streetcar funding instead flowing through the TIGER program. However, with the changes in the evaluation framework of Small Starts projects under MAP-21—namely, an equal emphasis on all evaluation criteria and a change in the way cost effectiveness is measured—seem to create a more favorable evaluation model for streetcar projects. In fact, since the implementation of MAP-21, two modern streetcar projects have been approved into the Small Starts Project Development pipeline: The Fort Lauderdale WAVE Streetcar in Florida and the Tempe Streetcar in Arizona.

New Starts

New Starts projects are those with total capital costs of over \$250 million or that request greater than \$75 million in funding. Given the limited amount of federal funds available and the generally high cost of New Starts projects, lower shares are now more typical, and proposed New Starts projects are required to proceed through a rigorous evaluation process. While the evaluation criteria and framework is the same for both New and Small Starts projects, project sponsors of the larger and complex New Starts projects are subject to more stringent technical capacity reviews. This is reflected in FTA's Project Development process, in which New Starts projects have to be approved into and proceed through an additional Engineering phase prior to being considered for a Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA).

Flexible Funds

There are two programs under which funds can be used for both transit or highway projects, and that are frequently used to provide funding for streetcar projects:

- **Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)**, which is jointly administered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the FTA and that provides funding for projects that reduce air pollution in areas that do not meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (nonattainment areas) and former nonattainment areas that are now in compliance (maintenance areas). This includes the Twin Cities area, and these funds can be used for streetcar projects. The funds can be used for up to 88.5% of capital costs, and for operating costs for up to the first three years of service.
- **Surface Transportation Program (STP)**, which is an FHWA = program that allows states to shift highway funds to transit uses, including the development of streetcar service. Funds can be used for capital purposes, but not for operations.

In large urban areas, both CMAQ and STP funds are allocated by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), which in the Twin Cities is the Met Council. Funds from the two sources are commonly considered together, and have been used as partial funding for most recent streetcar projects, but usually in limited amounts; for example:

- Atlanta: \$1.9 m (CMAQ for partial funding for first three years of operations)
- Fort Lauderdale: \$8.1 m (capital)
- Kansas City: \$17.1 m (capital)
- Cincinnati: \$4.0 m (capital)
- St. Louis: \$5.8 m (capital)
- Tucson: \$14.0 m (capital)

FTA Section 5303 Metropolitan Planning Funds

FTA Section 5303 provides funding to support cooperative, continuous, and comprehensive planning for making transportation investment decisions in metropolitan areas, and are frequently used for streetcar

planning activities. In the Twin Cities area, these funds flow through the Metropolitan Council, which makes programming decisions for these funds through its regional process.

Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Program

In large urban areas such as the Twin Cities, Section 5307 provides formula funding for transit capital purposes, and for some limited operating cost expenses such as preventative maintenance and lease costs. These funds flow to the urbanized area's "designated recipient," which in the Twin Cities is the Met Council.

These funds could conceivably be used for the capital development and construction of a streetcar project but would not likely be, as they would not be new funds, but rather a reallocation of existing and programmed funds and that are currently directed toward other uses. To date, no agency has used Section 5307 funds for a streetcar project.

REGIONAL

Metropolitan Council-Controlled Funds

The Metropolitan Council administers two types of funding that could potentially be used to fund streetcar capital and operating costs: the Motor Vehicle Sales Tax (MVST) and Regional Transit Capital (RTC) bonds. At this time, the Met-Council is still determining where and how streetcar service should fit within the region's overall transit system. The Met Council's current thinking on streetcar service is best expressed in its recent letter to the Minneapolis' mayor,³ which states in part:

"The Council's current Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) is nearly silent on streetcars as a mode of transit in the region, except for a reference to Council-local government collaboration to determine when and where a streetcar project might be appropriate. The TPP also states that projects that show a positive, significant, and cost-effective transportation benefit might be funded with local, regional and federal transportation funds but a project pursued primarily for development outcomes should be funded locally and should not compete with other priorities for federal and state transportation funds. With numerous transit corridors identified for future investment, the demand for transit capital and operating funding greatly exceeds current funding.

Both transportation and economic development serve an important role in helping the region grow in an efficient, connected manner and provide justification for investment. I understand that project justification for the Nicollet-Central streetcar is still under discussion by technical staff and policymakers as part of the Nicollet-Central Transit Alternatives Study. It will be important for the project justification to be well developed and vetted prior to it coming forward to the Council for consideration."

Minneapolis' efforts to develop Nicollet-Central streetcar service will likely accelerate resolution of regional streetcar funding issues, and successful resolution of those issues within the context of that project could facilitate the development of Saint Paul streetcar service.

