



MULTI-MODAL

How one city welcomed a new stadium without building a single space, and without a parking crunch.

MIA



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INFRASTRUCTURE THAT'S DESIGNED AND BUILT TO MEET TRANSPORTATION NEEDS makes a big difference in how our communities function and grow. The City of Minneapolis' leadership and regional partners have traditionally been forward-thinking when it comes to creating a favorable environment for a balanced and sustainable mode share. This attitude towards public transportation and accessibility played an important role when a new professional baseball stadium was planned for the middle of downtown Minneapolis. In the end, the facility was built without adding a single public parking space to existing inventory.



After considering several sites around the Twin Cities, a decision was made to construct the new Minnesota Twins' stadium, Target Field, in downtown Minneapolis. The location decision was due, in large part, to existing transportation infrastructure that served the area. This included close proximity to the crossroads of Interstates 394, 94, and 35W; ample parking supply, including state- and city-owned parking facilities; a light rail station; a commuter train station; transit bus stops; an inter-city bus terminal; and a bike trail.

Though existing transportation infrastructure near the proposed stadium was ample, the new ballpark's success would rest on how well these pieces worked together to serve fans and maintain mobility for downtown commuters. Target Field would be located in an urban setting that generates activity at all times of the day. Downtown Minneapolis houses headquarters of several international companies; Target Center (home court for the Minnesota Timberwolves and Lynx); a thriving arts and theater district; and many restaurants, bars, and clubs. The influx of 40,000 Twins fans for each game was both a challenge and an opportunity.

Careful planning among many groups that worked together was critical to the project's success. Any

plans for accommodating pedestrian, vehicle, bike, and transit traffic to Target Field required sensitivity to existing traffic patterns. Public and private entities came together in an unprecedented way to make the project a success.

The Roadway System

City traffic engineers reviewed all existing roadway elements to ensure effective signal coordination. A reverse traffic flow plan was put in place to accommodate overflow from the area's largest parking facilities. Additionally, traffic control agents were strategically placed in key locations to guarantee that traffic would flow smoothly on game days.

One of the most visible and effective tools used by the city was the installation of a series of variable message signs, which are used to direct vehicles toward available

parking. The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) also uses messaging boards that display “Full” or “Open” status for major parking facilities accessible from the interstate freeway system.

The Parking System

Immediately adjacent to the ballpark are three large parking facilities that are owned by MnDOT. Commonly known as the ABC Ramps, they offer discounted carpool parking and provide mass transit hubs that mitigate pollution and traffic congestion through increased use of high occupancy vehicle (HOV) choices. These facilities also have direct access to the interstate highway system and are managed by the City of Minneapolis as part of its fringe parking strategy, which reduces traffic congestion in the central business district.

The ABC Ramps were originally built as commuter facilities, so they were designed for staggered entrance

and exit times. They were not originally capable of handling the mass ingress and egress associated with a new major league baseball stadium. Moreover, the only local street exit for one of the garages was slated to have a light rail system constructed in front of it.

To address these challenges, several steps were taken to be ready to handle baseball crowds, including:

- A new entrance and exit for local street access from a key ramp.
- Conversion of revenue control equipment to allow cashier-less exit and credit card payment.
- Re-striping for straight-in parking stalls to operate in a two-way traffic mode.
- Increasing entry and exit lane distances.
- The modernization of existing elevators.
- The addition of two new elevators to accommodate increased pedestrian traffic during events.

In addition, a pedestrian bridge was constructed from one of the ramps to the ballpark to address ADA and safe pedestrian access.

Private parking operators also took steps to ensure that arriving fans had many parking options. Some operators worked with the Twins organization to provide programs that addressed employee parking needs along with those of fans who wanted pre-paid parking options.

Transit

Metro Transit, the regional transit provider, had recently introduced a number of improvements to encourage increased transit ridership. The North Star line is a heavy rail system that brings fans from the northern and western parts of the metro area. The Hiawatha light rail line brings fans from the southern parts of the city as well as from Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport. Local city bus service can be accessed from two parking facilities that are adjacent to the field or from a recently updated transit corridor just a short walk away. Finally, suburban bus routes were put in place from the western and southwestern suburbs specifically for baseball games.

Charter Bus

The selected stadium site was not large enough to accommodate charter bus parking, so the surrounding roadway system and surface parking options had to be considered. Space was identified, and a plan to park the anticipated 120 charter buses was put in place. The primary parking area is about one block from the ballpark and can handle about 40 buses, which typically meet charter bus parking needs for games. The rest were accommodated on streets and other areas.

Charter buses are accommodated on streets surrounding the stadium.





Bicycle

Bicycle parking was always a part of the original plan, and more than 300 potential bike rack parking spaces were identified before Target Field opened. The city already had a robust network of bike lanes. Additionally, a major bicycle trail—the Cedar Lake Bike Trail—runs directly past the ballpark. In the end, biking turned out to be such a popular option among game-goers that the existing supply of bike parking did not meet demand. Fortunately, the Twins and the city, in collaboration with MnDOT, were able to quickly add to the supply.

Pedestrian

A plan to provide for a safe flow of pedestrians at anticipated high-volume points was put in place. The plan included agents at street corners and the temporary use of traffic lanes to handle those high volumes. In addition, the city leveraged its skyway system of interconnected pedestrian walkways that use enclosed bridges over the city roadways between buildings, to further enhance pedestrian options.


Communications

Providing clear communication regarding the available transportation alternatives was essential for the transportation strategy to work. The Twins promoted the available transportation options through a dedicated web domain, DestinationTargetField.com, and by distributing flyers to fans during major events held before the opening of the ballpark. The City of Minneapolis Communications Department also played an important role in getting the word out to the public by working with many downtown partners. Following are some of

the key messages covered by these communications:

- The importance of planning ahead.
- Encouraging fans to arrive early and stay late (this would also result in patronage of local restaurants and bars).
- Web links to the transit website and transit options.
- Web links to bicycle routes and parking information.
- Web links to information on driving directions.
- Web links to a map of all surrounding parking.
- Suggesting that fans may be able to park in the same location they'd used for Twins games in the past.

As Minneapolis welcomed a new major league baseball park, the transportation infrastructure built around a multi-modal framework easily accommodated an additional 40,000 fans arriving and departing for baseball games. By all accounts, the multi-modal message was received well by the fans. Increased transit and bicycle use was most dramatic. On a typical game day, parking facilities and pedestrian and street traffic are mostly cleared within 40 minutes of the last out.

Studies reported an estimated 20 percent of fans arrived by mass transit, 3 percent arrived by charter buses, 1 percent arrived by bicycle, and 25 percent parked on the large ramps immediately adjacent to the ballpark; 50 percent walked from local hotels, nearby places of employment, and residences as well as parking locations more than two blocks away. 



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