



**Orange Line Bus Rapid Transit
Public Engagement Plan**



**Metro Transit
August 2013**

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Draft 3.0
August 30, 2013

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1 Introduction

Metro Transit is initiating a Project Plan Update for the METRO Orange Line, a planned Bus Rapid Transit project on I-35W between Minneapolis, Richfield, Bloomington, and Burnsville.

Orange Line BRT will benefit existing riders and attract new riders by improving transit access, service, and reliability on the I-35W corridor. Additionally, an identifiable, high-amenity brand will increase the visibility of transit and leverage service improvements to attract new riders to the system.

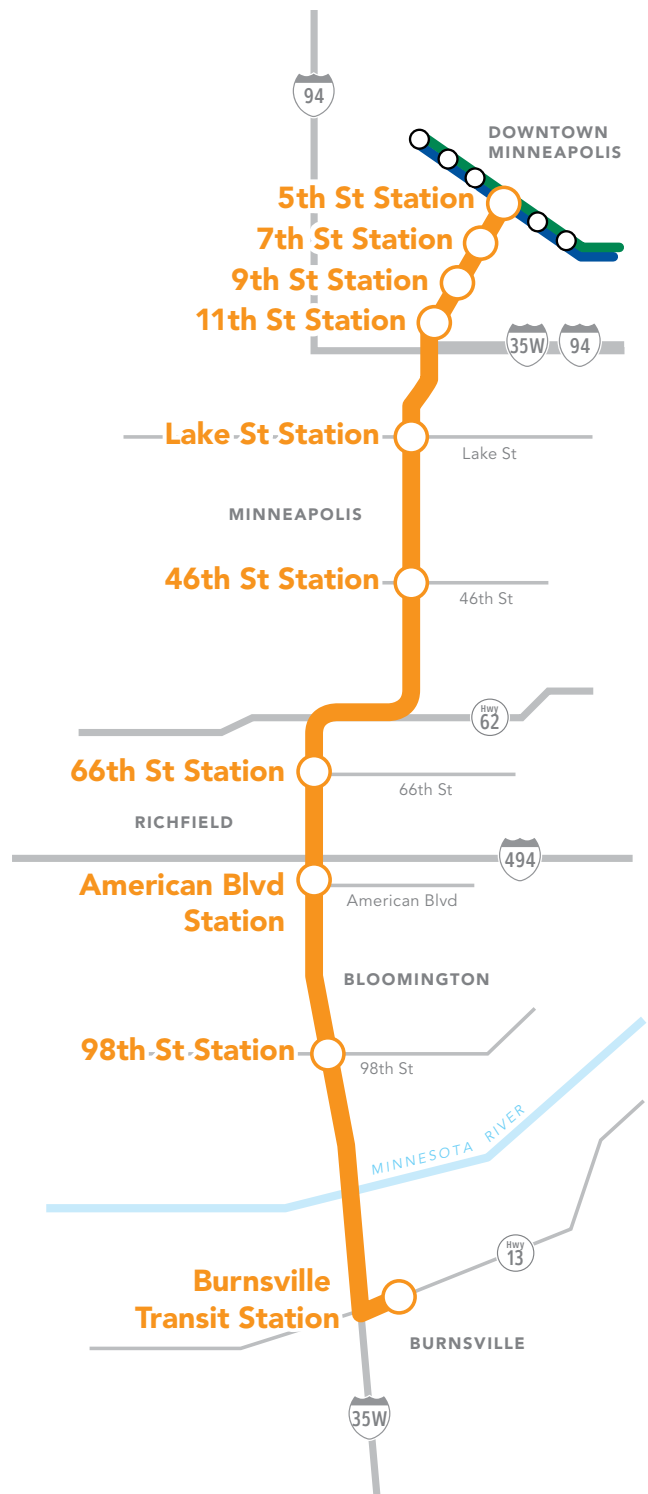
All-day, frequent BRT service will complement local and express bus routes along I-35W, providing competitive running times for station-to-station trips and a new option for reverse -commute markets. Both BRT and express-service riders will benefit from station, runningway, technology, and service improvements.

As a part of the METRO system, the Orange Line will connect people across the region to job centers, housing options, transit stations, and key destinations in the I-35W corridor. By providing a new transportation option and expanding accessibility, BRT service will promote compact, walkable development in the station areas.

1.1 Purpose of the Public Engagement Plan

This plan outlines activities for Metro Transit and its partners to engage and educate the public, policy makers, stakeholder groups, and staff on the 2013 Project Plan Update for the METRO Orange Line transitway project.

