

3 EXISTING TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

The District 3 study area has several public transit services. Regional services include Northstar commuter rail and Northstar Link. There are rural multi-county systems and local systems, as well as one urbanized area system, Metro Bus, which provides fixed-route and paratransit service to the communities within the St. Cloud metropolitan area. In addition there are several private nonprofit transportation providers and private for-profit transportation providers.

Many of the key corridors connecting the region are becoming congested during peak commute periods resulting in longer, more frustrating commutes and in some cases even unsafe travel conditions. Traffic congestion contributes to higher transportation costs and challenges the region socially, economically and environmentally.

The area has the distinction of having the state's only commuter rail service, Northstar commuter rail, which became operational in fall 2009. Northstar provides commuter rail service between downtown Minneapolis and Big Lake during prime morning and evening weekday rush hours and special events. This service is also supported by a connecting coach bus service, Northstar Link, offering service between Big Lake and St. Cloud.

The area's population and economic growth of the past two decades has spurred the need to explore additional alternatives and strategies to handle the increased transportation demand. Among them include the development of a more integrated and coordinated public transit system capable of accommodating the needs of commuters.

PUBLIC TRANSIT SERVICES

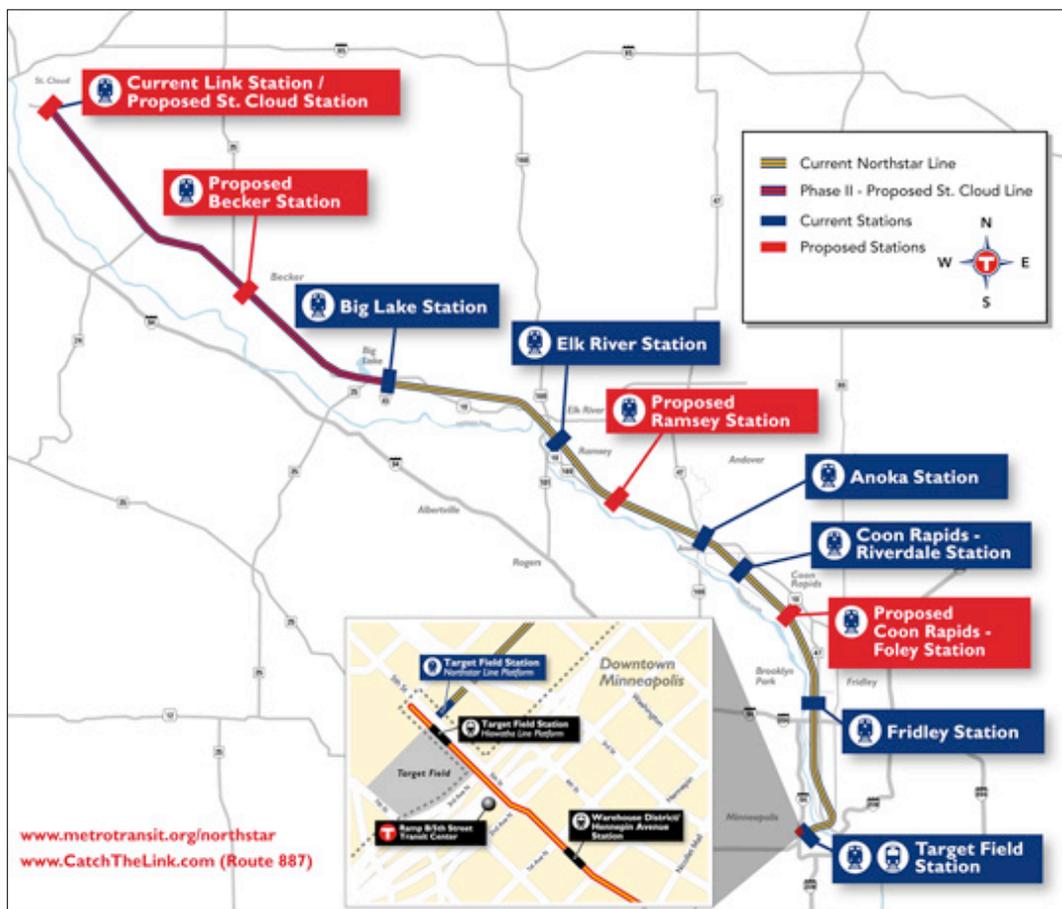
District 3 has several public transit services. Regional services include Northstar commuter rail and Northstar Link. Rural multi-county systems include Chisago/Isanti Heartland Express serving Isanti and Chisago Counties; RiverRider Transit serving Sherburne and Wright Counties; Timber Trails Transit serving Mille Lacs and Kanabec Counties; and Tri-CAP Transit Connection serving Benton, Morrison and rural Stearns Counties. The City of Brainerd/Crow Wing County provides service within the cities of Brainerd and Baxter and throughout Crow Wing County and Friendly Rider provides service throughout Wadena County. "Ride With Us Bus" is the City of Pine River's service that provides service only within the City of Pine River. Metro Bus is the area's only urbanized system in the region and provides fixed-route and paratransit service to the communities within the St. Cloud metropolitan area. In addition, there are several private nonprofit transportation providers and private for-profit transportation providers.

Regional Services

Northstar Commuter Rail

Northstar commuter rail provides service along one of the most congested and fastest-growing corridors in Minnesota - US 10. Stations integrate pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicle movements for optimal safety and efficiency. This commuter service is geared towards peak commuting times; however, it also operates during weekends and for some special events as a convenient alternative to driving and parking in downtown Minneapolis. Currently, the line runs 40 miles from downtown Minneapolis, terminating at Big Lake Station in District 3. Northstar also stops at Elk River Station in District 3. Future opportunities for District 3 involve continuing the line northwest, with a stop in Becker and terminating in St. Cloud.

Figure 3-1 Northstar Commuter Rail Public Route Map



Source: Northstar Commuter Rail/Metro Bus

Metro Transit, the operator of the Northstar Line, has indicated that ridership is growing on the line. Ridership in 2011 is up roughly 6.25% through April, compared to 2010.

The Northstar Corridor Development Authority (NCDA) is a joint powers board of governmental entities representing counties, cities, townships and regional railroad authorities along the Northstar Corridor, which covers an 80-mile stretch from downtown Minneapolis to St. Cloud.

Ridership in 2010 totaled 710,425, with a weekday average of about 1,900 rides. The operating cost was \$15.6 million, and fares yielded approximately \$2.5 million, resulting in a subsidy/passenger of \$18.49. Of the two stations in District 3, Elk River Station had the highest number of passengers in 2010 with 196,963, and Big Lake had a ridership of 182,803. However, in 2011, the trend may be changing. In November 2011, Big Lake Station had the higher ridership with 7,191 passengers compared to Elk River Station with 6,790 (see Figures 3-2 through 3-4).

Figure 3-2 Northstar Commuter Rail Ridership, 2010 -2011

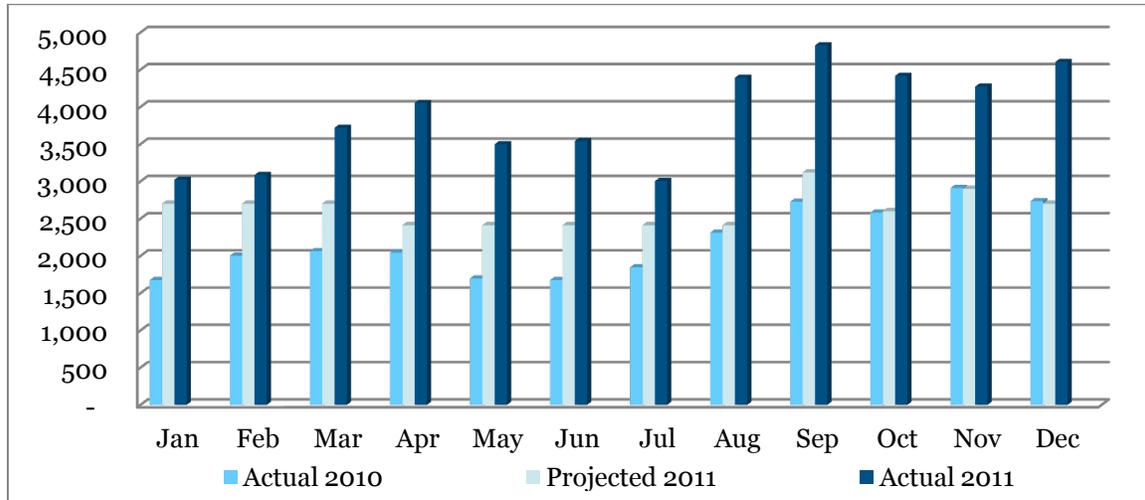
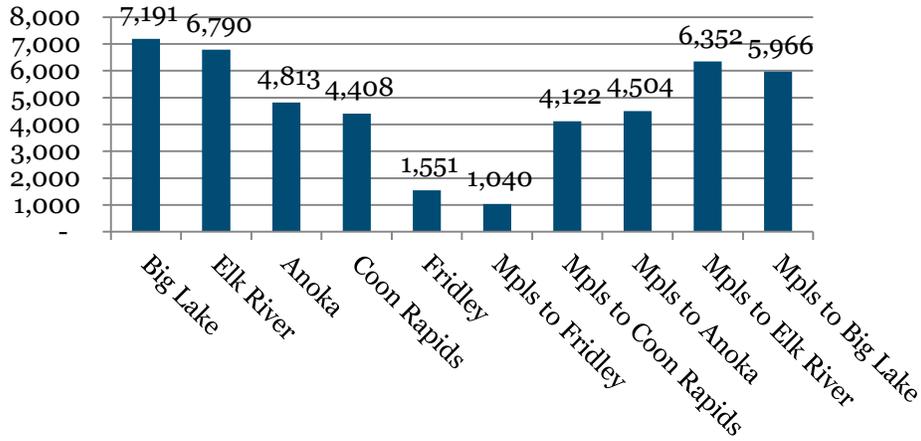


Figure 3-3 Northstar Commuter Rail Ridership by Station and Access Mode, 2010 Data

Location	Downtown and University of MN Commuters (2008 LEHD)	Park and Ride Users (Oct 2010)*	Park & Ride Mode Split	Northstar Station and Link Lot Users	Northstar Mode Split
Big Lake Total	1,544	281	18.2%	211	13.7%
St. Cloud Area	866	128	14.8%	24	2.8%
Big Lake Area	678	153	22.6%	187	27.6%
Elk River	1,617	439	27.1%	311	19.2%
Anoka	1,647	331	20.1%	157	9.5%
Coon Rapids	2,561	530	20.7%	176	6.9%
Fridley	2,203	117	5.3%	41	1.9%
Total/Average	1,1116	1,979	17.8%	1,107	10.0%

*Includes Northstar Station Users

Figure 3-4 Northstar Commuter Rail Ridership, November 2011



Source: Northstar Rail

Weekday commuter ridership in 2011 has grown to an average of around 2,100 weekday rides. However, ridership on days of Minnesota Twins baseball games, which comprises a significant portion of Northstar ridership, is down compared to 2010.

Fares are established to be distance-based, with the highest fare from Big Lake to Minneapolis (See Figure 3-5).

Figure 3-5 Northstar Commuter Rail Fares

	Weekday *	Weekend	
		General	Seniors (65+), Youth (6-12) and Medicare card holders. Valid at all times for persons with disabilities.
Big Lake	\$7.00	\$5.25	\$1.75
Elk River	\$5.50	\$4.00	\$1.25
Anoka	\$4.00	\$3.00	\$1.00
Coon Rapids-Riverdale	\$4.00	\$3.00	\$1.00
Fridley	\$3.25	\$2.50	\$0.75
Station-to-Station	\$3.25	\$2.50	\$0.75

*No discounted fares on weekdays except for people with disabilities

Northstar Link

The Northstar Link travels between St. Cloud and Big Lake Northstar Station, with one stop in Becker. The service is scheduled for timed transfers with most Northstar trains in Big Lake. On Fridays, a midday bus runs the full length of the Northstar corridor, from St. Cloud to downtown Minneapolis. Special buses serve sporting and other events. The train schedule primarily serves commuters during peak hours and special events such as Minnesota Twins baseball games.

