

T Transportation Committee
Meeting date: September 12, 2011
Metropolitan Council Meeting: September 28, 2011

ADVISORY INFORMATION

Date:	September 2, 2011
Subject:	Authorization for City of Ramsey Transit Service Expansion Agreement
District(s), Member(s):	District 9, Edward Reynoso
Policy/Legal Reference:	Minnesota Statutes, section 473.66
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Brian Lamb, General Manager, 612-349-7510 Vince Pellegrin, Chief Operating Officer, 612-349-7511 Edward Byers, Director of Commuter Rail, 612-349-7080 MarySue Abel, Lead Project Manager, 612-349-7638
Division/Department:	Metro Transit/Northstar Commuter Rail

Proposed Actions

That the Metropolitan Council authorize the Regional Administrator to execute an agreement with the City of Ramsey for potential transit service and the extension of the Council’s transit levy to the City of Ramsey.

Background

Minnesota Statutes, section 473.446 defines the transit taxing district and that the Council may not levy a tax in any city not included in the transit taxing district as it existed on January 1, 2001 unless the Council and the governing body of that city have agreed on a transit service expansion plan. The City of Ramsey was not included in the transit taxing district in 2001; and, subsequently, the Council has not levied a transit tax in that city since then.

Rationale

The City of Ramsey and the Anoka County Regional Railroad Authority have been jointly working to secure funding for the construction of a Northstar station at the City of Ramsey. Additional funding has been secured from the Cities Transit Improvement Board; and in, 2011, State G.O. Bonds totaling \$4.0 million have been made available for the project. With approval of Business Item 2011-206, the Council will authorize \$5.3 million in additional funding for the Ramsey station. This consists of \$4 million in State G.O. bonds and \$1.3 million in Regional Transit Capital funds.

The components of the agreement are summarized as follows:

- Northstar Commuter Rail station at the City of Ramsey
- Northstar Commuter Rail service as determined by the Council
- Termination of Express Bus service when rail service commences
- Extension of Council transit levy in 2012 (payable in 2013).

Funding

It is anticipated that the additional cost to operate the station will be fully covered by the increase in passenger fares associated with service to the station.

Known Support / Opposition

The Ramsey City Council is expected to approve the agreement on September 27, 2011.

On November 5, 2009, the Northstar Corridor Development Authority passed Resolution #2009-13 supporting a request for State bonding to construct a station at the City of Ramsey.

Sherburne County sent a letter to the Metropolitan Council outlining its concern regarding possible impacts on total travel time, operating fare equity and attractiveness for existing and potential future customers on the service. (See attached letter.)

August 22, 2011

RE: Ramsey Station Impact

Dear Chair Haigh:

We understand that the Ramsey Station is in the process of receiving final approval for funding from your respective committees.

At the recent NCDA meeting, we had hoped to have a discussion of this letter and the concerns from the western end of the line. That did not happen due to agenda compression, so we are forwarding this on behalf of Stearns and Sherburne counties.

Stearns and Sherburne counties remain committed to building the ridership on the Northstar line in order to reduce the subsidy on the line and also to obviously have the support for the completion of the line to St. Cloud.

Now that the Ramsey Station is close to becoming a reality, Stearns and Sherburne counties would ask that Metro Transit review operations to assure, as much as possible, that there is not a negative impact on system ridership from the addition of the Ramsey Station. The close proximity of the Ramsey station to both the Elk River and other Anoka County stations could result in an alteration in ridership from those stations that could be perceived as a negative. In addition, we have growing ridership coming from St. Cloud down to Big Lake, which greatly benefits the metro area in reduced cars on Highway 10 through Anoka and Hennepin Counties, and it is important to not degrade the quality of their ride with this addition.

Specifically, we would ask Metro Transit to review schedules and services in Anoka County and make sure that there is not inappropriate competition with the Northstar service – either in schedule or fees. One scenario that should be considered is to provide some express runs that would bypass at least one of the stations, as an effort to maintain existing service for those riding the greatest distance. This is already being done with the Fridley station for other reasons.

The second specific request would be as consideration is given to establishing fares that the Ramsey fares not compete unfairly with the existing stations, particularly Anoka and Elk River stations.

We appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

Leigh Lenzmeier, Chair
NCDA and Stearns County Board of Commissioners

DeWayne Mareck,
Stearns County Board of Commissioners

Ewald Petersen, Chair
Sherburne County Board of Commissioners

Felix Schmiesing
Sherburne County Board of Commissioners

August 22, 2011

RE: Ramsey Station Impact

Dear Chair Elkins:

We understand that the Ramsey Station is in the process of receiving final approval for funding from your respective committees.

At the recent NCDA meeting, we had hoped to have a discussion of this letter and the concerns from the western end of the line. That did not happen due to agenda compression, so we are forwarding this on behalf of Stearns and Sherburne counties.

Stearns and Sherburne counties remain committed to building the ridership on the Northstar line in order to reduce the subsidy on the line and also to obviously have the support for the completion of the line to St. Cloud.

Now that the Ramsey Station is close to becoming a reality, Stearns and Sherburne counties would ask that Metro Transit review operations to assure, as much as possible, that there is not a negative impact on system ridership from the addition of the Ramsey Station. The close proximity of the Ramsey station to both the Elk River and other Anoka County stations could result in an alteration in ridership from those stations that could be perceived as a negative. In addition, we have growing ridership coming from St. Cloud down to Big Lake, which greatly benefits the metro area in reduced cars on Highway 10 through Anoka and Hennepin Counties, and it is important to not degrade the quality of their ride with this addition.

Specifically, we would ask Metro Transit to review schedules and services in Anoka County and make sure that there is not inappropriate competition with the Northstar service – either in schedule or fees. One scenario that should be considered is to provide some express runs that would bypass at least one of the stations, as an effort to maintain existing service for those riding the greatest distance. This is already being done with the Fridley station for other reasons.

The second specific request would be as consideration is given to establishing fares that the Ramsey fares not compete unfairly with the existing stations, particularly Anoka and Elk River stations.

We appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

Leigh Lenzmeier, Chair
NCDA and Stearns County Board of Commissioners

DeWayne Mareck,
Stearns County Board of Commissioners

Ewald Petersen, Chair
Sherburne County Board of Commissioners

Felix Schmiesing
Sherburne County Board of Commissioners