A well-informed public feels it has opportunities to contribute input into transportation decision-making processes through a broad array of involvement opportunities at all stages of decision making. This process should strive to be inclusive and transparent, and include multiple techniques and tools to fully engage communities that are traditionally under-represented in public processes.



It is intended that this be a living document that evolves over time. As public involvement is initiated, Metro Transit will continue to learn more about Orange Line communities, about what techniques work, and about what kind of involvement the public wants. This public input should be clearly reflected in the decision-making process, and be evaluated for effectiveness to inform future phases of this project.

1.2 Key decisions and level of public participation

Nine key items will be finalized during 2013 planning, and documented in the Orange Line Project Plan Update.

1. Transitway alignment. The preferred routing of the transitway will be selected, and any anticipated right-of-way acquisitions identified. This item will also include the scope of any road modifications needed for the transit runningway.
2. Station locations. General station locations are identified on the Orange Line map on page 3, however, placement and configuration of the platforms and the American Boulevard park-and-ride will be identified in 2013. Locations will balance access and speed to nearby destinations, and account for short- and long-term impacts on transit riders, residents, businesses, property owners, and other stakeholders.
3. Station naming standards. The name of each transit station will be determined, primarily based on the names of major cross streets or existing transit facilities, consistency with current bus stop identification, and ability to use common names throughout the system.
4. Conceptual station design for improvements at 66th Street, 98th Street, and Burnsville Transit Station. Work will document the function of existing stations and any improvements needed at planned BRT stations, including transit investments and improving connections by foot, bike, bus, and car.
5. Preliminary service planning. Service planning will develop and analyze origins and destinations, and bus route and schedule plans, including preliminary Orange Line schedules, headways, and connecting routes. Impacts on existing and potential customers will be studied.
6. Determine a NEPA path. The National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) of 1969 outlines policies for protecting our environment for future generations. The purposes of this Act are:

“To declare a national policy which will encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment; to promote efforts which will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere and stimulate the health and welfare of man; to enrich the understanding of the ecological systems and natural resources important to the Nation; and to establish a Council on Environmental Quality.”

An original intent of NEPA was to put environmental concerns on par with economic motivations and technical feasibility when making decisions that affect the environment. These concerns may be hydrological, geological, biological, ecological, social, or health related. More recently, archeological, historical, cultural, and visual concerns have been added to the process. NEPA requires that information is available to the public before decisions are made and actions are taken, supporting more transparent public engagement, and decision making that reflects community feedback. There are three levels of analysis that a project may follow: categorical exclusion determination; preparation of an environmental assessment/finding of no significant impact (EA/FONSI); or preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS). Working with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Metro Transit will determine which path should be pursued to evaluate any potential environmental impacts of Orange Line BRT.

7. Conceptual budget for planning and funding purposes. A project budget will be created to position Metro Transit to apply for local and federal funding sources.

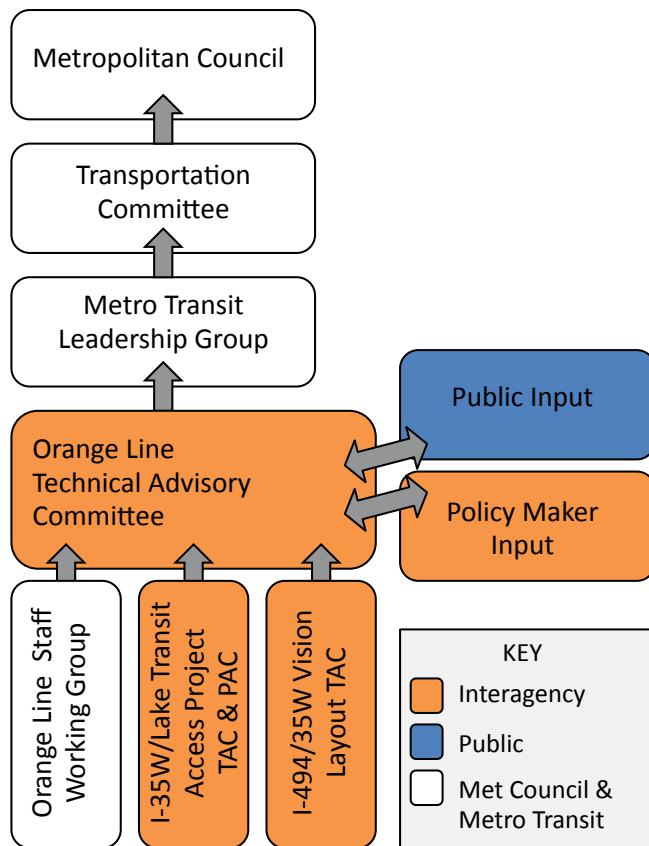
8. Project implementation roles and responsibilities. Many partners will be needed to design and build a successful BRT line. This document will outline roles and responsibilities for each partner.

