



# NICOLLET MALL AND DOWNTOWN TRANSIT

Phase 2 Engagement Summary | December 2024 - January 2025



## Project & Engagement Overview

*The City of Minneapolis is relocating transit to create a more dynamic Nicollet Mall, and plans to enhance downtown transit service as a part of the project.*

This City-led project is informed by existing City transportation policy and recent recommendations for downtown vibrancy. Mayor Jacob Frey created the [Vibrant Downtown Storefronts Workgroup](#) in 2022, as a response to the increase in vacant storefronts in the downtown core. In 2024, the City published the [Downtown Action Plan](#), which further develops the concept of Nicollet Mall as a pedestrian- and bicycle-only (pedestrianized) space.

The objective of this transit-focused project is to make transit as good or better than it is today on Nicollet Mall. Two goals drive the project: to improve downtown transit and increase downtown vibrancy. Three options for moving transit service have been developed in partnership between the City of Minneapolis and Metro Transit.

Phase 1 of Nicollet Mall & Downtown Transit Engagement focused on introducing the project to the public and seeking feedback on the three options under consideration.

Phase 2 shared more detailed technical information on each transit option and presented tradeoff information to help the public compare the options.



Central Library Open House



Hollidazzle Pop Up

## Phase 2 Highlights

### Pop Up Events, Outreach on Transit, and Open Houses on Nicollet Mall

Key project information and input opportunities were shared at transit stops and on bus routes.

**2,250+** survey responses

**25** community meetings

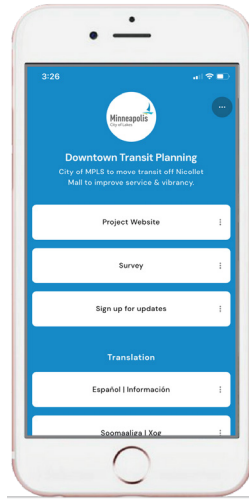
**100+ hours** in-person transit rider surveying and outreach

Stay tuned for Phase 3

Coming Spring/Summer 2025.

## How We Engaged

Phase 2 engagement opportunities were tailored to reach key audiences where people already were. Project information and survey links were posted at bus stops and within transit smartphone apps. Open houses, pop-up events, and individual meetings were held at a variety of downtown locations, as well as online. City of Minneapolis, Metro Transit, and consultant engagement staff surveyed transit riders one-on-one as they waited for their bus, or while on their journey.



## COMMUNITY MEETINGS & POP UP EVENTS

- A. **Building Owners and Managers Assoc.** | December 16th
- B. **Regional Chamber of Commerce** | December 17th
- C. **Holidazzle Pop Up** | December 20th
- D. **Bicycle Advisory Committee Meeting** | January 7th
- E. **Downtown Neighborhood Association** | January 7th
- F. **Business flyering on Nicollet Mall** | January 7th
- G. **Elliot Park Neighborhood Association** | January 8th & January 27th
- H. **Citizens for a Loring Park Community** | January 9th
- I. **Pedestrian Advisory Committee** | January 9th
- J. **Atrium Apartments Pop Up** | January 14th
- K. **Downtown Improvement District Learning Tuesday Pop Up** | January 14th
- L. **Advisory Cmte. on People with Disabilities** | January 15th
- M. **Stevens Square Neighborhood Assoc.** | January 16th
- N. **Minneapolis Transportation-focused Organizations focus group** | January 16th
- O. **Transportation Equity Advisory Cmte., Met Council** | January 21st
- P. **Transportation Committee, Met Council** | January 27th
- Q. **Minneapolis Downtown Council** | January 30th
- R. **Transportation Accessibility Committee, Met Council** | February 5th

## ONLINE SURVEY & ON-SITE SURVEYING

An online survey was open for one month (Jan 6 - Jan 31, 2025) and received 2,250 responses. A shorter on-site survey was used by project staff at bus stops and while riding bus routes that would be affected, focused on understanding riders' feedback.

