



9 Consultation and Coordination

The Metropolitan Council's (Council) planning for the proposed METRO Blue Line Light Rail Transit (BLRT) Extension project involved extensive outreach and coordination with the affected public, which included the community members residing in the proposed BLRT Extension project corridor as well as individuals, businesses, groups, clubs, civic organizations, and others interested in the proposed BLRT Extension project. Also engaged in the process were agencies, including local governments and state and federal agencies with regulatory oversight and permitting responsibilities.

This chapter summarizes the efforts and outcomes of the various consultation and coordination efforts made for the proposed BLRT Extension project during the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)/Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) process. This chapter describes the proposed BLRT Extension project's advisory committee structures; agency participation; coordination activities, public meetings, and events; and other communication activities implemented during the project development and environmental processes. This chapter also summarizes public and agency comments received during the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) public comment period, as well as permits and approvals that will be required to implement the proposed BLRT Extension project.

This chapter includes the following sections:

- **Section 9.1** describes public involvement for EIS Scoping, selection of a locally preferred alternative (LPA), the Draft EIS public comment period, and Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS) development.
- **Section 9.2** summarizes the project advisory committees through the Draft and Final EISs.
- **Section 9.3** describes agency coordination throughout the Draft and Final EISs, including key coordination issues.
- **Section 9.4** summarizes public and agency comments on the Draft EIS.
- **Section 9.5** describes permits and approvals required for the proposed BLRT Extension project.

Project outreach and collaboration began with Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA), which was the proposed BLRT Extension project's local lead agency for the environmental process through the Draft EIS. Outreach responsibilities were transferred to the Council, which became the local lead agency for the environmental process upon completion of the Draft EIS public comment period.

Project consultation and coordination have been implemented in compliance with the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) of 2005; the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21); Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Circular FTA C 4702.1B, *Title VI Requirements and Guidelines for FTA Recipients*, effective October 1, 2012 (Title VI Requirements and Guidelines Circular); and Executive Order 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*, including the US Department of Transportation's (USDOT)



Final Environmental Justice Order [*Order 5610.2(a): Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*], updated May 2, 2012; and the FTA Circular FTA C 4703.1, *Environmental Justice Policy Guidance for FTA Recipients*, effective August 15, 2012 (Environmental Justice Circular [FTA, 2012]).

Outreach activities, agency coordination, and committee structure evolved as project development activities progressed. Public and agency coordination activities were consistent with NEPA, MEPA, and the Chapter 4410 Environmental Quality Board (EQB) Environmental Review Program of the State of Minnesota. Publications of notices of intent, document availability, public comment periods, and public open houses and hearings were published in the Federal Register and the EQB *Monitor*, as well as in local and regional publications. Requirements regarding the timing and length of public comment periods, as well as when public open houses and hearings could be held relative to publication of environmental documents, were also consistent with NEPA and MEPA.

9.1 Public Involvement

This section provides an overview of the public involvement activities completed during the Draft EIS and Final EIS stages of the proposed BLRT Extension project. Ongoing engagement and communication with the affected public has been a fundamental element of the proposed BLRT Extension project since its initiation and will continue to be a key component of project implementation.

In 2008, HCRRA initiated the Alternatives Analysis (AA) Study to investigate transit improvement alternatives along the Bottineau Transitway. The study considered a range of alternatives that would improve regional mobility and meet long-range transit needs. Early in the study process, the Council established a framework for stakeholder outreach that engaged nearly 1,000 stakeholders through public meetings, open houses, stakeholder presentations, email, website visits, and phone calls. Further information can be found in the *Bottineau Transitway Alternatives Analysis Study* (2010) at www.hennepin.us/~media/hennepinus/residents/transportation/bottineau/bottineau-alternative-analysis-summary-report.pdf?la=en.

As the proposed BLRT Extension project moved into the EIS phase, a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) was developed to clarify the goals for public outreach. The PIP included engagement strategies, key stakeholders, decision-making and advisory bodies, communication methods, and public involvement activities. The PIP guided engagement through EIS project Scoping and LPA selection, as well as the Draft EIS public comment period.

This section summarizes engagement completed during EIS project Scoping, LPA selection, and the Draft EIS public comment period. Further information can be found in Chapter 9 of the Draft EIS at www.BlueLineExt.org.



