Network Now Framework

2026 Amendment | Recommended for Council Endorsement (Business Item 2026-207)

11/09/2026

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Background

The Metropolitan Council endorsed the Network Now Framework on March 26, 2025, as Metro Transit's vision for transit following the COVID-19 pandemic. The Framework accomplishes the outcomes shown in Figure 1. Since its endorsement, Metro Transit has implemented approximately half of the improvements identified in the Framework, growing service by approximately 23% as of December 2026 (see Figure 2).

Figure 1: Network Now Framework outcomes.

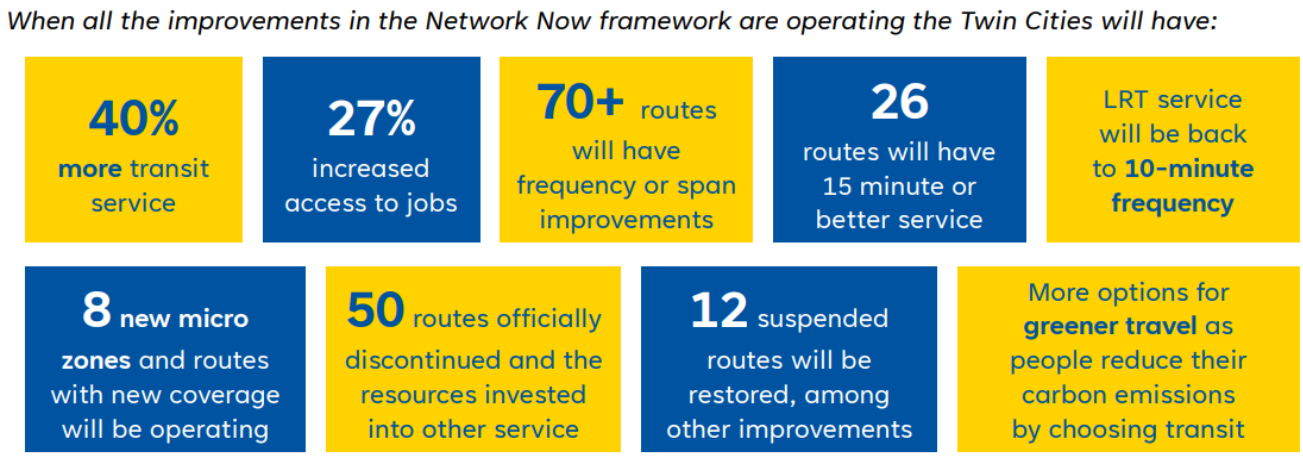
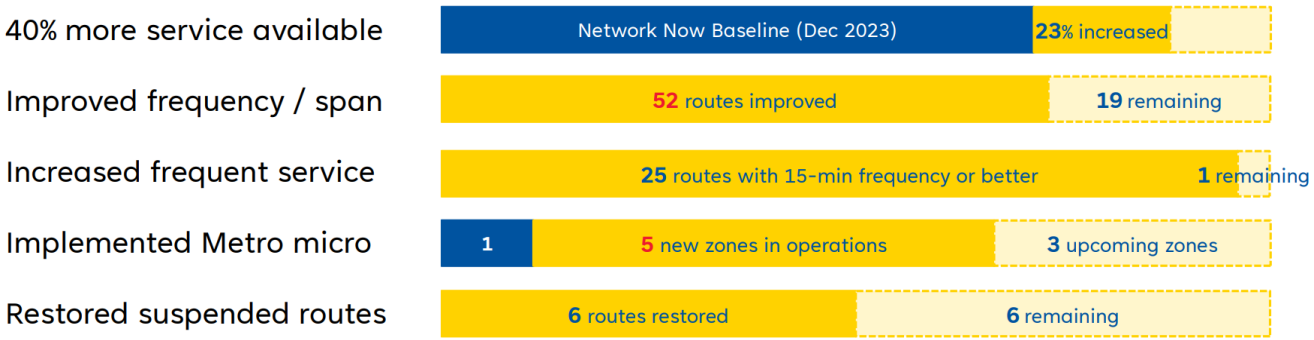


Figure 2: Network Now improvements implemented since December 2023 and remaining improvements to be implemented.



Why is an amendment needed?