The survey questions gathered data on how well each transit option fulfilled the project subgoals. This supports integration of community values into the analysis and selection of a downtown transit corridor(s). For more details on both surveys, see page 5-6, Appendix A – Full Survey Responses, and Appendix B – Thematic Data & Detailed Analysis.

## IN-PERSON AND ONLINE OPEN HOUSES

The City and Metro Transit hosted two public open houses in person and one online. These events presented technical analysis, draft conceptual street layouts, and tradeoff information to better inform community feedback on each transit option. To see open house materials, visit the [project website](#).

- **Online Open House** | January 22nd, 12-1:30pm  
Estimated 22 attendees
- **Minneapolis Central Library** | January 26th, 4-6pm  
Estimated 53 attendees
- **IDS Crystal Court** | January 28th, 12-1:30pm  
Estimated 85 attendees

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
Dec 2024	15	16	17	18	19	20
	Event A	Event B			Event C	
January 2025			7	8	9	10
		Events D, E, F	Event G	Events H, I		
		Events J, K	Event L	Events M, N		
	19	20	21	22	23	24
		Event O		Open House Online		
	26	27	28	29	30	31
Open House Library	Events G, P	Open House IDS		Event Q		
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
			Event R			

## ADDITIONAL ENGAGEMENT

City of Minneapolis and Metro Transit staff coordinated with suburban transit providers who currently operate on Marquette and 2nd Avenues to share more about the technical trade offs between the three transit options, and how the various options would potentially impact service. Additionally, the suburban transit providers helped spread the word about the project with their riders.

## Stakeholder Input – Key Themes

The summary below does not capture all ideas or comments at each event, but highlights main takeaways and common sentiments from participants.

**Minneapolis Central Library Open House** | Key takeaways included concerns about the distance to key destinations like the library, the suggestion to include walk times to destinations on Nicollet Mall within trip time comparisons, and interest in maintaining a car-free transit spine downtown or reducing a car lane on Option 2 to preserve dual transit lanes.

**IDS Crystal Court Open House** | Key takeaways from the lunchtime open house included concerns with Option 3 being too far from destinations on Nicollet Mall, interest in bus lanes on Hennepin Ave to preserve bus reliability and concerns about turning vehicles causing delays on Option 2.

**Online Open House** | Online participants shared questions about the project purpose, street operation details and Nicollet Mall public realm design. Overall average rating of the options in interactive polling favored Option 1, followed by Option 3.

**Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association** | Downtown residents discussed the cost of the project, implications for the vibrancy of Nicollet Mall and details on operations of the Marquette/2nd Ave corridors.

**Elliot Park Neighborhood Association Meeting & Board Meeting** | Elliot Park residents discussed the medical facilities affected by this project, event transit operations, the role of the Minneapolis Downtown Council, and the future of downtown fare free rides. The board expressed concern over the impact on accessing service destinations, the Convention Center, and overall safety on the new corridor(s).

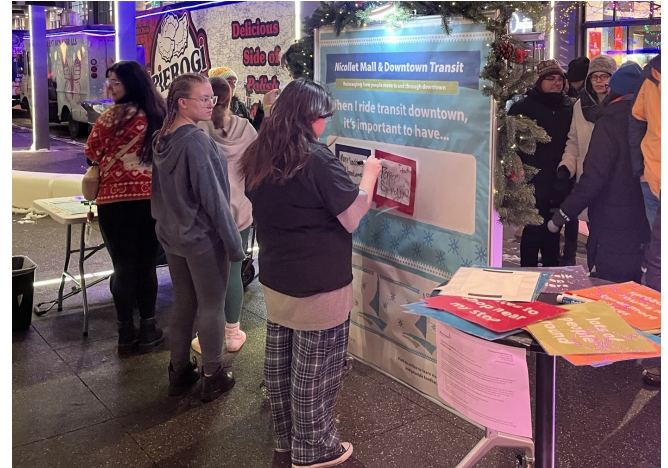
**Citizens for a Loring Park Community Meeting** | Loring Park residents asked questions on the role of the Downtown Improvement District (DID) in downtown activation and the details of how proposed changes improve transit speeds. Meeting participants were excited about a pedestrianized Nicollet Mall and shared their enthusiasm for moving transit to one of the three options.

