



NICOLLET MALL AND DOWNTOWN TRANSIT

Phase 1 Engagement Summary | August-October 2024



Project & Engagement Overview

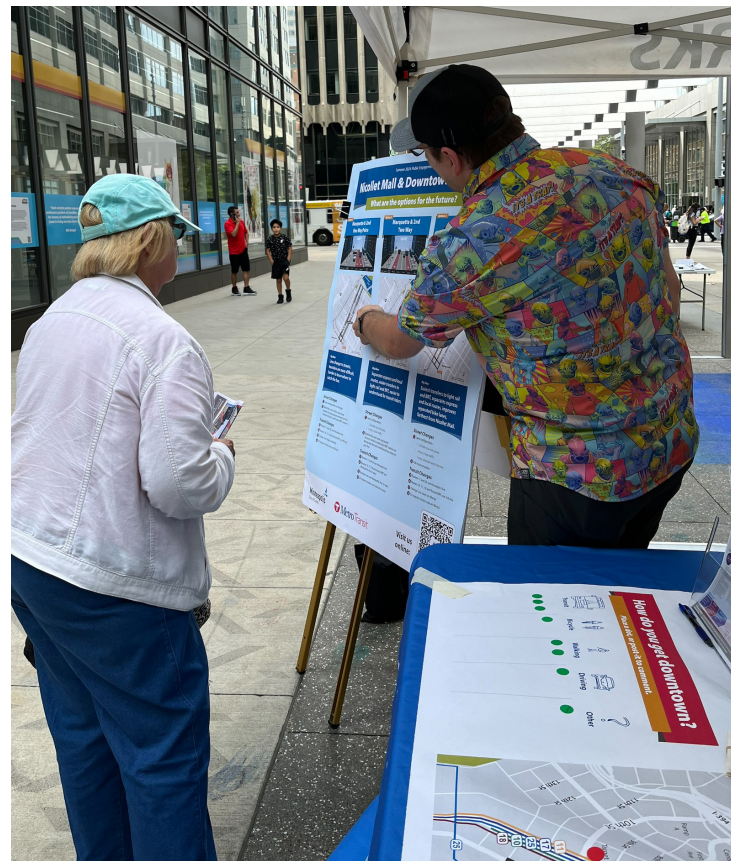
The City of Minneapolis is relocating transit off Nicollet Mall to enhance downtown transit service and create a more dynamic Nicollet Mall.

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 pedestrianized space.

The objective of the project is to make transit as good or better than it is today on Nicollet Mall. This work has two goals: 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 for relocation of downtown transit routes. Input received will inform the analysis approach and frame further technical data to compare the options in Phase 2.



Highlights

Pop Up Events, Outreach on Transit, and Open House on Nicollet

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

2,365+ impressions

Connected with over 2,000 people through online and in person engagement.

Stay tuned for Phase 2

Coming early 2025.

How We Engaged

During Phase 1 the City of Minneapolis and Metro Transit launched an online survey and shared project information with the public, via promotions along and adjacent to Nicollet Mall transit stops, at pop-up events downtown, and through an Open House.

In collaboration with Metro Transit, the City of Minneapolis led public engagement on downtown transit options and the future vision of Nicollet Mall. The events featured boards with project information, distribution of informational handouts with links to the project survey, and hands-on activities to generate feedback. During August, September, and October, the City and Metro Transit connected with the public and promoted engagement opportunities at the following events:

- Pop-Up at the Downtown X-Change on Nicollet Mall
- Pop-Up at Downtown Thursdays on Nicollet Mall
- Great Day in Transit with over 70 Metro Transit staff
- 35 outreach shifts on multiple transit routes
- Open House at Downtown Central Library
- Presentations to City Council and the Metropolitan Council
- Presentations to the City of Minneapolis Bicycle Advisory Committee and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

ONLINE SURVEY

The online survey was open for two months and received 1,780 responses.

Survey questions addressed the experience of people on Nicollet Mall today, transit riders today, and opinions on the three options for downtown transit. The following quotes highlight a sample of the diversity of opinions shared on the future of transit service:

- *"I believe Nicollet Ave should be totally pedestrian/bike friendly with no motorized traffic (except for emergency vehicles.) Less concrete and much more green space."*
- *"It would make it harder to get to Nicollet especially for people like me who have a hard time walking, a hard time with mobility. The places we go are on Nicollet. I'm going to Walgreens, Target, and the light rail."*
- *"Faster service on another street would be good. I take the bus to the doctor's office. Marquette would be the best option, something still close."*
- *"Moving transit off nicollet is going to make nicollet feel much more desolate and abandoned, not make it better."*

See Appendix A for the full survey questions and results.



Open House attendees participated in several activities to stimulate discussion and feedback on the options presented.

OPEN HOUSE INFORMATION & ACTIVITIES

At the Open House attendees talked with staff and were introduced to the project vision and goals. Initial data about how transit operates in downtown Minneapolis today was displayed alongside the three options under consideration for the preferred north/south transit spine.

