



## AGENDA

### Rush Line Corridor Task Force Meeting

October 21 at 4:30 p.m.

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

*Web access / call-in instructions to be sent separately*

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	<u>Item:</u>	<u>Action Requested:</u>
<i>Chair Victoria Reinhardt</i>	1. Call to Order/Introductions	
<i>Chair Victoria Reinhardt</i>	2. Approval of the Agenda	Approval
<i>Chair Victoria Reinhardt</i>	3. Summary of February 18, 2021 Meeting*	Approval
<i>All</i>	4. Member Updates*	Discussion
<i>Frank Alarcon, Ramsey County Public Works</i>	5. State and Federal Legislative Update*	Information
<i>Andy Gitzlaff, Ramsey County Public Works</i>	6. Insurance Renewal*	Approval
<i>Andy Gitzlaff, Ramsey County Public Works</i>	7. 2021 Final Workplan and Budget*	Approval
<i>Andy Gitzlaff, Ramsey County Public Works</i>	8. 2022 Draft Workplan and Budget*	Information
<i>Andy Gitzlaff, Ramsey County Public Works</i>	9. Rush Line BRT Project (now Purple Line) Update*	Information

*\*attachments*

*Note from Chair Reinhardt - Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the prevalence of the Delta variant, as Chair of the Rush Line Corridor Task Force, I have determined that an in-person meeting is not practical or prudent. In compliance with Minnesota Statutes Section 13D.021, subdivision 1, as the Rush Line Corridor Task Force meets via Zoom, we state for the record that all members of the Rush Line Corridor Task Force are able to hear one another and all discussion and testimony, as can members of the public. Also, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is not feasible for at least one Commission member, chief legal counsel, or County staff to be physically present in the regular meeting room.*

*For questions related to this material, please contact Andy Gitzlaff at 651-266-2772 or [andrew.gitzlaff@co.ramsey.mn.us](mailto:andrew.gitzlaff@co.ramsey.mn.us).*



**Rush Line Corridor Task Force Meeting  
February 18, 2021, 4:30 pm via ZOOM  
Draft Meeting Summary**

**MEMBERS:**

Victoria Reinhardt, Ramsey County Commissioner (Chair)	Ben Montzka, Chisago County Commissioner
Scott McCune, White Bear Township Supervisor	Randy Carlson, Harris Mayor
Marylee Abrams, Maplewood Mayor	Fran Miron, Washington County Commissioner
Nelsie Yang, Saint Paul Councilmember	Tom Weidt, Hugo Mayor
Mary Kay Sloan, Pine City Councilmember	Jo Emerson, White Bear Lake Mayor
JJ Waldhalm, Pine County Commissioner	

**OTHERS:**

Andy Gitzlaff, Ramsey County Public Works	Frank Alarcon, Ramsey County Public Works
Katie Emory, Ramsey County Public Works	Kurt Howard, Washington County Public Works

**1. Call to Order / Introductions**

Chair Reinhardt called the meeting to order at 4:33 p.m. Introductions were made by the Task Force members and attendees.

**2. Approval of the Agenda**

A motion to approve the agenda was requested. Commissioner Montzka moved for approval. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Yang. The motion passes.

**3. Summary of July 23, 2020 Meeting**

A motion to approve the meeting summary was requested. Mayor Abrams moved to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Yang. The motion passes.

**4. Member Updates**

Several Task Force members provided a brief update on transportation-related activities in their communities.

## **5. State and Federal Legislative Update**

Frank Alarcon gave an update on state and federal legislation. Because 2021 is an odd year, it is a budget year for the state of Minnesota. The legislature's responsibility is to approve a budget for the biennium for fiscal years 2022 and 2023. Governor Tim Walz released \$52 million budget, which includes tax increases on the wealthy and taps into the budget reserve. A \$1.3 billion budget shortfall is projected, largely due to the economic impact of COVID-19 and the associated shutdowns. However, a fresh forecast later this month is expected to report better a better budget outlook, including higher than expected revenue collection in recent months and transfers to the budget from the federal government. There is an effort to approve a bonding bill this session too, even though it is not a traditional "bonding year." This year's bonding package will be smaller than the \$1.9 million bonding bill from 2020. It is expected to be focused on state agency needs more than local projects.

At the federal level, the Biden administration's top priority is to pass a rescue package in response to COVID-19. On his first day in office, President Biden released a \$1.9 trillion package to address COVID-19 and the economic downturn. This includes \$350 billion for state and local government aid to replace lost revenue. This will be flexible money for agencies to use as they see fit. The administration is also hoping to get money for transit agencies to replace lost fares due to COVID-19. This is projected to be \$20-\$30 billion. The administration is pursuing a process called budget reconciliation to pass the rescue package with a simple majority in the Senate. Congressional leaders are trying to pass the package by early March, before enhanced unemployment benefits expire in mid-March.

Congress is also working on a surface transportation reauthorization bill. In 2015, Congress approved the FAST Act to establish policy for all modes of surface transportation, including highways and transit. The five-year package was set to expire last year, but Congress extended it through September of this year. Congress is developing a new surface transportation bill and hopes to approve it before the FAST Act extension expires.

Finally, Pete Buttigieg is the new Secretary of Transportation – his stated priorities include safety, jobs and infrastructure, and climate change.

Commissioner Miron asked whether Frank Alarcon could speak to HF 1027 and SF 957 in the state legislature. Commissioner Reinhardt responded that these bills will push all transitway operation, maintenance and replacement costs onto counties, removing the 50-50 cost share with the state. Ramsey County commissioners are concerned about this bill due to the additional financial burden it would place upon counties that are planning are operating transitways. Mayor Emerson inquired whether the Task Force ought to call a special meeting to discuss the provision and consider a resolution in opposition to it. Commissioner Reinhardt answered that the Task Force may oppose the legislation without drafting a resolution. A motion to oppose the legislation was requested. Commissioner Miron moved for approval. The motion was seconded by Mayor Emerson. All were in favor with the exception of Commissioner Waldhalm who abstained. The motion passed.

