

Nicollet Mall – Downtown Transit Engagement

Public Engagement Plan

August 2024 – Updated November 2024

Project Overview

The City of Minneapolis' Departments of Public Works and Community Planning & Economic Development are assessing several opportunities to improve downtown transit operations and enhance downtown vibrancy. Informed by recommendations in the [Vibrant Downtown Storefronts Workgroup report \(2023\)](#) and the Mayor's [Downtown Action Plan \(2024\)](#), the City is evaluating options to relocate transit service from Nicollet Mall to alternative corridors downtown. This project aligns with adopted City policy in the Minneapolis 2040 Plan:

- Policy 7: Public Realm – Proactively improve the public realm to support a pedestrian friendly, high-quality and distinctive built environment.
- Policy 15: Transportation and Equity – Ensure that the quality and function of the transportation system contributes to equitable outcomes for all people.
- Policy 22: Downtown Transportation – Ensure travel to and throughout Downtown is efficient, understandable, reliable and safe.

The Transportation Action Plan (2020) also demonstrates alignment with this work to improve downtown transit and Nicollet Mall:

- Transit Strategy 2: Increase the speed and reliability of transit.
 - Action 2.4: Improve transit speed and reliability throughout downtown; focus on Nicollet Mall and Marquette/2nd Avenue operations first.
- Transit Strategy 4: Partner with Metro Transit and other agencies to pursue new transit projects of high impact.
- Design Strategy 2: Foster vibrant public spaces for street life.

The City is planning for the future of Nicollet Mall as a pedestrian and bike only mall with public space programming to improve the vibrancy of the Mall in all seasons. A total of five bus lines currently operate on Nicollet Mall including routes 10 (future Nicollet BRT), 11, 17, 18, and 25. The City is partnering with Metro Transit to explore alternative transit corridors, using a combination of Marquette, Second, and Third Avenues, for routes 10, 17, and 18. Routes 11 and 25 are anticipated to move to Hennepin.

This Public Engagement Plan outlines a process that opens up opportunities for these important discussions about the future of downtown transit & public space. It aims to encompass a broad segment of people who will be impacted by these decisions and who are invested in the success of transit and Nicollet Mall. This process blends creative approaches like pop ups at neighborhood events and bus stop input opportunities, as well as tried-and-true methods like pop-up events and online surveys. Our team seeks to create equitable opportunities to shape the outcomes of the decisions for Nicollet Mall and transit downtown, as well as building trust & relationships for future planning and design processes to come.

Guiding the engagement & planning process are several City policies and standards helping to underpin the conversation:

- Vision Zero Action Plan (2023)
- Racial Equity Framework for Transportation (2023)
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan for Public Works (2022)
- Minneapolis Street Design Guide (2021)
- Complete Streets Policy (2021)
- Transportation Action Plan (2020)
- Minneapolis 2040 (2019)
- Minneapolis Climate Equity Plan (2023)

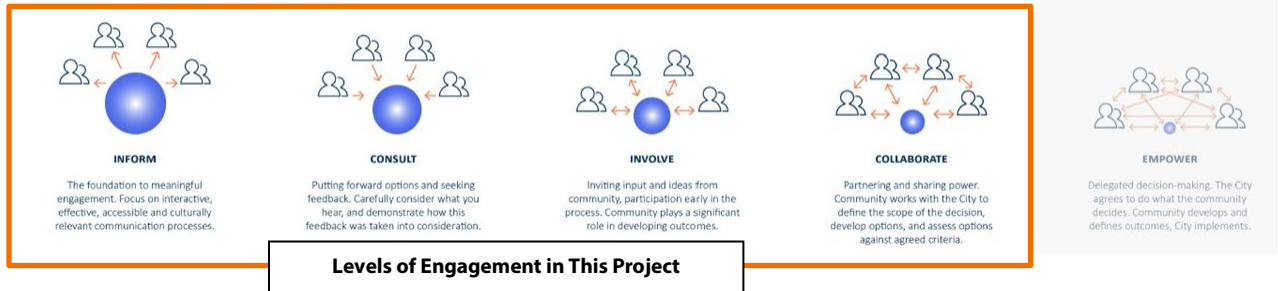
Engagement Objectives

Truly effective engagement is about customizing a process to meet the needs of the community as well as the objectives of the project. This engagement plan builds on the [IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation’s](#) strategy of designing a process to match the level of public participation with milestone decisions in each phase of the project.