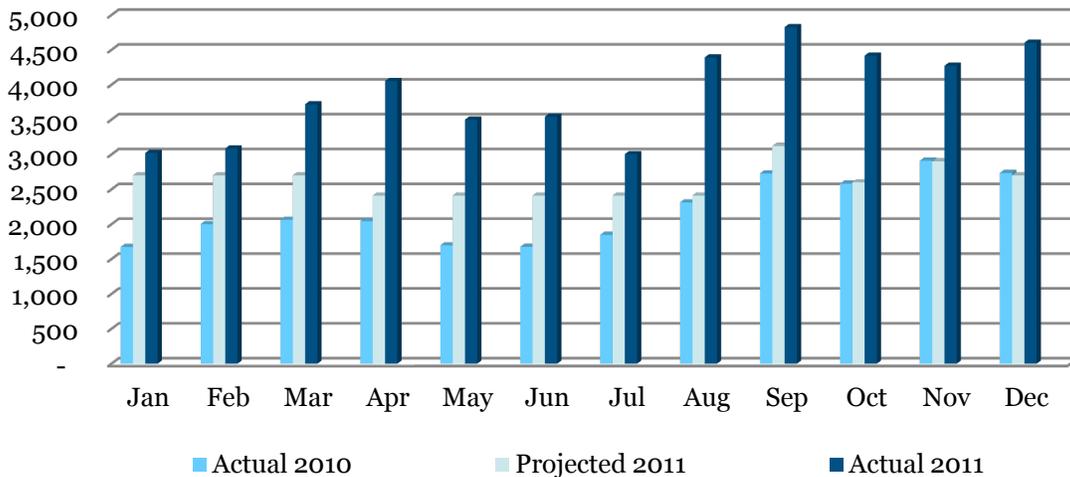
Northstar Link makes it possible to work a half-day on Fridays or make a non-work trip to Minneapolis. The Fabulous Friday midday bus service starts in St. Cloud at 10:15 a.m. and ends in Minneapolis at 12:45 p.m., with stops in between at Becker and all Northstar train stations, except Fridley. On the return trip to St. Cloud, the bus stops at any requested station, except Fridley.

Rides are free on special buses and trains serving the Target Holidazzle parades on Dec. 10 and 17.

Ridership on the Link continues to grow. Between January and October of 2011, people boarded the bus 70,741 times, a 113% increase over the same period in 2010. Confirming this trend, May 2011 ridership was up 106% over May 2010, from 1,697 to 3,499 rides, the biggest month to month jump since service was introduced in November 2009. Ridership has consistently outpaced projections since service began.

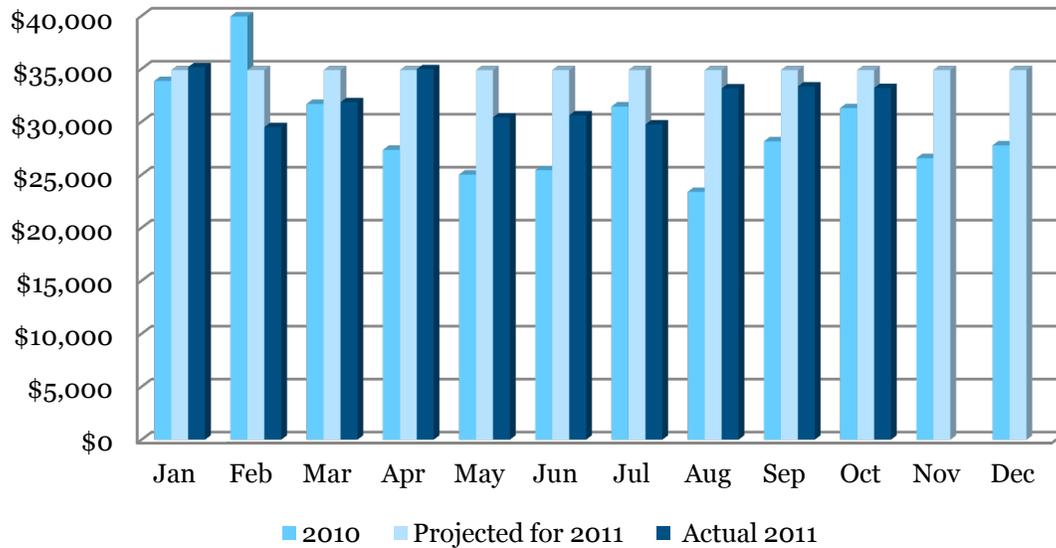
2011 ridership exceeded projections and has significantly increased over 2010 ridership. See Figure 3-6 below.

Figure 3-6 Northstar Link Ridership, 2010-2011



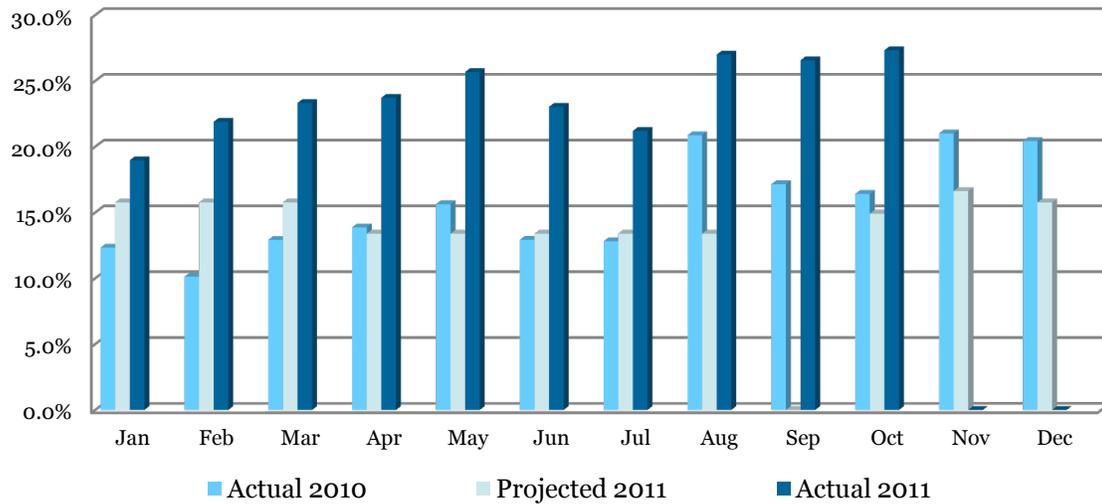
Overall ridership on the Northstar Link was 23,529 in 2010. Ridership in 2011 was recorded at 46,437 excluding December. The annual ridership change from 2010 to 2011 is a 77.8% increase (Jan-Nov). The projected ridership numbers for 2011 were much lower than the actual ridership for 2011. This significant growth demonstrates a willingness to use bus service and transfer to rail, and also reflects a growing interest in the Link service.

Figure 3-7 Northstar Link Operating Expenses



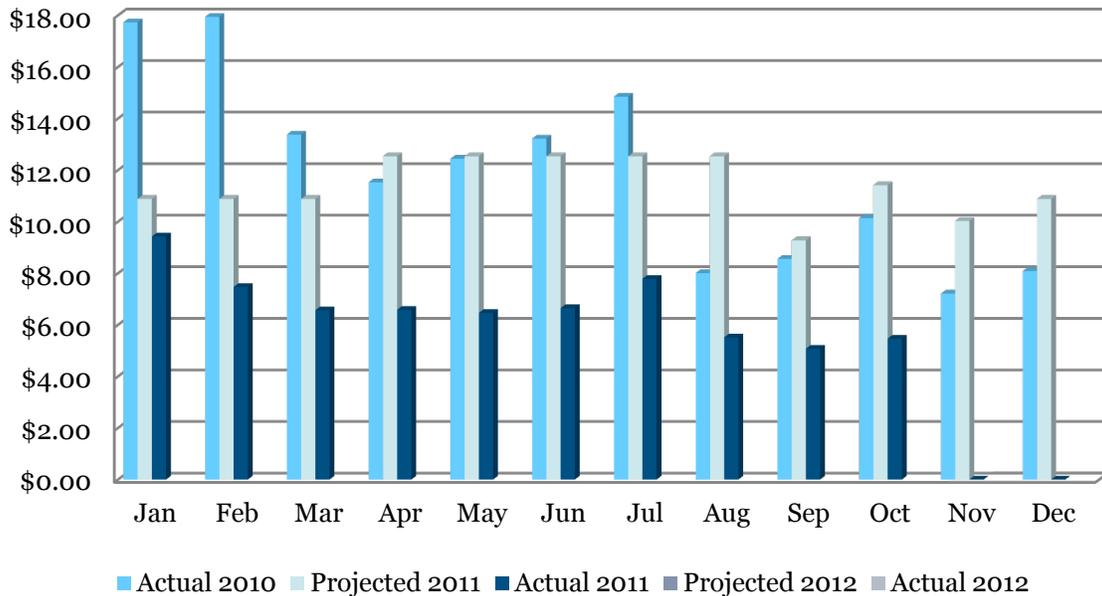
Northstar Link operating expenses were \$351,887 in 2010 (Figure 3-7). As of October 2011, the operating expenses were \$321,954.

Figure 3-8 Northstar Link Farebox Recovery Ratio 2010-2011



As shown in Figure 3-8, the 2010 farebox recovery ratio average was at 15.5%. In 2011, the farebox recovery ratio average increased to nearly 24%.

Figure 3-9 Northstar Link Subsidy per Passenger 2010-2012



In 2010, the subsidy per passenger was \$143.06 (see Figure 3-9). In 2011, the subsidy per passenger dropped to \$66.98 (through October 2011). The percent change from 2010 to 2011 (using Jan-Oct only) shows a 47.6% decrease in annual subsidy per passenger due to increased ridership and much higher farebox recovery.

The Northstar Link commuter bus increased service to St. Cloud State University (SCSU) and to the Metro Bus Transit Center in downtown St. Cloud in August 2011. Additional weekday afternoon departures were added from SCSU at 3:45, 4:45 and 6:15 and the downtown Transit Center at 3:40 and 4:40. Another option at SCSU is to board the Campus Clipper at 5:15 p.m. and transfer to the Link in East St. Cloud. In Becker, the morning and afternoon stops moved five minutes earlier to reflect actual travel time for the Link bus.

The cost to ride is \$1.25 to Becker and \$1.75 to the Northstar Commuter Rail station in Big Lake. Train tickets between Big Lake and Minneapolis are a separate rail fare (see Figure 3-5). Link fares are shown in Figure 3-10. The Northstar Corridor Development Authority approved a 2012 budget on December 1, 2011, that includes a fare increase for Northstar Link Commuter Bus, effective January 3, 2012. This is the first fare increase since the service began in November 2009. The increase will help offset operational costs, though the anticipated effect on ridership is not known.

Figure 3-10 Northstar Link Fares, Effective January 2012

Service/Fare Type	One-Way/Round Trip Fare
Cash (887)	\$1.75/\$3.25
Cash (887T/887V)	\$1.75
Cash (887F)	\$3.25/\$5.50
Cash (Becker)	\$1.25
10-Ride Pass	\$16.00/\$27.00
31-Day Pass	\$95.00

Amtrak’s Empire Builder

The Amtrak Empire Builder route provides rail transportation between Chicago and Seattle, with two stops in District 3, in St. Cloud and Staples. One eastbound and one westbound train stops daily at each station. Eastbound service stops in Staples at 4:09 AM and in St. Cloud at 5:14 AM, arriving in Minneapolis at 7:05 AM. Westbound service stops in St. Cloud at 12:40 AM and in Staples at 1:42 AM. Fares are based on distance. For example, a fare between Staples and Minneapolis is \$36.00. The schedule makes it unlikely for a commuter to use the service.

