

Committee Report

Transportation Committee



Committee Meeting Date: June 13, 2022

For the Metropolitan Council: June 22, 2022

Business Item: 2022-158

METRO Blue Line Extension Route Recommendation

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council (“Council”) take action to advance the proposed route modification for the METRO Blue Line Extension Light Rail Transit Project (“Project”) as outlined in the April 18, 2022 Route Modification Report and to direct staff to proceed with design and additional environmental evaluation.

Summary of Transportation Committee Discussion/Questions

This item was presented by Nick Landwer, BLRT Design and Engineering Lead. Chamblis voiced appreciation for the community and displacement engagement.

Moved by Fredson, seconded by Chamblis. Motion carried.



Business Item

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METRO Blue Line Extension Route Recommendation

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| District(s), Member(s): | All |
| Policy/Legal Reference: | Minnesota Statutes: 473.3994 |
| Staff Prepared/Presented: | Wes Kooistra, General Manager, 612-349-7510 Nick Thompson, Deputy General Manager, 612-349-7507 Nick Landwer, BLRT Design and Engineering Lead, 612-373-3847 |
| Division/Department: | Metro Transit / Blue Line Extension Project Office ("BPO") |

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council ("Council") take action to advance the proposed route modification for the METRO Blue Line Extension Light Rail Transit Project ("Project") as outlined in the April 18, 2022 Route Modification Report and to direct staff to proceed with design and additional environmental evaluation.

Background

In August 2020, after a multi-year effort to negotiate with BNSF Railway, the Council and Hennepin County directed staff to evaluate modifications to the original Project route to avoid the BNSF property. The Project developed goals for analyzing revised route options and prepared a framework for identifying a community supported alignment. In March 2021, the Initial Route Evaluation Report was released for public input. BPO then published the Draft Route Modification Report for public comment in December 2021.

On April 18, 2022, the Final Route Modification Report was published that recommends extending the existing Blue Line from Target Field Station along West Broadway Avenue in Minneapolis to County Road 81 in Crystal and Robbinsdale, and along West Broadway Avenue in Brooklyn Park. During the 38-day public comment period, the Council and Hennepin County received over 1,100 comments via in-person meetings: stick-it notes, comment forms, online interactive maps, online comment forms, and emails.

West Broadway was chosen as the route option in Minneapolis because of its connectivity to jobs and economic activity, including the West Broadway Business District, and its connectivity to Minneapolis Public Schools, regional and cultural attractions, and zero-car households.

On June 9, the Corridor Management Committee voted to adopt a resolution to advance the Blue Line Extension, as the route best meets the project goals and will connect some of our region's most diverse communities to jobs, education, and opportunities.

Rationale

The Council and Hennepin County were intentional about engaging the community to ensure that the recommended route was community supported. Since August 2020, the two entities have worked closely with the corridor cities and the community seeking public input. Community engagement has included 300 events resulting in nearly 11,000 points of contact with the public. There has been door-knocking, stakeholder 1-to-1 meetings, driveway talks and other project hosted events. Data has been collected via 4,000 survey responses, 1,500 comments on the interactive map, 217 comments from comment forms, and over 500 emails and phone calls.

Thrive Lens Analysis

Investment in high-quality transportation options advance the Thrive outcome of Prosperity by providing new and improved access to economic and personal opportunity throughout the corridor and increasing available workforce with affordable, convenient transportation.

Increased access to financial opportunities, educational opportunities, and health services are a key outcome of implementing the Project, advancing the Thrive outcome of Livability.

The Project advances Equity by investing in high quality, fast, and frequent transit service. Roughly half of the corridor population identify as Black, Indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC). There are approximately 8,225 (14%) zero car households in the corridor and nearly 15 percent of households living below the poverty level.

Funding

The design and environmental work are included in the Blue Line Extension (61403) authorized capital budget.

Small Business Inclusion

Information in this section must be completed by the Office of Equal Opportunity.





