



Arterial Bus Rapid Transit Program Governance & Risk Assessment

for



FINAL REPORT DATE: SEPTEMBER 21, 2026

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
ABRT PROGRAM OVERVIEW	4
ASSESSMENT APPROACH	5
WORK PERFORMED	5
ASSESSMENT RESULTS AND BUSINESS PROCESS ENHANCEMENTS	6
APPENDIX A: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED & INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED	12

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Talson Solutions, LLC (Talson), an independent capital programs advisory firm, was engaged by the Metropolitan Council's (Met Council) Evaluation and Audit Department to perform a program-level governance and risk assessment of METRO Transit's Arterial Bus Rapid Transit (ABRT) Program. The objective of the assessment was to evaluate whether METRO Transit had established an effective, scalable, and sufficiently documented framework to support oversight and delivery of various ABRT corridors progressing through different stages of planning, design, procurement, construction, and operations.

The assessment addressed seven program areas: (i) governance and oversight; (ii) management framework; (iii) project controls; (iv) schedule management; (v) cooperative agreements and interagency coordination; (vi) project status and cost reporting; and (vii) risk management and reporting. Talson focused primarily on the F, G, and H Lines, considering differences in corridor maturity, delivery phase, complexity, funding requirements, and stakeholder environments.

Talson performed selective, risk-based testing procedures, including review of relevant program and corridor documentation and interviews regarding governance, coordination, project controls, reporting and escalation practices. The procedures were not intended to constitute exhaustive testing of all corridor activities, transactions, controls, or documentation.

Based on the procedures performed, Talson did not identify any notable risks in the ABRT Program's existing governance, management, coordination, project administration, or corridor-level control environment. Drawing on its prior experience delivering five current active ABRT corridors, METRO Transit has established a sound and repeatable delivery framework that includes standardized practices, repeatable station designs, a defined corridor development process, and early coordination with external partners. This framework is supported by defined roles and responsibilities, common program guidance, corridor-level schedule and budget controls, established interagency coordination practices, and project control and risk management processes scaled to each corridor's phase, complexity and funding requirements.

Talson identified two Business Process Enhancement (BPE) opportunities to further strengthen the ABRT Program's existing framework. These opportunities are summarized below and discussed in detail in the "*Assessment Results and Business Process Enhancements*" section of this report.

1. **Finalize and Enhance the ABRT Procedures Guide** – Formalize finalization of the Program's governance, decision authority, scalable project controls, risk management, closeout, records retention, and reporting expectations.
2. **Establish an ABRT Active Projects Quarterly Status Update** – Provide senior management with concise, consolidated visibility into schedule, cost, project status, risks, issues, and matters requiring escalation or management decision.

METRO Transit representatives were accessible and responsive throughout the assessment. Talson discussed the assessment results and proposed BPEs with METRO Transit representatives.

ABRT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

METRO Transit's ABRT Program is a corridor-based transit improvement program focused on enhancing service along high ridership bus routes through increased speed, reliability, frequency, and passenger accessibility. The Program incorporates standardized station designs, wider stop spacing, all-door boarding, off-board fare payment, transit signal priority, and where feasible, roadway treatments such as bus-only lanes. As the Program has expanded, METRO Transit has developed a repeatable delivery approach, with five ABRT Lines currently in service and additional corridors in planning, design, procurement, or construction.

The METRO Lines currently in service include: **A Line:** Snelling Avenue (2016); **B Line:** Lake Street, Marshall & Selby Avenues (2025); **C Line:** Penn Avenue (2019); **D Line:** Chicago/Emerson-Fremont Avenues (2022); and **E Line:** Route 6/University, Hennepin, France, Southdale (2025).

The typical ABRT delivery process progresses from long-range planning and corridor identification through corridor planning, design and engineering, procurement, construction, testing and training, and service opening. Corridor planning establishes key project elements, including station and platform locations, before detailed design begins. Design and engineering generally span 18-24 months, construction typically occurs over two construction seasons, and testing and training generally requires three to six months of pre-revenue activity before passenger revenue service.

