



# SDEIS Overview

**For Metropolitan Council  
Transportation Committee  
6/24/2024**

Kelcie Young – Senior Environmental Manger  
Nick Thompson - Deputy GM Capital Prgm



BROOKLYN PARK | CRYSTAL | ROBBINSDALE | MINNEAPOLIS



# Agenda

1 Project History

2 Build Alternative

3 Findings of the SDEIS

4 Environmental Justice (EJ)

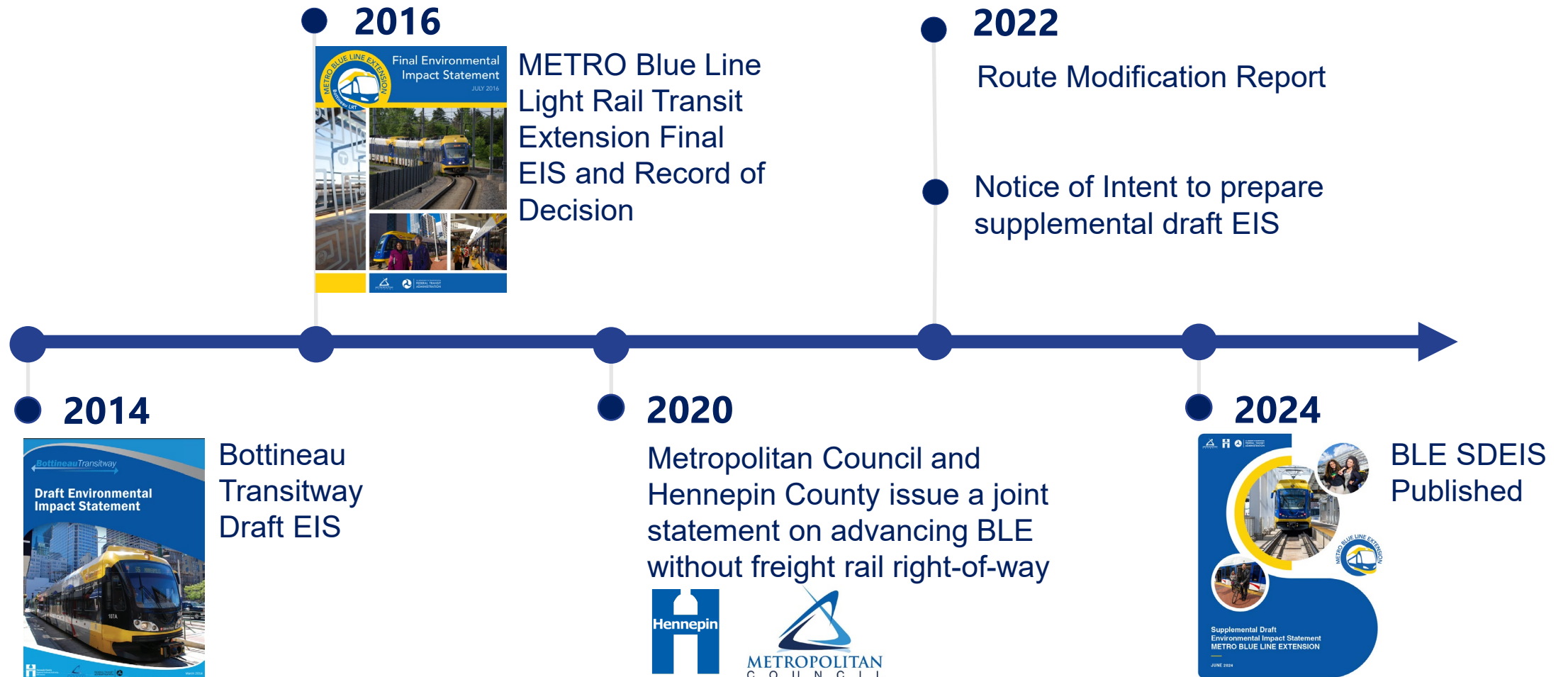
5 Comment Period/Next Steps



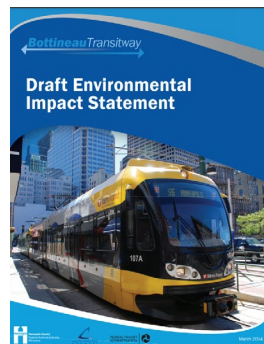
# Project History



# Project Background



● 2014



Bottineau  
Transitway  
Draft EIS

● 2016



METRO Blue Line  
Light Rail Transit  
Extension Final  
EIS and Record of  
Decision

● 2020

Metropolitan Council and  
Hennepin County issue a joint  
statement on advancing BLE  
without freight rail right-of-way