## **6. 2021 Draft Workplan and Budget**

Andy Gitzlaff presented on the 2021 Draft Workplan and Budget. General activities include coordination with other groups, offering formal comments, educating on transportation improvements, coordinating with local government members and broadening the mission to get input on all forms of transportation, including highways, transit, and trails. The

environmental analysis phase will complete this year, when the project will receive a Environmental Decision from the Federal Transit Administration. After this, the project will transition to the Metropolitan Council, rather than Ramsey County, as the lead agency. However, County and cities will still be involved. The County will remain the lead agency for Advanced Station Area Planning, which will focus on development opportunities around stations and bicycle and pedestrian access. This process is expected to take place between late 2021 and late 2023. Ramsey County will continue to coordinate with Met Council and Metro Transit to monitor the performance of Route 275 and will advocate for additional service improvements along the Rush Line Corridor. They will also look to whether there are long term transportation options to be preserved in former rail corridors. Public engagement information is available on the Ramsey County website. Ramsey County is the fiscal agent for the Task Force and handles all necessary reporting and administrative functions. The budget includes insurance that's being split between county members as well as in-kind contributions of staff time.

## **7. Rush Line BRT Project Update**

Andy Gitzlaff provided an update on the Rush Line BRT Project. The project adopted a locally preferred alternative in 2017: a 15-mile route bus rapid transit (BRT) route from downtown Saint Paul to downtown White Bear Lake. He discussed the features of BRT, including characteristics of stations, vehicles and fare payment. The project is nearing the end of the environmental analysis phase. The engineering is more than 15% complete and includes defined station locations, traffic signals, bridges and underpasses, and potential locations for stormwater treatment. A visual quality manual was developed that describes the design of project elements such as their character, materials, size, form, and texture. The Environmental Assessment describes why the project is needed, alternatives, and impacts to the environment. Andy gave a summary of the Environmental Analysis results. The Federal Transit Administration is in the process of reviewing a draft of the document. In early May, the environmental assessment will be published for comment, and a decision is expected in the fall. This document will also need a review from the Federal Highway Administration for the crossing of I-694. Public engagement on the project has been extensive, including online and in-person methods to collect feedback from nearby residents and businesses. The engagement has shaped the project in multiple ways including added stations and changed station locations. Upcoming engagement includes online methods, social media, public meetings and outreach to underrepresented communities. Andy played a video that was developed to inform viewers about the Rush Line BRT. He then discussed upcoming activities, as well as the fact that the County received a grant from the Federal Transit Administration for advanced station area planning that was supported by the Task Force.

Commissioner Reinhardt expressed her appreciation that the Task Force has remained engaged. She stated that critical issues for future consideration include access for students and extending the line beyond White Bear Lake.

Councilmember Yang asked whether the video might be translated into multiple languages, for example, for the benefit of the Hmong community. Andy replied that they may be able to translate the video and can have multiple languages for future videos.

Commissioner Reinhardt noted that the virtual meeting format will continue to be useful in the future for the Task Force, even once it is safe to meet in person.

The meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m.



**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Rush Line Corridor Task Force Members  
**FROM:** Staff  
**DATE:** October 18, 2021  
**RE:** Member Updates

Members will be asked to share one or two transportation-related updates from their respective County, City or Township. Updates could include transportation or multi-modal projects, initiatives or service improvements as well as economic development activity that has occurred near recent transportation investments.

**Action Requested:** Information



**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Rush Line Corridor Task Force Members  
**FROM:** Staff  
**DATE:** October 21, 2021  
**RE:** State and Federal Legislative Update

Frank Alarcon, Ramsey County Public Works, will provide an update on current state and federal legislative activities.

**Action**

Information



## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Rush Line Corridor Task Force Members  
**FROM:** Staff  
**DATE:** October 21, 2021  
**RE:** Insurance Renewal

Coverage was initially obtained in 2001 for the work of the Task Force through the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust (LMCIT). Coverage includes municipal liability, auto, and crime along with defense cost reimbursement for open meeting law litigation. The premium last year was \$833 and paid by the five counties. At the time coverage was obtained last year, the Task Force was asked to determine whether or not it would waive the statutory tort liability limits. The Task Force chose **NOT** to waive such limits. This means that an individual claimant would be able to recover not more than \$500,000 on any claim. If the Task Force chose to waive the limits, a claimant could recover up to \$1.5 million.

The LMCIT would like confirmation that the Task Force would again choose not to waive the statutory tort liability limits. The premium this year is \$836. It is the assumption that the counties will continue to pay the insurance premium based on the following established formula.

Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority	60.9%
Chisago County Regional Railroad Authority	16.7%
Washington County Regional Railroad Authority	16.1%
Pine County Regional Railroad Authority	6.3%

### **Action Requested:**

Task Force continue to maintain its insurance coverage with the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust and the statutory tort liability **NOT** be waived and that the counties continue to pay the insurance premium based on the existing formula.



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## LIABILITY COVERAGE – WAIVER FORM

LMCIT members purchasing coverage must complete and return this form to LMCIT before the effective date of the coverage. Please return the completed form to your underwriter or email to [pstech@lmc.org](mailto:pstech@lmc.org)

This decision must be made by the member's governing body every year. You may also wish to discuss these issues with your attorney.

League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust (LMCIT) members that obtain liability coverage from LMCIT must decide whether to waive the statutory tort liability limits to the extent of the coverage purchased. The decision has the following effects:

- *If the member does not waive the statutory tort limits*, an individual claimant would be able to recover no more than \$500,000 on any claim to which the statutory tort limits apply. The total all claimants would be able to recover for a single occurrence to which the statutory tort limits apply would be limited to \$1,500,000. These statutory tort limits apply regardless of whether the city purchases the optional excess liability coverage.
- *If the member waives the statutory tort limits and does not purchase excess liability coverage*, a single claimant could potentially recover up to \$2,000,000 for a single occurrence. (Under this option, the tort cap liability limits are waived to the extent of the member's liability coverage limits, and the LMCIT per occurrence limit is \$2 million.) The total all claimants would be able to recover for a single occurrence to which the statutory tort limits apply would also be limited to \$2,000,000, regardless of the number of claimants.
- *If the member waives the statutory tort limits and purchases excess liability coverage*, a single claimant could potentially recover an amount up to the limit of the coverage purchased. The total all claimants would be able to recover for a single occurrence to which the statutory tort limits apply would also be limited to the amount of coverage purchased, regardless of the number of claimants.

Claims to which the statutory municipal tort limits do not apply are not affected by this decision.

LMCIT Member Name \_\_\_\_\_

Check one:

- ☐ The member **DOES NOT WAIVE** the monetary limits on municipal tort liability established by Minnesota Statutes, Section 466.04.
- ☐ The member **WAIVES** the monetary limits on municipal tort liability established by Minnesota Statutes, Section 466.04 to the extent of the limits of the liability coverage obtained from LMCIT.