Network Now is built on the principles of:

- Adapting service to changes in transit markets and travel patterns.
- Preparing for new METRO and high-frequency routes.
- Maintaining the reliability of scheduled service consistently over time.
- Building on success to grow ridership, adding service where people use transit the most.
- Providing access to opportunities and services with a focus on advancing equity and reducing regional disparities.

The proposed amendment is an opportunity to build on those principles in the following ways:

- **Adapting service** and **Building on Success:** Metro Transit has implemented approximately 50% of the Network Now Framework. Throughout, changes in ridership have been tracked. Service changes supporting all-day service are producing the strongest ridership growth.
- **Preparing for new METRO and high frequency routes:** Metro Transit will extend Green Line light rail service to Eden Prairie in 2027. This highly anticipated service significantly expands transit in the fast-growing west metro. Green Line Extension will be complemented by connecting transit service to help riders reach destinations beyond walking distance from stations and stops.
- **Maintaining the reliability of service:** Reliability is consistently cited as a critical factor to rider satisfaction. Through this amendment, Metro Transit will review routes and propose simplifications that support service reliability.
- **Providing access to opportunities:** The extended Green Line and new transit service on Highway 55 bring new access to residents west of Minneapolis. Maximizing the usefulness of these new transit corridors through strong connecting services will continue to make transit more accessible across the regional network.

Public engagement on draft amendment

Metro Transit released the draft amendment for public feedback on August 25, 2026. Four hundred fifty-nine comments were received through an on-line survey, in-person outreach, and open houses. In general, respondents were supportive of the changes and stated they would be as likely or more likely to take transit after the changes are implemented. Many comments requested specific changes to the proposed amendment or to other Metro Transit services.

Metro Transit is incorporating several changes to the final plan in response to feedback, described below. For a detailed review of feedback, see the Engagement Summary.

Plan modifications since draft amendment

In response to a more detailed understanding of operational constraints and public feedback, Metro Transit is making the following modifications to the amendment:

Route 2

Many respondents during the public engagement period requested a Route 2 extension to the West 21st Street light rail station. Metro Transit had previously evaluated this extension and determined that it would not proceed with the change.

In summer 2026, however, operational challenges around the existing Route 2 layover at Hennepin and Franklin continued to mount. The need to secure a permanent, transit-owned layover for this frequent service became paramount. Metro Transit re-evaluated options to secure a reliable layover and respond to public feedback about a Green Line connection. Metro Transit evaluated several alternatives, including:

After evaluating several alternatives, extending the route to Bassett Creek Valley Station proved to be the most advantageous:

- Bassett Creek Valley Station offers a bus layover and operator restroom facility owned by Metro Transit, something not available at West 21st Street Station.
- Extending Route 2 to Bassett Creek Valley Station provides better access to the Green Line from Franklin Avenue neighborhoods, the Hennepin/Lyndale commons and nearby destinations as well as the Loring Park neighborhood. It also provides a direct connection between Dunwoody College and the Green Line.
- Reliability on the extended routing to Bassett Creek Valley Station is supported in part by full-time bus lanes through the Hennepin/Lyndale commons.

Metro Transit is working with the City of Minneapolis on implementation details for this proposed extension. Today, the left turn from southbound Hennepin Avenue to eastbound Franklin Avenue is prohibited. If a technical solution is not found to allow for buses to make this turn, Metro Transit will work with the City of Minneapolis on alternate routings in the localized area near Hennepin & Franklin. If a solution is not found for this turn, alternate routings may be considered.

Route 38

The draft amendment released for public feedback proposed substantial changes to Route 38. Modifications to the eastern portion of the route and increased frequency were received favorably. Changes proposed in Hopkins and Minnetonka generated significant negative feedback, especially changes along 11th Avenue in Hopkins.

The proposal would have shortened Route 38, terminating it at the Shady Oak Green Line station. The existing route experiences poor reliability and the Opus terminal does not have adequate operator layover and restroom facilities; shortening the route would have improved reliability. The shortened route was proposed to use an existing Metro Transit facility near the Shady Oak Station for an operator layover. In turn, 11th Avenue in Hopkins and the Opus area would have been served by a restructured Route 615.

