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COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN

JUNE 8, 2018

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Rush Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project is a proposed 14-mile transit route connecting Union Depot in Saint Paul and the east side of Saint Paul, Maplewood, Vadnais Heights, Gem Lake, White Bear Township and White Bear Lake. The Rush Line BRT Project is led by the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority.

Public input will inform the Rush Line BRT Project design and environmental assessment. It will also help decision-makers shape the project to meet the needs of the communities it would serve. As used throughout this document and project, the **public** refers to the population as a whole, and includes all persons who are interested in the Rush Line BRT Project. Public engagement activities during the environmental analysis phase will be structured to inform project decisions and will be inclusive of all members of the public. The communication and public engagement plan will be updated throughout the environmental analysis phase to reflect identified community needs as decision-making advances. As used throughout this document and project, a **community** is a group of people defined by a shared background. A **stakeholder** is an individual or entity that would be affected by the project, including businesses, residents, elected officials, local government and community organizations.

The purpose of this communication and public engagement plan is to:

- Outline the goals for public engagement.
- Specify the project decisions public input will inform.
- Detail methods, techniques, timelines and staffing assignments.

This document will guide both how the project is communicated to the public and how public input is used and shared.

The remainder of this document is structured as follows:

- Section 2: Public engagement goals.
 - Goal 1: Inform a diverse public.
 - Goal 2: Collect input from a diverse public.
 - Goal 3: Use public input to shape the project.
- Section 3: Public participation strategies.
 - In-person strategies.
 - Online strategies.
- Section 4: Key project decisions.
 - Station area planning.
 - Guideway placement and corridor design.
 - Environmental impacts and inventory.
 - Health impact evaluation.
- Section 5: Decision-making process.
 - Policy Advisory Committee.
 - Technical Advisory Committee.
 - Community Advisory Committee.
 - Station area planning working groups.

2. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT GOALS

2.1. GOAL 1: INFORM A DIVERSE PUBLIC

People who live and work in the Rush Line BRT Project area were informed of and involved in decision-making during the prior phase of work, referred to as the Pre-Project Development Study. The current phase, referred to as the environmental analysis phase, will involve detailed decision-making and present project information for public review.

The approach to engagement builds on Ramsey County's goal established by the Board of Commissioners to cultivate economic prosperity through "inclusive initiatives that engage all communities in decisions about our future." The public will be invited to participate and provide input to shape the Rush Line BRT Project.

Residents

The people living in the Rush Line BRT Project area are diverse in their racial and ethnic backgrounds, ages, abilities, languages spoken and income levels. More detail on residents in the Rush Line BRT Project area, including the source of data, is included in Appendix B.

Mt. Airy, an area that offers public housing options including Valley Hi-Rise and Mt. Airy Hi-Rise, is home to many African-American and Asian-American residents. The east side of Saint Paul is home to Latino, African-American, Karen and Hmong residents. Neighborhoods in Saint Paul close to the Rush Line BRT Project route have more than 50 percent residents of color. Maplewood is home to Hmong, African-American and White populations. Further north in Vadnais Heights and White Bear Lake, there are predominantly White communities that are becoming increasingly diverse as more Asian, African-American and Latino households settle in these areas.

Following English, the most common language spoken by people living along the route is Hmong. Of the 24,111 people living in census tracts with high rates of limited English proficiency in the project area, approximately 12 percent (2,800 people) report that Hmong is the primary language spoken at home. More than 7 percent (1,800 people) speak another Asian language at home, including Laotian, Vietnamese, Cambodian and Chinese; more than 7 percent (1,700 people) speak Spanish at home; and more than 3.5 percent (850 people) speak an African language at home. Households that do not speak English at home are largely concentrated along the southern portion of the route in Saint Paul. Arrangements will be made for translation of materials from English to Spanish, Somali, Karen and Hmong languages as needed. Interpreters will be made available at community meetings if a specific request is made or if a need for these services is identified.

Many households along the Rush Line BRT Project route do not have a car. In most census blocks along the Rush Line BRT Project in Saint Paul, more than 20 percent of households do not have a vehicle. In the southern part of the Rush Line BRT Project area in the Saint Paul neighborhoods of Payne-Phalen, Thomas-Dale and northern parts of downtown, the percentage of households with no car ranges from 6 percent to 73 percent. Near the proposed St. John's Hospital and Maplewood Mall stations in Maplewood, 20 percent of households have no car. The northern part of the Rush Line BRT Project area in Vadnais Heights and White Bear Lake tends to have fewer households without cars. When possible, in-person public engagement activities will be held near existing transit routes so

¹ https://www.ramseycounty.us/your-government/leadership/board-commissioners/vision-mission-and-goals

that current transit users and those without a car can participate. More details are included in Section 3 of this document.