Date of city council/governing body meeting \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_

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## **RUSH LINE CORRIDOR TASK FORCE FINAL 2021 WORK PLAN AND BUDGET**

NOTE: INDICATES PROPOSED CHANGES FROM 2020 APPROVED WORK PLAN AND BUDGET

### **WORK PLAN**

The 2021 Rush Line Corridor Task Force (Task Force) Work Plan will include the following items:

#### **1. GENERAL ACTIVITIES**

The Task Force will work with corridor counties, municipalities, transit agencies, the Metropolitan Council, Metro Transit, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to continue the advancement of the Rush Line Corridor. To accomplish this, the Task Force will do the following:

- a. Coordinate corridor studies with MnDOT, Metropolitan Council, Metro Transit, and others.
- b. Monitor progress and offer guidance on studies that impact the Rush Line Corridor.
- c. Offer formal comments.
- d. Continue to educate public officials along the Rush Line Corridor on corridor and regional transit and transportation developments.
- e. Local government coordination including the encouragement of the adoption of the Rush Line Corridor Joint Powers Agreement and ex-officio membership, to increase attendance at Task Force meetings, and to increase information sharing amongst corridor communities.
- f. Seek input on all forms of transportation, including roadways, transit, rails and trails, at Task Force meetings.

#### **2. RUSH LINE BRT ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS PHASE**

The Rush Line Corridor has undergone extensive technical analysis, community engagement, and inter-agency coordination at both the staff and policymaker level through the Pre-Project Development study led by the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority on behalf of the Task Force. The Pre-Project Development study resulted in the selection of a locally preferred alternative that best meets the needs of the communities along the corridor.

The locally preferred alternative is defined as bus rapid transit within a dedicated guideway generally along Robert Street, Phalen Boulevard, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority right-of-way and Trunk Highway 61 from Union Depot in downtown Saint Paul to downtown White Bear Lake. It would be co-located with the Bruce Vento Trail through the portion of the route that utilizes the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority right-of-

way. A connector bus from White Bear Lake to Forest Lake and other bus service improvements will continue to be explored.

The current phase of the Rush Line BRT Project includes environmental analysis under the Federal and State environmental review processes to avoid, minimize, and mitigate potential impacts while maximizing mobility, accessibility and surrounding economic development opportunities. The public will continue to be engaged throughout the environmental review process and subsequent design, engineering and construction phases to ensure that the project is reflective of the needs of the diverse communities within the Rush Line Corridor. The environmental analysis phase of the project began in early 2018 and will take approximately three years to complete. Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority will continue to be the lead agency for the environmental phase and funding will be provided by Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority. The Technical and Policy Advisory Committees will continue to meet through the duration of the environmental analysis phase. Membership in these committees reflect the geography of the 13-mile Rush Line BRT Project, and thus differ somewhat from the committees that operated during the PPD Phase.

The Task Force will:

1. Receive project updates from the project team and will be provide input at key project milestones.
2. Continue to engage the various affected interests along the Rush Line Corridor.

### **3. ROUTE 275**

The Task Force will continue to coordinate with the Metropolitan Council and Metro Transit to monitor the performance of route 275.

### **4. CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS AND PROJECTS**

Local Government/Agency Coordination:

The Task Force will coordinate with corridor counties, municipalities, transit agencies, MnDOT and the Metropolitan Council to identify potential capital improvement projects along the Corridor, including supporting communities' implementation of land use tools to preserve land for the identified capital projects.

Rush Line Corridor Transit Service:

Encourage Metro Transit, the Metropolitan Council, Chisago-Isanti Heartland Express, Arrowhead Transit and others to provide additional bus service in the Rush Line Corridor as demand warrants. This includes, but is not limited to, improved bus service along I-35E to the northern portion of the Rush Line Corridor, circulator bus service, the planned route 54 extension and other improvements along the East 7<sup>th</sup> Street and White Bear Avenue corridor.

Metropolitan Council Highway BRT Study

Coordinate with the Metropolitan Council and Metro Transit on any additional analysis in the Rush Line Corridor related to the findings of the 2014 Highway Transitway Corridor Study, including the incorporation of its analysis into the Pre-Project Development Study.

**Funding:**

Work with Task Force members to identify corridor improvements eligible for state and federal funding and seek funding for their completion. Assist local governments in the preparation of grants for Corridor improvements. Work with funding recipients to ensure the timely expenditure of funds on corridor projects.

**Corridor Preservation:**

The Task Force will work with corridor communities to preserve the former and existing freight railroad corridor and adjoining properties for future transportation uses. The Task Force is committed to the co-existence of the rail corridor with other transportation modes, including multi-use trails and bus transit.

**I-35E MnPASS expansion**

MnDOT added new MnPASS express lanes on both directions of I-35E between Cayuga Street and Little Canada Road in 2015. The MnPASS lanes were extended north to County Road J (northbound) and Highway 96 (southbound) in 2017. This is the first MnPASS investment in the East Metro area and an essential link for people commuting between downtown St. Paul and the suburbs to the north. The Task Force will continue to work with MnDOT to promote the implementation of the service.

**5. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

The Task Force will continue to provide information to the public on the corridor. It will work with Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority to coordinate outreach efforts with the Rush Line BRT Project to increase corridor awareness and to maintain consistent messaging.

**6. ADVOCACY AND LEGISLATIVE COORDINATION**

The Task Force will continue to develop policy positions and advocate for improved transit to serve the Rush Line Corridor and the Twin Cities region. Task force activities include:

- a. Informing legislators of the need for transitway improvements in the Rush Line Corridor
- b. Advocating for increased transit capital and operating funding to improve and expand the existing transit service in the corridor
- c. Coordinating legislative initiatives with other transitway corridors
- d. Establishing positions on legislative initiatives that affect the Rush Line Corridor
- e. Coordinate legislative initiatives with corridor regional railroad authorities, counties, and municipalities for the advancement of the Rush Line Corridor.

**7. MANAGEMENT, POLICY, AND ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITIES**

Commission activities will include:

- a. Prepare and adopt the annual Work Plan and Budget
- b. Prepare the annual financial report

- c. Review insurance needs and procure appropriate insurance
- d. Provide Task Force and staff administration
- e. Manage Task Force expenses
- f. Manage the consultant(s) selected by the Task Force for completion of various work tasks

## **2021 Budget**

### **Revenues/Sources of Funding**

General corridor funding for administrative functions and staffing committees and corridor advocacy is provided through “in-kind” contributions of staff time to the Task Force. Funding for insurance is provided through regional railroad authority and county member contributions.

