CHAPTER 4: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

A. Pre-Plan Outreach and Engagement (Winter 2013-2014)

The SIP project kicked off with three workshops with stakeholders and community leaders. Workshops in November 2013 were followed by a survey to help determine which service improvements would best meet the community's transit goals.

1. Community Leader Workshops

Metro Transit invited all local elected officials, staff from cities and counties, and representatives from more than 150 community organizations to participate in a two-hour workshop. The purpose of the workshops was two-fold: to build and strengthen relationships with project stakeholders and to request assistance in expanding Metro Transit's reach into communities. Table 2 shows the locations and number of attendees of the workshops.

Table 2: Community Leader Workshops

Workshop Location	Date	Participants
Hennepin County Brookdale Library, Brooklyn Center	Tuesday, Nov. 12, 2013	28
Union Depot, St. Paul	Wednesday, Nov. 13, 2013	47
Hennepin County Southdale Library, Edina	Thursday, Nov. 14, 2013	26

Attendees performed a review and critique of the existing transit network and provided ideas for Metro Transit to connect with their communities/constituents for deeper engagement during the SIP planning process. They also were given a ration of yarn to plot local and express routes for a fictional city, learning the challenges of balancing broad needs and limited resources.

2. Surveys

Along with the workshops, a survey gathered feedback from transit customers and community members prior to drafting the SIP. The survey was available online and also distributed as a postage paid mailer. It was promoted on Metro Transit's website, in *Connect*, its onboard customer newsletter, on social media, on buses, in press releases and via community-based organizations.

Special attention was given to traditionally under-represented groups such as low-income communities, people of color and those who speak English less than "very well."

The survey asked respondents to share information about the places they traveled to and from most frequently and how often they used transit and what changes would encourage them to use it more often. They were also asked to describe their values related to transit investment, goals and trade-offs when need exceeds available resources.

The survey was administered between November 2013 and February 2014 and nearly 4,000 responses were received.

B. Draft SIP Public Comment Period (November 2014)

1. Outreach Tools

The Draft SIP was released for public review and comment in Fall 2014. There were several ways for the public to access the Draft Plan.

- Project page at metrotransit.org/sip, which also included the public meeting presentation via YouTube for those unable to attend.
- Executive Summary was translated into Spanish, Somali and Hmong.
- Full-color, printed Draft Plan copies and postage-paid comment cards were available at libraries throughout Metro Transit's service area. Those interested could view the plan at the library reference desk and provide comment via comment card or website.
- Individual Draft Plan copies with comment cards were given to community groups, based off the list of those invited to community workshops.
- Individual Draft Plan copies with comment cards were available, by request, to anyone visiting a Metro Transit Service Center or contacting Metro Transit.
- Posters and project brochures were available on buses and at Metro Transit Service Centers.
- Numerous media outlets, including Minnesota Public Radio and the Star Tribune, covered the project.

C. Public Meetings and Public Hearing

There were five public meetings and one official public hearing to receive comments on the plan. The format and content of all meetings was the same, and feedback received at the public meetings was treated the same as that received at the official public hearing. Those unable to attend a meeting could comment via a postage-paid comment card, leave a message on the Council's public voice-mail line, or send an email to sip@metrotransit.org. See Table 3 for a list of dates, locations and the number of attendees at each meeting.

Table 3: Draft SIP Public Meetings

Location	Date	Attendees
Hennepin County Minneapolis Central Library, Minneapolis	Wednesday, Nov. 5, 2014	32
North Minneapolis Community YMCA, Minneapolis	Saturday, Nov. 8, 2014	6
Hennepin County Southdale Library, Edina	Thursday, Nov. 13, 2014	9
Conway Recreation Center, St. Paul	Saturday, Nov. 15, 2014	8
Anoka County Northtown Library, Blaine	Monday, Nov. 17, 2014	7
Metropolitan Council, St. Paul (designated public hearing)	Tuesday, Nov. 18, 2014	16

1. Feedback

Metro Transit received 176 unique contacts from individuals and organizations with nearly 600 suggestions on bus service improvements. The vast majority of comments were sent via email but comment cards and speaking at a public meeting or the public hearing were other popular ways to give feedback on the Draft Plan.

The comments received by agency staff covered a range of Draft Plan elements from route-specific to general remarks about the transit network as a whole. There were many comments supporting the overall service improvement project and reiterating the importance of expanding transit as the region continues to grow and change. Highlights from the Draft Plan comments are listed below.

Table 4: Draft SIP Comments

Comment Type	Comments
New Service Improvement Idea	216
Supporting Service Improvement Idea in Draft	161
Modified Service Improvement Idea in Draft	69
General – Not Specific to Service Improvement Planning	104

- The most popular category of feedback, with 225 comments, related to the frequency and hours of service on existing bus routes.
- Approximately 125 comments focused on routing and bus service structure.
- About 100 comments were related to improving service coverage to areas without service or with limited service and reverse commute routes (routes bringing urban residents to suburban jobs).
- Nearly 70 comments related to the SIP planning process and 50 comments were submitted about the importance of improving travel time.

Most of the new ideas primarily related to expanding service coverage, including suburb-to-suburb service, new express routes and new limited-stop service in the urban core with 47 comments.

- Of all the ideas within the Draft Plan, the improvement ideas for Routes 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 14, 18, 25, 30, 46, 67, 68, 71, 74, 94, 288 and 615 all received at least five suggestions.
- Most of the suggestions to modify an item in the Draft Plan focused on additional buses to operate more frequently or with longer service hours. Respondents also shared a desired reroute to serve a nearby destination as a modification to a coverage suggestion.

Staff has reviewed all of the comments received and modified the Draft Plan as appropriate. Changes to the plan include reviewing and scoring additional improvements, modifying and reevaluating already identified improvements and making changes to the scoring criteria. Overall 26 improvements were either added or modified based on comments received. Examples of new and modified items, as well as the changes made to the scoring criteria are noted below:

New Items evaluated include:

- New express Route 276 from I-35E corridor in the northeast metro to downtown Minneapolis
- New routes 51, 52 and 58 providing rush-hour and peak direction limited-stop service in major transit corridors in Minneapolis, Brooklyn Center, Richfield and Bloomington.
- New suburban local limited-stop Route 419 in the I-494 corridor in Washington and Dakota counties.
- Extend Route 2 to connect to the planned 21st Street Station on the METRO Green Line extension.

Modified Items include:

- Revised routes 302 and 303 in Woodbury to reflect updates to the Gateway Corridor planning
- Revised new Route 110 providing limited-stop service to the University of Minnesota from the Seward and Longfellow neighborhoods of Minneapolis.
- Revised Route 63 improvement to retain current level of service on McKnight and Lower Afton Road rather than reducing to every 30 minutes on weekdays.

Clarifications or Changes to Guiding Principles and Evaluation Criteria include:

- Revised connecting routes measure to include future planned transitways, and the current and future Hi-Frequency network
- Revised scoring of express routes only serving park-and-ride facilities. These routes no longer default to a Low score on equity criteria.
- Revised guiding principle of “improve transit equitably” to “improve transit equity”
- Defined key destinations as landmarks in a database used by Transit Information Center representatives as the destinations most commonly requested by customers planning trips

See Appendix D for additional information about the public engagement process, including a list of workshop attendees, a copy of the survey results and highlights and a summary of the comments from the November 2014 public comment period.