Transportation Committee: June 13, 2022

Nick Landwer, Design and Engineering Lead



Brooklyn Park | Crystal | Robbinsdale | Minneapolis



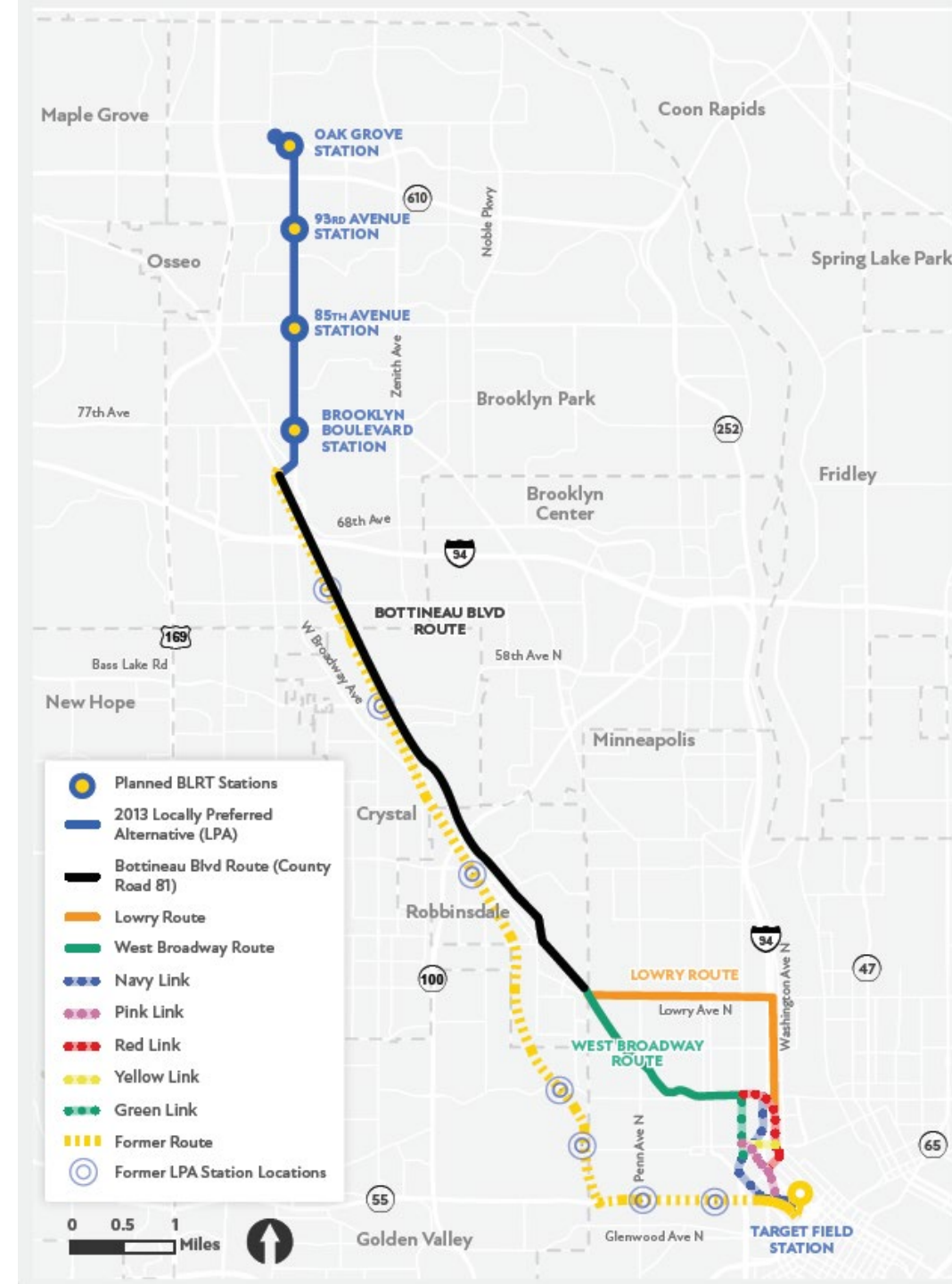
Today's Topics

- Route modification process
- Route recommendation report
 - Staff recommendation