Additional operational coordination identified that the planned layover facility near Shady Oak is no longer available. Additionally, the proposed service by Route 615 generated significant concerns from residents south of Excelsior Boulevard. Metro Transit has reviewed these concerns and the new operational limitations and now recommends retaining Route 38 service on 11th Avenue and in Opus, with some modifications from today.

Under the revised plan, Route 38 will serve Shady Oak Station and continue south via 5th Street and 11th Avenue to Opus.

Route 615

Three updates to Route 615 are incorporated with the final plan:

1. **Facilitating transfers to Route 617:** Feedback received regarding Routes 615 emphasized the need for a convenient and well-timed transfer to Route 617. As originally proposed, transfers between these two routes would have occurred on Excelsior Boulevard near the Downtown Hopkins light rail station. Excelsior Boulevard can be challenging to cross for pedestrians and could make the transfer experience uncomfortable. Metro Transit has revised the proposed downtown Hopkins routing for Route 615 to move the transfer point to Mainstreet in downtown Hopkins.
- **Service on Cedar Lake Road and Greenbriar Road:** Metro Transit also heard significant concern about discontinuing service on Cedar Lake Road and Greenbriar Road in Minnetonka. The draft plan would have significantly increased walking distances for customers and required crossing Hopkins Crossroad to board southbound buses. The revised plan retains the service on its existing alignment.
2. **Opus Service:** With changes to Route 38, Route 615 is now planned to serve the Opus area west of the METRO Green Line. This reduces duplication of Route 38 and provides fixed-route bus service to an area that would no longer be served by Route 38.

Route 617

Route 617 is now planned to serve Mainstreet in Hopkins. This change facilitates transfers to Routes 38 and 615. It will also bring riders closer to destinations in downtown Hopkins. Connections to Green Line will be available at the Downtown Hopkins Station or the Wooddale Station in Saint Louis Park.

Additionally, Route 617 will operate on Park Center Boulevard in Saint Louis Park rather than Monterrey Drive. Retaining service on Park Center Boulevard will provide convenient access to more grocery store options. This change is in response to feedback emphasizing the use of Routes 615 and 617 for grocery access. Customers on Monterrey Drive will be about a 5-minute walk or roll from the nearest Route 617 bus stops.

What changes are planned?

The updated Network Now Framework Amendment brings improvements in the west metro connecting with an extended Green Line and new service along Highway 55 to Plymouth. Both the extended Green Line and new Highway 55 service will launch in 2027. This amendment focuses on these corridors.

13 routes will be updated to reduce duplicate service, simplify routing, and improve frequency or span of service and one new route will be created:

- **Route changes to nine routes:** Existing routes 2, 9, 30, 36, 38, 46, 615, 705, 716 and 758 are proposed to change. In addition, Route 757 is modified from what was proposed in the original Network Now Framework.

- **Improved and/or expanded frequency on four routes:** Routes 38, 705, and 757 are planned to have more frequent service and/or have service at expanded times of day compared to what was proposed in the original Network Now Framework. Route 758 will be restored with three trips rather than two trips as previously proposed.
- **One newly proposed route:** A new Route 617 is planned to connect to the Green Line.
- **Discontinued routes and segments:** Routes 755 is discontinued and largely replaced by other routes. Segments of service on routes 25 and 705 are also discontinued. Weekend-only Winnetka Ave service will be taken over by Route 705 with Route 716 serving Douglas Drive, Zane Ave, and Brooklyn Blvd 7 days per week.