The Rush Line BRT Project team endeavors to reach out to low-income people, people of color and business owners to understand their transit needs and the potential benefits and impacts of the Rush Line BRT Project. Given the diversity of residents and the underrepresented communities along the route, the project team will share information in ways that are approachable to multiple audiences. **Underrepresented communities** are those whose input has been disproportionately unheard in public decision-making, including people of color, people with disabilities and low-income people.

Below is a list of communities that the project team intends to proactively engage:

- Hmong.
- Latino.
- Somali.
- African-American.
- Karen.
- Low-income households.
- People with disabilities.
- Seniors.
- People who are transit-reliant.

Informing underrepresented communities will be a focus of public events and online materials. Other channels of communication will be used as appropriate, such as:

- Walk-and-engage (described in Section 3.1).
- One-on-one and small group meetings.
- Listening/informing sessions.
- Conversations and/or surveys.
- Culturally-relevant pop-ups and community events.
- Traditional and multicultural social media communications.
- Community and multicultural media.

These methods of engagement are further described in Section 3 of this document.

Businesses and Institutions

In addition to serving people living near the route, the Rush Line BRT Project would serve a range of businesses and institutions. Many customers and clients reach businesses and institutions using transit. Downtown Saint Paul, Maplewood Mall and downtown White Bear Lake are major commercial and retail centers along the route, each with very different characteristics and needs. Smaller, neighborhood-scale retail is located on Payne Avenue and Arcade Street, and Hmong Village has a regional draw. Medical facilities have a large presence along the route with Regions Hospital, Gillette Children's Specialty Clinic, St. John's Hospital and Health Partners Clinics near proposed stations. The route will also increase access to several educational facilities, including Metro State University, Century College, and several public and private K-12 institutions.

Partner Agencies

In addition to residents, businesses and institutions along the route, public agencies have an interest in the Rush Line BRT Project. These include:

- City of Saint Paul.
- City of Maplewood.
- City of Vadnais Heights.
- · City of Gem Lake.
- City of White Bear Lake.
- White Bear Township.
- Ramsey County.
- Metropolitan Council/Metro Transit.
- Minnesota Department of Transportation.
- Federal Transit Administration.

These agencies will participate in the project through committees that meet regularly, as detailed in Section 5. Other state and federal agencies may participate as warranted.

2.2. GOAL 2: COLLECT INPUT FROM A DIVERSE PUBLIC

Providing opportunities for all voices to be heard, especially those of typically underrepresented communities, is a crucial step to achieving equitable outcomes. At every event led by project team members, there will be opportunities to gather input from people whether they are project experts or hearing about it for the first time and whether they have three minutes or an hour to spend.

The project team will hold targeted events with the communities of color with the largest populations along the route, such as Hmong, African-American and Latino residents, in locations and manners relevant to their busy lives, family, convenience, language and cultural preferences. The project team will host activities at events to assist with kids and families, such as including food and games to provide parents the time to converse with project team members. Arrangements will be made for translation of materials from English to Spanish, Somali, Karen and Hmong languages as needed. Interpreters will be made available at community meetings if a specific request is made or if a need for these services is identified.

For communities of color with smaller populations along the Rush Line BRT Project, such as Karen, East African and Native American, the project team will engage in smaller group settings to gather input and build understanding of the project impacts and benefits. Engagement with these communities will include pop-ups and participation in cultural events to inform and engage all people during the environmental analysis phase of the project.

Key Themes Relevant to Diverse Communities

- Equity and inclusivity: Given the disparities communities of color face with regards to healthcare outcomes and employment opportunities, the Rush Line BRT Project route can be referred to as a "health corridor" providing increased access to healthcare facilities and an opportunity to improve health and job parity.
- Safety: Concerns about public safety vary by geographic area and by culture.

- Communities of color who live within the Rush Line BRT Project area and those who
 would use the transit service may have different work schedules according to their
 profession or economic status and may be concerned about safety during early
 morning or late-night shifts outside of rush hour.
- Safety concerns for families, children and pets with new multi-modal interactions and guideway crossings.
- Environment: As many people of color along the Rush Line BRT Project live near proposed stations and may be future Rush Line riders, their perspectives on environmental and design issues are especially valuable to the project.

Community Engagement Approach Focusing on Culturally Relevant Topics

- Health and employment equity: Seek input on the transportation barriers to health care and jobs faced by underrepresented communities.
- Culturally specific art and traditions: Seek input on how to design stations to reflect neighborhood cultural character.
- Safe and inclusive neighborhoods: Seek input on cultural habits and traditions to build safe, inclusive and welcoming spaces at and surrounding the stations.

