



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The 29th Street and Southwest Corridors extend from 5th Avenue in Hopkins to Hiawatha Avenue in Minneapolis. In the early 1990s, the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) purchased these corridors, preserving them for a future transit use.

This busway feasibility study was initiated in May 1999 as a joint effort of Hennepin County and Metro Transit to determine the feasibility, defined in terms of ridership forecasts and cost assumptions, of constructing and operating a limited-stop, rapid transit busway within these corridors and to determine if this was a practical first step toward light-rail transit (LRT). Study components included market assessment, ridership forecasts, cost estimates and analysis of issues relating to transit service provision. The determination of feasibility is based solely on the estimates of ridership and costs for a rapid-transit service.

STUDY ASSUMPTIONS

Key study assumptions were that busway infrastructure elements such as transit stations, park-and-ride lots, fare collection systems and communications would be compatible with LRT and capable of re-use with conversion to LRT. Another assumption was that the bicycle/pedestrian trails constructed within the corridor would remain with conversion to a busway. For purposes of this study, a busway was defined as a two-lane roadway, separated from other traffic, operating with hybrid, diesel-electric, low-floor buses and a proof-of-payment fare collection system.

STUDY CONCLUSIONS

Based on ridership forecasts and cost estimates, an exclusive limited-stop busway in the 29th Street and Southwest Corridors is “technically” feasible. As such, the busway option should be included with other transit alternatives (e.g., LRT, Electric Trolley) in any future studies of these corridors. Furthermore, based on capital costs, constructing a busway will not preclude conversion to LRT in the future.

SUMMARY OF KEY STUDY FINDINGS

Market Assessment

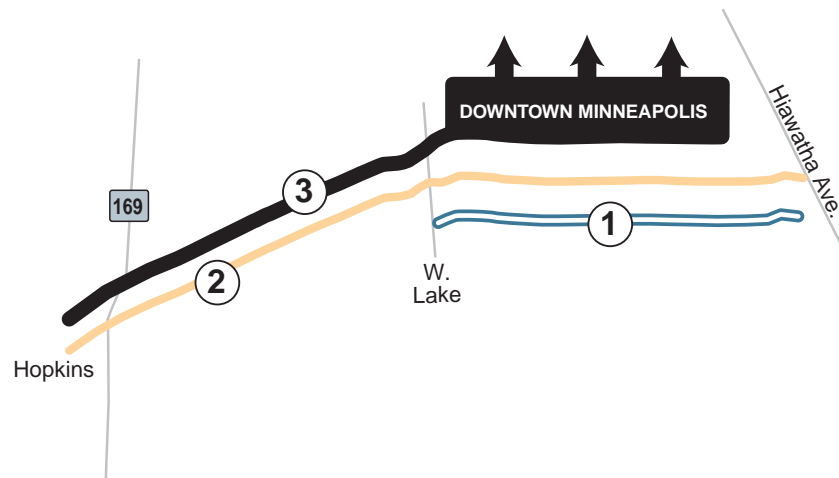
- Based on responses from the focus group participants, telephone survey respondents, and on-board bus survey respondents, a market for busway service in the 29th Street and Southwest Corridors does exist.

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- Connections to other regional systems such as the proposed Hiawatha LRT and downtown Minneapolis were viewed as critical to the corridor's success as a transit service.
- A modest preference for LRT over busway service was expressed; however, a busway was viewed as a positive precursor to LRT given LRT's long-term implementation prospects in this corridor.
- Current transit riders in the corridor are highly transit-dependent with 51 percent not owning an automobile and 36 percent riding the bus 10 or more times per week.

2020 Ridership Forecasts

- A substantial number of riders would be attracted to rapid transit service provided in the 29th Street and Southwest Corridors



Route 1: West Lake to Hiawatha:

- 7,300 daily busway riders
- 7,700 daily LRT riders

Route 2: Hopkins to Hiawatha

- 11,500 daily busway riders
- 12,100 daily LRT riders

Route 3: Hopkins to downtown Minneapolis:

- 16,000 daily busway riders
- 16,500 daily LRT riders

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Cost Estimates

- Busway construction costs and operations and maintenance (O&M) costs are within a reasonable range. Based on regionally acceptable criteria, a busway will be operationally cost-effective.

BUSWAY COSTS (2005 DOLLARS)

	ROUTE 1	ROUTE 2	ROUTE 3
Construction	\$59M	\$104M	\$84-95M
Annual O/M	\$2.0M	\$4.9M	\$9.1M

LRT COSTS (2005 DOLLARS)

	ROUTE 1	ROUTE 2	ROUTE 3
Construction	\$122M	\$234M	\$244-289M
Annual O/M	\$2.3M	\$4.9M	\$8.4M

Issues Analysis

- Sufficient space exists in both the 29th Street and Southwest Corridors to accommodate both transit (Busway or LRT) and a bicycle/pedestrian trail, assuming the use of fencing, retaining walls and bridge modifications.
- Unresolved issues include issues relating to transit service (rapid transit or collector service using trolleys or other vehicle types), existing freight rail service, physical design (transit stations, transitway treatments, retaining walls, bridge work, and landscaping), and the environment. These issues will be explored in greater detail if future transit planning is initiated in the 29th Street and Southwest Corridors.

NEXT STEPS

This study is only the first step in the 29th Street and Southwest Corridors transit planning process. As illustrated in the graphic on the next page, the next step is a process of agency and public review to select one of three transitway candidate corridors for further study. Future studies will focus on identifying the type of transit service (LRT, busway, trolley, etc.) offered on the chosen corridor and how it may be designed. Public and agency involvement is critical to determining which corridor and which transit alternative is selected. A process for public involvement has been initiated and will be ongoing as the project development process continues. Future steps in planning for transit will involve the identification of environmental and other impacts directly resulting from project implementation as well as a discussion of how the transit service will be designed and operated.