Intercity Bus Services

District 3 has only one intercity bus provider - Jefferson Bus Lines. Greyhound Bus operated service from Minneapolis to Fargo, with stops in St. Cloud and Alexandria, but eliminated these routes several years ago. Megabus provides service between Madison, WI, and Minneapolis, but does not provide trips into the District 3 region.

As a result, Jefferson Bus Lines is currently the only recipient of 5311(f) funds in District 3. Funding provided by 5311(f) is a subset of the rural and small urban transit funding program through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). To be eligible for 5311(f) funding, a service must address intercity needs of residents in non-urbanized areas. Funds can also be used for the infrastructure of the intercity bus network. Section 5311(f) funding is expressly restricted from being used for commuter service. For its 5311(f) funding allocations, the state prioritizes connections between regional trade centers in addition to connections from rural areas of the state to the Twin Cities.

KFH Consulting Group prepared the Minnesota Intercity Bus Network Study for MnDOT in April 2010. The study outlines federal and state policies governing the intercity bus network, the history of intercity bus lines, existing intercity services in the greater Minnesota region, population characteristics and service needs, and potential future networks. The study included a detailed survey of intercity bus riders, with a total of 180 respondents; 12% of respondents were using intercity bus service for work travel.

A recommended network expansion for 2010 in District 3 was a new link between Minneapolis to Virginia, via Princeton. Funds available through 5311(f) in Fiscal Year 2008 totaled \$1.8 million.

From the report, the most salient intercity bus program priorities for District 3 are continuing to support rural operations and provide for intercity bus services not eligible for Section 5311(f) funding, primarily regional services that address commuter needs. Additional program priorities include:

- Preferred service level of one additional midday round-trip and new services in areas of high potential need
- Encourage coordination with local transit
- Support infrastructure improvements
- Continue to provide and enhance user information
- Enhance coordination with neighboring states
- Provide non-local match for operation

Intercity bus routes are displayed in Figure 3-11, along with the urban services.

Jefferson Bus Lines

Jefferson Lines is a private intercity bus operator based in Minneapolis. Jefferson provides direct service to 65 Minnesota communities, 105 Midwest communities, and connections to more than 4000 destination in the United States, Canada and Mexico. Jefferson Lines operates over the road coaches 24 hours daily, 7 days per week and provides service for Greyhound within District 3.

Three routes operate in District 3 - Fargo to Minneapolis, Grand Forks to Minneapolis, and Sioux Falls to Minneapolis. The routes are listed below along with stops within District 3.

Service to Sioux Falls from Minneapolis operates outbound on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday, operating express to St. Cloud. Inbound, this service only operates Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday.

Two daily round trips between Fargo and Minneapolis stop in Alexandria and St. Cloud, with some runs also stopping in Monticello.

On Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, service from Grand Forks, ND, stops in Cass Lake, Walker, and Wadena, where passengers can transfer to the Fargo service for access to Minneapolis. Service from Minneapolis to Grand Forks operates on Monday, Friday, and Sunday.

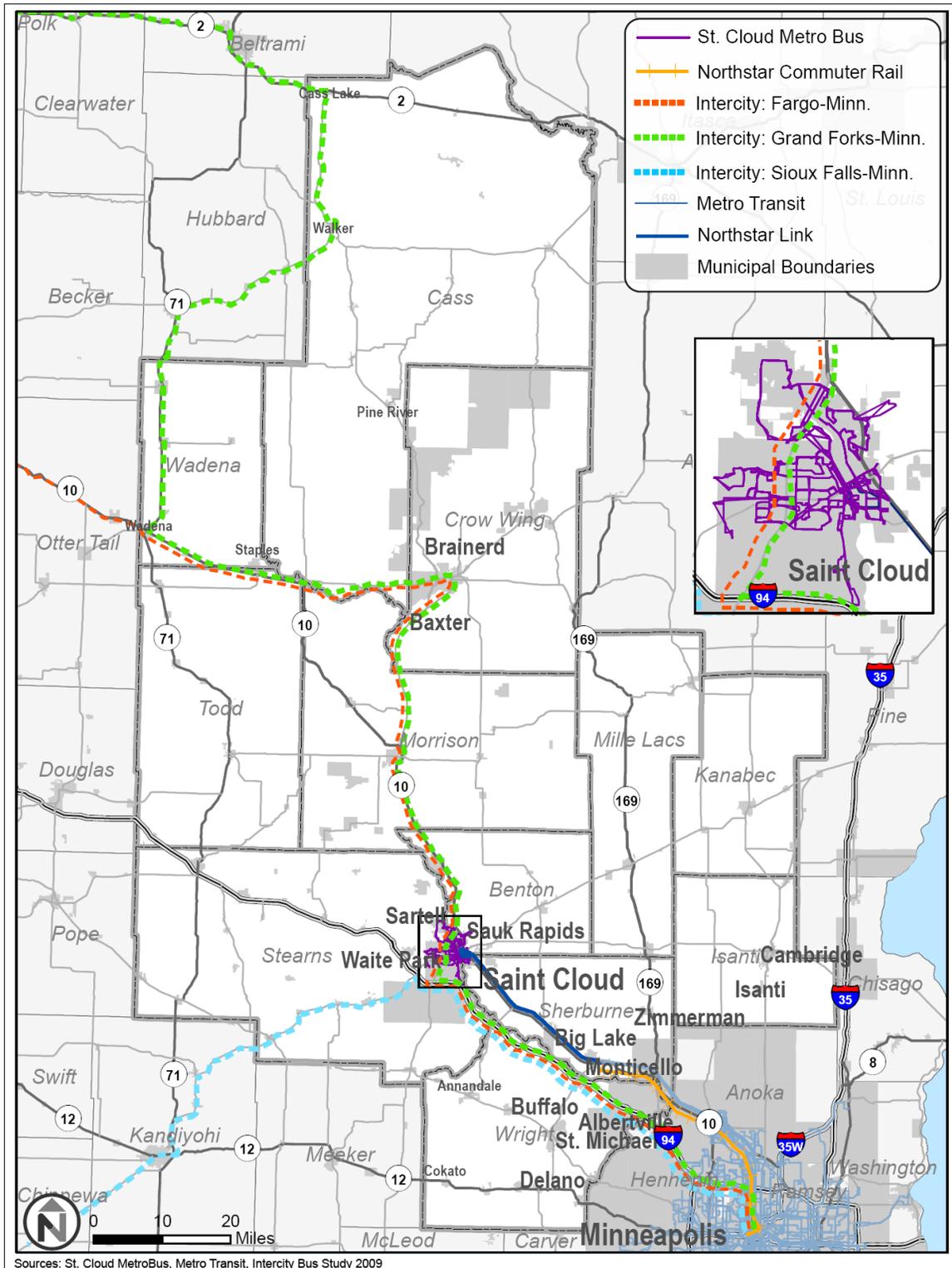
The following towns within District 3 are served by a Jefferson Lines route:

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| ▪ Alexandria | ▪ Paynesville |
| ▪ Brainerd | ▪ St. Cloud State - Atwood Center |
| ▪ Cambridge | ▪ St. Cloud - 1st Street |
| ▪ Cass Lake | ▪ Staples |
| ▪ Little Falls | ▪ Wadena |
| ▪ Maple Grove | ▪ Walker |
| ▪ Monticello | |

Jefferson Lines uses its own funds as a local match for 5311(f) funding, whereas many private companies expect state or local governments to provide this match. Jefferson Lines also works closely with local services to coordinate transfers and feeder service. Jefferson Lines cannot expressly serve commuters due to restrictions on 5311(f) funds; however, in an on-board survey conducted in 2008, 12% of riders on Jefferson Lines were traveling for work.¹

¹ Minnesota Intercity Bus Network Study. KFH Group, 2010.

Figure 3-11 Urban and Intercity Transit Routes



Voigt's Motorcoach Travel Inc.

Voigt is a private transportation service with a variety of full size coaches, mini-coaches and school buses as well as some other smaller vehicles available for group travel. They also provide parlor tours for special events, which are only available in the St. Cloud Area. Voigt also offers free shuttles to Mystic Lake Casino seven days a week with more than 50 stops throughout the Twin Cities Area. Stops within District 3 include St. Cloud, Buffalo, Rockford, Monticello, Cold Spring and Waite Park.

Airport Bus Services

Lakes Express

Lakes Express is a private transportation agency that provides shuttle access to the Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport daily from Brainerd, Baxter, Little Falls, St. Cloud, Monticello and Elk River. They provide service every two or three hours during the daytime, with multiple scheduled departure times from various locations. Same day round trip service starts at \$55.00. Lakes Express also has a 14-passenger van charter service for special reserved trips.

Executive Express

Executive Express provides an airport shuttle service and a private car/van charter service. Airport shuttles travel to both the Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport, and Des Moines. Pick up locations within District 3 include Baxter, St. Cloud, Little Falls, Camp Ripley, Cold Spring, Clearwater, Albany, Albertville, Alexandria, Monticello, Paynesville, Sartell, Sauk Centre, Sauk Rapids and Wadena. Home pick up locations are an additional charge, but are offered.

Other Charter Transportation Providers

Charter services could potentially contract to provide regional intercity commuter bus services. Many operators provide charter bus services in District 3. A sample of the largest charter bus services are listed below.

- **Reichert Bus Service.** Reichert Bus Service provides school bus service, chartered motorcoach service, transit service, day tours and limousine service. They are able to accommodate groups of 30-56 passengers on these motorcoaches and they also transport more than 6,000 area students each day, with over 80 school bus routes. Limousine service is centered in Brainerd.
- **Bemidji Bus Line, Inc.** Located in Bemidji, Minnesota, Bemidji Bus Line provides motorcoach transportation to all points in the United States and Canada. They can transport up to 47 or 55 people, depending on the bus size.
- **Trobec's Bus Service.** Trobec's provides motorcoach and charter school bus transportation. They team with Happy Trail Tours for extended vacations. Trobec's is located in Stephen and as of 2010, includes the former Palmer Charter Service's fleet, with an office in Little Falls.

Amtrak

Amtrak is a long distance national passenger train network of 15 total train lines covering 46 states and three Canadian provinces. Amtrak routes range anywhere from 764 miles to 2,438 miles. Seventy percent of miles traveled by Amtrak trains are on tracks owned by other railroads

that host their railroads. Amtrak's Empire Builder runs through District 3 via a BNSF hosted railroad, and continues beyond Minnesota. It is a long distance route of 2,257 miles between Portland/Chicago, and 2,206 miles between Seattle/Chicago via Spokane WA and St. Paul-Minneapolis, MN. Within District 3, the Empire Builder line stops in Staples, MN and in St. Cloud, MN. (www.amtrak.com).

In 2010 Amtrak's national network transported more than 28.7 million passengers, or an average of 78,000 passenger rides. In FY 2010 Amtrak set its own records in ridership and revenue along their national network. Since 2000, ridership has grown by 36%, and since 2002, Amtrak has cut its debt in half. Along the Empire Builder line, in FY 2005 ridership was at 387,014, up 8.9% from the previous year.

Taxi Providers

Taxi providers could potentially contract to provide public transportation services. A sample of the largest taxi providers are:

Taxi Plus, Inc d/b/a Orange Cab

Taxi Plus, Inc is a privately owned cab service currently serving Stearns, Wright, Benton, Sherburne (and Douglas) Counties. Taxis are based out of Alexandria, the St. Cloud Metro Area, Monticello, Albertville, and St. Michael. There is also limited support for neighboring communities.

Cambridge Cab

Cambridge Cab is a privately owned cab business located in Cambridge, primarily serving Isanti and Kanabec Counties. From Isanti and Kanabec Counties, the cab service will transport passengers to Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport, medical clinics, shopping centers, etc. Hours of operation are: Monday through Thursday from 7:00 AM to 11:00 PM; Friday and Saturday from 7:00 AM to 2:00 AM; and Sunday from 7:00-4:00 PM. In addition to cabs, the company has minivans that are not wheelchair accessible. Rates are \$3.50 per boarding and then \$2 per mile with a \$10 minimum if the pick-up is in Mora.

Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe – Grand Casino Bus Tours

Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe is a Tribal government that provides some transportation to Isle/Vineland, offers casino shuttle service, human service rides, and medical rides. There are also a number of regional bus tour operators that frequently visit Grand Casino Mille Lacs. Within District 3, there are three day-trip tours that come from St. Cloud (Neil Thesing Tours), the Cambridge Area (Harold's Tours) and the Brainerd Area (Wally Thesing Tours). Beyond District 3, there are several trips from the Twin Cities Area, Mankato, Rochester, and Duluth, as well as services to and from Wisconsin, Canada, and Iowa.

Urban Services

The only large urban service in the district is operated in St. Cloud by Metro Bus.

St. Cloud Metro Bus

Metro Bus is operated by the St. Cloud Metropolitan Transit Commission. Metro Bus service includes fixed route and Dial-A-Ride service throughout the region and seasonal transit service to the St. Cloud State University campus. A map of the Metro Bus service area is presented in Figure 3-12.

Metro Bus, including both fixed route and demand response services, is currently owned and operated by the St. Cloud Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC), established in 1969 by the Minnesota State Legislature as a transit authority of the State of Minnesota. The MTC service area includes the cities of St. Cloud, Sauk Rapids, Waite Park, and Sartell. Within this region, the MTC operates 15 regular fixed routes on weekdays, 11 on Saturdays, and 10 on Sundays. Serving St. Cloud State University, Metro Bus operates four local and one express “Campus Clipper” bus routes on weekdays during the school year and the “Husky Shuttle” service at SCSU on weekdays during the day and weekend nights. Three late night routes serving SCSU and downtown St. Cloud are operated on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights. Finally, a point-deviated route serving the University and surrounding areas is operated during the evening, seven days per week during the school year. The MTC also operates a demand-response Dial-A-Ride service to serve customers with disabilities as well as the general public at times when fixed-route service does not operate.

The St. Cloud Metropolitan Area 2035 Transportation Plan includes several transit action items that will impact Metro Bus, including the need to work with MnDOT on Transit Oriented Development policies and to collaborate between Metro Bus and local jurisdictions to identify park-and-ride sites for future development and funding. The plan also recommends evaluating TDM and transit service during upcoming corridor studies.

Seventy five percent (75%) of Metro Bus 2010 operating expenses were spent on fixed-route services and the remainder on Dial-A-Ride. Total revenue was fairly consistent between 2010 and 2011, while operating cost increased slightly for the same time period.

Total operating expenses for Metro Bus in 2010 equaled \$10,331,857. The standard fare for a one-way trip by the general public is \$1.00, with a \$0.25 charge for a transfer.

Figure 3-12 St. Cloud Metro Bus System

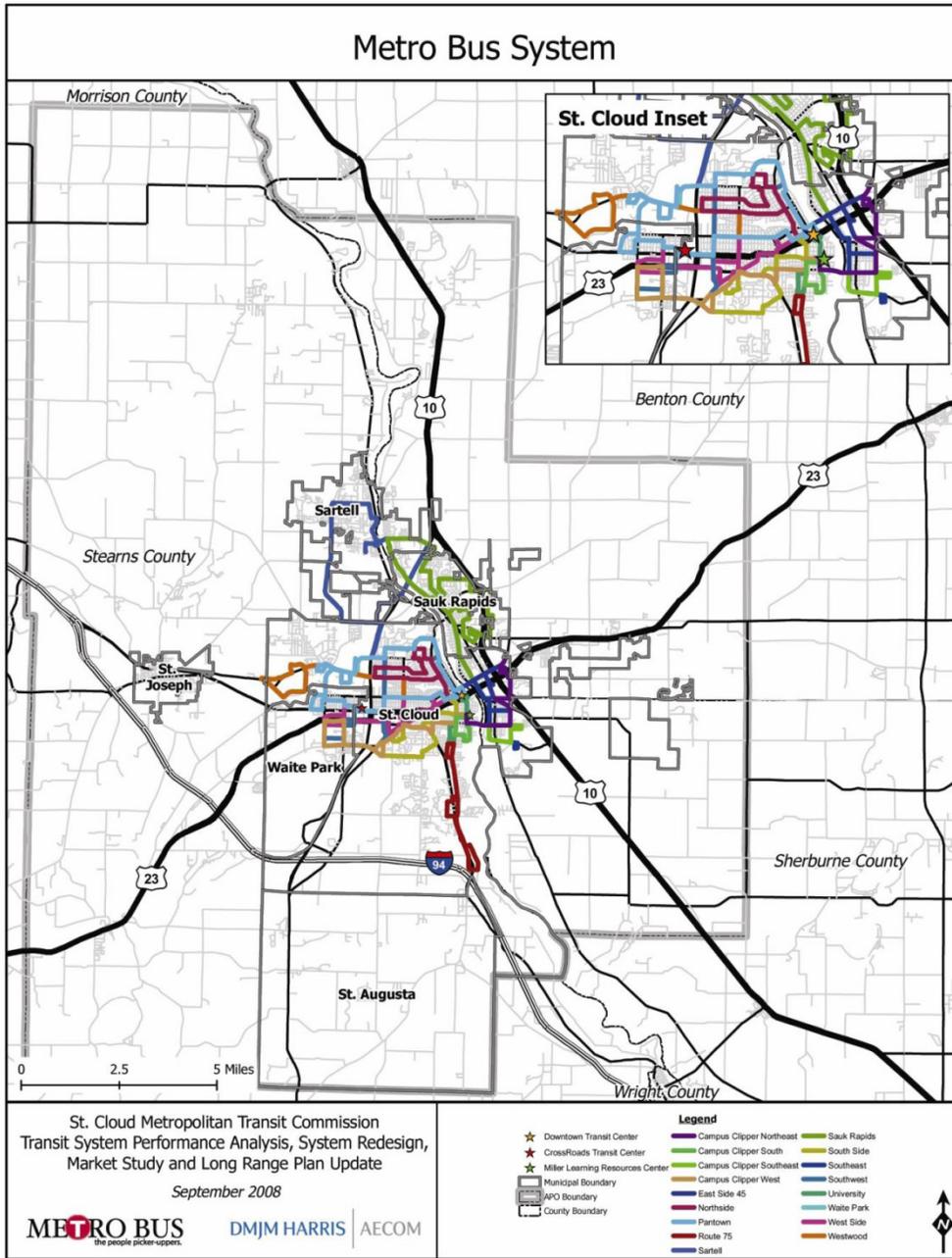
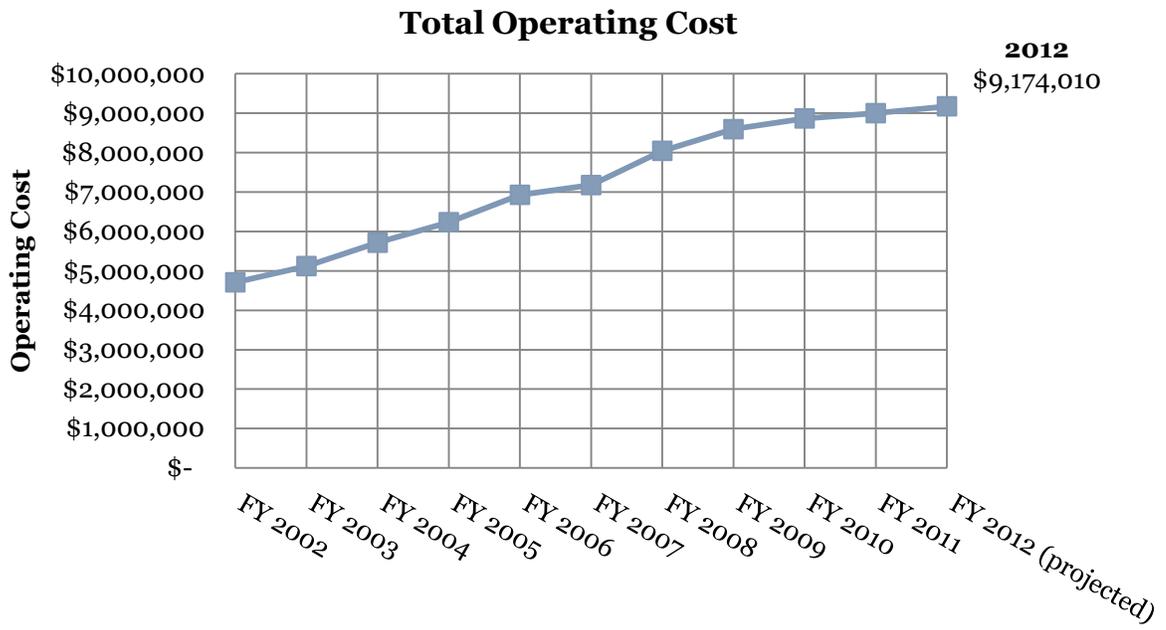
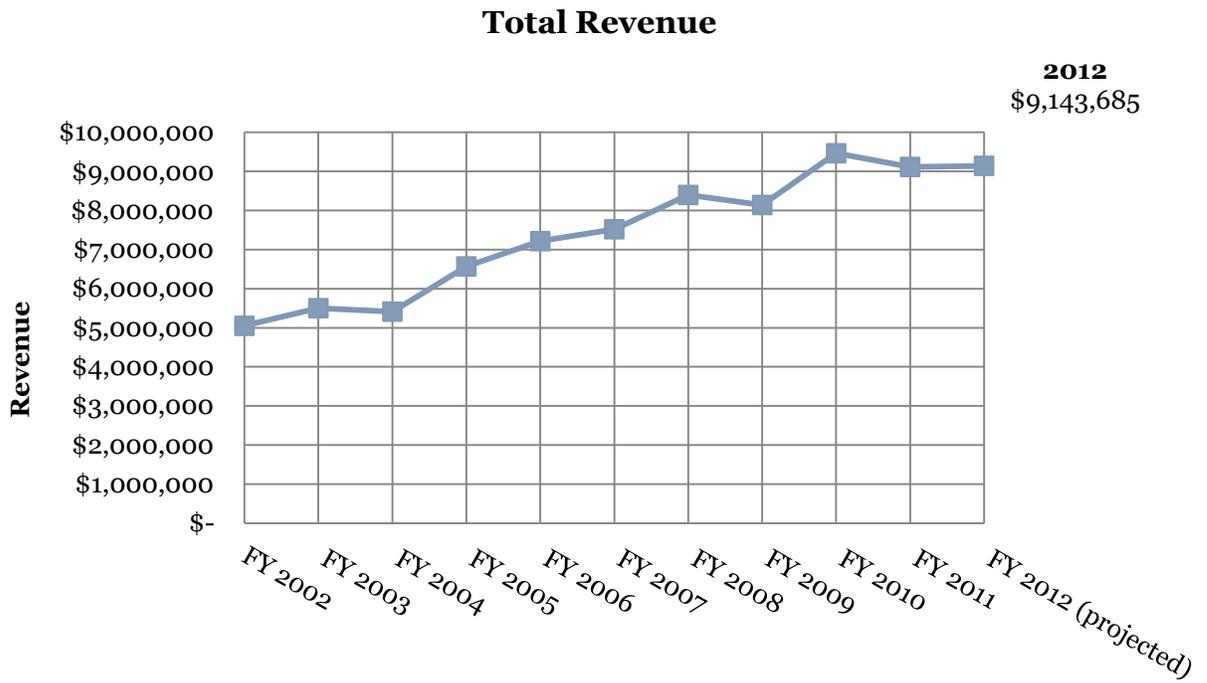


Figure 3-13 Revenues and Costs for Metro Bus



St. Cloud Metro Bus Fixed Routes

Fixed route ridership has increased by 21,547 from 2010 to 2011, with a 2011 ridership of 2,303,327. The SCSU routes operate more daily fixed route revenue miles than regular fixed routes, and also have higher fixed route revenue hours. For purposes of this summary, all fixed routes are summarized in Figure 3-14, Figure 3-15, and Figure 3-16. Fixed-route service hours have also increased to build ridership, although passengers per revenue hour declined slightly between 2010 and 2011, from 27.2 to 26.0.