Engagement efforts will build upon themes heard from public input during the Pre-Project Development Study. Some themes are specific to local areas along the route, while others are common or general.

2.3. GOAL 3: USE PUBLIC INPUT TO SHAPE THE PROJECT

The public will have opportunities to provide input so that the Rush Line BRT Project provides the most benefit to the communities it would serve.

Thorough and effective documentation of engagement efforts and results is important to the Rush Line BRT Project team. Documentation will communicate input received to decision-makers so they can consider it appropriately. Effective documentation will also show the public that the project team takes their contributions seriously. Materials viewed and distributed at any in-person engagement activity (e.g., targeted events, pop-up events, presentations) will also be available on the project website. Content produced for the website will be compliant with the Minnesota State Accessibility Standard and written in plain language.

A template is included in Appendix A to gather input and themes from public events so that information can be quickly and easily shared among team partners to create engagement summaries for decision-makers. Further details on how input will be collected and used is included in Section 4.

3. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

3.1. IN-PERSON ENGAGEMENT

Walk-and-Engage

The public will be engaged through a series of walk-and-engage efforts. The goal of walk-and-engage is to respectfully and authentically reach people where they live and informally start conversations

with people who may not have heard of the project. This is a particularly direct way to engage people who may be difficult to reach with formal events. Walk-and-engage events will not be heavily advertised, though they will often be noticed with a post on the Rush Line Facebook and Twitter accounts. Members of the project team will wear shirts that identify them with the Rush Line BRT Project to make their association clear as they approach. Walk-and-engage will be used in commercial and recreation areas with foot traffic, including near Lake Phalen, in downtown White Bear Lake and near Hmong Village.

Presentations to Stakeholders and Community Groups

To build a shared vision for the Rush Line BRT Project, the project team will make presentations to local organizations to educate their members about the project, obtain their input and seek their support. Examples include city councils, Saint Paul district councils and community organizations such as chambers of commerce, neighborhood organizations or resource organizations.

Pop-Up Meetings

Engaging stakeholders in places they work, live and play is an effective method for gaining public input, particularly from traditionally underrepresented communities. The goal of pop-up meetings is to introduce the project team, provide information about the project and gather input in an informal setting. Pop-up meetings initiate open dialogue with people by meeting them in places where they are comfortable, such as outside a neighborhood religious institution, near a housing development, or in a well-used local park.

Community Events

Attending community events is an effective method to speak to many people in a short amount of time and raise awareness of the project. Community events range from annual neighborhood celebrations to street fairs that have a regional draw. The project team and Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority will decide whether to staff these events based on several factors including the opportunity to reach underrepresented communities, expected attendance, timing of the event and its location, to ensure a reasonable use of resources.

Targeted Gatherings

Targeted gatherings will be a key public participation strategy. These gatherings are intended for groups to learn about the project and dive deeper into specific elements, questions and issues within the Rush Line BRT Project area. These can include but are not limited to visits to future station areas and in-depth discussions on specific topic areas. Targeted gatherings will be used to reach a specific audience, like people who live near an area or share a common interest or identity.

Walking and Biking Tours

A type of targeted gathering, walking and biking tours will be used to explore areas along the route inperson. Targeted walking tours will be used to inform, educate and seek balanced input. Tour locations could include areas south of Larpenteur Avenue and walks or bike rides along the Bruce Vento Trail.

Open Houses

Open house meetings will be held upon publication of the environmental document and will be followed by a public hearing regarding the contents of the environmental document. The open house is a forum for the project team to share project information with the public and obtain input on issues and potential solutions. Open house meetings may be held at other project milestones as needed.

Open houses will be held at accessible locations. Agendas, information packets, presentation exhibits and meeting summaries will be posted on the project website. Interpreters will be provided upon request.

3.2. ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

Website

The project website (rushline.org) is hosted on the Ramsey County website and managed by the county. The project team will generate web content for engagement, including frequently asked questions and online engagement activities. The website will serve as an information resource and will provide a project overview, updates at key milestones and documents such as the schedule, public participation calendar and graphics. The website also includes a sign-up form for email updates.

Targeted Input Opportunities

Surveys allow people with a few minutes to spare an opportunity to learn about a specific project topic and provide input in a variety of multiple choice, short answer and ranking questions. These surveys will both inform the public and gather necessary information to make decisions. Surveys will be available online to allow stakeholders and the public to provide input.

For in-person events, portable tablets will have the survey pre-loaded to allow for easy input. Hard copies of surveys will also be available at events for those who are not comfortable completing the survey on a tablet.