## **RUSH LINE CORRIDOR TASK FORCE DRAFT 2022 WORK PLAN AND BUDGET**

NOTE: INDICATES PROPOSED CHANGES FROM 2021 WORK PLAN AND BUDGET

### **WORK PLAN**

The 2022 Rush Line Corridor Task Force (Task Force) Work Plan will include the following items:

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- a. Coordinate corridor studies with MnDOT, Metropolitan Council, Metro Transit, and others.
- b. Monitor progress and offer guidance on studies that impact the Rush Line Corridor.
- c. Offer formal comments.
- d. Continue to educate public officials along the Rush Line Corridor on corridor and regional transit and transportation developments.
- e. Local government coordination including the encouragement of the adoption of the Rush Line Corridor Joint Powers Agreement and ex-officio membership, to increase attendance at Task Force meetings, and to increase information sharing amongst corridor communities.
- f. Seek input on all forms of transportation, including roadways, transit, rails and trails, at Task Force meetings.

#### **9. RUSH LINE BRT PROJECT ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS**

The Rush Line Corridor has undergone extensive technical analysis, community engagement, and inter-agency coordination at both the staff and policymaker level through the Pre-Project Development study led by the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority on behalf of the Task Force. The Pre-Project Development study resulted in the selection of a locally preferred alternative that best meets the needs of the communities along the corridor.

The locally preferred alternative is defined as bus rapid transit within a dedicated guideway generally along Robert Street, Phalen Boulevard, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority right-of-way and Trunk Highway 61 from Union Depot in downtown Saint Paul to downtown White Bear Lake. It would be co-located with the Bruce Vento Trail through the portion of the route that utilizes the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority right-of-

way. A connector bus from White Bear Lake to Forest Lake and other bus service improvements will continue to be explored.

The Rush Line Bus Rapid Transit project is now known as the METRO Purple Line - a proposed 15-mile transit route with stations between Union Depot in Saint Paul and downtown White Bear Lake. The METRO Purple Line will operate primarily in dedicated bus lanes seven days a week, serving stops every ten minutes during rush hours and every fifteen minutes during other times. The project will connect people to jobs, education, healthcare, and recreation destinations while supporting economic development along the corridor.

The project's Environmental Assessment was available for public comment between May 11 and June 25, 2021. All comments received were reviewed by the Federal Transit Administration and Ramsey County, the project's lead federal and local agencies. Several public meetings were held during the Environmental Assessment public comment period. Substantive comments are responded to in the environmental decision document, or Finding of No Significant Impact, which the Federal Transit Administration approved on October 5, 2021.

The project is expected to fully transition to the Metropolitan Council by late 2021 or early 2022. As the region's leading transit provider, the Metropolitan Council has the experience and expertise to lead project development and final design (expected 2022-24) and construction (expected 2024-2026) for the project. It will ultimately operate the BRT line as part of the regional METRO system.

The project transition will be complete when the project enters the Project Development phase of the Federal Transit Administration's Capital Investment Grants program (expected in late 2021). Following the transition, Ramsey County, as the project's local funding partner, will continue to be involved with the project at the staff and policymaker levels. Ramsey County will also lead Advanced Station Area Planning between 2022 and 2024 in partnership with corridor cities, the Metropolitan Council and the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

The Task Force will:

1. Receive project updates from the project team and will be provide input at key project milestones during the Project Development phase.
2. Continue to engage the various affected interests along the Rush Line Corridor.

## **10. ROUTE 275**

The Task Force will continue to coordinate with the Metropolitan Council and Metro Transit to monitor the performance of route 275.

## **11. CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS AND PROJECTS**

Local Government/Agency Coordination:

The Task Force will coordinate with corridor counties, municipalities, transit agencies, MnDOT and the Metropolitan Council to identify potential capital improvement projects along the Corridor, including supporting communities' implementation of land use tools to preserve land for the identified capital projects.

**Rush Line Corridor Transit Service:**

Encourage Metro Transit, the Metropolitan Council, Chisago-Isanti Heartland Express, Arrowhead Transit and others to provide additional bus service in the Rush Line Corridor as demand warrants. This includes, but is not limited to, improved bus service along I-35E to the northern portion of the Rush Line Corridor, circulator bus service, the planned route 54 extension and other improvements along the East 7<sup>th</sup> Street and White Bear Avenue corridor.

**Purple Line Expansion:**

Project staff will work to develop a draft scope of work, identifying staff resources and funding options including potential grants and Task Force member contributions for a future study to explore connector bus options for expansion of the Purple Line further north. The timing for the start of the study will also be explored in relation to the development of the Purple Line.

**Metropolitan Council Highway BRT Study:**

Coordinate with the Metropolitan Council and Metro Transit on any additional analysis in the Rush Line Corridor related to the findings of the 2014 Highway Transitway Corridor Study, including the incorporation of its analysis into the Pre-Project Development Study.

**Funding:**

Work with Task Force members to identify corridor improvements eligible for state and federal funding and seek funding for their completion. Assist local governments in the preparation of grants for Corridor improvements. Work with funding recipients to ensure the timely expenditure of funds on corridor projects.

**Corridor Preservation:**

The Task Force will work with corridor communities to preserve the former and existing freight railroad corridor and adjoining properties for future transportation uses. The Task Force is committed to the co-existence of the rail corridor with other transportation modes, including multi-use trails and bus transit.

**I-35E MnPASS Expansion:**

MnDOT added new MnPASS express lanes on both directions of I-35E between Cayuga Street and Little Canada Road in 2015. The MnPASS lanes were extended north to County Road J (northbound) and Highway 96 (southbound) in 2017. This is the first MnPASS investment in the East Metro area and an essential link for people commuting between downtown St. Paul and the suburbs to the north. The Task Force will continue to work with MnDOT to promote the implementation of the service.

## **12. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

The Task Force will continue to provide information to the public on the Rush Line Corridor. It will work with Ramsey County and Metropolitan Council to coordinate outreach efforts with the METRO Purple Line project to increase corridor awareness and to maintain consistent messaging.

