

Revised Draft Problem Statement/Goals and Objectives

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1. Introduction

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) advises that a corridor’s transportation problem should be viewed as the “gap” or difference between the desired level of system performance and the current and projected level of performance¹. With this direction in mind, transportation conditions in the corridor are summarized below.

2. Background

2.1 Corridor Description

The Gateway Corridor is centered on Interstate 94 (I-94) between the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota and the west central Wisconsin community of Eau Claire (Figure 1). The corridor study area for this Alternatives Analysis extends approximately 3-5 miles either side of the freeway. Old Hudson Road brackets many segments of I-94 in the suburban Minnesota portion of the corridor; US TH 12 parallels I-94 on the north in Wisconsin. The Union Pacific Railroad roughly parallels I-94 on the north throughout the corridor in both states.

FIGURE 1
Gateway Corridor



The approximately 90-mile-long corridor provides the major transportation route for communities surrounding the corridor within Hennepin, Ramsey, Washington, St. Croix,

¹ *Procedures and Technical Methods for Transit Project Planning – Part II, Organization and Management*, Federal Transit Administration Office of Planning and Environment, June 2007 (http://www.fta.dot.gov/printer_friendly/planning_environment_2396.html)



Dunn, Eau Claire, and Chippewa Counties. It is a major route for commerce, and creates vital connections between urban, suburban, and rural communities. Several major educational institutions are also located in communities that are directly adjacent to the corridor.

I-94 provides two general purpose travel lanes in each direction throughout most of the Wisconsin portion of the corridor. The roadway increases to three through lanes in each direction through Hudson, WI, and maintains a consistent minimum six-lane cross-section throughout the corridor, with additional travel lanes added at some major interchanges and in higher-volume segments.

Transit service is provided in most of the Minnesota portion of the corridor by Metro Transit. In Wisconsin, regular route transit service is provided within the City of Eau Claire and operated by the City. Metro Transit operates both local and express fixed-route bus service between downtown Minneapolis and St. Paul and into the eastern suburban communities. I-94 corridor express bus service currently provides over 80 daily bus trips and 2,200 daily rides. Express bus service continues as far east as Woodbury. The primary Metro Transit express routes and their characteristics are identified in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1
Express Bus Service Characteristics

Express Bus Service Characteristics						Productivity	
September 2010							
Route	Peak Direction	Midday	Reverse Dir	Total Trips per Peak	Travel Time to Core of CBD	Daily Rides	PPISH
294	5/6	0	3	8-9	0:44	330	21
351	5	0	2/3	8	0:18	265	NA
353	2	0	0	2	0:20 St Paul/0:45 Mpls	103	28
355	13	0	0	13	0:34 to 0:45	896	44
375	10	0	0	10	0:29 to 0:40	812	59

Core of CBD assumes 6th/Cedar for St. Paul and 7th/Nicollet Minneapolis. October 2010 Ridership/Productivity shown

Source: Metro Transit, November 2010

Fixed-route transit service is augmented by demand-responsive service (i.e. Transit Link) provided by the Metropolitan Council, and by commuter van operations supported by several corridor employers. Park and ride lots are located throughout the corridor.

In the Twin Cities, the Gateway Corridor currently offers many miles of bus-only shoulders on I-94. Bus-only shoulder operation is a form of fixed guideway transit that qualifies for fixed guideway FTA funding. The corridor has also been studied for managed lanes, which would further improve the fixed guideway nature of freeway bus improvements.

The current construction of the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit between downtown St. Paul and downtown Minneapolis will introduce another form of fixed guideway transit into the Gateway Corridor study area. Fixed guideway transit, both LRT and commuter rail, has also been studied in other corridors which share a portion of the downtown St. Paul area of the Gateway Corridor. Washington and Ramsey Counties are working together on both of those corridors, Rush Line and Red Rock.

In general terms, I-94 is the primary travel corridor between the Twin Cities and Eau Claire, and south and east to Madison, Milwaukee and Chicago. The corridor is a major thoroughfare linking Minnesota and western Wisconsin into the Chicago mega-region.



Besides being a major economic development and commerce corridor of national significance, the ADT numbers are representative of the importance of the Gateway Corridor for commuter travel. Some of the region's largest employers, such as 3M, Anderson Windows, and those in the two major downtowns, are located within or rely on this corridor.