9. Orange Line Phase II. Recently, Metro Transit has discussed the concept of extending the planned Orange Line from Burnsville Transit Station to Lakeville Kenrick park-and-ride, with an additional offline station in the vicinity of Burnsville Shopping Center. Work this year will analyze what transit service would best serve existing and future markets, studying a variety of options: all-day BRT, express bus service, reverse commute service, and improved local connections.

Decision	Public Participation
1. Alignment	Involve
2. Station Location	Collaborate
3. Naming Standards	Consult
4. Station Design	Collaborate
5. Service Planning	Collaborate
6. NEPA Path	Inform
7. Budget	Inform
8. Roles	Consult
9. Scope Phase II	Consult

Anticipated levels of 2013 participation are described in the chart above, based on the Spectrum of Public Participation developed by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2). The IAP2 Spectrum assists with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public’s role in any engagement process. The Spectrum also shows that differing levels of participation can be meaningful depending on the goals, time frames, resources, and levels of concern in the decision to be made.

Goal	Public Participation	Promise to the Public
Inform	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities, and/or solutions	We will keep you informed
Consult	To provide the public with feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced decision
Involve	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision
Collaborate	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and identification of the preferred solution	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible
Empower	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public	We will implement what you decide



2 Project Plan Update decision making

The planning process will be informed by input by various organizations, agencies, and the general public. The members, roles, and responsibilities of each of these groups are described below.

2.1 Community members

Metro Transit hopes to engage the public at existing community events and organizations. Some examples of this involvement may include conducting transit customer surveys and focus groups, speaking with neighborhood and business groups, and providing materials at destinations near planned Orange Line stations. If you are interested in being involved, or hearing more about the Orange Line project at your meeting or event, please send a request to brtprojects@metrotransit.org, or call Christina Morrison at 612-349-7690.

2.2 Orange Line Staff Working Group

The Orange Line Working Group consists of Metro Transit and Metropolitan Council staff from Route Service Planning, Street Operations, Engineering and Facilities, Local Planning Assistance, Community Outreach, Metropolitan Transportation Services, and the BRT/Small Starts Project Office. The working group reviews all technical information and recommendations, advises on the feasibility of different alternatives and approaches, and provides a link back to departmental work that impacts I-35W planning.

2.3 Technical Advisory Committee

A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will be convened with representatives from interagency partners. Its purpose is to provide technical guidance and assist in the resolution of technical issues in their field. See page 7 for a list of current TAC members.

2.4 Concurrent outreach processes

2.4.1 I-35W/Lake Transit Access Project

The I-35W Transit/Access Project includes a number of roadway design changes between I-94 and 32nd Street, as well

as the construction of an online BRT station at Lake Street and streetscape improvements. It is being led by Hennepin County in partnership with the City of Minneapolis, Metropolitan Council, Metro Transit, and MnDOT.

A robust public engagement process has been underway for several years in this project area. A Project Advisory Committee (PAC), comprised of residents, business owners, community institutions and policy makers, meets monthly. The PAC will advise partner agencies as the Lake Street BRT Station moves into 60% design in 2013. Additional information on the meetings and proposed station design can be found at www.35lake.com.

2.4.2 I-494/35W Vision Layout

The 35W/494 interchange is congested well over 30% of each and every day, carrying nearly 500,000 vehicles daily, with many vehicle crashes occurring in and around the area. In 2009, MnDOT recommended a “turbine interchange” concept layout, which has the ability to be constructed in phases. Phase I of the I-35W/494 interchange improvement is planned to include an American Boulevard BRT station with a park-and-ride ramp. Planning is currently underway to study location and alignment alternatives for the transit station.

In the fall of 2013, MnDOT and its partner agencies will host public events and policy maker workshops to receive feedback on options for the interchange concept layout.

2.4.3 County State Aid Highway 53 (66th Street) Reconstruction

This street reconstruction will improve the operational safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles, as well as improve the condition of the pavement. The project will replace the deteriorating 66th Street roadway and the sidewalks, thereby improving safety and access to the 66th Street Orange Line BRT Station.

The Richfield Transportation Commission, with significant involvement from members of the City Council, various other advisory Commissions, the Richfield Chamber of Commerce, and County and City Staff, recently concluded two visioning workshops. A Technical Advisory Committee meets regularly, and public open houses for the project will be held in the fall of 2013.

