

Committee Report

Transportation Committee



Committee meeting date: August 25, 2025

For the Metropolitan Council: Sept 10, 2025

Business Item: 2025-137

METRO Blue Line Extension – Adequacy Determination

Proposed action

That the Metropolitan Council (Council) determine the adequacy of the Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement (SFEIS) for the METRO Blue Line Extension (Project) and authorize its Chair to sign the SFEIS Adequacy Determination on behalf of the Council.

Summary of Transportation Committee discussion/questions

Metro Transit Senior Project Manager Kelcie Young presented this item. Chair Barber asked for more information in relation to permits. Young answered that the project has a whole set of permits that will be needed (some environmental, some with partner agencies) but the permits that the project team needs to acquire would want to be in place by the time construction bids are issued. Young added that some of the Project's next steps would require future Council action. Johnson asked about funding. Young stated that the actions to formalize the project budget are still in the future. Osman asked where the project is at with the FTA. Metro Transit Blue Line Extension Project Director Alicia Vap stated project staff are continuing to work with the FTA, submitting information last week for a pre rating package and currently compiling information so FTA can conduct a risk assessment this fall, which will help finalize the schedule and budget.

It was moved by Osman, seconded by Obisakin. Motion carried.

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District(s), member(s): District 2 (Chamblis), District 7 (Osman), District 8 (Cameron)

Policy/legal reference: Minnesota Administrative Rules 4410.2800

Staff prepared/presented: Lesley Kandaras, General Manager, 612-349-7513
Kelcie Young, Senior Project Manager, 612-373-3886
Alicia Vap, Blue Line Ext. Project Director, 612-349-7070

Division/department: Metro Transit – Blue Line Extension Project Office

Proposed action

That the Metropolitan Council (Council) determine the adequacy of the Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement (SFEIS) for the METRO Blue Line Extension (Project) and authorize its Chair to sign the SFEIS Adequacy Determination on behalf of the Council.

Background

Under Minnesota Rules 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 SFEIS for the Project under Minnesota Rule 4410.2800, subp. 4, which sets the following standard for determining if an FEIS is adequate:

Subp. 4. Conditions. A Final EIS shall be determined adequate if it:

1. 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;
2. provides responses to the substantive comments received during the Draft EIS review concerning issues raised in scoping; and
3. was prepared in compliance with the procedures of the act and part 4410.0200 to 4410.3000.

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 an Amended Record of Decision (AROD). The AROD was signed by FTA on August 11, 2025, and includes the agency's decision regarding compliance with relevant environmental requirements. The AROD also summarizes the alternatives considered, impacts identified in the SFEIS, and measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate adverse impacts. The AROD is available on the Project website at www.bluelineext.org.

Rationale

The SFEIS (published in May 2025) and the FTA's AROD are incorporated as part of the proposed Adequacy Determination. Council staff recommend the Council find the SFEIS adequate under the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act based on the following:

1. The SFEIS 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. The analysis in the SFEIS addresses long-term and short-term (construction) direct and indirect impacts, as well as cumulative impacts related to the Project. The AROD provides FTA's decision for the Project, and the Council concurs with the AROD. Specific mitigation measures for impacts from the Project are in Attachment D of the AROD.
2. The SFEIS provides responses to all substantive comments received during the Supplemental Draft EIS public comment periods. Appendix A-CR of the SFEIS contains responses to substantive comments received during the public comment period on the SFEIS.
3. The SFEIS was prepared in compliance with the procedures of Minnesota Statutes, chapter 116D, and with Minnesota Rules parts 4410.0200 to 4410.3000.

Thrive lens analysis

On February 12, 2025, the Council adopted Imagine 2050, which builds on policy direction in Thrive MSP 2040. Under the Thrive lens, this action advances several Imagine goals:

Equity – Extending the METRO Blue Line helps address patterns of historical injustices, including racial covenants and redlining which impacted communities in the BLE corridor. The mitigation commitments reflected in the SFEIS are the result of the Imagine 2050 goal of working with impacted communities to co-create solutions.

Accountability – The SFEIS, including mitigation for adverse impacts, was developed with input from impacted communities.

Stewardship – The Project supports future generations by expanding access to reliable, frequent, high-capacity transit service.

Funding

There are no funding considerations associated with this action. Mitigation commitments identified in the SFEIS are included in the overall cost estimate for the Project.

Small business inclusion

There are no direct impacts to small business with this action.