Route Modification Process

- **August 2020:** After a multi-year effort to negotiate with BNSF, Met Council and Hennepin County directed staff to seek a solution for the Blue Line Extension that did not use freight rail property
- **August 2020 – March 2021:** Project transition, goal development, route study areas
- **March 2021:** Potential routes released for input
- **December 2021:** *Draft* Route Modification Report published for 45-day comment period



Advisory Committee Decision-Making Process



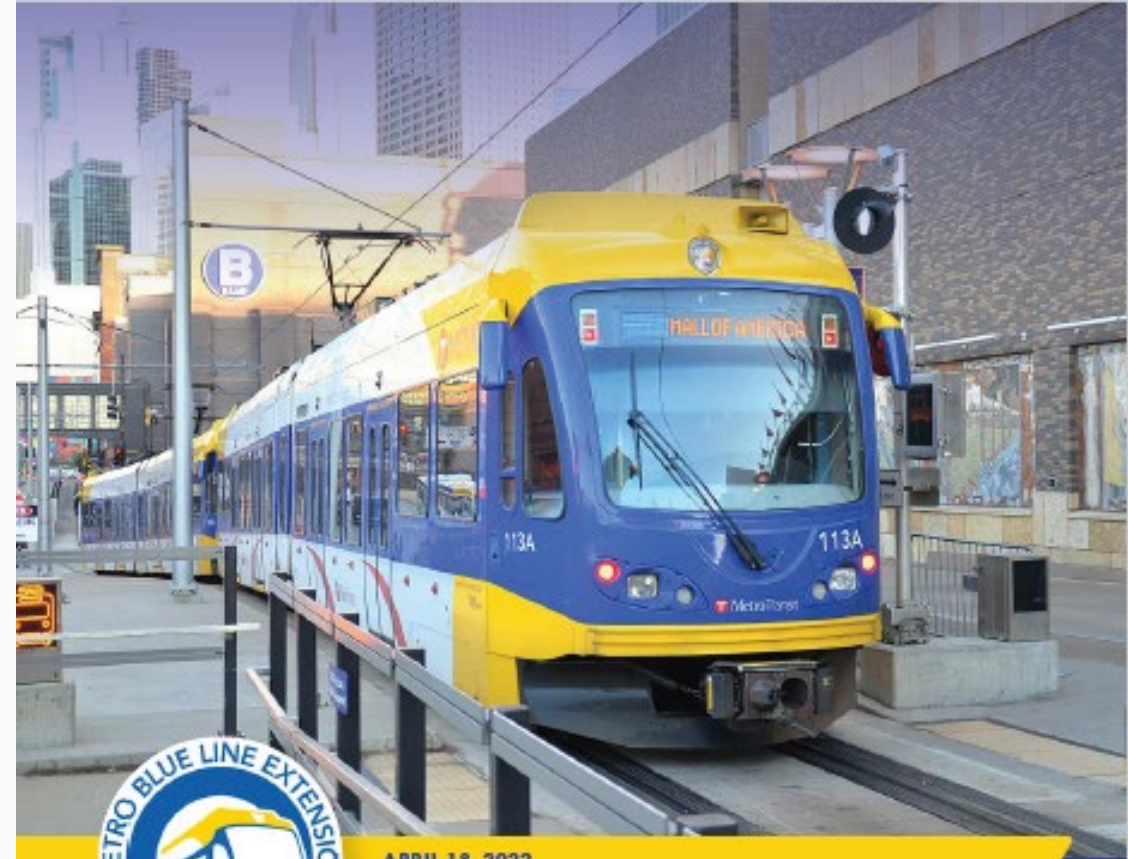
Engagement Metrics, August 2020-February 2022

- **300** events resulting in nearly **11,000** points of contact with the public
 - Community event attendance, door-knocking, stakeholder 1-to-1, project hosted events, driveway talks, etc.
- **75,000** reach on social media and **1 million** + reach through paid ads on community and cultural media
- Approximately **4,000** survey responses
- **1,500** comments on the interactive map
- **217** comments from comment forms
- Corridor postcards mailed to **26,000** households/businesses
- Over **500** emails and phone calls
- Majority of activities with environmental justice communities