**Stevens Square Neighborhood Association Meeting** | Stevens Square residents raised concerns with safety on the new corridor(s), east-west corridor connections, and concerns about the added distance for people to get to destinations on Nicollet Mall.

**Atrium Apartments Pop Up** | Key takeaways from the discussion included an interest in keeping transit on Nicollet Mall or Hennepin Ave given the impact on low-income seniors and transit riders overall. Residents shared interest in one or more routes on Hennepin being made fare free downtown and interest in new connecting routes going east-west through downtown to support transfers to the new transit corridor.

**Downtown Improvement District Learning Tuesday Pop Up** | Discussion focused on how connections would be made between a new transit corridor(s) and Nicollet Mall destinations and future visioning for the pedestrianization of Nicollet Mall.

**Business flyering on Nicollet Mall** | When business managers voiced input on the project, perspectives varied widely with some strongly supporting the idea of moving buses off Nicollet Mall in support of their business and others deeply concerned that the move would significantly hurt their foot traffic on Nicollet Mall.



Holiday Pop Up



Central Library Open House



IDS Center Crystal Court Open House

## Minneapolis Transportation-focused Organizations Focus Group Meeting

| Discussion covered key questions and requests covered in a letter from the organizations, concerns about limitations of future transit expansion, and concerns about limited dialogue with transit riders. There was an interest in retaining an option that considered transit improvements while keeping buses on Nicollet Mall.

## Minneapolis Building Owners and Managers Association

| Members weighed in on implications of the Marquette/2nd Ave options on building operations, including parking ramp access and street parking. The discussion also covered potential implications of downtown business growth and increased workforce commuting by car and transit.

**Minneapolis Regional Chamber Meeting** | The meeting covered downtown business opportunities related to a revitalized Nicollet Mall and potential collaboration to engage the business community.

**Minneapolis Downtown Council Board Meeting** | The discussion covered the roles of the City and Metro Transit in decision making and ideas for piloting Nicollet Mall improvements and activation.

## City of Minneapolis Bicycle Advisory Committee Meeting

| Committee members provided input on the bicycling experience on a pedestrianized Nicollet Mall and on the new transit corridor(s), as well as impact to express bus travel times.

**Minneapolis Pedestrian Advisory Committee** | Committee members provided input on the inclusion of walk times to destinations in the travel time comparison. They shared concerns around the impact to transit riders, safety considerations, cost implications to matching Nicollet Mall pedestrian environment on future transit corridors, and limitations of safe pedestrian crossing design on streets with general traffic.

## Minneapolis Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities

| Committee members recommended further consideration of Metro Mobility access to Nicollet Mall, the configuration of outdoor dining, and accessible curb cut design. They voiced concern over the impact of diminished foot traffic on Nicollet Mall businesses, the added distance to Nicollet Mall from any of the transit options, including concerns about operating hours of skyways.

## Metropolitan Council Equity Advisory Committee Meeting

| Discussion covered suggestions for additional audiences to engage and ways to further elevate the needs of residents and transit riders in decisions for transit operations downtown.

**Metropolitan Council Transportation Committee Meeting** | The committee provided input and feedback based on their role of both overseeing Metro Transit operations and advising on regionally significant transportation initiatives. The discussion recommended consideration of keeping buses on Nicollet Mall, upstream impacts of the decision on businesses, and cost to taxpayers.

## Metropolitan Council Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee

| The committee provided insights on the impact of traversing more cross streets between transit stops and final destinations, accessible parking spaces, and winter sidewalk accessibility.