An online mapping tool will provide an additional opportunity for stakeholders and the public to provide input. This is particularly useful for location-specific information and may be used for station siting and guideway design. Surveys, maps and other online engagement tools will be promoted on the project website, email list and social media.

E-Newsletter

Email updates will be distributed by the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority using its newsletter delivery tools at project milestones. Email updates will announce opportunities to get involved and share links to surveys and recent engagement summaries.

Social Media

The popularity and accessibility of social media enables users to receive up-to-date information immediately. Social media channels will be used as a tool to help share information throughout the environmental analysis phase and promote public engagement activities. Tapping into the existing Rush Line Facebook and Twitter accounts, as well as Ramsey County Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram accounts will expand the reach of the Rush Line BRT Project among its followers. This allows information about the Rush Line BRT Project to reach a broader portion of the public, including underrepresented communities. Individuals who may not want to engage or be able to participate via traditional public engagement methods can still be a part of the decision-making process if they use social media.

All outreach will be structured and timed to inform key project decisions, as detailed in Section 4.

4. KEY PROJECT DECISIONS

This section describes the engagement efforts planned to help inform key project decisions during three areas of work in the environmental analysis phase of the project.

4.1. STATION AREA PLANNING

Although the general location of stations was decided as part of the Pre-Project Development Study, the precise location and orientation of each station platform will be refined and confirmed during the environmental analysis phase. Station area planning will also address access to stations and changes to land use and development patterns around the stations. It is expected that the technical and policy advisory committees (defined in Section 5) will make decisions regarding station platform locations in fall 2018. Engagement efforts in spring and summer of 2018 will therefore be focused on gathering input to inform this decision. The Rush Line BRT Project team will hold meetings with station area planning working groups in three stages. Working groups will be assembled in consultation with each city's staff and elected officials, and will be composed of area residents, business people and elected and appointed officials. In addition to these working groups, one-on-one interviews with other stakeholders will provide additional perspectives on the station areas. Meanwhile, broader community engagement efforts will capture public input from people who do not attend the working group meetings or interviews. Public input collected will be presented to the working groups and the technical advisory committee (see Section 5) so they can consider voices from across the community during the station siting process.

The first stage of public engagement for station area planning will include walk-and-engage activities around Mt. Airy, Phalen Village, Payne Avenue and Arcade Street and pop-ups in downtown White Bear Lake, Vadnais Heights and Maplewood. The conversations will inform and build awareness of the project by collecting input that includes:

- Access to future stations and destinations.
- Ideas for improving sidewalks and streets.
- Current and potential use of transit.
- Pedestrian and bicycle access and mobility.

Targeted, culturally and linguistically relevant community events with audiences surrounding the station areas will take place in geographically defined areas, shown below in Table 1. Events for the first stage of station area planning are outlined in the following table.

Table 1: Engagement Events for the First Stage of Station Area Planning

Geographic Area	Audience	Activity	Location
Saint Paul	Hmong	Targeted Hmong gathering	Hmong Village
	Latino	Targeted Latino gathering	CLUES or Sagrado Corazón Church
	African-American	Targeted African- American gathering	Mt. Airy Community Center
	General public, inclusive of diverse communities	Community events	East Side Area Business Association

Geographic Area	Audience	Activity	Location
Maplewood	General public, inclusive of diverse communities, seniors and persons with disabilities	Community events	Gladstone Area
	General public, inclusive of diverse communities	Community events	Maplewood Mall
Vadnais Heights and Gem Lake	General public, employers, including people of color	Community event, walk-and-engage	Vadnais Heights Sports Center
White Bear Lake	General public, including people of color, seniors and persons with disabilities	Pop-up, community events, walk-and-engage	Normandy Park Education Center
	General public, including people of color	Community events	White Bear Lake Area Chamber of Commerce (targeted businesses)

Outreach with Karen, East African, Native American and other African and Asian communities will be made on a one-on-one basis with organizations and leaders to build their awareness and receive their input. Small-group listening sessions can be organized as appropriate.

The second stage of engagement will involve visioning sessions to review station location alternatives drafted by the project team. These visioning sessions will explore local details of station areas like access routes, land use and the overall station area vision.

The third stage of engagement will discuss project team recommendations. The working group will spend time reviewing recommendations and providing their input.

4.2. GUIDEWAY PLACEMENT AND CORRIDOR DESIGN

The precise placement of the guideway will determine how well the Rush Line BRT Project serves stations, the speed of travel and compatibility with nearby trails and travel lanes. Ensuring safe pedestrian and bicycle access to stations will be a focus for engagement regarding guideway placement. The project design will include both BRT and the Bruce Vento Trail in the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority right-of-way. This work will include targeted input opportunities in person and online. It is expected that the technical and policy advisory committees will make decisions regarding guideway placement and design in late 2018. Engagement efforts in summer and fall of 2018 will therefore be focused on gathering input to inform this decision.