Budget development begins during long-range planning and is refined as each corridor advances through planning and design. ABRT investments are supported by multiple sources, including state bonding, regional solicitations, federal grants and Met Council budget actions. The availability and timing of these funding sources vary by corridor and may occur at different stages of project development.

Talson's assessment focused on the F, G, and H Lines, which were at different stages of development¹ during the review period:

- **F Line (Central):** Planned 13 miles with 32 planned stations, from downtown Minneapolis to Northtown Transit Center. The project is in design, requires significant MnDOT coordination, and is progressing through FTA Small Starts. The estimated capital cost is approximately \$98 million, with a planned fleet of approximately 27 buses and revenue service targeted for 2030.
- **G Line (Rice/Robert):** Approximately 11.5 miles with 32 planned stations, primarily along Rice Street and Roberts Street. Design is complete and the project is transitioning into construction in 2026, with phased service openings planned for 2027 and 2028. The estimated \$75 million to 85 million capital cost is fully funded through a combination of federal, state and local sources, with service planned using a hybrid-electric bus fleet.
- **H Line (Como/Maryland):** Proposed 17 miles with 45 planned stations, along Washington, Como, Maryland, and White Bear Avenues. The corridor is in early planning and development, with an estimated capital cost of approximately \$120 million to \$150 million. Funding and fleet requirements remain under development.

¹ Source: Arterial BRT Program Overview Presentation, June 23, 2026

ASSESSMENT APPROACH

Talson conducted the governance and risk assessment in alignment with the Institute of Internal Auditors' *Global Internal Audit Standards*, using a systematic, disciplined and risk-based approach. Talson maintained independence and objectivity throughout the engagement.

Procedures evaluated governance, oversight, coordination, project controls, reporting and risk management practices. Testing was tailored to the maturity, delivery phase, complexity, and funding requirements of the F, G, and H Lines.

Testing was selective and risk-based, and not intended to constitute exhaustive testing of all corridor activities, transactions, controls or documentation. Accordingly, conclusions are limited to the areas and information reviewed.

Information obtained through interviews, process discussions and supporting documentation was considered collectively in developing the assessment conclusions. Talson believes the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for the conclusions presented in this report.

WORK PERFORMED

Talson commenced the ABRT Program assessment in June 2026. Fieldwork included in-person and virtual interviews with METRO Transit personnel and review of selected Program and corridor-level documentation.

Documents reviewed included governance and organizational material, program guidance, corridor schedules and budget information, risk and issue management records, interagency and cooperative agreements, project control documentation, and selected meeting minutes.

Talson facilitated discussions with program leadership and project personnel to understand governance, decision-making, coordination, oversight, reporting, and escalation practices across the F, G, and H Lines.

Supplemental interviews and document review continued through July and August 2026. A Closeout Briefing to discuss preliminary results and confirm BPEs were accurately represented was conducted with various METRO Transit stakeholders prior to finalization of this report.

A complete list of documents reviewed and interviews conducted is included in [Appendix A](#).

ASSESSMENT RESULTS AND BUSINESS PROCESS ENHANCEMENTS

Overall Assessment

Talson did not identify any notable risks in the ABRT Program's existing governance, management, coordination, project administration, or corridor-level control environment. The differences observed among the F, G and H Lines were generally consistent with each corridor's stage of development and applicable funding and delivery requirements.

Talson did identify two BPEs opportunities focused on further formalizing and consolidating existing practices. These opportunities are summarized below and discussed in detail thereafter:

1. Finalize and enhance the ***ABRT Procedures Guide*** to consolidate program governance, decision authority, escalation expectations and project controls requirements.
2. Establish a standing ***ABRT Active Projects Quarterly Status Update*** for approved corridors, consolidating schedule, cost, delivery, issue, decision-making, and escalation information for METRO Transit.
 - BPE No. 2A: Schedule Reporting
 - BPE No. 2B: Project Status and Cost Reporting
 - BPE No. 2C: Risk and Issue Reporting

The two BPEs would improve program-level visibility, accountability, and consistency while preserving corridor-specific controls appropriate to each Line's phase and funding obligations.

