

2023 METROPOLITAN COUNCIL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION REPORT

REPORT TO THE MINNESOTA LEGISLATURE

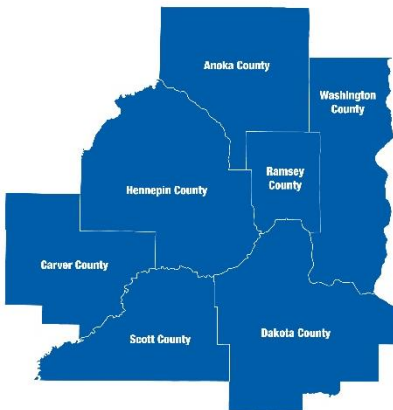


May 2025

The Metropolitan Council's mission is to foster efficient and economic growth for a prosperous metropolitan region.

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The Metropolitan Council is the regional planning organization for the seven-county Twin Cities area. The Met Council operates the regional bus and rail system, collects and treats wastewater, coordinates regional water resources, plans and helps fund regional parks, and administers federal funds that provide housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income individuals and families. The 17-member Council board is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the governor.

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About this report

The Performance Evaluation Report is submitted annually to the Minnesota Legislature to ensure Metropolitan Council functions meet key objectives in a timely and cost-effective manner. This report is required by Minnesota Statutes, Section 473.13, Subdivision 1a, which calls for the Council to submit annually to the Legislature a "...substantive assessment and evaluation of the effectiveness of each significant program of the Council, with, to the extent possible, quantitative information on the status, progress, costs, benefits and effects of each program."

The report includes performance measures for major Met Council operations and summarizes significant contributions and accomplishments by division in 2023.

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Introduction

For more than 50 years, the Metropolitan Council has helped coordinate regional growth and planning in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area. We provide essential services such as transit and wastewater treatment, and housing programs for households with low and moderate incomes. We collaborate with a wide range of partners to achieve ambitious goals that may be unrealistic for a single community but are possible together. These goals benefit residents and visitors throughout the region.

Our governing body includes a governor-appointed chair who serves at large and 16 Council members representing geographic districts throughout the region. The organization includes transportation, environment, and community development divisions and employs nearly 4,700 people. The Met Council's annual operating expenditure was approximately \$1.309 billion, used mostly for regional transit service and wastewater collection and treatment.

Services

- We operate Metro Transit, light rail, commuter rail, Metro Mobility, and contracted transit services, which provided nearly 45 million rides in 2023. Our transportation planners collaborate with local communities to ensure cost-efficient transportation investments and development that foster residential and business opportunities.
- We collect and treat wastewater for 90% of the region's population at rates 35% lower than peer regions and earn state and national awards for environmental achievements.
- We partner with 10 regional parks implementing agencies to plan, acquire land, and develop facilities for regional parks and trails that draw more than 69 million visitors annually, preserving natural resources, and providing recreational opportunities.
- We serve more than 7,200 low-and moderate-income households monthly through rental assistance and provide other housing services to additional clients.

Table 1. Percent of Employees and Expenditures in Met Council Divisions, 2023

Division	Employees	Expenditures
Transportation	76%	55%
Environmental Services	14%	25%
Community Development and Regional Administration	10%	21%
Total	100%	100%

Metropolitan Council division overview

The Met Council consists of three operating divisions, plus supporting central administrative units within Regional Administration. The operating divisions report to the Regional Administrator, who reports to the 17-member Met Council policy-making board.

Community Development provides coordinated planning, policy, and program development to support and encourage regional growth and reinvestment. We identify and analyze regional issues, facilitate community collaboration, and lead the regional planning process to develop the region's 30-year plan. In addition, we develop affordable housing programs to assist low- and moderate-income households; and partner with regional park agencies to manage regional parks.

Environmental Services provides around-the-clock wastewater collection and treatment services for municipal and industrial customers, with near-perfect compliance with federal and state water standards. We operate and maintain over 600 miles of regional sanitary sewers and treat an average of 233 million gallons of wastewater daily at nine regional treatment plants for 111 cities and townships. The division also conducts integrated planning to ensure sustainable water quality and water supply for the region.

The Transportation Division operates, administers, and coordinates public transit services for the Twin Cities metropolitan area. In addition, it manages the allocation of federal transportation funds and plans for regional aviation, highway, transit, and bike/pedestrian transportation systems. The Transportation Division consists of Metro Transit and Metropolitan Transportation Services.

Overview of the Metropolitan Council's performance

Engaging stakeholders to create the 2050 Regional Development Guide

In 2023, staff engaged Met Council committees, advisory committees, staff and hundreds of external stakeholders to discover the core values and generate the regional vision and goals for Imagine 2050. Imagine 2050 is the next regional development guide that builds on the principle that together we can tackle challenges that individual communities may not be able to take on alone. State law requires the Met Council to create a regional development guide every 10 years and policy plans for the seven-county metro area. These plans become the foundation for the next round of local comprehensive land use plans that counties, cities, and townships will create in the second half of the decade.

Implementation of our Climate Action Work Plan

In 2023 the Met Council set up the infrastructure for carrying out our new Climate Action Work Plan, which defines strategies and actions to reduce our climate impacts and prepare for a changing climate. In July 2023, the Environmental Protection Agency awarded the Met Council a \$1 million planning grant. The Met Council is partnering with local governments and the region's stakeholders across 11 of 15 counties in the greater Twin Cities metropolitan area. This grant is an opportunity to work together and identify strategies that we can collaborate on to make a significant impact sooner.

Supporting communities to create jobs and affordable housing

Helping cities and townships prosper to ensure a thriving, vibrant region is at the core of the Livable Communities grant program. The Met Council administers the program, created by the Minnesota Legislature in 1995. The Met Council has awarded more than \$450 million in funding to participating communities in the last 28 years. In the 2023 funding cycle, the Met Council awarded a total of \$27.3 million to 18 cities in grants for policy development, predevelopment, affordable rental and ownership housing, tax-base revitalization, transit-oriented development, and efficient land use.

Tribal Liaison and Native Relations

In ensuring clean water, the work of our Environmental Services division intersects frequently with the interests of Tribal nations. In late 2023, Met Council hired our first-ever full-time Tribal Liaison and Native Relations Coordinator. Staff intend to come to a shared understanding with Tribal nations about respectful ways to consult and collaborate on decisions impacting the regional wastewater system and water policy.

Sustainable, reliable funding for the region's transportation system

In the 2023 session, the Minnesota Legislature passed a new sustainable revenue source for the region's transportation system. The 3/4-cent, seven-county metro area transportation sales tax went into effect Oct. 1, 2023. The funds are split between the region's counties (17%) and the Met

Council (83%). The Met Council share will primarily support transit operations, maintenance, and capital projects, with 5% focused on active transportation like walking and biking.

Transit Ridership continues to grow

Ridership totals across all modes of Metro Transit service (an estimated 44.8 million rides) rose more than 15% from 2022. Thanks to tireless efforts to hire and retain operators, we increased bus service by nearly 10% by the end of the year, resulting in nearly 90% of 2019 service levels on bus rapid transit and local bus routes across the system. In October, Northstar Commuter rail service doubled, and we reinstituted service to Twins playoffs and Vikings games.

Safety and Security Action Plan to improve public safety

A safe and welcoming transit system is our top priority. Metro Transit recorded a decrease in crime in the second and third quarters of 2023 compared to the first quarter of the year. Our Safety and Security Action Plan, approved in 2022, includes 43 actions focused on improving public safety on transit by improving conditions on the system, training and supporting employees, and engaging customers and partners. Among the new approaches we implemented in 2023, with additional funding from the Minnesota Legislature, supplemental security, Transit Rider Investment Program, Transit Service Intervention Project, and updated rider code of conduct.

Community Development

The Met Council's Community Development division provides essential planning and technical assistance to local communities, parks, and open spaces. Core services include:

Regional parks. Community Development partners with the 10 regional park implementing agencies as they manage the many regional parks, trails, and open spaces that comprise the Twin Cities nationally renowned regional parks system. We provide grant programs, outreach assistance, master plan reviews, local comprehensive plan reviews, and environmental studies. We also develop the Regional Parks Policy Plan in collaboration with the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission.

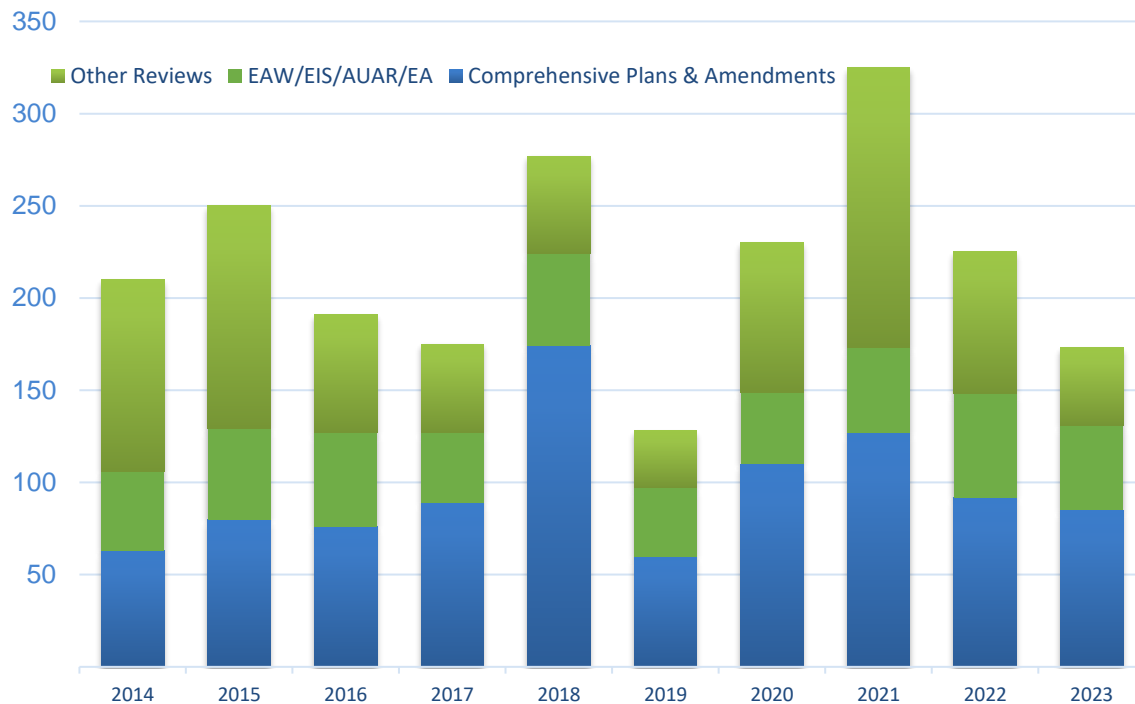
2023 developments:

- Reviewed and evaluated local comprehensive plans for conformance to the Regional Parks Policy Plan and worked with local communities to ensure that their local planning efforts protect the integrity of the existing and planned Regional Parks System.
- In the fall of 2023, the 2024 parks equity grant program rolled out. The Council is making \$2 million available to the 10 metro area park agencies for capital and noncapital projects that will strengthen equitable usage of regional parks and trails by all our region's residents across age, race, ethnicity, income, national origin, and ability. Awards will be announced after a competitive review process in the spring of 2024.
- The Met Council also assists the 10 regional parks implementing agencies with funding for capital investment, operations and maintenance, land acquisition and programming, including the newest Equity Grant Program, throughout the metropolitan Regional Parks System.

Local planning assistance. We help communities plan for growth by supplying information, best practices, and analysis of regional issues. This unit coordinates the review of local comprehensive plans prepared by local governments, which deal with transportation needs, land use, housing, parks, and more.

2023 developments:

- As shown in the chart below, 173 reviews conducted to determine conformance to the regional systems, consistency with Metropolitan Council policy, and compatibility with the plans of adjacent communities, including:
 - 85 reviews of 2040 comprehensive plans and amendments and 46 environmental reviews, such as environmental assessment worksheets (EAWs), environmental impact statements (EIS), environmental assessments (EAs), and alternative urban area-wide reviews (AUARs).
 - 42 reviews of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers #404 permits, wastewater and surface water discharge permits, and other types of reviews.

Chart 1. Type and Number of Reviews, 2014-2023

- The Metropolitan Council authorized 164 of 168 expected comprehensive plans through December 2023. Staff are actively working with local governments to assist in completing their plans.
- Facilitated and supported ongoing implementation of the Climate Action Work Plan, which provides direction for Met Council operations to be more resilient and responsive to climate impacts.
- Provided analysis on fiscal disparities, including tax-base values and impacts of the tax-base sharing program, for the public and policymakers.
- Initiated and implemented community engagement projects for the development of the next Regional Development Guide (Imagine 2050) including a collaboration with youth-led community organizations alongside ongoing engagement with traditional stakeholders like local governments on land use objectives.
- Met Council endorsed work on the regional vision, values, and goals, community designations, equity framework, environmental justice framework, and definitions for equity and environmental justice.
- Initiated planning and outreach to create a land acknowledgement with the region's American Indian communities.
- Planned and coordinated bi-monthly meetings of the Regional Planning Advisory Group, in partnership with Metro Cities. This group provided opportunities for engagement and feedback from local government staff (Community Development directors, city planners, city administrators) on the 2050 regional planning and policy development process including topics on lands use objectives and forecasts.
- Planned and coordinated bimonthly meetings of the Land Use Advisory Committee, which provided recommendations to the Community Development Committee on land

use scenarios, planning analysis, and findings; development of land use objectives; and density analysis and approaches for the Regional Development Guide. The Committee also reviewed topics on regional forecasts, land use engagement findings, scenarios for water, transportation, parks, and housing policy planning.

- Prepared an annual report on comprehensive plan amendments to 2040 local comprehensive plans.
- Prepared an annual Plat Monitoring Report for 45 developing communities.
- Prepared a report on the Metropolitan Agricultural Preserves program monitoring enrollments in the region.

Livable Communities. In 2023, 77 metropolitan area communities voluntarily participated in the Livable Communities program to help expand and preserve affordable housing opportunities, recycle polluted sites, revitalize cities, and create new neighborhoods in growing communities. We offer seven different Livable Communities Act (LCA) grant programs to eligible communities throughout the seven-county metropolitan area. LCA grants help communities clean up polluted sites and achieve development goals that create more housing choices, support living wage job creation, and connect jobs, housing, regional amenities, and more for a more equitable region. In addition, Community Development implements the Housing Policy Plan.