## **13. ADVOCACY AND LEGISLATIVE COORDINATION**

The Task Force will continue to develop policy positions and advocate for improved transit to serve the Rush Line Corridor and the Twin Cities region. Task Force activities include:

- a. Informing legislators of the need for transitway improvements in the Rush Line Corridor
- b. Advocating for increased transit capital and operating funding to improve and expand the existing transit service in the corridor
- c. Coordinating legislative initiatives with other transitway corridors
- d. Establishing positions on legislative initiatives that affect the Rush Line Corridor
- e. Coordinate legislative initiatives with corridor regional railroad authorities, counties, and municipalities for the advancement of the Rush Line Corridor.

## **14. MANAGEMENT, POLICY, AND ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITIES**

Commission activities will include:

- a. Prepare and adopt the annual Work Plan and Budget
- b. Prepare the annual financial report
- c. Review insurance needs and procure appropriate insurance
- d. Provide Task Force and staff administration
- e. Manage Task Force expenses
- f. Manage the consultant(s) selected by the Task Force for completion of various work tasks

## **2022 Budget**

### **Revenues/Sources of Funding**

General corridor funding for administrative functions and staffing committees and corridor advocacy is provided through “in-kind” contributions of staff time to the Task Force. Funding for insurance is provided through regional railroad authority and county member contributions.





**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Rush Line Corridor Task Force Members  
**FROM:** Staff  
**DATE:** October 19, 2021  
**RE:** METRO Purple Line (formerly Rush Line BRT) Update

At the Task Force meeting, Ramsey County Public Works staff will provide an update on the project and answer questions from the Task Force members.

**Project Description**

The METRO Purple Line (formerly Rush Line BRT) is a planned 15-mile transit route with stops between Union Depot in Lowertown Saint Paul and downtown White Bear Lake. The Rush Line BRT Project includes further exploration of connector bus service north to Forest Lake, along with other transit system improvements. See the handout and frequently asked questions document in the packet for details about the project.

**Completion of Environmental Process**

The purpose of the environmental process is to define the project in enough detail to understand its potential benefits and impacts, reduce those impacts as much as possible, and prepare an environmental document that explains why the project is needed, the alternatives that were considered, the project's impacts to the natural and built environments, and mitigation strategies for those impacts.

The project's Environmental Assessment was available for public comment between May 11 and June 25, 2021. All comments received were reviewed by the Federal Transit Administration and Ramsey County, the project's lead federal and local agencies. Several public meetings were held during the Environmental Assessment public comment period. Substantive comments are responded to in the environmental decision document, or Finding of No Significant Impact, which the Federal Transit Administration approved on October 5, 2021.

**Project Transition**

The project is expected to fully transition to the Metropolitan Council by late 2021 or early 2022. As the region's leading transit provider, the Metropolitan Council has the experience and expertise to lead project development and final design (expected 2022-24) and construction (expected 2024-2026) for the project. It will ultimately operate the BRT line as part of the regional METRO system.

The project transition will be complete when the project enters the Project Development phase of the Federal Transit Administration's Capital Investment Grants program (expected in late 2021). Following the transition, Ramsey County, as the project's local funding partner, will continue to be involved with the project at the staff and policymaker levels. Ramsey County will also lead Advanced Station Area Planning between 2022 and 2024 in partnership with corridor cities, the Metropolitan Council and the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

**Action Requested:**

Information



B R T



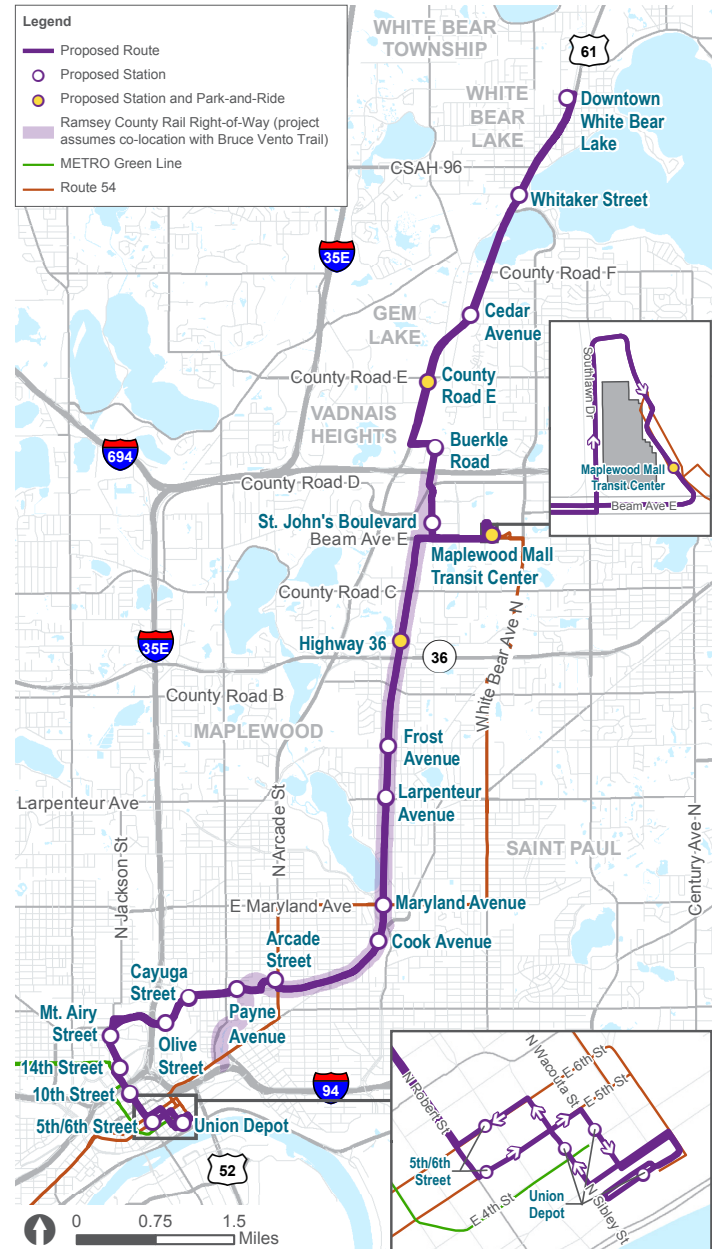
## Rush Line Bus Rapid Transit

The Rush Line BRT Project is a planned 15-mile transit route with stations in Saint Paul, Maplewood, Vadnais Heights and White Bear Lake. The Rush Line BRT will:

- Offer frequent, convenient, all-day service that will provide residents and workers the flexibility to ride anytime, without a schedule.
- Operate primarily in dedicated bus lanes to provide faster and more reliable service.
- Have stations with amenities like shelter, light, heat, fare payment machines, real-time departure signs and enhanced safety and security features.
- Connect to METRO Green and Gold Lines, local and intercity buses and Amtrak® service at Union Depot in Saint Paul.
- Connect people to 106,000 jobs as well as education, healthcare, shopping and recreation destinations within a ten-minute walk of the 21 planned stations.
- Serve more than 97,000 people who are diverse in income, race, ethnicity, age, ability and languages spoken.
- Improve biking and walking connections and support economic development near stations.