IAP2 identifies five levels of engagement where the public can have increasing impact on the decision – Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, and Empower. The engagement process is expected to move across the spectrum throughout the different phases of engagement with Collaborate as the highest level on the spectrum this project plans to achieve. The project will eventually result in a recommended option for locating transit improvements downtown to be approved by the Mayor and City Council after the engagement process, as well as by the Metropolitan Council.

Visualizing the levels of engagement

Diagram adapted from the [Health Canada Public Involvement Continuum](#).



Goals

This Public Engagement Plan will be using the following goals to measure the success of our process in producing equitable results:

- Engage in meaningful and relevant dialogue that substantively impacts the next phase of work and the overall vision for transit & Nicollet Mall.
- Provide mutually beneficial experiences for people participating in engagement and seek to build relationships that go beyond a single project, as this work will continue with capital project improvements on the selected transit corridor(s).
- Provide transparent access to project information, feedback received, and engagement opportunities through both traditional and non-traditional communication methods.
- Continually recognize diverse perspectives and embrace tensions within respectful dialogue.
- Design engagement methods to always be welcoming, plain language, accessible and meet the needs and comfort levels of the intended audiences. This includes providing translated materials when feasible.

Audience

The engagement process will seek to inform and consult audiences with a focus on those most impacted by potential changes in downtown transit and Nicollet Mall operations. The focus area for our outreach will be bounded by the Mississippi River, 1st Ave N, 15th St, and 4th Ave S, as shown in the adjacent map. Several key audiences, some categories of which may overlap, we will seek to reach include:

- **Transit riders.** People riding local and express busses and light rail lines that go to and through downtown Minneapolis
- **People who use Nicollet Mall & Marq2 Bus stops.** A subset of transit riders – those who start or end trips on Nicollet Mall today
- **People walking and rolling on Nicollet Mall.** Pedestrians who go to and from downtown destinations
- **People attending events and visiting Nicollet Mall.** People who participate in weekday or weekend/special events
- **People riding bikes and scooters downtown.** People riding on Nicollet Mall or other parts of the downtown bicycle network
- **People without vehicles.** People who rely on walking, biking and transit
- **People who drive downtown.** People driving personal or delivery vehicles
- **People with accessibility needs.** Residents, employees, and visitors that require level surfaces, enhanced features, and other design considerations
- **Transportation advisory committees.** Metropolitan Council Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee, City Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committees

