

## Executive Summary

Saint Cloud is a rapidly growing metropolitan area situated along the Mississippi River in the central region of Minnesota. It is located 65 miles northwest of the Twin Cities and in 2000 was officially linked with the cities through designation as a new Combined Statistical Area (CSA), Minneapolis-St. Paul-St. Cloud by the US Census Bureau. Saint Cloud is also home to the St. Cloud State University, the second largest university in the state and the largest member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System.

The transit service in the region, Metro Bus, is operated by the Saint Cloud Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC). Metro Bus service includes fixed route and Dial-A-Ride service throughout the region and seasonal transit service to the St. Cloud State University (SCSU) campus. A map of the Metro Bus service area is presented in Figure 0-1. The region of interest for this study is the entire Saint Cloud Area Planning Organization (APO) area, which includes Saint Cloud and its surroundings in Stearns, Benton, and Sherburne Counties. Particular interest is paid to the municipalities where Metro Bus service currently is operated (Saint Cloud, Sartell, Sauk Rapids, and Waite Park) as well as two municipalities where future transit expansion has been discussed (Saint Joseph and Saint Augusta).

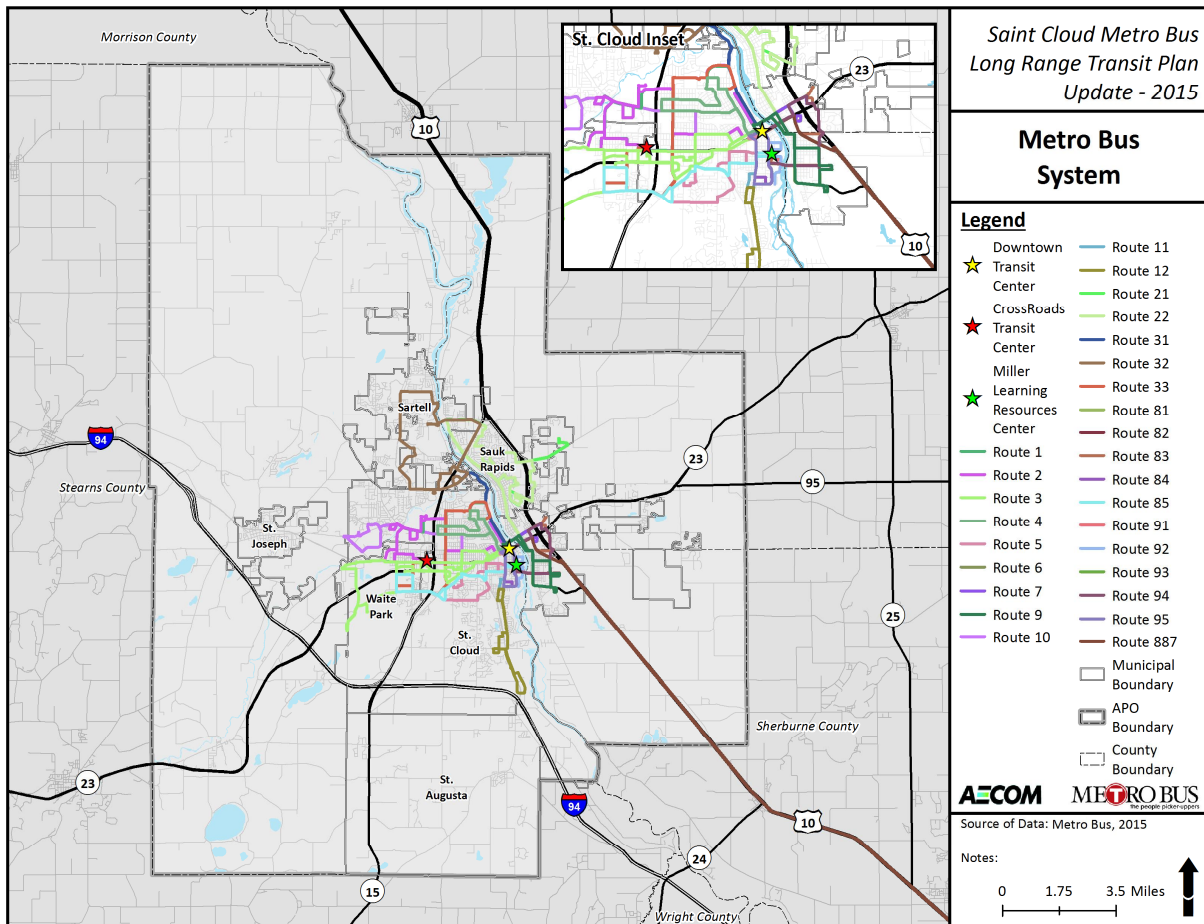
### Population – Past, Present, and Future

