

HIGHWAY 36 TRANSIT STUDY



Washington County, in collaboration with Ramsey County, Hennepin County, Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), and the Metropolitan Council, studied the potential for transit improvements in the Highway 36 corridor, which extends about 27 miles between Stillwater, Oak Park Heights, Bayport area, and downtown Minneapolis. Previous transit and highway studies have consistently shown that Highway 36 is a critical connection between Washington County and other parts of the Twin Cities region.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY WAS TO:

- Identify transit service needs and recommendations that are reflective of the Highway 36 corridor's existing and anticipated future travel demands and patterns
- Consider transit and complementary facilities to improve travel options and provide alternatives to highway congestion for Washington, Ramsey, and Hennepin County residents, businesses, and visitors

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose statement developed for transit improvements in the Highway 36 corridor was as follows:

The purpose of the Highway 36 Transit Feasibility Project is to expand multimodal travel options, improve mobility for people who rely on transit or have less access to a vehicle, and to improve access to jobs and opportunities. Improved transit service that satisfies the long-term regional mobility and accessibility needs for residents and businesses supports sustainable development within the study area.

PROJECT NEEDS

The existing conditions analysis for the Highway 36 corridor suggested that the issues that support the need for improved transit in the corridor include the following:

- ▶ Limited existing transit service span and coverage
- ▶ Limited transit options for people who rely on transit
- ▶ Traffic congestion
- ▶ Gaps in active & accessible connections
- ▶ Planned growth of population, jobs, and density

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS AND FINDINGS

During fall 2020, the project team conducted focus groups and collected surveys. The over 1,200 questionnaires collected from people living, working, or going to school in the Highway 36 corridor showed the following results:



of respondents are interested in taking transit

Barriers to currently riding transit in the Highway 36 corridor included:



The convenience of driving an automobile



Travel time on transit



Challenges of getting to/from the bus stop



of respondents are interested in taking transit in the Highway 36 corridor multiple times per week

Top destinations to which respondents are interested in taking transit in Highway 36 corridor

- ▶ Stillwater/Oak Park Heights/Bayport
- ▶ Downtown Minneapolis
- ▶ Highway 36 & Snelling
- ▶ University of Minnesota



HIGHWAY 36 TRANSIT STUDY

RECOMMENDATIONS

Transit improvement recommendations were developed for the Highway 36 corridor with an equity lens with the intention of expanding multimodal travel options, improving mobility for people who rely on transit or have less access to a vehicle, improving access to jobs and opportunities, satisfying the longterm regional mobility and accessibility needs for residents and businesses, and supporting sustainable development within the study area. Recommendations were based on technical evaluation and the feedback received from the public and corridor stakeholders. Technical recommendations are grouped based on their suggested implementation timeframe and include the need and implementation recommendations.

0-2 YEARS

IMMEDIATE-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Continue to prioritize, maintain, and invest in mobility management
- ▶ Study and consider piloting an on-demand public transit service
- ▶ Continue to engage residents, employees, businesses, and community organizations in corridor transit planning, especially underrepresented populations, and the hospitality industry
- ▶ Continue planning and constructing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure connecting to the highway 36 corridor
- ▶ Collaborate with state, regional, and local agencies to show a Highway 36 transitway in planning documents as they are updated (SMTP, TPP, Metropolitan Area Comprehensive Transit Finance Report)

3-5 YEARS

NEAR-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Develop a higher frequency (10-15 minute) limited stop service between downtown Minneapolis and Maplewood Mall Transit Center via University of Minnesota
- ▶ Develop a lower frequency (30 minute) limited stop service between Maplewood Mall Transit Center and Stillwater/Oak Park Heights/Bayport
- ▶ Continue to monitor the need for peak-period, peak-direction express service between Stillwater and downtown Minneapolis
- ▶ Form a corridor commission, including city and county policymakers, to:
 - Identify funding sources for corridor improvements
 - Develop multi-jurisdictional agreement
 - Scope out the projects (transit service and infrastructure, including mobility management)
 - Monitor need for peak period express bus service to report to the corridor commission

5-8 YEARS

MEDIUM-TERM IMPROVEMENTS

- ▶ Strategically develop a network of mobility hubs in the Highway 36 corridor
- ▶ Encourage transit-supportive development near potential transit access areas, especially uses that balance out parking demand for shared parking opportunities
- ▶ Protect and enhance the existing bus-only shoulders on Highway 36 and explore/designate and enhance bus-only shoulders on Highway 36 east of 694
- ▶ Explore/designate and enhance bus-only shoulders on Highway 280



QUESTIONS? CONTACT:

EMILY JORGENSEN, Project Manager, Washington County Public Works
✉ emily.jorgensen@co.washington.mn.us ☎ 651-430-4338