4.3. ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

The environmental analysis is comprised of two tasks that will need different engagement approaches, the health impact evaluation and the environmental impacts and inventory.

Environmental Impacts and Inventory

To help inform the environmental assessment, some engagement will be focused on determining the potential impacts of the project. This outreach is especially critical to the environmental justice analysis, where the project must determine and disclose whether it will have disproportionately high

and adverse effects to environmental justice (people of color or low-income) populations. Other topics that will be covered in this engagement effort include potential impacts to community facilities and historic resources. Strategies used for this section will include open houses, presentations to stakeholders, targeted gatherings and targeted online input opportunities. It is expected that the project team will need input to determine impacts in spring 2019. Engagement efforts around this time will therefore be focused on determining impacts.

Health Impact Evaluation

A health impact evaluation, which identifies health indicators potentially affected by the project, will be conducted for each station area. This will occur early in the environmental analysis phase (summer to winter 2018) to allow community members to identify ways in which health indicators will be considered as part of the design process. Strategies used for this section will include pop-up events and targeted online input opportunities.

5. DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

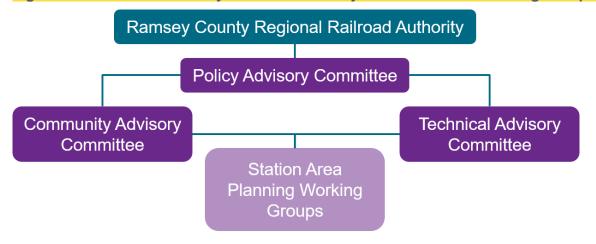
5.1. PUBLIC INPUT DOCUMENTATION

The project team will share summaries of engagement efforts and input received with the project advisory committees described below to help make key project decisions. Comments emailed or mailed to Ramsey County outside of a specific engagement event will also be included in the summaries. These summaries may take the form of a list of major themes discussed, verbatim input or infographics depending on the content and depth of input collected. Summaries of engagement efforts and input received will be posted on the project website at project milestones and leading up to project decisions, to demonstrate that the input has been recorded and provided to decision makers.

5.2 DECISION MAKERS

The decision-making process is led by the following teams and committees that are informed by input gathered from public engagement efforts.

Figure 1: Environmental Analysis Phase Advisory Committees and Working Groups



5.2. POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Policy Advisory Committee consists of elected and appointed officials from communities in the Rush Line BRT Project area and key partner agencies. The Policy Advisory Committee will provide the overall direction and guidance for the project and will meet every other month for the duration of the environmental analysis phase. All Policy Advisory Committee meetings will allow for public comment. The Policy Advisory Committee will provide recommendations to the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority Board on project decisions using input and findings from other committees and working groups.

5.3. TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Technical Advisory Committee, comprised of planning and public works staff from Rush Line BRT Project area communities and other agencies, will provide technical input on issues including design, environmental, engineering, construction and operation of the Rush Line BRT Project. Technical Advisory Committee members will review technical documents and make recommendations to the Policy Advisory Committee.

Issue resolution teams will be formed during the environmental analysis phase to address specific technical and engineering issues related to the Rush Line BRT Project. Participants in the issue resolution teams will include public agency staff (including members of the Technical Advisory Committee) and the project team. Recommendations and findings from the issue resolution teams are given to the Technical Advisory Committee.

5.4. COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Community Advisory Committee will provide business and community perspectives to the Rush Line BRT Project team, Technical Advisory Committee and Policy Advisory Committee on project design, station area planning, environmental analysis and operational plan decisions. The Community Advisory Committee will consist of 15 to 20 committee members who will also be asked to advise on public engagement techniques and assist with ensuring that information regarding engagement opportunities is effectively communicated. Community Advisory Committee members may participate in working groups established for specific geographic sub-areas of the route that they represent for items like station area planning or guideway design in the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority right-of-way portion of the route. The Community Advisory Committee is expected to meet quarterly.

Input from the Community Advisory Committee will be shared with the Technical Advisory Committee and Policy Advisory Committee.

5.5. STATION AREA PLANNING WORKING GROUPS

Based on geographic location and proximity to stations, up to five regional station area planning working groups will be formed to discuss station area issues, including placement of station platforms, access to stations, circulation within the station areas and land use and development patterns. These working groups may include residents, elected officials, interested Community Advisory Committee members, hospital and business representatives and planning commission members. The working groups will have meetings where they explore topics in depth with representatives from the project team.