Figure 3-14 Metro Bus Fixed Route Ridership, 2010-2011

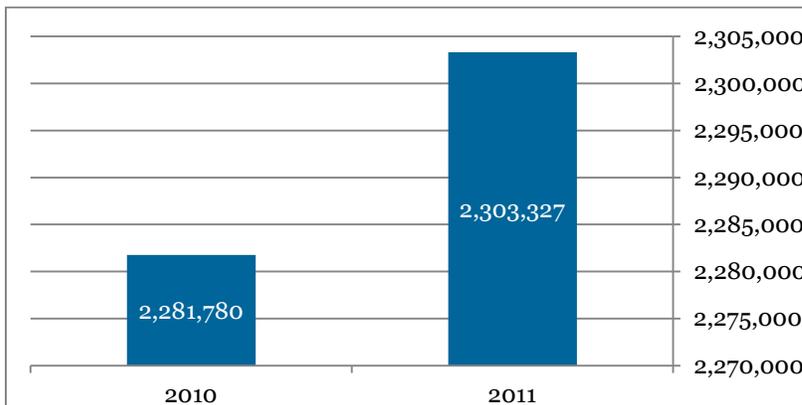


Figure 3-15 Metro Bus Fixed Route Service Hours, 2010-2011

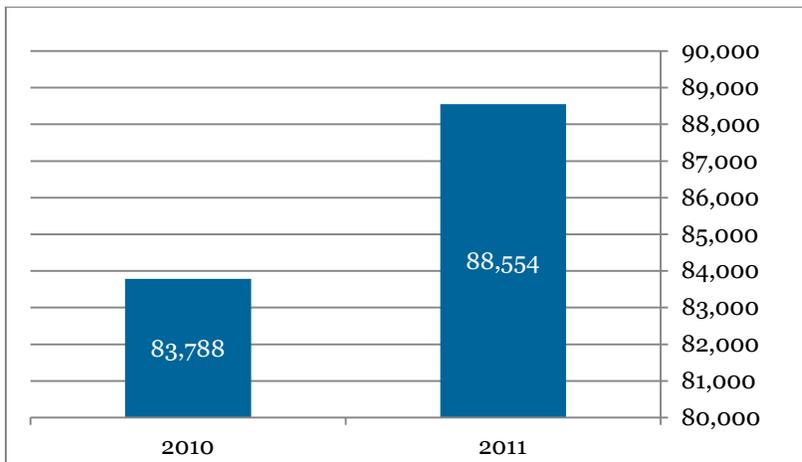
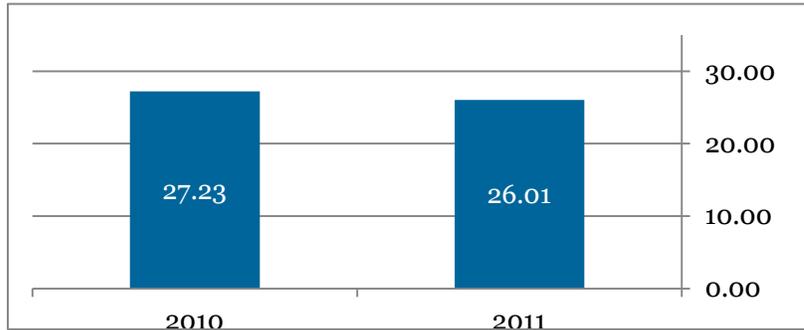


Figure 3-16 Fixed Route Passengers per Revenue Hour, 2010-2011



St. Cloud Metro Bus Dial-A-Ride

Metro Bus Dial-A-Ride is a shared ride service that requires advance reservations. Dial-A-Ride is available seven days a week for those who are unable to ride the regular fixed-route bus system. Dial-A-Ride offers two types of services: driver-assisted specialized services and general public service. Specialized services are available for individuals with disabilities who are unable to ride fixed routes and require door-through-door driver-assisted service. Users of specialized services must complete an eligibility process before using the service. The general public may use Dial-a-Ride service for late night travel after the last fixed route, until 12:00 a.m. (Monday-Friday). Metro Dial-A-Ride fares are listed in Figure 3-17 below.

Figure 3-17 Metro Bus Dial-a-Ride Fare

Type	Fare
Single Ride	\$2.00
10-Ride Card	\$20.00
31-Day Pass	\$66.00
Agency Fare*	\$3.75

*An agency fare is paid by a social service agency or other organization that schedules a trip a client, and is billed directly to the agency.

Annual ridership on the Dial-a-Ride was nearly 135,000 in 2011, up from 2010 by about 2,150 riders. Dial-a-Ride service hours in 2011 were at 40,928 hours, which is an increase of 803 hours over 2010. Passengers per revenue was virtually unchanged at a respectable 3 hourly passengers. These numbers are shown in Figure 3-18, Figure 3-19, and Figure 3-20.

Figure 3-18 Dial-A-Ride Ridership

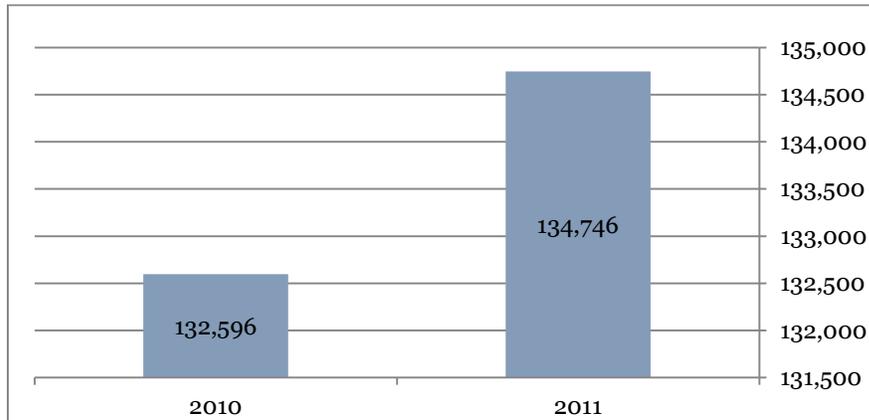


Figure 3-19 Dial-A-Ride Passengers per Revenue Hour

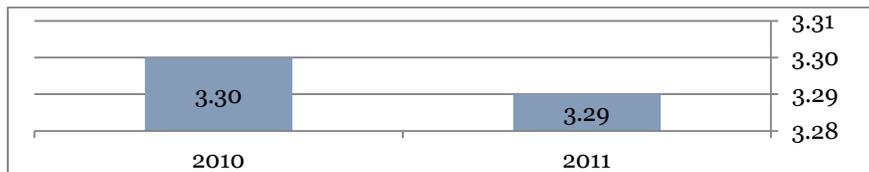
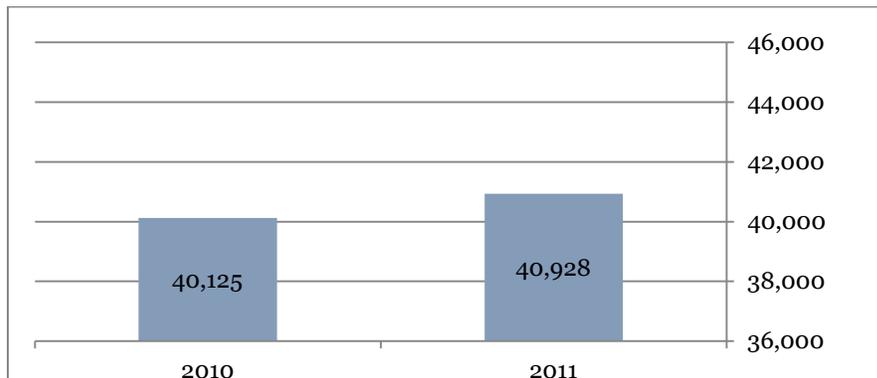


Figure 3-20 Dial-A-Ride Service Hours



St. Cloud Metro Bus Transit Centers

Currently, the Metro Bus system contains three transit centers where passengers can transfer between routes: The Crossroads Transit Center, the Downtown Transit Center, and the Miller Learning Resources Center stop at St. Cloud State University.

The Downtown Transit Center is the largest of the Metro Bus transfer facilities, serving 11 of 15 regular routes. The facility is located off-street at the corner of 5th Avenue S. and 1st Street S., and includes nine bus bays for Metro Bus, two bays for Jefferson Lines, a permanent building structure with restrooms, tickets, information, and an indoor waiting area, and customer service center. Route schedules are coordinated for passenger ease in transferring between routes at this facility – most routes depart at 15 or 45 minutes past the hour.

The Crossroads Transit Center is located at Crossroads Center, a shopping mall on Division Street between MN 15 and Waite Avenue in Waite Park. The transit facility includes two heated bus

shelters and is served by the Waite Park, Pantown, West Side, Southwest, and Sartell Routes. Route schedules at this facility are not coordinated.

The SCSU Routes, with the exception of the Husky Shuttle daytime service, all serve the Metro Bus stop in front of the Miller Learning Resources Center at 4th Avenue S. and 7th Street S. Passenger amenities comprise two sheltered stops and benches. Routes serving this stop include the four local and one express Campus Clipper routes, the three Late Nite routes, the evening Husky Shuttle, and the Sundowner, as well as the University Route.

Metro Bus recently completed an analysis of the current bus system, which included an analysis of the transit centers. A recommended plan was prepared to guide Metro Bus through a staged implementation plan of service changes and expansion. The route proposals call for the continuation of downtown St. Cloud as a major focal point and hub for the bus system. The recommendations note that there is a need for a downtown terminal that affords a convenient location for passengers to transfer and be provided some level of amenities as well as intermodal connections with Jefferson Bus Lines. The recommended plan includes making improvements to the current site and utilization of adjacent parcels.