9.1.1 Project Public Involvement for EIS Project Scoping and LPA Selection

Public involvement for the proposed BLRT Extension project’s environmental review process began with the EIS Scoping process, which informed the public, interest groups, affected tribes, and government agencies of the Draft EIS. Six open houses were held in corridor cities in June 2011 to initiate EIS Scoping. Notices announced the beginning of the EIS Scoping comment period, which extended from December 26, 2011, to February 17, 2012, and included dates for four public EIS Scoping meetings and hearings.

The process provided opportunities to inform the public, government agencies, elected officials, organizations, and businesses that development of the Draft EIS was commencing and to solicit issues of concern. A Scoping booklet was prepared and distributed to inform the public about the Scoping meetings. A Scoping video was also prepared and made available on the website for the proposed BLRT Extension project for people who could not attend the open houses. Public comments were considered alongside technical data and analysis to inform project decisions and shape the content of the Draft EIS. Responses to public comments and documentation of the outcome of the EIS Scoping process were included in the *Bottineau Transitway Scoping Decision Document* (June 2012) at www.BlueLineExt.org.

The information collected in the EIS Scoping phase of the proposed BLRT Extension project, along with technical analysis, helped to identify a potential LPA. The selection of an LPA tells FTA which alternative local agencies expect to be the most competitive in achieving support at the local, regional, and federal levels. The LPA was selected through a public process with input from corridor residents, communities, businesses, and other organizations. Notifications and meetings held throughout the EIS Scoping and LPA selection process are shown in **Table 9.1-1** and **Table 9.1-2**.

Table 9.1-1. Summary of Meetings during Project Scoping and LPA Selection

Date	Meeting/Location	Meeting Purpose
June 2011	Six locations: Brooklyn Park (two locations), Robbinsdale, Golden Valley, Crystal, and Minneapolis	EIS Scoping initiation – open houses
September 15, 2011	Brookdale Library (6125 Shingle Creek Parkway, Brooklyn Center)	EIS Scoping initiation – roundtable discussion
October 6, 2011	Urban Research & Outreach-Engagement Center (2001 Plymouth Avenue North, Minneapolis)	Alignment D2 – open house
January 23, 2012	Theodore Wirth Chalet (1301 Theodore Wirth Parkway, Minneapolis)	EIS Scoping – open house
January 24, 2012	Brooklyn Park City Hall (5200 85th Avenue North, Brooklyn Park)	EIS Scoping – open house
January 25, 2012	Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center (2001 Plymouth Avenue North, Minneapolis)	EIS Scoping – open house
January 31, 2012	Robbinsdale City Hall (4100 Lakeview Avenue North, Robbinsdale)	EIS Scoping – open house
May 10, 2012	Policy Advisory Committee Meeting (Hennepin County)	LPA – public hearing
June 12, 2012	HCRRA Meeting (Minneapolis)	LPA – public hearing



Table 9.1-2. Summary of Notices and Flyers during EIS Scoping

Date	Activity	Distribution
May 2011	Distribution of posters in community facilities to announce June 2011 open houses	Approximately 40 corridor-wide
August 2011	Email invitation to roundtable discussions held September 15, 2011	Email
September 2011	Door-to-door distribution of flyers announcing Alignment D2 open house held October 6, 2011	>500 in neighborhoods surrounding Alignment D2
September 2011	Distribution of posters in community facilities to announce Alignment D2 open house held October 6, 2011	Approximately 40 corridor-wide
December 2011	Distribution of Scoping booklet and poster announcing EIS Scoping meetings	Corridor-wide, 327 hard copies of Scoping booklet and about 50 posters

9.1.2 Public Involvement for the Draft EIS Public Comment Period

FTA and HCRRA published the Draft EIS in April 2014. The Notice of Availability was published in the Federal Register on April 11, 2014, and in the EQB *Monitor* on April 14, 2014. These notices were followed by a public comment period that concluded on May 29, 2014. Copies of the Draft EIS were available at the following locations for public review during the comment period:

- Hennepin County, 701 Fourth Avenue South, Suite 400, Minneapolis
- Metropolitan Council, 290 Robert Street North, St. Paul
- Libraries
 - Brookdale Library
 - Brooklyn Park Library
 - Hennepin County Public Library
 - Maple Grove Library
 - North Regional Library
 - Osseo Library
 - Rockford Road Library
 - Sumner Library
- City Halls
 - Brooklyn Park City Hall
 - Crystal City Hall
 - Golden Valley City Hall
 - Maple Grove Government Center
 - Minneapolis City Hall
 - Robbinsdale City Hall



During the Draft EIS public comment period, the Draft EIS was available on Hennepin County's website and can now be found at www.BlueLineExt.org. Public hearings on the Draft EIS were held on:

- Wednesday, May 7, 2014, at the Golden Valley City Hall
- Thursday, May 8, 2014, at the Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center
- Tuesday, May 13, 2014, at the Brooklyn Park City Hall
- Wednesday, May 14, 2014, at the Crystal Community Center

Each public hearing was preceded by an open house. A total of 262 people attended the public hearings. Translation services and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations were provided upon request. Substantive comments received during the Draft EIS public comment period and subsequent responses are included in **Appendix G** of this Final EIS and summarized in **Section 9.4** below.