The first stage of station area planning will involve a review of existing conditions and invite working group members to share their ideas and concerns. The second stage of station area planning will

involve visioning sessions with the working groups to review station location alternatives drafted by the project team. These visioning sessions will explore local details of station areas like access routes, land use and the overall station area vision. For the third stage of station area planning, the working groups will review the project team's recommendations and provide input.

Station area planning working groups will be informed by input collected through other engagement efforts. Findings from the station area planning working groups will be shared with the Technical and Policy Advisory Committees for the project. The station area planning working groups will meet as needed to address specific station area issues and will exist only as long as they are needed. Shown in light purple in Figure 1, they differ from standing committees which will meet throughout the study and discuss all project-related topics.

APPENDIX A INPUT TEMPLATE

ENGAGEMENT EVENT SUMMARY

Date	Time
Location	
Staff present	Number of participants
Event purpose	
Type of meeting:	
□ Walk-and-Engage □ Open House □ Pop-up	☐ Targeted Gathering ☐ Presentation
Input gathered:	
•	
•	
•	
•	

How will input influence decision-making?

APPENDIX BDEMOGRAPHIC MAPS

The U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2012-2016 5-year estimates were used to create the following maps. American Community Survey data provides a useful picture of who lives within the Rush Line BRT Project area. The study area includes census block groups within a half-mile of the project route.

These maps show areas where historically underrepresented and difficult to reach communities are located. This information will be used to guide engagement efforts and select appropriate meeting types and communication strategies.