Local and Rural Bus Services

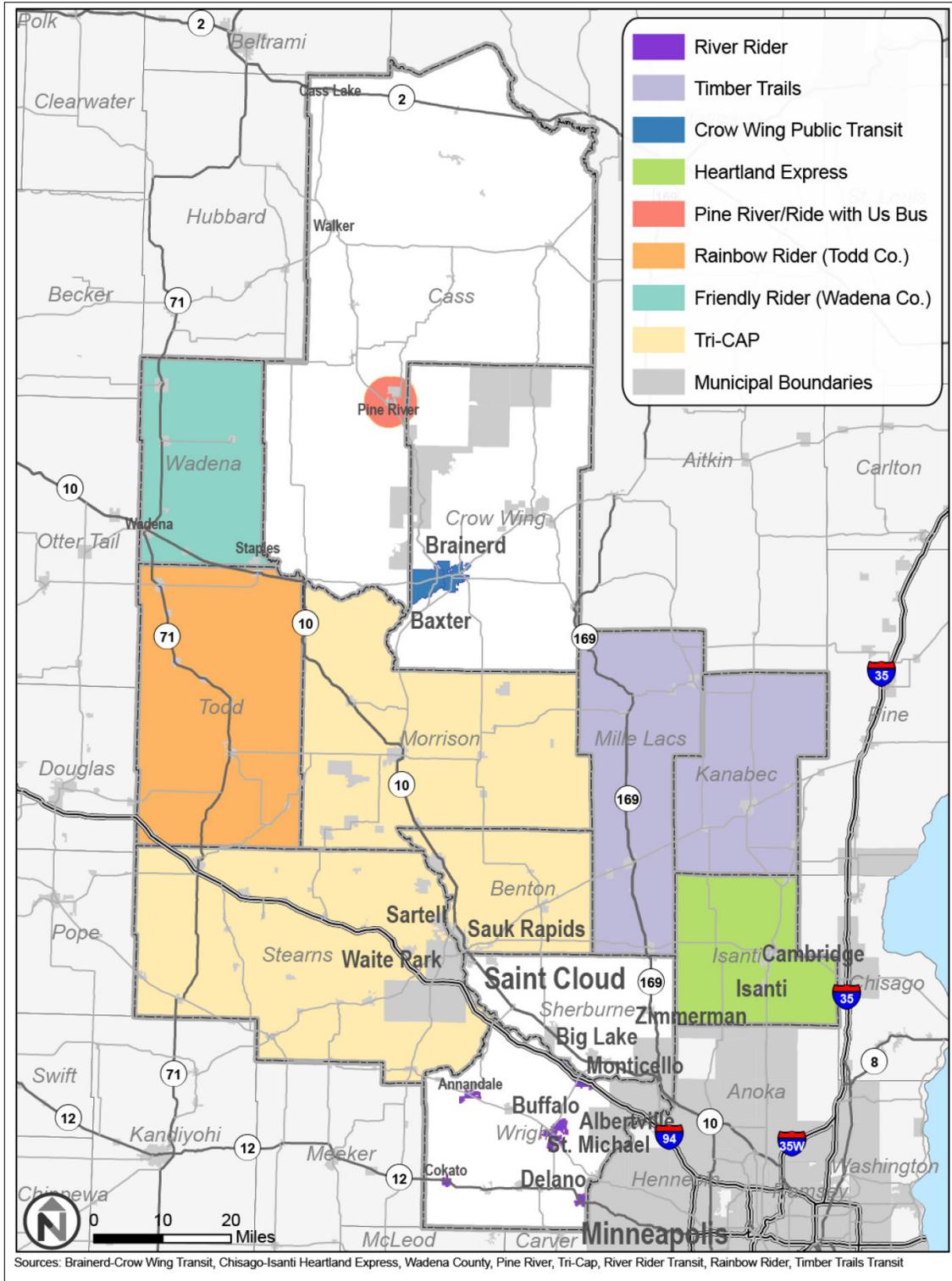
The following section describes local and rural bus services in District 3. Some of these services could function as feeder bus services to regional commuter bus or rail services, or they could operate commuter bus services directly.

Sources for this data are Local Human Transit Coordination Plans, 2010 Transit Report, and the transit providers. Local and rural public transit providers in District 3 are summarized in Figure 3-21 and shown on the map on Figure 3-22.

Figure 3-21 Local and Rural Public Transit Providers in District 3

Provider	District 3 Service Area	Service Type
Brainerd-Crow Wing Public Transit	Cities of Brainerd and Baxter Crow Wing County	Fixed express (Brainerd-Baxter) Dial-A-Ride (Brainerd) Limited Dial-A-Ride (County)
Chisago-Isanti County Heartland Express	Isanti County	Dial-A-Ride
Friendly Rider Transit	Wadena County	Dial-A-Ride
Pine River "Ride with Us Bus"	Pine River (Cass County)	Dial-A-Ride
Rainbow Rider	Todd County	Dial-A-Ride Volunteer Drivers
RiverRider	Sherburne County Wright County	Route deviation Dial-A-Ride
Timber Trails Public Transit	Kanabec County Mille Lacs County	Dial-A-Ride
Tri-CAP Transit Connection	Benton County Morrison County Stearns County	Dial-A-Ride Limited regional express Deviated routes

Figure 3-22 Local and Rural Bus Services in District 3



Brainerd/Crow Wing Public Transit

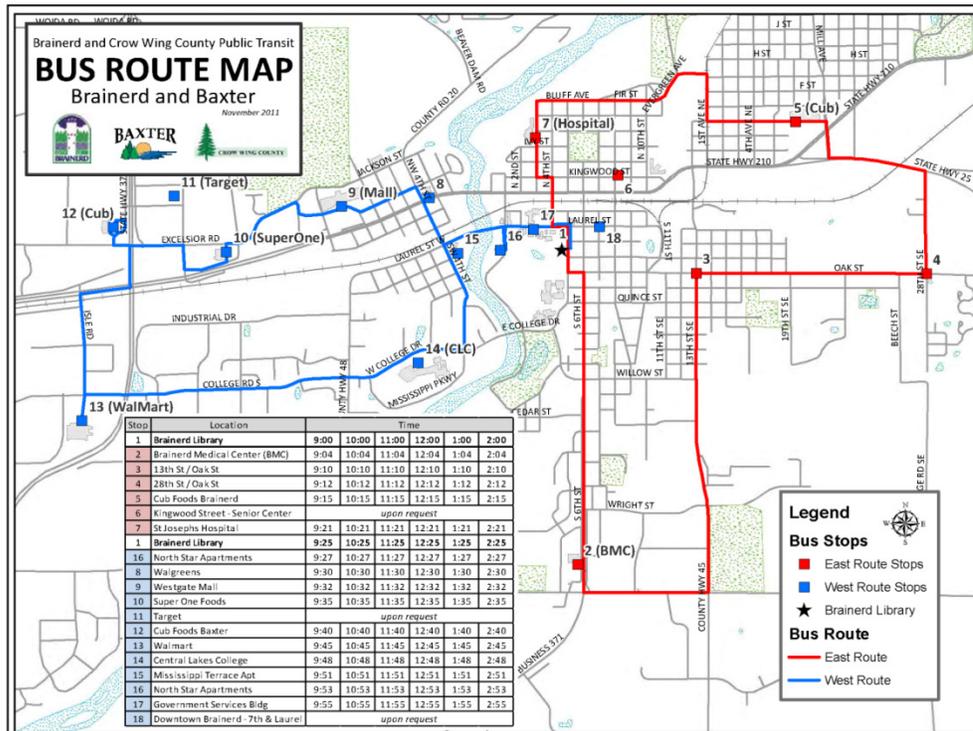
Dial-A-Ride Service

Within the City of Brainerd a dial-a-ride service is available for individual and group needs. Passengers call the dispatch number by 1:00 PM the day prior to the desired trip and a ride will be arranged. In the greater Crow Wing County area, a combination of flexible routes and Dial-A-Ride service is available on a limited basis. Again, passengers call the dispatch number by 1:00 PM the day prior to the desired trip and a ride will be arranged. The Dial-A-Ride service can be used for trips for shopping, medical appointments, work, and recreational opportunities. The system is supported by eight Class 400 vehicles, with service Monday through Friday from 7:15 AM to 4:30 PM. There is no service on Saturday or Sunday. The one-way fare within Brainerd is \$1.00; outside Brainerd it is \$2.00 one-way. Same-day service is available for double the fare.

Brainerd-Baxter Express Route

Effective May 2, 2011, an Express Route serving the cities of Brainerd and Baxter was resumed. The buses are equipped with a wheelchair lift and bike racks. Hours of service are Monday through Friday from 9 AM to 3 PM. A single ride costs \$1.00; a pass, worth 10 rides, costs \$10.00. Children five and younger ride for free. Figure 3-23 provides the Express Route map for this service that runs six trips per day in the morning and early afternoon.

Figure 3-23 Brainerd-Baxter Express Route



Source: Brainerd/Crow Wing Public Transit

Chisago-Isanti County Heartland Express

Heartland Express is a rural public transportation system serving area residents in Isanti and Chisago County. Heartland Express provides curbside service and is open to all riders. All of the drivers have a Commercial Drivers License and all buses are accessible and lift-equipped. Heartland Express has 12 sedans and 11 medium buses (16-18 per bus) with 2-4 wheelchair capacity. Riders must reserve service by noon the working day before the ride. Assistance is provided to and from the vehicles upon rider request. Staff spends 172 hours a month arranging rides. Hours of service are Monday through Friday from 6:00 AM to 5:30PM. Additional hours are from 5:30 to 8:00 PM, and half days on Saturdays and Sundays have been expressed as a desired improvement.

The fares for this service are as follows:

- Senior Dining Bus: Free, or \$.75 donation
- In-City Senior Fare: \$.75 one way
- City Zones: \$1.50 one way
- Isanti Corridor \$2.00 one way
(Braham to Cambridge; Isanti to Cambridge; Pine Brook to Cambridge)
- Border Zone \$3.50 one way
(Townships of North Branch, Oxford, Athens, Stanford, Spencer Brook, Wyanett and Dalbo into the City of Isanti, Cambridge or Braham)

Friendly Rider Transit

Friendly Rider Transit operates Dial-A-Ride service throughout Wadena County and provides service to the general population, seniors and people with disabilities. The service also extends into the City of Staples and Todd County. Public transit works in conjunction with the Wadena County Volunteer Driver Program. Friendly Rider has 4 Class 400 buses with lift capacity. Service is provided Monday through Friday from 7:15 AM to 5:30 PM, Saturday from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM, and on Sunday from 8:00 AM to 12:30 PM.

The fares for this service are as follows:

- 0-2 miles one way: \$1.25
- 2-9 miles one way: \$2.50
- Over 9 miles one way: \$3.75

Pine River “Ride with Us Bus”

The City of Pine River in Cass County operates the public Pine River “Ride with Us Bus” up to three miles outside the city limits. Pine River Ride with Us Bus is City-owned and operated with funding from federal and state assistance. Pine River Ride with Us Bus is a first come, first served system and operates with one Class 300 disability-accessible vehicle. Service hours are Monday through Friday 8:45 AM to 4:15 PM. There is no service on Saturday and Sunday.

The fare schedule for this service is as follows:

- In Town: \$1.00 one way
- Town Limit- 1 mile: \$1.25 one way
- 1-2 miles: \$1.50 one way
- 2-3 miles: \$1.75 one way
- Each additional stop: \$0.75

There is also a \$12.00 ride ticket available at a discounted rate of \$11.00. Service is free of charge for passengers going to Super Valu to shop on Tuesdays courtesy of Jerry's Super Valu.

Rainbow Rider

Rainbow Rider is a public transportation system serving residents of all ages, covering the counties of Douglas, Pope, Stevens, Travers and Todd. There are no income or age restrictions. Rainbow Rider offers door to door bus service to any destination within the six-county Minnesota area and also offers a Volunteer Driver Program, in which volunteer drivers provide rides. Rainbow Rider has 29 Class 400 vehicles, one Class 500 vehicle, and two vans. All buses offer a child seat and are complete with accessible lifts. Hours of service in Todd County are Monday through Friday, 7:30 AM to 4:30 PM. Reservations can be made up to one week in advance.

The fares for this service are as follows:

- 5 and under mile trip: \$2.00
- 5.1-10 mile trip: \$4.00
- 10.1 to 20 mile trip: \$5.00
- Each add. 10 miles: \$2.00

RiverRider Public Transit

RiverRider operates in Sherburne and Wright Counties and provides route deviation and dial-a-ride services. Public transit service is provided in the cities of Annandale, Buffalo, Elk River and Monticello and their surrounding communities and townships. The service is open to the public and has seven Class 400 vehicles and seven Class 500 vehicles. The route from St. Cloud to Elk River stops at the Metro Bus hub, a restaurant in Clear Lake and the McDonald's in Becker. The route from Annandale utilizes a stop in Maple Lake. Service hours are Monday through Friday from 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM. The base fare is \$1.25.

Timber Trails Public Transit

Timber Trails Public Transit operated as a nonprofit agency until January 1, 2011 when it became a department of Kanabec County. Timber Trails serves both Kanabec and Mille Lacs Counties – providing public transit and accessible transportation (formerly known as a volunteer driver program for Medical Assistance in both counties). Timber Trails also coordinates the Veteran's transportation in both counties. The programs share dispatch time, which allows Timber Trails to have adequate dispatch time for all programs. Timber Trails' operations center is located in Milaca where the three buses are housed. The buses that serve Kanabec County are housed in a facility in Ogilvie.

