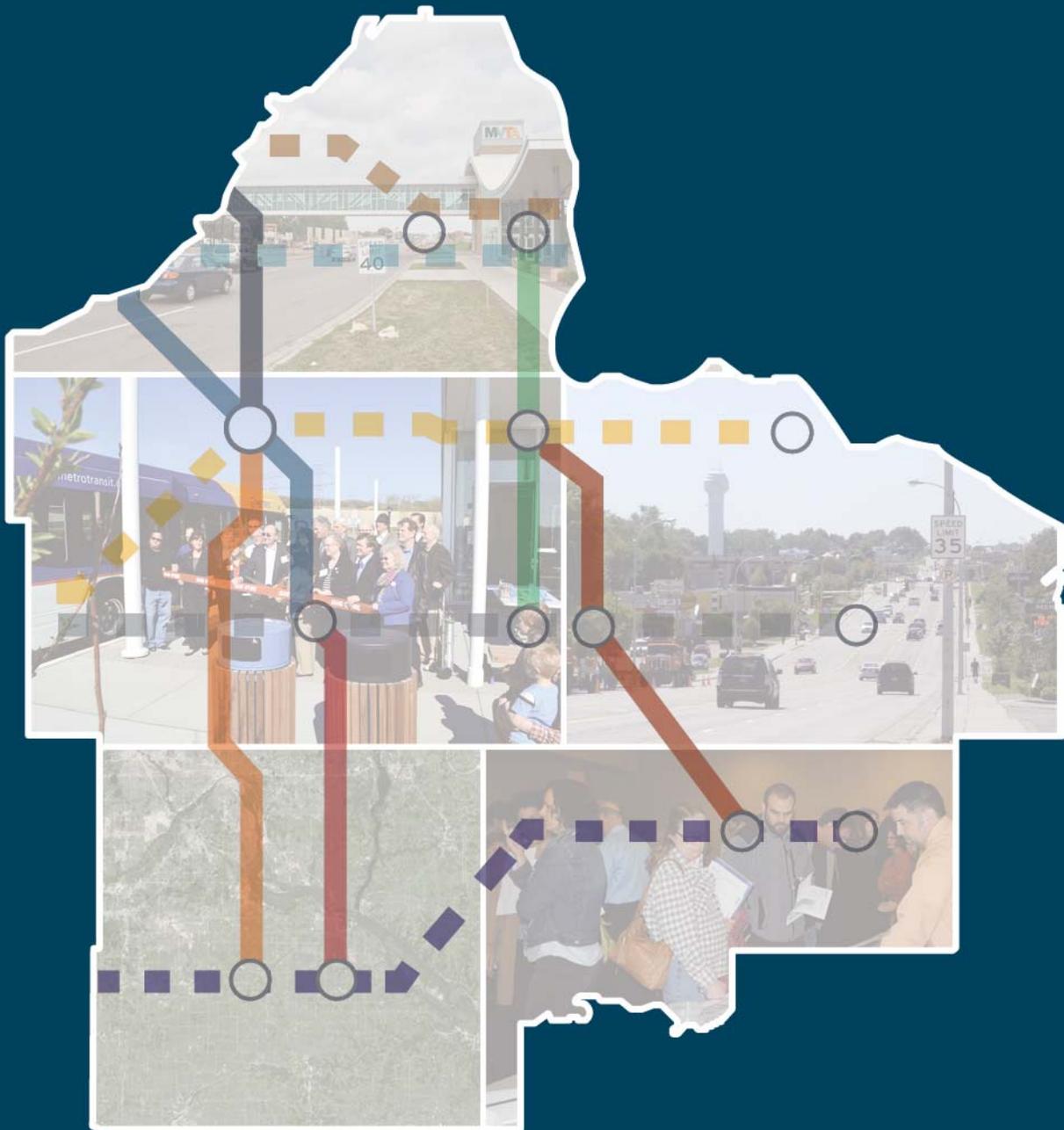




Dakota County East-West Transit Service Study

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

MAY 2016



Prepared for:



Prepared by:





Revision History

Revision Number	Date	Description
0	April 28, 2016	Initial draft to Dakota County for comment
1	May 4, 2016	Dakota County comments incorporated
2	May 27, 2016	MnDOT, Washington County, MVTA, and Met Council comments incorporated



List of Acronyms

CDA	Dakota County Community Development Authority
DCRRA	Dakota County Regional Railroad Authority
MVTA	Minnesota Valley Transit Authority
PIP	Public Involvement Plan
PMW	Policy Maker Workshop
TAC	Technical Advisory Committee



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Introduction

Project Overview

East-west transit connectivity has come up frequently as an important topic as each transitway is studied in Dakota County. As one nears the center of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, the range of transit service options and coverage is much greater than it is within and through Dakota County. With the primarily north-south orientation of the METRO Red, Orange, and Blue Lines as well as the planned north-south orientation of the Robert Street and Red Rock corridors, all existing and planned transitway service in the area is largely designed to provide frequent service into the downtown cores of Minneapolis or Saint Paul and other areas north of Dakota County. However, many residents lack options to connect to transit centers, major destinations, and employment opportunities within and surrounding Dakota County. Improved service to the airport, Fort Snelling, Thomson Reuters, and Inver Hills Community College, to name a few, has been identified as a priority for several communities. Developing improved east-west service to provide a more comprehensive network for Dakota County, its cities, and the surrounding counties is critical to support these growing communities.

The Dakota County East-West Transit Service Study will review and identify existing and emerging needs for east-west oriented transit service in the county. The Transit Service Study will look for opportunities to improve the reach and quality of transit service in Dakota County and improve connections to the regional transit system. Corridor-level recommendations will be developed to improve connections to employment, improve mobility to and from areas adjacent to the county, and expand the range of travel options for transit dependent populations. The study will also explore needs and opportunities to establish service that can provide continuity between the two separate service areas in the county operated by the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA) and Metro Transit.

Purpose

The purpose of this Public Involvement Plan (PIP) is to provide an overview of the proposed public involvement techniques, target audiences and stakeholders, intended messages, and timing relative to milestones within the greater project schedule. The project committee decision-making process and staff roles and responsibilities are also defined.

Goal

The goal of the public involvement efforts for the Transit Service Study is to engage citizens and stakeholders in identifying and evaluating existing and future east-west oriented transit needs.

Principles of Effective Public Involvement

Successful public involvement is about building trust, understanding, and a foundation for consent. This requires a process that is characterized by technical competence, honesty and integrity, and good listening. These principles will create the framework within which public involvement will occur for the East-West Transit Service Study. This will require:

- Early and continuous participation of stakeholders
- Reasonable availability of technical and other project information
- Collaborative input on the study and evaluation process
- Open access to the decision-making process
- Proactive efforts to engage the public in the process, particularly those groups that are often underrepresented in public policy processes

A key element of the public involvement process will be working with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and the Steering Committee. Both groups are made up of representatives from state, regional, and local agencies in the study area or adjacent counties.



Decision-Making Process

The East-West Transit Service Study is commissioned and funded by Dakota County. Dakota County is managing the project, and MVTA and the Metropolitan Council/Metro Transit will consider recommendations for potential implementation. Project committees include the TAC, Steering Committee, and Policy Maker Workshop (PMW). The project organizational structure is illustrated in **Figure 1**.