Rush Line BRT rendering (concept only)



The Rush Line BRT Project includes further exploration of connector bus service north to Forest Lake, along with other transit system improvements.



## Public Input

The Rush Line BRT Project seeks public input on:

- How are cultural, historic and natural resources maintained within the project area?
- How will communities along the route benefit from this investment?
- How will BRT operate alongside people walking, rolling, biking and driving?
- What kind of development and pedestrian, bicycle and transit connections do we want to see at and near stations?



Health Line BRT, Cleveland, OH



## Completion of Environmental Process

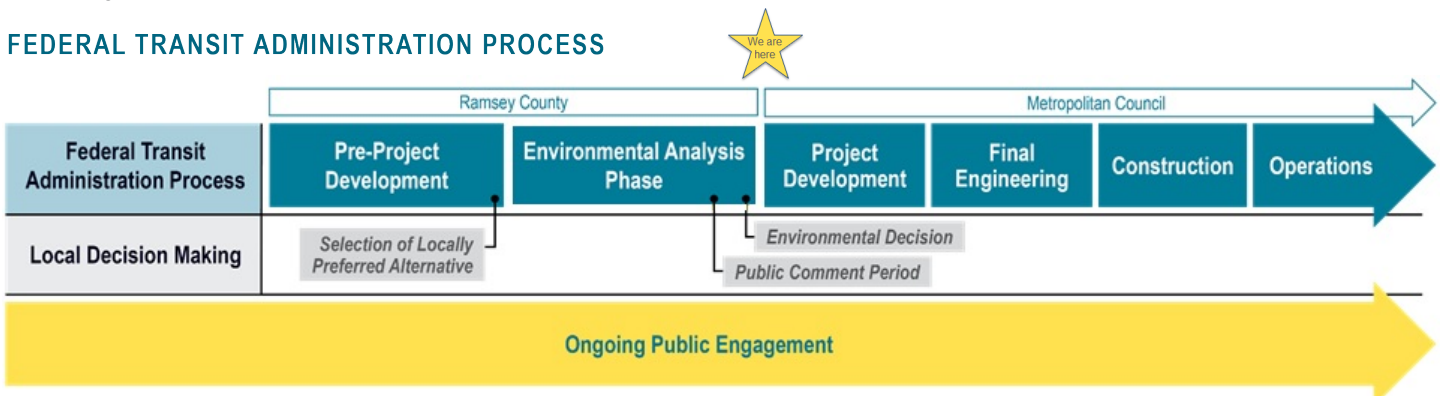
Because Ramsey County and Rush Line BRT Project partners intend to pursue federal funds for the project, between 2018 and 2021 the project followed an environmental planning process prescribed and overseen by the Federal Transit Administration. In October 2021, Ramsey County completed the Environmental Analysis Phase of the project, which included preparation of an Environmental Assessment and receipt of a favorable environmental decision from the Federal Transit Administration.

The project is currently transitioning from Ramsey County to the Metropolitan Council, a transition that is expected to be complete by late 2021 or early 2022. As the region's leading transit provider, the Metropolitan Council has the experience and expertise to lead project development, final engineering and construction for the project. The project's transition to the Metropolitan Council includes renaming the project from Rush Line to METRO Purple Line.



METRO A Line, Saint Paul, MN

### FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION PROCESS



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# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

## OCTOBER 2021



## GENERAL QUESTIONS

### What is the Rush Line BRT Project?

The Rush Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project is a proposed 15-mile transit route with stops between Union Depot in Lowertown Saint Paul and downtown White Bear Lake. Rush Line BRT will run seven days a week from early in the morning to late at night; arrive every 10 minutes during rush hours and every 15 minutes other times; provide fast and reliable transit service; and have stations with amenities including a shelter with light and heat, fare payment machines and real-time arrival signage. Rush Line BRT will connect people to jobs, education, healthcare and recreation destinations, as well as other transit routes, and will support economic development. Additional information about the project can be found on the project website at [www.rushline.org](http://www.rushline.org).

### Who will the Rush Line BRT Project serve?

The Rush Line will serve 97,000 residents and provide access to 106,000 jobs within a 10-minute walk of all 21 stations. Rush Line BRT will serve downtown and the East Side of Saint Paul, Maplewood, White Bear Township, Vadnais Heights, Gem Lake and White Bear Lake, and will provide access to employment, educational facilities, healthcare, retail, parks and recreation areas, and more community resources.

### What is happening now to advance the Rush Line BRT Project?

After completing the [environmental process](#) in October 2021, the project is in the process of transitioning from Ramsey County to the Metropolitan Council, which will be complete by late 2021 or early 2022. As the region's leading transit provider, the Metropolitan Council has the experience and expertise to lead final design (expected 2022-24) and construction (expected 2024-2026) for the project. It will ultimately operate the BRT line as part of the regional [METRO system](#). Project transition will be complete when the environmental process concludes and the project enters the Project Development phase of the Federal Transit Administration's [Capital Investment Grants program](#) (expected in late 2021).

Following the transition, Ramsey County, as the project's local funding partner, will continue to be involved with the project at the staff and policymaker levels. Ramsey County will also lead [Advanced Station Area Planning](#) between 2022 and 2024 in partnership with corridor cities, the Metropolitan Council and the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

### Why is leadership of the project transitioning from Ramsey County to the Metropolitan Council?

As the region's leading transit provider, the Metropolitan Council has the experience and expertise to lead final design (expected 2022-24) and construction (expected 2024-2026) for the project, and ultimately operate the BRT as part of the regional [METRO system](#). The Metropolitan Council has been involved with all aspects of project planning to date.

### How much will the project cost? How will it be funded?

The line is expected to provide between 6,700 and 7,400 rides per day by 2040, which is sufficient to support all-day transit service. The estimated capital cost is between \$457 million and \$474 million. The estimates remain consistent with ridership and cost projections completed in 2017, are expected

to meet federal cost effectiveness standards and are comparable to similar projects across the country.