Tri-CAP Transit Connection

Tri-CAP has buses operating in rural Benton, Morrison, and Stearns Counties five days per week. The bus service is available to the general public with no age or income requirements. Tri-CAP has one Class 300 vehicle, nine Class 400 vehicles, two Class 500 vehicles, and two Class 600 vehicles. All buses are accessible. Bus reservations can be made up to two weeks in advance. Tri-CAP provides curb-to-curb service in designated areas. Tri-CAP provides the following transit options:

In Morrison County:

- MorrTrans DAR (Dial-A-Ride): Monday-Friday, 7 AM-4:45 PM. Provides service in Morrison County within 10 mile radius of Government Center as time and space permits.
- Little Falls: Monday-Friday, 7 AM – 4:45 PM. Serves Little Falls City.
- Shoppers Express: Tuesday and Thursday, 9:00AM-2:30 PM. Fixed routes serve various housing communities in the city of Little Falls.
- Deviated Routes:
 - Little Falls to St. Cloud via Royalton, Bowlus and Upsala, Mondays, departing Little Falls between 8:00 AM and 8:30 AM and arriving St. Cloud at 10:00 AM; leaving St. Cloud at 2:45 PM and arriving in Little Falls at 4:30 PM.
 - Upsala, Swanville, Flensburg and Sobieski to Little Falls, Tuesdays and Fridays, arriving Little Falls at 1:00 PM and leaving at 3:00 PM
 - Upsala, Elmdale, Bowlus, and Royalton to Little Falls, Wednesdays, arriving Little Falls at 1:00 PM and leaving at 3:00 PM
 - Little Falls to Pierz, with local Pierz service, Fridays between 8:25 AM and 10:45 AM, returning to Little Falls at 11:15 AM.

In Benton County:

- Dial-A-Ride (DAR): Monday – Friday, 6:45 AM – 4:30 PM. Provides service in Stearns and Benton County (outside of Metro Bus area) as space permits within a 20 mile radius of Stearns County Government Center in Downtown St. Cloud.
- Tri-CAP also provides a St. Cloud to Foley route on Thursdays, leaving St. Cloud at 9:15 AM and arriving in Foley at 10:00 AM.

Stearns County:

- Dial-A-Ride (DAR): Monday – Friday, 6:45 AM – 4:30 PM. Provides service in Stearns and Benton County (outside of Metro Bus area) as space permits within a 20 mile radius of Stearns County Government Center in Downtown St. Cloud.
- Deviated Routes: Monday – Thursday (see schedule below).
 - Sauk Centre to Willmar via Elrosa, Brooten, Belgrade, and Paynesville on first Monday of the month, departing Sauk Centre at 7:30 AM and returning at 4:15 PM.
 - Sauk Centre to St. Cloud via Melrose, Freeport, Albany, and Avon on Wednesdays, departing Sauk Centre at 7:30 AM and returning at 4:15 PM.
- Sauk Centre: Monday – Friday, 7:00 AM-4:45 PM. Serves Sauk Centre City and Township.
- Melrose: Monday- Friday, 7:30 AM-4:00 PM. In-City and DAR service is available.
- Albany: Tuesdays, 9:00 AM - 3:45 PM. Service is available within city limits of Albany.

- St. Joseph: Monday and Thursday, 9:00AM-3:45 PM. Service is available within the city limits of St. Joseph and shuttles into St. Cloud.

The fare schedule for these services are as follows:

- Community “in town” trips are \$1.25 per boarding or stop, due at time of each boarding or stop.
- Rural trips (city to city or rural to city) are \$3.00 per boarding or stop.
- Any additional stop will be charged as follows: Within a community, \$1.25; rural or city-to-city is \$3.00.

According to Tri-CAP, most trips are for work and medical appointments. Tri-CAP also works with the Retired & Senior Volunteer Programs (RSVP).

The Transportation Resource Center (TRC) is a project of Tri-CAP Inc., created in 2008 to be the central access point for transportation in the five-county region of Benton, Morrison, Sherburne, Stearns and Wright. The TRC functions as a mobility management organization to match riders with the most suitable and cost-effective transportation resource, helping to address unmet transportation needs by providing medical rides to senior and disabled residents and helping residents explore options for other types of trips.

Other Transportation Services

Several additional transportation services are available in each District 3 county, including specialized services for older adults and persons with disabilities as well as private transportation companies. None of these providers serve the commuter populations in District 3. A table listing the providers by county is available in Appendix B.

STUDIES EVALUATING THE INTEGRATION OF PUBLIC TRANSIT AND HUMAN SERVICE TRANSPORTATION

Three separate Public Transit-Human Service Transportation Coordinated Plans were developed in the study area, one for each of the three Regional Development areas. These documents are noted below because they indicate efforts have been ongoing to advance mobility and transportation options in the region.

Region 7W Regional Coordinated Public Transit and Human Services Coordination Plan (Covering Benton, Sherburne, Stearns and Wright Counties)

This coordination plan was prepared by the St. Cloud APO and Region 7W Economic Development District in 2006 in order to access Federal Transit Administration funds available to support transportation programs targeted to seniors, persons with disabilities, and persons with low income. The plan collates information about transportation providers in the four-county region – including private providers operating commuter service – but briefly describes service hours and levels of service for public and nonprofit providers only. Importantly, the plan was compiled before the opening of Northstar Link commuter rail.

Prioritized recommendations in the plan are as follows:

- Improve agency coordination and communication (esp. regarding funding)
- Implement volunteer reimbursement and need for more drivers
- Investigate private/public partnerships
- Implement mobility management
- Explore insurance issues

Region Five Public Transportation-Human Services Coordination Plan (Including the counties of Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison, Todd and Wadena)

This 2006 coordinated plan includes information about public transit and nonprofit providers in the five-county region as well as about service gaps and unmet needs in the region. The region is extremely rural with low population density, and with relatively few services in Cass, Morrison and Todd Counties; Crow Wing and Wadena have more transit services available. No listing of private operators in the five counties is provided. The primary goals of this plan are to:

- Meet minimum transportation needs
- Have one organization play the role of regional facilitator or dispatcher
- Communicate with Legislation about public transportation issues
- Share data more often to decrease data tracking costs
- Work on volunteer driver issues – insurance and reimbursement rates
- Document reporting by funded systems
- Increase public awareness
- Increase outreach using schools, churches, local papers
- Create a single source of transportation information
- Create an easy payment system

- Create regional mobility management
- Focus efforts on specific areas – Brainerd, Little Falls and Wadena
- Address insurance concerns

Region 7E Public Transit-Human Service Coordination Plan (East Central Minnesota – counties of Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine)

This 2006 coordinated plan focuses largely on a list of existing public transit, nonprofit and private providers in the area, documenting service characteristics and levels of service. A few private providers are listed; however, most transport school children and not commuters or the general public. The plan points out that the region is in close proximity to major urban areas, but is largely rural. The counties are all expected to grow in the coming decade, while many other regions of the state will see a population decline.

Unlike the other coordinated plans for the District 3 region, this plan points out the strong commuting culture in the counties of Region 7E. Over 53% of the population of Region 7E commutes outside of their home counties for work, compared to only 33% of Minnesota as a whole. In Isanti County, one of the highest statewide, this rate is over 60%.

Strategies include:

- Funding the cost to riders and the cost of services
- Increase education and coordination of available transportation
- Expand the hours/days/areas of transportation services
- Initiate a regional coordination committee
- Develop public transit services in un-served areas
- Assess the feasibility of developing a transportation mobility manager position
- Review JARC and New Freedom applications from a regional perspective

COMPARISON OF TRANSIT SERVICES

Figure 3-24 presents service hours in each of the counties in District 3, showing some variation by day of week in some of the counties. Metro Bus in the St. Cloud area operates the longest service hours of any of the operations. Figure 3-25 illustrates availability of service to demonstrate which services could potentially help serve as feeders to regional commuter routes (the figure shows very little service operates during AM peak and evening hours when feeder service would be required).

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Figure 3-24 Transit Service Hours (Fixed Routes, Demand-Response, Private Services, Veterans, Rail)

County	Transit Agency	Monday	Tuesday	Wednes.	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Benton	Tri-CAP	6:45 AM - 4:30 PM						
	St. Cloud Metro Bus	5:30 AM - 12 AM	8 AM - 6 PM	9 AM - 6 PM				
	Northstar Link*	5 AM-8:15 AM and 3:45-8 PM	5 AM-8:15 AM, 3:45-8 PM, and 1 Midday Round Trip MPLS/St Cloud	9:15 AM - 11:30 AM and 6:45 PM - 9 PM	8:30 AM - 10:45 AM and 4:30 PM - 7 PM			
	DAV Transportation Network	7:30 AM - 4:30 PM						
Cass	Pine River/Ride with Us Bus	8:45 AM - 4:25 PM						
	Lakes Express***	24 Hour	24 Hour	24 Hour				
Crow Wing	Crow Wing Public Transit	7:15 AM - 4:30 PM						
Isanti	Heartland Express	6 AM - 5:30 PM						
Kanabec	TimberTrails	7 AM - 5 PM						
Mille Lacs	TimberTrails	7 AM - 5 PM						
Morrison	Tri-CAP	7 AM - 4:45 PM						
Sherburne	St. Cloud Metro Bus	5:30 AM - 12 AM	8 AM - 6 PM	9 AM - 6 PM				
	RiverRider	7 AM - 5 PM						
	DAV Transportation Network	7:30 AM - 4:30 PM						
	Northstar Commuter Rail*	5-8 AM and 4-7 PM	10:30 AM - 12:15 PM and 1:30 PM to 8 PM	9:30 AM - 12:45 PM and 1:15 PM - 5:45 PM				
	Northstar Link*	5-8:15 AM and 3:45-8 PM	5-8:15 AM, 3:45-8 PM, and 1 Midday Round Trip MPLS to St Cloud	9:15 AM - 11:30 AM and 6:45 PM - 9 PM	8:30 AM - 10:45 AM and 4:30 PM - 7 PM			
Stearns*	Tri-CAP	6:45 AM - 4:30 PM						
	St. Cloud Metro Bus	5:30 AM - 12 AM	8 AM - 6 PM	9 AM - 6 PM				
	DAV Transportation Network	7:30 AM - 4:30 PM						
	Northstar Link*	5-8:15 AM and 3:45-8 PM	5-8:15 AM, 3:45-8 PM, and 1 Midday Round Trip MPLS to St Cloud	9:15 AM - 11:30 AM and 6:45 PM - 9 PM	8:30 AM - 10:45 AM and 4:30 PM - 7 PM			
Todd	RainbowRider	7:30 AM - 4:30 PM						