Motor Vehicle Sales Tax

Minnesota Statute 297B.09 allocates 36% of the state MVST funding to the metropolitan area transit fund to be used for capital and operating transit assistance in the metropolitan area. The Metropolitan Council is responsible for allocating the MVST funds to various transit purposes. The funds are primarily used to

³ Letter from Susan Haig, Chair of the Metropolitan Council to Minneapolis Mayor Rybak, July 12, 2013.

pay for existing transit operations, both rail and bus. MVST funding is allocated annually by the Council through the adopted Regional Transit Operating Revenue Allocation Procedure and Regional Transit Capital Revenue Allocation Procedure (adopted in September 2010).

Regional Transit Capital Bonds

RTC funds are bond funds where the debt service is paid using the Met Council's transit capital levy. The legislature is responsible for authorizing the amount of RTC bonds that may be sold and the Met Council sets the annual levy required to pay the debt. RTC funds are used for transit capital expenditures including assets with shorter than a 20-year life, including transit vehicles and technology. RTC funds may not be used for transit planning and operations. RTC funds are allocated by the Council through the annual development of the six-year CIP.

Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB)/Metro Counties Sales Tax

The Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB) is a joint powers board consisting of Anoka, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey and Washington Counties that, as permitted by Minnesota Statute 297A.99, has enacted a quarter-cent sales tax and \$20 a motor vehicle sales tax to invest in and advance transit projects by awarding annual capital and operating grants. The Board works in collaboration with the Metropolitan Council and Carver and Scott counties.

CTIB has adopted a Transitway Investment Framework, which establishes principles and rules regarding how the CTIB will invest in transitway development. At this time, CTIB's Transitway Investment Framework does not provide for streetcar projects to receive CTIB funding. However, CTIB is in the process of updating their investment framework and the inclusion of streetcar service within the regional transitway framework will be considered. In that case, Saint Paul streetcar service could qualify for CTIB funding, and CTIB sales tax revenues could be used to fund up to 30% of streetcar capital costs (if CTIB funded streetcar at the same level they fund LRT projects). The funding would require a minimum of 10% local (non-state) match and 10% state match.

STATE

State funding for major transit capital projects is currently available from three sources: State General Fund, General Obligation (GO) Bonds and Mn/DOT Trunk Highway Funds and Bonds. State statutes does not specifically address streetcars but do prohibit state funds from being used to pay more than 10% of the total capital cost of an LRT project. Additionally, "after operating and federal money have been used to pay for LRT transit operations, 50% of the remaining costs must be paid by the state." Again, streetcars are not currently addressed and would likely require modifications to state legislation in order to apply state funding to a streetcar project.

State General Fund

Funding from the state general fund is made available for transitway projects through appropriations by the state legislature and varies in amount from year to year. General funds are rarely used for capital investments and may include additional restrictions as specified in the appropriation language. General funds may be used for transitway operating costs.

General Obligation Bonds

General Obligation (GO) bonds can provide funding for transitway capital costs and are allocated through state legislative appropriations in varying amounts. Typically, the state authorizes a large bonding bill in even numbered sessions and smaller or no bonding bill in the odd numbered sessions. The specific use of the funds is dictated by the appropriation language. Any capital expenditure funded by GO bonds must be

for a specific capital project that will have a 20-year life and the asset must be owned by the public entity specified in the appropriation. GO bonds may not be used for planning studies, alternatives analysis, technology, vehicles or operating expenditures.

Mn/DOT Trunk Highway Funds and Bonds

Mn/DOT trunk highway funds and bonds may be used on transitway projects that further a trunk highway purpose, which would not be the case for most or all streetcar projects. Trunk highway funding can only be used for trunk highway purposes and cannot be used for transit operations. Capital assets that utilize trunk highway bonds must have a 20-year life, be owned by Mn/DOT and are considered part of the trunk highway system. Trunk highway funding and bonds are authorized through the state legislative process.

COUNTY AND CITY

County General Fund

County general funds may be used on transitway projects as allocated. General funds are allocated through the county budget process and vary in amount from year to year.

County Highway Funds

County highway funds may be used for highway-related transit improvements but may not be used for non-highway transitway purposes. Two potential lines—East 7th and West 7th—would operate along West 7th Street, which is a state highway and thus these lines could potentially leverage County Highway Funds for partial funding.

Highway funds are allocated through the county budget process and vary from year to year.

