

Business Item

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

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.

