



## II – MARKET ASSESSMENT

---

The market assessment component included the use of focus groups, a telephone survey and an on-board transit passenger survey. The purpose was to better understand transit needs in the area and to determine the factors considered important for making potential transit service attractive to users.

### FOCUS GROUPS

Four focus groups were convened on July 6 and July 7, 1999, consisting of two residential groups (east and west of Hennepin Avenue) and two employer groups (east and west of Hennepin Avenue). Input was sought from respondents as to their general reaction to transit on the 29th Street and Southwest Corridors, their preference for busway or LRT service, and other transit issues. The purpose of the focus groups was to better understand transit needs in the area from the point of view of those directly affected by the service.

### Reaction to Transitway Proposal

Participants, for the most part, viewed transit service in the 29th Street and Southwest Corridors positively. They saw the corridors' potential as part of an overall transit system that could effectively move people throughout the Twin Cities, as well as alleviate congestion and pollution. Transit service was viewed as an asset to those traveling to downtown destinations, in addition to offering benefits to those who reverse-commute.

### Busway versus LRT

When discussing busway transit service provision, a general preference for LRT was voiced by many focus group participants. However, a misconception existed among them that existing freight rail could be easily converted for light rail usage. When provided an understanding of the time and cost of LRT service provision, many acknowledged that a busway was a viable beginning for transit service in the 29th Street and Southwest Corridors.

### System Linkages

Universally, focus group participants want to see the 29th Street and Southwest Corridors linked to other transportation corridors. Participants believed that the linkage to proposed LRT service on Hiawatha was critical, and also suggested a direct connection (i.e., no transfer) to downtown Minneapolis via Nicollet, I-35W, Hennepin, Lyndale or an existing rail corridor connecting to downtown Minneapolis through the Kenwood area.

## II – MARKET ASSESSMENT

### TELEPHONE SURVEY

Random telephone calls were made to households in proximity to the 29th Street and Southwest Corridors during the second and third weeks of July 1999, to gain an understanding of the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of study area residents and employees. Two geographical areas were delineated to the west and east of France Avenue. The west section survey area included residential properties within one mile of either side of the corridor. The east section was narrowed to within four blocks of the corridor, due to higher residential densities. In all, 201 surveys were administered, 100 to the east section and 101 to the west section.

### Typical Travel Mode

The clear majority of all respondents (68 percent) drove alone to work. The remainder either carpooled (10 percent), rode the bus (14 percent) or bicycled/walked (8 percent).

### Busway Conversion to LRT

When asked whether a busway should be built as a precursor to future LRT, a slim majority (51 percent) of responses were affirmative. The remainder either believed that no transit use should be made until LRT was constructed (26 percent) or had no opinion on the issue (23 percent).

### Busway versus LRT

It is interesting to note respondents' modest preference for LRT over busway service. When the question was asked if and how often respondents would use busway service in the corridor, 9 percent said they would use it three or more times per week in comparison to 13 percent who would use LRT service three or more times per week.

Although there was a modest preference expressed for LRT over busway service, this preference still does not seem strong enough to divert the "drive alone" segment of the survey responders who accounted for 68 percent of the sample. The number of the "drive alone" responders who would use the transitway, whether busway or LRT, more than three times a week remained stable at 8 percent. The difference in the "drive alone" segment arose in their belief that if LRT service were provided they would be more likely to be occasional (one to 3 times per month) users of it.

## II – MARKET ASSESSMENT

### ON-BOARD TRANSIT PASSENGER SURVEY

An on-board survey was administered to passengers on five Metro Transit routes serving the 29th Street and Southwest Corridors area to better understand current transit users and trip patterns in the study area. Distribution began on September 7 and concluded September 29, 1999. In total, 748 surveys were returned and tabulated. The results indicate that survey respondents are highly transit dependent with 51 percent not owning an automobile. Most riders (55 percent) have been transit users for more than five years and 36 percent ride the bus 10 or more times per week.

### MARKET ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Although many of the potential riders of 29th Street and Southwest Corridors transit service expressed a preference for LRT over busway service, it is important to note that almost all of the reasons expressed for this preference could be replicated in these corridors by a busway. By using hybrid diesel-electric vehicles with fixed station stops and loading riders in a fashion similar to that of LRT, customer concerns about polluting buses, route predictability and service attractiveness may be overcome.

Concerns regarding safety and shelter in the corridors were voiced by many of the focus group respondents who suggested station design modifications adding security cameras and additional lighting to address safety concerns. Issues relating to shelter from the elements during transfers may be addressed by providing canopies and other means of sheltering riders.