Land use and development characteristics in the corridor vary from:

- urbanized, heavily employment-oriented downtown core districts (Minneapolis and Saint Paul),
- transitional suburban/rural development (eastern Ramsey County, Washington County, Saint Croix County of western Wisconsin), and
- growing rural communities in western Wisconsin, marked at the eastern end by Eau Claire, the largest city in the three Wisconsin counties the Gateway Corridor runs directly through.

2.2 Comparison to Other Corridors

Travel corridors in Minnesota and around the nation have undergone similar studies to the Gateway Alternatives Analysis, resulting in multiple successful transitways. The Gateway Corridor incorporates travel aspects of many of these other successful transit corridors. Within the Twin Cities, the Hiawatha LRT corridor exceeded projected ridership in its first year, linking regional travelers using the Mall of America to the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport to downtown Minneapolis. The Cedar Avenue Transitway, in final design as the Region's first BRT corridor, will use all-day, station-to-station and express bus service to bring suburban riders to mid-point destinations within the corridor such as the Mall of America, where it will connect to existing shoulder and MnPass lane facilities into downtown Minneapolis. The Northstar Corridor commuter rail service extends from Minneapolis to areas through the developed suburbs in Anoka County and brings riders from rural Sherburne County.

Around the United States, cities such as Dallas, Denver and Salt Lake City have constructed and operated successful new fixed guideway transit corridors, bringing increased transportation capacity and improved economic development opportunities to their communities. Every one of these cities with newer systems is planning additional extensions to their transitway network.

2.3 Travel Patterns and Trends

An analysis of 2008 Average Daily Traffic (ADT) on I-94 provides a representation of the predominant Gateway Corridor travel patterns. The entire corridor reflects the heavy westbound am/eastbound pm flow. Starting from the east, ADT at Eau Claire is approximately 30,000; this increases to 40,000 ADT near Baldwin, and to nearly 90,000 ADT at the St. Croix River Bridge. In Minnesota, ADT increases to approximately 110,000 in Woodbury at the 494/694 interchange, and then fluctuates between 150,000 and 185,000 in the stretch between downtown Saint Paul and Minneapolis. Several of the communities between the St. Croix River and Saint Paul have identified congestion on I-94 as an increasing problem.

Mn/DOT's 2011 I-94 East Metro Corridor Study, 2030 Traffic Forecasts and State of the Corridor report addressed the impact of the proposed new Stillwater bridge over the St. Croix River. The report indicates that, with a new river crossing at Stillwater, 2030 ADT

downstream across the I-94 river bridge was projected at 109,000 vehicles. Without a new Stillwater bridge, that number would increase to 122,000 ADT.

The Mn/DOT *I-94 Managed Lanes Study*² examined the stretch of I-94 between Minneapolis and Saint Paul. One of the study’s findings was that due to capacity constraints in the two downtown areas, 2030 traffic models project that traffic will not be able to pass through the study area without experiencing severe congestion.

Population growth is also a defining characteristic of the Gateway Corridor. Growth from the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area has extended into western Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) *Connections 2030* report noted that St. Croix County, adjacent to the Minnesota border, experienced Wisconsin’s highest percentage increase (25.1 percent) in county population between 2000 and 2007. Economic expansion in Minneapolis and Saint Paul has driven this growth. Interstate 94 allows a large number of western Wisconsin workers to access the larger Minnesota job market³. The importance of the I-94 corridor was also emphasized in the 2005 WisDOT *West Central Regional Freeway System Study*, where it was noted that capacity on the 4-lane segment of I-94 between Hudson and Baldwin will be exceeded within 10 years.

As shown in Table 2, continued steady growth is anticipated for cities and townships in the corridor between 2010 and 2030. The area surrounding the Saint Croix River (from Woodbury to Hudson) is expected to show the largest growth in percentage terms. Population in that segment of the Gateway Corridor is expected to increase 54 percent (55,000 new residents) over the same timeframe. As described above, the land use area of the Twin Cities suburbs including Hudson, WI is “transitional.” While some corridor cities are fully suburban and considering redevelopment, others have a rural character which they wish to preserve. Based on a review of future land use plans for these communities, a variety of land uses and community characteristics are expected to remain in this segment of the corridor, along with dramatic population growth over the next twenty years.

