11 Long Range Transportation Plan Update

The focus of the Saint Cloud Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC) has been on a near-term restructuring of current services, with a longer term expansion of service and service area. The service plan covers 5 years of local bus operations, including expansion into Saint Joseph. This chapter presents longer term (i.e., beyond 5 years) strategies to improve bus service beyond the Phase 3 route and service proposals. This chapter proposes two types of improvements:

- Specific operating and capital projects
- Recommended planning studies to ensure that current plans are updated to meet the transit mobility needs of the region, and additional opportunities and needs are identified to keep Metro Bus moving forward

11.1 Operating Proposals 2017 - 2035

The operating proposals described previously are designed to restructure bus service in the Saint Cloud region in the short term. In the longer term (i.e., beyond the 5 year planning horizon of this study), the extension of the frequencies and spans of service could be considered on the most productive services, as well as expansions of the service area to areas such as Opportunity Drive.

In Phase 2 the service area will expand to include Saint Joseph. While these services have been identified as Phase 2 services, service can be started in this community at any time that they elect to become members of the MTC. The Saint Joseph route would operate as a shuttle between Saint Joseph and Crossroads Center, where transfers can be made to numerous other routes.

In addition to the expansions previously described in the service plan, other service expansions that may be implemented between 2025 and 2035 include:

- *Improved frequencies and spans of* service – As the proposed service plan is adopted and services are operated over time, specific routes will become more heavily utilized than others. One strategy to consider in the longer term is to improve both the frequencies and spans of service on these routes.

  For example, weekday peak period frequencies could be improved so that eventually certain routes and/or corridors can attain relatively frequent service, even to the extent of providing "show-up-and-go" (i.e., no need for timetables) services between certain key locations.

  Another potential improvement is to lengthen spans of service, particularly on weekends and especially on Sundays.

- *Further expansion of the service area* – As the Saint Cloud area grows, consideration should be made to further expansion of the service area, as mentioned above. This would include

incorporating more areas into the MTC and providing service to these communities. Appropriate service levels and methods of service delivery, such as fixed route bus, demand response services, or perhaps even contracting with ride-hail services and taxicab providers should all be explored to provide cost effective service to new areas and developments.

- *Shuttle buses to connect with the Northstar* – Future phases of the Northstar Commuter Rail are planned to extend the service up to Saint Cloud. The extended Northstar trains would stop at the park-and-ride along U.S. Route 10 that was built for the Northstar Link commuter coach service.

  In the future, as Northstar service reaches Saint Cloud and the park-and-ride lot becomes constrained, dedicated bus services could be developed to connect both residential areas and job locations to the train station without forcing transfers in downtown. This will require research into appropriate destinations to serve with these shuttle buses.

- *Enhanced Bus and/or Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in major corridors* – The operating plan increases service on major corridors in the Saint Cloud area. Building upon these increases in service, "enhanced bus" or BRT services should be studied along major corridors that are growing and may be good locations to provide bus enhancements. Elements of BRT to consider include limited stops, off-board fare collection, upgrades to bus stops for BRT, and physical improvements to streets to facilitate bus priority. A menu of ITS improvements should also be pursued such as real-time passenger information and upgraded priority for buses at traffic signals. Possible corridors to consider for BRT or enhanced bus treatments include the Downtown-SCSU corridor and the Downtown-Crossroads Center corridor.

- *Commuter Bus Services* – As the Saint Cloud region grows, consideration for commuter bus services into Saint Cloud could be considered. This would support connections to Northstar Commuter Rail services, as well as bring people from neighboring cities and towns into Saint Cloud for employment, education, shopping, and social services and activities. Commuter services can be run directly by Metro Bus or with coordination with rural transit operators that serve Saint Cloud. Some markets that possibly could be served with daily commuter bus services include Little Falls, Sauk Centre, Annandale, Foley, and Princeton.

