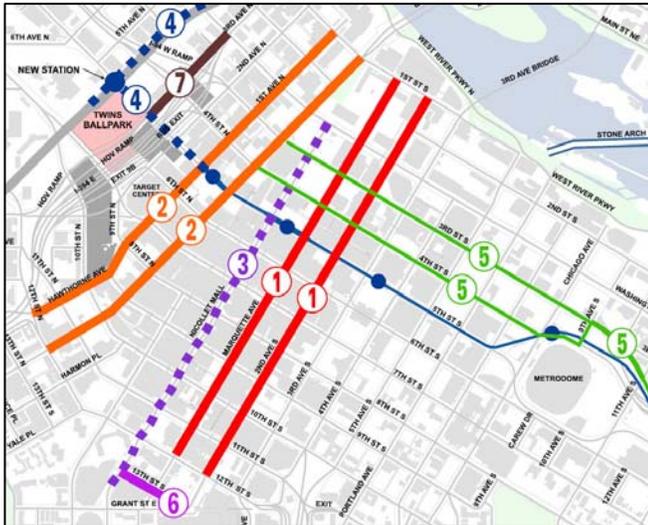




# Downtown Transportation Improvements



## PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2009

- ① Marquette and 2<sup>nd</sup> avenues will be reconstructed to create better transit access and wider, greener sidewalks.
- ② Hennepin and 1<sup>st</sup> avenues will be converted from one-way to two-way streets, and new bike lanes will be added to 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue.
- ③ Fewer, quieter buses on Nicollet Mall will make shopping and dining on the Mall an even better experience beginning in early 2010.
- ④ New rail lines will begin operating, including the startup of Northstar Commuter Rail and an extension of the Hiawatha Light Rail Line.
- ⑤ The Hiawatha LRT Bicycle Trail will be extended into Downtown to connect with 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> streets.
- ⑥ A Convention Center gateway will improve the streetscape along 13<sup>th</sup> Street between the Convention Center and Nicollet Mall.
- ⑦ 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue North will be reconstructed from Washington Avenue to 5<sup>th</sup> Street.
- + When the Downtown Improvement District begins its work this year, visitors to downtown will see cleaner, greener sidewalks.

## A TRANSPORTATION MAKEOVER

By the end of 2009, transportation in downtown Minneapolis will be transformed for everyone from drivers and transit riders to bicyclists and pedestrians. This year, many transportation improvements will be completed that will change the way people travel into and around downtown.

The improvements are all part of Access Minneapolis, a transportation plan for the city that was approved by the Mayor and City Council in June 2007. Although the plan was originally intended as a 10-year plan, City and Metro Transit investment, as well as a significant federal funding, means many pieces of the Downtown plan are becoming reality much sooner than originally expected.

The number of improvements and pace of construction means that residents, workers, and visitors Downtown will want to plan ahead for detours and delays during 2009. Despite the temporary inconvenience, the end result will be a downtown that is more accessible, greener, and easier to get around.

## RECONSTRUCTION OF MARQUETTE AND 2<sup>ND</sup> AVENUES

The reconstruction of Marquette and 2<sup>nd</sup> avenues (MARQ2) is a key component of the transportation improvements Downtown. Both streets and the adjoining sidewalks are being rebuilt through Downtown, from 1<sup>st</sup> Street to 12<sup>th</sup> Street.

The project will add dual bus lanes to each street, which will allow buses to move through Downtown more quickly and efficiently than before. Right now, the single-file flow of buses can only move as fast as the slowest bus. Once the dual bus lanes are open, buses will be able to pass other buses that have stopped for passengers, getting more quickly to their own stops. The dual lanes will dramatically increase bus capacity on Marquette and 2<sup>nd</sup>. During peak times, buses could carry 8,100 passengers per hour, compared to 2,700 per hour today. It will also speed up bus travel through Downtown—passengers will spend less time waiting, making transit a more attractive option for commuters.

