

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Effective bus service is a critical part of a successful transit system in the greater Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. Bus services include local routes that operate more frequently, bus rapid transit that travels in mixed traffic and serves stops spaced farther apart (arterial BRT), and commuter express routes that operate primarily during traditional morning and evening rush hours, serving fewer stops. Buses are the backbone of the regional transit system – 80 percent of all daily Metro Transit boardings are made on buses.

The *Metro Transit Service Improvement Plan* (SIP) builds on the existing bus network, identifying opportunities to add new routes and increase the frequency and span of service on existing routes. The plan combined four resources – *Thrive MSP 2040* outcomes and principles, *2040 Transportation Policy Plan* (TPP) goals and objectives, transit planning fundamentals and significant public input – to create a specific and prioritized list of improvements that require additional operating funds. The plan identifies the evaluation factors and measures that were used to prioritize these bus service investments, as well as the timing and resources needed to make them.

The SIP identifies needed bus service improvements within the Metro Transit service area for the foreseeable future, generally between 2015 and 2030. Improved bus services would be operated by Metro Transit or by private providers under contract to the Metropolitan Council. The SIP will be updated every four to five years, and amended as needed.

In addition to local and express bus service, the SIP includes some improvements for transitway projects. Transitway project improvements include arterial BRT service and bus service connecting to commuter rail, light rail or highway bus rapid transit projects. The SIP includes these improvements because the region's long-range transportation plan does not currently include ongoing operating funds for arterial BRT or bus services that support commuter rail, light rail or highway bus rapid transit. The SIP is not intended to be a complete transit improvement or investment plan. It does not affect cities outside of Metro Transit's service area and does not include associated capital investments (vehicles, customer and support facilities, technology enhancements, etc.).

Metro Transit is an operating division of the Metropolitan Council and the largest of five public transit providers in the Twin Cities region. The TPP requires each transit provider to develop its own SIP, then work together to combine and prioritize projects into the Regional Service Improvement Plan (RSIP). The RSIP is a four- to five-year plan that guides bus service improvements for all transit providers in the region, and will be updated in 2015.