2023 developments:

- Awarded 24 tax-base revitalization grants totaling over \$5 million to help clean up polluted land in 11 communities: Bloomington, Excelsior, Maplewood, Minneapolis, Newport, North St. Paul, Shoreview, South St. Paul, St. Louis Park, Saint Paul, and Fridley.
- Awarded 19 demonstration account grants totaling over \$12 million to projects in 10 communities: Chaska, Fridley, New Brighton, Brooklyn Center, Maplewood, Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, Saint Paul, Bloomington, and Edina. The funded projects will help acquire and prepare sites for redevelopment that include a mix of housing, commercial, and other uses that support daily needs and community activities.
- Awarded 11 housing incentive grants totaling \$5.4 million to help preserve or build affordable housing in 8 cities: Brooklyn Center, Maplewood, Minneapolis, Edina, Golden Valley, Minnetonka, Saint Paul, and Carver County.
- Awarded four transit-oriented development grants totaling nearly \$5 million in three communities: Minneapolis, Richfield, and Saint Paul. The funded projects will help promote higher-density development within easy walking distance of a major transit stop that will typically include a mix of uses oriented to the transit stop.

Collectively, the 2023 Livable Communities grants will create or retain more than 1,500 jobs; add or preserve over 3,300 housing units, including nearly 2,100 at or below 60% of area median income for rental units and 80% of area median income for owned units; and clean up more than 72 acres of polluted property to prepare it for redevelopment.

Research. Data is essential for understanding and supporting the Twin Cities region. Community Development collects, analyzes, and provides demographic data about the region, forecasts growth trends and development patterns, and analyzes other regional trends. We also release data related to the U.S. Census and American Community Survey; conduct annual surveys on building permits, affordable housing production, group quarters and manufactured home parks; maintain data on the Met Council's website; and provide technical assistance to local governments as they update their comprehensive plans.

2023 developments:

- Led the youth collaborative qualitative research support to bring youth voices into planning.
- Released the greenhouse gas strategy planning tool, which provides communities with tools to quantify greenhouse gas reduction measures.
- Annual population estimates were conducted and released on time.
- Parks use estimates were conducted and released on time.
- Updated the rent trends application and presented an overview of the rental housing market in the region.
- Completed all annual surveys such as building permits, affordable housing, etc.
- Made significant progress on developing the local forecast model of population and employment.
- Initiated the residential preferences of Metro HRA voucher holders project to understand resident perspectives on their preferences in housing and neighborhood attributes.
- Completed the joint Streetlight project to use location-based services data to understand visitation to regional parks.

Metropolitan Housing and Redevelopment Authority (Metro HRA). Metro HRA is the largest administrator of the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program in Minnesota – providing housing for more than 7,200 households in nearly 100 communities throughout the metro area. The program partners with private landlords to provide affordable housing opportunities for qualifying households. Participants pay a minimum of 30% of their income toward rent and Metro HRA pays the rest to the property owner. We also work with other states and local agencies to deliver other housing options to help people with special needs live as independently as possible.

2023 developments:

- Provided Housing Choice Vouchers to 7,200 very low-income seniors, families with children, individuals, households with disabilities and veterans, enabling families to afford the rent in private rental units.
- Issued more than \$80 million in direct rent payments to approximately 1,400 private landlords.
- Maximized use of Housing Choice Voucher funds by ensuring nearly 100% of the available funding was utilized.
- Maintained the HUD ranking of High Performer in the Section Eight Management Assessment Program.
- Owned and managed 154 scattered-site Project-Based Voucher units (Family

Affordable Housing Program), comprising single-family houses, duplexes, and town homes located in 11 suburban communities.

- Partnered with the City of Edina for \$2 million and acquired four housing units in the city as part of the Family Affordable Housing Program.
- Selected as one of nine national sites to be awarded the HUD-funded Community Choice Demonstration in partnership with the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority through a competitive application process. The program will assist voucher holders in moving to low-poverty neighborhoods.
- Executed a memorandum of understanding with Hennepin County, Anoka County, and Carver County to partner in a Foster Youth to Independence Initiative, a HUD-funded program which provides housing assistance on behalf of youth no more than 24 years old who have left or will leave foster care.
- Increased rental assistance opportunities available to homeless veterans through the Veteran's Affairs Supportive Housing program with an award of 30 additional vouchers.
- Updated small-area fair-market rents, zip code-based rent limits to ensure voucher holders have access to high-rent areas of the region.

Environmental Services

Metropolitan Council Environmental Services provides around-the-clock wastewater collection and treatment services for municipal and industrial customers, with near-perfect compliance with federal and state water standards. We operate and maintain over 600 miles of regional sanitary sewers and treat an average of 233 million gallons of wastewater daily at nine regional treatment plants for 111 cities and townships with 2.9 million people. The division also conducts integrated planning to ensure sustainable water quality and water supply for the region. Its 654 employees protect public health and the environment and support economic growth for the metropolitan area.

Environmental Services aligns its business plans with the strategies of the 2040 Water Resources Policy Plan and the Met Council's long-range regional plan, Thrive MSP 2040, to support economic growth and development in ways that protect our valued water and land resources.

Our 2023 accomplishments include:

- **National award for water conservation collaborations:** In 2023, the Met Council was recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's WaterSense program with an Excellence in Promoting WaterSense Labeled Products Award. The Met Council awarded water efficiency grants to cities, who in turn offered rebates to residents for replacing older water-using devices with high-efficiency WaterSense-labeled or Energy Star-certified alternatives. In total, 1,056 toilets, 822 irrigation controllers, 131 spray sprinkler bodies, 760 clothes washers, and 571 dishwashers were replaced in homes around the region in 2023. Additionally, 64 irrigation system audits were conducted by WaterSense-approved professionals.
- **High honors:** The Metropolitan Council's nine wastewater treatment plants earned high honors for outstanding compliance with federal clean water discharge permits. All nine plants were recognized for their performance with Peak Performance Awards by the National Association of Clean Water Agencies in 2023. The compliance records at the Hastings and St. Croix Valley plants place them among the top five plants in the nation.
- **Keeping our sanitary sewer system safe:** The Met Council convened a regional task force to address the increasing problem of fats, oils, grease (FOG), and rags in the sewer system. The task force explored industry, community, and residential needs for FOG-related guidance, and delivered a website with educational and outreach materials that provides guidance for keeping FOG and rags out of our sanitary sewers.
- **Planning for climate resiliency, responding to extreme drought conditions:** Our staff spent extra time in the field monitoring the health of our region's rivers, lakes, and streams. When oxygen levels in the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers dropped to dangerous levels due to drought, some of our wastewater treatment plants added oxygen to our treated effluent water to help preserve aquatic life. Through our turfgrass irrigation efficiency project, we provided community-based education about proper lawn irrigation and how to reduce water use.
- **Shaping the new Water Policy Plan:** Starting in 2022 and running through 2023 we engaged stakeholders and partners to help define the new issues we needed to address in the Water Policy Plan update which is part of the regional development

guide, Imagine 2050. We also drafted research papers on:

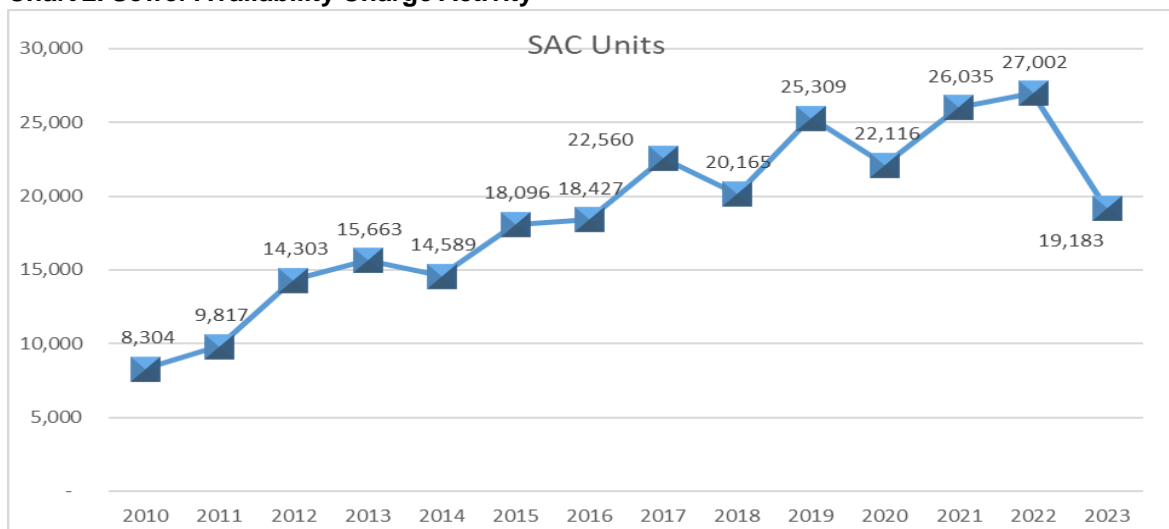
- Protecting our region's water quality
- Exploring water reuse
- Protecting source water areas
- Wastewater planning and service
- Water and climate change
- Protecting rural areas

These research papers will be used to guide the update of the Water Policy Plan and the Metro Area Water Supply Plan which will be part of the Water Policy Plan Update.

- **Building a more diverse workforce:** Our skilled, dedicated workforce is the foundation of our success. We sharpened our focus on workforce development activities in 2022 to invest in our people and our future. We are committed to creating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace. To do that, we are prioritizing initiatives like our Construction Inspection Training Program, focused on recruiting diverse candidates, to develop a workplace that better reflects the communities we serve.
- **Improving water quality:** As part of its mission to improve water quality and ensure a sustainable water supply for the region, the Met Council is working to plant landscapes that need less water, reduce runoff, and provide habitat for birds, bees, and butterflies. Sustainable landscapes include drought-tolerant turf, bee lawn, and grasses, flowers, trees, and shrubs native to Minnesota.
- **Prioritizing public health:** The Met Council continued to play a key role in monitoring and analyzing wastewater for the SARS-CoV-2 virus in the metro area. We have been working as partners with the University of Minnesota Genomics Center, we have reported weekly, since January 2022, on the prevalence of viral RNA in wastewater flowing to the Metro Plant, an important indicator of the spread of the virus.

The sewer availability charge for single family households remained steady and has not increased since 2014.

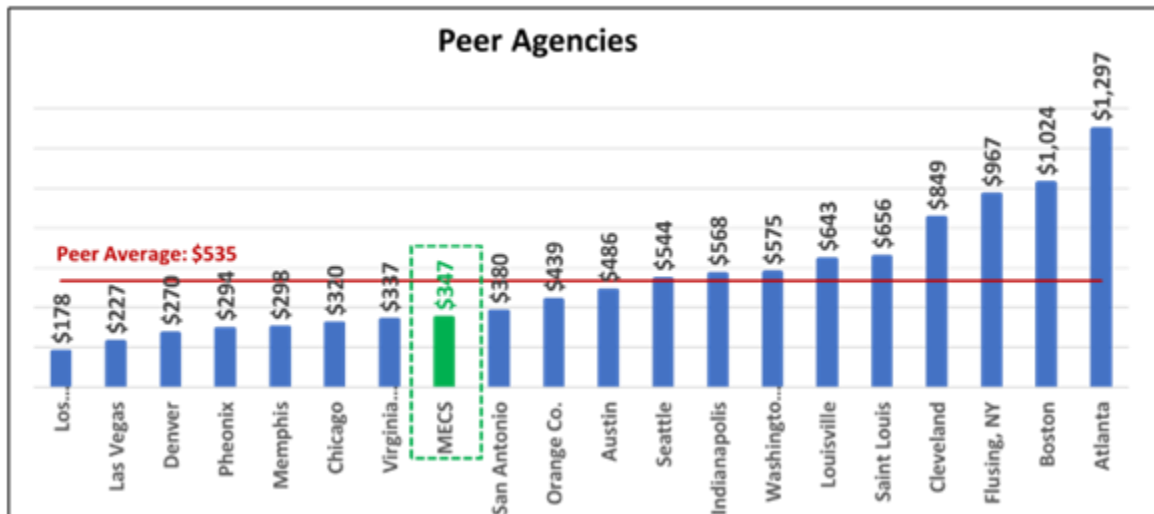
Chart 2. Sewer Availability Charge Activity



SAC is a one-time fee for new connections or increased capacity demanded of the wastewater system.

Households in the region pay an average of \$377 per year to their municipalities for wastewater collection and treatment, 35% less than households in comparable regions throughout the country.

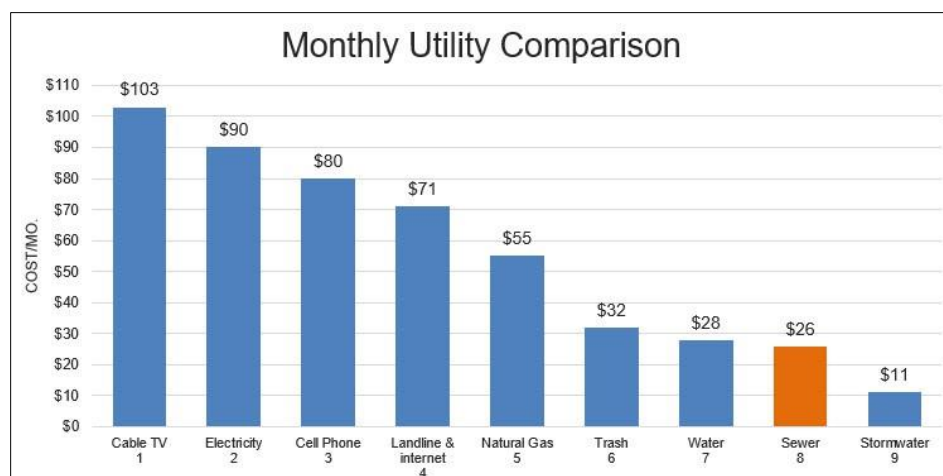
Chart 3. Retail Sewer Charges per Household Compared to Peer Agencies (2020 national data)



2020 National Association of Clean Water Agencies survey. Our portion is typically less than 65% of communities' retail rates. 2023 National Association of Clean Water Agencies survey will be released in fall of 2024.

Wastewater service charges in the Twin Cities metro area are lower than most household utility charges, such as gas, electricity and wi-fi.

Chart 4. Monthly Household Utility Comparison (2020 national data)



*2023 data will be released in the fall of 2024

Wastewater Services

Our Wastewater Services group provides high-quality, efficient, and cost-effective regional wastewater service for the metro region. Water cleaned at the wastewater treatment plants is

discharged to the Crow, Mississippi, Minnesota and St. Croix rivers. The water we return to the environment is cleaner than the rivers flowing past our treatment plants.

Wastewater collection and treatment highlights from 2023 include:

- Operated and maintained nine regional wastewater treatment plants: Blue Lake in Shakopee, Eagles Point in Cottage Grove, East Bethel Water Reclamation Facility in East Bethel, Empire in Empire Township, Hastings in Hastings, Metropolitan in Saint Paul, Rogers in Rogers, Seneca in Eagan and St. Croix Valley in Oak Park Heights.
- Tracked 24,638 effluent water quality data points proving our environmental compliance throughout the year.
- Achieved full compliance with federal and state clean water discharge standards at all of our nine wastewater treatment plants. Seven wastewater treatment plants earned Platinum Awards for the National Association of Clean Water Agencies for five consecutive years or more of perfect discharge permit compliance through 2022. The awards were given in 2023 and include: Hastings (32 years), St. Croix Valley (31 years), Blue Lake (17 years), Eagles Point (17 years), Empire (15 years), Metro (11 years) and Seneca (6 years). These compliance records are among the highest in the nation.
- Set user fees that pay 100% of wastewater operations and debt service costs. When combined with local collection fees, users in the Twin Cities pay rates that are 35% lower than the national average of other large metropolitan areas.
- Partnered with approximately 900 industrial permittees to monitor their wastewater discharges, preventing pollutants such as mercury from entering the wastewater collection system.