● 2022

Route Modification Report  
  
Notice of Intent to prepare  
supplemental draft EIS

● 2024

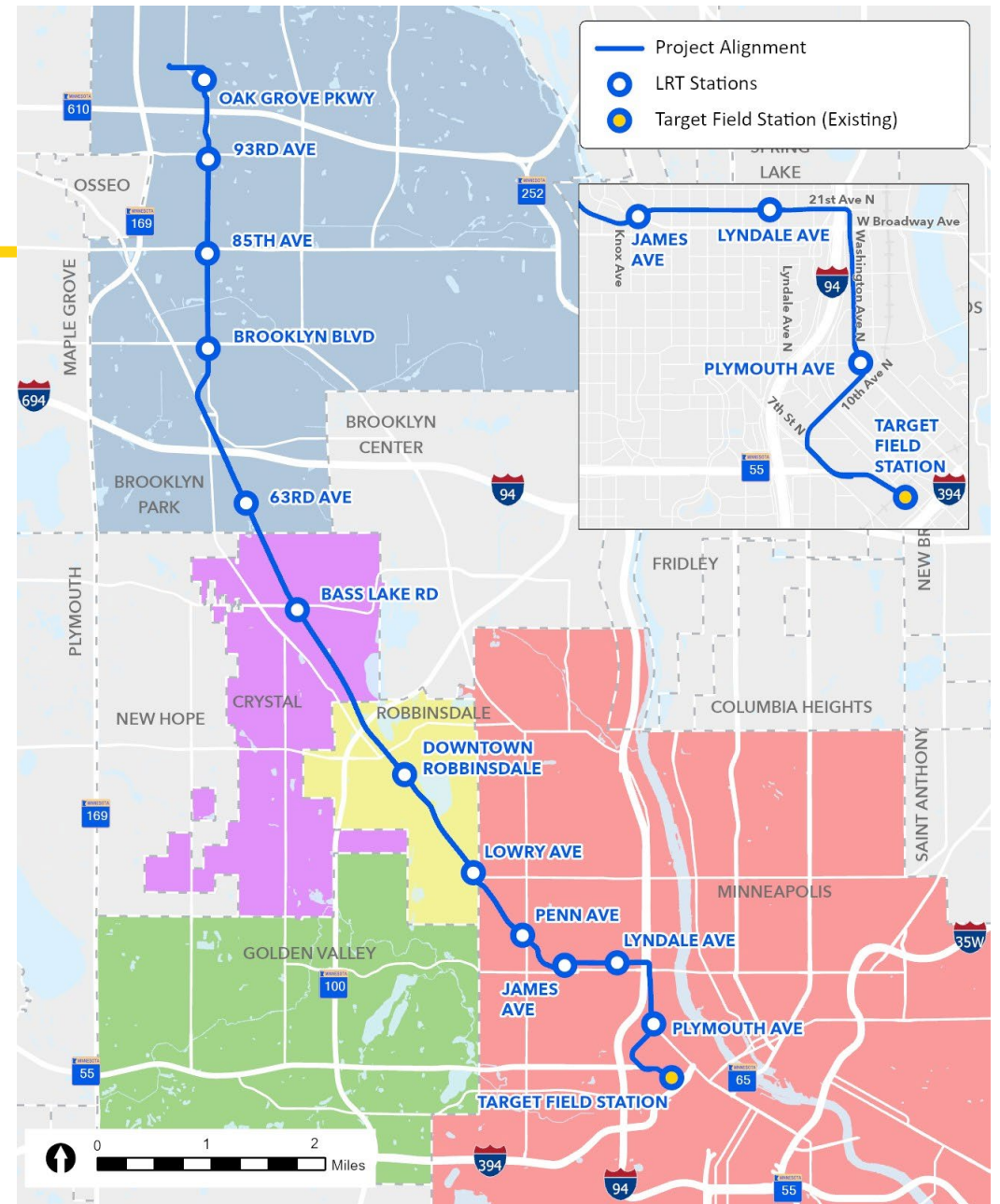


BLE SDEIS  
Published



# Project Description

- The BLE connects downtown Minneapolis, north Minneapolis, Robbinsdale, Crystal, and Brooklyn Park
- Includes LRT stations, pedestrian bridges, bike facilities, and park-and-rides



# About the SDEIS

---

- An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is a document that details the impacts of a proposed project as part of the NEPA process
  - The EIS for the original Blue Line Extension was completed in 2016
- This includes an evaluation of:
  - Social impacts and benefits
  - Economic impacts and benefits
  - Environmental impacts and benefits
- A Supplemental EIS is required if there are significant changes to a project or if new impacts and benefits are discovered after the finalization of the EIS



# Purpose and Need

## SDEIS Chapters

- Purpose and Need
- Alternatives
- Transportation
- Community and Social Analysis
- Physical and Environmental Analysis
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
- Environmental Justice
- Section 4(f) and 6(f)
- Consultation and Coordination
- Financial Analysis

- 2016 BLE Purpose Statement:
  - *"The Project is needed to effectively address long-term regional transit mobility and local accessibility needs while providing efficient, travel-time-competitive transit service that supports economic development goals and objectives of local, regional, and statewide plans."*
- Purpose has not changed since 2016, but has been updated in response to community interest
- 2024 Purpose includes investment in areas experiencing history of systemic racism, improved connectivity/access for communities, and advancement of local and regional equity

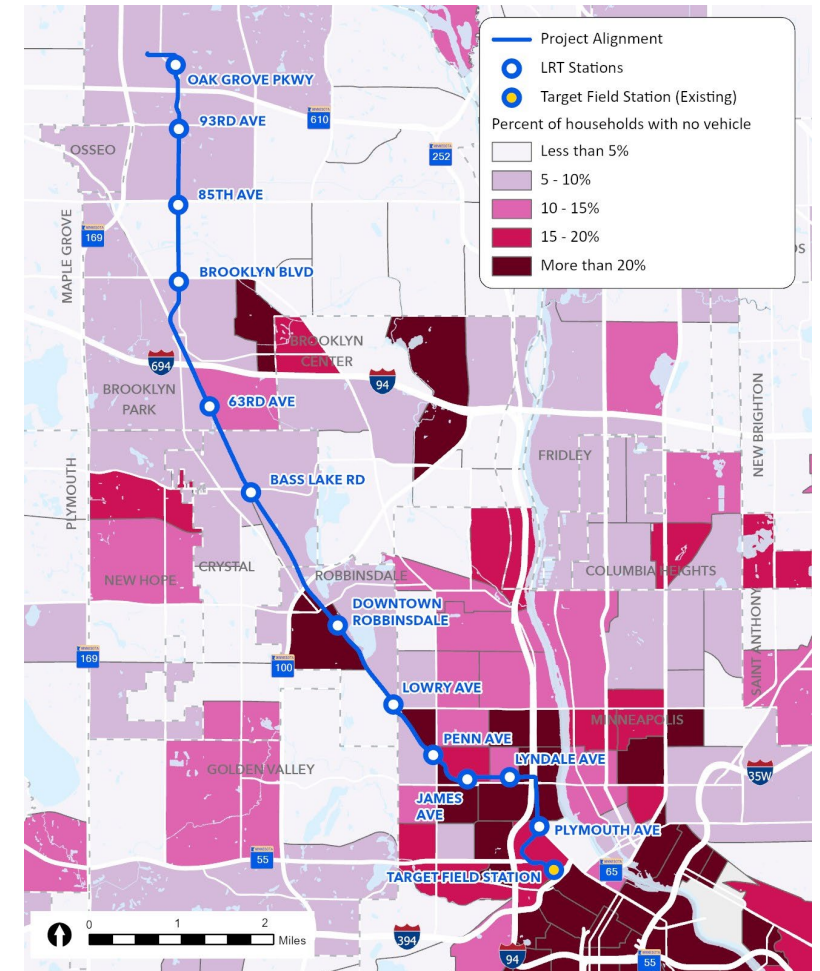


# Purpose and Need

## SDEIS Chapters

- Purpose and Need
- Alternatives
- Transportation
- Community and Social Analysis
- Physical and Environmental Analysis
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
- Environmental Justice
- Section 4(f) and 6(f)
- Consultation and Coordination
- Financial Analysis

- Updated Need Factors (2024):
  - Growing travel demand
  - Reducing local pollution with a balanced transportation network
  - Increased reliance on transit
  - Improved transit service in black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities
  - Changing travel patterns from Covid-19
  - Regional objectives for growth



