



Recommended Locally Preferred Alternative

The recommended Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for transit in the Nicollet-Central Corridor is modern streetcar running between Lake Street and at least 5th Street NE on Nicollet Avenue, Nicollet Mall and Hennepin/1st Avenues, using the Hennepin Avenue Bridge to cross the Mississippi River.

The recommended LPA was approved by the Minneapolis City Council for recommendation to the Metropolitan Council on October 4, 2013.

The decision follows over a year of technical analysis and public engagement through the Nicollet-Central Transit Alternatives Study. During the study, over 3,000 people participated in outreach activities, including ten public open houses, presentations at 70 standing community and stakeholder meetings, online surveys, and other efforts. A Technical/Community Advisory Committee and a Policy Advisory Committee guided the process, meeting regularly, and recommending the LPA to the Minneapolis City Council.

The study examined a 9-mile corridor generally following Nicollet Avenue S and Central Avenue NE between 46th Street to the south and 41st Avenue NE to the north. The corridor runs through the heart of downtown Minneapolis and serves many activity centers including the Convention Center, several post-secondary schools, and numerous entertainment and restaurant districts.

A variety of alternative transit modes and alignments were evaluated to determine what option best met the purpose of the project:

To improve transit connectivity, enhance the attractiveness of transit service, and catalyze development through an investment in transit infrastructure within the Nicollet-Central Corridor.

Six goals and 28 evaluation measures based upon this purpose were used to evaluate the alternatives. Based on the evaluation results and public and stakeholder input, modern streetcar on the 3.4-mile LPA alignment was found to best meet the purpose of the project.

PROJECT FACTS

Length: 3.4 miles

Service Frequency: 7.5 min peak, 10 min off-peak, 7 days a week

2030 Projected Weekday Ridership: 9,200

Estimated Capital Cost: approximately \$200 million in 2017 dollars

Major Transit Connections:

- all transit in downtown Minneapolis
- 4 LRT lines downtown (Blue and Green)
- I-35W Highway BRT line (at Lake St and downtown)
- major E-W bus connections outside downtown (Lake St, Franklin Ave, 4th/University)

Special Generators:

- Nicollet Mall
- Minneapolis Convention Center
- 6,000 hotel rooms
- “Eat Street” Nicollet Avenue business district
- Minneapolis Institute of Arts
- East Hennepin business district
- Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park and Nicollet Island