Orange Line Technical Advisory Committee	
Member	Agency
Glen Markegard	City of Bloomington
Karl Keel	City of Bloomington
Kirk Roberts	City of Bloomington
Steve Albrecht	City of Burnsville
Mark Krebsbach	Dakota County
Jim Grube	Hennepin County
Kim Zlimen	Hennepin County
Steve Mielke	City of Lakeville
Charles Carlson	Metro Transit
Christina Morrison	Metro Transit
Jack Byers	City of Minneapolis
Steve Hay	City of Minneapolis
Ron Rauchle	MnDOT
Jen Lehmann	MVTA
Jeff Pearson	City of Richfield
Lisa Freese	Scott County

3 Key stakeholders

- Residents
- Property owners
- Neighborhood groups and organizations
 - » Minneapolis Neighborhood Organizations within ½ mile
 - » Midtown Greenway Coalition
 - » Midtown Community Works and Phillips Partnership
 - » The Richfield Foundation
- Corridor groups and organizations
 - » 35W Solutions Alliance
 - » 494 Corridor Commission
- Local businesses
- Business associations and Chambers of Commerce
 - » Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce
 - » Minneapolis Downtown Council
 - » Lake Street Council
 - » Nicollet-Lake Business Association
 - » Bloomington Chamber of Commerce
 - » Penn Central Neighborhood of Richfield
 - » Richfield Chamber of Commerce
 - » Burnsville Chamber of Commerce
- Transit and highway users
- Potential transit users
- Transit advocacy organizations
 - » Transit for Livable Communities
- Commuter services organizations
 - » Commuter Connection
 - » 494 Commuter Services
- Major destinations, employers, institutions, and service providers
 - » Allina Hospitals and Clinics
 - » Abbott Northwestern Hospital
 - » Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD)
 - » Children’s Hospital and Clinics
 - » Wells Fargo
 - » Cristo Rey Jesuit High School
 - » Field Middle School
 - » Southside Family Charter School
 - » Saint Joan of Arc Church and School

- » Richfield Hub and West Shopping Center
- » Academy of Holy Angels
- » Fountainhead Apartments
- » Globe College
- » US Bank – Meridian Crossings Office
- » Knox Landing senior housing
- » Southtown Shopping Center
- » Best Buy Headquarters
- » Alder University
- » Strayer University - Bloomington Campus
- » Oxboro Shopping Center
- » Bloomington City Hall and Civic Center
- » Nativity of Mary Parish and School
- » Volunteers Enlisted to Assist People (VEAP)
- » Minnesota School of Business
- » Normandale Community College
- » Heart of the City
- » Burnsville Performing Arts Center
- Transit Providers
 - » Metropolitan Council
 - » Metro Transit
 - » Metro Mobility
 - » Metro Link
 - » Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA)
 - » Scott County/BlueXpress
 - » Southwest Transit
- County Staff and Policy Makers
 - » Hennepin County
 - » Dakota County
- City Staff and Policy Makers
 - » Minneapolis Mayor and City Council
 - » Minneapolis Planning Commission
 - » Minneapolis Transportation and Public Works Committee
 - » Richfield Mayor and City Council
 - » Richfield Transportation Commission
 - » Bloomington Mayor and City Council
 - » Bloomington Planning Commission
 - » Burnsville Mayor and City Council

- » Lakeville Mayor and City Council
- State Legislature
- Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Minnesota Department of Transportation
- Watershed Districts and Watershed Management Organizations
 - » Mississippi (WD)
 - » Minnehaha Creek (WMO)
 - » Nine Mile Creek (WMO)
 - » Lower Minnesota River (WMO)
 - » Black Dog Lake(WD)
- Department of Natural Resources
- Local Newspaper Media
 - » Star Tribune
 - » Pioneer Press
 - » Minn Post
 - » Finance & Commerce
 - » Downtown Journal
 - » Sun Current
 - » Richfield Patch
 - » Burnsville Patch
 - » SunThisweek

3.1 Service impacts

Service changes will primarily impact a smaller subset of key stakeholders.

- Residents
- Property owners
- Local businesses
- Transit and highway users
- Potential transit users
- Commuter services organizations
- Major destinations, employers and service providers
- Transit Providers

3.2 Property and right-of-way impacts

Although the Orange Line is being constructed mostly within existing right-of-way, there may be property that needs to be acquired in the American Boulevard and 98th Street station areas. This is dependent on exact park-and-ride and station platform location. It is expected that this information would be known by the end of 2013, after key decisions

have been made about the transitway alignment and station locations (see section 1.2). Impacts on private property will be one consideration of various station location options.

