

City of Saint Paul
Comments on the draft *Central Corridor Transit Service Concept Plan*

June 29, 2012

The City of Saint Paul applauds Metro Transit on their extensive and inclusive outreach process for the Central Corridor Transit Service Study, and for the thoughtful recommendations that have been put forward in this draft concept plan. The planned local service improvements represent significant user benefits for those who work, live, and visit Saint Paul. Metro Transit's emphasis on reinvesting resources to improve coverage, frequency, and hours of service will enable more efficient transit use in the study area, and the approach is consistent with adopted Comprehensive Plan policy T2.6.

The City is supportive of the concept plan overall, however, there are several topics which warrant additional consideration:

- **Route 83 - Lexington Parkway.** The new route is currently proposed to serve the southern portion of Lexington Parkway, from West 7th Street to Energy Park Drive, and on Energy Park and Snelling Avenue to Como Avenue. The new service on Lexington will provide much-needed service in the two-mile gap between Snelling and Dale, however, areas north of Lexington and Energy Park do not gain bus service under this service plan. While a low bridge clearance at Jessamine challenges regular route bus service on this northern section, it is critical that Como Regional Park and the North End-South Como neighborhood are able to share in the benefits of LRT and proximity to enhanced transit options.

Comprehensive Plan policy PR6.1 calls for designing convenient connections to from major parks to LRT, citing Como Park Zoo and Marjorie McNeely Conservatory as an example. Como Regional Park functions as both a neighborhood park and a regional attraction, serving 4 million visitors a year. Recently the City adopted the *Como Regional Park Transportation Implementation Plan (TIP)*, recognizing the need for a plan to address the park's transportation and parking issues and direct future planning efforts and resources.

In the Como TIP process, transit service - bus routes in or near the park, bus frequency, bus stop locations, and park shuttle service¹ – was identified by both the community and the task force as a top issue. A 2008 survey showed that 85% of visitors to Como come from outside of Saint Paul, making connections to regional transit a vital tool for relieving parking issues and traffic congestion. Increasing transit mode share, improving transit facilities, and reducing the need for new parking have emerged as primary goals of the TIP. The City would like to continue to partner with Metro Transit to further explore options for bus routing, optimized transfers, and potential for capital

¹ In 2009, the City implemented a shuttle service to and from a 450-space parking lot located at the State Fairgrounds along Como Avenue, but the lot is unavailable during fairground events. For 2009, the Como Shuttle operated on weekends only, and offered weekdays since and the maximum single day usage was 2,457 visitors (or 4,914 trips). The average usage is 6.9% of visitors on a busy weekend day. In 2011, Como Park recorded 11 days with more than 1,000 visitors riding the shuttle.

improvements in this area. A copy of the Como TIP can be found at www.stpaul.gov/DocumentView.aspx?DID=19913

- **Route 16.** In the planning of LRT, the City has supported increasing midday service over peak hour service on Route 16 due to the large number of off-peak trips traditionally taken on this local service. However, it is difficult to estimate how many peak or off-peak trips will switch to LRT due to better headways and accessibility advantages. The City recommends that Metro Transit revisit the topic of Route 16 service approximately one year after LRT operations begin, and adjust as needed.
- **Routes 3 and 21.** East/west improvements on Routes 63 and 67, in addition to upgraded Green Line service, will greatly improve crosstown service in the urban core. The City recommends that Metro Transit also consider increasing the frequency of other parallel routes, including the Routes 3 (Como) and 21 (Selby-Lake). With the redirection of the 65, Selby Avenue in particular may merit additional study, as identified in chapters four and six.
- **Local, transit-supportive improvements.** The City recognizes that pedestrian safety will need increasing attention with proposed improvements on routes like Cretin Avenue, where missing sidewalks and higher vehicle speeds make using transit more difficult. As described in chapter seven, trip ends will also need to accommodate transit driver facilities, which will need to be further explored for new and extended routes. Additionally, the City continues to partner with Metro Transit on concurrent transit improvement projects in this study area, including the Snelling Arterial “Rapid Bus” project and the Downtown Saint Paul Bus Stop Improvement Plan.

Again, the City of Saint Paul appreciates Metro Transit’s efforts on this comprehensive study, and is excited to see the level of overall transit improvements. We look forward to partnering on the implementation and evaluation of the finalized plan.