Transit and the Future of Remote Work

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Metro Transit Response to COVID

• Rapid changes to service & policy in spring/summer 2020
  – Health practices
    • Onboard passenger limits (25% of seated capacity)
    • Rear-door boarding
    • Operator COVID shields
    • Face coverings required
  – Dynamic service delivery
    • Reduced bus and LRT service
    • Reassignment of high-capacity buses
    • Extra trips added
September 2020 – Summer 2021 Transit Service

• Reduced demand due to remote work, school closures
  – Social distancing requires additional service capacity

• Return to weekday pre-pandemic levels on most core local bus routes. Focus on:
  – Highest ridership routes (pre- and during COVID)
  – Routes serving communities that rely most on transit
  – Service to schools & colleges when they re-open

• Blue and Green Line service adjustments

• Commuter and express routes have remained at June 2020 levels
  – Many commuter and express route remain suspended

• Equity evaluation
Total Trips, September 2020 vs. September 2019

- **Bus Rapid Transit**
  - A Line, C Line: 100%
- **Supporting Local**
  - i.e. routes 23, 30, 32: 98%
- **Core Local**
  - i.e. routes 5, 64: 94%
- **LRT**
  - 93%
- **Suburban Local**
  - i.e. routes 538, 705: 87%
- **Northstar Commuter Rail**
- **Commuter & Express**
  - 33%
  - 25%
Planning Through Uncertainty: 2 Stories

- All-day, all-purpose travel has continued throughout the pandemic
  - 80,000-90,000 rides per day
  - Essential trips
- Primarily using BRT, local bus, LRT

- Weekday “9-5” commute market is impacted by remote work
- Uncertainties abound:
  - How many people will return to offices?
  - Where are they coming from?
  - Will they get on board transit?
  - How often will they ride?
“9-5” Commute Considerations

Most Important Reason to Return to Metro Transit

Avoiding traffic and parking hassles is the most indicated reason to return to Metro Transit use (44%) among all respondents. Among those with their own or shared access to a vehicle, that reason is even more prevalent (53%). Among those without regular access to a vehicle, 73% indicate that travel without access to a vehicle is most important.

Most Important Reason to Return to Metro Transit Use

- **44%** AVOIDS TRAFFIC AND PARKING HASSLES
- **22%** ALLOWS TRAVEL WITHOUT OWNING OR HAVING ACCESS TO A VEHICLE
- **17%** SAVES MONEY OVER OTHER OPTIONS
- **11%** IS ENVIRONMENTALLY MORE RESPONSIBLE THAN OTHER OPTIONS
- **6%** GIVES ME TIME TO MYSELF WHILE TRAVELING

Q9 Which of the following would be the most important reason that you would return to using Metro Transit services? Metro Transit:
“9-5” Commute Strategies

• Coordinate with major employers on return-to-office plans
  – downtown employers, University of Minnesota

• Track key commute indicators
  – Parking demand/pricing
  – Traffic & congestion

• Flexible service planning
  – Capacity available on local, BRT, LRT service
  – Serve key facilities & freeway corridors
  – Monitor ridership
Strengthening Local Service

- New Route 323
  - Woodbury to Sun Ray
- Better Bus Routes program – Route 3
  - Route simplification and North Loop extension
  - Stop consolidation and improvements
- Orange Line Connecting Bus Plan
  - Convenient connecting service
- Regional Solicitation Grants
  - Improved frequency
Expanding the METRO Network

• Construction
  – Orange Line (opens late 2021)
  – D Line (opens late 2022)
  – Green Line extension

• Planning & design
  – B, E, Gold and Rush Lines
  – Blue Line extension, Riverview

• F, G and H Lines identified through Network Next
Metro Transit Forward

• Capacity restrictions lifted
  – Federal mask requirement continues
• Daily cleaning of buses and trains
• Ventilation
• Participating in industry best practices
Metro Transit Forward

• NexTrip real-time information improvements
• Encouraging touch-free payments  
  – Mobile ticking app improvements  
  – Transit Assistance Program (TAP) expansion
• Review of MetroPass and other fare tools
• Coordinated hiring efforts
Remote Work at the Metropolitan Council

Framework:
• Ensure attractiveness as an employer
• Driven by business needs, with manager discretion
• Balance strong work culture and flexible options

• Spectrum of schedule options:
  – Fully in-office
  – Hybrid options
  – Remote

• Developing updated policies & procedures
• Evaluating facility and equipment needs
  – Hotel/”touch-down” spaces
  – Additional teleconference space