



Light Rail Transit (LRT). LRT is an electrically powered, two-rail technology capable of providing a broad range of passenger capacities, and operating as single vehicles or in short trains on a variety of alignment types. It is a mode combining vehicle technology very similar to that of streetcars, but operating primarily on a partially controlled right-of-way and typically at higher speeds and passenger loadings. LRT typically operates with frequent stops spaced one-half-mile to one-mile apart in dense urban environments at speeds of 20 to 50 mph.

The Hiawatha line from the Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport to downtown Minneapolis is an example of LRT, as will be the proposed Central Corridor line along University Avenue connecting St. Paul and Minneapolis.

Heavy Rail Transit. Heavy Rail Transit is an electric railway with the capacity for a heavy volume of traffic in dense urban areas. It is electrically powered by a third rail which must be separated in its own right-of-way for safety. It is characterized by high-speed and rapid acceleration passenger railcars operating singly or in multicar trains on fixed rails; separated right-of-way from which all other vehicular and foot traffic are excluded; sophisticated signaling; and high platform loading at stops normally spaced one-half-mile to two miles apart. Heavy rail is generally considered to be inappropriate for applications in the Minneapolis and St. Paul area due to lack of very high population densities and high capital costs.



Commuter Rail. Commuter Rail is an urban passenger train service that connects an urban region together over moderate distances; which typically operates on existing freight tracks; and whose primary clientele travels between home and work. These trip-to-work services usually offer concentrated frequencies primarily during rush hour, with suburban station spacing typically every five miles. Commuter rail service may be either locomotive-hauled or self-propelled, and is characterized by reduced fair multitrip tickets, specific station-to-station fares, and usually only one or two stations in the central business district. Average speeds are 18 to 55 mph. The Northstar rail line from Big Lake to Minneapolis is the first example of commuter rail in Minnesota.

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Conventional Intercity Rail. Traditional intercity passenger rail services are typically more than 100 miles with as little as one to as many as 7 to 16 daily frequencies with station spacing from 10 to 100 miles apart. Top speeds of up to 79 miles per hour to as high as 90 miles per hour are common on shared freight track. Current Amtrak service connecting the Twin Cities to Chicago and the Pacific Northwest is an example of this service.



High-Speed Rail (HSR). HSR service has the characteristics of intercity rail service but at substantially higher speeds. It is most applicable in markets where the combination of travel demand and distance justifies the higher investment cost. Operations place an emphasis on significantly improved average end-to-end speeds along a corridor, often with limited stops, offering travel advantages to auto and air travelers. North American practice defines

HSR as being at least 110 mph. Operations can occur over track shared with slower passenger and freight trains at speeds of up to 150 mph, and on dedicated track where speeds in some countries now exceed 200 mph. Amtrak's Northeast Corridor Acela service is the only (partial) operational example of HSR in North America.

