

Evaluation of Better Bus Route 3 Community Engagement Summary

Doug Cook & Yumi Nagaoka Outreach and Engagement March 2021



Background

Metro Transit's Better Bus Routes program will improve our customers' experience riding local bus routes by reducing stops, improving accessibility and stop amenities, and providing more shelters. These changes, both on and off the bus, will make their trips better, faster, and more reliable. Previous projects were on high ridership local service like Route 2 and Route 63.

Route 3 will receive these Better Bus Routes upgrades in third quarter of 2021. In addition to the Better Bus Routes program, Route 3 is also being considered as a candidate for METRO bus rapid transit (BRT) implementation as part of the Network Next project. Phase I engagement concluded on Oct. 9, 2020, and Phase 2 engagement began on Dec. 9, 2020. Engagement had to distinguish between Better Bus Routes and Network Next and to avoid confusion these engagement processes would not overlap.

Purpose and Goal

The purpose of this public engagement effort is to seek input and feedback on potential changes to Route 3. Among the items for consideration are:

- Education about Better Bus Routes
- Consolidating stops will result in faster and more reliable service
- Understanding how proposed bus stop changes would affect our customers
- Potential changes
 - o Alignment shift in downtown Minneapolis from 3rd/4th streets to Washington Avenue
 - Expansion of service to the North Loop
 - Service alternatives for customers along the Elm/Kasota branch such as different route or circulator or feeder off the Green Line
- ADA pads will be added to select bus stops

Methods of Engagement

The target audience is customers, especially those who use the stops that are proposed for removal or consolidation. This would also include a concerted effort to reach out to the ELL community along the corridor.

- Rice Street/downtown St. Paul Immigrants who speak Karen, Somali, Spanish, Hmong, downtown resident's art community, seniors
- Como Park/North End Immigrants who speak Karen, Somali, Spanish, Hmong
- Southeast Como/UMN Students, Kasota businesses
- West Bank/downtown Minneapolis (4) Students, immigrants who speak Somali and Oromo, downtown residents, businesses, and employees

The inability to hold or unwillingness of people to attend meetings due to COVID-19 remains a challenge. However, Metro Transit continues to use strategies to engage a diverse set of stakeholders. Following are a few examples.

- o Direct people to webpage for information and Google map
- o Target ethnic and local media via social media (organic and paid), website, earned media



- Send emails to current Go-To Card and mobile app users, Riders Club, and community groups/neighborhood organizations
- Send stakeholder packet to City Council members/county commissioners to include in their newsletters, social media, district communications
- o Post online survey in English, Spanish, Somali, and Hmong
- Post Rider Alerts with a QR code to the survey at potentially affected stops/shelters along Route 3 to engage current customers
- o Distribute paper survey, and translated one-pager to businesses along the Elm/Kasota branch

Communications

DATE	ACTIVITY			
2/3	Earned media to promote survey. Contacted Star Tribune, Pioneer Press, Park Bugle and			
	Minnesota Daily offered to arrange interview			
2/5 & 2/12	Article included in Insights internal newsletter			
2/8	SurveyMonkey survey goes live in English, Somali, Hmong, and Spanish			
2/8	Website posted with information about BBR 3, video about BBR 3, and link to the survey			
2/8	News article posted on metrocouncil.org website			
	Article included in the Metropolitan Council's monthly e-newsletter			
2/8	News article posted on metrotransit.org website			
2/8	BBR 3 email to 4,068 Go-To card users and Metro Transit App users			
2/9	Information packets with materials, maps, graphics, and presentation to cities and counties so			
	they could update their elected officials and push information out via their newsletters, social			
	media, and website.			
2/9	Email/call about BBR 3 info including survey, maps, articles for newsletters, offers to attend			
	meeting, and one-pager sent to community organizations			
2/10	BBR 3 email sent to Riders Club subscribers via GovDelivery			
2/10	Riders Club e-newsletter with project update and link to the website, interactive map, and			
	survey			
2/10	RIDER ALERTS posted at affected stops/shelters along the route with information about BBR 3			
	and QR code to the survey. Removed after two weeks			
2/17	Text and email sent to Rider Alert Subscribers			
2/18	Earned Media: Laura Baenen shared with Star Tribune			
3/5	Published in Metro Transit Connect newsletter with update on BBR 3			

Social Media

Social media was used to get word out about the survey. We also used it in a new way to prompt an online discussion. We posed a question and encouraged people to respond in the comment section. Many of the questions received good response.

