ROBERT ST
TRANSITWAY ALTERNATIVES STUDY

RAMSEY COUNTY Regional Railroad Authority
DCRRA Dakota County Regional Railroad Authority
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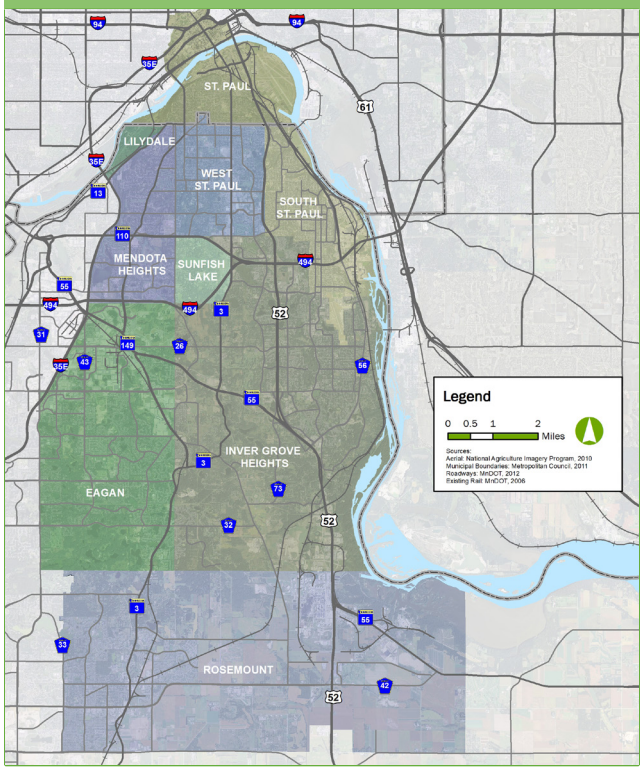
FINAL REPORT | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MAY 2015

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The **Robert Street Transitway Alternatives Analysis (AA) Study** was a step forward in advancing a transit improvement project focused on identifying more frequent service and faster transit travel times between downtown Saint Paul and areas within north central Dakota County. The AA phase of development began in mid-2012, and was a joint effort between the Dakota County Regional Railroad Authority and the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority. Oversight of the AA was provided by a Steering Committee and guided by a Technical Advisory Committee. Both committees were made up of representatives from local communities within the Robert Street study area and from regional and state agencies.

STUDY AREA



What is the purpose of the Robert Street Transitway?

The purpose of the Robert Street Transitway is to provide the necessary transit infrastructure and service to meet the long-term regional mobility and local accessibility needs between downtown St. Paul and areas within Dakota County.

This project intends to address the following issues:

- **Forecasted growth in travel demand resulting from continued growth in population and employment**
- **Limited transit service and time-efficient transit options**
- **Needs of people who depend on transit**
- **Roadway congestion and shift toward multimodal investments**
- **Regional objectives for growth**

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Extensive public outreach was completed as part of the AA study. Open houses were held at five different times during the process, and each round included a meeting in both Saint Paul and West St. Paul. In addition, over 30 individual meetings with neighborhood and business organizations, advocacy groups, and under-represented populations ensured continuous input throughout the process. The feedback collected throughout the study was integrated into the decision-making process for each project stage.

WHAT ALTERNATIVES WERE EVALUATED?

At the beginning of the study, based on the project goals, over 30 potential routes were identified and screened. An initial set of seven mode/alignment alternatives were then advanced based on the results of the screening process. Preliminary evaluation then narrowed the analysis down to three final alternatives:

- **Arterial Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) along Robert Street**
- **Modern Streetcar along Robert Street**
- **Highway BRT along Trunk Highway (TH) 52**

Service characteristics for the three final alternatives:

