

# INTRODUCTION

## PREFACE

The Duluth Transit Authority with the assistance of The Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC) initiated development of a comprehensive transit plan for the Duluth-Superior metropolitan area beginning in late-2008. The MIC is the designated transportation planning agency conducting studies in the urbanized area of Duluth and Superior. The Duluth Transit Authority is the FTA designated recipient for transit funds for the area. This document culminates the efforts of all the staff at the DTA, interns from UMD as well as staff from the Transportation Division of Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC). Additionally the Board members of the DTA, technical advisors from local government bodies, as well as many individuals from the general public that were an integral part of this study via public reviews as well as surveys.



*DTA bus on Superior Street in Duluth.*

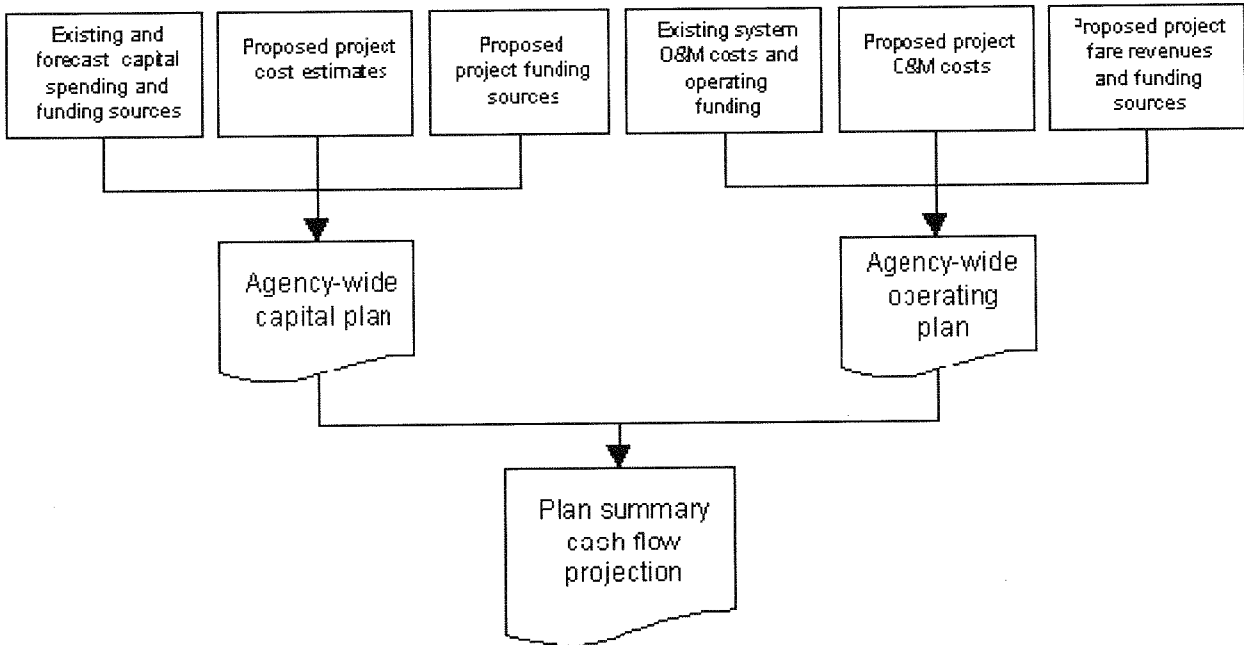
## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Federal requirements state that DTA and MIC must have a Transit Development Program that looks out at least five years. The Vision report is that document. By Federal standards it must contain:

- The Goals and Objectives of the Transit Agency
- Summary of Regional Economic Conditions
- A review of the system's operation
- Summary of Financial Condition and Operation of the System
- Summary of Fleet Management Plans

- How is the area changing
- What services should the Agency be providing

- 5 Year Operational Plan - A Financial Plan
- Capital Plan (extends to 20 years for major Projects)
- Funding sources and revenue forecasts
- Proposed capital budget to meet Operational Plan
- Annual operating and maintenance (O&M) expenses for the proposed projects and the existing system



Also, from a DTA perspective it good to take that pause and look at the system. Ask passengers and others in community how is the DTA operating and could it be better? Thus the study incorporates surveys of bus riders, people waiting for buses in the downtown area, bus operators, and a telephone survey of the general population. In this way the DTA can see what the current demand for service is, what the latent demand is, and decide what level of services can be provided.

The Duluth-Superior area has experienced significant changes since the Duluth Transit Authority (DTA) public bus system was put into operation in February of 1970 years ago. Even more since the creation of transit in Duluth in 1893! Some of the more notable changes include the expanding commercial growth in Duluth’s Miller Hill corridor and the Tower Avenue corridor in Superior. The metropolitan area has shifted from a highly industrial one to an area that is more focused on tourism and the service industries. Medical and University populations continue to grow dramatically. Population has shifted from the central city areas to the outer fringes of each community. These changes have created a more widespread residential population covering large expanses of land. Density is lower in the surrounding areas than in the central city, which stretches the feasibility and increases the cost of transit service. In the last year the price of fuel has also made a dramatic shift in modal choice for many families.

In response to these issues, provision of public transportation in the Twin Ports area has been thoroughly examined in order to meet current demands and to best serve the general public. Meeting the transportation needs of senior citizens, people with disabilities, and students as well as other demographic groups that rely on transit are all key aspects studied within the scope of this project.

DTA staff, interns, and staff at the Metropolitan Interstate Committee (MIC) have conducted a comprehensive study to examine the condition of bus service in the metropolitan area to address the changing needs of the community. The focus of this study is to provide the DTA with short and long range recommendations that will allow the bus system to maintain and improve its vital role in transportation of individuals now and in the future. Results of the study will include recommendations to make transit usage more attractive to those who currently use the DTA and those currently not using public transportation to meet their travel needs. The plan will involve matching service needs to service types (size of bus, frequency of service, location of service), and it will examine DTA's financial position as well as explore innovative ways to continue financing operating and capital costs.

## **PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

- Develop and/or update DTA Goals, Objectives, and Standards. This will provide the DTA with a system evaluation and enable the bus service to operate at maximum effectiveness.
- Develop a Marketing Plan that addresses the existing demographic make-up of the metropolitan area in terms of successfully exploiting niches in both new and mature markets.
- Plan for meeting the needs of those individuals with disabilities.
- Provide major employers and businesses in the metropolitan area with enhanced transit opportunities to allow their employees a better choice between transit and the private automobile for meeting their transportation needs.
- Strengthen the link between transit planning and community planning by inclusion of land use and urban design policies that support the use of transit.
- Develop innovative solutions in the provision of transit service for the Twin Ports that includes practices never applied to the DTA in the past. These options will include optimizing the latest in technological advances used in the transit industry today, to make transit more attractive to the public.

## **PROJECT OVERVIEW**

The following provides a listing of the key components analyzed and discussed within the Duluth - Superior Vision for Transit study.

- Review existing bus service and performance measures,
- Review impacts of current and future trends which affect transit use,

- Review changes in commuting patterns,
- Identify current and future major travel destinations,
- Identify future capital needs that may better serve the riding public while also cost effective for the DTA,
- Identify needs and options for suburban service,
- Develop performance standards for different service types to ensure that the services are provided cost effectively,
- Develop a marketing plan, (conduct market research and develop market strategies)
- Develop link between transit and community planning,
- Identify technological innovations for the DTA to examine and implement,
- Examine security and service quality issues and needs,
- Develop recommendations for service improvements,
- Develop priorities for transit service delivery, and
- Develop a financial plan for operating and capital costs.