POSTED	POST DESCRIPTION	FACEBOOK	TWITTER
2/5	Video about BBR 3 posted on YouTube. 764 views		
2/8	Organic FB and Twitter posts with a short video about BBR 3	12 comment	3 comments
	encouraging people to complete the survey	15 shares	16 retweets



POSTED	POST DESCRIPTION	FACEBOOK	TWITTER	
		58 likes	33 likes	
2/9	Shared proposed posts with Minneapolis, St. Paul, Ramsey Co., and Hennepin Co. social media staff			
2/9	Paid posts of BBR video (native to Facebook) and YouTube link for Twitter, were targeting to social media users within targeted area	142 total clicks	44 total clicks	
2/15	Organic FB and Twitter posts with a short video and Elm/Kasota information, encouraging people to complete the survey	5 comment 7 shares 17 likes	0 comment 5 retweets 7 likes	
2/22	Organic FB and Twitter posts with a short video and downtown Minneapolis map about BBR 3 encouraging people to complete the survey	1 comment 3 shares 25 likes	1 comment 7 retweets 5 likes	
3/4	Organic posts reminding people to complete the survey	1 comment 2 shares 21 likes	0 comment 4 retweets 6 likes	

In-person outreach

Due to the length of the survey, rather than have staff conduct the survey in person, staff handed out the onepage info sheet with the URL and QR code that directed customers to the survey.

DATE	LOCATION	STAFF
3/2	Minnesota Street at 6th Street	Scott Thompson
3/2	Rice Street at University Avenue	Doug Cook
3/2	Como Avenue and 22nd	Michael Mechtenberg
3/2	Pleasant Street at Jones Hall	Yumi Nagaoka
3/2	4th Street at Chicago Avenue	Victoria Dan
3/2	4th Street at Nicollet Mall	John Dillery
3/4	Minnesota Street at 6th Street	Michael Mechtenberg
3/4	Cedar Street at 7th Place/6th Street	Andrea Kiepe
3/4	Rice Street at University Avenue	Doug Cook
3/4	Rice Street at University Avenue	Juan Rangel
3/4	Como Avenue and 22nd	Kathryn Lehinger
3/4	3rd Street at Marquette Avenue	Jessica Cross
3/4	Pleasant Street at Jones Hall	Tenille Warren
3/4	4th St. at Chicago Avenue	Yumi Nagaoka
3/4	4th Street at Nicollet Mall	Nasser Mussa

Stakeholder Engagement

Project staff met with staff at cities and counties within the study area and engaged community organizations. Many of them helped to get the word out about the project and the survey.



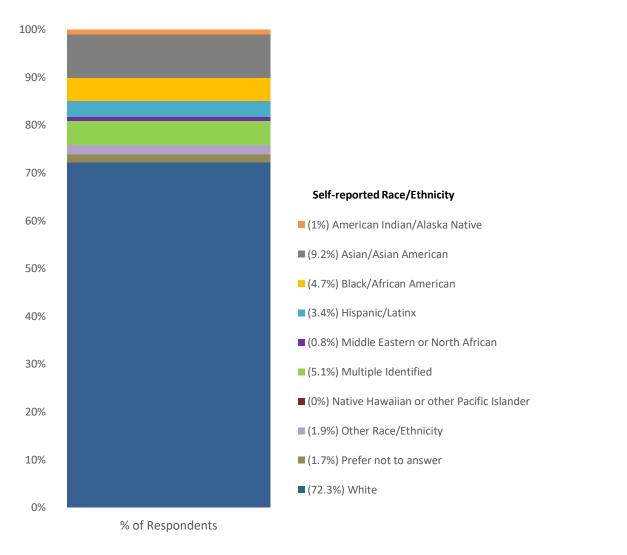
DATE	ORGANIZATION
2/1	Email sent to North Loop Neighborhood Association
2/8	Robin Caufman emailed City of St. Paul and Minneapolis and Ramsey County
	communications staff with information and request to help get the word out about the
	BBR 3 survey
2/9	Doug Cook and Yumi Nagaoka emailed community organizations in the St. Paul area and
	Minneapolis area ¼ mile from BBR 3 corridor
2/9	Doug Cook emailed District Councils – Thomas Dale/Frogtown, North End, Como, St.
	Anthony, Hamline Midway. The city of Lauderdale
2/10	Jessica sent email to the U of M
2/11	Yumi sent email to Elm/Kasota businesses
2/15	Doug Cook emailed Como Student Community Cooperative for Como/Maryland corridor
2/17	Yumi sent email to TMOs
3/12	Letters sent to Elm/Kasota businesses requesting work shift information
3/3	Michael Mechtenberg presented to TAAC and to the District 10 Land Use Committee