City General Fund

City general funds may be used on transitway projects as allocated. General funds are allocated through the city budget process and vary in amount from year to year.

Municipal Highway Funds

Municipal highway funds may be used for highway-related transit improvements but may not be used for non-highway transitway purposes. It may be possible to use some of these funds for roadway improvements that are made in conjunction with the development of streetcar lines.

Highway funds are allocated through the city budget process and vary in amount from year to year.

Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority (RRA)

Regional Rail Authorities (RRAs) in the state of Minnesota have the power to impose a property tax levy up to 0.04835% of the market value of all taxable property within the RRA boundary and to issue bonds to fund transitway-related projects. To date, RRA funds have not been used for streetcar projects although they could be. To do so, the proposed streetcar project would need to be programmed within the RRA's transitway program. Funds can be used planning and environmental work, and for up to 10% of capital costs. However, RRA funds cannot be used for operations in counties that have enacted the Metro Counties Sales Tax (which Ramsey County has).

POTENTIAL NEW FUNDING SOURCES

In addition to the currently available sources described above, there are additional methods that are used in other cities that could potentially be used in Saint Paul. Those with the greatest potential to fund major portions of streetcar projects include Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts and Special Assessment Districts. Other potential sources include a variety of fees and taxes, including on parking, lodging, and entertainment tickets.

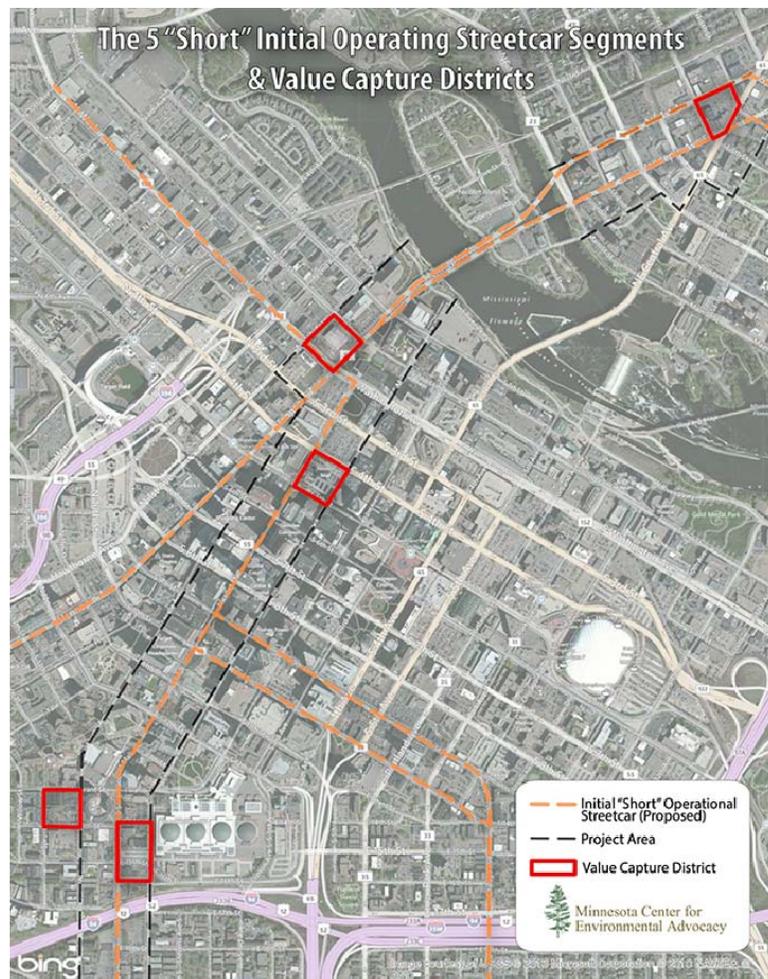
Tax Increment Financing District

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a process that involves selling bonds for a project and repaying the bonds with the increases in property tax that are produced as a result of the project. For a streetcar project, a TIF district could be developed that would consist of the area that would benefit from the streetcar service. The total amount that could be raised would be based on projections of how much debt service the increases in property values support, and the party issuing the bonds would be responsible for covering any funding shortages should property tax revenues fail to increase to anticipated levels.