Example map from Purpose and Need: zero-car households





# Alternatives Studied and Build Alternative

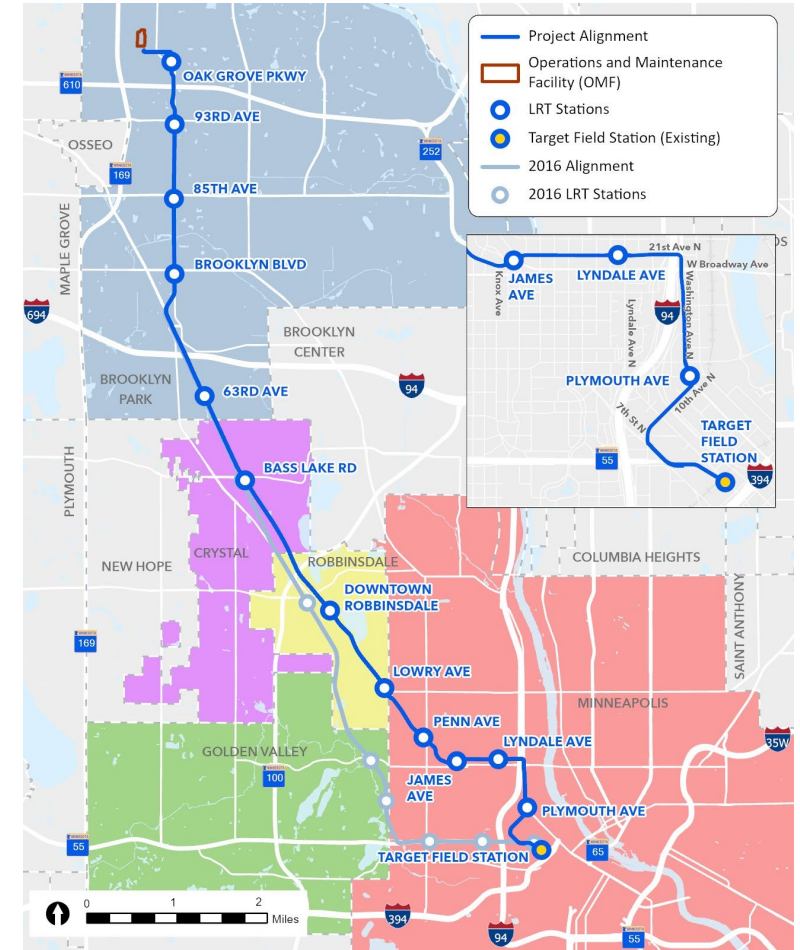


# Alternatives Development

## SDEIS Chapters

- Purpose and Need
- **Alternatives**
- Transportation
- Community and Social Analysis
- Physical and Environmental Analysis
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
- Environmental Justice
- Section 4(f) and 6(f)
- Consultation and Coordination
- Financial Analysis

- 2016 Alignment
  - Included freight rail right-of-way
- Route Modification Process (2020-2022)
  - Identified revised alignments that avoided the freight rail right-of-way portion of 2016 Alignment
- Evaluation of Alignment and Design Options (2023)

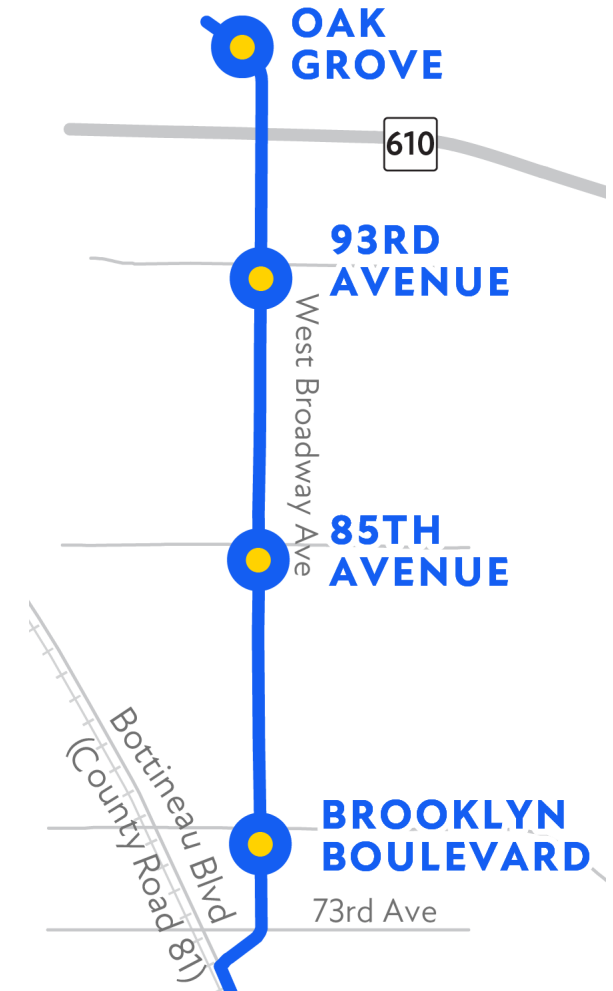


# West Broadway Ave - Brooklyn Park

## SDEIS Chapters

- Purpose and Need
- **Alternatives**
- Transportation
- Community and Social Analysis
- Physical and Environmental Analysis
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
- Environmental Justice
- Section 4(f) and 6(f)
- Consultation and Coordination
- Financial Analysis

- The proposed LRT elements including stations, park and ride, Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF), and track remain the same as in the 2016 FEIS and ROD
- However, the reconstruction and expansion of West Broadway (from north of Brooklyn Boulevard to 93rd Avenue), which was previously studied as a separate project is included in the SDEIS

