



Agenda
Gold Line Partners
July 11 – 4:00-5:30 PM

Woodbury City Hall, Birch Room
8301 Valley Creek Road
Woodbury, MN 55125

<u>Item</u>	<u>Requested Action</u>
1. Introductions	Information
2. Consent Items	Approval
a. Summary of January 10, 2019 Meeting*	
b. Checks and Claims*	
3. Strategic Planning	Discussion
4. Updated Joint Powers Board	Discussion
5. Project Updates*	
a. Project Development Activities	Information
b. BRTOD Project Update	Information
c. Communications Update	Information
6. Media Articles	Information
7. Next Meeting	Information
October 10, 2019 4:00-5:30 PM, Woodbury City Hall	
8. Adjourn	Approval

*Attachments

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January 10, 2019 Meeting Summary Woodbury City Hall, Birch Room

Members	Agency	Present
Stan Karwoski	Washington County	X
Rafael Ortega	Ramsey County	X
Anne Burt	Woodbury	X
Jane Prince	St Paul	X
Paul Reinke	Oakdale	X
Bryan Smith	Maplewood	X
Tami Fahey	Lakeland	
ALTERNATE MEMBERS		
Victoria Reinhardt, Alternate	Ramsey County	
Lisa Weik, Alternate	Washington County	X
Lori Pulkrabek, Alternate	Oakdale	
Amy Scoggins, Alternate	Woodbury	
Richard Glasgow, Alternate	Lakeland	

Ex-Officio Members	Agency	Present
Mike Amundson	Baytown Township	
Paris Dunning	East Side Area Business Association	
Shannon Watson	Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce	X
Ed Shukle	Landfall Village	
Randy Kopesky	Lakeland Shores	
Bill Burns	Oakdale Area Chamber of Commerce	
Tim Ramberg	WI Gateway Coalition	
Doug Stang	3M	
Jason Lott	Woodbury Chamber of Commerce	

Others	Agency
Jan Lucke	Washington County
Emily Jorgensen	Washington County
Joe Ayers-Johnson	Washington County
Chris Beckwith	Gold Line Project Office
Brian McClung	MZA + Co.
Don Arambula	Crandall Arambula
Jason Graf	Crandall Arambula
Mike Rogers	Ramsey County
Tabatha Hansen	Washington County
Rick Barstow	Fractional Toy Store - Oakdale
Josh Straka	Office of Betty McCollum
Janelle Schmitz	City of Woodbury
Tom Cook	Metropolitan State University

For questions regarding this material, please contact Jan Lucke,
Washington County at (651) 430-4316 or at jan.lucke@co.washington.mn.us.

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Linda Stanton	Woodbury Resident
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Agenda Item 1. Introductions

Introductions were made by those present.

Chair Karwoski acknowledged former Woodbury Mayor Giuliani Stephens and thanked her for her service to the Partners and on the Policy Advisory Committee.

Agenda Item 2. 2019 Elections

Item 2a. Chair of Commission

Item 2b. Vice Chair of the Commission

Motion made by Mayor Reinke to confirm Commissioner Karwoski as Chair of the Commission. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ortega. All were in favor. **Approved.** Motion carried.

Motion made by Chair Karwoski to confirm Commissioner Ortega as Vice Chair. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Prince. All were in favor. **Approved.** Motion carried.

Agenda Item 3. Consent Items

Item 3a. and 3b. Summary of October 11, 2018 Meeting and Checks and Claims

Motion made by Commissioner Ortega to approve consent item 3a. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Smith. All were in favor. **Approved.** Motion carried.

Motion made by Commissioner Ortega to approve consent item 3b. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Smith. All were in favor. **Approved.** Motion carried.

Agenda Item 4. 2019 Partners Work Plan and Budget

Washington County Planning Director Jan Lucke directed members to the packet for changes to work plan. She indicated that both changes focus on adding legislative strategy and coordination to the Partners' work plan. Lucke stated that last session didn't have as many opportunities, but that there were two big potential opportunities for this year.

- City of St. Paul requesting funding for Kellogg Bridge.
 - Not explicitly a part of Gold Line project, but important to the success, as the bus collocates here.
 - Could present a schedule delay if the timing is not in sync with the Gold Line project.
- Washington County is looking to request funding for roadway lanes and bike/pedestrian lanes for a reconstructed 4th St bridge

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- State funding would allow us to rebuild bridge and perhaps lead to federal money.

