

T Transportation Committee

Meeting date: June 8, 2009

Council Meeting June 24, 2009

ADVISORY INFORMATION	
Date:	June 4, 2009
Subject:	Authorization for Forest Lake and Columbus Transit Service Expansion Agreements
District(s), Member(s):	11-Hilker; 12-Broeker
Policy/Legal Reference:	Minnesota Statutes, section 473.66
Staff	Arlene McCarthy, Director MTS
Prepared/Presented:	
Division/Department:	Metropolitan Transportation Services (MTS)

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council authorize the Regional Administrator to execute an agreement with the City of Forest Lake and with the City of Columbus providing for transit service and the extension of the Council’s transit levy to the City of Forest Lake and the City of Columbus.

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. Neither Forest Lake nor Columbus were 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 implementation of Route 288 in January 2008 in response to the 35W bridge collapse, utilizing emergency federal funds for transit operations, has demonstrated strong ridership in this corridor. The express service provides five morning and five afternoon express trips between the Forest Lake Transit Center and the Running Aces Park and Ride facility in Columbus and downtown Minneapolis, plus a morning trip from the park-and-rides to the 95th Avenue Park and Ride in Blaine connecting to other regular route trips to Minneapolis.

The Council is funding the 2009 Route 288 operating cost with Washington and Anoka counties funding the 2009 regional transit levy equivalent for Forest Lake and Columbus. It was determined that the two cities must agree to pay the regional transit levy effective January 1, 2010 for the Council to continue the transit service in 2010 and beyond.

The Columbus City Council took action at its November 24, 2008 meeting to pay the transit levy effective in 2010 conditional upon Forest Lake doing the same. The Forest Lake City Council took action on May at its May 11, 2009 meeting to pay the transit levy effective in 2010.

Funding

The service is being funded as part of the Council's regular transit service operating budget. A 2009 budget amendment will be forthcoming and the service is being programmed in the proposed 2010 operating budget.

Known Support / Opposition

Public testimony from bus riders at city council meetings indicated support for this service and paying the regional transit levy. Other citizens spoke both in favor and not in favor. Neither City Council vote was unanimous.