Survey Respondents

Over the course of five weeks, we received nearly 1,000 survey responses. BIPOC respondents accounted for 21% of total surveys completed.

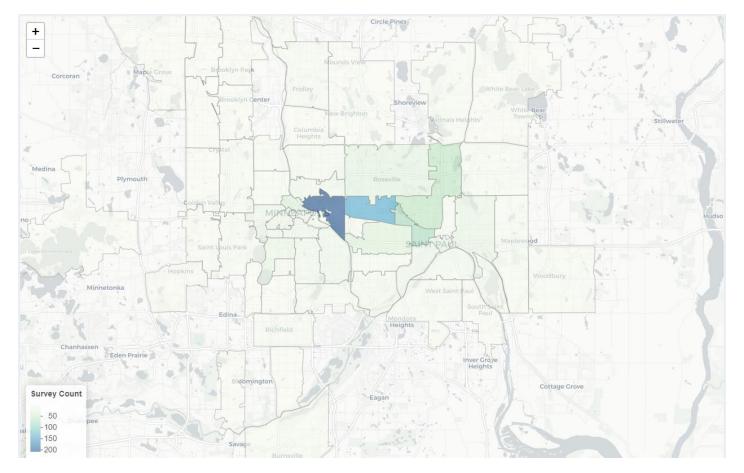
RACE/ETHNICITY	PERCENT
American Indian/Alaska Native	1%
Asian/Asian American	9.2%
Black/African American	4.7%
Hispanic/Latinx	3.4%
Multiple Identified	5.1%
Middle Eastern or North African	0.8%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0%
Other Race/Ethnicity	1.9%
Prefer not to answer	1.7%
White	72.3%

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Zip code data was also collected in our online survey. We've mapped this data below, showing the zip codes with the highest concentration of respondents. The top three zip codes represented, are 55414 (22.8%), 55108 (15.4%), and 55103 (8.8%).





Analysis and Key Themes

The survey was intended to gain valuable feedback so that the data can be part of a contributing factor in increasing the speed and reliability of the Route 3. Key survey results included:

Nearly 80% of respondents told us they would be willing to walk three minutes or more to the nearest bus stop if their current stop was removed (Chart 1).