New, wider sidewalks will also be constructed along Marquette and 2<sup>nd</sup> avenues. A better streetscape will greet pedestrians and bus riders with more trees, better bus stop facilities, and electronic displays of real-time transit information.

MARQ2 construction began in August 2008 and resumed in March 2009. The project is required to be completed by the end of 2009, which means construction will continue at an aggressive pace throughout the spring and summer. Construction on both streets will generally move from north to south, and in most cases, streets will be rebuilt first, followed by sidewalk reconstruction.

The MARQ2 project is funded as part of an Urban Partnership Agreement (UPA), a federal grant that includes about \$32 million for the project as part of a larger, \$133 million grant to reduce congestion in the metropolitan area.

## TWO-WAY CONVERSION OF HENNEPIN AND 1<sup>ST</sup> AVENUES

In late 2009, both Hennepin and 1<sup>st</sup> avenues will be converted from one-way streets to two-way streets between 1<sup>st</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> streets, making Downtown easier to navigate. Once the conversion is complete, some trips that now take four or six blocks of driving could be completed in just one or two blocks.

The two-way conversion will also have a calming effect on traffic, making the sidewalks along Hennepin and 1<sup>st</sup> a more inviting place for people who come Downtown to eat, shop, work, or for entertainment.

The switchover from one-way to two-way traffic is scheduled to happen toward the end of 2009. However, preparation work will happen this summer. The work includes seal-coating the streets (which creates a new street surface), re-striping the streets, and rebuilding the traffic signal system to manage two-way traffic. Because most of this work involves traffic signals and not the street itself, the construction is not expected to have a significant impact on traffic while work is under way.

As part of the conversion, bicycle lanes will be added to 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue. Buses and bikes will share reserved lanes on Hennepin.

## A BETTER NICOLLET MALL

Shortly after the MARQ2 project is complete, express buses that currently use Nicollet Mall will move to Marquette and 2<sup>nd</sup> avenues, reducing peak

period buses on the mall by 35 percent. The buses that remain on the mall will be cleaner, quieter hybrid electric buses. Many hybrid electric buses are already in service, and Metro Transit plans to have all hybrid buses on the Mall by the end of 2010. All this adds up to a Nicollet Mall that's a better place to walk, shop, and dine at sidewalk cafes.

## MORE RAIL SERVING DOWNTOWN

Beginning in late 2009, Metro Transit's Northstar Commuter Rail Line will begin carrying passengers into Downtown from the north metro. The 40-mile line stretches from Big Lake to a new transit station alongside Target Field, the new Minnesota Twins ballpark. At the same time, the Hiawatha Light Rail Line will be extended three blocks to connect with Northstar. Planning is also under way on two new light rail lines that would converge in Downtown, including the Central Corridor line to Saint Paul and the Southwest Corridor to the southwest suburbs.

## BETTER BICYCLE ACCESS

Minneapolis is the #2 bicycling city in the country, according to the U.S. Census, and improvements on the way mean Downtown will be even better connected. In 2009, the Hiawatha LRT Trail running alongside light rail will be extended into Downtown, where it will connect with bike lanes on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> streets. In 2010, the Cedar Lake Trail for bikes and pedestrians will be completed on the western edge of Downtown all the way to the Mississippi River.

## CONVENTION CENTER GATEWAY

In 2009, streetscape improvements will be installed along 13<sup>th</sup> Street between the Convention Center plaza and Nicollet Mall. New sidewalks, trees, planters, and public art will connect convention-goers and other pedestrians to Nicollet Mall, the Loring Greenway, Eat Street, and nearby Downtown neighborhoods and businesses.

## DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Downtown pedestrians will find more inviting sidewalks starting in 2009, thanks to the newly-formed Downtown Improvement District. In 2008, Downtown property owners agreed to contribute additional funding to make Downtown cleaner, greener, and safer. The district will begin its work in 2009 and 2010, meaning better sidewalk cleaning and landscaping are coming soon to Downtown.