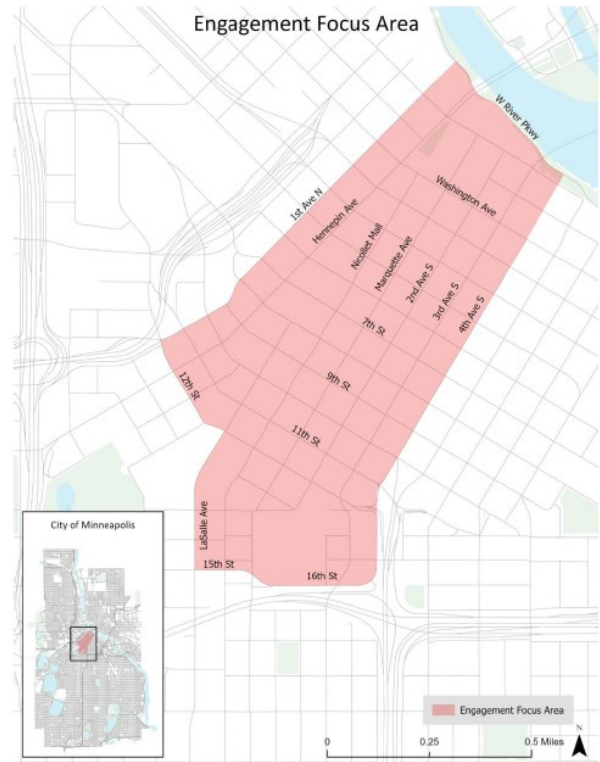


Figure 1 – Engagement Focus Area

- **Business owners & managers on Nicollet Mall and evaluated corridors.** People who regularly serve and interact with customers on the corridors
- **Building/property owners, management.** People with vested interest in property along and adjacent to the corridor including the Building Owners Management Association (BOMA)
- **Downtown Minneapolis residents.** People who live within the Engagement focus area
- **Neighborhood/community groups.** Representative(s) of Downtown Improvement District, Loring Park, Elliot Park, North Loop, Stevens Square and Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Associations
- **Business groups.** Representative(s) of business interests with the Minneapolis Downtown Council & Chamber of Commerce

Engagement Methods

This list of methods will be the toolbox from which Phases 1, 2, and 3 of project engagement will be formed. They span both traditional engagement and other opportunities tailored to project audiences. At the end of Phase 1 there will also be opportunities to evaluate the effectiveness of different methods and adjust the strategy to ensure that we are reaching a diverse and representative segment of stakeholders.



Figure 2: Targeted methods - pop ups, bus advertisements

Traditional Methods

These are conventional methods that most planning processes already use.

IAP2 Level Method

Consult & Inform	Public Meetings. Workshop-style, creative engagement that offers a variety of ways for people to provide feedback, are family friendly, and minimize barriers to participation.
Consult & Inform	Neighborhood & Business Organization Meetings. Meeting with downtown business and placemaking organizations to vet project information and provide input.
Consult & Inform	Technical & Advisory Committee Meetings. Meeting with Minneapolis advisory committees including Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC), Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC), the Metropolitan Council’s Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee (TAAC), and Equity Advisory Committee (EAC) to vet design details particularly relevant to their purview. Convening technical review meetings.

Targeted Methods

This will be outreach to specific groups that may not otherwise participate in the planning process or would be substantially impacted by changes as a result of project decision making.

IAP2 Level Method

Consult & Inform	Pop-Up Events. Increasing project awareness and participation at unconventional locations highly relevant to key audiences. Pop-ups are geared toward everyday users of the corridor visiting for an event, riding transit, or running errands.
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Consult

Focus Groups. Engaging stakeholders with a significant interest in the project to discuss transit solutions in more depth, garnering insights to help develop project plans.

Inform

Transit Stop Advertisements. Leveraging the partnership between the City of Minneapolis and Metro Transit, seek some highly visible locations to feature project promotions & communications.

Online & Communications-Based Methods

Online formats allow a participant to interact with the project’s content without physically attending a public meeting and absorbing information at their speed. The project will develop robust online and communications tools to gain broad-based input on Nicollet Mall & downtown transit service options.

IAP2 Level Method

Consult

Online Survey. The online survey will use a graphical format to gather input on key project decisions. Survey opportunities will be promoted with the help of the City’s communication team and coordinated communications channels.

Inform

Project Website. The City of Minneapolis project website will house key information to support in person and online engagement opportunities for the duration of the project.

Inform

Social Media. Social media will be critical to getting the word out about the project broadly in Minneapolis and garnering participation in surveys and public meetings. The engagement team will coordinate with the City’s communication team and Metro Transit’s communication team to deploy effective, creative social strategies.

Audience/Methods Matrix

The matrix below provides some initial thinking about how to match each audience with the best engagement methods. This will be a work in progress as the project moves forward and we will evaluate the effectiveness of the outreach methods and target audiences as part of the engagement process.