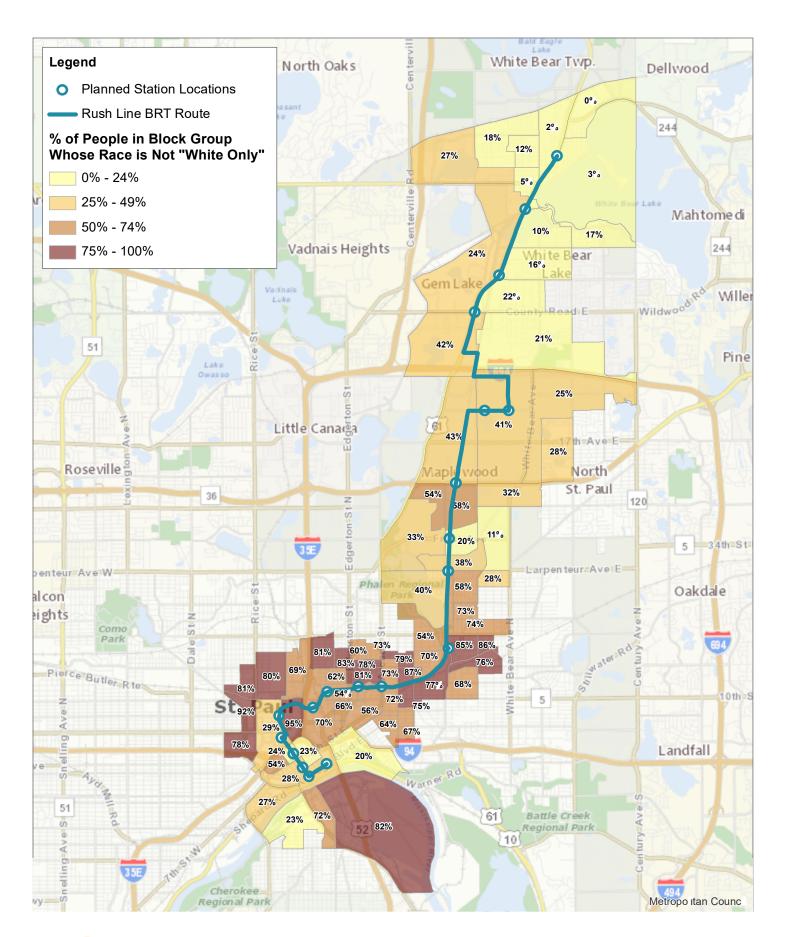






Figure 2: Percentage of People of Color in the Study Area

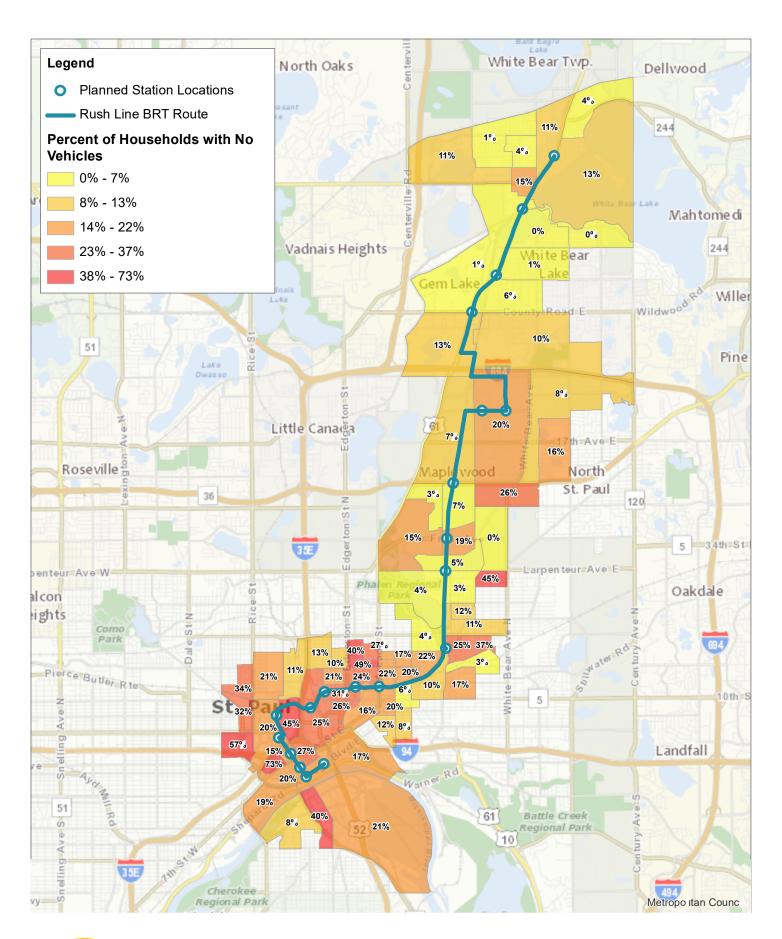






Figure 3: Percentage of Households with No Vehicles in the Study Area

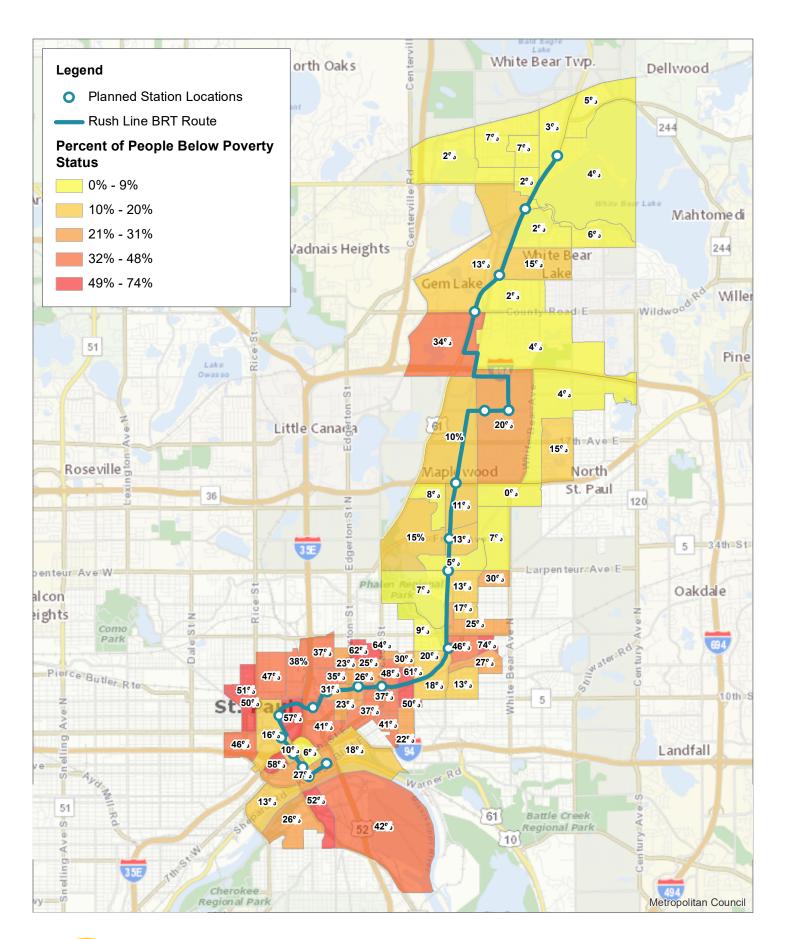
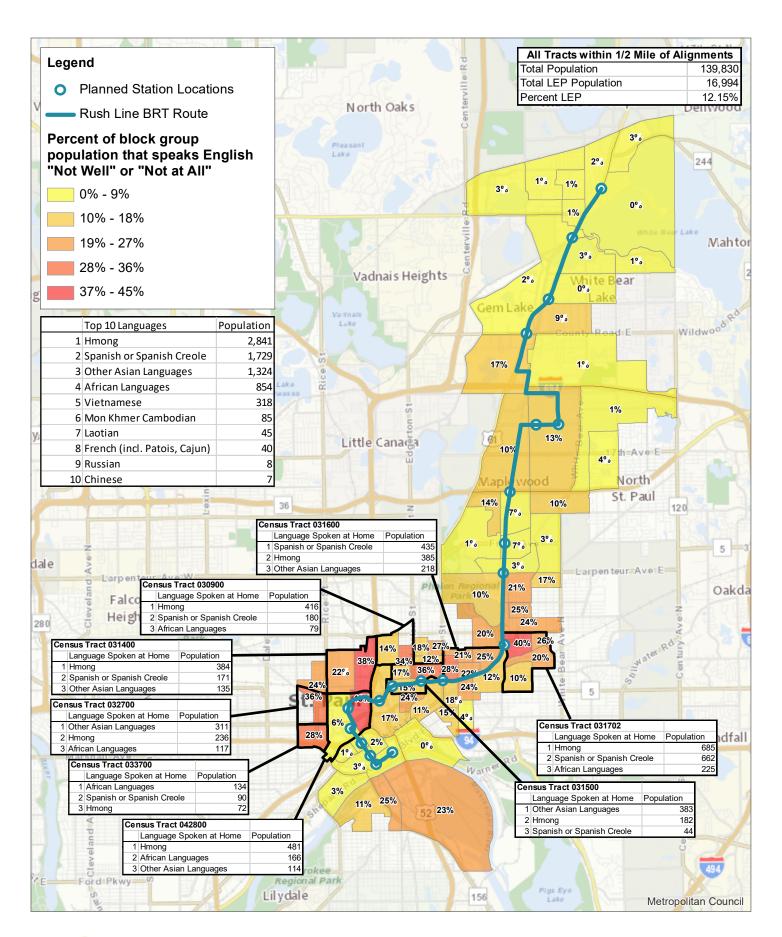