9.1.3 Public Involvement for the Final EIS

Public involvement for the Final EIS built on the foundation established during the AA, EIS Scoping, LPA selection, and Draft EIS stages of project development. This section summarizes outreach activities during the Final EIS stage.

9.1.3.1 Public Outreach Activities Framework

Public involvement through the Draft EIS public comment period established the framework for the preparation of the Final EIS. The goal of public outreach for the proposed BLRT Extension project has been to continue momentum and facilitate stakeholder engagement, input, and understanding through a meaningful public involvement process. The technical, social, economic, and environmental issues that were identified through early stages of public involvement have been considered throughout project development. This emphasis on building confidence and credibility in the environmental process by assuring the public that they will be heard and understood has carried through to the preparation of the Final EIS.

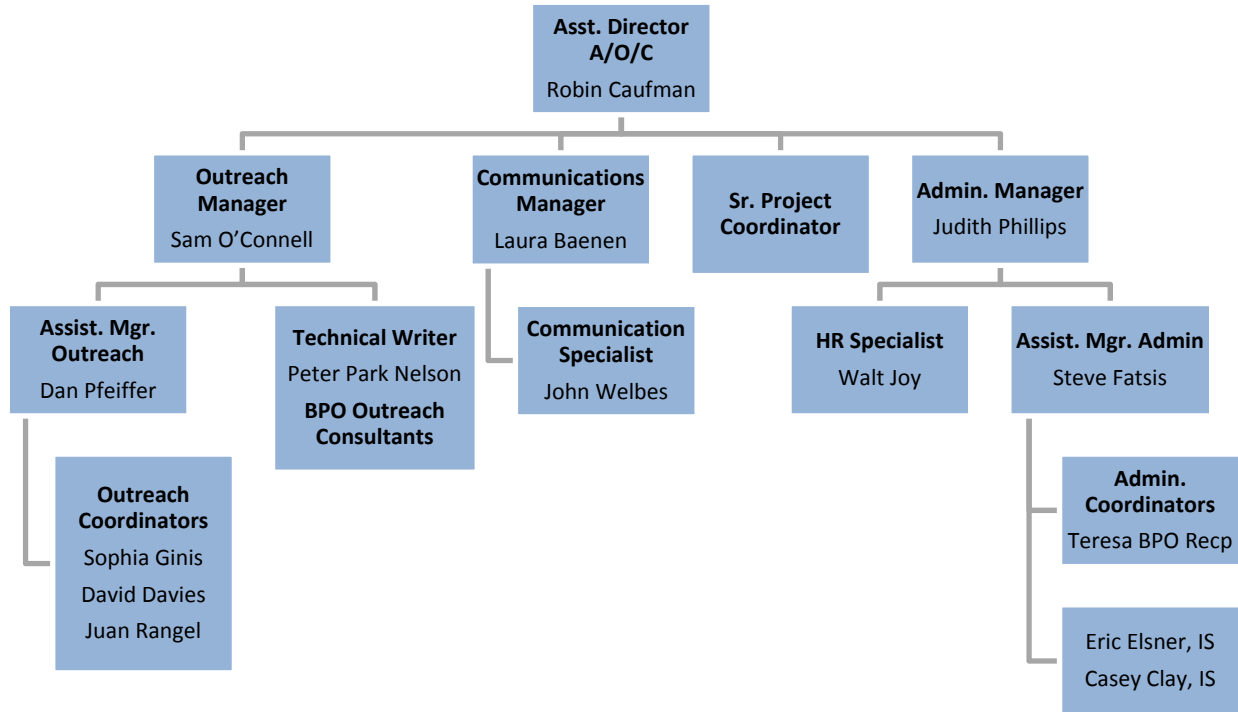
9.1.3.2 Outreach and Communications Team

Council staff dedicated to communications and outreach for the proposed BLRT Extension project include the Assistant Director for Administration, Public Involvement, and Communications; the Communications Manager; the Public Involvement Manager; the Assistant Public Involvement Manager; the Communications Specialist; three Community Outreach Coordinators; and a Technical Writer. An organizational chart of project outreach and communications staff for the proposed BLRT Extension project is shown in **Figure 9.1-1**.

