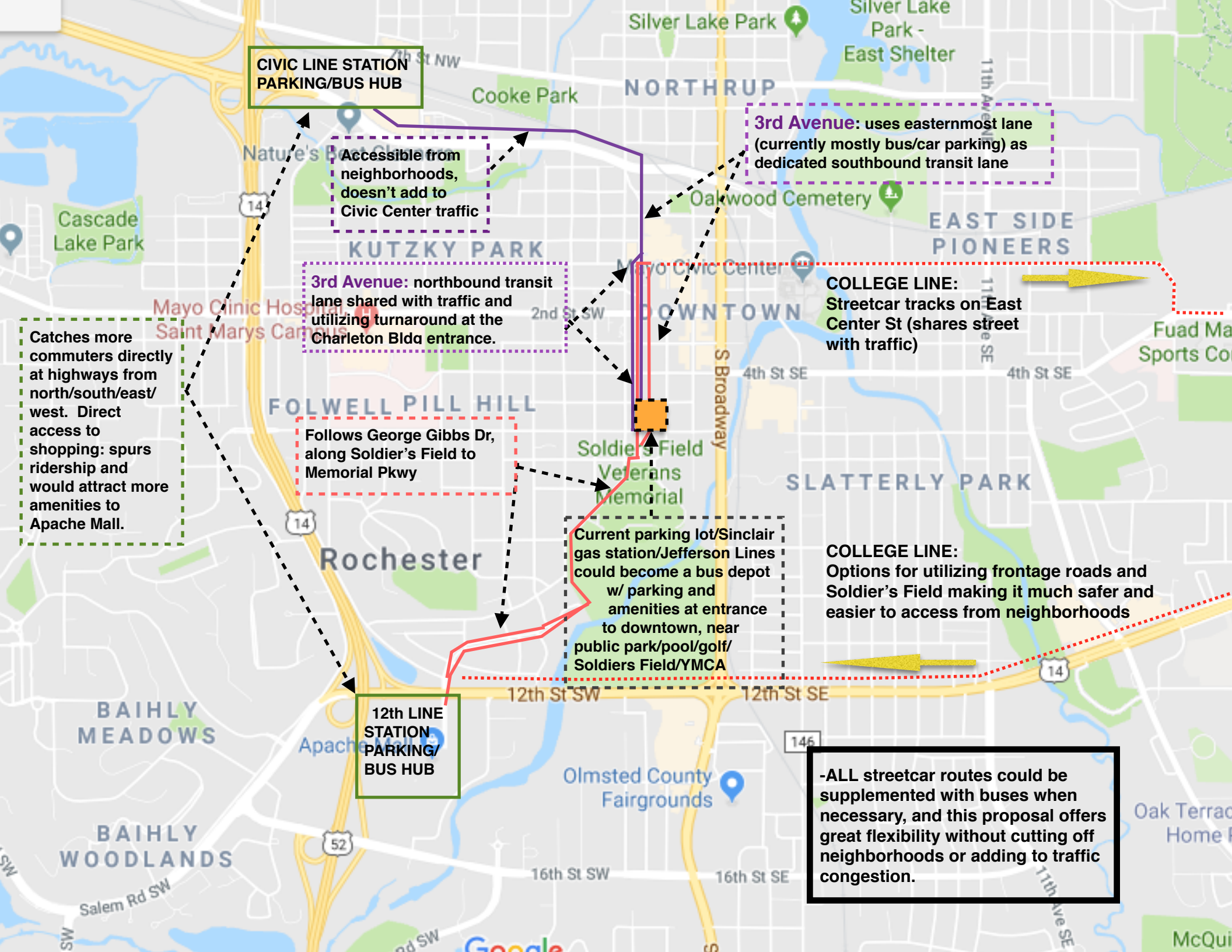
Transit Proposal

Many ideas have been studied since the city took on the task of revisiting Rochester's transportation plan. Initially, options included light-rail, an elevated system, and autonomous vehicles. So far, there has been good progress made by improving our current bus system through extending hours and working to create more direct routes. The overwhelming feeling I get from voters, though, is that more needs to be done. This idea is being put forth to answer a question that has come up at every forum and debate: How can we address the transportation issue?