When looking at the demographics of an area, the current situation as well as the past and projected conditions must be studied. Why changes in transit service were made in the past and how transit needs to change in the future to meet changing demographics and demand can be better understood by looking at the patterns that emerge from such an analysis. The decennial Census provides a “snapshot” of a region’s demographics, which is very useful to understanding the current needs of a population, but does not speak to how the region got to that snapshot or what the future is expected to bring.

Large employers are important to discussions of transit because they are major destinations for a lot of people, many on the same schedule. The Saint Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce maintains a list of the largest employers in Saint Cloud. Major employers are spread throughout the metro area, but are concentrated in Saint Cloud. Major employers are also generally located along major transportation corridors.

Major trip generators are locations frequented by a significant number of people, traveling by all modes, within the study area. Common transit generators include: healthcare facilities, schools and universities, shopping areas, and recreational areas (such as parks). These generators must be considered when evaluating transit service for a region. Major trip generators are spread throughout the metro area, with most located in Saint Cloud. In a later analysis, these trip generators in addition to the transit success score discussed earlier are compared to the paths of current Metro Bus routes to determine if any needy areas or major generators are unserved.

Figure 0-1 – Metro Bus Service Area Overview



Public Outreach

The *Long Range Transit Plan Update* included an extensive community participation program designed to elicit input from members of the general public, current users of the system, community leaders, key policy decision makers and other transportation stakeholders in the Saint Cloud area. Metro Bus and the consultant team completed a multifaceted stakeholder engagement and outreach process to gather meaningful input to the transit development process and help shape the results of the plan. The process included engagement of Metro Bus staff, elected officials, members of the business and academic community, community and agency leaders, current passengers, and the broader community. These stakeholders were engaged through two rounds of meetings and focused discussions, community and on-board surveys, and a series of public open houses. Additional details on each of these components of the outreach and engagement process are included throughout this report.

Whether talking to riders at the drop-in sessions or the various community leaders and stakeholders, it was clear that public transportation is considered an important part of the community's infrastructure, and a part which can be improved in the minds of those who participated. Many concerns, ideas, and

issues were raised in these discussions, which provided a great deal of direction for this project, and which were used in developing concepts and recommendations in subsequent phases.

### Existing Conditions and Route Diagnostics

Two major topics within the *Long Range Transit Plan Update* were the existing conditions and route diagnostics. The existing conditions section details the current operations at Metro Bus, financial and operating data and trends, capital assets, and staffing and organization. Following the existing conditions data is information regarding route diagnostics and service standards, including a route-by-route analysis of performance metrics.

Metro Bus, including both fixed route and demand response services, is currently owned and operated by the Saint Cloud Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC), established in 1969 by the Minnesota State Legislature as a transit authority of the State of Minnesota. The MTC service area includes the cities of Saint Cloud, Sauk Rapids, Waite Park, and Sartell. Within this region, the MTC operates the regular fixed route bus service throughout the week; four local and one express “Campus Clipper” bus routes serving St. Cloud State University (SCSU) on weekdays during the school year; the “Husky Shuttle” service at SCSU on weekdays during the day and weekend nights; three late night routes serving SCSU and downtown St. Cloud on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights; and a point-deviated route serving the University and surrounding areas during the evening, seven days per week during the school year. The MTC also operates a demand responsive “Dial-A-Ride” service disabled customers (and the general public at times when fixed route service does not operate).