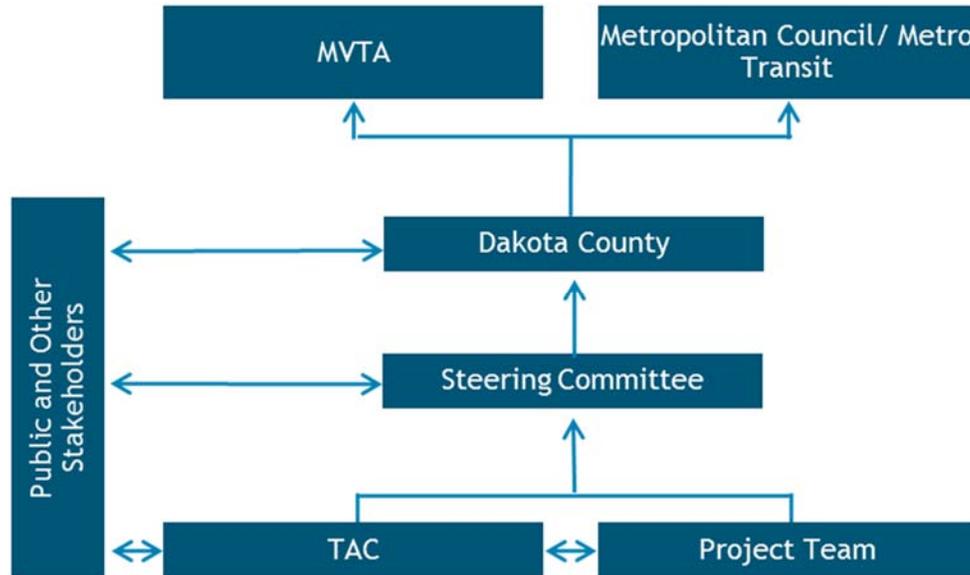


Figure 1: Project Organizational Structure

Technical Advisory Committee

The TAC consists of planning and technical staff from Dakota County Physical Development and Community Services divisions, MVTA, Metro Transit, Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), Metropolitan Council, study area municipalities and townships, and adjacent counties. The TAC will assist in the technical analysis, including, but not limited to: development and execution of an evaluation process, review of evaluation results and deliverables, and review of project team recommendations. Information and recommendations from the TAC and project team will be brought to the Steering Committee.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee consists of senior staff from Dakota County, MVTA, Metro Transit, and the Metropolitan Council. The Steering Committee will oversee development of the study goals and process, address policy considerations related to the study, and assist County staff in providing direction on project management.

Potential Stakeholders

One of the initial and ongoing tasks will be to identify stakeholders and ensure that these organizations and individuals are represented in the study process. A preliminary list of potential stakeholders is provided below.

Federal, State, and Regional Agencies

- Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)



- Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)
- Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB)
- Metropolitan Council (Districts 13, 15, and 16)
- Metro Transit
- Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA)
- Dakota Area Resources and Transportation for Seniors (DARTS)

Local Agencies

- Dakota County
- Dakota County Community Development Agency (CDA)
- Hennepin County
- Ramsey County
- Scott County
- Washington County
- Apple Valley
- Burnsville
- Coates
- Eagan
- Farmington
- Hastings
- Inver Grove Heights
- Lakeville
- Lilydale
- Mendota
- Mendota Heights
- Rosemount
- South St. Paul
- Sunfish Lake
- West St. Paul
- Empire Township
- Marshan Township
- Nininger Township
- Ravenna Township
- Vermillion Township

Businesses

- Dakota County Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Local chambers of commerce and business associations
- Individual businesses
- Major employers
 - CHS Cooperative (Inver Grove Heights)
 - Thomson Reuters (Eagan)
 - Delta Airlines (Bloomington)
 - Patterson Companies (Mendota Heights)
 - Goodrich Sensor Systems (Burnsville)
 - Unisys (Eagan)
 - UTC Aerospace System (Burnsville)
 - Blue Cross and Blue Shield (Eagan)
 - Uponor (Apple Valley)



- M-O-M Brands (formerly Malt-O-Meal) (Lakeville)
- Wings Financial (Apple Valley)
- Prime Therapeutics (Eagan)
- Flint Hills Resources (Rosemount)
- Burnsville Center (Burnsville)
- Abdallah Chocolates (Burnsville)
- Large commercial property owners
- Commercial and residential developers