Community Meeting: January 2022



Route Modification Report Overview



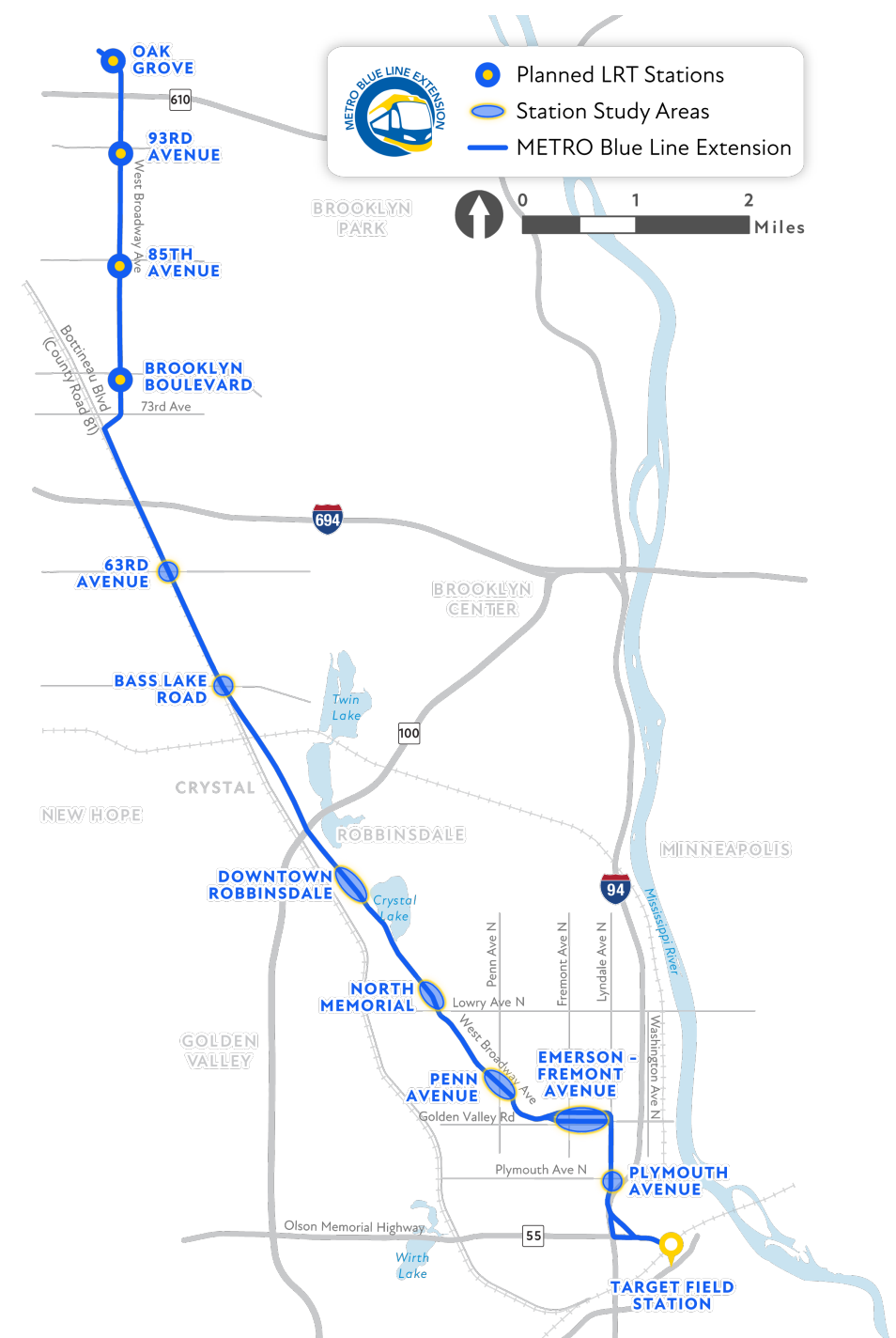
APRIL 18, 2022

METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Route Modification Report









Staff Recommended Route: West Broadway

- The West Broadway Route option including:
 - West Broadway Avenue in Brooklyn Park to County Road 81, County Road 81 in Crystal and Robbinsdale to West Broadway Avenue in North Minneapolis, connecting to Target Field Station in downtown Minneapolis.