Commissioner Ortega asked whether two motions would be appropriate or one. Commissioner Ortega suggested Councilmember Prince could make a motion to support a legislative ask for the Kellogg Bridge and Mayor Reinke could make a motion to support a legislative ask for the Oakdale Bridge.

Councilmember Prince made a motion for board support of the City of St. Paul's request for funding for the Kellogg Bridge in the State Legislature. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ortega. All were in favor. **Approved.** Motion carried.

Mayor Reinke made a motion that collaboration between Washington County and Oakdale regarding the funding and expansion of the 4th Street Bridge be a part of the Gold Line Partners 2019 work plan and budget. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ortega. All were in favor. **Approved.** Motion carried.

Ms. Lucke brought attention to another, related work plan item. The 2019 revenues and expenditures will be \$60,000 less than the anticipated actuals for 2018 thanks to the work becoming more streamlined and lower expenditures. Therefore, there will be a reduction in the fees collected from Ramsey and Washington County Regional Rail Authority in 2019. The allocations remain largely the same, although the communications budget has been dropped in addition to reductions in financial oversight and legal policy development. Revenues and expenditures are both reduced in the 2019 work plan and budget.

Ms. Lucke pointed out the work plan does continue to support items like consultation with New Starts funding specialist Jeff Booth, who will advise the Gold Line Project on how best to work with FTA and gain the appropriate federal approvals the project needs to move forward. Mr. Booth was not used as much in 2018, but 2019 is a year in which we may need more assistance.

The Chair opened the floor for questions.

Commissioner Karwoski commented it makes sense to lower the budget and approved of the approach and expertise of Mr. Booth, which he views as a wise investment.

Mayor Reinke commended the financial responsibility of the board, and commented that this was a good opportunity to publicly acknowledge the project's responsible use of public funds, if an appropriate way to do so could be identified.

There was general agreement on that point.

Shannon Watson made a motion to approve work plan and budget. The motion was seconded by Mayor Reinke. All were in favor. **Approved.** Motion carried.



Later in the meeting, staff noticed an error in motioning during this agenda item – Ms. Watson is an ex-officio board member, and ex-officio members cannot make motions. The items were revisited, resulting in the following:

Councilmember Smith moved to approve the work plan and budget. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Prince. All were in favor. **Approved.** Motion carried.

Agenda Item 5. 2019 Insurance Renewal

Ms. Lucke presented the annual insurance renewal to the board. The premium for 2018 was \$3,068, and was included in the approved budget. The board's risk manager recommended that Partners not waive limits of the statutory tort limit.

Commissioner Ortega made a motion to continue insurance through the League of Minnesota Cities and to not waive the statutory tort limits. Councilmember Smith seconded the motion. All were in favor. **Approved.** Motion carried.

Agenda Item 6. BRTOD Presentation

Don Arambula, of Crandall Arambula consultants, gave a progress report on the Bus Rapid Transit Oriented Development Plan process. The BRTOD plan focuses on the half mile around each station, including station access and land use.

Of the four phases, almost all have been completed. Stakeholder engagement has been conducted in person, at community meetings and opening houses, as well as online and via social media. The entire project has been very collaborative with the project office and Partners.

The corridor wide vision is three-part: (1) to be multimodal, (2) to increase ridership, and (3) to achieve development potential. Ultimately, it comes down to livability and creating great places that people want to be.

Each station was assigned a typology that expresses the diversity of the stations, but together create a unified whole. First and foremost, people who live in the corridor need to be served.

Four typologies:

- Neighborhood
- Mixed use
- Employment
- Commerce

Mr. Arambula then presented about the access hierarchy for stations, including:

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- Corridor trail
- Collector trail
- Station access
- Neighborhood access

The deliverables are as follow:

- Station assessments
- Vision
- Circulation plans
- Development plans
- Implementation recommendations

Each city will receive a completed set of documents, which will be delivered by end of February.

Mr. Arambula summarized some of the characteristics and features of specific stations.

Mr. Arambula went over development plans and outlined what needs to be done next. He stated that equitable growth and anti-displacement strategies need to be put in place. It is important to consider St. Paul home and storefront improvement plans and not price out residents. Additional planning needs to be done with MnDOT parcels. Also, missing middle housing studies should be considered.

