

Transportation Committee

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of September 26, 2016

Subject: Blue Line Light Rail Transit Extension (BLRT) Project Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Determination of Adequacy

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council (Council): (1) determine the adequacy of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS) for the Blue Line Light Rail Transit Extension (BLRT); and (2) authorize its Chair to sign the Final EIS Determination of Adequacy on behalf of the Council.

Summary of Committee Discussion/Questions

Metro Transit Assistant Director Environmental & Agreements Kathryn O'Brien presented this item. Councilmember Dorfman expressed her thanks for all the hard work that has been put into these difficult projects. There were no questions from committee members.

Motion by Dorfman, seconded by Letofsky and carried.

Transportation Committee

Meeting date: September 26, 2016

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of September 28, 2016

Subject: Blue Line Light Rail Transit Extension (BLRT) Project Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Determination of Adequacy
District(s), Member(s): All
Policy/Legal Reference: Minnesota Statutes ch. 116D and Minnesota Rule 4410.2800
Staff Prepared/Presented: Brian Lamb, General Manager, 612-349-7510
Mark W. Fuhrmann, Deputy General Manager, 612-373-3810
Dan Soler, BLRT Project Director, 612-373-5371
MarySue Abel, BLRT Deputy Project Director, 612-373-5376
Kathryn O'Brien, Asst. Dir. Environmental & Agreements, 612-373-5377

Division/Department: Metro Transit / Blue Line Extension Project Office

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council (Council): (1) determine the adequacy of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS) for the Blue Line Light Rail Transit Extension (BLRT); and (2) authorize its Chair to sign the Final EIS Determination of Adequacy on behalf of the Council.

Background

Under Minnesota Statutes chapter 116D, Environmental Policy, and Minnesota Rules chapter 4410, Environmental Review, the Council is the Responsible Governmental Unit (RGU) for the Project in Hennepin County, Minnesota. As the RGU, the Council must determine the adequacy of the Final EIS for the Project under Minnesota Rule 4410.2800, subp. 4, which sets the following standard for determining if a Final EIS is adequate:

- Subp. 4. Conditions. The Final EIS shall be determined adequate if it:
 - A. addresses the potentially significant issues and alternatives raised in scoping so that all significant issues for which information can be reasonably obtained have been analyzed in conformance with part 4410.2300, items G and H;
 - B. provides responses to the substantive comments received during the Draft EIS review concerning issues raised in scoping; and
 - C. was prepared in compliance with the procedures of the act and part 4410.0200 to 4410.6500.

Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is the lead federal agency for the Project. In this role, its final environmental determination in the environmental review process is the issuance of a Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD was signed by FTA on September 19, and includes the agency's decision regarding compliance with relevant environmental requirements. The ROD also summarizes the alternatives considered, impacts identified in the Final EIS, and measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate adverse impacts. The ROD is available on the Project website at www.bluelineext.org.



Rationale

The Final EIS (published in July 2016) and the FTA's ROD are incorporated as part of the proposed Determination of Adequacy. Council staff recommend the Council find the Final EIS adequate under the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act based on the following:

1. The Final EIS addresses all potentially significant issues and alternatives identified during scoping. All significant issues for which information could reasonably be obtained have been analyzed in conformance with Minnesota Rules, part 4410.2300, items G and H. The analysis in the Final EIS addresses long-term and short-term (construction) direct and indirect impacts, as well as cumulative impacts related to the Project. The ROD provides FTA's decision for the Project, and the Council concurs with the ROD. Table 3-1 of the ROD summarizes the long-term and short-term impacts to environmental and transportation-related resources that will result from the Project. Specific mitigation measures for impacts from the Project are in Attachment A of the ROD.
2. The Final EIS provides responses to all substantive comments received during the Draft EIS and Supplemental Draft EIS public comment periods. Appendix G of the Final EIS contain responses to substantive comments received during the public comment period on the Draft EIS.
3. The Final EIS was prepared in compliance with the procedures of Minnesota Statutes, chapter 116D, and with Minnesota Rules parts 4410.0200 to 4410.6500.