Table 11-1 – Financial Capacity Analysis – Operating Expenses

2040 Transit Plan Update							2041 TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE																		
Updated 3/2015							ST. CLOUD METROPOLITAN TRANSIT COMMISSION TRANSIT PLAN																		
							FINANCIAL CAPACITY ANALYSIS															OPERATING EXPENSES				
							(Thousands (000) of Actual Fiscal Year Dollars)																		
Expense Category	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**	**2026**	**2027**	**2028**	**2029**	**2030**	**2031**	**2032**	**2033**	**2034**	**2035**	**2036**	**2037**	**2038**	**2039**	**2040**	**2041**
Operating	New Base																									
Base Operating Budget	12,931	13,440	15,327	17,899	18,488	18,548	19,095	20,145	20,592	22,199	22,847	23,487	24,644	26,157	27,784	28,557	29,330	30,953	32,692	34,660	35,592	36,667	38,537	40,640	42,989	44,255
Expanded Transit Services																										
Inflation Adjustment (2%)	259	202	307	358	370	371	382	403	412	444	457	470	493	523	556	571	587	619	654	693	712	733	771	813	860	885
Debt - 2014A Revenue Bonds									*Ends 2024*																	
Route Restructure & Expansion																										
Phase I - 2016/2017		1,528																								
Phase II - 2018			2,109																							
Phase III - 2019				380																						
Future Service Expansion							500	700	900			500	700	900			700	900	1,100			900	1,100	1,300		
Downtown Trolley Service		5				10				10				10				10				10				
Dial-a-Ride Service (2% annual incr	150	153	156	159	162	166	169	172	176	179	183	187	190	194	198	202	206	210	214	219	223	227	232	237	241	
Additional Agency Personnel	100				110				120				130				130				140				140	
*Undesignated Operating Contingency					15					15					20					20					25	
Northstar Link Commuter Bus							*Ends 2022*																			
*Undesignated operating contingency includes: insurance, fuel, consultant studies, other unbudgeted operating expenses																										
Total Operations	**13,440**	**15,327**	**17,899**	**18,796**	**19,145**	**19,095**	**20,145**	**21,421**	**22,199**	**22,847**	**23,487**	**24,644**	**26,157**	**27,784**	**28,557**	**29,330**	**30,953**	**32,692**	**34,660**	**35,592**	**36,667**	**38,537**	**40,640**	**42,989**	**44,255**	**45,140**
*Route restructuring plan figures derived from 2010 Moving Forward LRP Update																										
Operating Revenue Sources																										
Local Metro Bus Tax Levy	1,714	1,935	2,196	2,835	2,892	2,950	3,009	3,069	3,130	3,193	3,257	3,387	3,522	3,663	3,810	3,962	4,121	4,286	4,457	4,635	4,821	5,014	5,214	5,423	5,640	5,865
Local Metro Bus Fares/Contracts	1,480	1,510	1,655	1,938	2,228	2,563	2,947	3,065	3,187	3,315	3,447	3,585	3,800	4,067	4,229	4,398	4,574	4,803	5,091	5,295	5,507	5,727	6,070	6,465	6,724	6,993
Local Miscellaneous	171	174	176	180	181	183	185	187	189	191	193	195	198	202	204	207	209	215	219	221	224	226	231	237	240	242
Mn/DOT	7,667	9,196	10,883	11,296	11,521	11,521	11,867	12,460	12,834	13,219	13,616	14,229	15,082	16,063	16,544	17,041	17,978	19,057	20,200	20,806	21,430	22,502	23,739	25,045	26,047	27,089
NCDA	250	302	305	308	314	321	327																			
Federal 5307 Operating	1,239	1,288	1,340	1,393	1,449	1,507	1,567	1,630	1,695	1,763	1,833	1,907	1,983	2,062	2,145	2,230	2,320	2,412	2,509	2,609	2,714	2,822	2,935	3,052	3,175	3,302
Federal 5307 Preventive Maint.	919	946	975	1,004	1,034	1,065	1,097	1,130	1,164	1,199	1,235	1,272	1,310	1,350	1,390	1,432	1,475	1,519	1,565	1,612	1,660	1,710	1,761	1,814	1,868	1,924
Total Operating Revenue	**13,440**	**15,350**	**17,529**	**18,953**	**19,620**	**20,110**	**20,999**	**21,541**	**22,200**	**22,880**	**23,581**	**24,574**	**25,897**	**27,407**	**28,323**	**29,270**	**30,676**	**32,292**	**34,041**	**35,178**	**36,355**	**38,000**	**39,951**	**42,036**	**43,692**	**45,414**
Note: inflation adjustment factor 2%, based on the US Inflation Calculator.																										
Fare recovery ratio	**12.3%**	**11.0%**	**10.2%**	**11.3%**	**12.6%**	**14.4%**	**15.5%**	**15.2%**	**15.2%**	**15.3%**	**15.5%**	**15.3%**	**15.3%**	**15.4%**	**15.5%**	**15.7%**	**15.5%**	**15.3%**	**15.3%**	**15.5%**	**15.6%**	**15.4%**	**15.5%**	**15.6%**	**15.7%**	**16.0%**
Mn/DOT Share of Expenses	**57.0%**	**60.0%**	**60.8%**	**60.1%**	**60.2%**	**60.3%**	**58.9%**	**58.2%**	**57.8%**	**57.9%**	**58.0%**	**57.7%**	**57.7%**	**57.8%**	**57.9%**	**58.1%**	**58.1%**	**58.3%**	**58.3%**	**58.5%**	**58.4%**	**58.4%**	**58.4%**	**58.3%**	**58.9%**	**60.0%**