Chart 5. Total Expenditure per Million Gallons (adjusted to 2023 dollars)

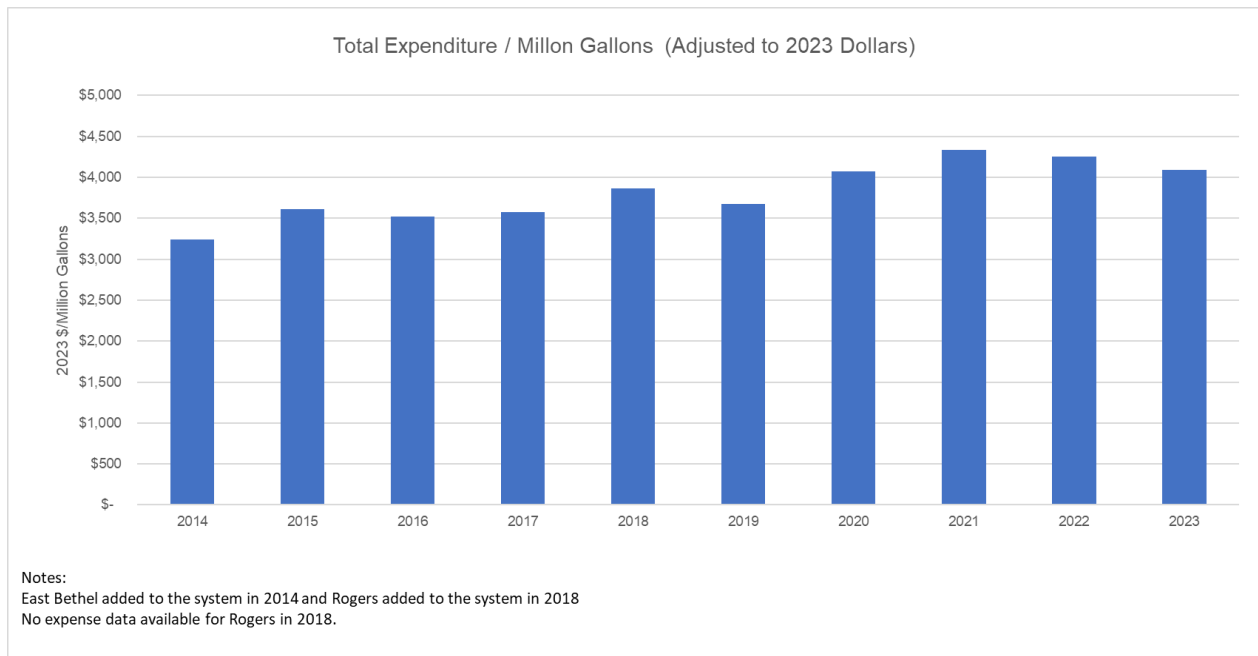


Chart 6. Total Expenditure Per Capita (adjusted to 2023 dollars)

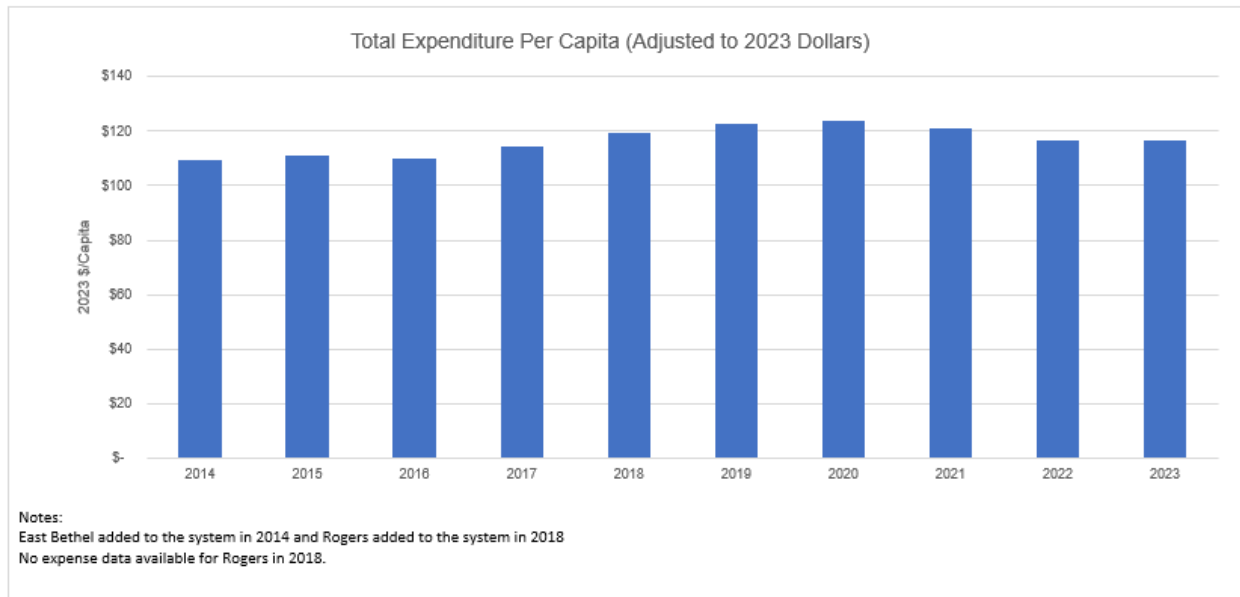
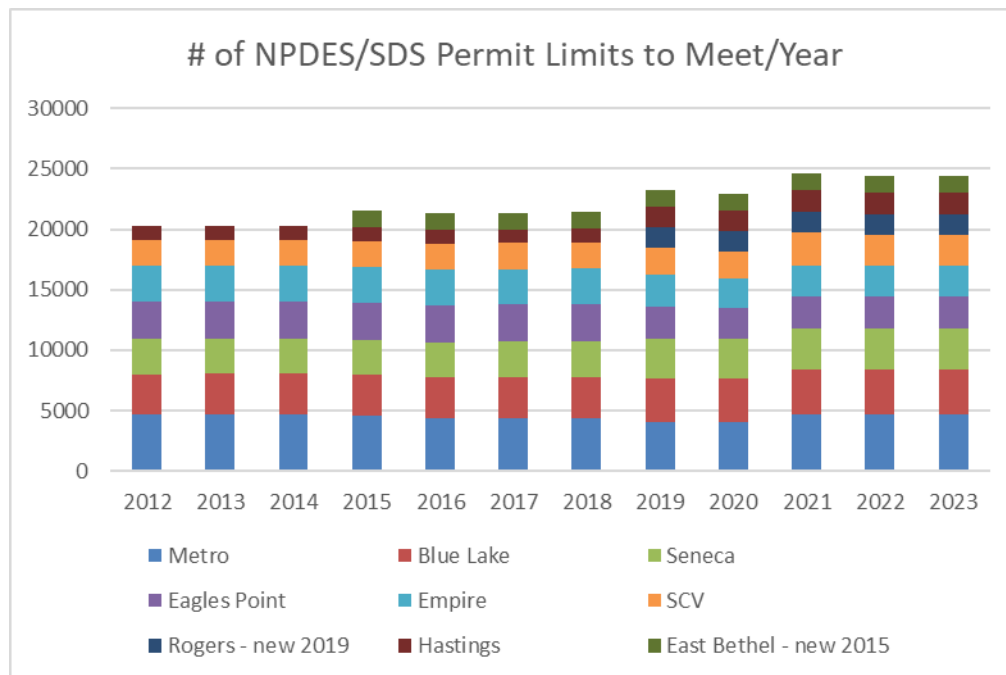


Chart 7. National and State Pollutant Discharge Limits to Meet Annually



Wastewater infrastructure

The Met Council Environmental Services capital program ensures reliable, affordable wastewater infrastructure that provides long-term value to the region. The capital improvement program is prepared, reviewed, and approved annually, and adjusted as needed.

Capital expenditure totaled about \$104 million in 2023. Capital project details:

- 60% for renewal of aging infrastructure
- 21% for upgrades needed to meet increasing permit regulations
- 19% for expanding system capacity through plant expansions and interceptor extensions

Eight of the regional treatment plants were part of our capital improvement program: Blue Lake, Eagles Point, East Bethel, Empire, Metro, Rogers, Seneca, and St. Croix Valley. In addition, construction projects made sewer improvements in 24 regional cities: Apple Valley, Bayport, Bloomington, Brooklyn Park, Chanhassen, Coon Rapids, Eagan, Eden Prairie, Independence, Loretto, Maple Plain, Medina, Minneapolis, Minnetrista, Mound, Oak Park Heights, Orono, Plymouth, Rosemount, Saint Paul, Savage, South St. Paul, Waconia, and Woodbury.

The Met Council worked with a task force of staff from cities and townships in the metro area to develop a grant program that will provide funds to repair private sewer pipes that are a source of groundwater and surface water intrusion. The task force included representatives from Apple Valley, Bloomington, Chanhassen, Columbia Heights, Cottage Grove, Eagan, Edina, Golden Valley, Lauderdale, Minneapolis, Mound, Newport, Saint Paul, St. Anthony, West St. Paul, White Bear Township, and MetroCities. The 2024 Private Property Inflow and Infiltration Grant Program provides \$1.5 million in wastewater revenue to provide grants to private property owners to help with repairs that will remove and prevent clear water from entering the wastewater treatment system.

Water resources planning and management

Our water resources team ensures quality, reliable sources of clean water for the future. They work with surface water planning and management to help improve and maintain the quality of our lakes, rivers, streams, and wetlands, and coordinate water supply planning to ensure reliable sources of clean water for the future. This team manages data collection and partners with other state and local agencies to identify pollution problems, support regional planning efforts, and meet federal and state regulations.

Water resources 2023 highlights include:

- Monitored the water quality at 22 metro-area tributary rivers and streams sites.
- Monitored 14 sites on the 3 large rivers flowing through the region: Minnesota, Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers.
- Monitored the water quality of 159 lakes in the metro area. In 2023, 57% of the lake sites received a grade of A or B, meaning that they had relatively good water quality. Another 29% of lake sites received a water quality grade of C. The remaining 14% of lake sites received a water quality grade of D or F, meaning that they had relatively poor water quality. Similar to that of past years, there was no distinct pattern within the Twin Cities metropolitan area as to where lakes with specific water quality are located.
- Updated pollutant trends on 17 area streams that flow into one of three major rivers – the Mississippi, the Minnesota and the St. Croix that was originally published in 2014. The trends show whether or not water quality is improving, remaining the

- same or declining for select water quality parameters. Water quality trends were calculated for total suspended solids (TSS), total phosphorus (TP), nitrate (NO₃), and chloride (CL). The 17 streams that were used in the study were Bassett Creek, Battle Creek, Bevens Creek, Bluff Creek, Browns Creek, Cannon River, Carver Creek, Credit River, Crow River, Eagle Creek, Fish Creek, Nine Mile Creek, Riley Creek, Rum River, Sand Creek, Silver Creek and Valley Creek.
- Administered a water efficiency grant program funded through the Minnesota Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment funding for municipalities to reduce water demand. There are 37 communities participating in the 2022-2024 program. The Water Efficiency Grant Program provides grants to cities, who in turn offer rebates to residents for replacing older water-using devices with high-efficiency alternatives. The rebates are an incentive to replace older, less-efficient clothes washing machines, toilets, dishwashers, irrigation controllers, and spray sprinkler bodies with Energy Star and U.S. EPA Water Sense-labeled devices. The program also funds irrigation system audits, of which 134 were performed between 2022 and 2023. The grants funded replacement of more than 5,049 devices that will save an estimated 59 million gallons of water per year. The four-year program will provide \$1.25 million in total (\$250,000 for equity pilot project with Saint Paul Regional Water Services). More than \$652,890 in rebates were awarded as of 2023.

Transportation divisions

The Transportation divisions operate, administer, and coordinate public transit services for the Twin Cities metropolitan area. In addition, they manage the allocation of federal transportation funds and plan for regional aviation, highway, transit, and bike/pedestrian transportation systems.

The Transportation divisions consist of Metropolitan Transportation Services and Metro Transit.

Metropolitan Transportation Services

Responsible for regional transportation planning, Metropolitan Transportation Services also provides regional transit services and coordinates contracted transit services with suburban transit providers within the region through contracts with public and private providers.

Transportation Planning: As the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the seven-county metro area, the Met Council is required to provide a continuing, coordinated, and comprehensive transportation planning process. In return, the region qualifies to receive federal transportation funding. Metropolitan Transportation Services planning initiatives include:

- **Transportation Policy Plan:** Every five years, the Met Council is required to update its long-range transportation plan for the region. The next major update is scheduled for 2024.
- **Transportation Improvement Program:** Through its Transportation Advisory Board and Technical Advisory Committee, the Met Council prepares a short-range Transportation Improvement Program and approves projects for federal funding. All efforts include broad public outreach.
- **Transit, highway, and air quality planning:** The Met Council collaborates with MnDOT, cities, and counties to follow the policies established in Thrive MSP 2040 and the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan.
- **Travel forecasting:** Federal regulations require the Met Council to provide projections of traffic demand and related air quality emissions. We maintain socioeconomic data and obtain traffic data from MnDOT to monitor, revise, and update travel forecasts. Our projections are used to evaluate regional transportation investments proposed in the short-range Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the long-range Transportation Policy Plan.
- **Aviation planning:** The Met Council coordinates aviation planning and community development with local, state, and federal governmental units, airport users, and community members to provide state-of-the-art, secure, and affordable services for business and leisure travelers, freight transport, and general aviation activities.

Transportation Services:

- **Metro Mobility:** the region's ADA transit service. This program provides group transit services (demand-response and arranged) as a legally mandated complement to the regular-route system for people with disabilities who are unable to use regular-route transit service.
- **Transit Link:** A dial-a-ride, shared-ride, curb-to-curb public transit service provided for

customers in areas not served by regular transit route service.

- Contracted regular-route service: A network of routes operated by private contractors. These routes comprise approximately 10% of regular-route transit in the Twin Cities.
- Metro Vanpool: Started in 2001, Metro Vanpool subsidizes commuter vanpools that serve work locations and times not effectively served by the regular-route bus and rail network.
- Suburban transit providers: 12 communities, also known as “opt-out” transit communities, have chosen to provide their own transit service. They provide service through contracts primarily with private companies, although they also contract with nonprofit and other governmental entities. Operating funds flow from the state to the suburban transit providers through the Metropolitan Council. The Met Council coordinates regional support for fares, capital programs, and other activities with opt-out communities.
- The region also has transit programs not affiliated with the Metropolitan Council. The University of Minnesota operates all-day intercampus transit service for students, faculty, employees, and the public. The system is integrated with the regional regular-route network and interchanges passengers with other transit programs.