For circulation plans, a feasibility study needs to be conducted. Consider enhancement improvements, such as trails, that may need lighting and landscaping. Capital improvement plans need to be integrated. Important to coordinate with the Metropolitan Council regional bike and pedestrian network plans.

Mr. Arambula summarized the benefits of the plan:

- \$1.3 billion in private investment
- New daily riders to be determined
- Over 50% annual fuel savings for residents
 - o \$725 a year per household
- Annual green dividend per station
 - o \$4 million recirculated locally
 - o 25% reduction in vehicle miles

The floor was then opened to questions or comments.

Mayor Burt commented that she thought that Woodbury had a third station. Ms. Lucke informed the group that the Met Council Technical Advisory Committee recently took an action to amend the Transportation Policy Plan to include the third station in Woodbury, but it has not been formally approved, as of yet.



Commissioner Ortega asked how the new station will affect the budget. Ms. Lucke stated that the proposal is to remove the structured parking facility at Woodbury Theatre site and instead build two surface lots. Therefore, there are no additional costs.

Councilmember Smith asked where the third station would be. Ms. Lucke informed the group that it would be right next to the 494 freeway, about a block away from the current terminus. The thought was that the station could serve as a location to consolidate express bus riders and offered an opportunity to bring two needs together in a larger vision, including a potential future slip ramp onto 494.

Chair Karwoski mentioned that this new station could bring high visibility for the Gold Line. May draw more riders with increased visibility.

Councilmember Smith asked whether this will impact the environmental study. Ms. Lucke stated that it would not.

Councilmember Prince stated that property owners there would be concerned with the renderings of the stations. They might see the renderings and think that the project is wiping out entire areas of the neighborhood. Mr. Arambula responded that the renderings have been vetted with community members and St. Paul staff members, and that they are not finalized plans. He expressed that he wants to make sure that concerns are addressed.

Agenda Item 7. Peer Region Visit – San Diego

Item 7a. Itinerary

Item 7b. Stipend Allocation

Joe Ayers-Johnson introduced the upcoming trip to San Diego to visit the newly opened South Bay Rapid BRT line. He summarized the trip itinerary, highlighting different parts of the system the group would be looking at including security, design, Transit-Oriented Development, and transit/pedestrian bridges over freeways. The tour includes guided and self-guided tours.

Mr. Ayers-Johnson then opened the floor for questions.

Commissioner Ortega asked for specifics about addresses for arrivals. Mr. Ayers-Johnson stated a packet would be provided in the upcoming weeks that included those specifics.

Chair Karwoski asked if elected officials could be available during the tour. Mr. Ayers-Johnson responded that the group is in talks with partners in San Diego, and that he would let them know that that was something they hoped could be arranged.

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Councilmember Smith confirmed that former Mayor Slawik would no longer be joining the trip and that there is currently no Maplewood representation, but they are searching for a replacement. That replacement could be a representative or a local resident.

Ms. Lucke presented the list of attendees, highlighting those who would be receiving stipends from the Gold Line Partners, including a handful of members from the Gold Line Community Business Advisory Committee.

Ms. Lucke asked Chair and Vice-Chair for approval to authorize additional stipends on a first come, first served basis upon a priority system of (1) cities who have yet to identify anyone, (2) community members and organizations, or (3) additional city and county representatives.

Commissioner Ortega made a motion to approve that prioritization for additional stipends. Mayor Reinke seconded. No additional discussion was made about the additional stipends. All were in favor. **Approved.** Motion carried.

Mr. Ayers-Johnson presented a list of questions pertinent to the Gold Line to forward to the partners in San Diego. He reviewed the changes that had been made since the packet had been produced. He then requested feedback on the list of questions.

Commissioner Weik asked about adding a question about bringing bicycles onto the vehicle, rather than the front of the bus. It was added to the list of questions.

Chair Karwoski recommended sending the list of questions to those going on the trip for feedback. Staff agreed to do so.

Agenda Item 8. Project Updates

a. Project Development Activities

Gold Line Project Manager Chris Beckwith introduced project updates for the past year. She introduced the new Gold Line map. She stated that they are amending the Transportation Policy Plan to go from 10 stations to 21 stations. This is because of the addition of the enhanced bus stops in downtown St. Paul. They are currently working on capital cost estimate and operating costs.

Ms. Beckwith stated that they are about halfway through project development phase and are on schedule. Beckwith explained project development costs expended to date. 34.6% has been expended and they are about 47% through project development. Ms. Beckwith walked through a presentation to bring attention to the good work that happened this year.