11.2 Capital Improvements 2010 - 2035

The capital improvement program includes such items as replacement vehicles and facilities, as well as capital expansion in order to enhance the experience for transit bus users. The capital program provides for the replacement of components and equipment for the delivery of transit services. These items are replaced at the end of their useful lives, and represent the current Metro Bus capital program. This program will ensure that the Metro Bus system and services remain in a state of good repair. The program also provides for systemwide expansion. The capital program is summarized on the capital financial capacity table on Table 11-2.

- *Fixed Route Vehicles* – Routine replacement of vehicles as they reach the end of their useful lives is programmed into the capital program. Expansion of the fixed route fleet will also be needed due to the proposals recommended in this plan. A fixed route bus should be replaced once it is in service for 12 years.

- *Demand Response/Smaller Vehicles* – The demand response/small vehicle fleet serves the Dial-A-Ride services, and the smaller "cutaway" buses can also serve less heavily patronized fixed routes. These vehicles, mostly "class 400" vehicles, could be replaced every 7 years; however, we have assumed a five year life for these vehicles in the capital planning needs described previously. As the demand response service grows, additional vehicles will be required to support Dial-A-Ride services.

Table 11-2 – Financial Capacity Analysis – Capital Expenses

2040 Transit Plan Update							2041 TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE																			
Updated 10/2014							ST. CLOUD METROPOLITAN TRANSIT COMMISSION TRANSIT PLAN																			
							FINANCIAL CAPACITY ANALYSIS																	CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS		
							(Thousands (000) of Actual Fiscal Year Dollars)																			
Expense Category	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**	**2026**	**2027**	**2028**	**2029**	**2030**	**2031**	**2032**	**2033**	**2034**	**2035**	**2036**	**2037**	**2038**	**2039**	**2040**	**2041**
Capital	New Base																									
Mobility Training Center				25					75					250					60					85		
Ops Ctr Storage Addn & Roof																400										
Ops Ctr CNG Renovations									200										250							
CNG Fueling Station									250										500							
Canopy for CNG Fueling station	200															75										
Operations Center Improvements		80				1,000					60					70					1,200					75
Transit Center Misc. Improvemen	25					75					40					100					50					110
Secondary Transit Hubs					400			750					500					500					500			
Large Bus Replacements			1,680		2,240		3,920				13,340				1,755		2,340		5,310				13,800		600	
Large Bus Expansion							1,120						580						590						1,200	
Small Bus Replacements - State	800	1,320	1,050	1,610	1,150	230			2,400	1,440	1,250	1,750	1,275	765			2,650	1,620	1,890	1,890	1,350	810			2,800	1,680
Small Bus Expansion - State						460					500							810								
Bus Shelter Program	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Fare Collection System Upgrade		350			1,000					500					1,000					500					1,200	