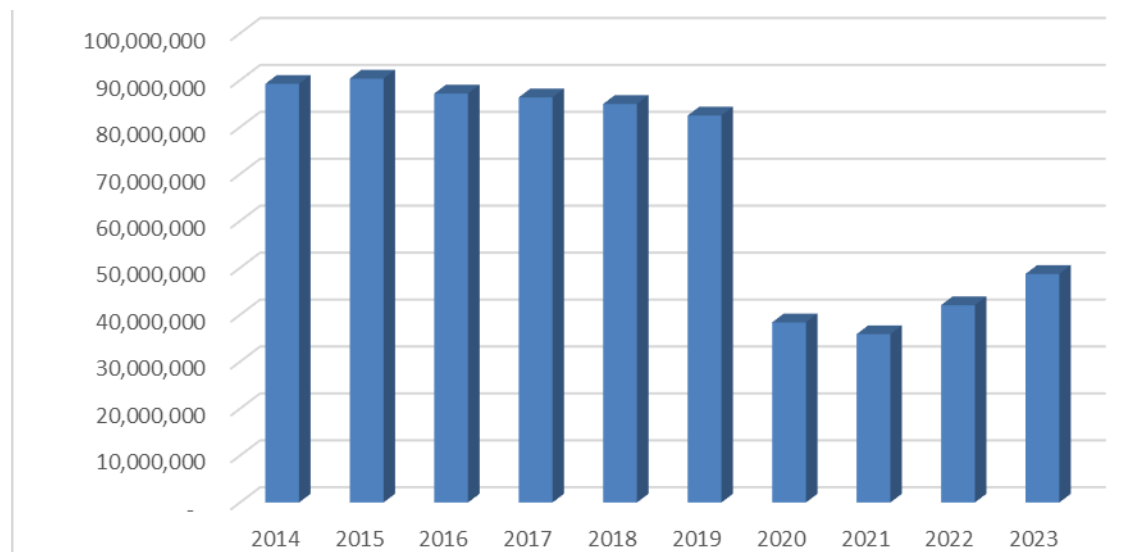
Overview of regional transit ridership

Total 2023 transit ridership in the region was 53.3 million rides, up about 16% from 2022.

Ridership numbers continued to be lower due to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 pandemic, with express services continuing to feel the greatest impact. Overall regional services experienced increases from 2022 – Bus Service improved 15%, Metro Mobility improved 6% METRO light rail ridership increased 19%, Northstar increased 26%, Transit Link dial-a-ride service increased by 47% and Vanpool increased 1%.

A variety of factors will affect future ridership growth, including funding levels, fuel prices, the economy, employment levels, workplace trends, development patterns, income levels, service improvements, highway congestion levels, and growth of ride-hailing companies.

Chart 8. Regional Transit Ridership, 2014-2023



Metro Mobility program evaluation

This section responds to Minn. Stat. 473.13, which requires the Met Council's program evaluation report to include "an assessment of progress towards meeting transit goals for people with disabilities... with required elements including, but not limited to: (1) a description of proposed program enhancements; (2) an assessment of progress; (3) identification of the estimated total number of potential and actual riders who are disabled; (4) an assessment of the level and type of service required to meet unmet ridership needs; and (5) an analysis of costs and revenue options, including a calculation of the amounts of surplus or insufficient funds available for achieving paratransit needs."

Metro Mobility service

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), every public entity operating a regular-route system that includes local service must provide complementary paratransit service to individuals with disabilities who are unable to use the regular-route system. Federal law requires this paratransit service be delivered at levels comparable to the regular-route system.

This service must be provided within 3/4 of a mile of any all-day, local regular route in the Twin Cities. In addition, Minnesota Statutes 473.386 requires the Metropolitan Council to provide "greater access" and "door-through-door transportation" for the elderly, people with disabilities, and others with special transportation needs within the Transit Taxing District as it existed on March 1, 2006. Legislation was signed in 2019 expanding the Metro Mobility service area to include the City of Lakeville.

Under the ADA there are several key provisions governing service delivery in the federally mandated service area. Some of these provisions include:

- There can be no trip limits, restrictions, or capacity constraints.
- There can be no denials of service.
- Service must be guaranteed at the time of the call.
- Service must be provided during all hours when regular-route service is available.
- Trips must be scheduled within one hour of the requested time.
- There may not be a pattern or practice of limiting availability. This includes long telephone hold times, a substantial number of late pickups, missed trips, or excessively long trips.
- The fare cannot exceed twice the non-discounted fare for a trip of similar length, at a similar time on the regular-route system.
- Eligibility determinations must be made within 21 days of receiving a complete application for service.

The Metro Mobility Service Center certifies riders, establishes policy in conformance with state and federal regulations, investigates customer concerns and manages the service contracts with private providers.

Program enhancements

Driver hiring and retention

Staff continued to assess the influence of the driver labor market relative to an increasing demand for Metro Mobility service to maintain improvements into 2023. In 2023, the Met Council increased wages an additional \$3.00 per hour for Metro Mobility drivers to include a minimum starting wage requirement of \$23 per hour.

Assessment of progress

Metro Mobility ridership

Regular Metro Mobility weekly ridership continued to rebound in its post-pandemic trajectory, increasing more than 4% over 2022. Total system ridership in 2023 was 2.01 million rides.

Chart 9. Change in Metro Mobility Ridership



2023 saw an increase in new applicants of 20.53% over 2022. Metro Mobility received 5,453 new certification applications in 2023.

Table 2. Active Metro Mobility Riders by Year

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Active Riders	18,973	19,983	20,794	20,626	21,475	21,982	19,009	17,550	18,636	20,566

Options for managing costs and increasing revenue

As ridership and service demand increases so do operational and capital costs. Over the past several years the Metropolitan Council has improved operating cost-effectiveness by increasing investments in workforce and technology to improve service delivery and service quality,

restructuring to achieve economies of scale, purchasing fuel in bulk below pump rates, and identifying innovative ways to reduce the cost of the service being provided without changing the operating parameters of the service.

Metro Mobility has a known long-standing structural deficit due to increasing costs and a base general fund appropriation that does not fully fund federal and state mandated levels of service.

Table 3. Metro Mobility Operations (in millions)

	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
Fare revenues	6.65	6.79	87.02	7.55
Expenses	87.92	102.79	121.16	132.57
Operations reserves	30.46	29.15	10.34	6.86
Federal revenue	31.00	37.11	34.84	28.84
Base appropriations	56.22	55.98	55.98	86.26
Shortfall	-	(2.99)	(20.48)	(4.58)
Funding requested	-	-	-	-

Key Assumptions: FY23 reflects actuals. FY24, FY25 and FY26 reflected budgeted amounts. Metro Mobility becomes a state forecasted program in State Fiscal Year 2026 (July 1, 2025). Revenue provided by Minnesota Department of Human Services for Metro Move.

Transportation planning activities

As the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Twin Cities metropolitan area, the Met Council is federally required to provide a continuing, coordinated, comprehensive transportation planning process that includes state agencies and local units of government. In return, the metropolitan region is eligible for federal transportation funds.

Transportation Policy Plan

In 2023, the Met Council had a number of initiatives related to the Transportation Policy Plan.

- An administrative modification was developed and adopted on transitway advancement policy. This clarifies roles, requirements, and processes required for amending a transitway project into the Transportation Policy Plan.
- An amendment was developed and adopted to add five regionally significant highway projects into the Transportation Policy Plan. These projects were advanced by local and state governments with a collective combination of federal, state, and local transportation funding.
- The project to develop the 2050 Transportation Policy Plan kicked off with listening sessions with regional stakeholders and work on regional frameworks that include developing the goals, objectives, policies, and actions for the plan. The Council formed policy and technical advisory groups for the effort, and they met frequently throughout the year to advise on the project. This project will continue into 2024 and 2025 for final adoption of the plan.

Transportation Improvement Program

The Met Council is responsible for preparing a short-range Transportation Improvement

Program (TIP) and approving projects for federal funding. This work is conducted through the Transportation Advisory Board and its Technical Advisory Committee and includes broad public outreach.

In 2023, the 2024-2027 Transportation Improvement Program was prepared and adopted by the Transportation Advisory Board and the Met Council. As required by federal law, the TIP includes all federally funded surface transportation projects.

Highway planning

The Met Council participates with MnDOT, cities, and counties in highway planning activities to ensure implementation of the policy direction established by the Met Council in Thrive MSP 2040 and the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan.

During 2021, the Met Council coordinated with MnDOT's Metro District on several highway planning studies, including several ongoing interagency corridor studies, the Rethinking I-94 Environmental Impact Statement, Highway 252 and I-94 Environmental Impact Statement, I-494 – Minneapolis Airport to Highway 169 Project, and I-35W North Gateway Study. In coordination with MnDOT, the Met Council also began a Principal Arterial Intersection Mobility Study and the development of a Regional Safety Action Plan.

The Met Council administers the Right-of-Way Acquisition Loan Fund, which gives communities no-interest loans to purchase right-of-way for principal arterials and other trunk highways in advance of the time that MnDOT would be in a position to make the purchase.

Transit planning

The Met Council performs long-range transit planning activities to implement the policy direction established in Thrive MSP 2040 and the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan.

The Met Council continued to participate in regional studies and policy developments started in previous years to guide the implementation of the regional transit system including:

- Metro Transit's multipurpose Network Next initiative and any outcomes of the initiative that affect regional policies or plans.
- Updating Transportation Policy Plan Appendix G to address outcomes of ongoing transit planning studies, analysis, and policy coordination with regional transit providers
- Updating the Transit Market Areas to reflect 2020 U.S. Census data or more recent data, as available

The Met Council also continued holding meetings of the Transit Technical Working Group to discuss transit elements of the transportation planning process with regional technical experts.

The Met Council continued to participate with MnDOT, transit providers, cities, counties, and county regional railroad authorities to conduct feasibility, alternatives analysis, environmental, and engineering studies and implementation plans for several transitway corridors.

- Participate in transitway studies or transit area studies that evaluate and/or prioritize transit improvements for recommended implementation, typical on a corridor or sub-regional level for the following:
 - Highway 55 Transit Study
 - Rethinking I-94 Transit Study
- Participate in ongoing work for transitway corridor development including environmental review, station-area planning, and other implementation-related planning work for the following corridors:
 - Blue Line Extension
 - Gold Line
 - Purple Line (formerly Rush Line corridor)
 - Riverview Modern Streetcar
 - Arterial BRT corridors
- Participate in corridor studies for intercity passenger rail as needed including environmental review, engineering, and other implementation-related planning work for the following corridors:
 - Twin Cities to Milwaukee-Chicago Passenger Rail Service Improvements
 - Northern Lights Express Passenger Rail

Air quality planning

The Met Council conducts long-term planning required by federal law to ensure that planning for congestion management, transportation, land use and air quality conforms to the requirements of the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendment. The Met Council also works to mitigate the climate impact of the transportation system in the metropolitan area.

The Met Council began a project that reviews and improves how greenhouse gases are estimated on proposed projects in the regional solicitation and the Transportation Policy Plan so that climate mitigation can be better considered along with other competing needs.

Travel forecasting

As the regional planning agency, the Met Council maintains and applies travel forecast models to support planning for the orderly development and operation of transportation facilities. We maintain socioeconomic data and obtain traffic data from MnDOT to monitor, revise, and update travel forecasts. Federal regulations require the Met Council to provide projections of traffic demand and related air quality emissions. We use these projections to evaluate regional transportation investments proposed in the short-range Transportation Improvement Program and the long-range Transportation Policy Plan.

2023 highlights include the following activities:

- Work continued responding to requests for forecast travel-demand data and providing assistance and model review to consultants, agencies, and local governments. Council staff also worked with consultants on several regional-scale highway and transit projects that required forecasts.
- We continued refining a next-generation activity-based travel demand model, released in late 2015, and provided technical assistance in its application. Planning

began for the next generation of travel forecasting models, by joining the national ActivitySim consortium Phase I of work on a local implementation of the region's next forecast model was completed in 2022 and Phase II will continue through 2024.

- Work continued on the Travel Behavior Inventory. A 10-year 2019-2027 program has been developed that will involve more frequent and regular data collection and model improvements. Data collection for the 2023 Household Travel Survey began in mid-2022 and continued through December 2023. Data release will occur in mid-2024.

Aviation planning activities

The Metropolitan Council prepares and maintains a plan for the regional aviation system. We work closely with MnDOT Aeronautics, the Metropolitan Airports Commission, and other airport owners to ensure that the region's airports provide state-of-the-art, secure, and affordable services for business and leisure travelers, freight transport and general aviation activities. The Met Council coordinates aviation planning and community development with local, state, and federal governmental units, airport users, and community members.

2023 highlights include the following activities:

- Participated in the ongoing updates of the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport Long Term Comprehensive Plan and Flying Cloud Airport Long term comprehensive plan.
- Participated in various aviation related task forces and studies including MnDOT State Aviation System Plan, Joint Airport Zoning Board, and the Noise Oversight Committee.
- Reviewed and approved the 2023-2029 Capital Improvement Program for Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport and the region's reliever airports.

Metro Transit

Metro Transit, an operating division of the Metropolitan Council, administers and operates transit services in the Twin Cities through directly provided services and contracted transit providers.

Based on ridership, Metro Transit is the largest transit agency in Minnesota and provides about 84% of regular-route service in the Minneapolis/Saint Paul region. About 67% of rides are taken on the agency's buses and 33% on trains. We continue to monitor and evaluate ridership impacts from the pandemic on a daily and weekly basis to evaluate services and the need for service adjustments. This also includes taking a longer view of service demand and ridership forecasts.

The Met Council's 3,265 employees transport customers more than 136,000 times each weekday with service on 125 local, express and contract bus routes, as well as the METRO Blue Line, METRO Green Line and the Northstar Commuter Rail Line. In total, Metro Transit provided 44.8 million rides in 2023. Metro Transit also opened the North Loop Bus Garage in 2023.

Metro Transit's fleet includes 721 buses, 91 light-rail rail cars, 18 commuter rail cars and six locomotives. Metro Transit expects to achieve the goals set in the Met Council's 2040 Transportation Policy Plan by tailoring cost-effective service to diverse markets with an integrated system of core routes focusing on transit centers, an array of express bus services using park-and-ride facilities, and transit advantages on freeways and highways.

Transit safety and security

As we're continuing to support major transit investments across the region, we're also investing in the safety and security of our transit system. Our Metro Transit Police Department patrol officers and community service officers ride transit and visit transit facilities. We're working to enhance this official presence on our system and optimize our use of real-time cameras and technology to allow staff to remotely monitor conditions across the system. We also partner with local law enforcement as we respond to incidents. Following the death of George Floyd, we engaged communities, customers, employees, and policymakers in a conversation about safety in our communities and on our transit system.