Educational Institutions

- Dakota County Technical College (Rosemount)
- Inver Hills Community College (Inver Grove Heights)
- Partners in Higher Education (Apple Valley)
- Saint Mary's University of Minnesota (Apple Valley)
- Argosy University (Eagan)
- Northwest Technical Institute (Eagan)
- Rasmussen College (Eagan)
- Brown College (Mendota Heights)
- Minnesota WorkForce Center – Dakota County Burnsville
- School Districts

Public Stakeholders

- Property owners and homeowner associations
- Residents (owners and renters)
- Students
- Underrepresented and underserved populations, such as low income families and non-English speakers
 - Palomino Neighborhood in Apple Valley
- Disabled persons
- Cultural and ethnic groups
- Neighborhood organizations and district councils
- Senior housing developments
- Commuters and traveling public

Other Stakeholders

- Social service providers
- Non-profit organizations
- Advocacy groups
- Faith-based groups
- Emergency service providers

Public Involvement Techniques

The specific techniques to be used for the Transit Service Study fall into two primary categories: stakeholder communications and public and stakeholder meetings.

Stakeholder Communications

The following methods are proposed to facilitate and maintain communications throughout the course of the project.



PROJECT WEBSITE

A project website will be created with a focus on concise and informative content and opportunities for online interaction. The website will be designed to allow the flexibility to embed surveys, use dynamic and interactive mapping, and incorporate photos and visual elements. This will be a central location for meeting announcements, open house materials, meeting summaries, and a comment log. Additionally, it will include a link for people to submit comments directly. When the Transit Service Study is complete, the final report will also be posted on the project website.

WikiMap

A WikiMap will be developed to actively engage Dakota County residents and stakeholders. WikiMapping is an online, interactive, and user-friendly tool that allows for crowd-sourced public input. The Google Map-based tool allows users to add points or draw routes that describe priorities, challenges, desires, and other comments, questions, or recommendations. This user input can be then be downloaded for further analysis.

The WikiMap will focus on gathering input related to two topics:

- What improvements would stakeholders like to see to existing routes?
- Where would stakeholders like to be able to go using transit?

EMAIL UPDATES

Using Constant Contact or another email service, a unique project email template will be created. Periodic email updates to corridor stakeholders will be provided.

PROJECT CONTACT DATABASE

This database will record all contact information collected through the website or at public events. It will be sortable based on address and categorized by stakeholder type.

COMMENT DATABASE

All comments received through the website, by email, or at public events will be recorded and categorized in a comment database that can be shared with project team members or posted on the project website.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

Additional materials will be prepared that are easily understood by a wide range of project stakeholders. These materials will use nontechnical, easy-to-understand language to present project information and custom graphics and figures to present information graphically where possible.

This will include a project brochure or handout that will be distributed at various meetings and events. Two updates to the initial brochure/handout are planned: one update prior to the second open house and a second update at the end of the project for use by Dakota County and project partners to summarize final study results and maintain a consistent message. A project business card will also be developed, which will include project contact information and a link to the project website. This business card will be distributed at various meetings and events.

NOTIFICATIONS AND ONLINE MEDIA

For both open house cycles, a general media release will be provided to Dakota County for distribution to local newspapers. Meeting flyers and email notifications will be provided to each city and stakeholder group that can be posted to each entities' website and social media accounts. An email notification will be provided to the entire project contact list. The project team will also coordinate with transit operators to distribute announcements on-board and at transit stations.



Public and Stakeholder Meetings

In addition to online engagement, several in-person engagement opportunities are planned leading up to key decision points.

POLICY MAKER WORKSHOP

This workshop will bring together elected officials in the study area and adjacent jurisdictions, as well as regional stakeholders including chambers of commerce, educational institutions, and groups representing citizen interests. Discussion will be focused around specific community needs for transit service, and review of the evaluation and recommendations. Workshop representatives will receive a specific invitation from Dakota County to participate. Feedback from the workshop will be brought forward for consideration by Dakota County, MVTA, and Metro Transit.

OPEN HOUSES

Two open house cycles are planned, with two meetings in each cycle. An outline for each open house cycle is below.