### Service Guidelines

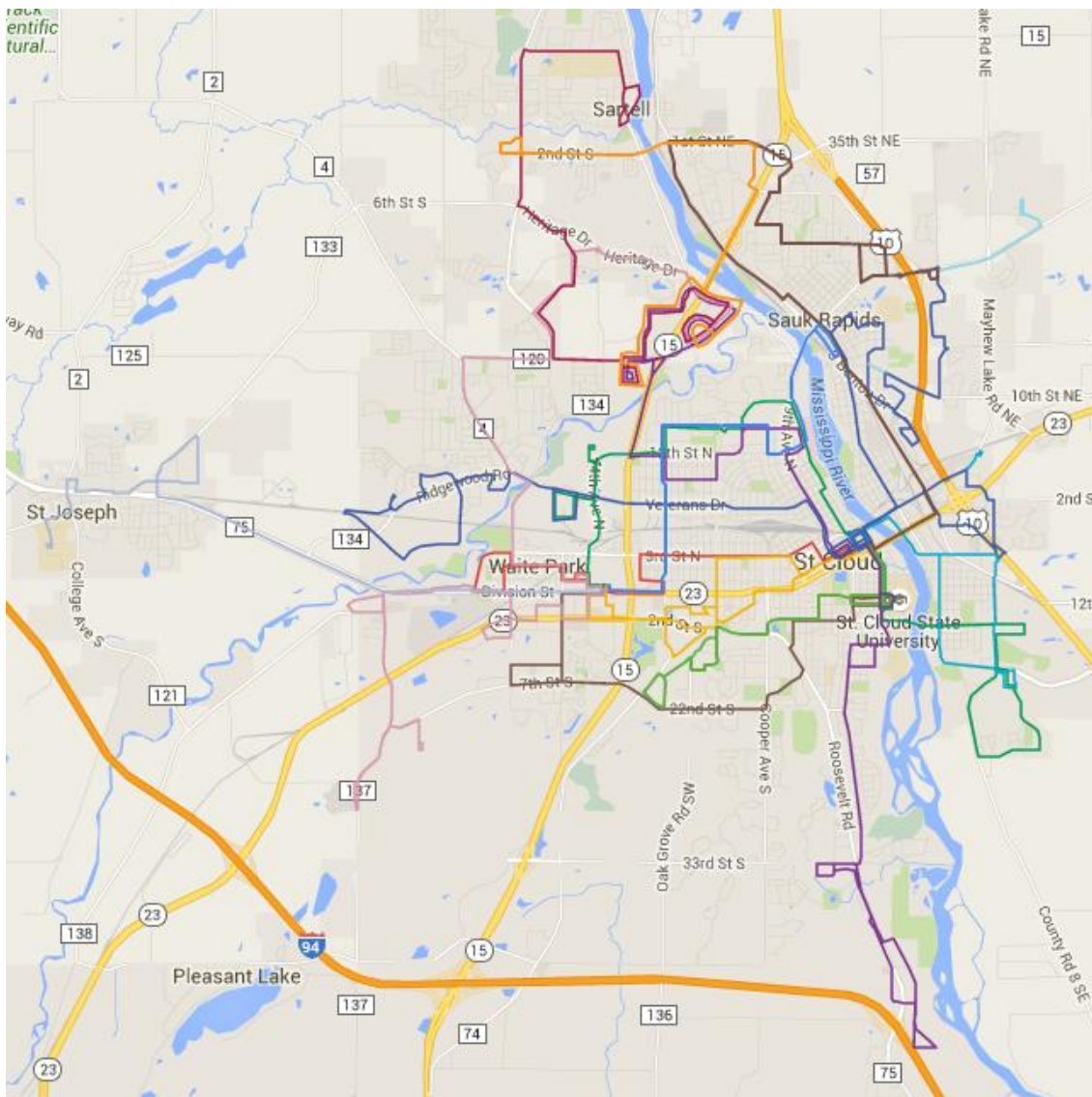
The proposed set of service and performance guidelines appropriate for Metro Bus services are divided into five primary categories – service availability, service design, service quality, fare policy and financial efficiency/productivity that can be applied to individual routes as well as the entire fixed route system. A description of each of the individual standards within the five broad categories is presented in this report.