The Metro Transit Police Department continues to have a shortage of sworn officers and other police department personnel like many police departments. Metro Transit has made increasing a visible presence on the system a priority in the Safety & Security Action Plan, and the Metropolitan Council raised police wages to help recruit and retain more police personnel to fill its budgeted complement. Between 2019 and 2023, Metro Transit has increased the budget for full-time sworn officers by approximately 44% and the budget for community service officers more than 500% to help increase official presence.

Metro Transit has also included the addition of community service officers as a new civilian presence that is welcoming and helpful to our transit customers while deterring crime and code-of-conduct violations. This program is based on much of what has been learned from similar programs at other large transit providers.

METRO Green Line construction continues

Construction on the METRO Green Line extension continued in 2023. When completed, the extension will provide an additional 14.5 miles of service on the Green Line, with new stops in Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Eden Prairie.

METRO Blue Line route modification, anti-displacement work

Following extensive community engagement and collaboration with local governments along the line, the METRO Blue Line Extension project released a report detailing potential route modification options for public comment in December 2021. In addition, the project began to address potential risks for displacement in partnership with the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Rural Affairs. The project will create an anti-displacement work group to help guide anti-displacement strategies and policy development by providing personal insight, local expertise and direct connections to communities impacted by the project. The group will be comprised of community leaders, residents, and business owners potentially at risk of displacement, as well as other experts and staff from key nonprofit, philanthropic and agency partners, including Hennepin County, the Metropolitan Council and corridor cities.

Greater equity in fares

The Transit Assistance Program (TAP), which allows qualified individuals to ride for \$1, provided about one million rides in 2019 and the number of people enrolled reached 12,000. Metro Transit introduced the program in 2017.

Employee hiring and retention

The Metro Transit Technician Training Program puts job seekers on a path to a good-paying job with a paid internship, job and skills training, and support for an educational degree.

Ongoing commitment to sustainability

The 2023-2028 Transportation Capital Improvement Program, approved in December 2022, includes the Zero-Emission Fleet Plan to make progress on mitigating climate impacts. The capital program begins a shift to zero emission buses in the Metro Transit fleet with 100 electric vehicles funded through 2027.

Bus rapid transit projects advancing

The METRO Gold Line proceeded into construction in 2022. Plans for the METRO Gold Line bus rapid transit line in the Interstate 94 corridor east of Saint Paul continued advancing throughout the year with plans to open into revenue service in early 2025.

With the opening of the METRO Orange Line in December 2021, the region currently has five operating bus rapid transit lines, including the METRO Red Line, METRO Orange Line, the METRO A Line, the METRO C Line and the METRO D Line.

Metro Transit by the numbers

The following charts provide a profile of Metro Transit over the previous decade. They show bus and rail fleet size; total miles operated; bus and rail ridership; fare history for bus, light rail, and commuter rail; number of miles between mechanical failure; and the number of accidents per 100,000 miles driven.

Chart 10. Metro Transit Fleet Size, Peak Bus and Rail, 2014-2023

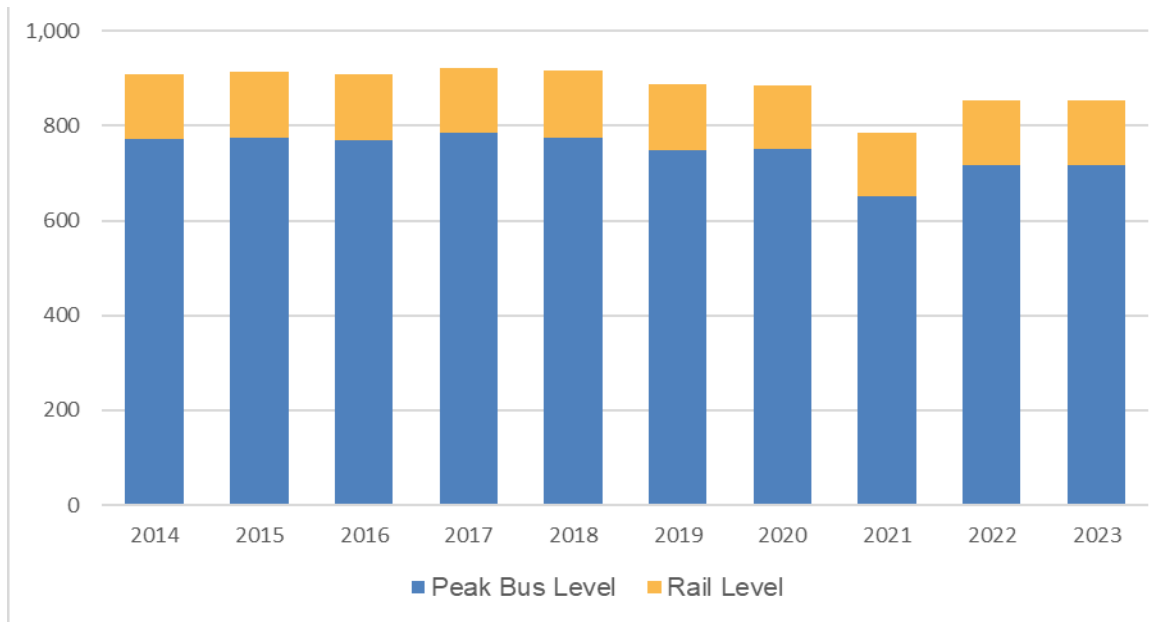


Chart 11. Metro Transit Total Miles Operated, 2014-2023 (in millions)

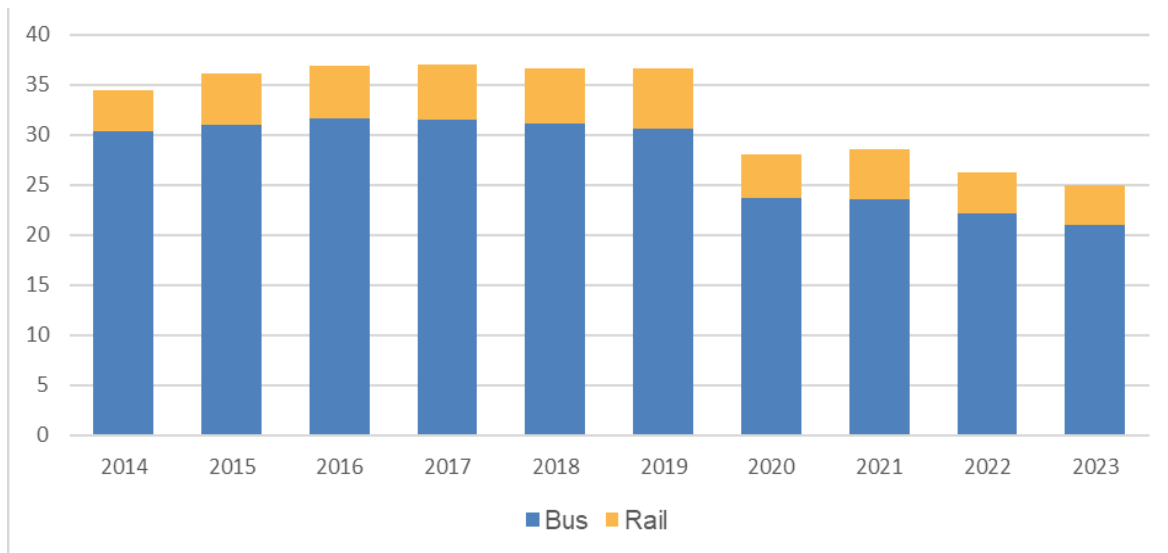


Chart 12. Metro Transit Bus Ridership, 2014-2023 (in millions)

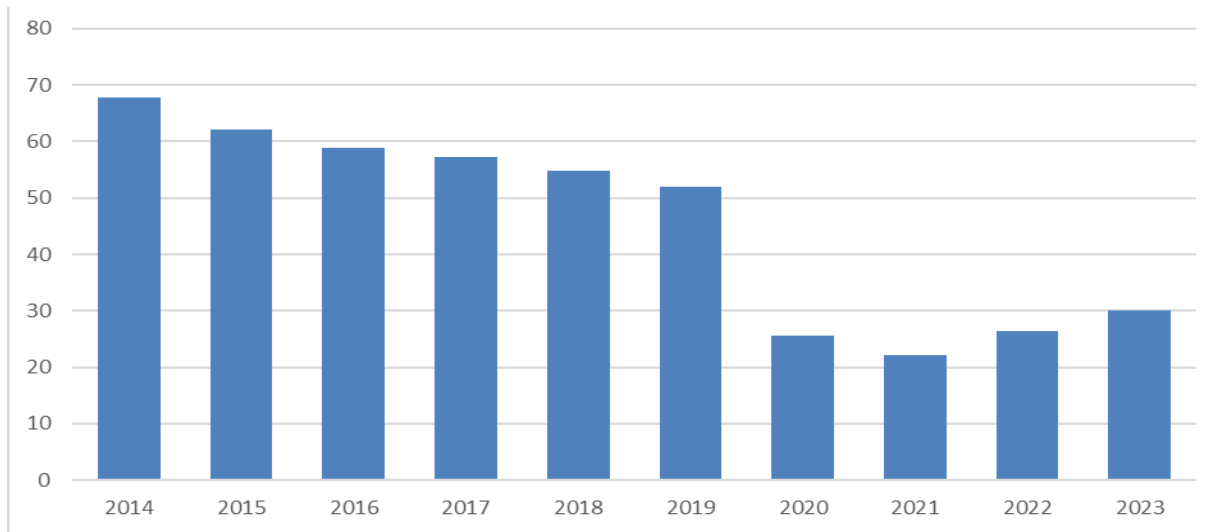


Chart 13. Metro Transit Rail Ridership, 2014-2023 (in million)