2-Way Radio System Upgrade					400										700										1,000	
Ranger upgrade/replacement					74					100					125					75					100	
ITS (TSP) Projects	25	25	25	25	25	30		30		30		35		35		35		35		40		40		40		40
Website update	50					25					75					25					75					
Operations Software	360															1,500										
IT & Office Equipment	40	87	41	45	25	55	55	55	55	55	60	60	60	60	60	65	65	65	65	65	70	70	70	70	70	70
Operations Vehicle		35	35	35		80	40		40	40	40		84	42		42	42	42		88	44		44	44	44	
Maintenance Vehicle			35	35		40				40	45		45				44	47		47				45	48	
Maint. Bus Hoist Replacement	200					225	225							250	250						275	275				
Maintenance Bus Washer											150										225					
Maintenance Tools & Equipment	10	10	10	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	35	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	25	50	25	25	25	25	25
Total Capital	**1,735**	**1,932**	**2,901**	**1,815**	**5,354**	**2,260**	**5,400**	**875**	**3,060**	**2,245**	**15,620**	**1,890**	**2,589**	**1,447**	**3,935**	**2,357**	**5,186**	**3,164**	**8,710**	**2,755**	**3,364**	**1,245**	**14,464**	**334**	**7,112**	**2,025**
Capital Revenue Sources																										
Local 20%	347	386	580	363	1,071	452	1,080	175	612	449	3,124	378	518	289	787	471	1,037	633	1,742	551	673	249	2,893	67	1,422	405
MNDOT 80%	320	1,336	2,184	1,288	3,032	552	4,032	0	1,920	1,152	12,072	1,400	1,484	612	1,404	0	3,992	1,944	6,232	1,512	1,080	648	11,040	0	3,680	1,344
Federal 80%	1,068	210	137	164	1,251	1,256	288	700	528	644	424	112	587	546	1,744	1,886	157	587	736	692	1,611	348	531	267	2,010	276
Total Capital Revenue	**1,735**	**1,932**	**2,901**	**1,815**	**5,354**	**2,260**	**5,400**	**875**	**3,060**	**2,245**	**15,620**	**1,890**	**2,589**	**1,447**	**3,935**	**2,357**	**5,186**	**3,164**	**8,710**	**2,755**	**3,364**	**1,245**	**14,464**	**334**	**7,112**	**2,025**

- *Bus Shelter Program* – The bus shelter program will add and replace bus shelters at key bus stops throughout the Saint Cloud area. Bus shelters provide a weather-protected waiting area for passengers and in some instances are heated in the winter time, thereby improving the passenger experience using transit. Bus shelters qualify for transit system enhancement funding. This is an important element of the capital program.

- *Maintenance/Storage Base and Administrative Offices* – The maintenance and storage facility will have to be expanded to support the future fleet – specifically, this will include additional storage/parking space.

  Long term, a study should be conducted to determine where a second operations facility could be located in order to support the future growth of Metro Bus services. Ideally, this study will focus on the western metropolitan area, so as to minimize non-revenue mileage.

  Ongoing improvements to the maintenance/storage and administration facilities are programmed into the capital program.

- *Office Equipment* – Office equipment also will need to be replaced as a piece of equipment reaches the end of its useful life. Office equipment includes items such as computers and telephones that ensure proper communication as well as well as management of transit resources. Replacement of office equipment is programmed as part of the capital program.