IDS Center Crystal Court Open House



Holidazzle Pop Up



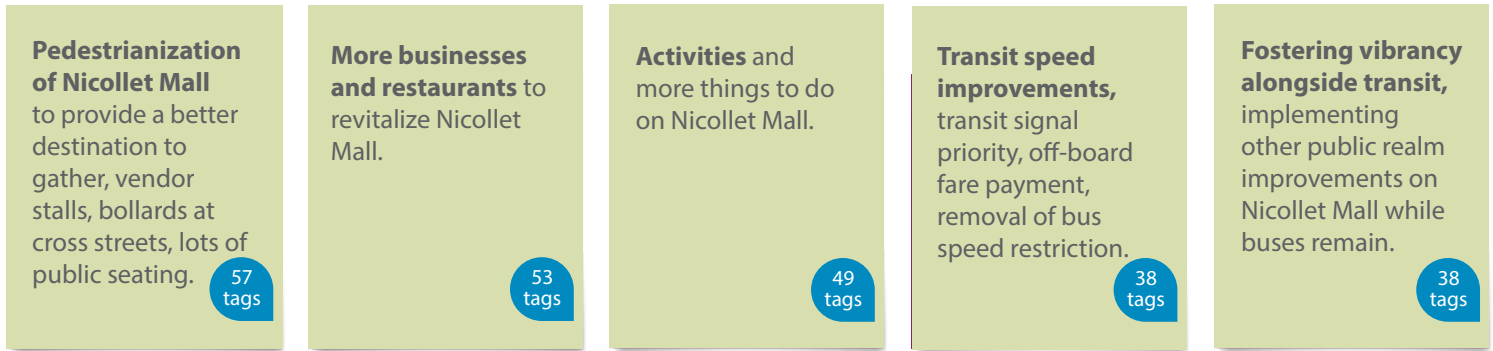
Central Library Open House

## Phase 2 Key Themes

In Phase 2 the project shared more detailed technical information on each of the three transit options and presented tradeoff information to help the public compare the options. Of the 2,250 online survey responses, there were 873 open response comments tagged by theme and sentiment. Each comment could have multiple themes. Comment themes were split into general themes, interests and concerns. There were general project comments that came up frequently throughout the open comments, with the most frequent comment theme addressing a desire to keep buses on Nicollet Mall. Other frequent general themes were support for the project and a feeling of frustration with the project.