The efforts of the communications and public outreach staff are guided by the PIP. The staff works closely with stakeholders, including several established stakeholder groups, to provide continual engagement with the public as a part of the overall decision-making process.



Figure 9.1-1. Outreach and Communications Organization Chart



9.1.3.3 Accessibility to the Public

Public and agency coordination for the proposed BLRT Extension project are managed by the BLRT Extension Project Office (BPO) at 5514 West Broadway Avenue, Suite 200, Crystal, Minnesota, 55428. The BPO can be reached by telephone at (612) 373-5301 and by email at BlueLineExt@metrotransit.org. Media events, news releases, advisory and management committee agendas, presentations, meeting minutes, environmental documents, and engineering plans for the proposed BLRT Extension project are available on the project website (www.BlueLineExt.org). These materials and this Final EIS comply with the requirements of Minnesota Statute 363A.42 regarding the accessibility of public records. Recp



9.1.3.4 Public Outreach and Events

Council staff hosted public events in locations throughout the proposed BLRT Extension project corridor to provide the public with the opportunity to provide input on design efforts and receive updates and information about proposed BLRT Extension project activities. Public events were tailored to present information and solicit feedback on specific aspects of the proposed BLRT Extension project, including:

- Coordination with the Hennepin County West Broadway Avenue Reconstruction project
- Noise impacts and mitigation
- Effects on wetlands, floodplains, and biological resources
- Effects on parks and historic properties
- Light rail transit (LRT) station locations and configuration
- Pedestrian safety
- Trail connections
- Traffic effects
- Parking
- Configuration of Olson Memorial Highway (Trunk Highway [TH] 55)
- Coordination with BNSF Railway

These public events offered an opportunity for the public to provide feedback on various features of the proposed BLRT Extension project and make connections with Council staff. Ideas and requests regarding the proposed BLRT Extension project provided by the public were documented and considered in engineering. Input received from public meetings and events on the proposed BLRT Extension project is posted on the project website located at this link: www.metrocouncil.org/Transportation/Projects/Current-Projects/METRO-Blue-Line-Extension.aspx. Public events involving the proposed BLRT Extension project were typically conducted in an open-house format and were publicized on the project website and through newspaper articles, newspaper advertisements, press releases, social media, and email alerts.

Public events were accessible to those with disabilities in accordance with the ADA. Translation services and other accommodations were provided on request. The Council selected meeting locations based on ease of access to the location and meeting room, and proximity to affected areas. Lists of public outreach and events held during the preparation of the Draft EIS are provided in Section 9.2 of the Draft EIS. **Table 9.1-3** summarizes the open houses held during Final EIS preparation.

In addition to hosting public open houses and other events, Council staff frequently attended and presented at community meetings throughout the proposed BLRT Extension project vicinity. Attending such meetings allowed groups with specific concerns or questions to interact with staff and to provide feedback in a more personal, less formal setting. Any concerns expressed at these meetings were shared with the appropriate team members.