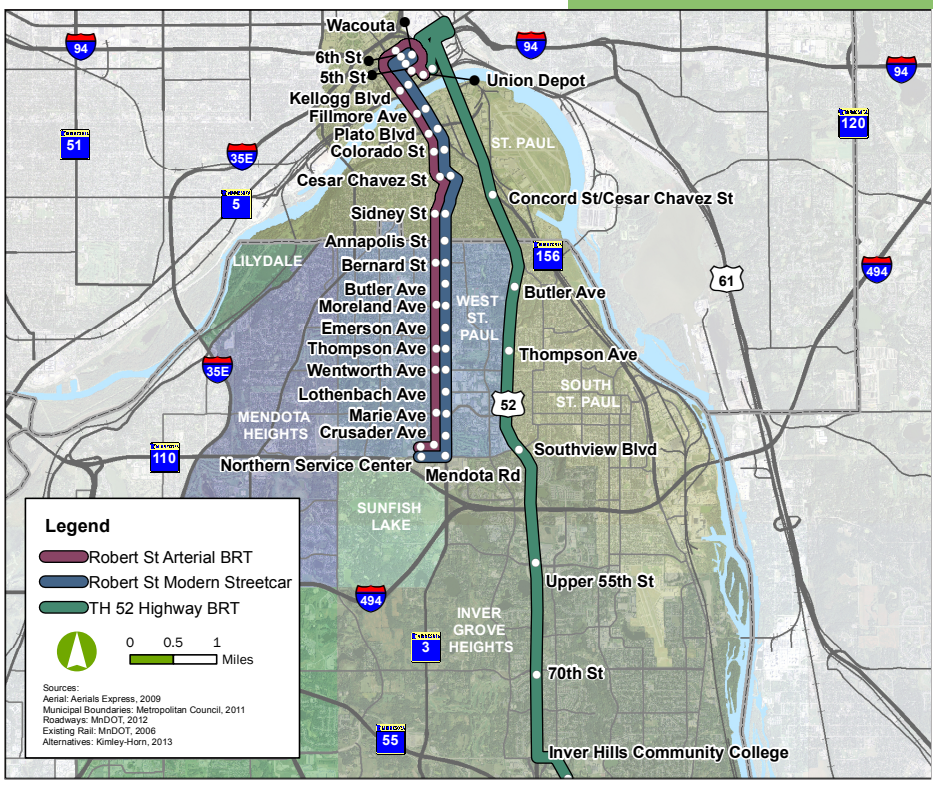
ALTERNATIVE	DISTANCE	TRAVEL TIME	FREQUENCY	ESTIMATED WEEKDAY BOARDINGS
Robert Street Arterial BRT	5.8 mi.	30 min.	Every 15 min.	3,100
Robert Street Modern Streetcar	5.4 mi.	29 min.	Every 15 min.	3,000
TH 52 Highway BRT	10.7 mi.	24 min.	Every 15 min.	2,300

HOW WERE THE ALTERNATIVES EVALUATED?

For each of the final alternatives, the following characteristics were defined: alignment, stations, service plans, traffic controls, and operating facilities. The alternatives were then evaluated based on a series of technical evaluation criteria. These measures were developed from project goals and objectives set through public input at the beginning of the AA:

- **Goal 1: Improve mobility and accessibility**
- **Goal 2: Enhance the effectiveness of transit service within the corridor**
- **Goal 3: Provide cost effective and financially feasible transit solutions**
- **Goal 4: Support and enhance existing development**
- **Goal 5: Support healthier communities and sound environmental practices**

FINAL ALTERNATIVES



WHAT WERE THE EVALUATION RESULTS?

➔ Goal 1: Improve mobility and accessibility

Key differences between the alternatives:

- Greater overall ridership potential for Arterial BRT and Modern Streetcar compared to Highway BRT
- Better accessibility for Modern Streetcar and Arterial BRT compared to Highway BRT

➔ Goal 2: Enhance the effectiveness of transit service within the corridor

Key differences between the alternatives:

- Greater potential of new transit riders for Highway BRT (in part because there is no transit service on TH 52 today)
- Better system productivity, as measured by passengers per revenue hour of service, for Arterial BRT and Modern Streetcar compared to Highway BRT

➔ Goal 3: Provide cost effective and financially feasible transit solutions

Key differences between the alternatives:

- Lower capital costs for Arterial BRT ($29 million) and Highway BRT ($49 million) compared to Modern Streetcar ($399 million) [Cost estimated in 2015 dollars]
- Lower operations and maintenance cost per rider for Arterial BRT ($3.97 per rider) and Highway BRT ($4.49 per rider) compared to Modern Streetcar ($8.33 per rider)

➔ Goal 4: Support and enhance existing communities and planned development

Key differences between the alternatives:

- Greater potential to directly serve planned development/redevelopment and encourage transit-oriented development in areas identified for future development/redevelopment for Modern Streetcar and Arterial BRT
- Greater potential to stimulate real estate development for Modern Streetcar compared to Arterial BRT, based upon additional economic analysis

➔ Goal 5: Support healthy communities and sound environmental practices

Key differences between the alternatives:

- Potential for fewer impacts related to private property, traffic congestion, and community resources with Highway BRT

STUDY CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

A technical recommendation for Arterial BRT on Robert Street was presented to the Steering Committee in May 2014 and to the public in June 2014. Following the evaluation process, continued interest in the Modern Streetcar alternative was expressed by many project stakeholders due to the expected benefits to local economic development.

The Steering Committee has acted to conclude the AA study at this time without taking action to select a single Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA), and is advancing the Robert Street Arterial BRT and Modern Streetcar alternatives for further consideration. This decision was made to allow more time to conduct additional land use planning, to update local comprehensive plans that guide development, and to target capital investments that would encourage additional density within the corridor. Following these local planning processes, the Dakota County Regional Railroad Authority and the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority will consider options for further evaluation of the final two alternatives with the intent of selecting an LPA.

HOW CAN YOU LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ROBERT STREET TRANSITWAY?

- View AA study documents on the project website: robertstreettransit.com
- Email questions and comments: robertstreettransit@co.dakota.mn.us
- Contact county staff:

  Dakota County
  952-891-7986

  Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority
  651-266-2760