Approximately 35 people were in attendance, with participants able to share their input via multiple activities:

- **Share Your Vision Activity** – Sticky notes for comments on Nicollet Mall & downtown transit vision
- **Origins and Destinations Activity** – Dot voting to understand the modes of transportation and important destinations people access
- **Like & Dislike Notes on Transit Options** – For each option in consideration, post it notes allowed people to add comments on what they like and dislike from initial concepts.

The results of these activities were incorporated into the online survey dataset for analysis of key themes and to contribute to the results of key questions summarized on the next page.

For access to the boards presented at the Open House, please visit the City of Minneapolis [project website](#).

Phase 1 Key Themes

We tagged each open house, pop-up and online survey comment by theme to track the top ideas as they emerged. Each comment could have multiple themes, and they are listed in order of frequency. Key themes that will inform the next phase of planning include:

1 | Distance to Destinations

The walking distance to destinations is a top priority for transit riders. Many riders are concerned with moving transit further from key destinations like Target, the library, and clinics.

"We are nurses at the clinic on Nicollet and lots of other people work on Nicollet. Our patients rely on easy access to the services at our clinic and many of them have mobility issues that would make it hard to go further."

2 | Pedestrian First Street

People shared excitement for a vision for a pedestrianized street in downtown Minneapolis.

"Buses absolutely need to be removed from Nicollet in order to bring vibrancy back to that street."

"Get buses off Nicollet Mall to make it more pedestrian-friendly as other major cities have done."

3 | Familiar & Convenient

People like the way Nicollet Mall operates today with familiar bus routes and easy access to downtown places.

"Like how it is now - it's convenient. You can't control how fast the bus comes, I'm not really sure it'd be faster on these other streets with the traffic and everything."

4 | Bus Riders Help Nicollet Mall

People see bus riders as foot traffic that supports Nicollet Mall vibrancy. There is concern that removing bus routes and bus riders from Nicollet would affect safety by diminishing activity on the Mall.

"On weekends no one is here without the bus. Bus keeps Nicollet busy. Without it, Nicollet would get dangerous after 5pm after office workers leave and on the weekends."

5 | Address Negative Activity

A top concern with Nicollet Mall today is the presence of negative activity, and there's desire to address that to bring vibrancy downtown.

"It's a good effort, but how would that not just increase the actual issues of no one being down here and all this bad stuff being here?"

6 | Places on Transit Route

The top concern with the new transit corridors centered on the lack of service and retail destinations on Marquette, 2nd, and 3rd Avenues.

"People are not traveling to the areas in Options 1, 2, or 3--they need to get along Hennepin, Nicollet, the streets between... If you don't put transit where the people are and where they want to go, then it's gonna fail."

7 | Nicollet Future Needs Retail

The most popular desire for the future of Nicollet Mall is the addition of more ground floor retail.

"Nicollet Mall provides people no reason to visit currently - not enough shops, restaurants, green space. And one off festivals won't do the trick or create a sustainable model for downtown life. Focus on developing small businesses and housing and people will gladly mill about in the area."

8 | Transit Speed Improvement*

Many comments support improving transit speed downtown, including the new corridors, additional transit signal priority measures or light timing.

"What about transit signal priority? Not currently on Nicollet. We should try more on Nicollet before moving the busses."

*Note: This theme combines the 8th & 9th top ranked themes from analysis.

9 | Improve Safety

People want to see safety improved broadly - in downtown, on Nicollet Mall, on transit, and at transit stops. Many commenters noted that streets with more people on them feel safer.

"I have visited Nicollet Mall with the buses present, and also at times that the buses were detoured away and am sure that I always felt safer and more welcome with the buses present."

Highlights from Online Survey Data

In the survey, questions covered the experience today on Nicollet Mall, riding transit and feedback on the corridor options. This data will support the development of tradeoff information on each option to be shared in Phase 2.

AS A TRANSIT RIDER, WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU?

In order of highest average rank to lowest:



Feeling Safe

ranked #1 by 39%

- **Feeling safe** (39% ranked #1, 58% top 3)
- **Bus service that is more likely to be on time** (53% ranked top 3)
- **Easy transfers to connecting buses or rail lines** (52% ranked top 3)
- **A shorter distance to walk or roll to my destinations** (44% top 3)
- **Quality, clean bus shelters** (40% top 3)
- **A faster bus trip** (37% top 3)
- **Feeling welcome** (16% top 3)

HOW WOULD THE THREE TRANSIT OPTIONS IMPACT YOUR ACCESS TO DESTINATIONS?

- **Takes me further from my destination** (#1 answer for all three options from respondents who said they ride transit almost every day)

HOW WOULD THE THREE TRANSIT OPTIONS IMPACT YOUR TRANSFERS?

- **Makes it more difficult to transfer to other routes** (#1 answer for all three options from respondents who said they ride transit almost every day)

IN YOUR WORDS:

“Feeling safe downtown isn’t just about whether I think someone is going to rob me. It’s also about whether how the space and transit are structured allow me to do things like access stops and transfer buses without getting hurt getting around or aggravating my disabilities to the point where I’m out of commission for days afterward.”