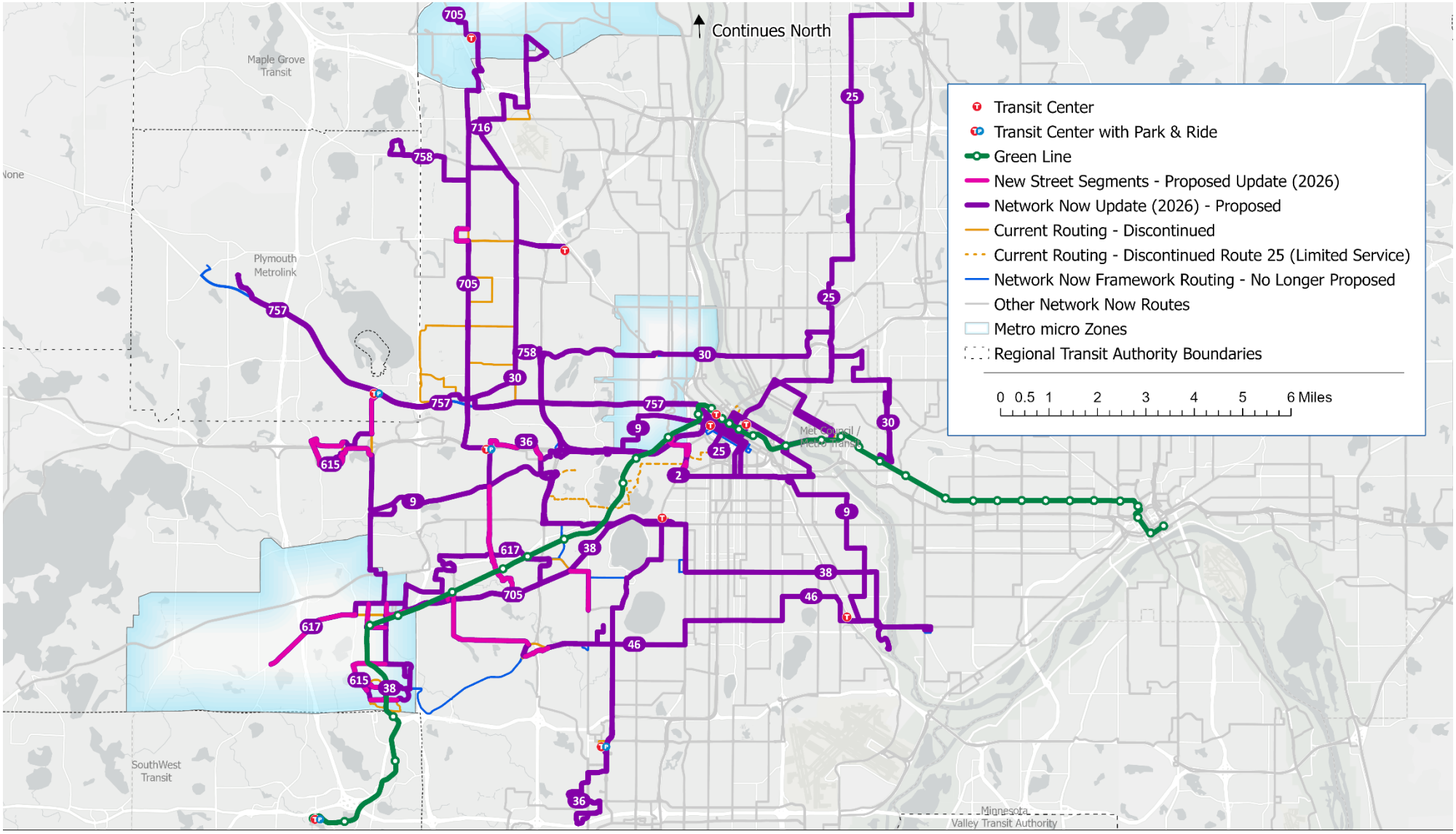
Table 1 and Figure 3 summarize the planned service changes. Detailed maps and descriptions of planned service changes are included in Appendix A.

Table 1: Summary of route changes planned in the 2026 Network Now amendment.

Route	Planned Changes
2	- Extension to Bassett Creek Valley Station from Hennepin and Franklin
9	- Single branch providing 30-minute service 7 days/week to Greenbriar Apartments
25	- Discontinue 25L branch (one trip per day per direction). All-day coverage is provided by Green Line and Route 36
30	- Extend all trips to Golden Valley Rd/Winnetka Ave, connect to routes 705 and 757
36	- Extend route to West End and Louisiana Transit Center
38	- 20-minute service 7 days/week - All trips serve Shady Oak and Opus Green Line stations and Ford Pkwy in St. Paul
46	- Extend all trips to Blake Road Station in Hopkins and Veteran's Home in Minneapolis
615	- Simplify to North/South routing. East/West routing taken by Route 617. - Extend to Station 73 Park and Ride (Route 757 connection) and to Opus (Green Line connection)
617	- New route covering East/West portion of Route 615. - Extend to E Line connection at 44th/France in Minneapolis and to Glen Lake area in Minnetonka
705	- 30-minute service 7 days/week, add weekend service, streamline route for speed and reliability - Connect to Green Line, Methodist Hospital, and Park Commons
716	- Move weekend service from Winnetka Ave to Douglas Drive to match weekday. All trips serve Brooklyn Blvd. Weekend service on Winnetka provided by Route 705
755	- Discontinue and replace with all day coverage on routes 705 / 757. Reverse commute provided on Route 758.