Mayor Reinke asked whether Helmo/Bielenberg and 4th street bridges were included in cost. Ms. Beckwith stated that the Helmo/Bielenberg bridge is included in the \$420 million cost, but there is a question as to whether the roadway itself is eligible for a federal match. Ms. Lucke



jumped in to explain the regional solicitation process to the group, and how it could be used to fund the bridge, and also be used as match to federal funds.

Commissioner Weik asked whether we are at a hard stop with the federal government shutdown, or if there was anything we can do to move ahead during shutdown.

Ms. Beckwith informed the group that the project was at a hard stop with the environmental review, but that the project was still moving forward on design. There is a handful of Federal Transit Administration staff still working, but Small Starts staff are not deemed critical.

b. BRTOD Project Update

Ms. Lucke invited consultants to speak about upcoming BRTOD meetings. The consultants spoke about the meetings, highlighting a January 16th meeting for District 1 Community Council. On January 28th, the Maplewood BRTOD plan will be presented to the City Council. On February 18th, a meeting with District 4. Finally, on February 26th, a presentation for the joint cities of Landfall and Oakdale.

c. Communications Update

Brian McClung presented the communications update. He stated that Minnesota currently has a divided legislature, the only state in the nation. It is the first time since 1914 that this has happened. The upcoming legislative session should be active and noisy. Transportation and transit will be a hot topic. Gas tax and transit will be a large part of the Governor's plan. There are a lot of new members, and a lot of new educating to be done. The three Minnesota house seats that are closest to the Gold Line have new legislators. The communications team has been scheduling meetings with these representatives and working to educate them about Gold Line Partners.

Social media has seen growth on Facebook and Twitter. The top tweets have been about autonomous vehicles and what the Sun Ray area may look like in the future. Facebook currently has 904 likes.

New coalition has been formed, called "Keep MN Moving". They are advocating on transit broadly and focusing on four areas in particular:

- Advancing modern Arterial BRT
- Improve current bus system
- Fully funding greater MN transit needs
- Fully funding Metro Transit core needs

There seems to be a broader approach to funding transit at the capital, which bodes well for the Gold Line. The mood in general is upbeat, pragmatic, and trying to avoid being like the federal government.



Chair Karwoski asked if there was an opportunity to get funding for the Gold Line from the state of MN with the new Governor.

Mr. McClung stated that Gov. Walz emphasized interconnectedness of MN transportation. He interpreted this as a positive sign that Gov. Walz understands how Metro region transit is impactful to the whole state.

Commissioner Ortega emphasized that Ramsey County would take the position that the whole transit system is important, not just the Gold Line. Ramsey County would lobby for the entire system, but not any one specific line.

Agenda Item 9. Media Articles

Chair Karwoski presented an article that appeared in the Woodbury paper, which listed the Gold Line as one of its top ten stories of the year. It shed a positive light on the Gold Line.

Agenda Item 10. Adjourn

Commissioner Ortega made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mayor Reinke. **Approved.**



Agenda Item #2b

DATE: July 8, 2019 Gold
TO: Line Partners Staff
FROM: Checks and Claims
RE:

FTA BRTOD Contract (Crandall Arambula)

April 2019 \$9,216.09

Contract Utilization = 93.7%

Communications Contract (MZA + Co)

March 2019 \$5,217.50

April 2019 \$5,945.00

May 2019 \$2,887.50

Contract Utilization = 47.2%

Total **\$23,266.09**

Detailed invoices can be made available upon request.

Action Requested: Approval



Agenda Item #3

DATE: July 8, 2019 Gold
TO: Line Partners Staff
FROM: Strategic Planning
RE:

In the approved January 2019 Gold Line Partners work plan, financial oversight and administrative activities were detailed. As part of the financial oversight and administrative process, Gold Line Partners has contracted with a consultant to assist in ongoing strategic planning in the absence of the Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB).

Recent work includes drafting agreements and funding commitment resolutions for the next phase of Gold Line BRT project work. Staff will provide an overview of these items and schedule for approval.

Action Requested: Discussion



Agenda Item #4

DATE: July 8, 2019
TO: Gold Line Partners
FROM: Staff
RE: Updated Joint Powers Board

A presentation will be made at the meeting by Staff, recommending next steps as the role of the Gold Line Partners transitions to best suit the needs of the METRO Gold Line BRT.