	Traditional Methods			Targeted Methods			Online & Communications Methods		
	Public Meetings	Neighborhood & Business Organizations	Technical & Advisory Committees	Pop-Up Events	Focus Groups	Bus Advertisements	Online Survey	Project Website	Social Media
Transit Riders	x			x	x	x	x	x	x
People who use Nicollet Bus stops	x			x	x	x	x	x	
People walking and rolling on Nicollet Mall	x			x	x	x	x	x	x
People attending events and visiting Nicollet Mall	x			x		x	x	x	x
People riding bikes and scooters downtown	x			x			x	x	x
People without vehicles	x			x			x	x	
People who drive downtown	x			x			x	x	x
People with accessibility needs	x		x	x			x	x	
Transportation advisory committees			x				x	x	
Business owners & managers on Nicollet Mall and evaluated corridors		x					x	x	
Building/property owners, management		x					x	x	
Downtown Minneapolis residents		x					x	x	x
Neighborhood/community groups		x					x	x	
Business groups		x					x	x	

Figure 3: Audience and Methods matrix

Engagement Phases

The engagement process is set up to proceed through three phases with a set of key questions, audiences, methods, events, and communications opportunities identified to be implemented.

Phase 1: Launch and Listen

Purpose | To understand goals that should drive decision-making, present transit concepts, and gather feedback on the transit concepts from a diverse audience.

Key Questions

- Related to Nicollet Mall, what is most important to you?
- As a transit rider, what is most important to you?
- What do you like or dislike about Option 1, 2, and 3?
- How would this option impact your trip today?
- If Option A is selected, how would your travel habits change?
- Describe an ideal future of downtown transit service and Nicollet Mall in your vision.
- Which option do you like best?

Methods & Key Dates

- **Public Website** | Launch August 23, open throughout project
- **Online Survey** | Launch August 23, close Oct 21
 - Project website
 - Email to partners, neighborhood, office, property management, business stakeholder lists
 - Metro Transit promotion
- **Technical & Advisory Committee Meetings** | Attend September advisory committee meetings
- **Transit Stop Advertisements** | Various Routes | September 1-30, 2024
- **Social Media** | City of Minneapolis & Metro Transit platforms | September 1-30, 2024
 - Promotion of Public Meeting
 - Promotion of Online Survey
- **Pop Up Event** | [Nicollet Xchange](#) | Tuesday, August 27, 2024 – 11:30am-1:30pm
 - *Materials:* Project one-pager, online survey, overview board, one light activity, QR code to project website
- **Pop Up Event** | [Downtown Thursdays](#) | Thursday, August 29, 2024 – 11:30am-1:30pm
 - *Materials:* Project one-pager, online survey, overview board, one light activity, QR code to project website
- **Transit Stop & Ride Along Promotions** | Various dates in August, September
 - **Materials:** Project information slip with QR code and web address for survey
- **Public Meeting** | Minneapolis Central Library | Date Sept 24 4:00-6:00pm
 - *Materials:* Project one-pager, online survey, intercept survey, Phase 1 Boards, origin-destination mapping activity, priorities activity, pro-con options input activity

Phase 2: Tradeoffs and Technical Evaluation

Purpose | To share additional technical data and evaluate tradeoffs between the three transit corridor options. To provide comparison information to the present transit service condition on Nicollet Mall.

Key Questions

- Routes 11 and 25 will be moving to Hennepin Avenue.
 - What concerns do you have with this, if any?
 - Are there improvements you would like to see on Hennepin in relation to these two routes moving to that corridor?
- Routes 10, 17 and 18 (and future Nicollet BRT) will move from Nicollet to Marquette and 2nd, Marquette Avenue only, or 3rd Avenue.
 - What is important to you when these routes 10, 17 and 18 move off the Mall?
- What are the elements of options 1, 2 and 3 that excite you? What are the concerns you have about each?
 - What is most important for you about the new corridor(s) that Nicollet Mall transit will move to?
- How well do the transit options fulfill project goals?
- If this change was implemented, what other improvements or opportunities would be most important to the success of Nicollet Mall?