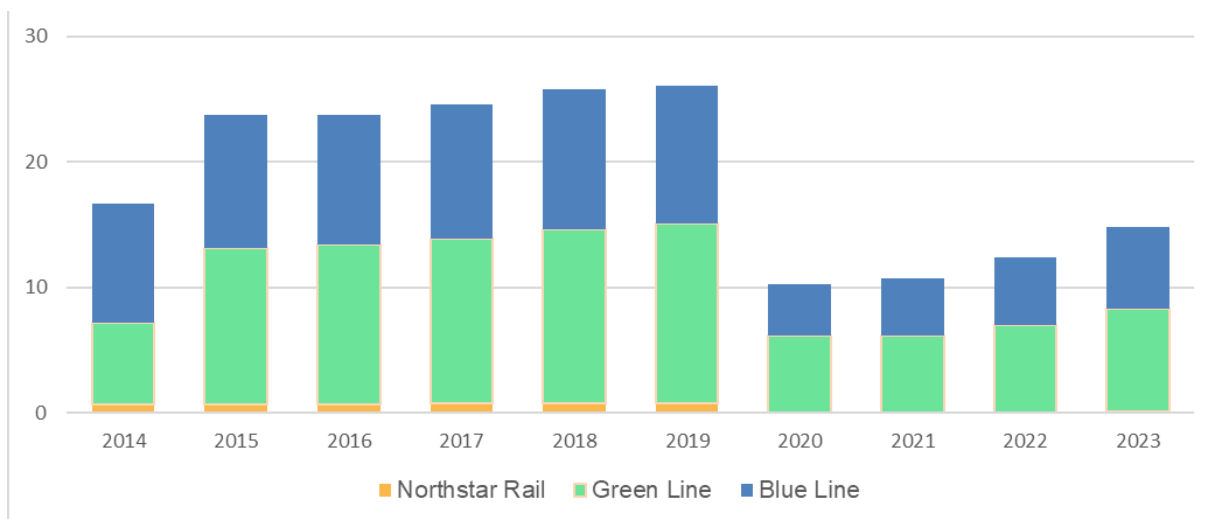


Chart 14. Metro Transit Fare History, Bus and Light Rail, 2014-2023

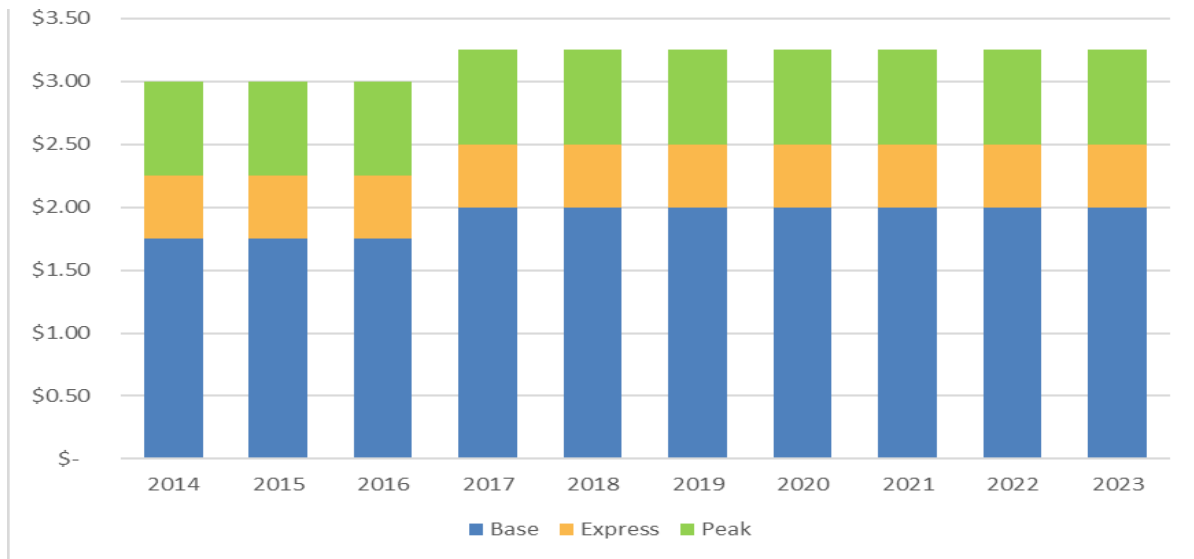
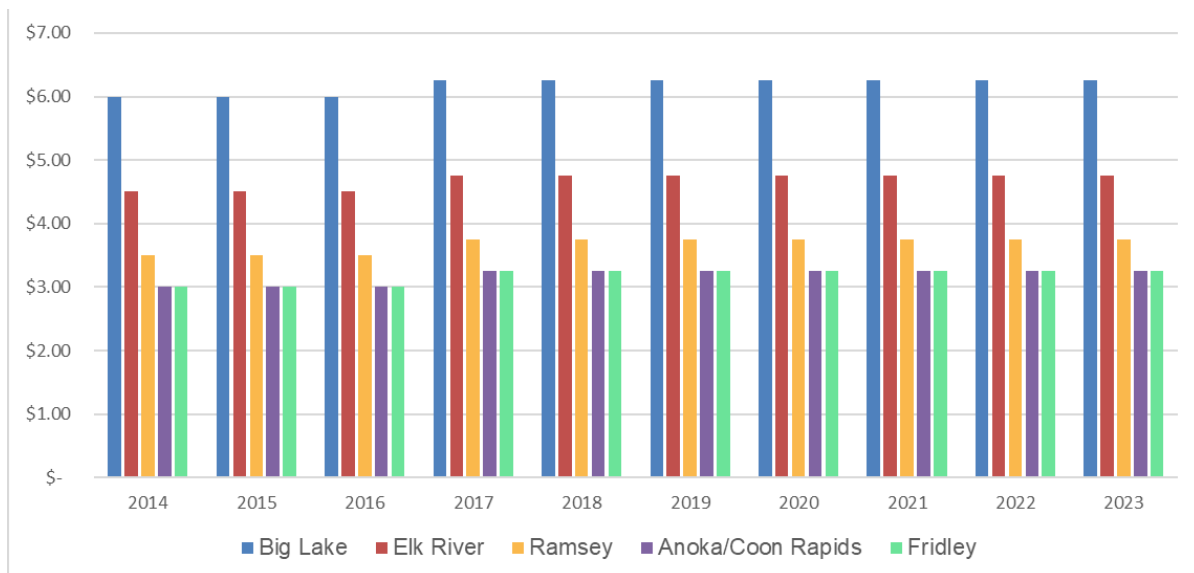
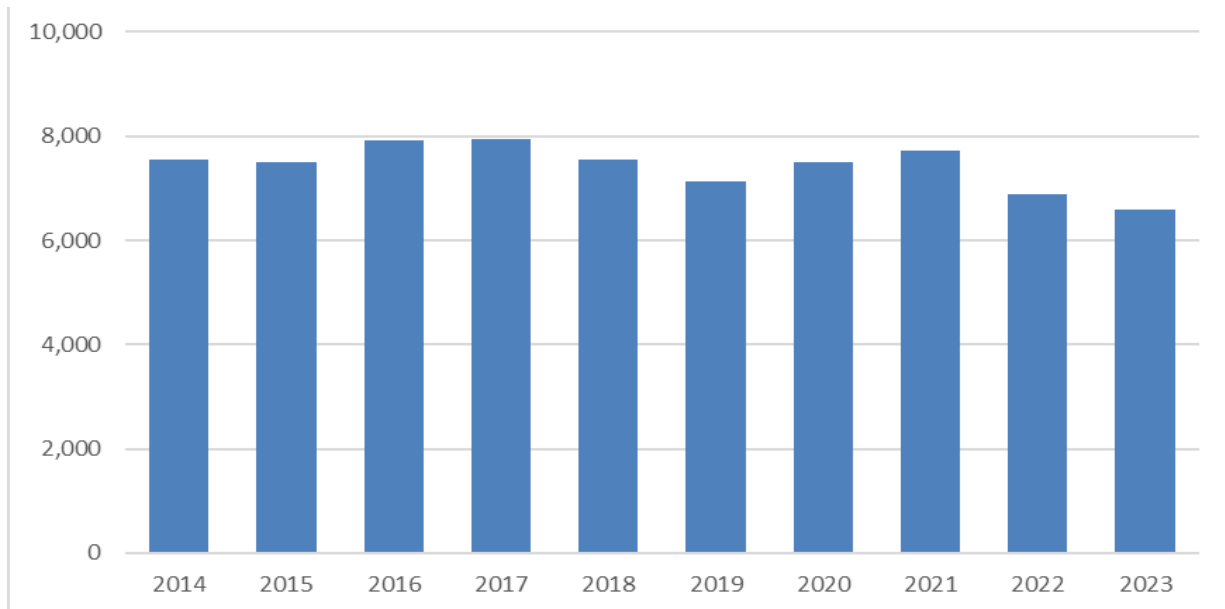


Chart 15. Commuter Rail Fares, 2014-2023 (fare increase in 2017)



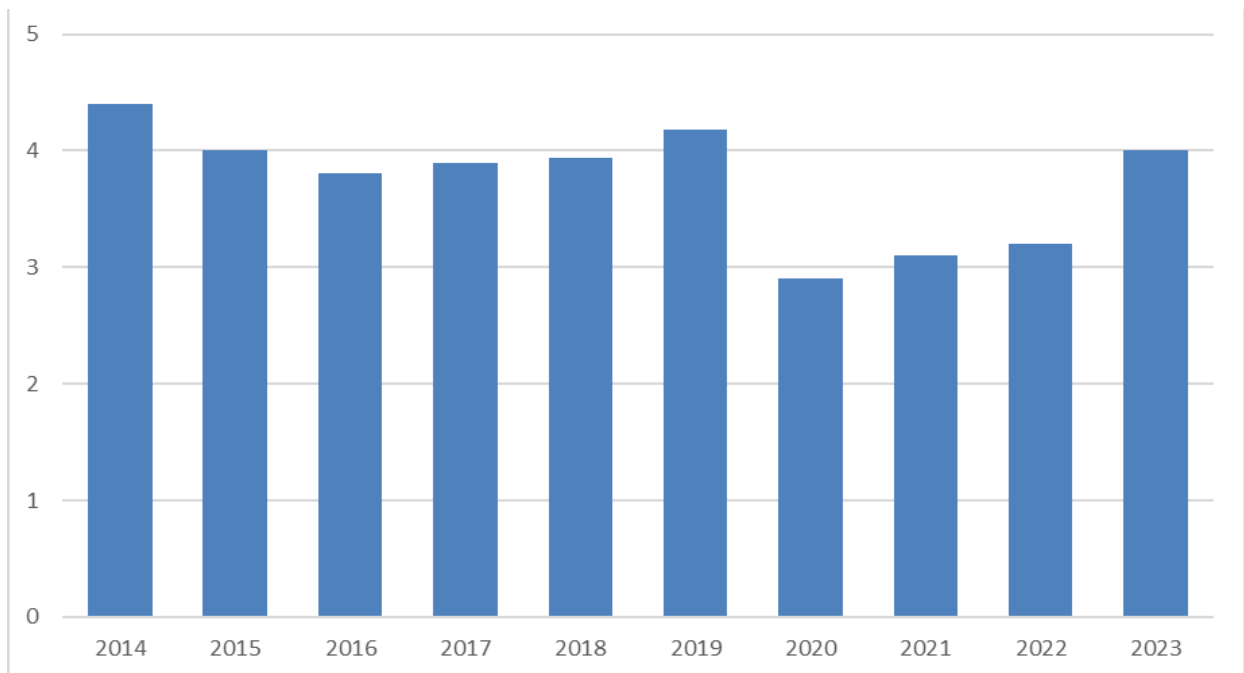
Note: Dollar figures reflect the fare increase on Oct. 1, 2017.

Chart 16. Metro Transit miles between mechanical failures, 2014-2023



Note: Mileage is the distance traveled in service between mechanical failures. Higher is better.

Chart 17. Metro Transit Crashes, 2014-2023 (per 100,000 miles driven)



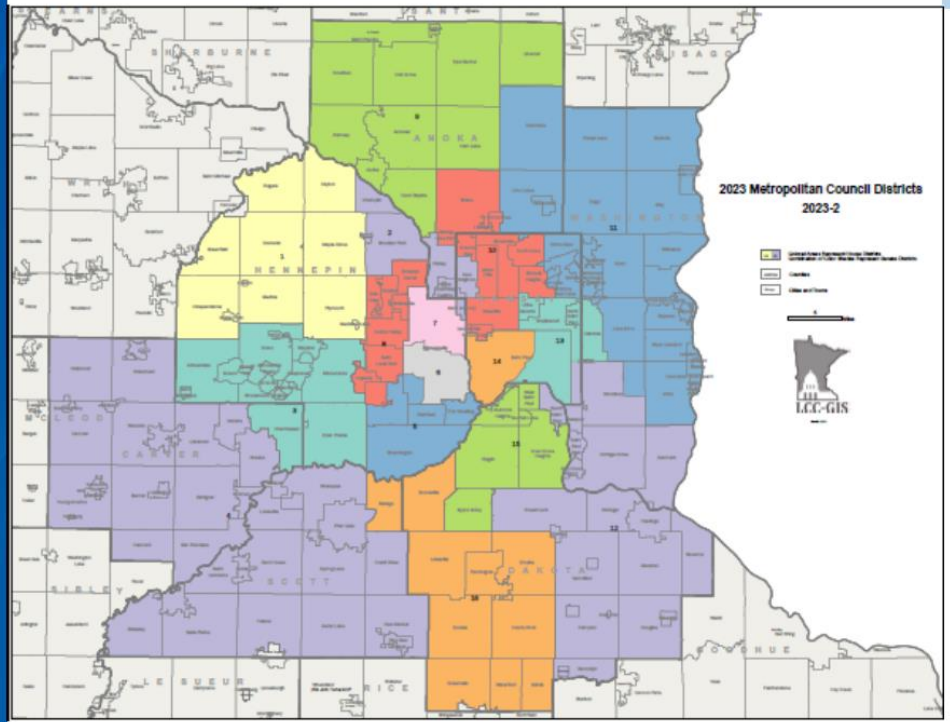
Note: Average number of traffic and passenger accidents per 100,000 miles of bus service.

Appendix: Maps and Budget Summary

Met Council redistricting

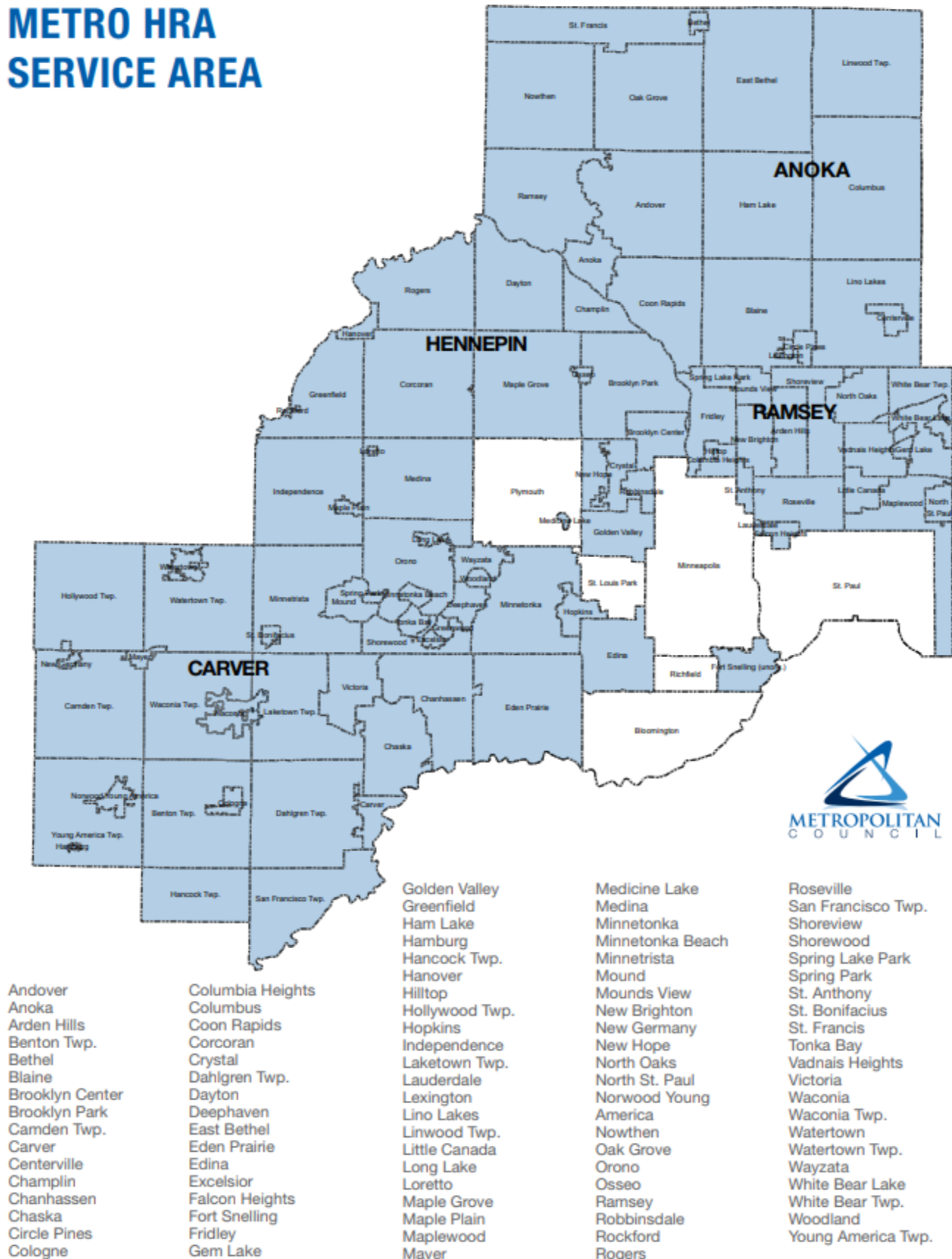
MN Statute 473.123
Subd. 3a. Redistricting.

The legislature shall redraw the boundaries of the council districts after each decennial federal census so that each district has substantially equal population. Redistricting is effective in the year ending in the numeral "3." Within 60 days after a redistricting plan takes effect, the governor shall appoint members from the newly drawn districts to serve terms as provided under subdivision 2a.