Route	Planned Changes
757	- Extend span to 10 p.m. and add weekend service - Connect directly to Golden Valley Rd/Winnetka Ave and extend hourly trips to U of M East Bank
758	- Extend to Bass Creek Business Park and provide 3 reverse commute trips

Figure 3: Overview map of amendment changes to the Network Now Framework.



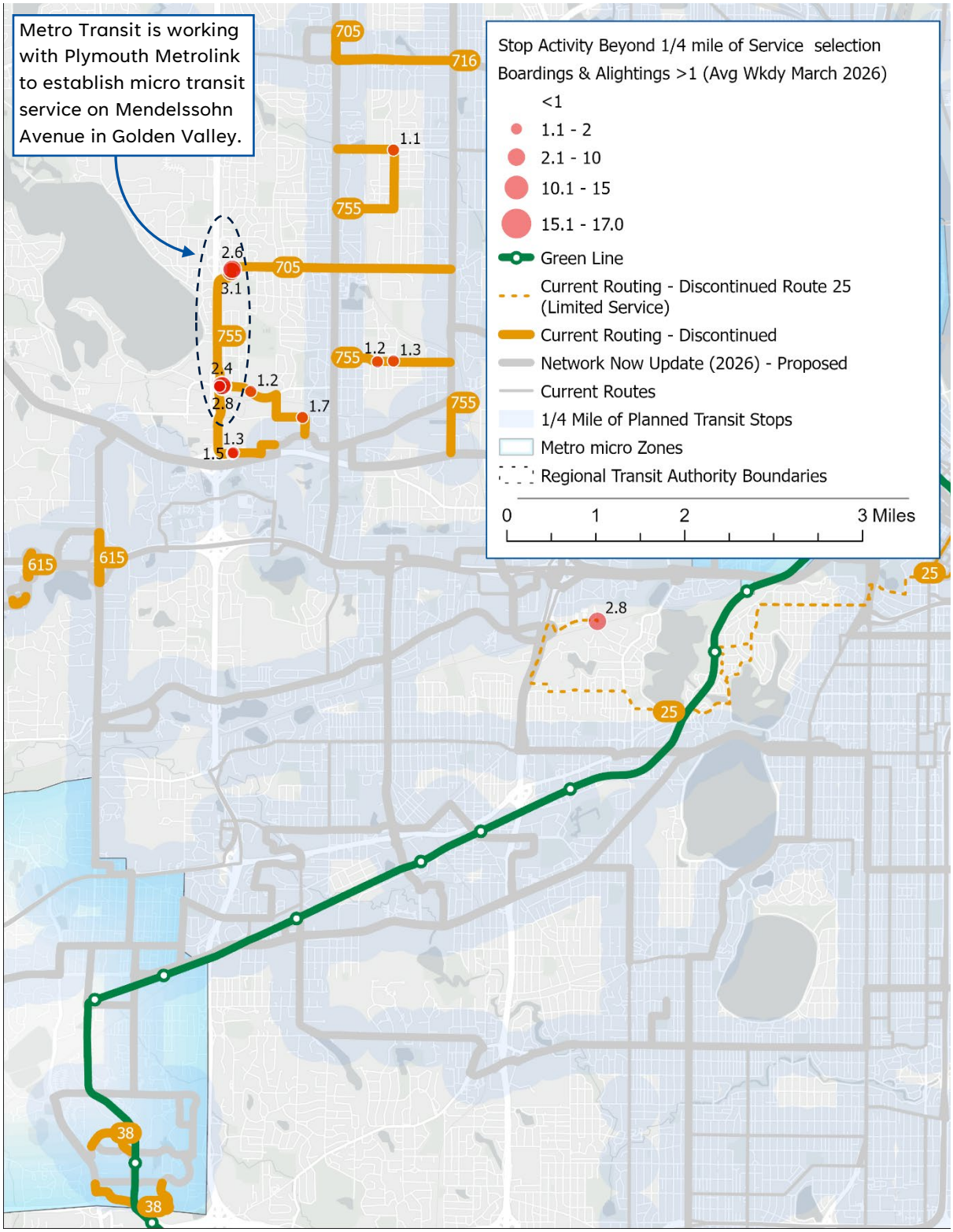
What are the outcomes of the planned changes?

