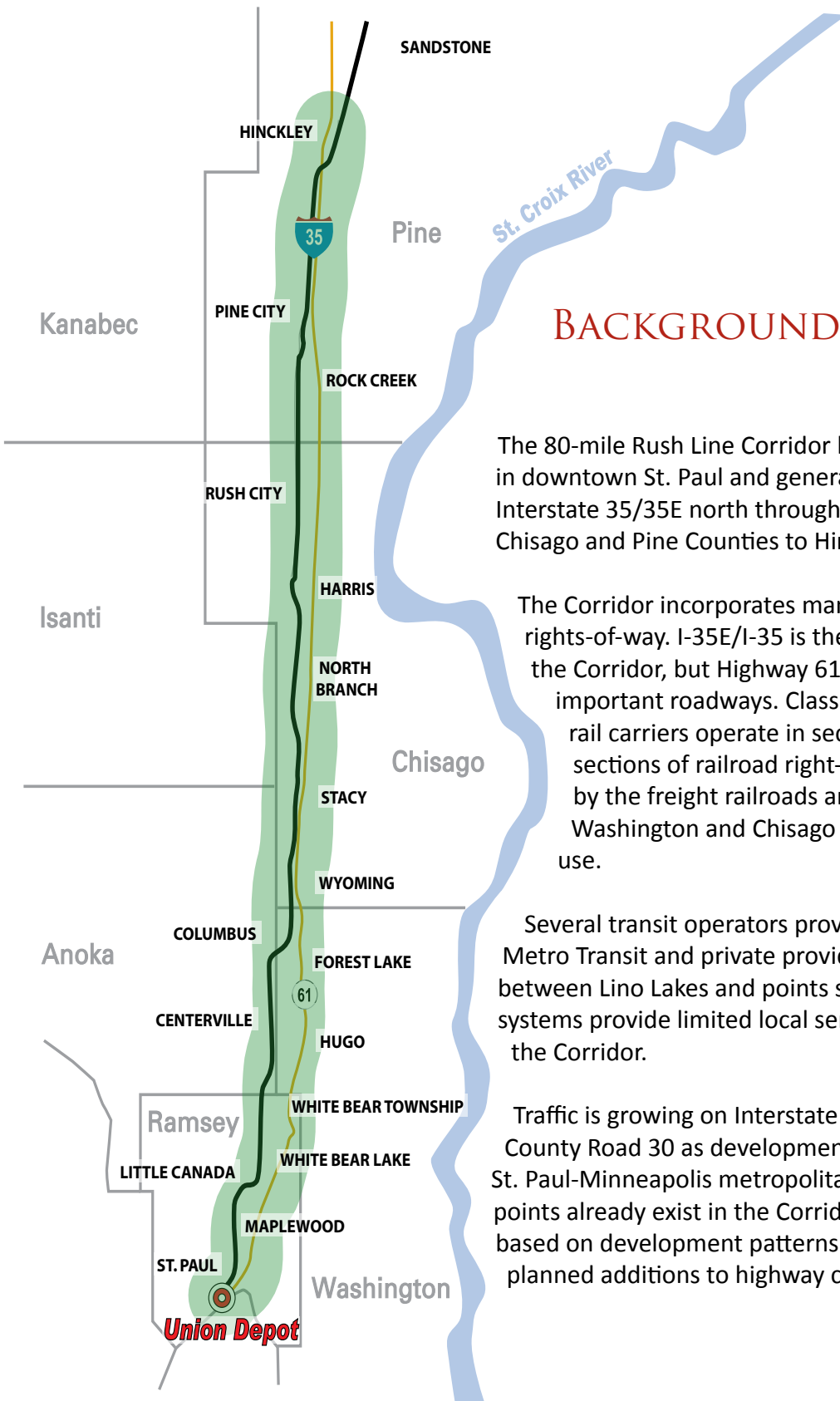


RUSH LINE CORRIDOR 2009 ANNUAL REPORT

PREPARED BY THE RAMSEY COUNTY REGIONAL RAILROAD AUTHORITY

January 2010

2009 ANNUAL REPORT



BACKGROUND

The 80-mile Rush Line Corridor begins at the Union Depot in downtown St. Paul and generally follows Highway 61 and Interstate 35/35E north through Ramsey, Anoka, Washington, Chisago and Pine Counties to Hinckley.

The Corridor incorporates many roadway and railroad rights-of-way. I-35E/I-35 is the major roadway traversing the Corridor, but Highway 61 and County Road 30 are also important roadways. Class I and Class III (shortline) freight rail carriers operate in sections of the Corridor. Other sections of railroad right-of-way have been abandoned by the freight railroads and acquired by Ramsey, Washington and Chisago Counties for future rail transit use.

Several transit operators provide bus service in the Corridor. Metro Transit and private providers operate limited bus service between Lino Lakes and points south. County-based transit systems provide limited local service in the northern portion of the Corridor.

Traffic is growing on Interstate 35/35E, Highway 61, and County Road 30 as development spreads north from the St. Paul-Minneapolis metropolitan area. Several traffic choke points already exist in the Corridor, and more are projected based on development patterns and the limited amount of planned additions to highway capacity.

2009 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Transit Studies

In November, the Rush Line Corridor Task Force completed its work on the Corridor's Alternatives Analysis. The study, which began in 2007, identified the benefits, costs, and impacts of a range of transit alternatives for the Corridor. The study resulted in the selection of Light Rail Transit from the Union Depot in downtown St. Paul to White Bear Lake along the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority right-of-way and Bus Rapid Transit along I-35E/35 to Forest Lake/Columbus as the two alternatives in need of additional analysis. The advancement of the two alternatives into an Advanced Alternatives Analysis will be a priority for the Task Force in 2010 and 2011 with study initiation dependent on funding. The completion of the Advanced Alternatives Analysis and associated environmental work will result in the selection of a single alternative for the Rush Line Corridor. Upon selection of the alternative the first step in securing Federal Transit Administration New Starts funding will have concluded.