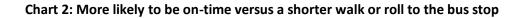


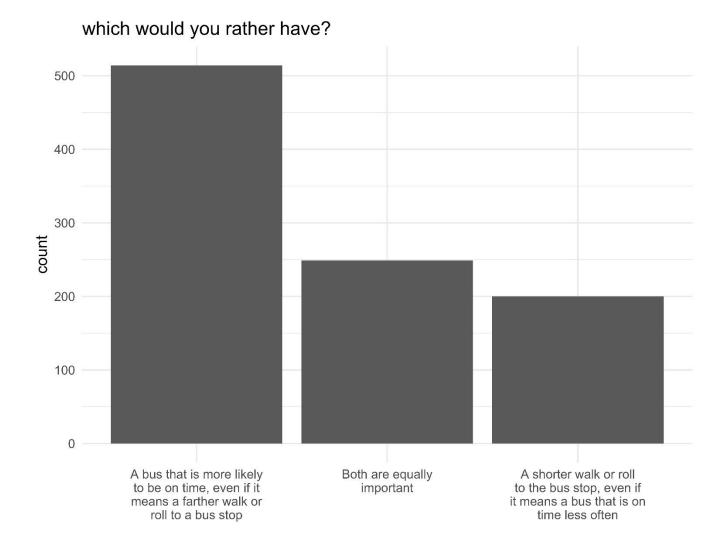
Chart 1: Willingness to walk

We are proposing to make Route 3 faster and more reliable by reducing the number of bus stops. If your stop was removed, how many additional minutes would you be willing to walk to your new bus stop? 300 80% of respondents would walk at least 3 minutes 200 count 100 0 ~ 2 ъ 5 0 2 6 1 θ 9 0 ~ 2 3 NA 5 minutes farther



By a greater than two-to-one margin, respondents told us they preferred service that is more likely to be ontime over a shorter walk or roll to the bus stop (Chart 2).

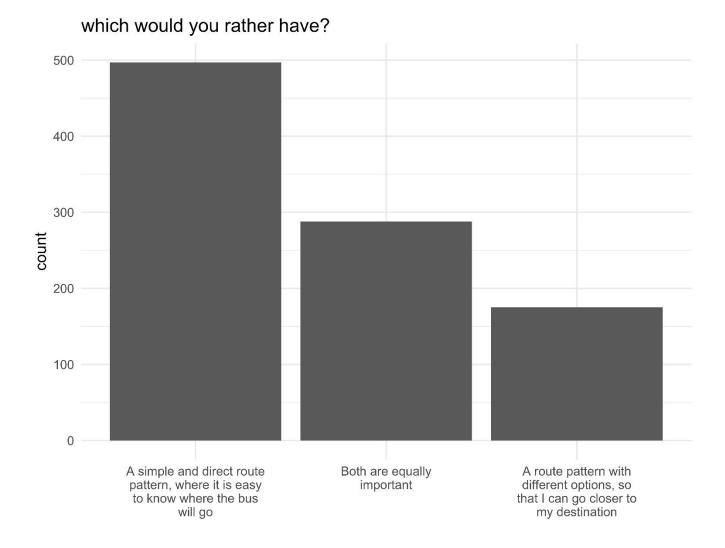






There was nearly a three-to-one preference for a route that was simple and direct compared to one that had more options but brought them closer to their destination (Chart 3).



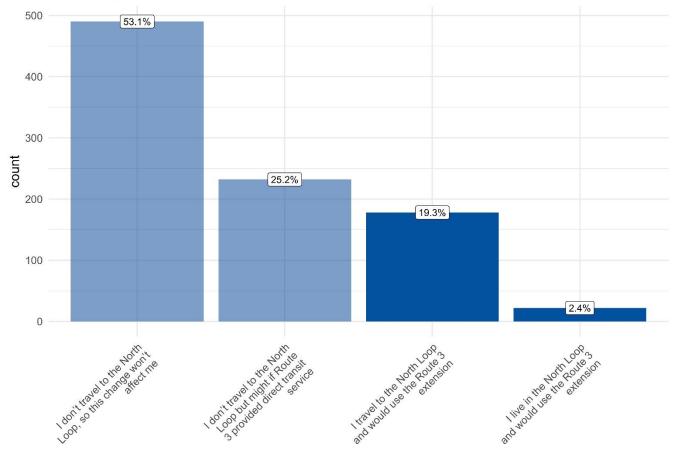




Nearly 200 respondents either work or live in the North Loop and would benefit from additional transit service (Chart 4).

Chart 4: North Loop extension

We are considering extending some or all Route 3 trips to serve the North Loop in downtown Minneapolis. Which of the following best reflect your opinion on this change:

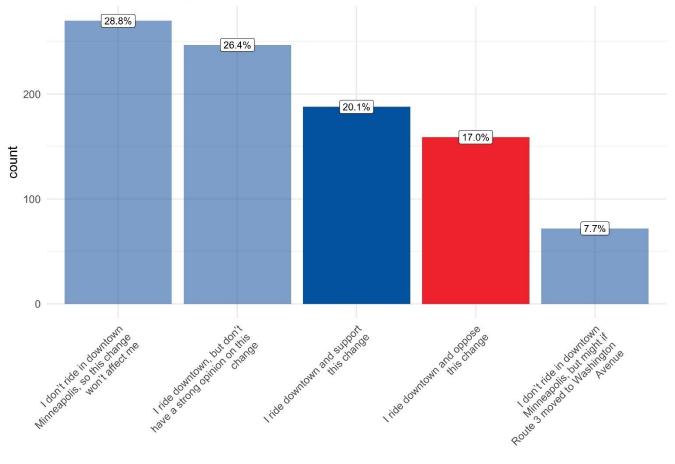




A plurality of respondents who ride Route 3 in downtown Minneapolis preferred the realignment to Washington Avenue (Chart 5).