Action Requested: Discussion

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Agenda Item #5a

DATE: June 27, 2019
TO: Gold Line Partners
FROM: Gold Line Project Office Staff
RE: Project Development Activities

On January 19, 2018, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) granted the METRO Gold Line entry into the Project Development (PD) phase of the federal New Starts program, which is the first step to securing federal funding. This approval allows the project to advance design and engineering, environmental work, and community outreach over the next two years.

Gold Line is nearly 3/4 through the PD Phase. The Gold Line Project Office (GPO) has been involved in the following activities since the April update to the Gold Line Partners:

- Executing the committee structure:
 - Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
 - Made up of staff from cities, counties, Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), Metro Transit, Metropolitan Council, and the FHWA
 - Have been meeting most months to discuss project issues
 - Reviewed project scope and cost items for CMC May recommendation
 - Community and Business Advisory Committee (CBAC)
 - CBAC has one business and one community representative from each station plus five at-large members
 - Co-chairs have been serving on the Corridor Management Committee
 - CBAC provided input on scope and cost as well as station design but has not been meeting every month in 2019 due to lack of items
 - Corridor Management Committee (CMC)
 - CMC serves a similar role as the previous Policy Advisory Committee
 - The CMC provided a recommendation on scope and costs to include in the project in May
 - The CMC is not meeting over the summer months due to lack of items
 - Design Advancement and Refinement Teams (DARTs)
 - Made up of staff from specific issue areas (ex: Maplewood DART has members from Maplewood, Ramsey County, MnDOT, and project office)
 - DARTs met weekly or every other week to resolve technical issues and refine design
 - DARTs have focused on refining issues throughout the entire corridor.
 - Environmental Assessment (EA) Scope
 - The EA is on track to be published in October
 - The federal decision document is anticipated in January 2020.
 - Project Development Schedule
 - There is no remaining schedule “float” in Project Development, the Federal shut-down consumed about 3 months of available schedule float
 - It will continue to be challenging to meet the PD schedule and a short extension may need to be pursued later this year with any additional schedule delays

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Staff will provide more information on these items at the commission meeting.

Action Requested: Information

DATE: July 8, 2019
TO: Gold Line Partners
FROM: Sara Allen, Washington County, BRTOD Project Manager
RE: METRO Gold Line BRTOD Plans

April 2019 Crandall Arambula Activities

- Engagement - Greenway Avenue BRTOD Plan Joint Council meeting (April 9)
- Finalize Greenway Avenue BRTOD Plans engagement summaries and update website with final materials and Greenway Avenue BRTOD Plan (Apr. 16)
- Review and finalize overall BRTOD Plans engagement summary (Apr. 23)
- Review and finalize Helmo Avenue BRTOD Plan with City and WCRRA
- Prepare all final materials and post entire project deliverables to Sharefile (Apr. 30)

Station Area Plans can be viewed at: <http://thegatewaycorridor.com/station-area-planning/>

Additional BRTOD Activities

Remaining BRTOD funds will be used to hire specialized real estate analysis services to help evaluate potential sites for joint development, which may qualify in the Federal Transit Administration's Joint Development Program.

Staff continues to work closely with the Metropolitan Council to expend funds and close out the grant according to Federal requirements.

DATE: July 3, 2019
TO: Gold Line Partners
FROM: Brian McClung, MZA+Co
RE: Gold Line Partners Communications and Government Relations Update

The 2019 Minnesota legislative session ended in May – the legislature was not able to pass all the budget bills before the scheduled end of session, but Governor Walz called them back and they finished their work in a one-day special session held the Friday before Memorial Day. They discussed the possibility of putting together a bonding bill, but it was not included in the final agreement.

Government Relations – Our team spent the legislative session monitoring legislative activity, maintaining and developing relationships with key legislators and ensuring there was accurate information about the Gold Line BRT project.

The initial strategy was to focus on educating the newly elected legislators in the area of the project and providing current information to existing legislators. We also determined that introducing a bill to provide bonding for the 4th street bridge was appropriate; with the understanding it is not the priority bonding request for Washington County and bonding requests often take more than one year. We worked closely with the Washington County lobbyists on legislator meetings, the 4th street bonding bill and explaining support of the Kellogg Bridge bonding request, to ensure a seamless approach to the Gold Line. This was helpful to ensure the project continues to have strong broad bipartisan support, which will be important for future efforts, particularly without passage of a bonding bill this session.