Capital funding for the Rush Line BRT Project will come from a combination of Ramsey County and federal funds. Ramsey County and the Metropolitan Council will ultimately seek federal funding for the project through the [Capital Investment Grants Program](#) administered by the Federal Transit Administration. Based on the project's estimated cost, ridership and cost effectiveness rating, financial plan, environmental and congestion relief benefits and impacts on land use and economic development, the Rush Line BRT Project is expected to qualify for the program and be competitive with other projects around the country for funding. The county funds are primarily generated by Ramsey County's [Transit Sales & Use Tax](#). Funding for operating costs for the Rush Line BRT will come from transit fares and state and county sources.

## Why is the project needed?

The purpose of the Rush Line BRT Project is to provide transit service that satisfies the long-term regional mobility and accessibility needs for businesses and the traveling public and supports sustainable development within the study area between Saint Paul and White Bear Lake.

The needs the Rush Line BRT Project addresses are:

- Serving the needs of people who rely on transit.
- Meeting increasing demand for reliable, high-frequency transit.
- Planning for sustainable growth and development.
- Expanding multimodal travel options.

Additional data to support the project's purpose and need is available in this [one-pager](#).

## What are the results of the Environmental Assessment and how were public comments addressed?

Because Ramsey County and project partners intend to pursue federal funds for the project, the project followed a planning process prescribed and overseen by the Federal Transit Administration. Ramsey County recently completed the Environmental Analysis Phase of the project, which included preparation of an Environmental Assessment.

The Environmental Assessment was available for public comment between May 11 and June 25, 2021. All comments received were reviewed by the Federal Transit Administration and Ramsey County, the lead federal and local agencies for the METRO Purple Line BRT Project. [Substantive comments](#) are responded to in the environmental decision document, or [Finding of No Significant Impact](#), which the Federal Transit Administration approved on October 5, 2021.

View the recordings of the virtual Environmental Assessment open house events held on [June 2](#) and [June 3](#), 2021.

Since the close of the public comment period, the Federal Transit Administration and Ramsey County completed environmental decision documents, which conclude the Environmental Analysis Phase of the project.

## When will construction begin? When will the Rush Line BRT open?

Based on the project's current timeline, it is anticipated that construction of the Rush Line BRT will begin in 2024 and the Rush Line BRT will open in 2026.

## Will the Rush Line BRT bring crime?

Research shows that people generally tend to commit crimes near where they live. Studies from [San Diego](#), [Denver](#), [Los Angeles](#), and [Durham, North Carolina](#) have found no significant increase in crime due to the presence of a transit station. Using transit to flee a crime is especially uncommon.

Transit facilities in the Twin Cities follow best practices for safety and security with multiple security cameras, emergency call buttons, and open layouts that are well-covered with lighting for high visibility. Rush Line BRT stations and Park & Ride lots will have these same safety features. Uniformed and plainclothes [Metro Transit Police](#) continually patrol transit routes, vehicles and stations. Like other [METRO lines](#), transit police officers will inspect fares on board Rush Line BRT vehicles. Buses are each equipped with multiple security cameras. Bus drivers continually serve as ‘eyes on the street’ and have instant radio and silent communications capability with police dispatch.

## Will Rush Line BRT cause residents to be displaced?

The Rush Line BRT will operate primarily in existing public right-of-way. As such, it is not anticipated that the Rush Line BRT will require the removal of any homes.

A central goal of the Rush Line BRT Project is to expand access to jobs, education, healthcare and recreation for people with low incomes. Historically, however, investment in high-quality transit service has the potential to increase property values near stations. In some instances, these increases can cause displacement due to higher rents or property taxes. The potential for this form of displacement and strategies to mitigate potential displacement along the Rush Line BRT route are being studied as part of the environmental analysis phase. This analysis will consider both technical data and community input obtained through [public engagement](#).

## ROUTE, STATIONS AND VEHICLES

### How were the route and vehicle type selected?

The project’s route and transit vehicle type were selected in 2017 as a result of the Pre-Project Development Study. The Pre-Project Development Study examined 55 route segments and several types of transit through an extensive public engagement and technical evaluation process in order to determine which route and type of transit would best meets the project’s overall purpose and need. The project goals, as defined in the Pre-Project Development Study, are as follows:

- Increase transit use.
- Develop an implementable project.
- Improve quality of life.
- Improve sustainable transportation options.
- Enhance regional connectivity.
- Support the local vision for sustainable development.

A light rail, commuter rail, modern streetcar, bus rapid transit, and local bus service were all evaluated in the Pre-Project Development study, and BRT proved to be the best option. BRT provides a similar quality of service to light rail at less than half of the cost. It is faster than local bus service and offers high-quality amenities such as improved stations, off-board fare payment, and more. The route and BRT option selected serves the highest number of riders including people who rely on transit and provides the greatest potential for economic development while maximizing cost effectiveness.

The Pre-Project Development study is available on the [project website](#).

## **How will the Rush Line BRT Project affect the Bruce Vento Regional Trail?**

The Rush Line BRT will be co-located with a reconstructed Bruce Vento Regional Trail through the portion of the route that utilizes the Ramsey County rail right-of-way. Ramsey County acquired the right-of-way in the 1990s for future transit use. There is enough of room within this public right-of-way to fit the Bruce Vento Regional Trail, the Rush Line BRT and other elements such as landscaping.

The Ramsey County Rail Right-of-Way Design Guide will guide the design of the Rush Line BRT Project and Bruce Vento Regional Trail. The [Ramsey County Rail Right-of-Way Design Guide](#) was created with public input collected in 2019 and in previous planning phases. It emphasizes the importance of the natural and historic character of the right-of-way, safety and security, ease of access and maintenance, and a safe, high-quality experience for trail and BRT users.

## **Why doesn't the Rush Line travel further north to Hugo and Forest Lake?**

As part of the Pre-Project Development Study, Ramsey County examined transit alternatives for a 30-mile corridor between downtown Saint Paul and Forest Lake. The study determined that the market for all-day, high-frequency (with buses arriving every 10 to 15 minutes) transit service in the corridor is between downtown Saint Paul and downtown White Bear Lake when accounting for current population data and forecasted population growth through 2040. Even with anticipated growth in Hugo and Forest Lake in the coming years, the residential and job density north of downtown White Bear Lake is not expected to warrant investment in all-day, frequent transit service. The existing demand for transit service in the Hugo and Forest Lake area is predominantly for express service. This need is served by the existing express bus routes [275](#) and [288](#) along I-35E.