Chart 5: Washington Avenue realignment

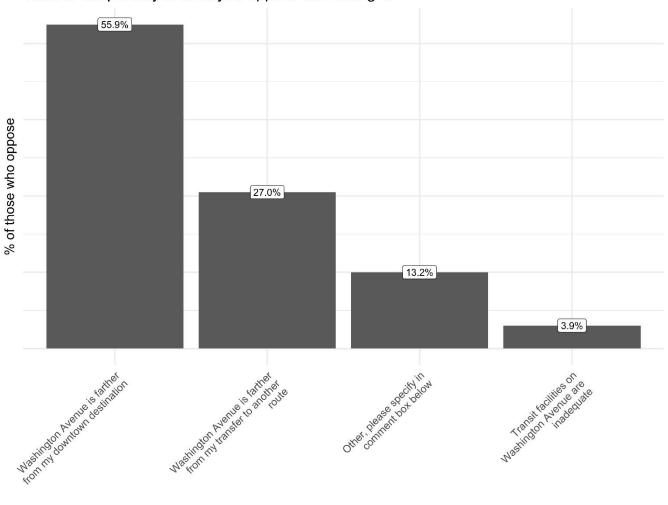
We are proposing to relocate Route 3 from 3rd and 4th streets to Washington Avenue through downtown Minneapolis. Which of the following best reflect your opinion on this change:





Of those that oppose the Washington Avenue realignment, the majority told us it was because Washington Avenue is farther from their downtown destination (Chart 6).

Chart 6: Reasons opposing the Washington Avenue realignment

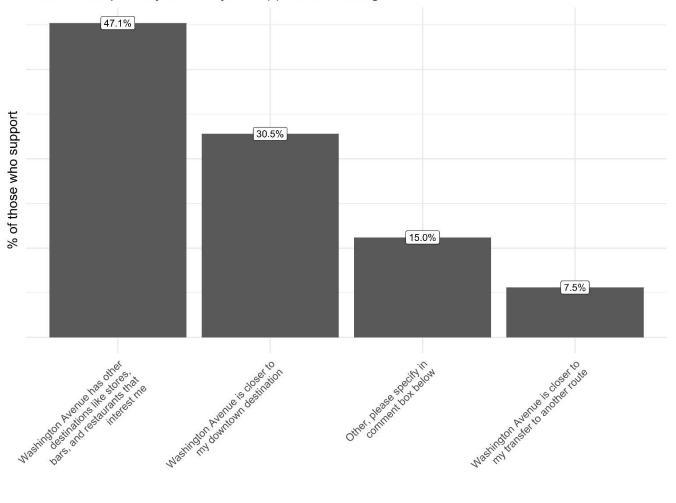


What is the primary reason you oppose this change?



That Washington Avenue has other destinations like stores, bars, and restaurants was the leading reason in supporting the realignment (Chart 7).

Chart 7: Reasons supporting the Washington Avenue realignment



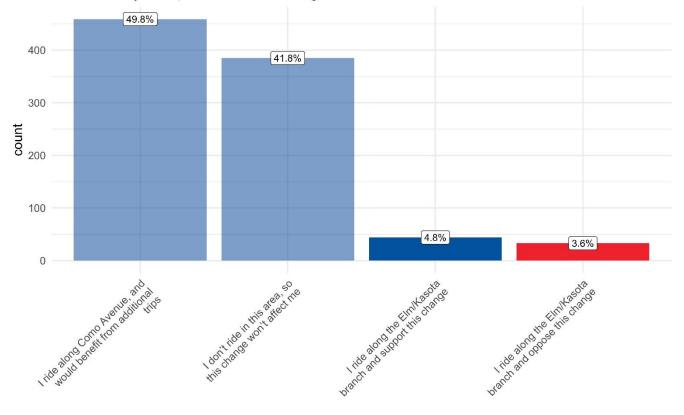
What is the primary reason you support this change?