Looking forward, it will be important to work with the Capital Investment Committees and encourage the 4th Street Bridge be included in bonding tours, if possible. Along with maintaining support in the community, we will want to continue to work with elected officials in the East Metro where transportation gridlock is not going away. We will work to help key legislators understand the need for transit options and the benefits of most cost-effective, efficient strategy of the Gold Line BRT.

Strategic Communications & Social Media – The Gold Line BRT project continues to enjoy positive news coverage and support from the community. We shared some of the good news stories and updates from Gold Line Partners in an E-Newsletter sent to our list of supporters in June. The news items featured in the E-Newsletter included the Bus Rapid Transit Oriented Development Plan Summary, the public engagement work that Metro Transit has been doing around station design, news about the approval of new project investments, and links to positive news stories about transit and Gold Line specifically.

We saw a lot of engagement on Twitter and Facebook around the Station Area Planning work that Gold Line Partners guided.

Our top tweet from the past three months was about the station area plans –

Gold Line Partners @GoldLinePrtnrs

METRO Gold Line BRT Station Area Plans are here! We'll be highlighting station plans from along the [@GoldLineBRT](#) route over the next several weeks!

That tweet earned 2,723 impressions. The other top tweets from the last 3 months were also about station area plans.

The Facebook post with the most impressions (524 people reached) was a news story about the strong return on investment for transit (“Study: For every dollar invested in transit, Twin Cities gets \$2.90 in benefits”)

EAST METRO

Cost of Gold Line bus-rapid transit could increase to \$461 million

Bigger budget funds more bike and pedestrian links and possibly electric buses.

By Janet Moore (<http://www.startribune.com/janet-moore/10645476/>) Star Tribune |

MAY 2, 2019 — 11:00PM

The cost of the Gold Line could increase by more than \$40 million as transit planners add bike and pedestrian paths and possibly electric buses to the east metro bus-rapid transit project.

The Gold Line, which will [link downtown St. Paul to Woodbury](http://www.startribune.com/gold-line-bus-rapid-transit-to-offer-six-stops-in-downtown-st-paul/499353131/) (<http://www.startribune.com/gold-line-bus-rapid-transit-to-offer-six-stops-in-downtown-st-paul/499353131/>) beginning in 2024, was slated to cost about \$420 million to build. But a Metropolitan Council advisory committee Thursday gave transit planners the go-ahead to increase the budget to as much as \$461 million.

Other cities along the line, which largely hugs Interstate 94 using a dedicated lane, include Landfall, Oakdale and Maplewood.



This rendering of the planned Gold Line shows what a bus-rapid transit vehicle and station could look like.

The increase is partly related to some cities along the line requesting bike and pedestrian paths on already-planned bridges, including a \$4.8 million bridge on N. Maple Street over Interstate 94 in St. Paul and a \$1 million span on Century Avenue in Maplewood near the 3M Co. headquarters.

Bike and pedestrian paths “offer a different amenity to the community beyond the Gold Line and can also make it easier for residents to get to the bus,” said Christine Beckwith, Metro Transit’s project manager for the Gold Line. Some cities along the 10-mile line will help pay for the bike and pedestrian enhancements.

In addition, planners now have the financial leeway to explore using electric buses, which are more expensive than traditional diesel vehicles, in the 12-bus Gold Line fleet. Metro Transit is now testing electric buses for the C Line rapid bus fleet in Minneapolis and the northern suburbs.

“This is a significant regulatory milestone,” said Lisa Weik, a Washington County commissioner and Gold Line Corridor Management Committee member. “This will be an amazing amenity for the east metro.”

As the Southwest and Bottineau light-rail projects inch forward in southwestern and northern Hennepin County, some officials have long felt the east side of the Twin Cities has been deprived of transit investment.

But the Gold Line, the planned Riverview streetcar route in St. Paul and the Rush Line in the northeastern suburbs represent significant investment in transit for the area.

Will Schroeer, executive director of the transit advocacy group East Metro Strong, said the Gold Line “will be an important high-quality corridor service on its own, it will also strengthen the entire east metro transit network through faster connections.”

Schroeer said “making it possible for people to walk to stations maximizes the usefulness of the investment we’re making.”