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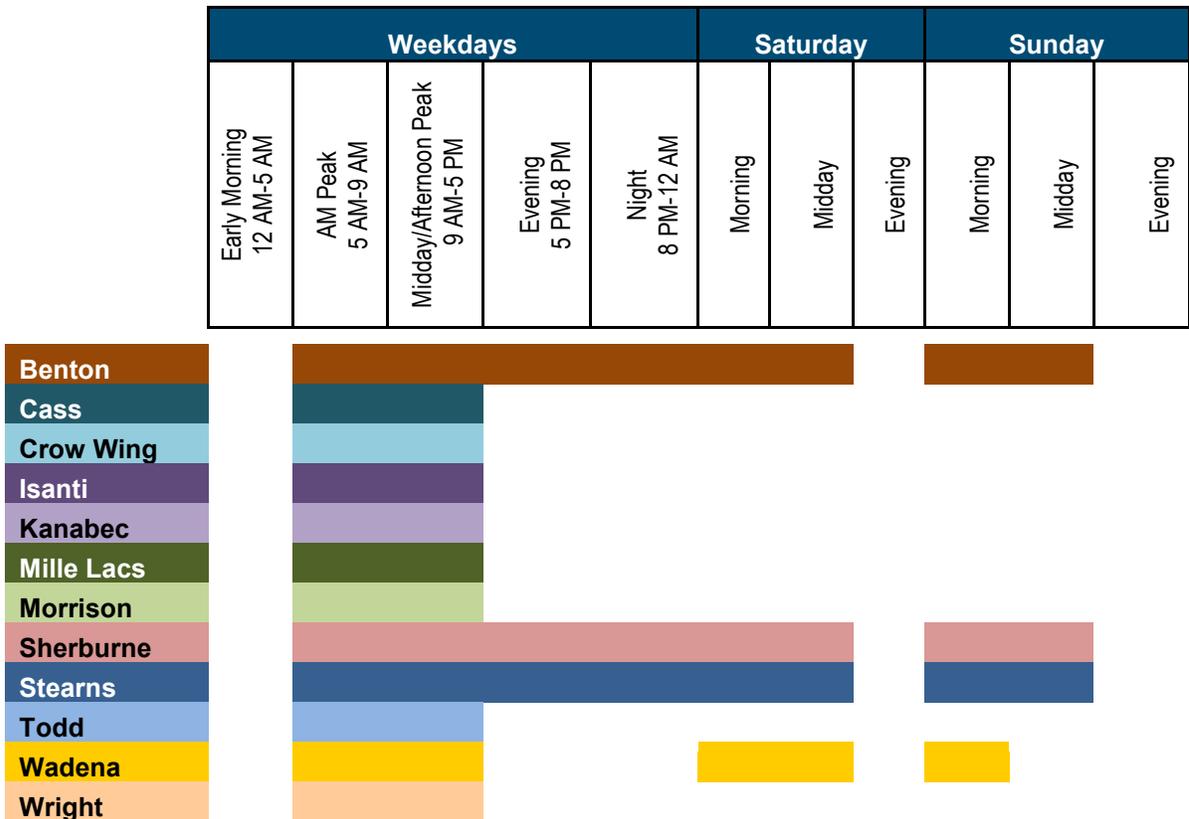
County	Transit Agency	Monday	Tuesday	Wednes.	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Wadena	FriendlyRider	7:15 AM - 5:30 PM	10 AM - 2 PM	8 AM - 12:30 PM				
Wright	RiverRider	7 AM - 5 PM	AM - 5 PM					
	Northstar Commuter Rail*	5-8 AM and 4-7 PM	10:30 AM - 12:15 PM and 1:30 PM to 8 PM	9:30 AM - 12:45 PM and 1:15 PM - 5:45 PM				

* Regional Service: Northbound/Southbound trip availability varies during the day.

** Disabled American Veterans Transportation Network

*** Lakes Express - 24/7 Shuttle Service Available to Airport

Figure 3-25 District 3 Counties General Public Bus Service Hours of Availability



TDM-RIDESHARING PROGRAMS AND EFFORTS

Minnesota Department of Transportation

MnDOT has several programs to support and encourage both transportation demand management (TDM) and ridesharing in Minnesota. Their website offers “how-to’s” on vanpooling, carpooling and using transit, as well as other promotional brochures for commuter programs. MnDOT sponsors periodic campaigns, which have included the following:

- **Give Your Car a Rest Campaign** to increase awareness of transportation options and to encourage rideshare use at least one day each week. MnDOT's goal is to reach out to employers who will encourage ridesharing.
- **Greater Minnesota Commuter Challenge** was designed to encourage ridesharing or TDM at least one day a week, with a number of promotional rewards and outreach activities.
- **Bike/walk week** is a promotional effort to reduce driving alone by encouraging groups to take action in using alternative modes of commuting.

Metropolitan Council

The Metropolitan Council in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area conducted a TDM Evaluation and Implementation Study in Aug 2010. The study inventoried TDM programs available in the Twin Cities, reviewed national best practices of TDM programs, and recommended strategies for the Twin Cities including identification of funding sources to support TDM. The study did not specifically address commuters from District 3, but included an analysis of US Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) data for the Twin Cities as well as regular reviews of congested corridors within the metropolitan area.

Several programs that the Metropolitan Council oversees in the Twin Cities are listed below:

- A regional TDM database is maintained by Metro Transit for many metropolitan area programs.
- Vanpools have been operating since 2000. The vans are administered by the Council, but managed through a contract with VPSI, a vanpool leasing company. Vanpool ridership has been rising steadily since implementation, and now 85 vans are registered to transport participants.
- Other programs include Guaranteed Ride Home, Parking Perks for Poolers, the Commuter Challenge, Transit Pass Products, and several others, primarily sponsored by the Metropolitan Council.

Transportation Management Organizations/Associations

There are four transportation management organizations/associations (TMOs or TMAs) in Minnesota, largely concentrated in or near Minneapolis:

- **494 Commuter Services** - This TMO focuses efforts in the Minneapolis suburbs of Bloomington, Richfield, Edina, Eden Prairie, and Minnetonka - all in Hennepin County. In addition to local services such as ridematching and a Guaranteed Ride Home program, they provide information on regional transportation resources such as regional transit and park and rides, many of which are applicable to commuters in District 3.
- **Downtown Minneapolis TMO (Commuter Connection)** - The Downtown Minneapolis TMO focuses on transportation partnerships and sustainability in the downtown Minneapolis area. The TMO, created by the City Council in 1991, is a partnership of the City of Minneapolis and downtown business community. Commuter Connection is the TDM program offered by the Downtown Minneapolis TMO.

- Anoka County TMO (Commute Solutions) - The Anoka County TMO, known as Commute Solutions, focuses on TDM programs serving Anoka County employers and transit advocacy projects.
- St. Paul Smart Trips - This St. Paul TMO offers public information and commuter options for employers in St. Paul. A key role of the TMO is advocacy on behalf of the Central Corridor LRT.

The Transportation Resource Center is working with other potential partners, including major employers, to potentially implement a TMA within District 3.

St. Cloud State University Rideshare

St. Cloud State offers ridematching services through the online Rideshare board. The board is available to students and employees of the University with the goal of enhancing ridesharing and carpooling.²

Vanpools in the Region

Often, vanpools provide a way to pilot more extensive regional commuter transportation programs.

For travel into the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, the Metropolitan Council oversees the Van-GO! Commuter Vanpool Program, helping to facilitate vanpool formation and the development of vanpool agreements. As of October 2011, 10 vanpools were operating from the study area to worksites or central locations south of the study area, including downtown Minneapolis. Figure 3-26 lists the existing vanpools based on data from MnDOT. Opportunities exist to promote and expand vanpools, especially those going to locations in the Minneapolis area. Figure 3-27 illustrates the general travel patterns of vanpools.

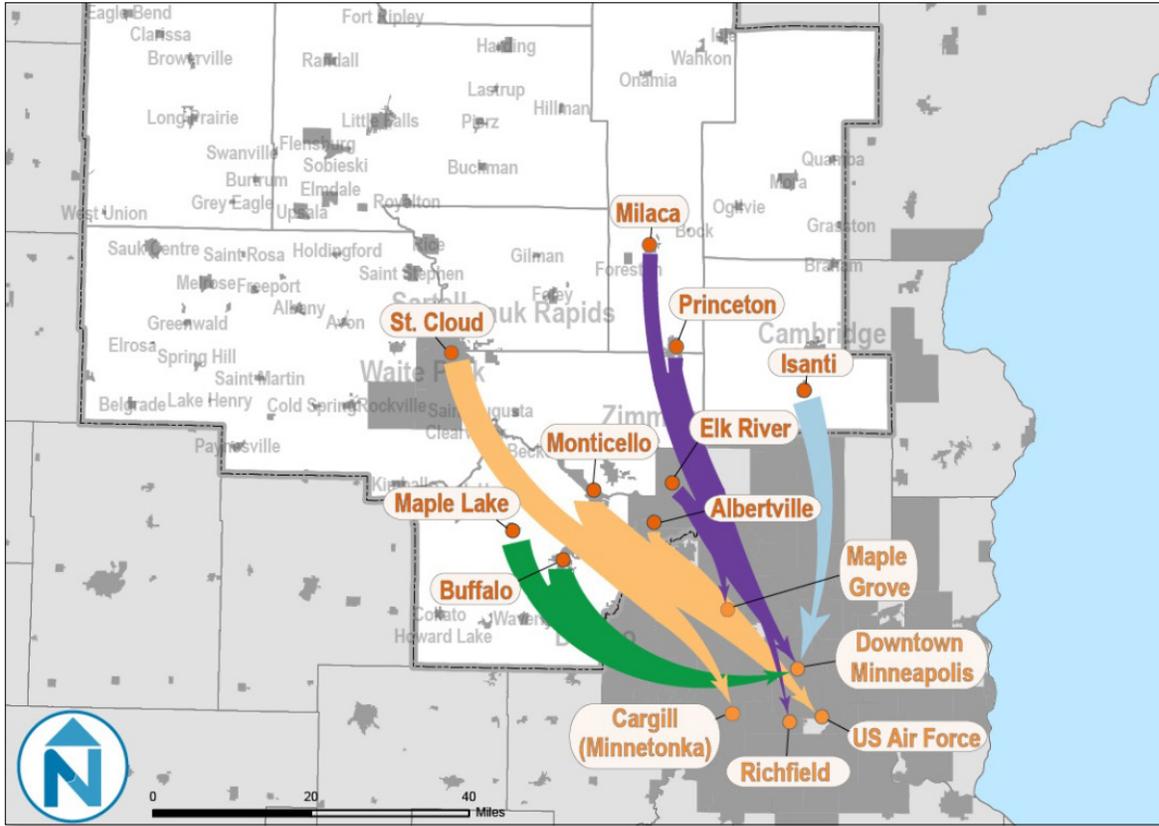
Figure 3-26 Regional Vanpools and Numbers of Users

Origin Town	Destination	Van Capacity	Available Seats
Albertville	Cargill Offices (Minnetonka)	7	1
Buffalo	Downtown Minneapolis	15	4
Elk River	US Air Force Base	7	Full
Isanti	Downtown Minneapolis	15	2
Maple Lake	Downtown Minneapolis	15	2
Milaca	Boston Scientific (Maple Grove)	7	Full
Monticello	US Air Force Base	14	Full
Princeton	Best Buy (Richfield)	7	Full
St. Cloud	Cargill Offices (Minnetonka)	7	2
St. Cloud	Downtown Minneapolis	7	Full

Source: Minnesota Department of Transportation

² <http://www.stcloudstate.edu/atwood/rideshare.asp>

Figure 3-27 Regional Vanpools Map



Source: Minnesota Department of Transportation and NelsonWygaard Associates

CONCLUSION

Transit service coverage in District 3 is relatively comprehensive, especially when compared with transit service in other rural areas. Almost all of the counties have some type of general public lifeline service, and some deviated fixed routes and regularly scheduled fixed routes operate in the most populous communities. By state statute, the Minnesota DOT must analyze transit needs in Greater Minnesota (outside of the Twin Cities metro area) and quantify service gaps and unmet needs. Targets for meeting needs identified by the legislature are as follows:

- Meet 80% of transit service needs by 2015
- Meet 90% of transit needs by 2025
- Identify costs of meeting 100% of transit needs every five years from 2010 to 2030

The 2010 MnDOT Greater Minnesota Transit Investment Plan found the percentage of passenger demand met by transit in 2009 was 61%. The percentage of transit service hours needed to meet demand was determined to be 57% of what was required. District 3 contains several counties with large service hour gaps, according to the plan, including Wright, Sherburne, Benton and Stearns. Priorities identified in the plan are:

- Expand service hours in the morning and night to provide more trips.
- Expand multi-county services to link more communities.
- Provide service on more days of the week.
- Expand service frequencies and coverage.
- Expand service to provide consistent levels of service statewide.

In District 3, as is common in other parts of Minnesota, many counties have separate general public service providers and providers for seniors and people with disabilities. Although there are state funds and local funds for transit, most of the public providers are funded with formula grants for rural transit operators (Federal Section 5311 Funds), while most of the specialized providers are funded with Federal Section 5310 formula funds, which are administered by the State of Minnesota for transportation programs serving seniors and people with disabilities.

Opportunities exist for expanded transit services in District 3. One of the key challenges in addressing gaps in commuter transit services will be limited funding and the limitations of existing services, many of which have reduced service hours and infrequent headways.