Of those respondents who use the Elm/Kasota branch, the majority preferred the new Route 3 proposal (Chart 8).

Chart 8: Elm/Kasota branch changes

We are proposing replacing service along the Elm/Kasota branch with a different route. This will allow us to provide more Route 3 service along Como Avenue where ridership is highest, simplify the route, better tailor replacement service to specific work times along Elm and Kasota, and connect these areas to the METRO Green Line on University Avenue. Which of the following statements best reflect your opinion on this change:





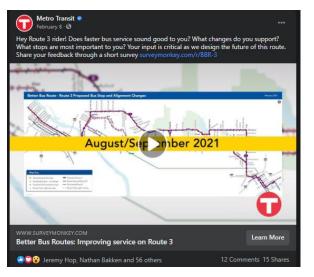
How we are using what we heard

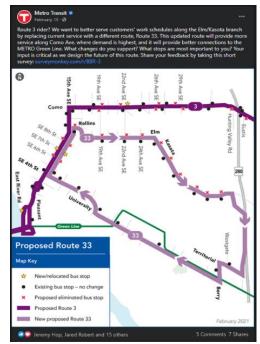
This report will be shared with the public by posting it online and presenting it to stakeholder groups. The data is being used by transit planners to evaluate the following:

- Consolidating bus stops for up to quarter-mile spacing
- Relocating select stops past a signalized intersection to reduce delays
- Expanding the no-parking zone around select stops to ensure buses can fully pull to the curb at the bus stop
- Adjusting the route alignment and schedule, including:
 - Replacing the branch that serves Elm and Kasota with a different route
 - Shifting the route in downtown Minneapolis from 3rd and 4th streets to Washington Avenue
 - Extending Route 3 to serve the North Loop
- Installing concrete pads to improve accessibility for customers
- Installing new shelters at qualifying bus stops

Appendix A: Screen shots of social media/web ads







Metro Transit @ @MetroTransitMN

Hey Route 3 rider! Does faster bus service sound good to you? What stops are most important to you? Your input is critical as we design the future of this route. Share your feedback through this short survey surveymonkey.com/r/BBR-3



February 22 · 🕲

Route 3 rider? We want to better serve customers by extending service to the North Loop and moving service from 3rd and 4th St., to Washington Ave. What stops are most important to you? Your input is critical as we design the future of this route. Share your feedback by taking this short survers survermonkey.com/YBBR-3





Appendix B: Sample quotes from survey responses

Washington Avenue/North Loop comments why people oppose or support the change

- I'm hoping that fewer turns downtown will mean faster travel time and less confusion (I won't have to remember which street to catch the bus home on from different parts of downtown if it's always Washington both ways).
- Both of these proposed changes are great ideas. I would love to see Route 3 run along Washington and extend into the north loop instead of terminating at Ramp B. Highly support these two changes!
- I regularly ride the 3 bus to the US Bank Stadium Light Rail stop and this change would cause me to not as easily transfer from bus to light rail.
- I live in the North Loop and have been looking for better access and more reliable frequent service in the neighborhood. I thoroughly welcome this change!
- In theory, I don't mind the distance of the change, but as a person on foot, it's takes SO LONG to cross Washington Ave. That makes it really, really unpleasant to consider this change. I'd rather be moving than standing needlessly for minutes waiting for the light to change amid unsafe traffic.
- It's closer to some destinations (although farther from downtown office buildings). I think the main reason I like this change is because it is more direct it seems like the current bus route is more difficult to anticipate and all the turns add much more time than just walking an extra block.