Funding

There are no funding considerations associated with this action. Any funding required to implement mitigation commitments associated with the Final EIS have been identified and are included in the overall cost estimate for the BLRT Extension Project.

Known Support / Opposition

FTA signed the ROD, thus completing the federal environmental review process. Additionally, during the public comment period on the Final EIS, the Council received seven letters or other communications with comments. The comments included support for and opposition to the Project, comments about the sufficiency of the analysis and mitigation included in the Final EIS. While Minnesota Rule 4410.2800 does not require an RGU to respond to comments on the Final EIS, Council staff reviewed and considered the comments received on the adequacy of the Final EIS in making its recommendation and asks the Council to consider them as part of this Determination of Adequacy. The comments received are included in Attachment E of the ROD and Council responses to comments received are found in Attachment F of the ROD.



Transportation Committee

September 26, 2016



Environmental Review Process

March 2014

- Draft EIS Published

May 2015

- Final EIS Annotated Outline

Q2-Q4 2015

- Data Collection and Technical Analysis

Feb 2016

- Administrative Draft of Final EIS/ROD to FTA

May 2016

- Legal Sufficiency Review of Final EIS / Amended 4(f) – 6(f) Evaluation

July 2016

- FEIS / Amended 4(f) – 6(f) Notice of Availability

Sept 2016

- Sept 19: Record of Decision Issued



Proposed Council Action

- Determine the adequacy of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS) for the Blue Line Light Rail Transit Extension
- Authorize the Chair to sign the Final EIS Determination of Adequacy on behalf of the Council