Audit Area No. 1: Program Governance and Oversight

Assessment: METRO Transit documents ABRT governance roles and responsibilities through organizational charts, the Program RACI matrix, workload forecasts, lessons-learned practices, corridor-specific management plans, cooperative and interagency arrangements, and supporting procedures. Consistent with federal funding requirements, the F Line Project Management Plan provides additional detail on roles, responsibilities, and approval authorities across project management, design, procurement, finance, construction administration, contract changes, claims and cost management. At the time of the audit, METRO Transit was developing an *ABRT Procedures Guide*.

BPE No. 1: Finalize and Enhance the *ABRT Procedures Guide*

METRO Transit should finalize and formally approve the *ABRT Procedures Guide* as the Program's consolidated governance and project control reference. The *ABRT Procedures Guide* should define decision rights, delegated authorities, approval and escalation requirements, minimum phase-appropriate controls, and corridor versus program-level responsibilities. It should also address risk and issue management, project closeout and records retention, status reporting, and document governance.

Formalization should include management approval, an effective date and version number, ownership of future updates and a defined process for communicating substantive revisions. Once finalized, the *ABRT Procedures Guide* can serve as the common program-level framework for consistently applying and scaling governance and project control expectations as existing corridors advance and new corridors enter the ABRT development lifecycle.

BPE No. 1 - Management Response:

METRO Transit Arterial BRT management agrees that formalizing the ABRT Procedures Guide will benefit Program governance by more definitively establishing expectations regarding decision-making roles and responsibilities, as well as providing additional process guidance related to aspects of project management and administration that are not currently addressed by the Guide (e.g., risk management, project closeout, status reporting).

While this Guide was originally developed as and intended to serve as a living document, initiating a formal process and cadence for managing and communicating revisions to the Guide will ensure that ABRT staff (both existing and future new hires) have a consistent and up-to-date understanding of expectations. Staff will initiate a process for formalization and regular updates.

Responsible Owner:

Kyle O'Donnell Burrows, Acting Director, Arterial BRT

Target Date:

January 2027

Audit Area No. 2: Program Management Framework

Assessment: The documents reviewed demonstrate a substantive and generally comprehensive ABRT Program management framework. The framework includes a common project-delivery lifecycle, standardized administrative and project control procedures, interagency coordination practices, consistent design and service standards, risk management principles, documented design-review practices, and mechanisms for capturing and applying lessons learned.

The *ABRT Procedures Guide*, *Typical Arterial BRT Schedule / Work Plan Memorandum*, *Design & Service Guidelines*, and *Design White Papers Register* collectively support consistency in program administration, technical requirements, and continuous improvement. In particular, the *Design White Papers Register* provides evidence of an established mechanism for documenting technical issues, evaluating alternatives, and carrying forward technical decisions and lessons across the ABRT Program. Finalizing the *ABRT Procedures Guide*, as described in **BPE No. 1**, would further consolidate and formalize existing program management expectations.

Conclusion: Talson did not identify a separate enhancement related to the overall adequacy of the program management framework.

Audit Area No. 3: Project Controls Environment

Assessment: METRO Transit has established project controls generally appropriate to each corridor's phase, delivery method, complexity, and funding requirements. Talson did not identify risks in the corridor-level project control environment.

The F and G Lines maintain project control documentation that includes schedule, milestone monitoring, cost/budget information, forecasting, meeting records, coordination activities, and delivery stage controls. The H Line uses planning-stage issue tracking and stakeholder coordination. The nature and formality of controls vary appropriately based on phase and funding requirements; for example, the F Line has additional documentation associated with federal grant requirements.

Conclusion: No separate BPE is recommended for the corridor-level project control environment.

Audit Area No. 4: Schedule Oversight and Monitoring

Assessment: METRO Transit maintains phase-appropriate schedules for the F and G Lines, supported by its engineering and construction administration consultant, Kimley-Horn & Associates. The schedules include key milestones and sufficient detail to support corridor-level monitoring and coordination as the projects advance through design and construction. METRO Transit retains overall responsibility for schedule oversight and project delivery. The H Line is in an earlier planning phase and therefore does not yet require the same level of schedule detail.