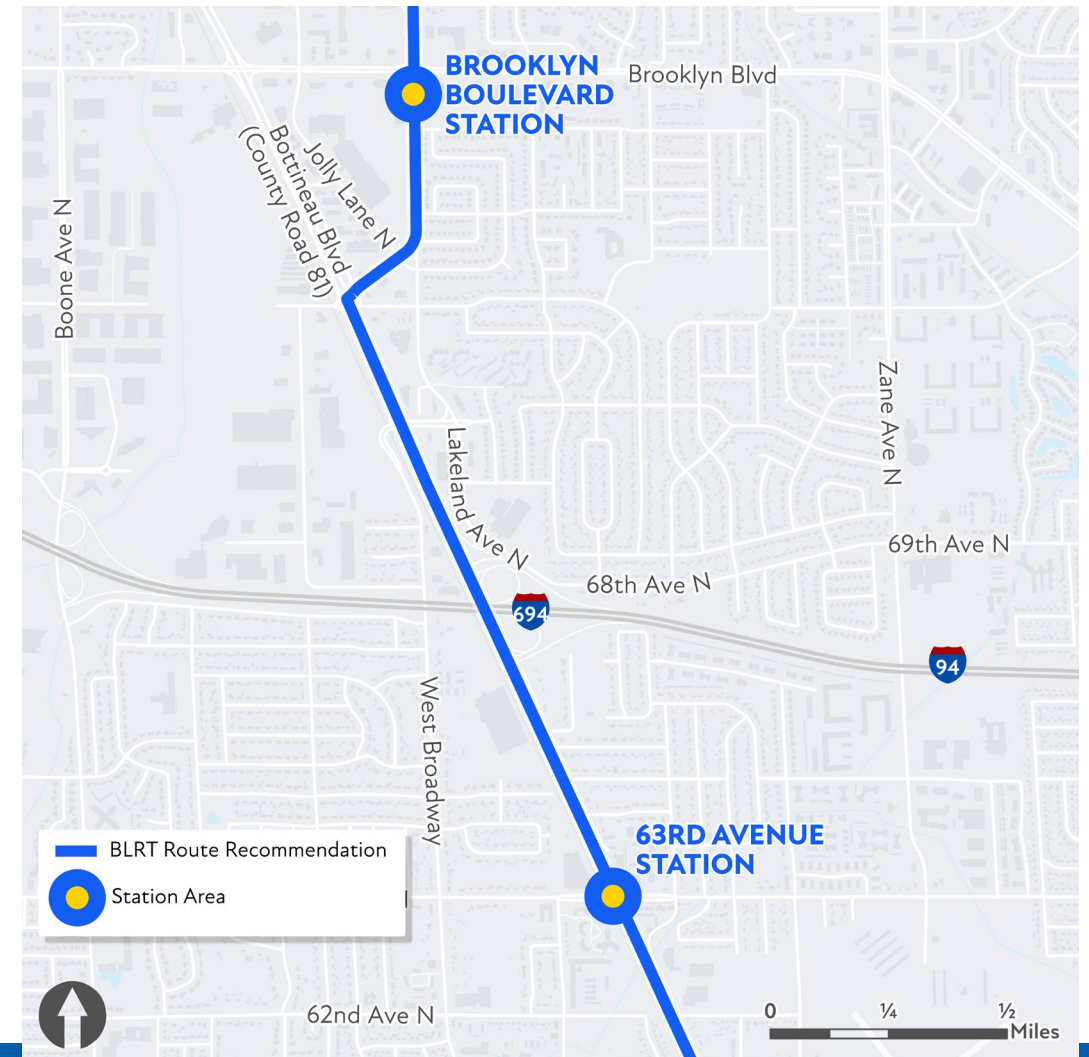


# County Road 81: 73<sup>rd</sup> Ave to 63<sup>rd</sup> Ave in Brooklyn Park

## SDEIS Chapters

- Purpose and Need
- **Alternatives**
- Transportation
- Community and Social Analysis
- Physical and Environmental Analysis
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
- Environmental Justice
- Section 4(f) and 6(f)
- Consultation and Coordination
- Financial Analysis

- In southern Brooklyn Park, the SDEIS evaluates proposed station at 63rd Avenue



# County Road 81 at Bass Lake Road - Crystal

## SDEIS Chapters

- Purpose and Need
- **Alternatives**
- Transportation
- Community and Social Analysis
- Physical and Environmental Analysis
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
- Environmental Justice Section 4(f) and 6(f)
- Consultation and Coordination
- Financial Analysis

- SDEIS evaluated a conventional at-grade intersection with a pedestrian bridge to access the station and a grade-separated elevated structure carrying County Road 81 over Bass Lake Road
- The proposed alignment along County Road 81 remains parallel to the 2016 Alignment, but distance ranges from 1,000 to 4,000 feet to the east of the freight rail right of way



Image depicts a rendering of the proposed Bass Lake Road Station



# County Road 81 - Robbinsdale

## SDEIS Chapters

- Purpose and Need
- **Alternatives**
- Transportation
- Community and Social Analysis
- Physical and Environmental Analysis
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
- Environmental Justice
- Section 4(f) and 6(f)
- Consultation and Coordination
- Financial Analysis

- Downtown Robbinsdale Station location
  - North of 40th Ave N and South of 40th Ave N Station locations were evaluated
- Downtown Robbinsdale park-and-ride location
  - U.S. Bank Site
- Lowry Ave Station location
  - At-grade and elevated station options were evaluated



Image depicts Downtown Robbinsdale Stations and Park-and-Ride Options



# Minneapolis

- Track routing on Lyndale Ave N or east side of I-94
- Track routing on W Broadway Ave or N 21st Ave approximately between Knox Ave N and Lyndale Ave N or I-94
- East side of I-94 location: adjacent to I-94 right-of-way or along N Washington Ave and N 10th Ave
- One or two stations between Knox Ave and I-94

## SDEIS Chapters

- Purpose and Need
- **Alternatives**
- Transportation
- Community and Social Analysis
- Physical and Environmental Analysis
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
- Environmental Justice
- Section 4(f) and 6(f)
- Consultation and Coordination
- Financial Analysis

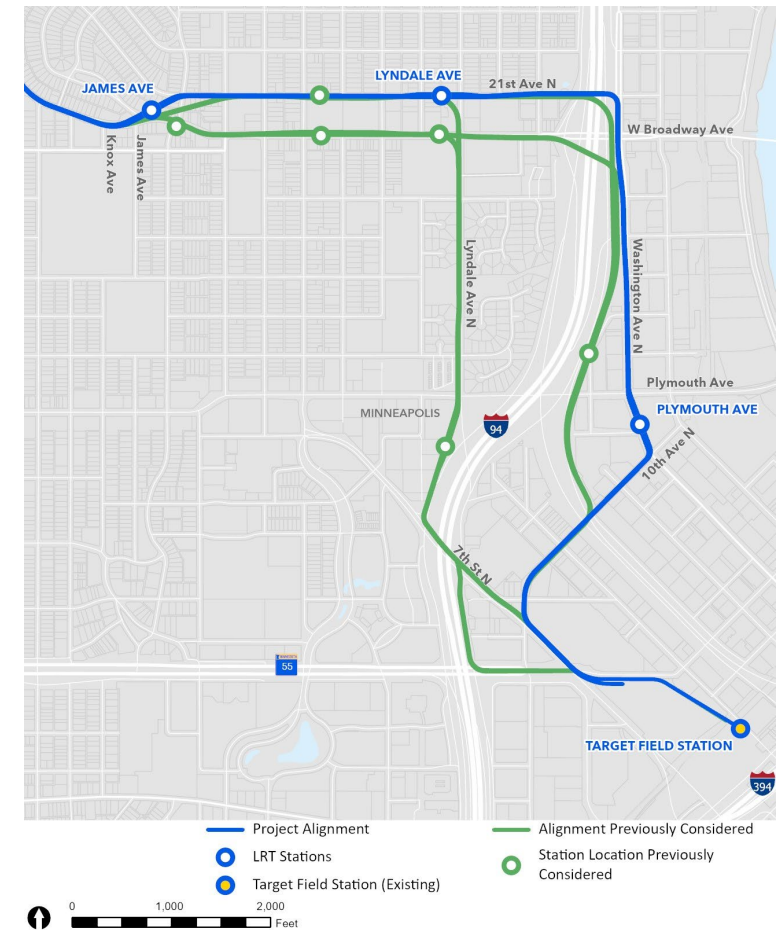


Image depicts Downtown Minneapolis Stations



# Build Alternative

- Brooklyn Park: new station at 63<sup>rd</sup> Ave
- Crystal: grade separated interchange at Bass Lake Road
- Robbinsdale: downtown station at 40<sup>th</sup> Ave
- Minneapolis:
  - Alignment east of I-94 along 10<sup>th</sup> and Washington Ave and over I-94 to 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue
  - New bridge to connect to 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue

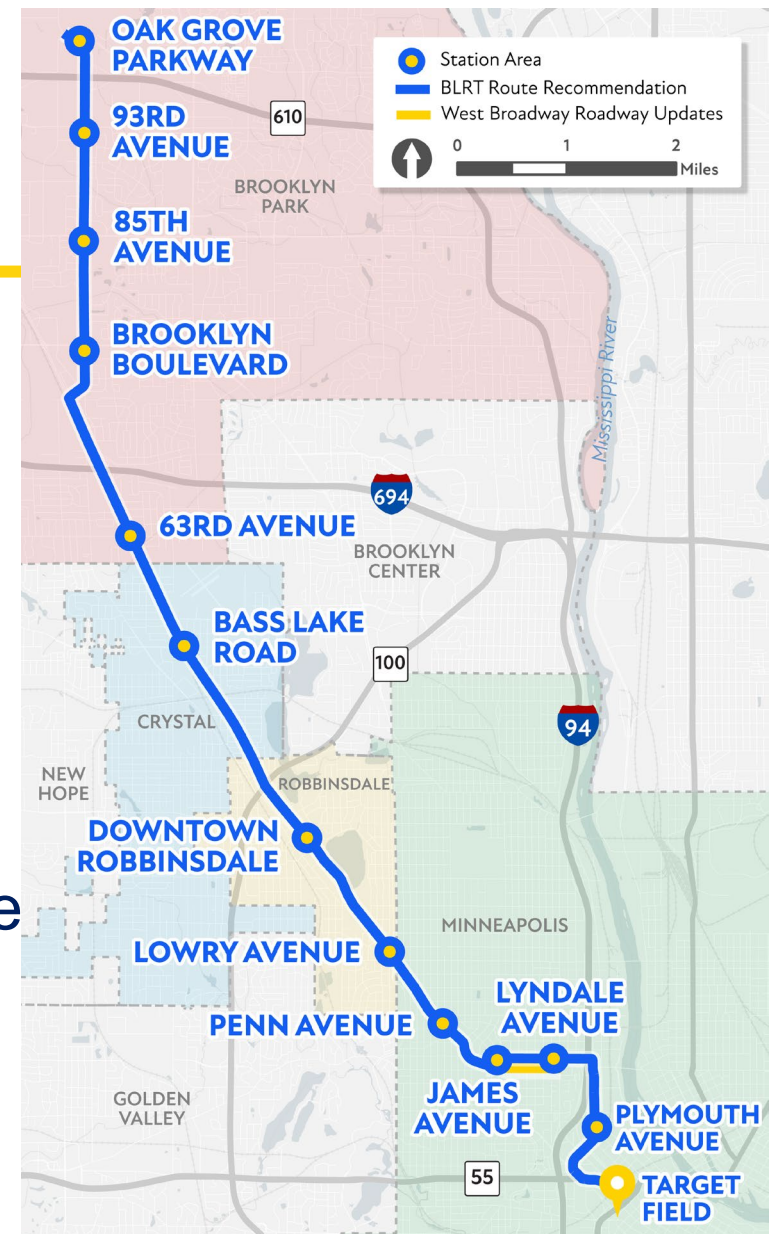


Image depicts BLRT Recommended Route





# Findings of the SDEIS



# Community

## SDEIS Chapters

- Purpose and Need
- Alternatives
- Transportation
- **Community and Social Analysis**
- Physical and Environmental Analysis
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
- Environmental Justice Section 4(f) and 6(f)
- Consultation and Coordination
- Financial Analysis

## Impacts

- Minor impacts to community amenities would occur in Brooklyn Park, Crystal, and Robbinsdale
- Relocation of seven community amenities in Minneapolis
- Loss of on-street and off-street parking
- Visual, noise, and vibration impacts in certain locations would affect community character (*see other sections*)

## Mitigation

- Additional community character mitigation to be developed in collaboration with community (21st Ave)

## Benefits

- Improved transit, pedestrian, and bicycle conditions would improve community cohesion and the accessibility of community amenities

## Definitions

**Community Amenities:** Community centers, restaurants, essential goods/services

**Community Cohesion:** The aspect of togetherness and bonding exhibited by a community. Affected by neighborhood boundaries, location of residences/businesses, demographics, economic, and social history

**Community Character:** Interactions among persons/groups, social patterns



# Property

## SDEIS Chapters

- Purpose and Need
- Alternatives
- Transportation
- **Community and Social Analysis**
- Physical and Environmental Analysis
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
- Environmental Justice Section 4(f) and 6(f)
- Consultation and Coordination
- Financial Analysis

## Impacts (Partial and Full)

- **Brooklyn Park:** 158 parcel impacts (67.4 acres), 2 relocations
- **Crystal:** 15 property impacts (4.2 acres), 6 relocations
- **Robbinsdale:** 31 property impacts (3.1 acres), 1 relocation
- **Minneapolis:** 142 property impacts (7.0 acres), 27 relocations
- **Continued efforts to minimize and avoid property impacts – finalized in SFEIS**

## Mitigation

- Payment of fair-market compensation for impacted property, relocation advisory services and reimbursement for moving and reestablishment expenses for commercial relocations



# Business/Economic Effects

## SDEIS Chapters

- Purpose and Need
- Alternatives
- Transportation
- **Community and Social Analysis**
- Physical and Environmental Analysis
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
- Environmental Justice Section 4(f) and 6(f)
- Consultation and Coordination
- Financial Analysis

## Impacts

- Increase in property values and associated property taxes
- Business access disruptions
- Potential for displacement of property owners and renters due to rising prices

## Mitigation

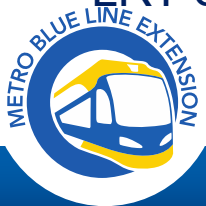
- Implementation of anti-displacement measures and policies within the Project
- Close coordination with key stakeholders and members of the public during construction

## Benefits

- Positive economic impact in the local economy
- LRT operation and maintenance job creation and earnings



Image depicts a BLE public engagement meeting



# Visual/Aesthetics

## SDEIS Chapters

- Purpose and Need
- Alternatives
- Transportation
- **Community and Social Analysis**
- Physical and Environmental Analysis
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
- Environmental Justice Section 4(f) and 6(f)
- Consultation and Coordination
- Financial Analysis

## Impacts

- Adverse visual impacts in Brooklyn Park, related to the proposed operations and maintenance facility

## Mitigation

- Mitigation could include screening, lighting design, and context-sensitive design elements for the OMF



Green Line LRT



# Historic Properties – Section 106

## SDEIS Chapters

- Purpose and Need
- Alternatives
- Transportation
- **Community and Social Analysis**
- Physical and Environmental Analysis
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
- Environmental Justice
- Section 4(f) and 6(f)
- Consultation and Coordination
- Financial Analysis

## Impacts

- Identification of properties eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, evaluation of impacts underway via Section 106 process

## Mitigation

- Mitigation will be identified in the SFEIS



Robbinsdale Library building - listed on the National Register of Historic Places

# Transportation

## SDEIS Chapters

- Purpose and Need
- Alternatives
- **Transportation**
- Community and Social Analysis
- Physical and Environmental Analysis
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
- Environmental Justice Section 4(f) and 6(f)
- Consultation and Coordination
- Financial Analysis

## Impacts

- Temporary sidewalk and bike facility closures, disruptions/changes to vehicle traffic/operations, loss of parking

## Mitigation

- Restriping, adding turn lanes, allowing U-turn movements, signalization, traffic management strategies

## Benefits

- Transit improvement – light rail service
- Improvements to pedestrian and cyclist safety, comfort, accessibility



LRT service in downtown Minneapolis



# Water Resources

## SDEIS Chapters

- Purpose and Need
- Alternatives
- Transportation
- Community and Social Analysis
- **Physical and Environmental Analysis**
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
- Environmental Justice Section 4(f) and 6(f)
- Consultation and Coordination
- Financial Analysis

## Impacts

- Approximately 12.2 acres of floodplain impacts
- Approximately 8.56 acres of wetland and stormwater basin impacts, which is less than what was identified in the 2016 EIS

## Mitigation

- Minimize floodplain impacts through design and create replacement flood storage areas
- Permanent wetland impacts will be mitigated through wetland credits