Project Readiness: Scope, Budget, Schedule

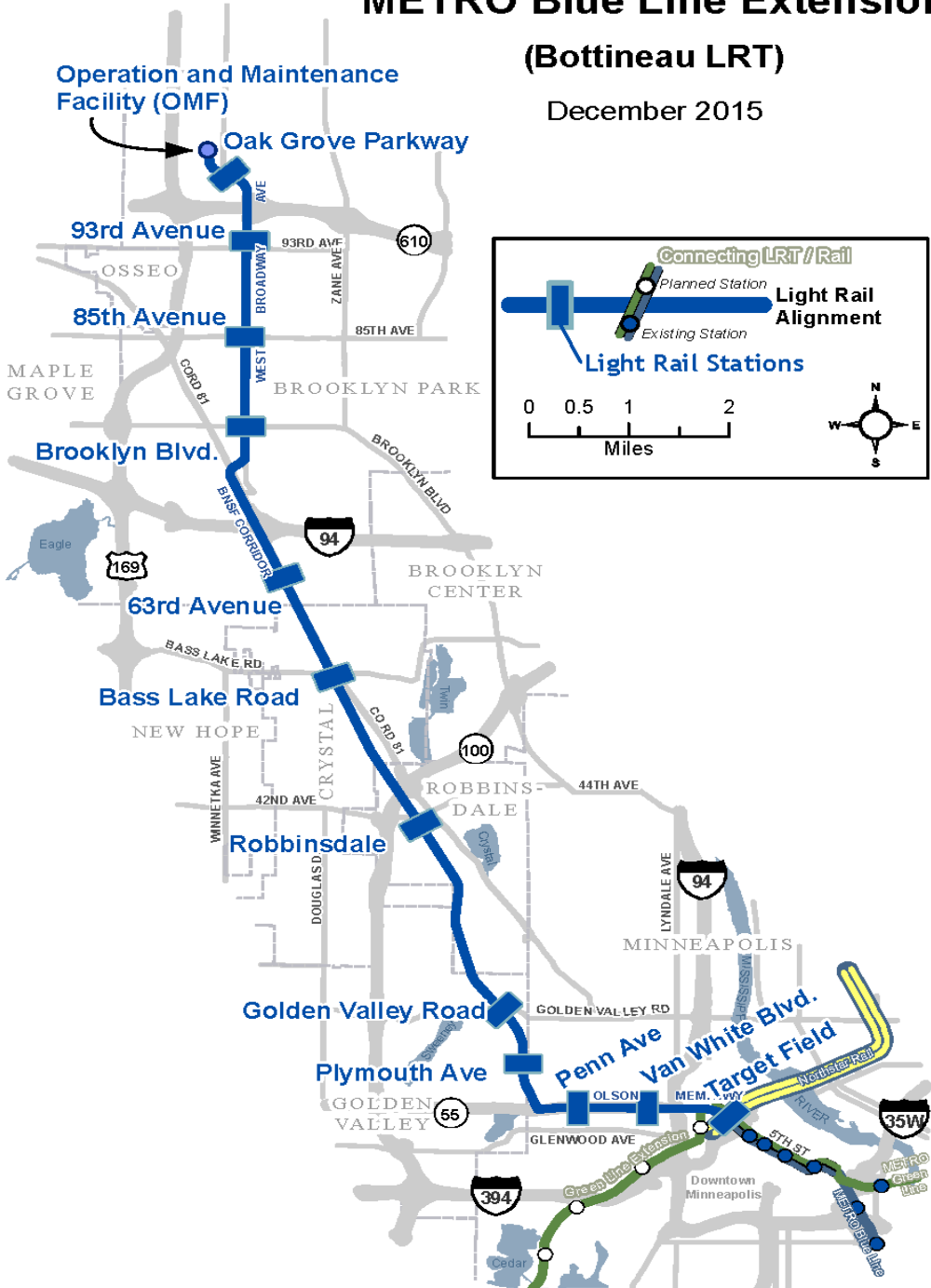


Project Description

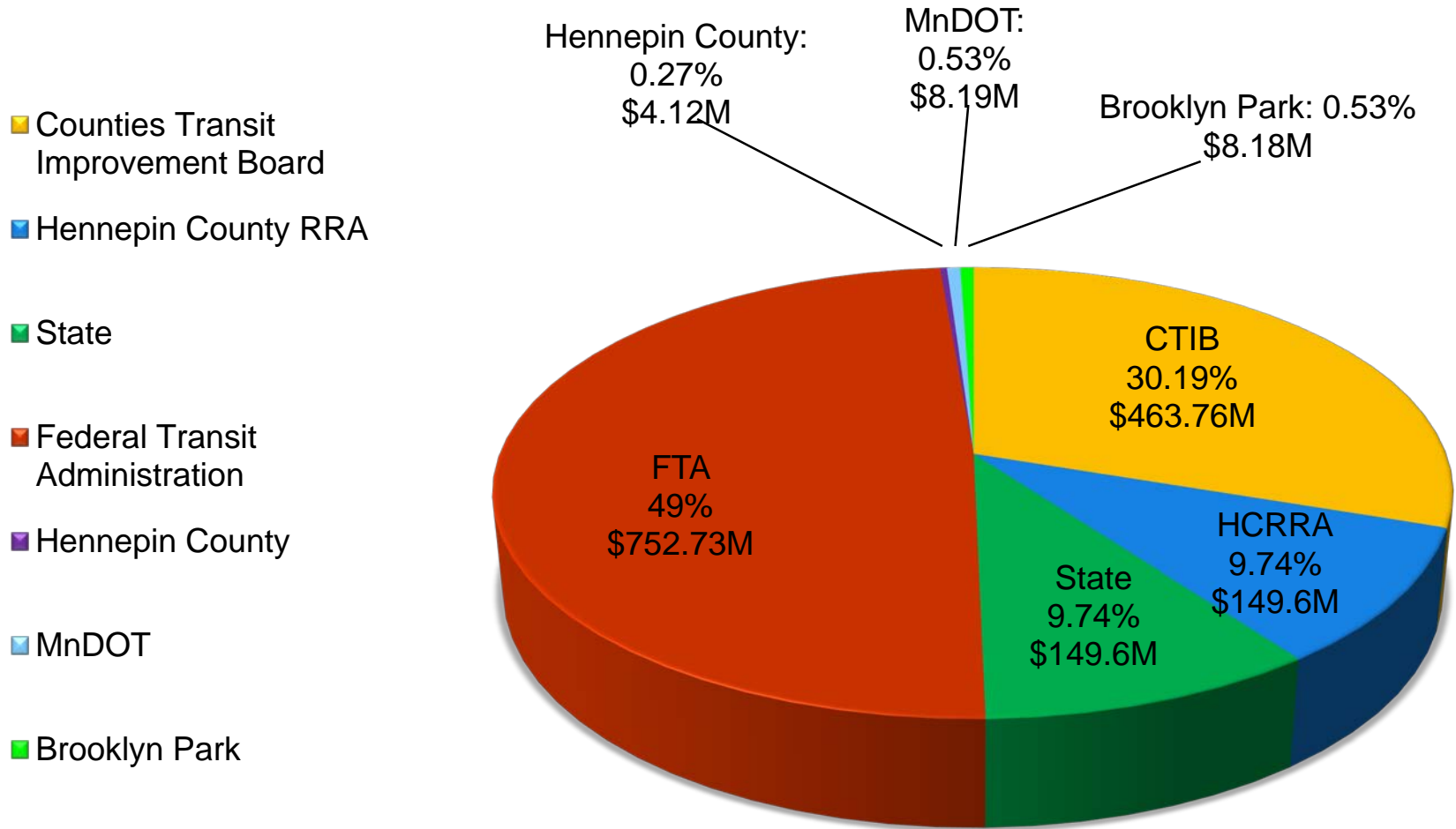
- 11 new LRT stations
- 13 miles of double track
- 27,000 est. rides by 2040
- Serving Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Robbinsdale, Golden Valley & Minneapolis
- Provides one seat Blue Line ride to MSP Airport and Mall of America
- Connections to METRO Green Line, Northstar and bus services