Expectations for continued growth extend into the broader portion of western Wisconsin as well. The surrounding region (represented by the Counties of Polk, St. Croix, Pierce,

TABLE 2
Gateway Corridor Community Population Projections

City	Population	
	2010	2030
Minneapolis	405,300	441,100
Saint Paul	305,000	331,000
Maplewood	37,500	40,900
Oakdale	28,000	30,000
Woodbury	60,000	84,000
Landfall	700	700
Lake Elmo	9,952	24,000
West Lakeland Township	3,860	4,190
Afton*	2900	3100
Lakeland	1,880	1,760
Hudson (City and Town)	22,414	38,226
Baldwin	4,044	6,824
Menomonie	16,120	19,009
Eau Claire	67,631	80,970

Sources: Metropolitan Council 2030 Regional Development Framework (January 2008)

Wisconsin Department of Administration Demographic Services Center (vintage 2008)

*City of Afton, revision accepted by Met Council

² I-94 Managed Lanes Study, Mn/DOT, January 2010

³ Connections 2030 Long-Range Multimodal Transportation Plan, Wisconsin Department of Transportation



Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire) all forecast growth at rates above that of the Wisconsin statewide average. WisDOT's *Connections 2030* report also notes the important economic trade relationship between Wisconsin and Minnesota. The report forecasts a 132 percent increase in tonnage of freight crossing the Wisconsin-Minnesota border over the 2002-2035 timeframe. While detailed data are not available by corridor, the Gateway Corridor represents the primary economic corridor connection between Minneapolis-Saint Paul and Chicago.

Data from the Metropolitan Council's *Regional 2030 Transportation Policy Plan (2030 TPP)* show that from 2003 to 2009, Twin Cities transit ridership increased from 73.3 million rides to 88.9 million rides (a 21 percent increase). With forecasted population growth such as that described above, demand for transit in the Gateway Corridor is also expected to increase. Table 3 identifies the growth between 2007-2010 in express bus ridership. Metro Transit's current 2008 service and 2030 plans based on current data are illustrated in Figure 2.

TABLE 3
I-94 Express Bus Ridership Growth, 2007-2010 Average Weekday Rides

Year	Route 355 (to Mpls)	Route 375 (to Mpls)	Annual Average Total To Minneapolis	Route 351 (to St. Paul)	Route 294 (to St. Paul)	Total
2007	828	203	1031	305	261	1,597
2008	1142	422	1564	302	361	2,227
2009	985	617	1582	239	319	2,140
2010	875	775	1650	265	324	2,239

Excludes Route 353 with 2 fringe-of-peak trips and 105 average daily rides. 2010 includes January-October

Source: Metro Transit, November 2010

The Metropolitan Council's *2030 Park-and-Ride Plan* indicates that the existing park-and-ride facilities in the corridor have capacity for and serve about 1,000 users daily. The 2030 forecast indicates an additional 1,300 spaces will be required to meet demand twenty years from now. Tables 4 and 5 indicate park and ride and park and pool facility usage and expansion.

TABLE 4
Park and Ride Facilities, Usage and Expansion

Park-and-Ride Lots		Current	Usage				Notes
Name	City	Capacity	2010	2009	2008	2007	
Woodbury Theatre	Woodbury	550	421	490	573	548	Owned by Metro Transit
Guardian Angels Catholic Church*	Oakdale	435	405	313	229	191	Long term lease- 2020s
Christ Episcopal Church**	Woodbury	50	28	15	70	26	Short term lease- 2010s
Woodbury Lutheran Church**	Woodbury	90	84	82	85	85	Expiring lease- 2010s
Walton Park	Oakdale	58	24	34	37	28	Agreement with Oakdale
Total (Current Facilities)		1183	962	934	994	878	
New Facility Manning Avenue	Woodbury	+550	<i>To open 2015-2016</i>				Funded by CMAQ, Ch 152
Woodbury Theatre Expansion	Woodbury	+450	<i>To open 2013</i>				Potential funding w/ Sec. 5307