Figure 4: Percentage of People Below Poverty Status in the Study Area







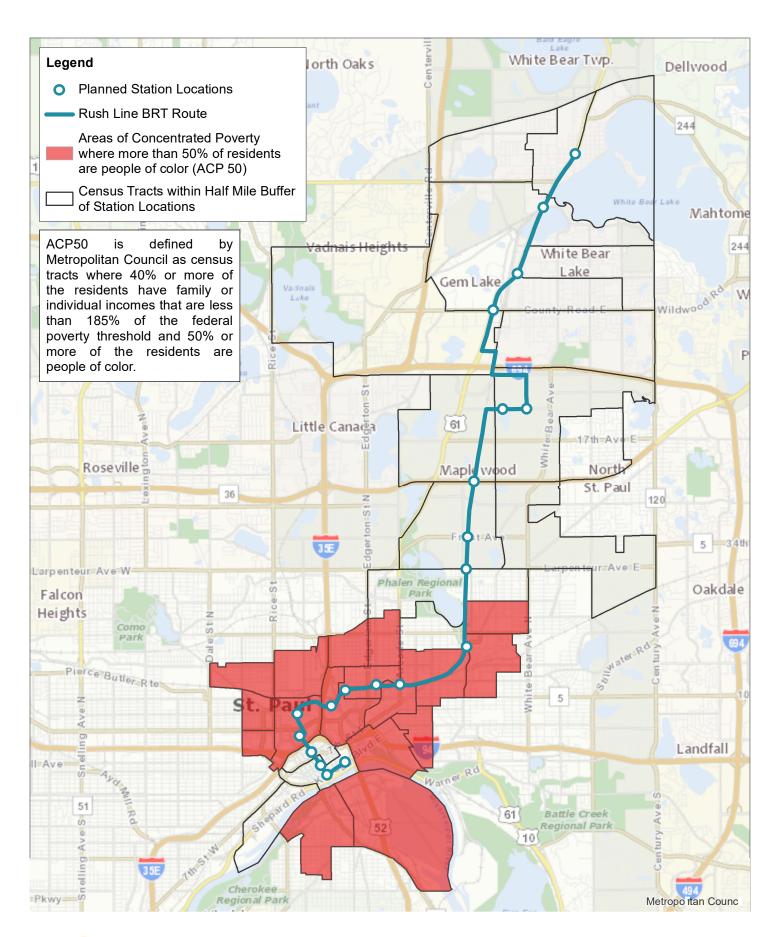






Figure 6: Areas of Concentrated Poverty in the Study Area ACP50