Elm/Kasota comments why people oppose or support the change

- I've worked at night on Kasota for over 17 years. The addition of the 3K route has helped me a lot since I've become older, and I'm concerned that needing to ride the Green Line into and out of Minneapolis late at night poses a significant safety issue for myself and other overnight workers. The morning 3B route that goes all the way to Downtown St. paul lowers my travel time from nearly 2 hours a trip at night to just over 1 hour, depending on which morning bus I'm able to catch due to my work schedule that day.
- This makes the 3 route more efficient. As a rider of the 3 bus for over 20 years, this change couldn't come fast enough.
- I am worried that the new schedule won't work in my favor
- More buses would really help. I end up walking to Como from 711 Kasota when I end up working late and miss the only bus for that hour.

Stop spacing changes

• I noticed some of the earlier stops are being removed and not replaced, like the Chicago St. stop. I would like to keep some of these earlier stops on Washington Ave, so that the stores like Trader Joes, which are before Nicolette, would have a stop closer to them.



- There is currently an excessive number of stops along Como, eliminating some to make for more consistent/efficient service would benefit everyone along the entire route.
- Don't remove bus stops. It discriminates against elderly & handicapped. Plus a longer walk can be dangerous vulnerability to crime. Too challenging in bad weather due to ice and snow.
- 29th Ave SE & Como Ave stop is the one of the most popular bus stops I have ever seen in the cities. It is a cold state, please do not make people walk more.
- I highly encourage the change to Washington Ave. However, I do not support eliminating bus stops on Como Ave. If you have ever rode a bus down Como, especially when school is in session it is extremely busy. This would force more people to surround bus stops, which I am not comfortable with anymore especially due to COVID. Plus, to have over 10+ people boarding at a small bus stop takes a lot more time than you may think. Especially when some of them may not even make it onto that bus due to full capacity. It would be stressful for me as a rider.
- Love the consolidation of stops along Como in Minneapolis. I would encourage you to look at possibly consolidating a few along Washington through mill district and downtown. Is every block necessary? Overall this would really boost transit in the north loop
- I take the 3 route to get to my clinic at Como Ave and Eustis Street. If I read it right, one of the stops or both stops are being removed. That is one vital stop for most patients that use those stops to get off the bus for their appointment or from their appointment.



Appendix C: Bus Stops with posted Rider Alert signs

Site On	Site At	Location	City	Status	Bus Stop Posting
15th Ave SE	6th St SE	Across from N	MINNEAPOLIS	Relocate less than 1/8 mile away	Changed
15th Ave SE	6th St SE	Near side S	MINNEAPOLIS	Relocate less than 1/8 mile away	Changed
15th Ave SE	8th St SE	Near side N	MINNEAPOLIS	Relocate less than 1/8 mile away	Changed
15th Ave SE	8th St SE	Near side S	MINNEAPOLIS	Relocate less than 1/8 mile away	Changed
3rd Ave N	4th St Garage	Across from W	MINNEAPOLIS	No longer served	Eliminate
3rd Ave N	Washington Ave N	Far side S	MINNEAPOLIS	No longer served	Eliminate
3rd St N	Hennepin Ave	Far side W	MINNEAPOLIS	No longer served	Eliminate
3rd St S	2nd Ave S	Near side W	MINNEAPOLIS	No longer served	Eliminate
3rd St S	4th Ave S	Near side W	MINNEAPOLIS	No longer served	Eliminate
3rd St S	Chicago Ave S	Near side W	MINNEAPOLIS	No longer served	Eliminate
3rd St S	Marquette Ave S	Far side W	MINNEAPOLIS	No longer served	Eliminate
3rd St S	Portland Ave / 5th Ave S	Mid block W	MINNEAPOLIS	No longer served	Eliminate
4th St N	Hennepin Ave	Near side E	MINNEAPOLIS	No longer served	Eliminate
4th St S	2nd Ave / 3rd Ave S	Mid block E	MINNEAPOLIS	No longer served	Eliminate
4th St S	4th Ave S	Far side E	MINNEAPOLIS	No longer served	Eliminate
4th St S	Chicago Ave	Near side E	MINNEAPOLIS	No longer served	Eliminate
4th St S	Nicollet Mall	Near side E	MINNEAPOLIS	No longer served	Eliminate
4th St S	Portland Ave	Near side E	MINNEAPOLIS	No longer served	Eliminate
5th St Trans	it Center Gate A	Near side E	MINNEAPOLIS	No longer served	Eliminate
Chatsworth St	Como Blvd W	Near side N	SAINT PAUL	Remove	Eliminate
Como Ave	#1930	Across from W	SAINT PAUL	Remove	Eliminate
Como Ave	#1930	Near side E	SAINT PAUL	Remove	Eliminate
Como Ave	Albert St	Across from W	SAINT PAUL	Remove	Eliminate
Como Ave	Albert St	Near side E	SAINT PAUL	Remove	Eliminate
Como Ave	Arona St	Near side W	SAINT PAUL	Remove	Eliminate
Como Ave	Arona St	Near side E	SAINT PAUL	Remove	Eliminate
Como Ave	Chatsworth St	Far side E	SAINT PAUL	Relocate less than 1/8 mile away	Changed
Como Ave	Commonwealth Ave	Across from E	SAINT PAUL	Remove	Eliminate
Como Ave	Galtier St	Across from W	SAINT PAUL	Remove	Eliminate
Como Ave	Galtier St	Near side E	SAINT PAUL	Remove	Eliminate
Como Ave	Lexington Pkwy	Near side E	SAINT PAUL	Remove	Eliminate