Source: Metro Transit, November 2010

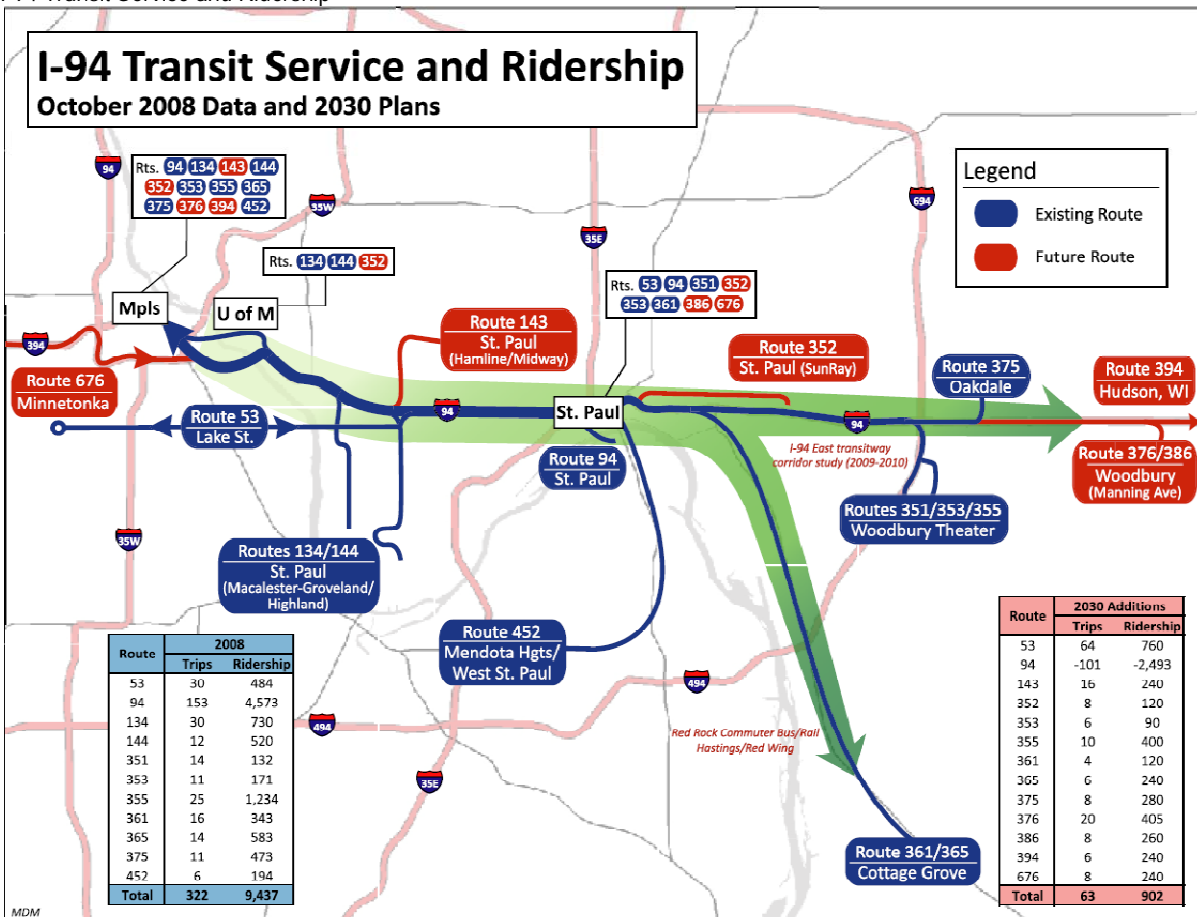
TABLE 5
Park and Pool Facilities and Usage

Park-and-Pool Lots	City	Current		Usage		
		Capacity	2010	2009	2008	2007
I-94 & Hwy 95	Lakeland	48	48	43	42	42
I-94 & US 63 (St. Croix Co)	Baldwin	36	26	35	36	36
I-94 & US 12 (Dunn Co)	Elk Mound	33	9	13	14	14
I-94 & WIS 65 (St. Croix Co)	Warren	48	39	55	39	39
I-94 & Carmichael Rd (St. Croix Co)	Hudson	168	125	127	155	155
Total		333	247	273	286	286

Source: Metro Transit, November 2010

Other trends as well contribute to continued demand for transit service and transportation choices, including an aging population, decreasing household size, and increasing fuel costs.

FIGURE 2
I-94 Transit Service and Ridership



Source: Metro Transit, November 2010



The ability to provide transit service, along with all transportation choices, is balanced by funding realities. While roadway facilities can be financed with existing, dedicated funding mechanisms such as the gas tax, state law prevents gas tax proceeds from being used to fund transit projects. Operations of transit service in the Twin Cities currently has one dedicated but limited funding source: the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax (MVST). Since it was passed in 2007 prior to the subsequent national recession and slump in automobile and truck sales, MVST funding has fallen short of projections.