## Benefits

- Replacement flood storage areas would improve overall flood management of affected basins



Image depicts a wetland with a LRT above



# Soils and Geologic Resources

## SDEIS Chapters

- Purpose and Need
- Alternatives
- Transportation
- Community and Social Analysis
- **Physical and Environmental Analysis**
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
- Environmental Justice Section 4(f) and 6(f)
- Consultation and Coordination
- Financial Analysis

## Impacts

- Dewatering
- Soil erosion
- Temporary fill

## Mitigation

- Adhere to permit requirements
- Special design considerations



Example of soil boring used to identify soil types

# Plants and Animals

## SDEIS Chapters

- Purpose and Need
- Alternatives
- Transportation
- Community and Social Analysis
- **Physical and Environmental Analysis**
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
- Environmental Justice Section 4(f) and 6(f)
- Consultation and Coordination
- Financial Analysis

## Impacts

- Wildlife disruption due to construction noise and physical disturbance, habitat fragmentation or loss, soil disturbance may cause spread of noxious weeds

## Mitigation

- Adhere to permit requirements
- Special design considerations



Image depicts a flower and bee

# Contaminated Properties and Hazardous Materials

## SDEIS Chapters

- Purpose and Need
- Alternatives
- Transportation
- Community and Social Analysis
- **Physical and Environmental Analysis**
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
- Environmental Justice Section 4(f) and 6(f)
- Consultation and Coordination
- Financial Analysis

## Impacts

- 152 high risk known or potentially contaminated sites
- 288 medium risk known or potentially contaminated sites

## Mitigation

- Additional study will be conducted and documented in the SFEIS to evaluate groundwater contamination

## Benefits

- Opportunity to remove contamination and potentially reduce future exposure risks



Image depicts equipment used for testing for contaminated soils



# Noise

## SDEIS Chapters

- Purpose and Need
- Alternatives
- Transportation
- Community and Social Analysis
- **Physical and Environmental Analysis**
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
- Environmental Justice Section 4(f) and 6(f)
- Consultation and Coordination
- Financial Analysis

## Impacts

- Moderate noise impacts at 2 institutions and 27 residential properties (244 dwelling units), most of which would be in Minneapolis
- Severe noise impacts at 15 properties (173 dwelling units), all within Minneapolis

## Mitigation

- Noise mitigation will be considered in the SFEIS

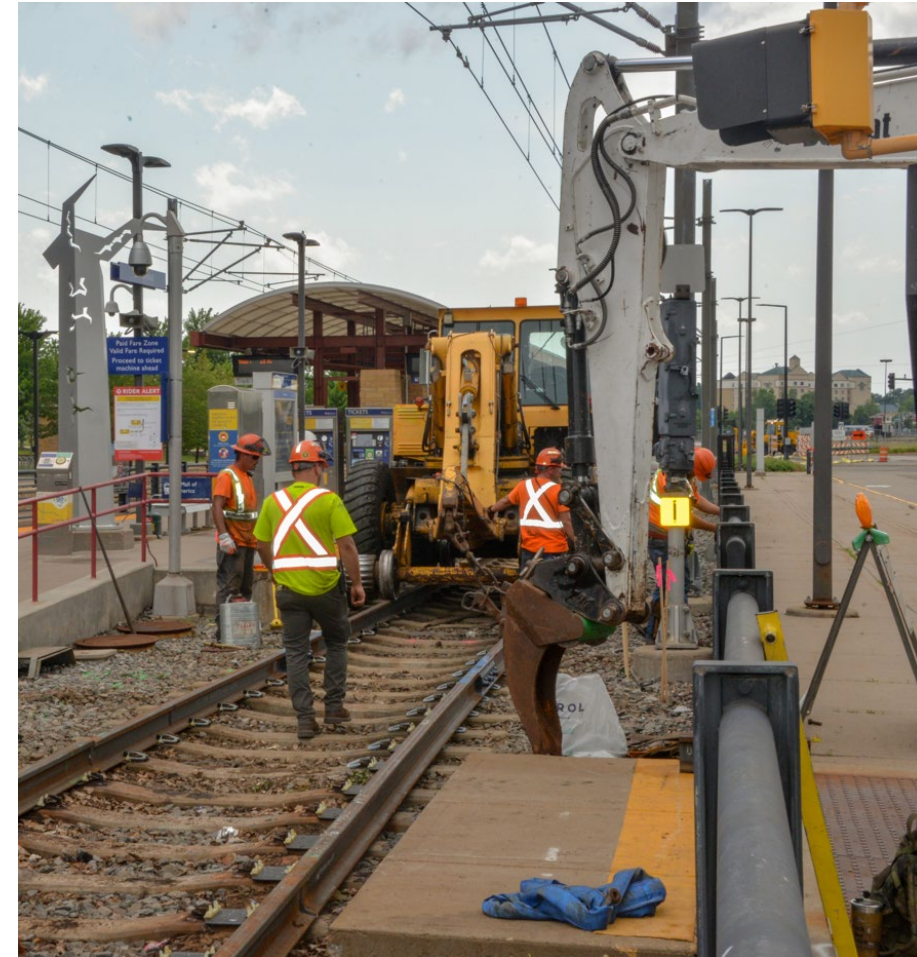


Image depicts LRT during construction



# Vibration

## SDEIS Chapters

- Purpose and Need
- Alternatives
- Transportation
- Community and Social Analysis
- **Physical and Environmental Analysis**
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
- Environmental Justice Section 4(f) and 6(f)
- Consultation and Coordination
- Financial Analysis

## Impacts

- The Build Alternative would result in vibration impacts at 2 residential properties (28 dwelling units)
- All vibration impacts are located within Minneapolis