BPE No. 2A: Schedule Reporting

As a best practice, METRO Transit should consider establishing a standing **ABRT Active Projects Quarterly Status Update** that consolidates schedule information across active corridors for senior management's review. The update could summarize current phase and delivery status, key milestones, significant variances, cross-corridor or third-party dependencies, schedule risks, corrective actions, responsible owners, and matters requiring management attention.

The quarterly update would serve as an exception-and decision-oriented management report, supplementing rather than recreating the detailed corridor schedules maintained by individual project teams or periodic ABRT plan updates. Its focus should be on material changes, emerging issues, and items requiring senior management awareness, escalation, or decision.

BPE No. 2A - Management Response:

Arterial BRT management supports the establishment of a Quarterly Status Update report for senior management within the agency.

Staff will coordinate with senior management to determine the best format for reporting, capitalizing on existing quarterly reporting structures as appropriate. For example, one opportunity would be to coordinate the timing of FTA quarterly review meetings with these internally-focused updates, as many of the same topics suggested above are typically covered in FTA review meetings.

Responsible Owner:

Kyle O'Donnell Burrows, Acting Director, Arterial BRT

Target Date:

January 2027

Audit Area No. 5: Cooperative Agreements and Interagency Coordination

Assessment: METRO Transit has established a structured process for identifying, developing, approving, coordinating, and tracking interagency activities and cooperative agreements across the ABRT Program. The *ABRT Agreement Matrix* documents agreement purpose, participating agencies, responsibilities, status, target execution dates, approval requirements, financial terms, execution, and record retention. METRO Transit has also established dedicated staffing responsibility for agreement coordination, reflecting the significance and complexity of interagency agreements to ABRT delivery.

The governance framework includes established interagency arrangements, including master partnership and work-order mechanisms with MnDOT that support technical services and corridor delivery activities. Agreement activity is aligned with each corridor's phase:

- G Line: Has active coordination requirements associated with procurement/construction.
- F Line: Identifies current and anticipated agreements needed for funding and delivery.
- H Line: Identifies agreements anticipated during planning.

Conclusion: Talson did not identify a separate BPE in this area. Existing practices provide for tracking agreement status, responsible parties, target dates, approval requirements, and matters requiring escalation.

Audit Area No. 6: Project Status and Cost Reporting Processes

Assessment: METRO Transit maintains detailed corridor-level processes for tracking authorized funding, budget and grant allocations, contracts, commitments, expenditures, invoices, staff costs, accounting payments, and remaining balances. The F, G, and H Line budget workbooks provide detailed support for cost administration and reconciliation.

The level of financial and project reporting appropriately reflects corridor phase and funding requirements. The F Line includes additional formal reporting requirements associated with federal grant funding; other corridors may use different reporting structures while still maintaining the information needed for management oversight.

BPE No. 2B: Project Status and Cost Reporting

Similar to **BPE No. 2A**, METRO Transit should consider using the ***ABRT Active Projects Quarterly Status Update*** to consolidate key project delivery and cost information for senior management's review.

Using existing schedules, budget workbooks and corridor records, the update could summarize project phase and status, funding and budgets, commitments and expenditures, forecast at completion, contingency, material variances, corrective actions, accountable owners, and matters requiring management decision or escalation. Reporting should emphasize material changes and exceptions rather than routine transactional detail.

BPE No. 2B - Management Response:

As noted above, Arterial BRT management supports the establishment of quarterly status update reporting.

Quarterly reports would provide valuable opportunities to ensure that agency senior management are aware of the status and key issues facing active arterial BRT projects, and they could serve as a valuable recurring venue to highlight project or program issues requiring senior management attention or decision-making. Staff will develop a process to incorporate cost and status into regular reporting.

Responsible Owner:

Kyle O'Donnell Burrows, Acting Director, Arterial BRT

Target Date:

January 2027

Audit Area No. 7: Risk Assessment and Reporting

Assessment: METRO Transit has established corridor-level processes for identifying and managing risks and issues proportionate to each project phase. Risk practices vary by corridor and funding environment.