As part of the current environmental analysis phase, Ramsey County staff are exploring the potential for a bus connection from White Bear Lake to Forest Lake via Hugo, which would provide hourly service to meet the limited demand for transit service in those communities.

## **How was the Downtown White Bear Lake station selected?**

This station location was selected after extensive technical analysis and public engagement, and the project includes measures to reduce potential traffic impacts and improve pedestrian safety such as:

- Adjusting the timing of green and red lights at nearby intersections.
- Reconfiguring turn lanes to provide sufficient space for all cars waiting to turn.
- Adding medians and crosswalks on Highway 61.
- Extending curbs at intersections to shorten the pedestrian crossing distance.

White Bear Lake residents identified support for this station location because they felt that it would provide access to downtown without impacting the existing downtown character or parking availability. A summary of the public engagement can be found in the [Downtown White Bear Lake Station Location Input Summary](#).

## **What features will Rush Line BRT vehicles have? Will vehicles produce air or noise pollution?**

The vehicles used for the Rush Line BRT will be modern, state-of-the-art vehicles designed for an enjoyable customer experience. Like all buses in Metro Transit's system, Rush Line BRT vehicles will



accommodate bicycles and be ADA-compliant with ramps, seating areas and accommodations for customers with disabilities.

Metro Transit [plans to gradually transition to a fully electric bus fleet](#) in the years ahead. Electric buses produce no tailpipe emissions and provide a quieter ride than conventional diesel models. Project plans assume a fully electric vehicle fleet will be used for the Rush Line BRT.

## RIDERSHIP AND TRAFFIC

### What will be the impacts on ridership from COVID-19?

While transit ridership declined during the COVID-19 pandemic not only in the Twin Cities region but throughout the Country, the Rush Line BRT Project remains a long-term investment in the region's transportation system. People will continue to count on transit to meet their transportation needs. Thus, planning for Rush Line BRT is continuing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the pandemic, existing BRT service has had some of the highest numbers of rides by essential workers. As of September 2021, BRT routes within the Twin Cities are at 75% ridership of what they were pre-pandemic and ridership continues to grow. While many employers have transitioned to remote work during the pandemic, studies have found that less than 40 percent of jobs can be done from home; the remaining 60 percent cannot be done remotely. In fact, the pandemic has underscored the importance of transit in providing essential workers with a means to get to work and to provide essential services.

As we navigate our new normal, Ramsey County and its partners continue to look beyond the pandemic to build the transportation system for the future and be a part of our economic recovery. People will continue to need to get to work, education opportunities, daily errands and appointments, as well as recreation. The fast, frequent, and all-day service of the Rush Line BRT will provide residents the flexibility to ride anytime, without a schedule.

As Rush Line BRT planning continues, Ramsey County and its partners will continue to monitor and take into account trends in travel patterns, including those related to COVID-19 to assess whether any adjustments may be needed.

### Will Rush Line BRT buses have their own lanes or operate in regular traffic?

To provide a faster and more reliable trip, the Rush Line BRT will operate in a dedicated guideway and bus-only lanes for about three-quarters of the 15-mile route between Saint Paul and White Bear Lake. Along the remaining portions of the route, the Rush Line BRT will share traffic lanes with other vehicles. The project's [15% Concept Plans](#) show where the BRT will operate in its own space versus where it will share the road with other vehicles.

### Who is going to ride Rush Line BRT north of Maplewood? Why will buses run so often?

Current transit service north of Maplewood focuses on commuters who work downtown during traditional weekday business hours, with just four southbound trips on weekday mornings and three northbound trips on weekday afternoons under usual conditions. Rush Line BRT will provide all-day service between downtown White Bear Lake, downtown Saint Paul and communities in between, and will be useful to a greater number of people than the limited bus service available today. There is a growing market for frequent, all-day transit service, and increased frequency allows for more

opportunities to use transit. Ridership is expected to meet benchmarks to justify the transit investment using strict federal ridership criteria and to position the project to qualify for competitive federal funds.

Overall, about 55 percent of the Rush Line BRT ridership would be for work trip purposes, demonstrating the utility of the service for non-work as well as work travel. Reverse commuting, or travel that occurs in the direction opposite the traditional downtown orientation (both work and non-work trips), is 28 percent of daily ridership. Roughly half of these reverse commute trips are work trips to employment opportunities outside of downtown Saint Paul. As described above, demand for transit in this area is sufficient to support this level of service.

### **Will there be traffic impacts in downtown White Bear Lake?**

The traffic analysis completed for the project found that implementation of Rush Line BRT would have a negligible impact on traffic operations throughout most of downtown White Bear Lake. Additionally, BRT service every 10 to 15 minutes in each direction amounts to 4-6 buses per hour in each direction. 4-6 vehicles per hour represents a very small percentage of overall traffic on Highway 61 and is not enough to significantly worsen congestion.

Beyond the location-specific improvements developed for the project that promote safe and efficient traffic and BRT operations, there are several more fundamental improvements to the transportation system that would result from the project. Dedicated BRT operations directly result in an increase in speed and reliability for transit. This increase in speed and reliability can lead to higher transit ridership and overall person throughput.

[This animated video](#) shows how Rush Line BRT will enter and exit the future station in Downtown White Bear Lake.

### **How will the Rush Line BRT Project fit with the consolidated White Bear Lake High School campus?**

The proximity of the Downtown White Bear Lake station and the new consolidated high school campus provides an opportunity for some students and staff to arrive at school without having to drive and add to traffic congestion in the area. Ramsey County is coordinating with the school district and the City of White Bear Lake on the design and operation of the Rush Line BRT Project to best serve the expanded school campus now that the bond referendum has been approved. Potential traffic impacts of the Rush Line BRT Project are being evaluated as part of the Environmental Assessment that will be available for public comment in May 2021. The Environmental Assessment includes mitigation strategies for potential traffic impacts.

## **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

### **How can I stay involved with the Rush Line BRT Project?**

After the environmental analysis phase concludes, Ramsey County will prepare for the project to transition to the Metropolitan Council. The website ([rushline.org](http://rushline.org)) will regularly be updated with the status of the project and opportunities for engagement. You can also subscribe to the Rush Line e-newsletter to receive project updates.