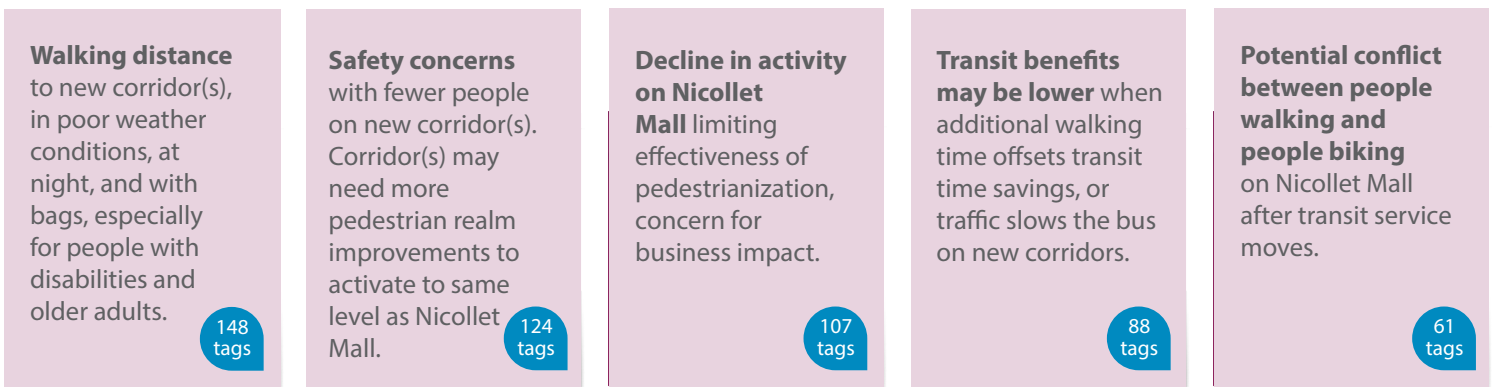
### TOP INTERESTS

Top themes focus on enhancing the vibrancy of Nicollet Mall and providing improved transit service downtown. Key considerations cover public realm furnishings, downtown activities, retail and restaurant destinations, and transit speed improvements. Common areas of interest include:



### TOP CONCERNS

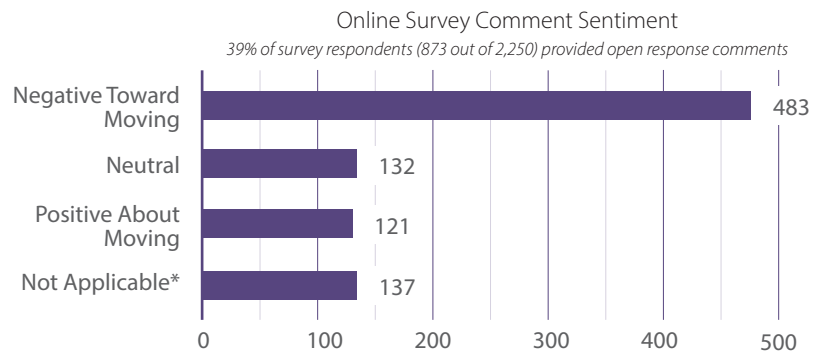
Concerns voiced regard lack of trust that moving transit to new corridor(s) would fulfill the project goals of improved downtown transit service and increased downtown vibrancy. The top concerns highlight challenges that transit riders will potentially experience using the new transit corridor(s) and potential threats to the success of pedestrianization given the foot traffic and street grid downtown. Common concerns include the:



### ONLINE SURVEY COMMENT SENTIMENT

39% of survey respondents (873 out of 2,250) provided open response comments. These comments have been tagged by sentiment. These include whether the comment was positive, neutral, or negative about moving transit.

\*Comments tagged as 'Not Applicable' did not address transit and/or did not comment directly on this project.



## Highlights from Survey Data

### How well did each option perform for the project goals?

All three options clustered closely with average ratings between 2 and 3 stars, or between “dislike it somewhat” and “neither like nor dislike.” Within the overall closely ranked options, Option 1 had the best average rating, Option 2 had the next highest, and Option 3 ranked a little lower.



**OPTION 1**  
1,515 Responses



**OPTION 2**  
1,364 Responses



**OPTION 3**  
1,313 Responses

Improves how people get around downtown	2.6	2.4	2.4
Improves safety for people walking and rolling	2.5	2.4	2.4
Provides a fast bus trip	2.8	2.6	2.6
Provides a short walk to places you need to go	2.4	2.4	2.4
Provides a safe and comfortable place to wait	2.5	2.4	2.4

### How popular was each option?

The survey asked people to rank the option on a scale of “Like it a lot, like it somewhat, neither like nor dislike, dislike it somewhat, and dislike it a lot” and these scores were translated into numerical ratings 5 to 1 in the same order and averaged.



### Best features

Based on which goals it had the highest average rating.