### Route Planning

This report also provides the methodology for developing a route plan for Saint Cloud, as well as the plan itself. This includes the congruency analysis, needs and opportunities, transit oriented development, and development of the route plan. In addition, it is important to note that much of the route plan and planning process itself was informed by the *Moving Forward* plan, which was the previous route plan document developed by the same study team. The route plan is presented in three phases, with recommendations to be implemented over the next three years. An implementation schedule for the route changes is also presented. The analysis of the proposed network includes a finance plan, a capital plan, as well as preliminary ridership estimates.

The system plan was developed by looking at the problems and issues of the current network, the proposals in the *Moving Forward* plan, and the planning precepts. These formed the guideline for individual and system route development. While a “blank slate” plan, where the current fixed route system would be eliminated and completely new routes were drawn, was again considered, a system that modifies and builds upon the current network is what is ultimately proposed. Indeed, the proposed route network meets all of the goals that a “blank slate” plan would have met without confusing the current riders and perhaps thereby alienating some of them. The fixed route plan includes base routes and expansion routes. Figure 0-2 presents the proposed system plan.

Figure 0-2 – Proposed System Plan



This plan contains three phases for adjusting services. Route descriptions and service stats for each phase are presented in the following sections.

Ridership Estimates

Table 0-1 presents the estimated annual ridership for this plan, both by route and phase of implementation.

Table 0-1 – Ridership Projection by Route and Phase

Route	Current	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Post Phase 3 (Year 5)
1	248,953	248,953	237,644	237,644	251,902
2	242,820	242,820	283,959	283,959	300,997
3	135,000	135,000	135,000	110,444	117,070
4	74,219	74,219	91,174	91,174	96,645
5	64,909	87,056	87,056	87,056	92,279
6	104,946	174,942	174,942	174,942	185,439
7	53,806	62,478	62,478	62,478	66,226
8	0	182,428	182,428	182,428	193,374
9	88,958	75,078	75,078	75,078	79,583
10	26,214	26,214	60,036	60,036	63,639
11	236,400	197,563	197,563	197,563	209,417
12	19,138	161,037	161,037	161,037	170,699
21	58,553	58,553	58,553	83,625	88,643
22	95,402	95,402	95,402	82,997	87,977
30	0	0	52,539	52,539	55,691
31	52,847	52,847	29,868	29,868	31,660
32	28,414	28,414	28,844	28,844	30,574
33	86,240	48,234	48,234	48,234	51,128
34	0	0	0	24,557	26,030
41	0	0	32,485	32,485	34,434
81	43,335	0	0	0	0
82	39,797	0	0	0	0
83	39,207	0	0	0	0
84	33,945	0	0	0	0
85	51,516	0	0	0	0
91	220,529	220,529	220,529	220,529	233,761
92	15,828	15,828	15,828	15,828	16,778
93	25,883	25,883	25,883	25,883	27,436
94	3,411	3,411	3,411	3,411	3,616
95	19,818	19,818	19,818	19,818	21,007
<i>Total</i>	<i>2,110,088</i>	<i>2,236,707</i>	<i>2,379,788</i>	<i>2,392,455</i>	<i>2,536,003</i>

Transit Center Analysis

An analysis was also undertaken to assess the capacity available at both the Downtown Transit Center, as well as at the Crossroads Center. Both facilities appear to have sufficient room to accommodate all of the buses that might appear at one time.

### Other Transportation Providers

This report also presents other regional transportation operations and how Saint Cloud Metro Bus will coordinate and interact with these services. The other key transportation project in the region is the Northstar Commuter Rail. Other major operators that Metro Bus needs to coordinate with include the local county rural transit systems and inter-city operators.

### Long Range Plan Update

The focus of the Saint Cloud MTC during the planning horizon of the service plan will bear on a near-term restructuring of current services as well as on extending service to Saint Joseph. Expansions of service frequencies and spans are expected to occur at some point beyond the immediate five year planning horizon of this plan, beyond 2020. These assumptions are based on fiscal year 2017 implementation of the route restructuring plan. The state of the local and state funding available for transit service in the Saint Cloud area may impact the implementation of this plan. While this may affect the timeline of the plan, the overall restructuring should not be affected.