In 2009 the Task Force continued working to implement the bus service scenario it selected at its August 2007 Task Force meeting. The route was shortened with the northern terminus moved from North Branch to Forest Lake/Columbus. From this northern terminus the route would travel south to the White Bear Township Theatre prior to running express to downtown St. Paul and the Union Depot. In November the Task Force agreed to enter into Contract Administration, Fare Reimbursement, and a federal funding Sub-recipient Agreements with the Metropolitan Council in preparation for the initiation of the service in 2010.

Related Developments

Route 288, a one-year commuter bus demonstration route between Forest Lake/Columbus and Minneapolis became permanent service due to the efforts of Anoka and Washington Counties, the cities of Forest Lake and Columbus, and the Metropolitan Council. The success of Route 288 service offers a glimpse into the potential for the Forest Lake/Columbus to St. Paul demonstration service.

TASK FORCE

The Rush Line Corridor Task Force is made up of elected officials from counties and municipalities along the Corridor. In 2009, members of the Task Force included:

- Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt, Chair
Ramsey County
- Commissioner Dennis Hegberg,
Vice Chair, Washington County
- Commissioner Ben Montzka,
Chisago County
- Commissioner Rhonda Sivarajah
Anoka County
- Mayor Mary Capra
Centerville
- Council Member Renae Fry
Columbus
- Council Member Susan Young
Forest Lake
- Mayor Diane Miller
Harris
- Council Member Dave Hopkins
Hinckley
- Council Member Tom Weidt
Hugo
- Mayor Bill Blesener
Little Canada
- Mayor Will Rossbach
Maplewood
- Council Member Theresa Furman
North Branch
- Commissioner Doug Carlson
Pine County
- Council Member Paul Janssen
Pine City
- Council Member Lee Raudabaugh
Rock Creek
- Council Member Mick Louzek
Rush City
- Council Member Dave Thune
St. Paul
- Council Member Leonard Bonander
Sandstone
- Mayor John Daher
Stacy
- Council Member Bryan Belisle
White Bear Lake
- Town Board Member Bob Kermes
White Bear Township
- Council Member Linda Nanko-Yeager
Wyoming

PRIOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1999

The Rush Line Corridor Task Force, a joint powers board of counties and cities along a corridor from the Union Depot in St. Paul to Hinckley, is formed.

2001

The Rush Line Corridor Task Force obtained Federal funds to complete a transit study. The Task Force decided to pursue both short- and long-term goals. Short-term goals were to preserve rights-of-way for future transit use and to construct facilities such as park-and-ride lots that would benefit the long-term goal of busway and rail transit in the Rush Line Corridor.

2005

The Rush Line Corridor Task Force contributed funds to assist with completing a park-and-ride lot at Maplewood Mall in Ramsey County.

2006

The Rush Line Corridor Task Force provided funding for the completion of an 85-car park-and-ride lot south of North Branch at the County State Aid Highway 17 and Interstate 35 interchange. This park-and-ride facility has expansion capacity for 400 vehicles.



Two vans were purchased with Rush Line funds in 2005. The vehicles were fully leased for vanpool operation in 2006. Both vanpools are utilized allowing residents in the northern sections of the Corridor to commute to their jobs in the southern sections of the Corridor.

2007

The Rush Line Corridor Task Force contributed funding to the Forest Lake Transit Center. Construction of this facility was started with the park and ride lot completed in time for the initiation of Route 288 commuter bus service to Minneapolis.

Route 288, a one-year demonstration service between Forest Lake and Minneapolis, was planned for and publicized in preparation for its January 2008 launch. Additional service and a stop at the Columbus park and ride were added in May.

The Rush Line Bus Study was completed and a service plan was adopted. The plan included service from the North Branch Area to downtown St. Paul with intermediate stops in Forest Lake and White Bear Lake. The Task Force approved seeking funding for the service from the 2008 Legislature.

Work on the Rush Line Corridor Alternatives Analysis continued throughout 2007. Analysis included the identification of modes and alignments that maximize benefits and minimize impacts to Corridor stakeholders. The study concluded in 2009.

A Capitol Open House was hosted by the Task Force in February to increase awareness of the Corridor.

2008

The Forest Lake Transit Center opened to Route 288 service on January 7, 2008 with additional amenities including a climate controlled waiting area and regional trail connections opening in the Spring. Jefferson Lines intercity bus service also utilizes the Transit Center as its Forest Lake stop.



Work continued on the Corridor's Alternatives Analysis. This study, which began in 2007, will identify and compare costs, benefits, and impacts of various transit alternatives in the Corridor.

The Rush Line Corridor Task Force continued working toward the implementation of bus service from Forest Lake/Columbus to White Bear Lake and on to St. Paul. Anoka, Chisago, Ramsey, and Washington Counties agreed to provide funding for a one-year demonstration project.

VISIT US ON THE WEB



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2010 RUSH LINE CORRIDOR TASK FORCE

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Commissioner Dennis Hegberg, Vice Chair
Commissioner Ben Montzka
Commissioner Rhonda Sivarajah
Commissioner Roger Nelson
Mayor Mary Capra
Council Member Renae Fry
Council Member Susan Young
Mayor Diane Miller
Council Member Dave Hopkins
Council Member Tom Weidt
Mayor Bill Blesener
Mayor Will Rossbach
Council Member Theresa Furman
Commissioner Doug Carlson
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