The new city comprehensive plan, the complete streets plan, and the energy action plan also recognize and point to a serious need for an improved transit system. There are goals and strategies identified, like reducing vehicle-miles travelled, increasing catchment of commuter traffic, and coordinating routes in conjunction with the shopping, schools, and facilities people already travel to. Ultimately, though, the final decisions on how to implement this massive plan are being put on the plates of very busy city council members who rely on recommendations from an already heavily-burdened city staff. So I want to make it clear how much I value the countless hours of dedication that are going on every day towards these goals. My offering of ideas is not meant to be counter-productive. I am simply offering another perspective in hopes of starting dialogue and addressing an issue before it becomes a crisis. I want us to have a system that is effective enough to improve people's quality-of-life, move us closer to our renewable energy goals, and creatively utilize city assets and our unique layout.

The following routes would utilize streetcars. Streetcars are electric light-rail cars that travel on a track embedded in the road, meaning cars, buses, and streetcars can use the same roads. I lived in a city with streetcars for six years. By having an electric system in these critical areas, we can have a big impact towards reducing emissions and achieving renewable energy goals. The placement of the stations will offer a way to catch more commuters coming from all directions right at the highways. Also, these particular routes, I believe, will take more people where they are already going (Downtown, RCTC, Soldiers Field, shopping), reduce traffic in some major corridors (Civic Center Drive, 12th St), could reduce reliance on Broadway, and will be faster than a bus-only system that has no dedicated lanes.

The following map highlights a possible approach that takes advantage of frontage roads, municipal property, and can be implemented in phases with an overall minimal impact on current traffic patterns. The caveat is that it also relies on a number of public/private partnerships that, to my knowledge, have not been discussed.


CIVIC LINE STATION PARKING/BUS HUB
Accessible from neighborhoods, doesn't add to Civic Center traffic
3rd Avenue: uses easternmost lane (currently mostly bus/car parking) as dedicated southbound transit lane
3rd Avenue: northbound transit lane shared with traffic and utilizing turnaround at the Charleton Bldg entrance.
COLLEGE LINE: Streetcar tracks on East Center St (shares street with traffic)
Catches more commuters directly at highways from north/south/east/west. Direct access to shopping: spurs ridership and would attract more amenities to Apache Mall.
Follows George Gibbs Dr, along Soldier's Field to Memorial Pkwy
Current parking lot/Sinclair gas station/Jefferson Lines could become a bus depot w/ parking and amenities at entrance to downtown, near public park/pool/golf/ Soldiers Field/YMCA
COLLEGE LINE: Options for utilizing frontage roads and Soldier's Field making it much safer and easier to access from neighborhoods
12th LINE STATION PARKING/ BUS HUB
-ALL streetcar routes could be supplemented with buses when necessary, and this proposal offers great flexibility without cutting off neighborhoods or adding to traffic congestion.
Silver Lake Park
Silver Lake Park - East Shelter
Cooke Park
NORTHRUP
Cascade Lake Park
KUTZKY PARK
Oakwood Cemetery
EAST SIDE PIONEERS
Mayo Civic Center
Mayo Clinic Hospital, Saint Marys Campus
DOWNTOWN
FOLWELL PILL HILL
Soldier's Field Veterans Memorial
SLATTERLY PARK
Rochester
BAIHLY MEADOWS
Apache Mall
Olmsted County Fairgrounds
BAIHLY WOODLANDS
Salem Rd SW
16th St SW
16th St SE
12th St SW
12th St SE
2nd St SW
4th St SE
S Broadway
11th Ave SE
14
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