Table 9.1-3. Summary of Open Houses Held during Final EIS Preparation

Date	Meeting/Location	Meeting Purpose
February 26, 2015	Church of St. Margaret Mary (Visitation Hall, 2323 Zenith Avenue North, Golden Valley, MN)	Station locations for Golden Valley and North Minneapolis – open house
March 5, 2015	North Hennepin Community College Center for Business Technology (Room 195/Grand Hall, 7411 85th Avenue North, Brooklyn Park, MN)	West Broadway Avenue roadway concepts – open house
March 19, 2015	North Hennepin Community College Center for Business Technology (Room 195/Grand Hall, 7411 85th Avenue North, Brooklyn Park, MN)	West Broadway Avenue roadway concepts – open house
April 7, 2015	North Hennepin Community College Center for Business Technology (Room 195/Grand Hall, 7411 85th Avenue North, Brooklyn Park, MN)	West Broadway Avenue roadway concepts – open house
May 28, 2015	Crystal Community Center (4800 Douglas Drive North, Crystal, MN)	Proposed stations and light rail alignment – open house
June 4, 2015	Harrison Neighborhood Park and Community Center (503 Irving Avenue North, Minneapolis, MN)	Proposed stations and light rail alignment – open house
June 11, 2015	Robbinsdale Middle School (3730 Toledo Avenue North, Robbinsdale, MN)	Proposed stations and light rail alignment – open house
June 17, 2015	Community Activity Center (5600 85th Avenue North, Brooklyn Park, MN)	Proposed stations and light rail alignment – open house
July 27, 2015	Crystal Community Center (A&B Meeting Rooms, 4800 Douglas Drive North, Crystal, MN)	Proposed stations, parking, and pedestrian/bicycle access – open house
July 28, 2015	Robbinsdale Middle School (3730 Toledo Avenue North, Robbinsdale, MN)	Proposed stations, parking, and pedestrian/bicycle access – open house
July 29, 2015	Harrison Recreation Center (503 Irving Avenue North, Minneapolis, MN)	Proposed stations, parking, and pedestrian/bicycle access – open house
August 11, 2015	North Hennepin Community College (CBT Grand Hall, 7411 85th Avenue North, Brooklyn Park, MN)	Proposed stations, parking, and pedestrian/bicycle access – open house
August 12, 2015	Golden Valley City Hall (7800 Golden Valley Road, Golden Valley, MN)	Proposed stations, parking, and pedestrian/bicycle access – open house
September 14, 2015	Downtown Robbinsdale (Corner of Broadway and 41st Avenue)	39½ Avenue Railroad crossing – open house
October 18, 2015	Crystal Community Center (4800 Douglas Drive, North Crystal, MN)	Environmental analysis – open house
October 20, 2015	Hennepin Technical College Cafeteria (9000 Brooklyn Boulevard, Brooklyn Park, MN)	Environmental analysis – open house
October 21, 2015	Robbinsdale Middle School (3730 Toledo Avenue North, Robbinsdale, MN)	Environmental analysis – open house
October 28, 2015	Golden Valley City Hall (7800 Golden Valley Road, Golden Valley, MN)	Environmental analysis – open house
October 29, 2015	Harrison Community Center (503 Irving Avenue North, Minneapolis, MN)	Environmental analysis – open house



Table 9.1-3. Summary of Open Houses Held during Final EIS Preparation

Date	Meeting/Location	Meeting Purpose
January 4, 2016	Crystal City Hall (4141 Douglas Drive North, Crystal, MN)	Crystal municipal consent open house
January 19, 2016	Minneapolis Central Library (300 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis, MN)	Joint Council/HCRRA municipal consent hearing and open house
January 25, 2016	Brooklyn Park City Hall (5200 85th Avenue, Brooklyn Park, MN)	Brooklyn Park municipal consent hearing and open house
February 2, 2016	Golden Valley City Hall (7800 Golden Valley Road, Minneapolis, MN)	Golden Valley municipal consent open house and public hearing
February 16, 2016	Crystal City Hall (4141 Douglas Drive North, Minneapolis, MN)	Crystal municipal consent open house and public hearing
February 16, 2016	Robbinsdale City Hall (4100 Lakeview Avenue North, Robbinsdale, MN)	Robbinsdale municipal consent open house and public hearing

9.1.3.5 Communication Methods

A variety of electronic and “traditional” (hard-copy) communication methods were used for the proposed BLRT Extension project. Although electronic communications might appear inappropriate for an area with a substantial number of low-income residents, area organizers advised that electronic media remains an effective method of outreach to low-income communities. Computers at area libraries are well-used, and smartphones are increasingly being used to access websites and other social networking applications. Communication methods are summarized below. Specific outreach efforts to target environmental justice populations are summarized in **Chapter 7 – Environmental Justice** of this Final EIS.

Project Website

The website that was maintained during the AA Study (www.bottineautransitway.org) was updated as the proposed BLRT Extension project moved into the EIS Scoping and Draft EIS phases. Upon completion of the Draft EIS, the website for the proposed BLRT Extension project migrated to the Council website at www.BlueLineExt.org. The purpose of the website is to serve as a resource for upcoming meetings, provide project development information, facilitate contact with Council staff, and provide a forum for submitting comments. On average, the website for the proposed BLRT Extension project received about 4,000 unique views per month. Information on the website for the proposed BLRT Extension project includes:

- Current status information and timeline for the proposed BLRT Extension project
- Project facts and frequently asked questions for the proposed BLRT Extension project
- Route information for the proposed BLRT Extension project
- Information about the proposed stations
- Public meeting announcements and presentations



- Environmental process information
- Links to project partners for the proposed BLRT Extension project
- Committee information and meeting documents
- Contact information, including community outreach coordinators and location of the project office for the proposed BLRT Extension project
- Announcements and newsletters for the proposed BLRT Extension project
- Funding information for the proposed BLRT Extension project
- Documents, including public and committee meeting documents, environmental documents, and other reports for the proposed BLRT Extension project
- Route visualization video

City Websites

Cities within the proposed BLRT Extension project boundaries provided links to the website for the proposed BLRT Extension project and updates on project development and upcoming meetings.