A traditional TIF process has not yet been used to fund streetcar service, but is being considered by Washington, D.C. as a way to raise approximately \$46 million. However, Minneapolis’s new Value Capture District, which will be used to provide \$60 million in funding toward its planned Nicollet-Central streetcar service is a form of a TIF District, but unique in two respects:

- Instead of being comprised of the entire area served by the streetcar line, it is comprised of five different parcels along the line; most of the area served by the streetcar line is not in the Value Capture District (see Figure 18).
- Whereas most Tax Increment Financing approaches use tax revenue increases that are produced as a result of the project, development is already planned or underway on each of the Minneapolis parcels, and the increase in property tax values will be based on the values of those properties as of January 1, 2013. Thus the Minneapolis Value Capture District will leverage increases in property taxes from both before and after development

Figure 18: Minneapolis Value Capture District Parcels



Source: Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy

of the project.

The Minneapolis Value Capture District required legislative authorization, and the use of a TIF approach in Saint Paul would also require legislative approval.

Special Assessment Districts

Special Assessment Districts are similar to TIF districts in that a special district is created that consists of the area that benefits from streetcar service. However, unlike as with TIF financing, where property owners indirectly pay increased property taxes as a result increases in their property values, in Special Assessment Districts, property owners directly pay a fee or a higher property tax rate that is used to repay bond receipts.

Portland has used Special Assessment Districts extensively to fund its streetcar services. Most recently, Kansas City enacted a special assessment district that extends approximately ½ mile around its planned streetcar line, which it calls a Transportation Development District, or TDD. Within this district, both a property tax surcharge and a 1% sales tax increase have been enacted, and these are projected to fund \$83 million in capital costs and ongoing operating costs.

OTHER

There are also a variety of other taxes and fees that can be enacted to fund streetcar service, and which can be enacted in many forms. Those that cities can typically enact include higher charges for on-street parking, taxes/surcharges on parking ramp rates, a tax on entertainment tickets (i.e., sports and theatre events), and lodging taxes.

SUMMARY

There are a large number of ways that streetcar service can be funded, but there is no single easily obtainable source that can provide the most of the funding. Instead, most projects are financed by combining funding from many sources. Primary among these are a significant amount of local funding, which is often generated through the development of a special assessment district, with the most recent examples being Minneapolis and Kansas City. Minneapolis' version is unique that it consists of specific parcels that are already being developed, and there do not seem to be similar near-term opportunities for Saint Paul. However, a broader special assessment district or a TIF district could provide potential.

Beyond local funds, the most frequently used sources by other projects have been federal TIGER funds, as well as CMAQ and STP funds. The FTA allocates TIGER funds through a competitive process that requires a well-defined project and commitments of local funding. The Met-Council allocates CMAQ and STP funds, and as described above, Met Council needs to make a number of policy decisions related to the development of streetcar service in the Twin Cities area before these funds could be obtained.

Additional potential funding sources include CTIB sales tax funds and Ramsey County RRA property tax funds. However, as is the case with CMAQ and STP funds, both of those agencies would also need to revise their funding policies to include streetcar service within the array of transitway projects that they will fund.

Many of the required policy changes at the Met Council, CTIB, and Ramsey County RRA will likely be challenging. However, one factor that Saint Paul has working in its favor is that the City of Minneapolis is now addressing the same issues as part of its development of Nicollet-Central streetcar service.

Successful resolution of those issues within the context of that project would likely set precedents that could facilitate funding for Saint Paul streetcar service.

Item Number: 2026-094

Meeting Date: 3/17/2026

Sponsor: Public Works

Title

Support for the Revised Locally Preferred Alternative for the METRO Bronze Line Bus Rapid Transit Project

Recommendation

1. Support the revised Locally Preferred Alternative for the METRO Bronze Line Bus Rapid Transit Project.
2. Support amendment of the Metropolitan Council's Imagine 2050 Transportation Policy Plan to incorporate the revised METRO Bronze Line project definition.
3. Authorize Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority Chair to transmit the resolution to the Metropolitan Council to amend the Metropolitan Council's Imagine 2050 Transportation Policy Plan to incorporate the revised project definition, and direct that this action be transmitted to the Metropolitan Council and Metro Transit.

Background and Rationale

The METRO Bronze Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project (formerly known as the METRO Purple Line Bus Rapid Transit Project) is a regional transit investment led jointly by the Metropolitan Council and Ramsey County in partnership with Metro Transit, the city of Saint Paul, the city of Maplewood, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

The project has evolved over time:

- 2017 - The Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority supported the original Rush Line Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA).
- 2021 - The project advanced as the METRO Purple Line BRT and entered the Federal Transit Administration Project Development phase under the Capital Investment Grant program.
- 2022 - Following the city of White Bear Lake withdrawing support, the Metropolitan Council initiated a Route Modification Phase I study to identify a new northern terminus.
- 2023-2024 - A Route Modification Phase II study evaluated alternative alignments north of Maryland Avenue, including White Bear Avenue and Bruce Vento Trail options, with technical analysis and corridor-wide community engagement.
- 2023-2025 - Ramsey County worked closely with the city of Maplewood and other partners to address municipal concerns and refine the project definition north of Maryland Avenue.
- September 2025 - The Ramsey County Board received a workshop update on the Bronze Line (formerly known as Purple Line) and anticipated recommendation.
- December 11, 2025 - The Bronze Line Corridor Management Committee recommended a revised LPA.