Hunting Valley Rd Como Ave Far side S SAINT PAUL Remove Eliminate Kasota Ave SE #2565 Near side W SAINT PAUL Remove Eliminate Kasota Ave SE #500 Near side W **MINNEAPOLIS** Remove Eliminate Kasota Ave SE #701 Across from N MINNEAPOLIS Remove Eliminate Kasota Ave SE #828 Near side N **MINNEAPOLIS** Remove Eliminate Kasota Ave SE **Bridal Veil Circle** Near side W MINNEAPOLIS Remove Eliminate Kasota Ave SE Kasota Circle Far side N **MINNEAPOLIS** Remove Eliminate Maryland Ave Danforth St Across from E SAINT PAUL Remove Eliminate Maryland Ave Danforth St Near side W SAINT PAUL Remove Eliminate Maryland Ave **Farrington St** Near side E SAINT PAUL Remove Eliminate Near side W Maryland Ave Farrington St SAINT PAUL Remove Eliminate Maryland Ave St Albans St Across from E SAINT PAUL Remove Eliminate Maryland Ave St Albans St Near side W SAINT PAUL Remove Eliminate Near side E SAINT PAUL Maryland Ave Woodbridge St Remove Eliminate Maryland Ave Woodbridge St Near side W SAINT PAUL Remove Eliminate Rice St Atwater St Near side S SAINT PAUL Remove Eliminate Rice St Atwater St Near side N SAINT PAUL Remove Eliminate Rice St Hatch Ave Near side S SAINT PAUL Remove Eliminate Rice St Hatch Ave Near side N SAINT PAUL Remove Eliminate Rice St Jessamine Ave Near side S SAINT PAUL Remove Eliminate **Rice St** Magnolia Ave Near side N SAINT PAUL Remove Eliminate **Rice St** St Anthony Ave Near side S SAINT PAUL Remove Eliminate Rice St State Bldg G Entrance Near side N SAINT PAUL Remove Eliminate **Rollins Ave SE** 15th Ave SE Near side W **MINNEAPOLIS** Remove Eliminate Van Slyke Ave Como Ave Near side E SAINT PAUL Remove Eliminate Washington Ave 5th Ave N Near side W **MINNEAPOLIS** Remove Eliminate Washington Ave 5th Ave N Near side E **MINNEAPOLIS** Remove Eliminate Washington Ave 7th Ave N Near side E **MINNEAPOLIS** Relocate less than 1/8 mile Changed away Washington Ave 9th Ave N Near side E **MINNEAPOLIS** Relocate less than 1/8 mile Changed away Washington Ave N 1st Ave N Near side E **MINNEAPOLIS** Remove Eliminate Washington Ave N 2nd Ave N Near side W **MINNEAPOLIS** Remove Eliminate Washington Ramp Cedar Ave S Far side W MINNEAPOLIS No longer served Eliminate Western Ave **Burgess St** Near side N SAINT PAUL Remove Eliminate Western Ave **Burgess St** Near side S SAINT PAUL Remove Eliminate