Transit capital and operations are typically funded by sources including regular budget appropriations from the State, allocations through the Metropolitan Council, individual counties, and recently, through the five-county Counties Transitway Improvement Board (CTIB). The Counties of Hennepin, Ramsey, Anoka, Dakota and Washington form the Counties Transitway Improvement Board, funded by a one-quarter cent sales tax within those counties dedicated to transitway development. All of these sources rely on taxes. Limited federal dollars are available on a competitive basis for capital projects through the Federal Transit Administration, but federal funds are not available to fund transit operating costs.

3. Summary Problem Statement

The corridor problem statement becomes the basis for the future Purpose and Need chapter of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The DEIS, or other National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)-required document, is typically the next step in the Federal Transit Administration's New Starts transit project development process.

Based on the corridor's travel characteristics and issues summarized in this document, the Gateway Corridor's draft problem statement is summarized as follows:

1. Peak period capacity is inadequate in many segments to handle the growing transportation demands of the Gateway Corridor communities, with no programmed projects for increasing highway capacity on I-94.
2. A more substantial multimodal transportation network is needed to provide viable options for users and achieve the diverse community land use visions, support economic development, and respond to changing corridor population characteristics.
3. The increasing demand for effective transit options requires greater coordination to provide an integrated transit plan for the entire corridor.

4. Goals and Objectives

Translating the corridor's problem statement into draft goals and objectives, the following have been developed to reflect the intent of state, regional, and community plans for the Gateway Corridor:

Goal 1: Improve Mobility

Objectives: Provide a travel option that:

- responds to corridor travel demand patterns, including reverse commute travel desires
- provides additional travel capacity to mitigate areas of existing and projected congestion
- offers a competitive commute time to a trip made via automobile, improving overall traveler productivity
- enhances intra and inter community mobility



- reliably improves mobility throughout the day
- maximizes service to existing and planned corridor population and employment concentrations
- expands and improves linkage to the Twin Cities regional transit system with connections at major regional multimodal hubs
- serves people who depend on transit
- enhances pedestrian and bicycle access

Goal 2: Provide a Cost-Effective, Economically Viable Transit Option

Objectives: Provide a transit option:

- with acceptable capital costs
- with acceptable operating costs and service productivity
- that enhances regional transit system connectivity
- that integrates efficiently with other modes
- that improves the overall transportation performance of the corridor, including the movement of goods for commerce

Goal 3: Support Economic Development

Objectives: Provide a transit option that:

- supports local economic development objectives and goals
- supports regional economic development objectives and goals
- supports state and interstate economic development objectives and goals
- enhances the potential for increased transit ridership
- facilitates more efficient land development patterns around stations

Goal 4: Protect the Natural Environmental Features of the Corridor

Objectives: Provide a transit option that:

- contributes to the sustainability of the corridor and adjacent communities
- minimizes environmental impacts
- is beneficial to the region's air quality
- avoids or minimizes alterations to environmentally sensitive areas

Goal 5: Preserve and Protect Individual Community Quality of Life

Objectives: Provide a transit option that:

- supports individual community development and redevelopment visions
- accommodates future regional growth in locations consistent with local plans
- is sensitively designed with respect to existing neighborhoods and property values
- enhances access to community facilities
- enhances the image and use of transit service in the corridor by improving the rider experience

Goal 6: Improve Safety

Objectives: Provide a transit option that:

- assists in addressing known travel safety issues along the corridor
- assists in addressing future safety issues along the corridor related to increased traffic congestion
- assists in addressing future safety issues along the corridor related to new fixed guideway transit
- enhances safety for all users

5. Partnership for Sustainable Communities Principles

The goals and objectives outlined above are consistent with the guiding principles of a new partnership between the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This “Partnership for Sustainable Communities” is intended to help improve access to affordable housing, more transportation options, and lower transportation costs while protecting the environment. The three agencies’ efforts are guided by the following livability principles:

- **Provide more transportation choices.** Develop safe, reliable, and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce our nation’s dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote public health.
- **Promote equitable, affordable housing.** Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, races, and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.
- **Enhance economic competitiveness.** Improve economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs by workers, as well as expanded business access to markets.
- **Support existing communities.** Target federal funding toward existing communities—through strategies like transit oriented, mixed-use development, and land recycling—to increase community revitalization and the efficiency of public works investments and safeguard rural landscapes.
- **Coordinate and leverage federal policies and investment.** Align federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding, and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth, including making smart energy choices such as locally generated renewable energy
- **Value communities and neighborhoods.** Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban, or suburban.