3.3 Community awareness and education

BRT is a new mode in the Twin Cities, with the first route, [METRO Red Line](#), opening in June 2013. The Red Line has some characteristics of highway BRT, but also some sections more closely resembling arterial BRT. As the public becomes familiar with Red Line service, it will be important to highlight similarities and differences between the two corridors.

Several decades of incremental transit investment along I-35W have focused on incorporating transit advantages into roadway improvements. The MnPass lanes and Marquette and 2nd bus stops were recently completed as part of the Urban Partnership Agreement, and the 46th Street BRT Station was built with the Crosstown Commons highway reconstruction. Additionally, two major planned stations, American Boulevard and Lake Street, and being designed as part of separate (but coordinated) roadway projects, potentially further obscuring what constitutes the Orange Line “project.” Metro Transit should clearly identify transit components of each roadway project, and their relation to the larger corridor.

I-35W is already Minnesota’s busiest commuter corridor, with 27 express bus routes, and one limited stop route providing station-to-station service (route 535). The Orange Line will significantly improve and reformat this route, while utilizing some runningway and station improvements that are already constructed and operating. Public engagement in the corridor should seek to distinguish the infrastructure and service improvements associated with BRT, while demonstrating how improvements will also benefit other express bus routes.

4 Outreach techniques and tools

4.1 Overall approach for public involvement

Several factors influence the overall approach to engagement in this corridor: the geographic length and diversity of the corridor, the recent completion of several stations, the mode of transportation planned, the differing scale of investment at each station, and the long-range timeline of project planning.

The 16-mile corridor has diverse demographic and land use patterns, and different agencies engaged at each station. Because BRT is planned and, in places, already partially constructed, more public input should be focused on stations still under design, or just beginning design.

Center-running highway BRT may lend itself to a more decentralized public process. The Orange Line is generally within large swaths of right-of-way, does not have properties directly adjacent to stations, and would have few physical impacts on properties. Station areas are several miles apart. Additionally, station capital investments will vary greatly depending on the context and need for associated roadway or bridge replacement. Finally, engagement techniques should help the project and the public move through this planning phase, but should not create “meeting fatigue” or overemphasize the finality of this planning. A significant amount of public input will still be needed as the project moves from the Project Plan Update work in 2013, into Project Development, Engineering, and Construction phases.

4.1 Outreach

The Orange Line project staff should pursue and attend events at the following locations:

- Community and neighborhood events in or adjacent to station areas
- Public meetings and open houses for concurrent planning processes (Lake Street, I-494, 66th, etc.)
- Employer fairs
- Business organization meetings
- City and County policy maker meetings
- Multi-family and multi-tenant buildings

Additionally, key stakeholders should be able to easily retrieve project information and receive updates:

- [Website](#), updated biweekly
- Email list for updates and public information
- Email contact for project staff
- Phone number for project staff

4.2 Education

Education tools and techniques might include:

- Presentations and discussion at meetings of key stakeholders
- Signage at existing transit stations
- Flyers distributed through neighborhood and business organizations
- Information distributed by commuter services organizations

4.3 Gathering input

Several types of tools could be used during outreach and education activities to gather input:

- Feedback from in-person discussion or meetings
- Paper surveys at bus stops, transit stations, and major destinations
- Web-based surveys, distributed via email and social media
- Design workshops
- Visual preference surveys
- Written and spoken comments from open houses
- Letters, emails, and phone calls to staff or policy makers
- Formal public hearings

5 Reflection of public input in decision making

5.1 Pathways for incorporating input into decision making

Metro Transit staff will act as one conduit for conveying public input to policy makers using the process shown in Section 2. As public comments, questions, and suggestions are collected throughout the planning of the Orange Line, a contact management log will be maintained and used as a way to document comments from the public. This information will be conveyed to other interagency staff via the Technical Advisory Committee, to Metro Transit Leadership via staff updates, and to policy makers throughout the corridor via presentations and briefings. The public is also encouraged to engage their local and regional policy makers directly, and to ask about how local planning will support the Orange Line, and vice versa.

5.2 Feedback to public about decision making

Metro Transit will also use the contact management log as one tool to coordinate answers and comments back to the public. Additionally, local and federal reporting on the decision-making process will be made available and transparent to the public to help demonstrate how public engagement is influencing various project components. Metro Transit will also provide biweekly updates to the Orange Line website with any meeting agendas, materials, FAQs, and presentations.

5.1 Plan for monitoring, evaluation, and adjustment

This plan will next be reviewed, evaluated, and updated again in January 2014 as the Project Plan Update is being finalized. Metro Transit will continue to learn more about Orange Line communities, about what techniques work, and about what kind of involvement the public wants. This input will directly inform future phases of this project.