## Mitigation

- Vibration mitigation will be considered in the SFEIS

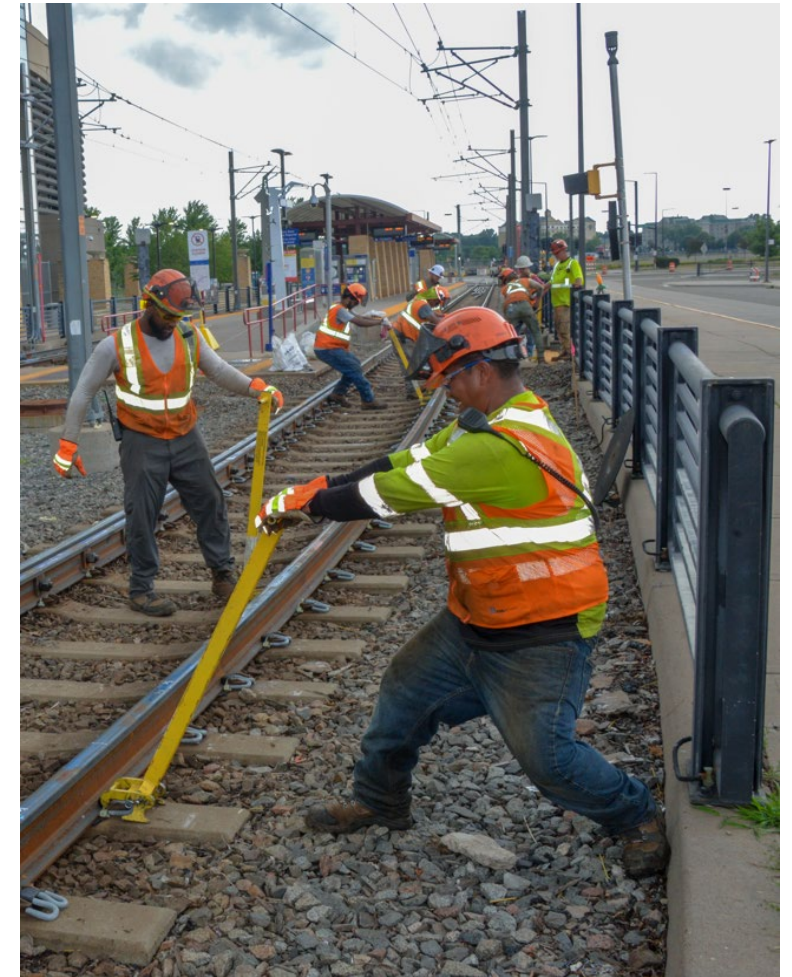


Image depicts LRT construction



# Section 4(f)

Section 4(f) is a federal law protecting publicly-owned parks and wildlife refuges and significant historical sites from conversion to transportation use

- **Section 4(f) Impacts:** Anticipated *de minimis use* for six parks and temporary occupancy use determinations for seven parks
  - *de minimis* means the activities, features, and attributes of the park are not adversely affected
  - Comments will be considered prior to making Section 4(f) determinations

## SDEIS Chapters

- Purpose and Need
- Alternatives
- Transportation
- Community and Social Analysis
- Physical and Environmental Analysis
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
- Environmental Justice
- **Section 4(f) and 6(f)**
- Consultation and Coordination
- Financial Analysis

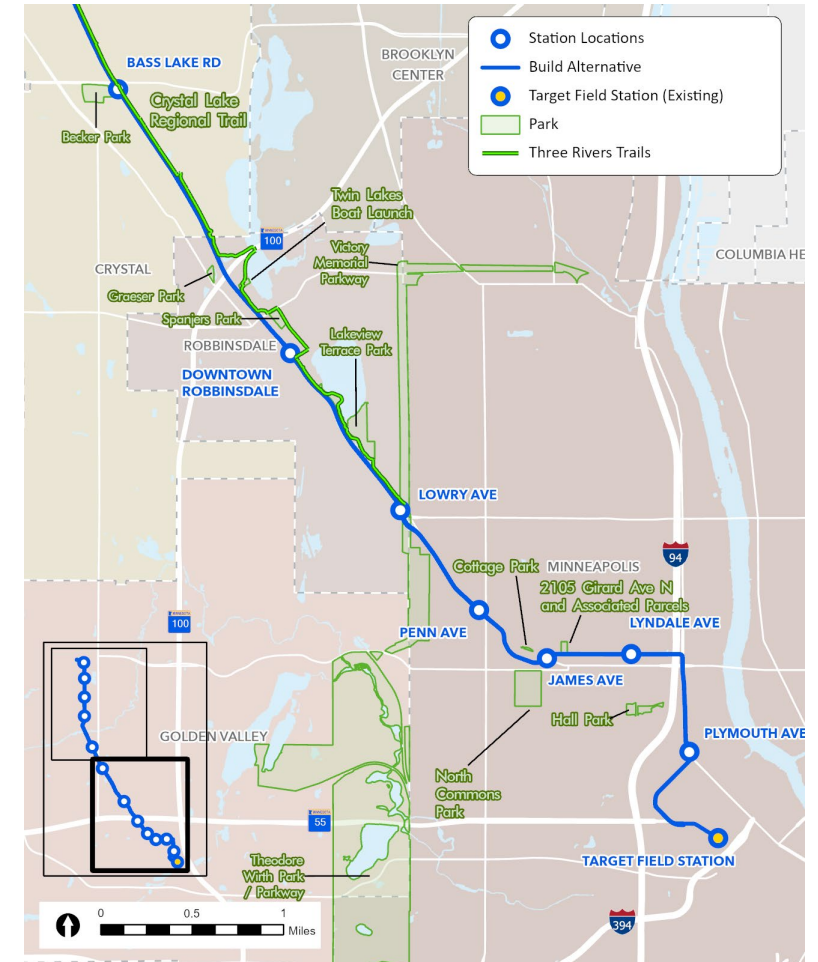


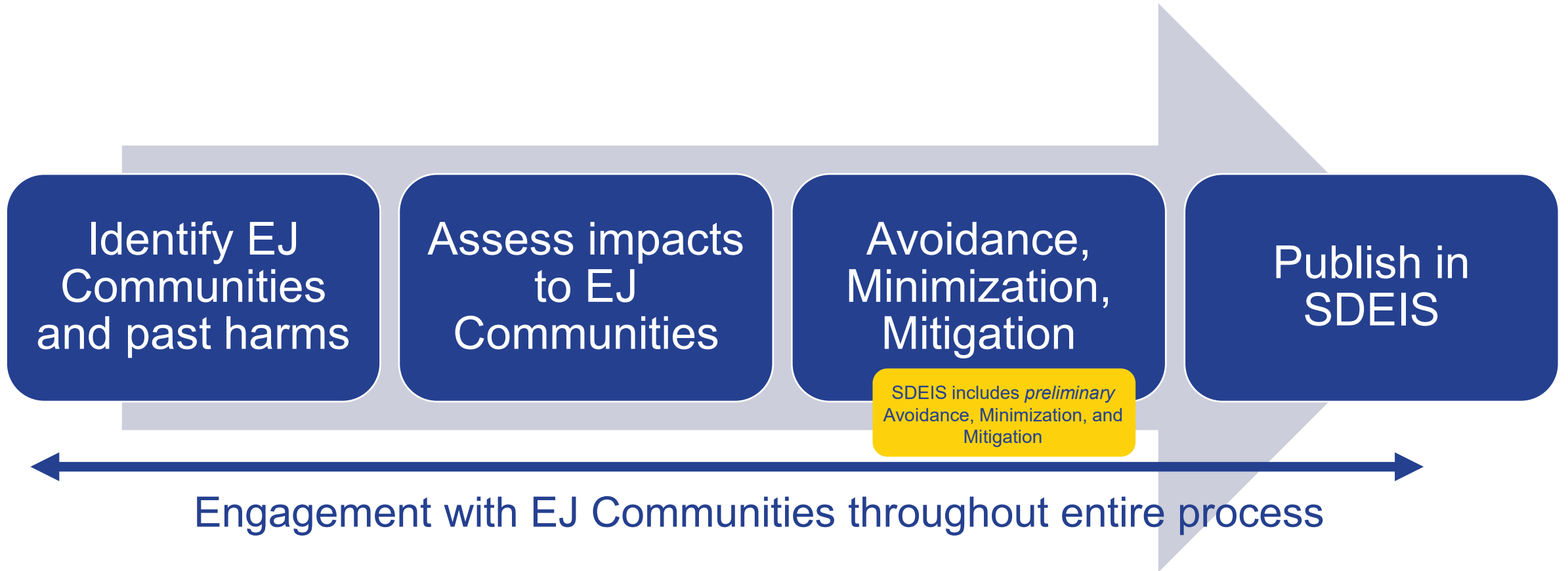
Image depicts the Build Alternative, parks, and trails