“Bus service on Nicollet Mall is often slow. I’d like to see an emphasis on speed in whichever alternative is chosen, making crosstown trips easier and faster for buses. For all of the transit options, I’d like to see significant streetscape improvements and an effort to make Marquette, 2nd, and any other streets carrying transit users more lively and vibrant.”

WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT RIDING THE BUS ON NICOLLET MALL?

- *I know where to catch my bus* (63%)
- *The stops are close to where I need to go* (52%)

WHAT DO YOU DISLIKE ABOUT RIDING THE BUS ON NICOLLET MALL?

- *The bus shelters are not clean* (49%)
- *The bus service is too slow* (35%)

RELATED TO NICOLLET MALL, WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU?

In order of highest average rank to lowest:



Feeling Safe

ranked #1 by 66%

- **Feeling safe** (66% ranked top 3)
- **More activities and things to see on a daily basis** (58% ranked top 3)
- **More places to sit and hang out** (43% ranked top 3)
- **More special events and street festivals to visit** (37% ranked top 3)
- **More outdoor dining** (35% ranked top 3)
- **Feeling welcome** (44% ranked top 3)
- **More performances and public art installations** (15% ranked top 3)

Demographic Insights

The survey demographics overall demonstrate a sample that captures both transit riders and non-transit riders, but is not fully representative of the diversity of Minneapolis.

MPLS RESIDENT

- Yes (78%)
- No (22%)

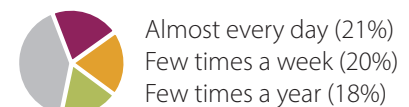
AGE

18-24 (25%); 35-44 (21%); 44-54 (13%); 55-64 (13%); 65+ (16%)

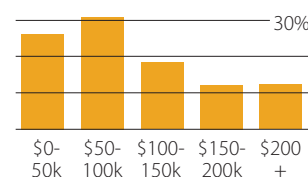
IDENTIFY AS DISABLED

- No (80%)
- Yes (17%)

RIDE BUS ON MALL



HOUSEHOLD INCOME



RACE/ETHNICITY

White (84%); African American, African, or Black (7%); Asian/Pacific Islander (5%); Latino/a/x (4%)

Option Preferences

Three options for downtown transit service were presented in Phase 1. The City and Metro Transit gathered input on features that people liked and disliked about each transit option. Additional engagement will take place before identifying a preferred option.



OPTION 1 – MARQUETTE & 2ND AVE – ONE WAY PAIRS

Like: easy to implement with current infrastructure, better pedestrian experience on Nicollet, improved transit service with dedicated bus lanes

Dislike: distance to walk to Nicollet for older adults or people with disabilities, proposed bus stops feel unsafe (low lighting, not as many people around, potential for crime), concerns about walking farther in winter, more difficult to transfer to light rail



OPTION 2 – MARQUETTE & 2ND AVE – TWO WAY

Like: better pedestrian experience along Nicollet, separation of Express/Local service easier to understand, dedicated bus lanes, two-way traffic more intuitive

Dislike: bus lane enforcement is top concern, distance to walk to Nicollet for older adults or people with disabilities, proposed bus stops feel unsafe, concerns about walking farther in winter, concerns around congestion, far from where people want to go to shop, fewer street parking spots



OPTION 3 – 3RD AVE – TWO WAY

Like: separated bike lanes, better pedestrian experience on Nicollet Mall as a result of transit changes

Dislike: too far from Nicollet and Hennepin, congestion concerns, decrease in perceived safety, distance to walk to Nicollet for older adults or people with disabilities

WHICH OPTION DO YOU LIKE BEST?



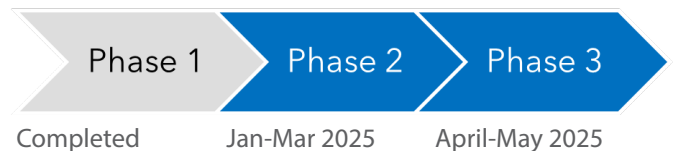
- Option 1 (22%)
- Option 2 (20%)
- Option 3 (13%)
- I don't know / unsure
- None, move transit to a different street
- No change (33%)*

*People who use Nicollet Mall and transit every day or a few times a week are overrepresented in selecting the "No change" option.

Next Steps

Phase 2 of engagement will begin in January 2025 with a focus on sharing additional information and tradeoffs about each transit option, answering questions raised by Phase 1 commenters, continuing the conversation on Nicollet Mall, and working toward a preferred north/south transit spine. This will include additional opportunities to seek feedback from transit riders, neighborhood residents, and downtown stakeholders.

Phase 3 of engagement will begin in spring 2025 and report out on the selected corridor and next steps for implementation.



Contact us

Amy Barnstorff, Transportation Planner – Public Works

612-673-2129 | Amy.Barnstorff@minneapolismn.gov

Visit us online at: www.minneapolismn.gov/government/programs-initiatives/transportation-programs/nicollet-mall-downtown/

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For reasonable accommodations or alternative formats please contact: **Amy Barnstorff** at 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.