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides a fast bus trip</li> <li>Improves how people get around downtown</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides a fast bus trip</li> <li>Improves how people get around downtown</li> <li>Provides a short walk to the places you need to go</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides a fast bus trip</li> <li>Improves safety for people walking and rolling downtown</li> </ul> |
|---|---|---|

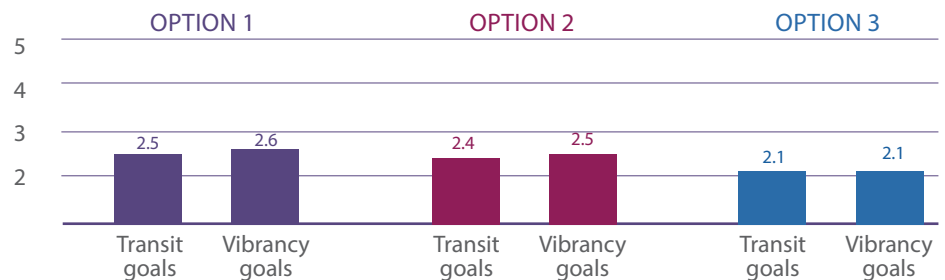
### Option 1 received the highest average scores on the transit and downtown vibrancy goals.

- Best fulfills downtown transit goals

Option 1

- Best fulfills downtown vibrancy goals

Option 1



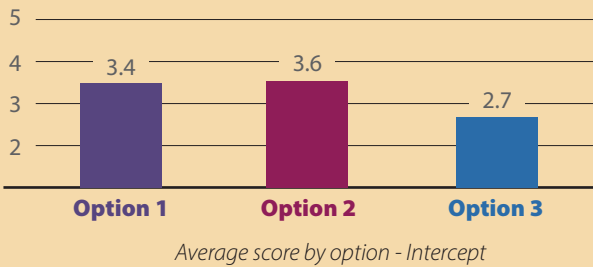
## Detailed Data Insights

It is important within a broad survey dataset to look at detailed data based on who is most impacted by project decisions. The following section highlights insights when analyzing responses based on existing transit use and demographic characteristics.

Based on breakdowns of survey data by how respondents said they use the bus:

**Intercept survey responses that came from meeting people at bus stops showed a slightly higher preference for Option 2.**

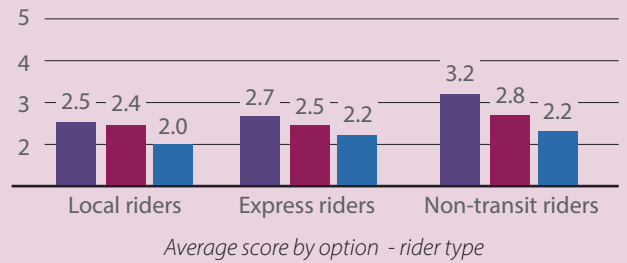
Those respondents highlighted the benefits in ease of use on the two-way transit corridor on Marquette.



Intercept surveys conducted: 61

**For people traveling downtown, non-transit riders are more likely to rate Options 1 and 2 favorably, compared to local bus riders and express bus riders.**

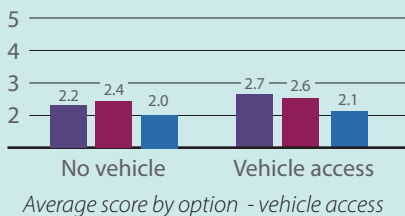
Local riders have close average scores between Option 1 and Option 2.



Local bus riders: 1,786 | Express bus riders: 319 | Non-transit riders: 381

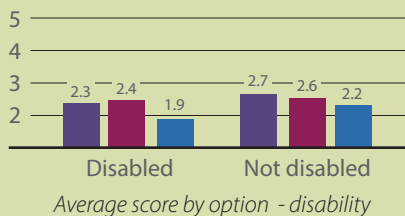
Based on breakdowns of survey data by demographic data:

**People without access to a vehicle were more likely to dislike Options 1, 2 and 3.** They slightly preferred Option 2 over Option 1, whereas the general survey response favored Option 1.



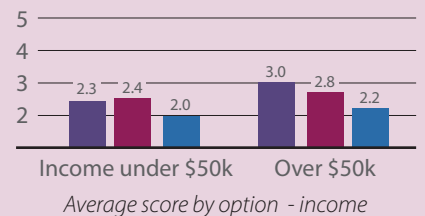
Vehicle access: 784 | No vehicle: 393

**People with disabilities or people with a disabled member in their household rated Options 1, 2, and 3 lower than non-disabled people.** They slightly prefer Option 2 over Option 1.