The F Line maintains a formal risk and contingency management framework associated with its federal grant requirements. The H Line planning issue log provides phase-appropriate visibility into significant planning and stakeholder matters. For the G Line, the review did not identify a comparable formal risk register; however, risk-related matters are discussed through project team meetings and meeting records.

BPE No. 2C: Risk and Issue Reporting

Similar to **BPE No. 2A**, METRO Transit should consider using the **ABRT Active Projects Quarterly Status Update** to provide senior management with a program-level view of material risks and issues across active corridors.

The update should identify the affected corridor, risk or issue, potential impact, accountable owner, mitigation actions, target resolution date, escalation status, and any required management decision. The objective is not to impose a uniform risk management requirements across all corridors, but to support sufficient documentation and consistent program level escalation of material risks and issues.

As the G Line advances through construction, METRO Transit should consider a more structured corridor-level risk process, such as a risk register, or a standing risk-and-issue agenda item during progress meetings, to consistently document key risks, owners, mitigation actions, due dates, status, and follow-up.

BPE No. 2C - Management Response:

Arterial BRT management supports the establishment of a more structured and consistent approach to risk management across projects.

Building on efforts underway on the G Line and H Line projects, the ABRT Procedures Guide will be updated to direct consistent project risk management practices, which will include development and management of a risk register as a consistent scope item in future projects. Project-specific risks will be integrated into a program-level summary of risks and issues, which can serve as a recurring agenda item for Quarterly Status Updates.

Responsible Owner:

Adam Smith, Acting Senior Project Manager, Arterial BRT

Target Date:

November 2026

End of Report

APPENDIX A: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED & INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

Documents Reviewed:

ABRT Program-Level Governance and Administration:

1. Program Overview, June 23, 2026
2. Project RACI Matrix, May 28, 2024
3. Procedures Guide, Undated
4. Typical Arterial BRT Schedule / Work Plan Memo, May 19, 2025
5. Agreement Matrix, June 23, 2026
6. Various Design Documents: Design & Service Guidelines (2025); Design Review Checklist (February 7, 2025); Design White Papers Log (2019 – 2025)
7. Lessons Learned, 2025 – 2026
8. Workload Forecast, 2026
9. Various Organization Charts including: ABRT (Undated); Metro Transit Capital Projects (June 12, 2024); Planning and Capital Programs (June 15, 2026)
10. FTA Coordination Schedule, July 2023

F Line Documents:

1. Organization Chart, May 19, 2026
2. Project Management Plan Draft, March 11, 2026
3. Risk & Contingency Management Plan Draft, May 14, 2026
4. Budget Master, May 26, 2026
5. Risk Register, June 9, 2026
6. Metro Transit F Line IMPS Full Schedule, May 28, 2026
7. Various Meeting Minutes and Agendas
8. State of Minnesota and Metropolitan Council Loan Agreement, March 26, 2026

G Line Documents:

1. Budget Master, June 6, 2026
2. Engineering and Construction Administration - Preliminary Schedule, June 12, 2026
3. Various Meeting Minutes and Agendas
4. Funding Agreement for Metro G Line in Ramsey County, Minnesota, April 18, 2025
5. Cooperative Construction Agreement for Construction of G Line Station Infrastructure on Rice Street Between Pennsylvania Avenue and Wheelock Parkway, February 25, 2025
6. Cooperative Construction Agreement for Construction of G Line Station Infrastructure on Robert Street in Downtown Saint Paul, November 24, 2025
7. State of Minnesota Work Order #12 Master Partnership Contract, November 1, 2023

H Line Documents:

1. Budget Master, December 17, 2025
2. Planning Issues, May/June 2026
3. Various TAC and IWG Meeting Minutes

Interviews Conducted:

1. Nick Thompson, Deputy General Manager, Capital Program
2. Katie Roth, Assistant General Manager, Planning and Project Delivery
3. Kyle O'Donnell Burrows, Director, ABRT
4. Adam N. Smith, Senior Project Manager