



February 12, 2026

TO: Transportation Committee of the Planning Commission

FROM: Bill Dermody, Current Planning Manager, PED
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SUBJECT: Bronze Line Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA)

The proposed Bronze Line Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) has been recommended by the project's Corridor Management Committee. Prior to adoption by the Metropolitan Council into the regional Transportation Policy Plan, resolutions of support for the LPA are sought from the City of Saint Paul and other local jurisdictions (Ramsey County and Maplewood). The following memorandum provides background and analysis, and makes a recommendation regarding the City's requested support for the LPA.

Background

The Bronze Line is a proposed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project that would provide a 10-mile route between Union Depot and the Maplewood Mall (see map below). It includes frequent all-day service with features like off-board payment, near-level boarding, and comfortable shelters with real-time arrival information. From approximately Arcade Street to Maryland Avenue, it would be on a separated guideway (a new road only for buses) running generally along the north side of Phalen Boulevard. In other sections, including parts of White Bear Avenue, Maryland Avenue, Phalen Boulevard west of Payne Avenue, and downtown, the bus would operate in dedicated bus lanes (between the street curbs in the outer lanes) that will be restricted to bus and right-turn traffic only – no general through traffic. Buses would run in mixed traffic (non-dedicated lanes) on Jackson Street, in part of downtown, and in the Maplewood portion of the route.



- 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



The project would also involve associated road and trail construction, including: the full reconstruction of a portion of Pennsylvania Avenue, of 1.5 miles of the Bruce Vento Regional Trail between Arcade Street and Johnson Parkway, of Maryland Avenue between Johnson Parkway and White Bear Avenue, and of White Bear Avenue from Maryland Avenue to Larpenateur Avenue; mill-and-overlay partial reconstruction of Phalen Boulevard from Mississippi Street to Payne Avenue; and two new guideway bridges, over Johnson Parkway and over a newly daylighted Phalen Creek near Arcade Street.

The project was previously known as the Purple Line and the Rush Line in earlier phases of study. The Rush Line LPA, which followed a partially different route, was supported by the City of Saint Paul via RES PH 17-204 in 2017 and its 15% design plans via RES PH 20-165 in 2020.

Analysis

The [2040 Comprehensive Plan](#) contains several policies relevant to the Bronze Line LPA decision, which are cited and analyzed below.

Policy T-1. Prioritize safety and racial and social equity benefits in project selection, followed by support of quality full-time, living wage jobs – both through business support and connection of residents to job centers. Priorities will also be informed by specific modal plans, such as the Bicycle Plan or the forthcoming Pedestrian Plan.

Analysis: The project provides racial and social equity benefits. As detailed in an attachment (“Bronze Line Demographic Analysis”) produced internally based on Wilder Research’s Minnesota Compass data, the project would serve 19 station areas with a higher share of cost-burdened households than the region average and 9 station areas with a higher share of zero vehicle households than the region average. It also provides improved transit access to full-time, living wage jobs such as light industrial jobs along the Phalen Boulevard Corridor; medical jobs at the Health Partners specialty center campus, Regions Hospital, and St. John’s Hospital in Maplewood; and other jobs in downtown and throughout the connected transit network.

Policy T-3. Design rights-of-way per the following modal hierarchy:

1. Pedestrians, with a focus on safety
2. Bicyclists, with a focus on safety
3. Transit
4. Other vehicles

Analysis: Transit needs to be prioritized in certain corridors if we are to provide a robust network with high-quality service throughout the city. Besides that baseline expectation for this corridor, pedestrian movement and safety is a priority of the proposed LPA and will need to be prioritized in further design. Though this project precludes a conversion from four lanes to three lanes on streets such as Phalen Boulevard, Maryland Avenue, and White Bear Avenue, it could provide a similar safety benefit by removing the outer lanes from general traffic use, converting them to bus lanes with right turn only use by other vehicles. The LPA allows for pedestrian safety measures like medians to shorten crossings, new/replaced sidewalks, and improved signalization for pedestrians. In previous phases of the project (Purple Line, Rush Line), City staff and project partners have advocated for designs that improve safety for people walking, and that is expected to continue to be a high priority. Staff and project partners will also reference the Saint Paul Bicycle Plan and implement bikeways that are consistent with the Plan, and within the scope of the project.

Policy T-6. Implement “road diets” for undivided four-lane roads to convert them to two or three lanes, where feasible, in order to prioritize pedestrian safety.

Analysis: If not for this BRT project, portions of Maryland Avenue and White Bear Avenue might be candidates for conversion from four lanes to three lanes, as identified in a [2020 report](#). However, this project could provide a similar pedestrian safety benefit by removing the outer lanes of Maryland Avenue and White Bear Avenue (in Saint Paul only) from general traffic use, converting them to bus lanes with right turn only use by other vehicles. For the roadways to provide safety benefits similar to what would be expected from a road diet, it will be important that general vehicle traffic remain out of the outer lanes – whether through norms, expectations, and/or enforcement. If general vehicle traffic uses the outer lanes regularly or intermittently to pass slower or left-turning vehicles (in violation of the law), it will dilute or negate the bus lanes’ safety benefits.