The Gold Line will be the state’s first bus-rapid transit service that will operate primarily in a dedicated lane. Bus-rapid transit features frequent service using enhanced stations equipped with heating and real-time arrival and departure information.

The Federal Transit Administration is expected to pay 45% of the cost to build the Gold Line, with local sources picking up the rest of the tab. An application for federal funding is expected to be made next year.

Transportation reporter **Janet Moore** covers trains, planes, automobiles, buses, bikes and pedestrians. Moore has been with the Star Tribune for 21 years, previously covering business news, including the retail, medical device and commercial real estate industries.

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TRANSPORTATION

Study: For every dollar invested in transit, Twin Cities gets \$2.90 in benefits



A Metro Transit bus crosses the light rail tracks as it drives along Nicollet Mall in downtown Minneapolis. METRO TRANSIT



By Dylan Thomas
Staff reporter, Minneapolis / St. Paul Business Journal
Apr 25, 2019, 3:07pm EDT

A new study that aimed to calculate the return on investment for the planned build-out of the Twin Cities regional transit network found that every \$1 spent on new transit connections will produce \$2.90 in benefits.

2 OF 3 ARTICLES REMAINING

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It's not just a win for transit users, who save money when they leave the car in the garage (or go without a vehicle at all). The majority of benefits – 81 percent, according to the study – are realized by the people and businesses who spend less time fighting traffic, which delays shipments and adds precious minutes to commutes.

The study was released Thursday by [East Metro Strong](#), a public-private partnership advocating for transit in Dakota, Ramsey and Washington counties, and the Minneapolis Regional Chamber.

Using data from the Metropolitan Council, the report estimates it will cost \$3.1 billion to build and operate the transit system over two decades, a figure that includes capital costs for the build-out planned between 2025 and 2031 and operational costs through 2045. That timeframe doesn't capture the cost of the \$2 billion Southwest Light Rail Transit project, the construction of a 14.5-mile Metro Green Line extension expected to open in 2023, and the study doesn't consider the 10 BRT lines Gov. Tim Walz recently proposed building over the next decade.

That \$3.1 billion investment produces a \$9.1 billion economic impact for the Twin Cities region over the same 20 year period, or a net benefit of nearly \$6 billion through 2045, according to the report. Those benefits come in the form of savings on travel times, vehicle operating expenses and roadway maintenance, as well as improved safety and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

Just driving less saves money, and the report argues that the nearly \$3.9 billion saved on vehicle operating costs exceeds the cost of building out the system by \$743 million.

But the impact extends far beyond the metro region. The entire state stands to gain in the form of the increased tax revenue produced by the people and businesses drawn to a transit-rich metropolitan area.

“A region in which you have more transportation choices is more attractive to businesses and residents,” said [Will Schroeer](#), executive director of East Metro Strong.

places where employees could more easily walk, bike or take transit to work. The study included 11 Twin Cities companies that had recently moved to one of the two downtowns.

The study also cites data from CoStar that shows about half Minneapolis office space filled by relocating companies in the last four years has been companies moving from the suburbs to the downtown core.

The taxes new residents and businesses pay will add an estimated \$143 million per year, on average, to state and local coffers, or a total of \$2.86 billion over the two-decade period considered by the report. That those new revenues amount to more than 90 percent of the cost to construct all the transitways currently planned between 2025 and 2031 is a “particularly important” finding of the report, Schroeer said.

The report also considers the rise of autonomous vehicles, which increasingly factor into debates over transit policy. While some argue autonomous vehicles will reduce transit ridership, the report notes they’ll be competing for space on the same roads already clogged with congestion, and that they may actually boost transit use by linking people in hard-to-reach areas with transitways.

Minneapolis Regional Chamber President and CEO [Jonathan Weinhagen](#) described the new report as a sequel to a 2012 study produced by the Itasca Project. That earlier study calculated a \$4.4 billion investment in regional transit between 2030 and 2045 would produce between \$6.6 billion and \$10.1 billion in benefits.

Weinhagen said the new report not only validates the 2012 study, it finds current transit use is exceeding the study’s most conservative estimates by 5.6 percent – despite slow progress on projects like Southwest Light Rail Transit, which has faced delays that drove up costs and delayed the opening. The earlier study also underestimated how much it would cost to operate a motor vehicle in the future, he said.

Schroeer added, “If transit ridership is higher than we forecast in 2012, then our study is both confirmed and, as it turns out, was quite conservative.”

Click [here](#) to read the report.