- *Maintenance Tools* – Proper maintenance of transit vehicles requires having the proper tools and equipment. Replacement of maintenance tools will ensure that transit vehicles are properly maintained. Tools would be used for preventive maintenance as well as repair of vehicles. Routine replacement of maintenance tools are part of the capital program.

- *Maintenance Equipment* – Similar to maintenance tools, maintenance equipment allow for proper maintenance of transit vehicles. Maintenance equipment includes large items such as bus lifts that allow maintainers to access vital components of buses. This will assist in both preventive maintenance as well as regular repair of buses. Routine replacement of maintenance equipment is part of the capital program.

- *ITS Program* – The Intelligent Transportation Program (ITS) assists in managing transit services. As was stated in the last planning study, this program should be continued over the next few years and certain items such as access to real time bus information for passengers may be implemented. The capital program does have funds programmed for ITS.

- *Vehicle Preventive Maintenance Program* – A good preventive maintenance program is a necessity for any transit operation. Preventive maintenance ensures that transit vehicles and

facilities are in good operating condition and reduces the need for costly emergency repairs. The capital program supports a preventive maintenance program.

11.3 Incorporation of Proposals into the APO Long Range Plan

The proposals listed previously, both in earlier chapters, as well as in this chapter, reflect the operations recommendations for the future of transit services in the Saint Cloud metropolitan area, and the capital needs to support the plan through 2035. These elements will be included in the transit section of the APO Transportation Plan Update.

11.4 Future Planning Studies

Besides the operations and capital recommendations, there are a number of planning studies that should be undertaken to further support Metro Bus operations throughout the life of this plan, as well as beyond the planning horizon. These studies will further support the Long Range Transit Plan Update, as well as provide a framework for developing Saint Cloud in a more transit friendly manner. A number of studies have been identified below that will support the transit system.

- *Paratransit/Dial-A-Ride Study* – Metro Bus has been actively trying to train and encourage Dial-A-Ride users to use fixed route services in order to manage growth in the dial-a-ride service. A new Mobility Training Center has been opened in downtown Saint Cloud. Nonetheless, demand response costs in Saint Cloud continue to increase. A paratransit/Dial-A-Ride study should be conducted to determine future strategies that can be utilized to minimize paratransit expenditures.

- *Western Transit Center* – Although the needs at the Crossroads Center were described previously, an in-depth study of the most feasible location for a new "Western Transit Center" should be undertaken, so that Metro Bus need not continually rely on lease agreements with the Crossroads center and so that the system would have an effective "western area hub" from which new services could serve the expanding portions of the service area to the south and west.

- *Garage Feasibility Study* – As was previously mentioned, future service expansions may require a facility larger than what can be supported at the current site. A feasibility study for a new bus storage and maintenance facility that includes administrative offices should be conducted. Options should include a satellite facility that would be able to supplement the main facility. This facility should likely be located in the western portion of the service area (perhaps near Waite Park), so that non-revenue mileage is minimized.

- *5 Year Bus Study* – To ensure that bus service continues to meet the needs of the population, as well as ensure that this proposed plan remains current, updates to this plan should be made every 5 years. This will ensure that funding sources and capital needs are also kept current.

- *Park-and-Ride Study/Northstar Expansion Study* – Future park-and-ride facilities would complement any commuter bus services that may be implemented, either to Saint Cloud or to the Northstar Line's future Saint Cloud terminal, as well as become a transit focal point for areas that have lower density. Park-and-ride will also become more important as parking becomes constrained at major activity centers such as the colleges and universities, at the Northstar Line lot (should service be expanded into Saint Cloud), or in Downtown Saint Cloud. A comprehensive park-and-ride study will help identify appropriate locations for park-and-ride lots, and identify the appropriate size for a park-and-ride lot, including the possibility of leasing existing parking lots.