# Environmental Justice



# EJ Process



2025 - SFEIS documents committed mitigation plan





# What is an EJ community?

---

EJ communities are any populations that have a significant proportion of people who have low incomes or are otherwise **adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality** and who experience **disproportionate and adverse human health and environmental burdens.**

## Some examples include:

- Low-income individuals
- Black, Indigenous, Persons of Color (BIPOC) individuals
- Individuals with disabilities
- Households with high housing-cost burden
- Households without access to a car
- Individuals 65 years or older
- Individuals with limited English proficiency



# Justice40 Initiative

---

- Federal government effort to deliver at least 40% of the overall benefits from certain federal investments to EJ Communities
- The Justice40 Initiative's investment areas, including clean transit, are especially relevant in the context of transportation
  - Provides an opportunity to address gaps in transportation infrastructure and public services



# How are Project Impacts to EJ Communities Determined?

---

- Determine project impacts for the entire population in the project area for all environmental categories (noise, vibration, water, community character, etc.)
- Identify ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts if they exist
- If there are impacts remaining after measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate have been identified, determine how much of these impacts would be borne by EJ populations
- Identify any benefits of the project that would offset impacts primarily borne by EJ populations
- Compare any EJ-borne impacts with off-setting benefits to determine if the project has “disproportionately high and adverse” effects on EJ populations
- If it is determined that project impacts would disproportionately and adversely impact EJ populations; determine additional mitigation commitments



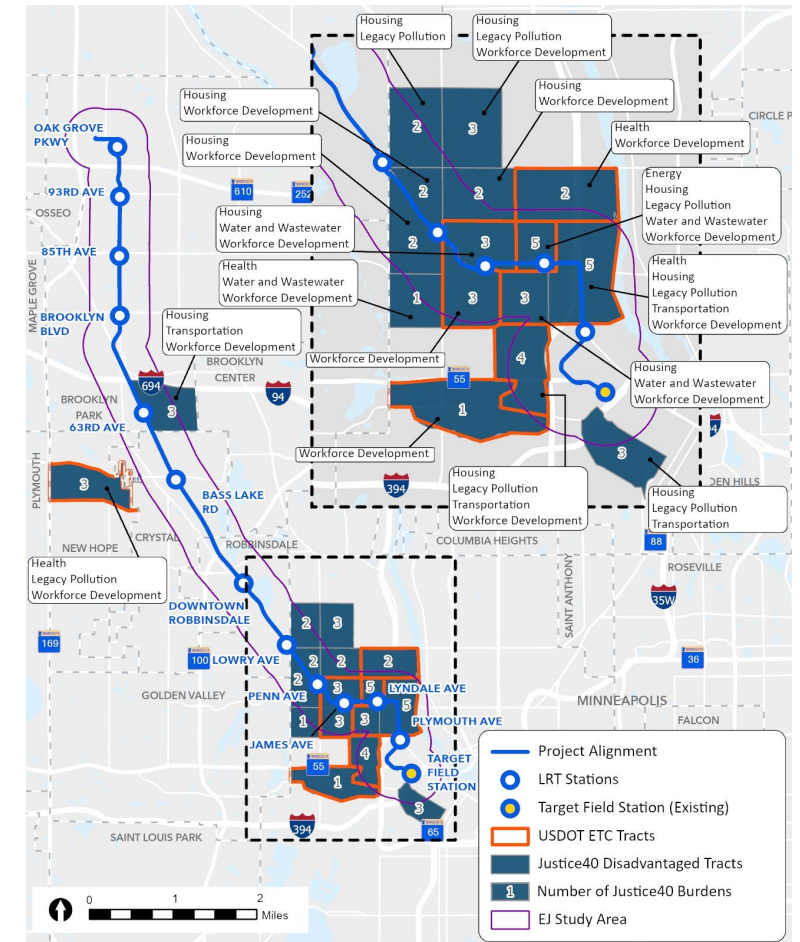
# Topics with identified adverse impacts to EJ communities

## SDEIS Chapters

- Purpose and Need
- Alternatives
- Transportation
- Community and Social Analysis
- Physical and Environmental Analysis
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
- **Environmental Justice**
- Section 4(f) and 6(f)
- Consultation and Coordination
- Financial Analysis

## • Adverse impacts that warrant mitigation:

- Community impacts – along 21<sup>st</sup> Ave
- Property
- Businesses
- Transportation - parking
- Noise and Vibration
- Economic effects – indirect displacement



Example map from Environmental Justice analysis – Justice40 Disadvantaged Communities mapping



# EJ Benefits

## • Transportation

- Improved transit service
- New bike and pedestrian infrastructure
- Reconstruction of roadways that are shared with LRT (and West Broadway in Minneapolis) would provide:
  - Refresh pavement, gutters, and drainage systems
  - Widened sidewalks provide space for street cafes, landscaping, directional signage, and improved street lighting, which can greatly enhance the pedestrian experience and contribute to the overall livability of the area
  - Curb extensions improve pedestrian safety by reducing crossing distance and enhancing sight line for drivers



# EJ Benefits (continued)

---

- **Jobs/Economic**

- Opportunity for community land ownership and redevelopment of land vacated for light rail
- Generation of thousands of jobs through planning and construction of BLE
- Small businesses can attract more employees and customers through improved transit options



# EJ Benefits (continued)

---

- **Environmental/Health**

- Opportunities for new stormwater infiltration and green space
- Reduced pollution compared to gas powered vehicles
- Improved public health by connecting people to quality healthcare and active transportation options
- Safety and more comfortable pedestrian-scale lighting
- Improved safety by reducing vehicle use and traffic accidents



# SDEIS Comment Period and Next Steps





# What will we do with comments received during the SDEIS comment period?

- After the comment period ends, project staff will compile, consider, and respond to comments received regarding the SDEIS
- Comments received will inform the SFEIS
- Responses to comments will be published in the SFEIS

**Comment here** on the Blue Line Extension Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement, led by the Blue Line Extension Project Office and the Federal Transit Administration



Visit: [BlueLineExt.org](https://www.BlueLineExt.org)  
for more details



# Commenting on the SDEIS

---

- **Providing a written comment**

- **In-Person:** Complete the “SDEIS Comment Form”, available at the public hearing in July and at office hours/community events with project staff, or other comments in writing
- **Online:** Visit the Metropolitan Council’s Blue Line project website ([BlueLineExt.org](https://www.metrotransit.org/blue-line-extension)) to complete the online comment form at any time during the comment period
- **Email** ([BlueLineExt@metrotransit.com](mailto:BlueLineExt@metrotransit.com))
- **Mail:** Blue Line Extension Project Office, Attn: Neha Damle, 6465 Wayzata Blvd, Suite 600 | St. Louis Park, MN | 55426

- **Providing a verbal comment**

- **Online:** Call the SDEIS project hotline (612-373-3970) and leave a message to submit a verbal comment at any time during the comment period
- **In-Person:** Provide a verbal comment at the public hearings in July

**The SDEIS comment period will close August 5, 2024**