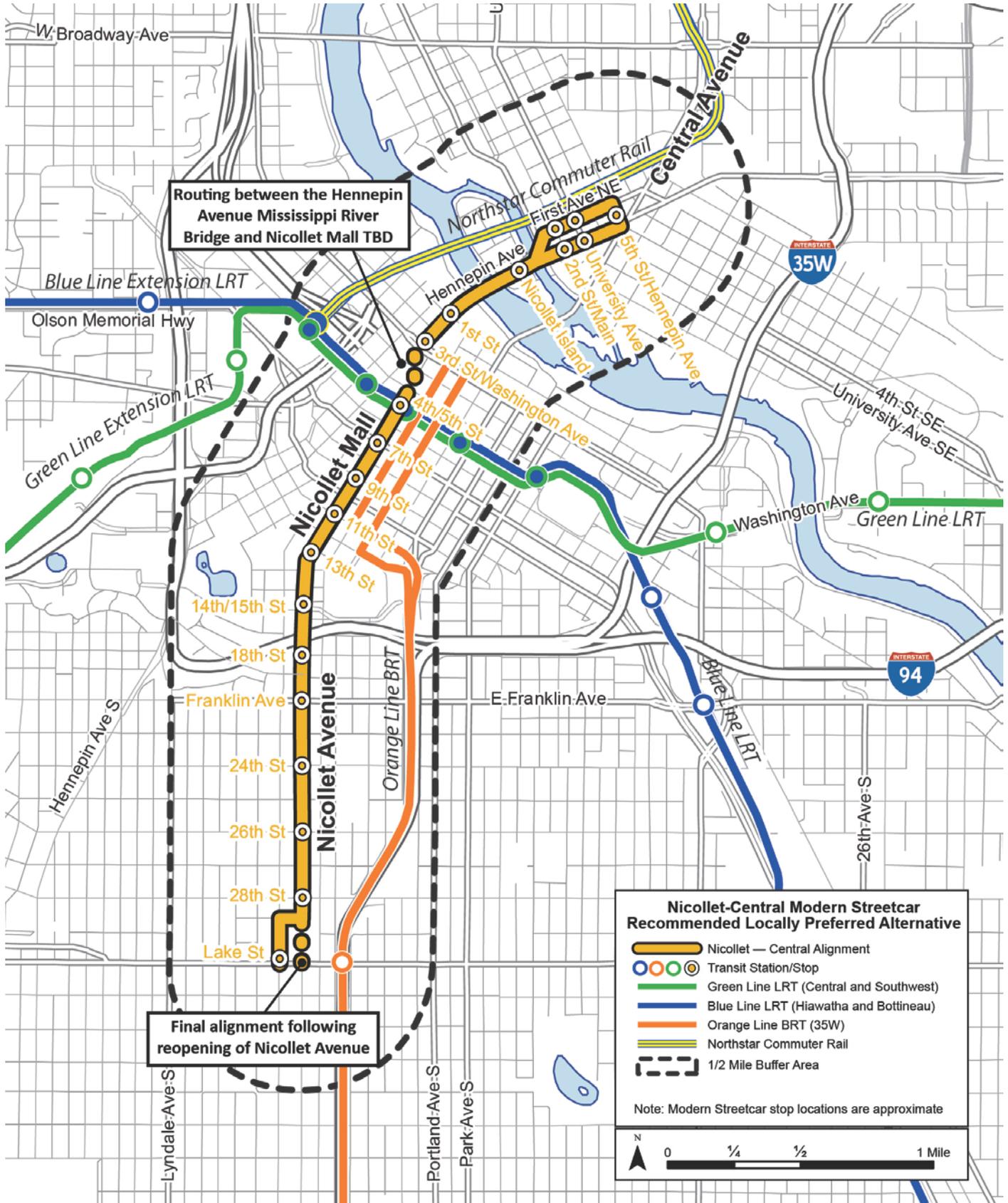
Population and Jobs:

- 55,000 residents and 118,000 jobs within one-half mile
- Projected to grow by 25,000 residents and 50,000 jobs in the next 20 years

Transit-Reliant Population:

- 20 percent of the population within one-half mile has no car
- 24 percent of residents within one-half mile live in poverty
- 4,200 legally-binding affordable housing units within one-half mile

Nicollet-Central Modern Streetcar Alignment



Note: Station/Stop locations are approximate and will be refined through further design and engineering

Mode Decision

The study evaluated in detail modern streetcar and enhanced bus options that operate in mixed traffic with cars for the 9-mile study corridor. Other alternatives such as light rail transit and bus rapid transit in a dedicated busway were screened out early in the process due to the limited physical space in the corridor and high demand for short trips and frequent stops. Both enhanced bus and modern streetcar alternatives serve the same people, jobs, activity centers, development sites, and transit connections and have similar minimal impacts on the existing transportation system. Modern streetcar was selected as the preferred mode because it:

- attracts more riders;
- has greater capacity to catalyze and support economic development;
- costs more to build and operate and maintain, but has similar operating and maintenance costs on a per passenger basis; and
- has significantly greater public support.