Summary Matrix

ASSESSMENT OF ROUTE OPTIONS TO DEFINED GOALS

| PROJECT GOAL | BOTTINEAU BOULEVARD (COUNTY ROAD 81) IN BROOKLYN PARK AND CRYSTAL | BOTTINEAU BOULEVARD (COUNTY ROAD 81) IN ROBBINSDALE | LOWRY ROUTE | WEST BROADWAY ROUTE |
|---|---|---|-------------|---------------------|
|  Goal 1: Improve transit access and connections to jobs and regional destinations | EXCELLENT | EXCELLENT | EXCELLENT | EXCELLENT |
|  Goal 2: Improve frequency and reliability of transit service to communities in the corridor | EXCELLENT | EXCELLENT | GOOD | GOOD |
|  Goal 3: Provide transit improvements that maximize transit benefits, while being cost competitive and economically viable | GOOD | GOOD | GOOD | GOOD |
|  Goal 4: Support communities' development goals | GOOD | GOOD | GOOD | EXCELLENT |
|  Goal 5: Promote healthy communities and sound environmental practices including efforts to address climate change | GOOD | GOOD | GOOD | GOOD |
|  Goal 6: Advance local and regional equity and work towards reducing regional racial disparities | GOOD | GOOD | GOOD | EXCELLENT |

Comment Period

- 38 days: April 18 to May 27
- Received 1,100+ comments
- Comments gathered through:
 - In-person meetings: stick-it notes, comment forms
 - Online: Interactive map, comment forms, emails