- Public Open House Round #1
 - Introduce the purpose of the study
 - Share the project schedule
 - Receive input on study goals
 - Solicit public feedback on key study area characteristics and existing challenges/opportunities
- Public Open House Round #2
 - Present results of transit and travel demand analysis and facility and operation analysis
 - Solicit feedback on initial service recommendations
 - Share project next steps

Meeting materials will include display boards, handouts, comment cards, and a brief presentation at the discretion of the County. Materials will be easy to understand, highly graphical, and visually appealing. Open house materials will be shared online in accessible formats.

OUTREACH TO TRANSIT-DEPENDENT AND TRADITIONALLY UNDERREPRESENTED POPULATIONS

To engage transit-dependent and traditionally underrepresented populations in the study process, notifications will be provided at transit centers and stations within the study area. The project team will work closely with the Dakota County Community Development Authority (CDA) to identify low-income populations and county housing facilities in the project area, including disabled/senior housing and transitional housing for at-risk young adults who are dependent on transit. Residents of these and other facilities and organizations will be extended invitations to the open houses.

A more focused outreach to these groups is also planned by going to where they are. Transit station pop-ups and on-site focus groups are two event types that would be particularly useful in understanding the needs of those who depend on transit. Specific locations for these events will be coordinated with the TAC and Steering Committee.

Schedule

The timing and details for the various public involvement activities are provided in **Table 1**.



Table 1: Public Involvement Techniques

Technique	Target Audience/Participants	Purpose/Intended Message	Tools	Frequency/Timing	Roles/Responsibilities
Project website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All stakeholders General public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project information and updates Notice of upcoming meetings Contact information Comment submittal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interactive mapping Meeting notices and summaries Comment submittal form Comment log Constant Contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial content and up to 12 updates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kimley-Horn: content development, website design and maintenance Dakota County: content review
Email updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All stakeholders General public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project information and updates Notice of upcoming meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constant Contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to eight e-newsletters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kimley-Horn: email template, content development Dakota County: content review
Project contact database	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project team Stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect stakeholder contact information Categorize by stakeholder type 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constant Contact Collect via project website, email, public events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kimley-Horn: compile, categorize, and maintain list
Comment database	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project team Stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track comments and responses Be transparent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sortable Excel spreadsheet Document coding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kimley-Horn: compile and code database Dakota County: review for information
Project handout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All stakeholders General public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project background and goals Summary of recommendations Next steps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-technical, easy-to-understand language Custom graphics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial version and two updates (one prior to second open house and one at end of project) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kimley-Horn: develop content Dakota County: review content
Public Open House #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All stakeholders General public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce purpose of study Share schedule Solicit feedback on study goals, study area characteristics, existing challenges and opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 10 display boards Project handout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two locations Anticipated in July 2016 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kimley-Horn: develop content, design display boards, create meeting flyer, staff meeting, create meeting summary Dakota County: review materials, distribute media release, staff meeting
Public Open House #2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All stakeholders General public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present results of analysis Solicit feedback on initial recommendations Share next steps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 10 display boards Project handout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two locations Anticipated in October 2016 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kimley-Horn: develop content, design display boards, create meeting flyer, staff meeting, create meeting summary Dakota County: review materials, distribute media release, staff meeting



Evaluation of Efforts

Specific techniques will be evaluated periodically by the project team to help shape future activities. Evaluation of techniques will be based on the following (example) criteria:

Quantitative:

- How many people attended events? What was the engagement tool response rate?
- What was the geographic representative of attendees/responses?
- How many people opened email messages?

Qualitative:

- What kind of feedback was received on the open houses?
- What kind of feedback was received on the pop-ups?
- What kind of feedback was received on the focus groups?
- What kind of feedback was received on the policy maker workshops?
- Have stakeholders expressed any particular challenges regarding their participation?

Quantitative and qualitative evaluation measures will be summarized in open house or meeting summaries and for each e-newsletter.