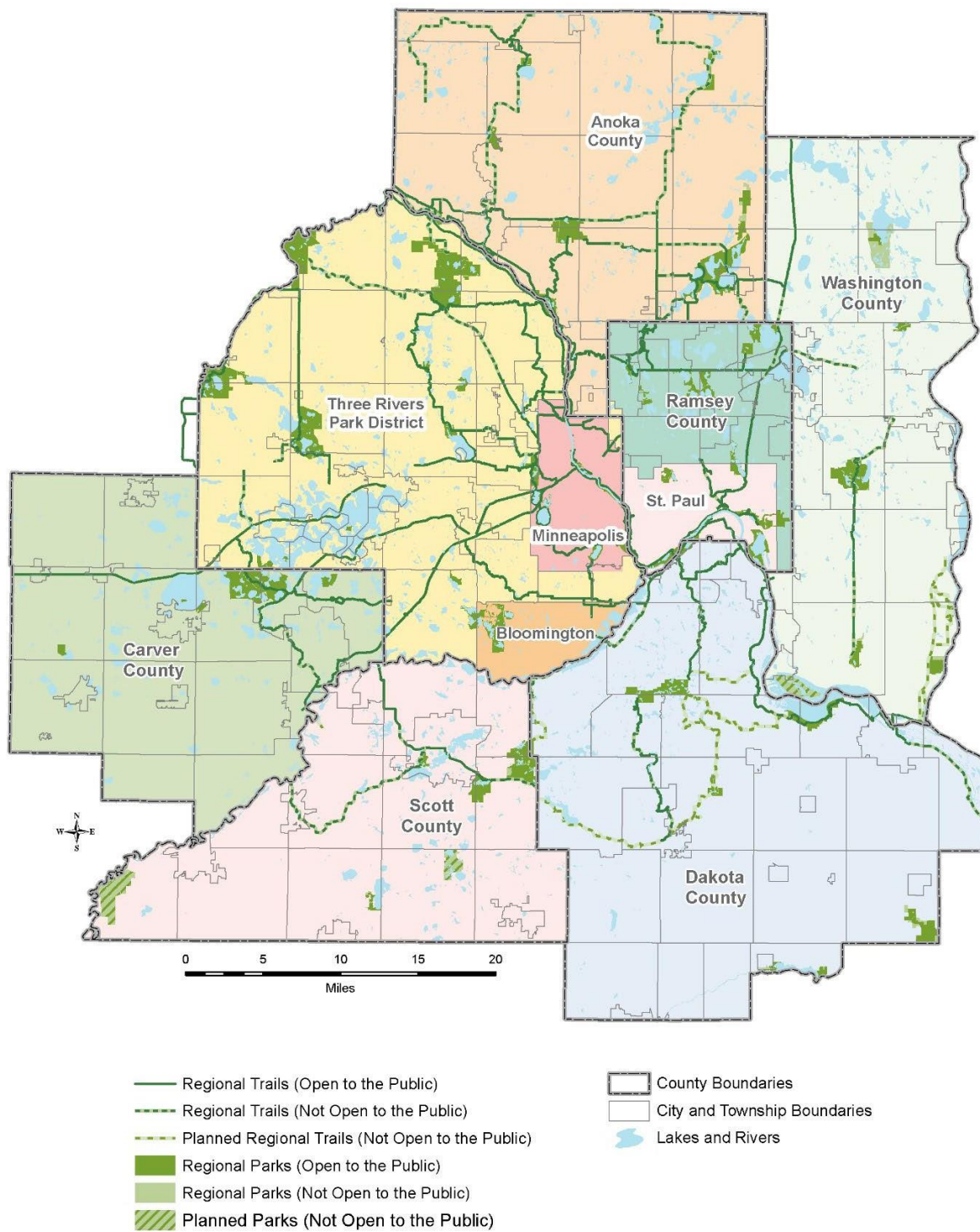




METRO HRA SERVICE AREA



Regional Parks Implementing Agencies



Metro Mobility ADA Service Areas

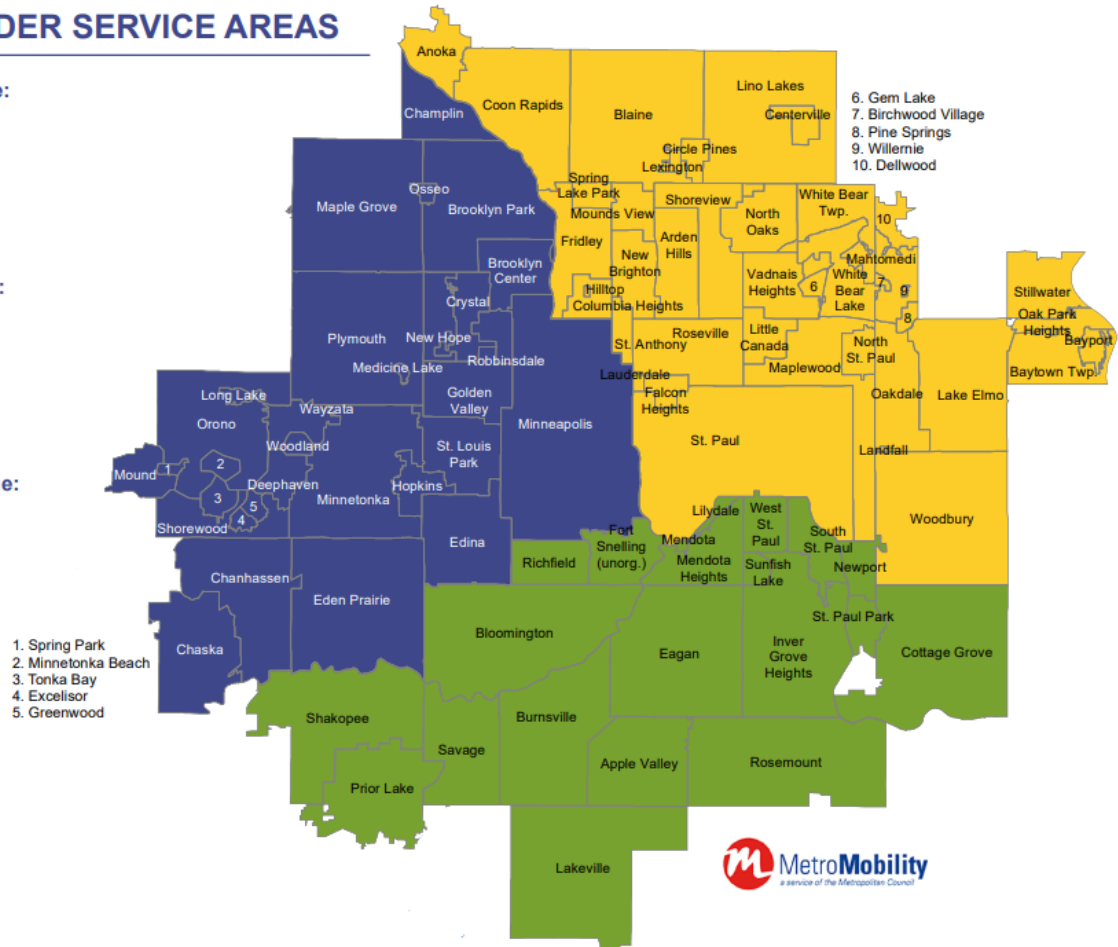
METRO MOBILITY SERVICE ZONES

TRIP PROVIDER SERVICE AREAS

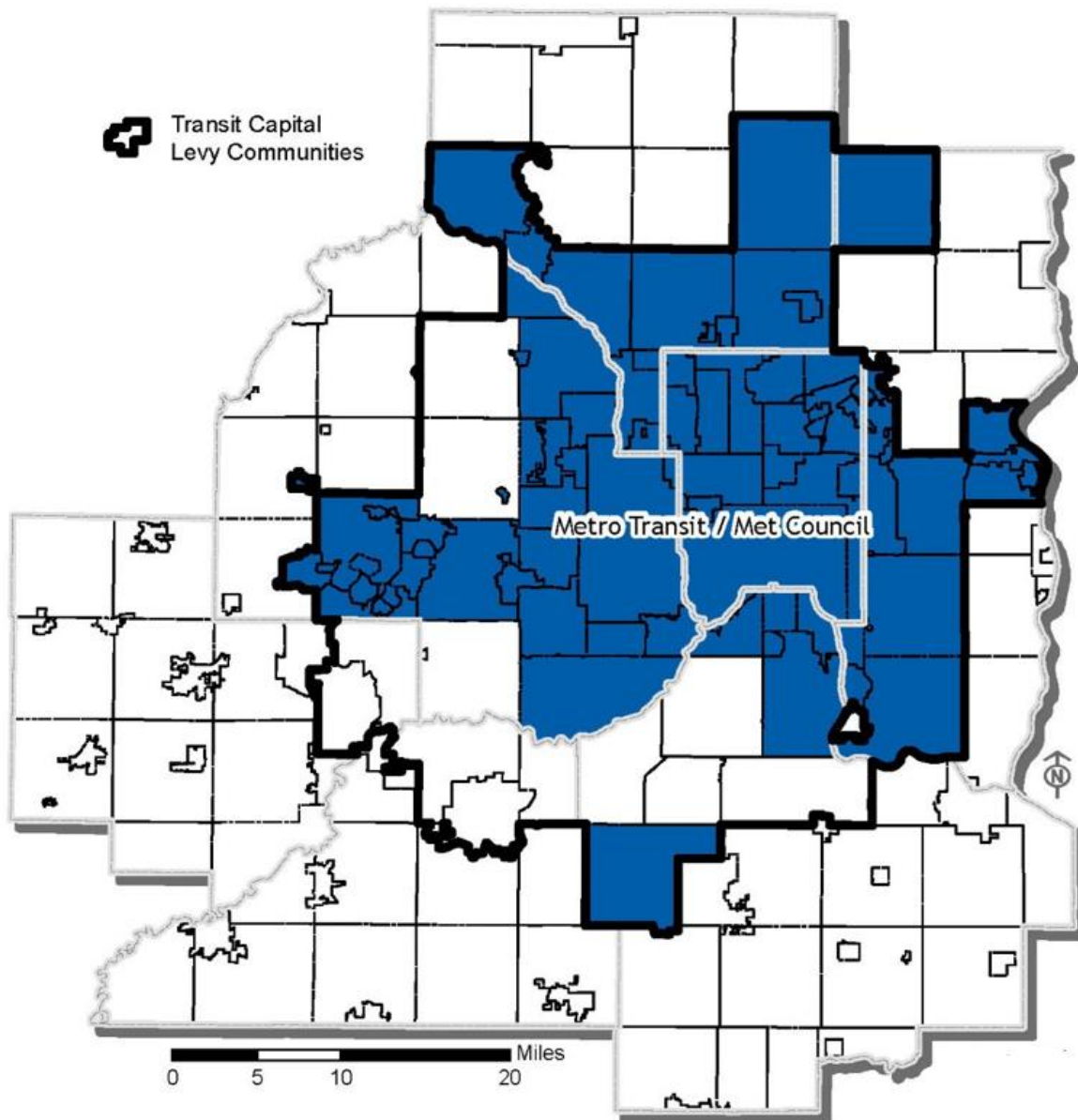
Metro West Zone:

Metro East Zone:

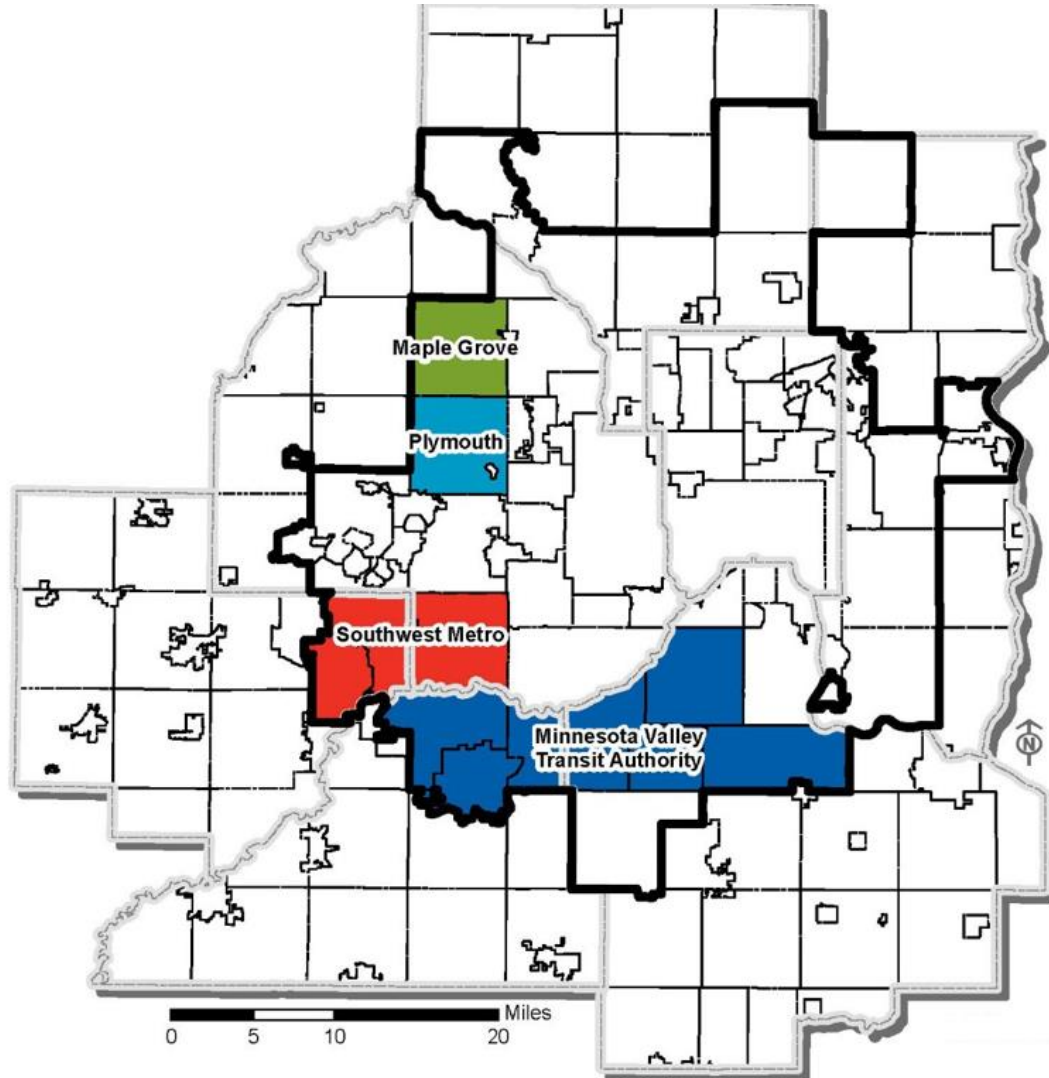
Metro South Zone:



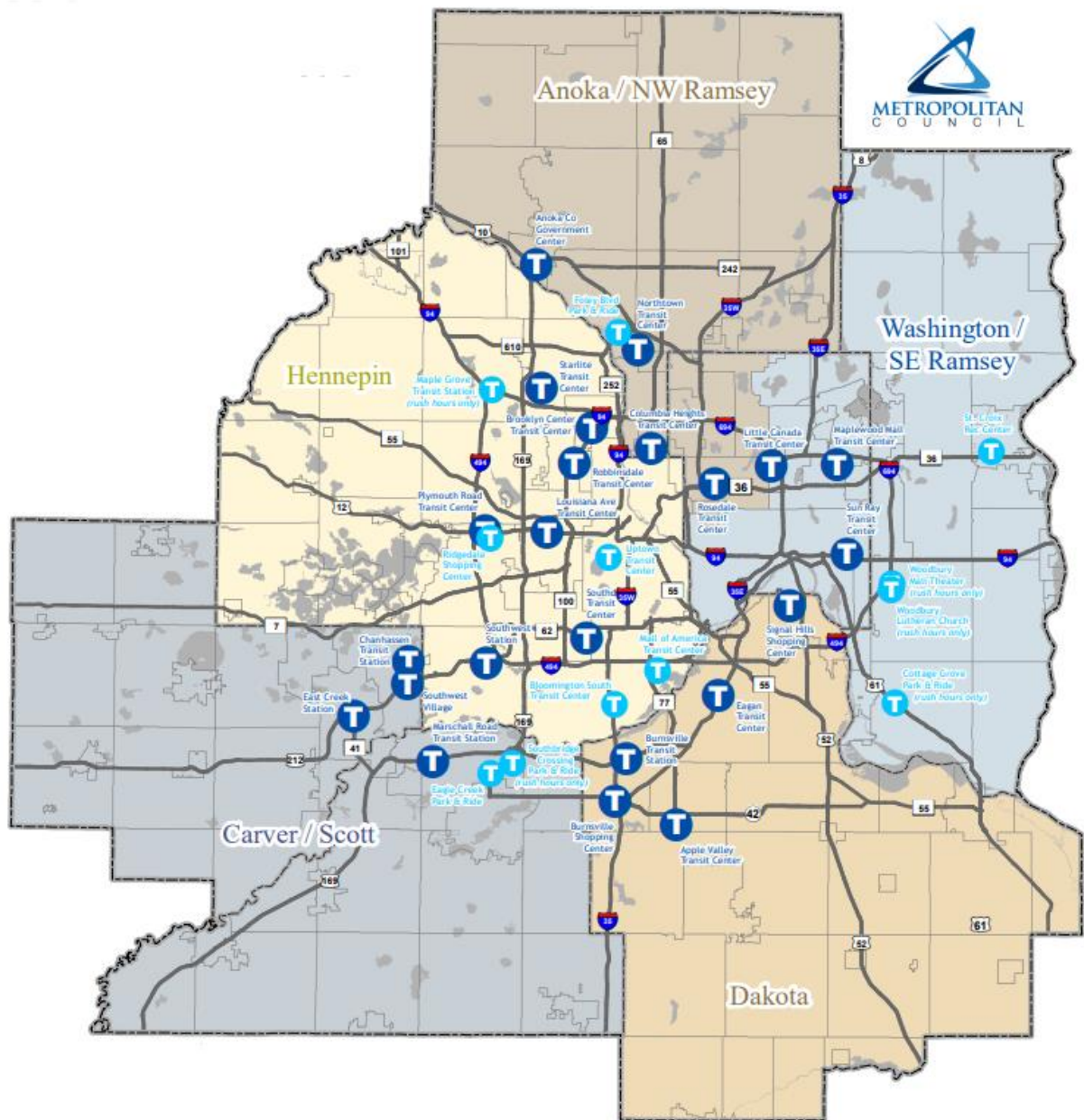
Metro Transit / Metro Council Service Area



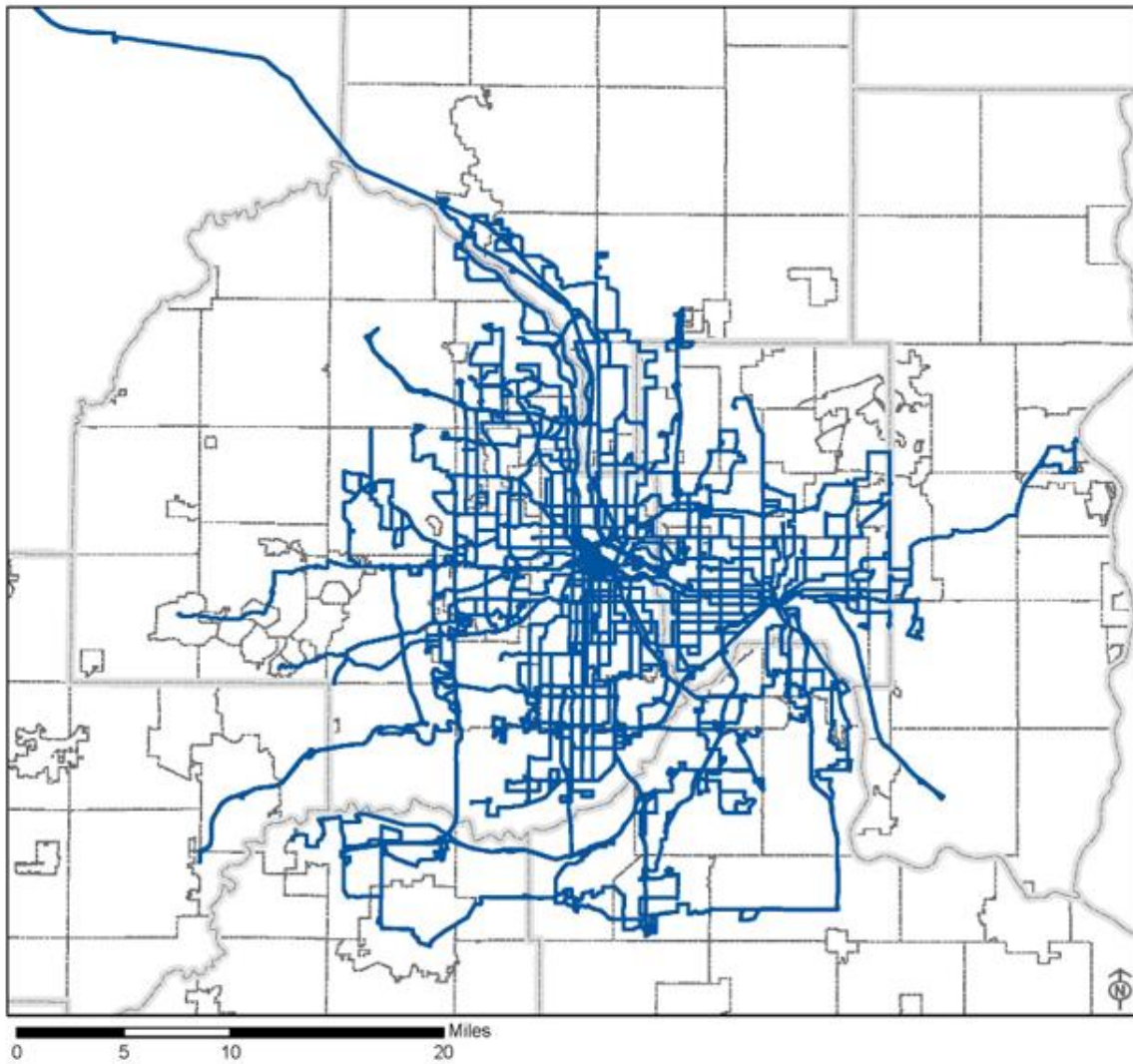
Suburban Transit Providers



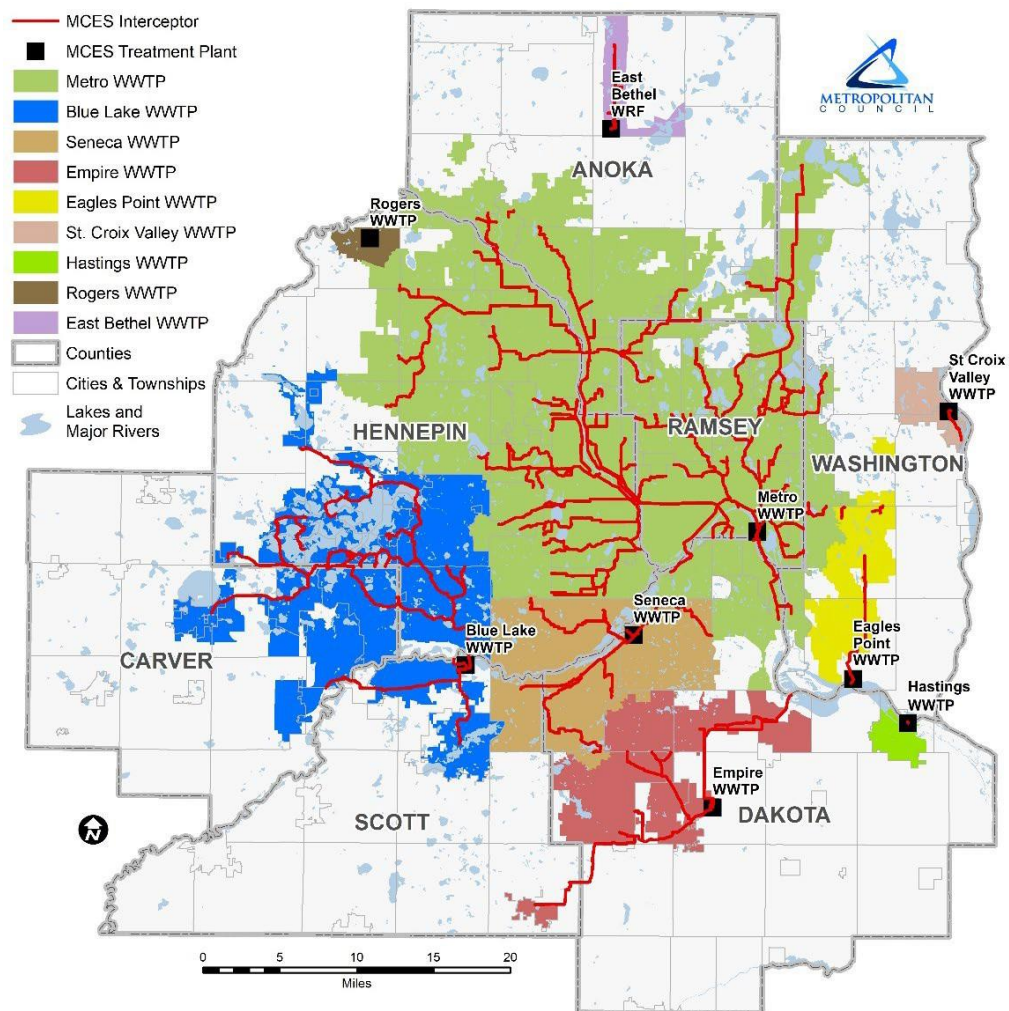
Transit Link Dial-a-Ride Service Area and Transit Hubs



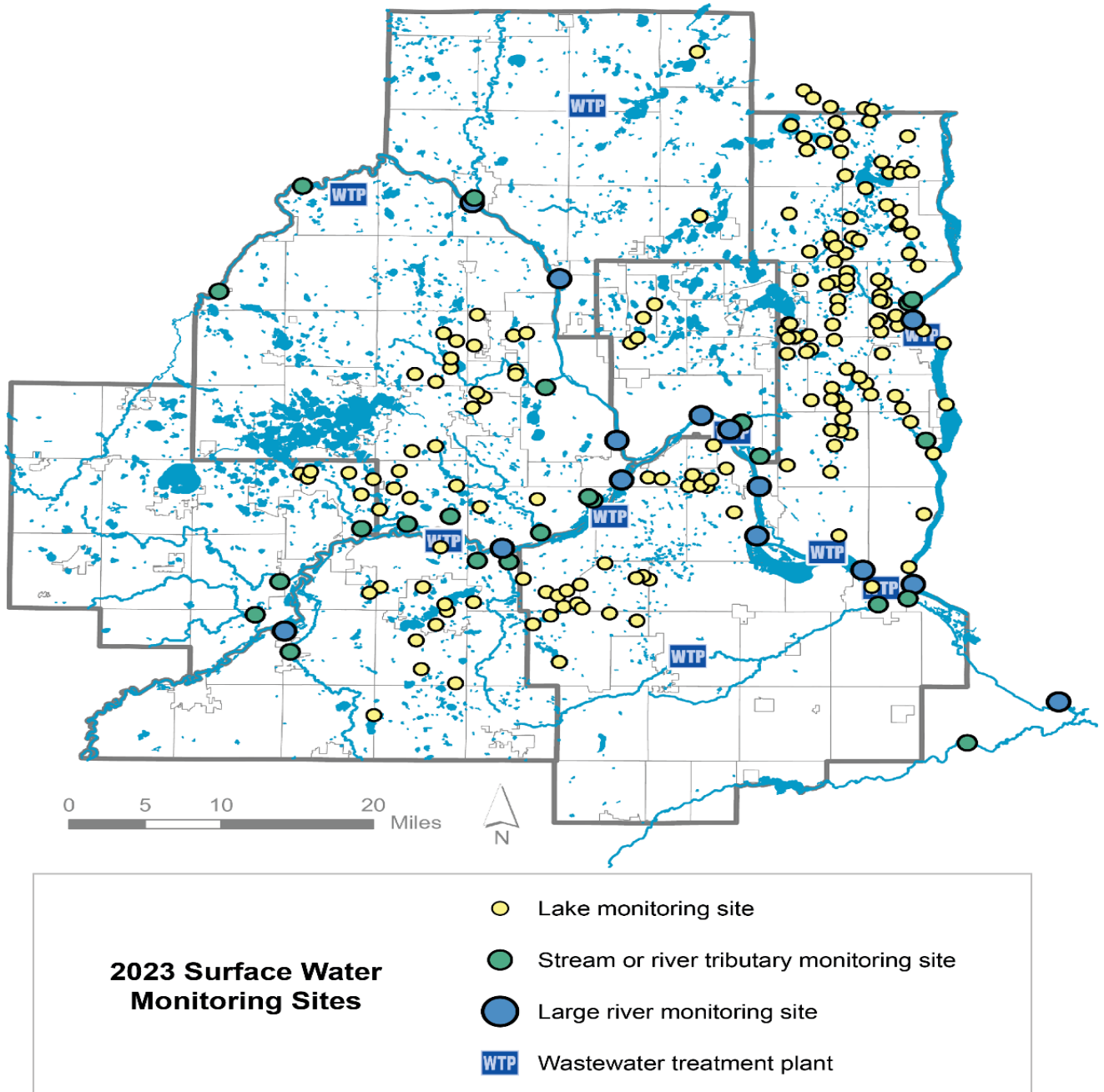
Metropolitan Area Regular-Route Transit Service



Wastewater Treatment Plants and Interceptors



Surface Water Monitoring Sites (2023)



Metropolitan Council 2023 Adopted Budget

Revenues

Sources	Dollars (000s)
Net Property Tax	92,324
Federal Revenues	238,270
State Revenues	456,699
Local Revenues	39,768
Municipal Wastewater Charges	263,703
Industrial Wastewater Charges	16,500
Passenger Fares, Contract & Special Events	56,726
Investment Earnings	1,425
Other Post-Employment Benefit Investment Earnings	4,800
Other Revenues	8,677
Total Revenues	1,178,892
Other Sources	
MVST Transfers In	49,397
SAC Transfers In	60,057
Total Other Sources	109,454
Total Revenues and Other Sources	1,288,346

Expenses

Categories	Dollars (000s)
Salaries & Benefits	543,161
OPEB Benefit Payments	15,257
Consulting & Contractual Services	80,981
Materials & Supplies	46,061
Fuel	30,199
Chemicals	12,612
Rent & Utilities	41,238
Printing	719
Travel	2,294
Insurance	10,298
Transit Programs	108,990
Operating Capital	2,495
Government Grants	2,374
Other Expenses	25,478
Passthrough Grants & Loans	181,850
Debt Service Obligations	191,794
Total Expenses	1,295,801
Other Sources and (Uses)	
Transfers Out/Other Uses	(13,069)
Total Other Sources and (Uses)	(13,069)
Total Expenses and Other Sources and (Uses)	1,308,870
Change in Fund Balance	(20,524)



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metro council.org

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