Identify as disabled: 260 | Not disabled: 831

**People with higher incomes tended to rate the options more favorably** and people with lower incomes tended to dislike the transit options more and slightly prefer Option 2 over Option 1.



Under \$50k income: 310 | Over \$200k income: 112

## Who Responded?

	# of responses	Minneapolis residency	BIPOC	Vehicle access	Disability	Household income		
						\$0-49k	\$50-99k	\$100k+
Online Survey	2250	85% yes	20%	67% yes	22% yes	28%	31%	41%
Intercept Survey	61	87% yes	43%	57% yes	22% yes	53%	30%	16%
Minneapolis averages	NA	100% yes	40%	85% yes	11% yes	34%	28%	38%

## Hennepin Avenue

*What improvements would you like to see on Hennepin Avenue as part of moving route 11 and route 25?*

In all transit options, Routes 11 and 25 are planned to move to Hennepin Avenue due to advantages in routing and overall transit coverage downtown. The online survey and open house activities addressed key improvements that would support the addition of new bus routes to Hennepin Avenue. The City plans to start an analysis of potential transit priority advantages on Hennepin Avenue in 2025. Findings may result in adjustments to Hennepin Avenue.

There were 896 responses (out of 2250 total survey responses) to this question and each comment was tagged with one or more theme. Top themes of these comments include:

- **Don't move the bus off Nicollet** - 203 comments
- **24/7 bus lanes on Hennepin** - 191 comments
- **More foot police, ambassadors, safety** - 97 comments
- **Places to sit** - 75 comments
- **Enhanced bus shelters, maintaining shelters** - 75 comments

## Nicollet Mall

*Once buses are moved off Nicollet Mall, which improvements would you like to see on Nicollet Mall?*

The online survey provided an opportunity to voice interest in public realm amenities that would support the pedestrianized vision of Nicollet Mall. Further planning for the pedestrianization of Nicollet Mall will be advanced in 2025 by the Mayor's Downtown Action Council and partner organizations.



Illustration of downtown transit corridors and potential corridors, including important connections to a pedestrianized Nicollet Mall

- **Public restrooms** 789 selected
- **Public seating areas** 772 selected
- **Outdoor markets and kiosks** 736 selected
- **Outdoor dining** 715 selected
- **Street festivals** 638 selected
- **Outdoor entertainment** 616 selected
- **Additional landscaping** 603 selected
- **Protected bikeway** 553 selected
- **Other** 509 comments (see Appendix A)
- **Parades** 362 comments

## Next Steps

Phase 3 engagement will begin in spring/summer 2025 and will focus on the selected transit corridor(s) including next steps for implementation. Once a preferred corridor(s) is selected, further design work will begin with full pedestrianization of Nicollet Mall planning to take place in 2026.

### Project Timeline



## Contact us

Amy Barnstorff, Transportation Planner – Public Works  
 ☎ 612-673-2129 ✉ [Amy.Barnstorff@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:Amy.Barnstorff@minneapolismn.gov)  
 Visit us online at: [www.minneapolismn.gov/government/programs-initiatives/transportation-programs/nicollet-mall-downtown/](http://www.minneapolismn.gov/government/programs-initiatives/transportation-programs/nicollet-mall-downtown/)

For reasonable accommodations or alternative formats please contact: **Amy Barnstorff** at [amy.barnstorff@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:amy.barnstorff@minneapolismn.gov) or **612-673-2129**. People who are deaf or hard of hearing can use a relay service to call 311 at 612-673-3000. TTY users call 612-263-6850. Para asistencia, llame al 311. Rau kev pab 311. Hadio aad Caawimaad u baahantahay 311.