Methods & Key Dates

- **Public Website** | Open throughout project
- **Online Survey** | Tentative launch January 6, close Jan 31
 - Project website
 - GovDelivery Promotion
 - Email to partners, neighborhood, office, property management, business stakeholder lists
 - Metro Transit promotion
- **Neighborhood & Business Organization Meetings** | Attend meetings
- **Technical & Advisory Committee Meetings** | Attend advisory committee meetings
- **Transit Stop Advertisements** | Various Routes
- **Social Media** | City of Minneapolis & Metro Transit platforms
 - Promotion of Public Meeting
 - Promotion of Online Survey
- **Pop Up Event** | Holidazzle | Dec 18-22
 - *Materials:* Project one-pager, online survey, intercept survey, overview board, one light activity, QR code to project website
- **Pop Up Event** | [Downtown Tuesdays](#) at Downtown Improvement District | January 14
 - *Materials:* Presentation, project one-pager, online survey, intercept survey, overview board, one light activity, QR code to project website
- **Pop Up Event** | Simpson Housing Services: The Continental Apartments | TBA
 - *Materials:* Presentation, project one-pager, online survey, intercept survey, overview board, one light activity, QR code to project website
- **Intercept Survey** | Multiple dates, locations
 - *Materials:* Intercept survey, QR code to project website
- **Focus Group** | Transportation-focused Organizations | Date TBA

- *Materials:* Presentation, project one-pager, online survey, intercept survey, overview board, one light activity, QR code to project website
- **Focus Group** | Suburban Transit Providers | Date TBA
 - *Materials:* Presentation, project one-pager, online survey, intercept survey, overview board, one light activity, QR code to project website
- **Public Meeting** | Minneapolis Central Library | Tentative Date Jan 23 4:00-6:00pm
 - *Materials:* Project one-pager, online survey, Phase 2 Boards, activities
- **Public Meeting** | IDS Crystal Court | Tentative Date Jan 28 – 11:30-1pm
 - *Materials:* Project one-pager, online survey, Phase 2 Boards, activities
- **Public Meeting** | Online | Tentative Date Jan 22 – 12:00-1:30pm
 - *Materials:* Project one-pager, online survey, Phase 2 Boards, activities

Phase 3: Downtown Transit Recommendations

Purpose | To share a preferred transit option based on refined technical analysis and Phase 1 input.

Methods & Key Dates

- **Public Website** | Open throughout project
 - GovDelivery Promotion
- **Neighborhood & Business Organization Meetings** | Attend meetings
- **Technical & Advisory Committee Meetings** | Attend advisory committee meetings
- **Social Media** | City of Minneapolis & Metro Transit platforms
 - Promotion of Public Meeting with Workshop on Wheels
 - Promotion of Online Survey
- **Public Meeting** | Minneapolis Central Library, City Hall Rotunda or Public Service Building Conference Center | Date TBD
 - *Materials:* Project one-pager, online survey, intercept survey, Phase 2 Boards, exploring Workshop on Wheels Artist transit token metalworks activity

Timeline

The goal of the engagement timeline will be to achieve a preferred strategy for downtown transit service by the spring of 2025. This will result in the adoption of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Minneapolis and Metro Transit outlining the downtown transit option that will move forward into more detailed design, engineering, and implementation.



Evaluation of Engagement Efforts

Documentation of each step of the engagement process will be critical in defining the direction and priorities for the redesign of the project as well as a better understanding of which stakeholder groups are being reached.

For each phase, the project team will document:

- Who was engaged?
- What methods were used?
 - Who participated?
- What information was provided?
- What questions or issues were identified?
- What feedback was received?
- How was the feedback collected and analyzed?
- What decisions did this input influence?

This documentation will shape the content process for each successive phase of engagement. At the end of each phase, an Engagement Summary will be written to answer the questions outlined above which will be posted on the project website and emailed to the GovDelivery list.

Methods to document the engagement process and subsequent stakeholder and community feedback may include:

- Sign-in sheets
- Meeting summaries
- Surveys
- Social media documentation

Contact us

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contact Andrew Degerstrom at 612-673-3251 or

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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.

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