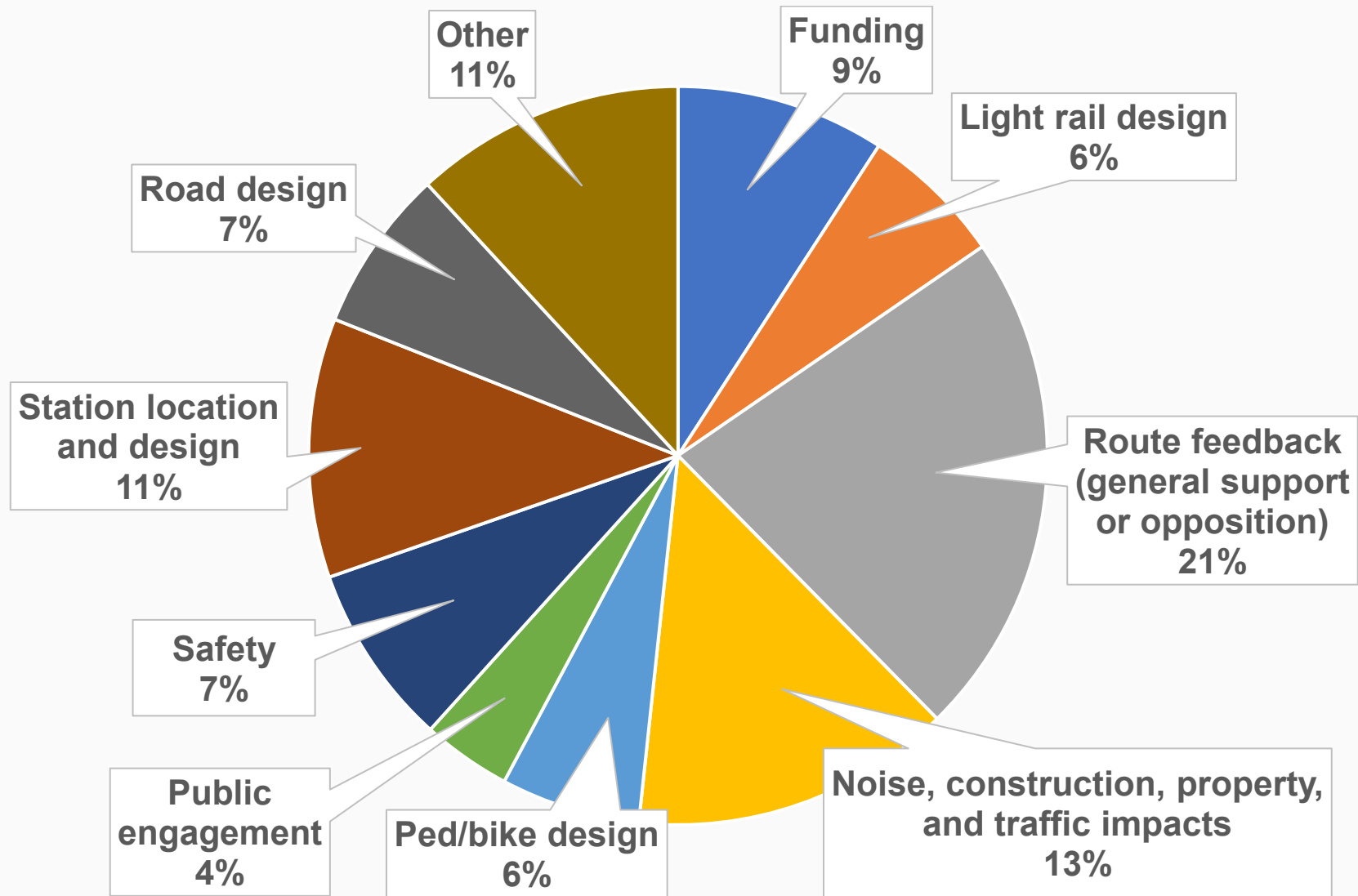


APRIL 18, 2022

METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Route Modification Report



Comment Summary



Corridor Wide Comments

- General support or opposition for the recommended route or overall project:
 - Improvement over the original route; serves the people, places, and communities that need transit access the most
 - Do not like the recommended route; feel that another light rail project cannot be delivered on time/in budget and transit demand / ridership is low
- Evaluation of on-street parking and impacts
- Desire for landscaping, traffic calming, and easy/safe access to destinations along the route, especially for pedestrians and bicyclists

Corridor Wide Comments (continued)

- Concern about the noise, traffic, environmental, and property impacts during and after construction
- Concern about safety and crime on/at transit
- Desire for efficient travel times so it's a competitive transportation option
- Need for additional outreach and engagement
- Desire to see the connection between Target Field Station and West Broadway further explored
- Desire for anti-displacement commitments to be in place before project advances

Route Modification Report Addendum

Based on feedback during the comment period, staff is recommending:

- Reevaluate options for the route between downtown Minneapolis and West Broadway
- Conducting anti-displacement work and environmental documentation at the same time

Overview Schedule

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

RECOMMENDATIONS

ANTI-DISPLACEMENT

IMPLEMENTATION

We're here



1 YEAR

1.5 – 2 YEARS

1.5 – 2 YEARS

3 – 4 YEARS

- Identify community-supported route

- Environmental review
Document benefits and impacts of the project

- Municipal consent
Seek city support of the LRT design

- Begin engineering
Identify location of stations, LRT, pedestrian and bicycle access to stations

- Station area planning

- Develop construction ready design plans and preparing the community for construction

- Station area planning

- Construction and full funding grant agreement
Federal funding

- **GOAL:** Line opens in 2028

Stay Connected!

- Project website: BlueLineExt.org
 - Project news, maps, surveys, what we're hearing
 - Committee meeting materials: agenda, handouts, presentations, meeting minutes
 - Sign-up for GovDelivery project updates
 - Connect with staff for your questions or schedule a presentation
- Share your Blue Line Extension story at: MyBlueLineExt.org
- Follow us:
 - Twitter: [@BlueLineExt](https://twitter.com/BlueLineExt)
 - Facebook: [MetroBlueLineExtension](https://www.facebook.com/MetroBlueLineExtension)



A service of the Metropolitan Council

COUNTIES *Transit*
Improvement
BOARD