Overall, this updated amendment increases Metropolitan Council transit services by 2.4% across the entire region over the original Network Now Framework. The planned changes advance Network Now principles in the following ways:

- **Adapting service** and **Building on Success:** Many of the routes in the amendment will see added service in the evening and on weekends. Some routes or branches in this area today operate as infrequently as every 2 hours. With these changes all local routes in this part of the network would operate every 60 minutes or better.
- **Preparing for new METRO and high frequency routes:** The amendment significantly strengthens Green Line Extension connecting services by bringing new routes and route extensions to stations and adding frequency to other routes.
    - Stations west of downtown Minneapolis will see 62% more planned connecting bus trips on weekdays and over 70% more connecting bus trips on weekends, compared to the original Network Now Framework.
- **Maintaining the reliability of service:** Several routes will be restructured or streamlined. Simplifying alignments makes reliability goals easier to achieve. Adding frequency means that the impact of any service disruption is lessened. Both lead to a more positive customer experience.
- **Providing access to opportunities:** The amendment brings new access to all-day transit coming at least every 30 minutes on weekdays for 14,000 people. These residents will have the opportunity to travel farther and at more times of day on Metro Transit than they did before, opening up access to jobs, critical services, and recreational opportunities.

Streamlining routes means that some segments of service will be eliminated, affecting a small number of customers. Figure 4 shows the location of those riders. Metro Transit is working with Plymouth Metrolink to establish micro transit service on Mendelssohn Avenue in Golden Valley to provide alternative service for customers on portions of Routes 755 and 705A.

Figure 4: Proposed segments that would no longer have transit service within a five-minute walk/roll.



Route changes considered but not recommended

In preparing this amendment, Metro Transit reviewed customer feedback and suggestions for route changes received in the past, including in the public engagement during the development of the original Network Now Framework. Metro Transit considered several route changes that are ultimately not recommended for implementation. They are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Overview of route changes considered in response to past feedback but not being pursued at this time.

Proposed Change	Reasoning
Direct connection between North Minneapolis and Uptown connecting to Green Line	Metro Transit is considering route options that would fulfill this request. Some alternatives would substantially duplicate Route 5 in North Minneapolis, so Route 5 is being reviewed for changes as well. Metro Transit has begun engaging Route 5 customers and will continue to evaluate these changes for future consideration.
Direct connection between downtown Minneapolis and Bassett Creek Valley Station	Providing this connection would require a significant increase in operational resources, for a relatively small customer benefit. Additionally, the North Minneapolis micro zone will include a Green Line connection at the Bassett Creek Station.
Deviate Route 9 to Bryn Mawr Station	Diverting Route 9 to Bryn Mawr station would add to the route length and make transit less accessible to residents north of I-394. The North Minneapolis micro zone will be extended to Bryn Mawr Station and will provide this connection.
Extend service on Franklin Avenue to W 21st St Station	Metro Transit has reviewed several options that would connect Franklin Avenue to W 21st St Station.. Key challenges include navigating tight streets west of Franklin Avenue and inadequate operator layover facilities near the W 21st Street Station. Extending service to this station would require significant additional resources, for a relatively small customer benefit. In the updated amendment, Metro Transit is planning to extend Route 2 to Bassett Creek Valley Station, which will provide dedicated layover and driver restroom facilities. The extension will also better connect Loring Park to Green Line and offer new service to Dunwoody Technical College.

When will these and other changes be implemented?

Metro Transit plans to implement the Green Line Extension connecting bus service when the Green Line is extended in 2027. Highway 55 corridor service enhancements are also planned to be implemented in 2027. Metro Transit's workforce availability drives how quickly planned improvements can be made. Other Network Now improvements are anticipated to be implemented through 2028, based on workforce availability.