Policy T-7. Implement intersection safety improvements such as traffic signal confirmation lights, pedestrian countdown timers, and leading pedestrian signal intervals. Reduce pedestrian roadway exposure via median refuge islands, curb extensions, narrowed travel lanes and other elements designed to lower motor vehicle speeds.

Analysis: Medians and pedestrian refuges are likely to be part of the project’s design. Other intersection safety improvements may be implemented, as determined through future design work.

Policy T-9. Design the rights-of-way for all users, including older people, children and those with mobility constraints, as guided by the Street Design Manual and Safe Routes to School Plans, and by thoughtfully addressing streetscape issues such as curb cut design, level sidewalks, lighting, accessibility to/from bus stops, and the presence of benches and buffers between sidewalks and streets.

Analysis: Right-of-way design will be determined as the project progresses. The proposed LPA will limit the ability to provide landscaped buffers between sidewalks and streets in some places.

Policy T-10. Design sidewalks, trails and transit stops for personal safety (real and perceived), including by providing lighting and boulevards.

Analysis: Sidewalk design will be determined as the project progresses. The proposed LPA will limit the ability to provide landscaped boulevards in some places.

Policy T-21. Reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by 40% by 2040 by improving transportation options beyond single-occupant vehicles.

Analysis: The project improves transit service in this corridor and connections to the broader transit network, thereby making it easier for VMT to be reduced.

Policy T-22. Shift mode share towards walking, biking, public transit, carpooling, ridesharing and carsharing in order to reduce the need for car ownership.

Analysis: The project improves transit service and helps shift mode share toward public transit, reducing the need for car ownership, especially in this corridor.

Policy T-24. Implement the [Saint Paul Bicycle Plan](#) to make bicycling safe and comfortable throughout the city, and to increase bicycling mode share.

Analysis: The Bicycle Plan identifies this stretch of Maryland Avenue for further study of a potential new bikeway. It also identifies parallel routes to the north on Arlington and Ivy Avenues for shared lane bicycle facilities. A bikeway along Maryland Avenue is not compatible with the proposed Bronze Line infrastructure without major property impacts. Through this study or separately, the Arlington and Ivy routes could be analyzed for potential upgrades to higher level bikeway facilities. In previous phases of this project (Purple Line, Rush Line), City staff and project partners have advocated for biking connections to the Bronze Line and will continue to do so.

Policy T-25. Implement the Pedestrian Plan to make walking safe and comfortable throughout the city, increase pedestrian mode share for short trips, and increase physical activity in people's daily routines.

Analysis: Reconstructed sidewalks and improved intersections through the project would make walking safer and more comfortable. The proposed design precludes removal of lanes that would allow narrower road widths and therefore shorter overall pedestrian crossing distances on Maryland Avenue and White Bear Avenue, but if general traffic stays out of the bus/right-turn lanes, the effective crossing distances will decrease. Also, the proposed medians would break up the crossings and improve pedestrian safety.

Policy T-26. Provide sidewalks throughout the city, generally on both sides of the street, except potentially in portions of Highwood as directed via other officially-adopted City plans.

Analysis: Sidewalks would be installed by the project along parts of Phalen Boulevard where there are currently gaps.

Policy T-27. Improve public transit mode share and support quality public transit in all parts of the city through strategic establishment of transit-supportive land use intensity and design, increased traffic signal optimization for transit, working with transit providers to improve their service offerings and supporting transit facilities.

Analysis: The project embodies an effort to improve public transit mode share. It would directly improve transit mode share through its provision of new transit service where it does not currently exist (e.g. Phalen Boulevard) and improved transit service throughout the route. Details about traffic signal optimization would be addressed as the project's design advances.

Policy T-41. Maximize space for recreation and landscaping uses within Parkway rights-of-way, and prioritize recreation and landscaping in Parkway design in order to maintain a park-like feel, particularly on the Grand Round.

Analysis: Johnson Parkway is a parkway and is part of the Grand Round. The route is designed to cross Johnson Parkway via a bridge that impacts space along it less than an at-grade crossing would and has minimal impact on recreation and landscaping along the parkway.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Transportation Committee recommends approval of the draft Planning Commission resolution recommending support for the Bronze Line Locally Preferred Alternative.

Attachments

1. Draft Planning Commission Resolution to recommend support of the Bronze Line Locally Preferred Alternative
2. Bronze Line Demographic Analysis
3. [Saint Paul Bicycle Plan excerpt: Planned Bicycle Network map](#)