The METRO Bronze Line represents the continuation of the previously approved Rush Line / METRO Purple Line corridor, with modifications to the northern alignment resulting from Route Modification Phase I and Phase II. The project's purpose, corridor limits, and regional mobility objectives remain consistent with prior board actions.

The revised LPA redefines the project as the METRO Bronze Line and consists of a 10-mile corridor between

Union Depot in downtown Saint Paul and the Maplewood Mall Transit Center with 22 stations and associated corridor improvements.

In Saint Paul, the revised LPA includes reconstructed and new stations; roadway reconstruction on Pennsylvania Avenue, Maryland Avenue, and White Bear Avenue up to Larpenteur; semi-exclusive, side-running bus lanes; improvements to Phalen Boulevard; reconstruction of the Bruce Vento Regional Trail to accommodate dedicated bus lanes; and new busway bridges at Arcade Street and Johnson Parkway. Reconstruction of Pennsylvania Avenue, Maryland Avenue, and White Bear Avenue is consistent with Ramsey County’s All-Abilities Transportation Network and includes lane conversion to support transit priority.

In Maplewood, the revised LPA includes six stations, improvements to the Maplewood Mall Transit Center, and pavement replant between Frost Avenue and Beam Avenue. In Maplewood, buses will operate in existing lanes without conversion to dedicated bus lanes.

The current planning-level capital cost estimate for the METRO Bronze Line is approximately \$375 million in year-of-expenditure dollars. Ramsey County is anticipated to provide approximately 90 percent of the total project cost (approximately \$340 million), with final funding commitments to be established through a future Capital Grant Agreement (CGA).

Because the Bronze Line Corridor Management Committee has recommended a revised LPA, impacted partner agencies are required to take formal action indicating support. The Metropolitan Council will use these actions as justification to adopt the revised LPA into the region’s Imagine 2050 Transportation Policy Plan. Upon adoption, Ramsey County and Metro Transit will continue advancing final design, environmental review, and preparation of a CGA to define funding commitments and delivery responsibilities.

County Goals (Check those advanced by Action)

- Well-being
- Prosperity
- Opportunity
- Accountability

Racial Equity Impact

The METRO Bronze Line advances Ramsey County’s commitment to equitable transportation investment by improving access to jobs, education, healthcare, and community destinations along the corridor. The Project serves diverse communities in Saint Paul and Maplewood and supports improved transit reliability, pedestrian safety, and multimodal access.

Community Participation Level and Impact

Community engagement has been a central component of the METRO Bronze Line throughout the Route Modification Study and corridor refinement process. During 2023-2025, project staff conducted corridor-wide outreach that included public meetings, pop-up events, municipal workshops, stakeholder briefings, advisory committee meetings, and online engagement tools. Thousands of residents, businesses, and corridor stakeholders were reached through in-person and virtual engagement, including surveys and interactive mapping tools.

Input received through this engagement informed evaluation of Route Modification Phase I and Phase II alternatives and refinement of the revised Locally Preferred Alternative.

- Inform
- Consult
- Involve
- Collaborate
- Empower

Fiscal Impact

This action affirms policy support for the revised Locally Preferred Alternative and Transportation Policy Plan amendment and does not authorize additional county expenditures beyond those previously approved. Any future capital funding commitments or modifications to the county’s financial participation will require separate board action.

Last Previous Action

On September 12, 2017, the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority approved support of the original Rush Line Locally Preferred Alternative. Subsequent Board actions advanced the project under the METRO Purple Line Bus Rapid Transit designation (R2017-24).

Attachments

1. METRO Bronze Line Project Map (December 2025)



- METRO Bronze Line BRT
- Park & Ride
- Current METRO lines**
- Gold Line (Bus Rapid Transit)
- Green Line (Light Rail)
- B Line (Bus Rapid Transit)
- Other Planned METRO lines**
- Gold Line Extension (Bus Rapid Transit)
- G & H Lines (Bus Rapid Transit)

- Exclusive bus lanes
- Side-running bus lanes