METRO Blue Line Extension (Bottineau LRT)

December 2015



Funding Sources



- Counties Transit Improvement Board
- Hennepin County RRA
- State
- Federal Transit Administration
- Hennepin County
- MnDOT
- Brooklyn Park

Proposed Project Budget: \$1.536 billion



Project Timeline

2014-2016

- Project Development

2016

- Environmental/Municipal Consent

2017

- Engineering

2018

- Full Funding Grant Agreement

2018-2020

- Heavy Construction

2021

- Passenger Operations



More Information

The screenshot shows the Metropolitan Council website with a navigation menu at the top. The 'TRANSPORTATION' menu item is highlighted. Below the navigation is a large photograph of a blue and yellow METRO bus at a station platform with passengers. To the left of the main content is a sidebar with a blue header 'METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION' and a dropdown arrow. The sidebar contains links for 'Route', 'Stations', 'Environmental', 'Timeline', and 'Project Partners'. The main content area has a blue header 'METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION' and a sub-header 'Bottineau Transitway – Minneapolis & Northwestern Communities'. Below this is a paragraph of text describing the project. At the bottom of the main content area, there are two sections: 'Latest News' with a link to 'Feds: Met Council can begin designing METRO Blue Line Extension' and 'Route' with a link to 'Click on the map below for more information'.

About Us | News & Events | Data & Maps | Publications | Doing Business | Council Meetings | Contact Us | Employment

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES | PARKS | **TRANSPORTATION** | WASTEWATER & WATER | HOUSING | PLANNING

METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION

Route

Stations

Environmental

Timeline

Project Partners

METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION

Bottineau Transitway – Minneapolis & Northwestern Communities

The METRO Blue Line Extension (LRT) will operate northwest from downtown Minneapolis through north Minneapolis, Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal and Brooklyn Park, drawing riders northwest of Brooklyn Park. The proposed alignment is primarily at-grade and will have up to 11 new stations in addition to Target Field Station and about 13 miles of double track. The line will interline with the METRO Blue Line and connect Minneapolis and the region's northwest suburbs with existing LRT on the METRO Green Line, future LRT on the METRO Green Line Extension, bus rapid transit on the METRO Red Line, the Northstar commuter rail line and local and express bus routes.

Latest News
Feds: Met Council can begin designing METRO Blue Line Extension

Route
Click on the map below for more information

Website: BlueLineExt.org

Email: BlueLineExt@metrotransit.org

Twitter: [@BlueLineExt](https://twitter.com/BlueLineExt)