Alignment Decision

The study evaluated alternative alignment options through downtown and paralleling Nicollet Avenue S and Central Avenue NE. The initial screening of alignment options determined that Nicollet Avenue S, Nicollet Mall, and Central Avenue NE best met the project purpose and goals; however, two river crossing alignment options were carried into the detailed evaluation: (1) the Hennepin/1st Avenue Bridge, and (2) the Central/3rd Avenue Bridge. While the two river crossings are geographically close and serve the same general areas and transit connections, the Hennepin Avenue river crossing was selected as the preferred alignment because it:

- is a shorter route, resulting in faster travel times, higher transit ridership and lower costs;
- has better bicycle/pedestrian connections to the Mississippi River and provides a direct connection to Nicollet Island;
- can more easily accommodate both bicycle facilities and on-street parking north of the river; and
- is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places as is the Central/3rd Avenue Bridge and has lower cost to accommodate modern streetcar.

Project Length Decision

Because most modern streetcar projects in the United States are generally short (built in 1 to 4 mile segments) and operate in activity centers where there is a high demand for short trips, the need to consider the modern streetcar alternative as a shorter initial project was identified and presented to the public early in the study. A 3.4-mile starter modern streetcar line between Lake Street and approximately 5th Street NE was evaluated in the same level of detail as the 9-mile enhanced bus and modern streetcar alternatives. This 3.4-mile segment was found to capture a significant concentration of the benefits of the longer streetcar alternative at a cost that is competitive with modern streetcar projects in other cities that are competing for federal funds. The 3.4-mile modern streetcar starter line was selected as the preferred alternative because it:

- requires half the construction costs of the 9-mile streetcar alternative;
- serves half the projected riders of the 9-mile streetcar alternative;
- serves two-thirds of the population and 90 percent of projected population and employment growth in the 9-mile corridor;
- serves 60 to 70 percent of transit-reliant people (people without cars and people in poverty), 60 percent of the non-white population, and 90 percent of affordable housing units within the 9-mile corridor;
- serves two-thirds of the development capacity and five out of nine development opportunity sites within the 9-mile corridor;
- serves the section of the corridor with a high percentage of short trips, allowing the replacement of many buses along Nicollet Avenue and Nicollet Mall in downtown; and
- is strongly supported by the public as a starter line, although there is interest in extending the line further northeast.

What is Modern Streetcar?

Modern streetcar is a type of rail transit that fits more easily into urban streets than light rail transit (LRT).

Like LRT, modern streetcar:

- has tracks in the ground and overhead electric wires;
- provides frequent, all-day service;
- boards passengers quickly with off-board fare payment, multiple doors, and boarding platforms;
- catalyzes and supports economic development;
- attracts more riders than bus; and
- is easy to use for new and occasional riders.

Unlike LRT, modern streetcar:

- shares tracks/lanes with cars and trucks;
- stops frequently (about every 1/4 mile);
- uses single-car vehicles and smaller platforms; and
- has less extensive construction impacts and lower construction costs than LRT.

Next Steps

- **Regional Transportation Policy Plan** – The Metropolitan Council’s 2030 Transportation Policy Plan will be modified in early 2014 to recognize the recommended LPA for the Nicollet-Central Modern Streetcar.
- **Environmental Review** – An Environmental Assessment (EA) is being prepared in 2014 for the project, led by the City of Minneapolis in partnership with the Metropolitan Council and Federal Transit Administration.
- **Project Development** – The City of Minneapolis and the Metropolitan Council, the presumed owner and operator of the modern streetcar, are collaborating to advanced design and engineering for the project.
- **Funding** – In spring 2013, following passage of enabling legislation by the State of Minnesota, the City of Minneapolis established a value capture district, by which future tax revenues generated in the near term from planned development on five blocks along the project may be used to fund capital costs of the streetcar project, estimated to generate up to \$60 million. Additional local, regional and/or federal transportation funds are needed.

For More Information

All of the technical documentation, public outreach documents, and the final Locally Preferred Alternative Report are available on the project website: www.minneapolismn.gov/nicollet-central.

What streetcar might look like on...



Hennepin Ave E



Nicollet Mall



Nicollet Avenue S

Note: Renderings are for illustrative purposes and do not represent actual designs or stop locations