Email List

An email list was created to provide updates and advertise upcoming open houses and other public events for the proposed BLRT Extension project. The email list was generated through open house sign-ins, comments, and requests received by Council staff and through the website for the proposed BLRT Extension project. Local media contacts, elected officials, and agency representatives were also added to the email list. The list was, and will continue to be, used throughout the proposed BLRT Extension project to notify stakeholders about new or updated information, upcoming meeting information, and opportunities for public comment. The emails provide links to the website for the proposed BLRT Extension project to facilitate quick and easy access to project materials. The list had grown to more than 2,500 subscribers as of January 2016.

Social Media

The Council used Twitter to provide project updates, including new website information, press releases, upcoming public meetings, project visualizations, project newsletters, and other project-related material for the proposed BLRT Extension project. The account can be found at www.twitter.com/BlueLineExt. The Council used its Twitter and Facebook accounts to share selected project information on the proposed BLRT Extension project.



Newsletters

Throughout project development, the Council published and printed a newsletter: *Tracking the Blue Line Extension*. This was also published during preparation of the Final EIS. The newsletter was produced in the following months:

- January 2015
- May 2015
- July 2015
- December 2015
- March 2016

Distribution of Posters and Flyers

Hard-copy posters and flyers were distributed to community gathering places along the proposed BLRT Extension project corridor to provide information and notify the public about upcoming events. These materials also informed readers about how to obtain further information on the proposed BLRT Extension project via either the project website or by contacting Council staff. Materials were provided at libraries, community centers, and churches along the proposed BLRT Extension project corridor. Public libraries included:

- Maple Grove Library, 8001 Main Street, Maple Grove, MN
- Osseo Library, 415 Central Avenue, Osseo, MN
- Brooklyn Park Library, 8600 Zane Avenue North, Brooklyn Park, MN
- Brookdale Library, 6125 Shingle Creek Parkway, Brooklyn Center, MN
- Rockford Road Library, 6401 42nd Avenue North, Crystal, MN
- North Regional Library, 1315 Lowry Avenue North, Minneapolis, MN
- Sumner Library, 611 Van White Memorial Boulevard, Minneapolis, MN
- Minneapolis Central Library, 300 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis, MN



News Releases

Council communication staff issued news releases regarding the time, location, and purpose of open houses and other events for the proposed BLRT Extension project. Releases were sent to about 200 media contacts, including all the major print, broadcast, radio, and web outlets in the Twin Cities, including specific media in the proposed BLRT Extension project area. Specific local outlets included neighborhood newspapers, local radio station KMOJ, neighborhood association websites, neighborhood web mail lists, and Cable Channel 12. A summary of news releases issued during the preparation of the Final EIS is shown in **Table 9.1-4**. News releases can be found on the website for the proposed BLRT Extension project at www.BlueLineExt.org.

Table 9.1-4. News Releases Issued during Final EIS Preparation

Date	News Release Purpose
August 22, 2014	Notice that the Council was receiving federal approval to begin design for the proposed BLRT Extension project
March 10, 2015	Notice of potential station locations and reconstruction of West Broadway Avenue
October 29, 2015	Update on proposed BLRT Extension project scope and cost estimate
December 9, 2015	Notice that the proposed BLRT Extension project was entering the municipal consent process

Media

Council communication staff coordinated with nearly 100 local reporters who represent print, electronic, and television network media that are following the proposed BLRT Extension project. News sources include city and neighborhood newspapers and minority and ethnic media sources. Coordination with media includes media tours and press releases regarding upcoming events, such as open houses and significant milestones, for the proposed BLRT Extension project.



9.2 Advisory Committees

This section summarizes the advisory committee structure used through development of the Final EIS. This section includes the structure used for developing the Draft EIS, during which time the advisory committee process was led by HCRRA, and for developing the Final EIS, during which time the advisory committee process was led by the Council.

9.2.1 Advisory Committees through the Draft EIS

Key stakeholder outreach activities conducted during EIS Scoping and the development of the Draft EIS are summarized below.

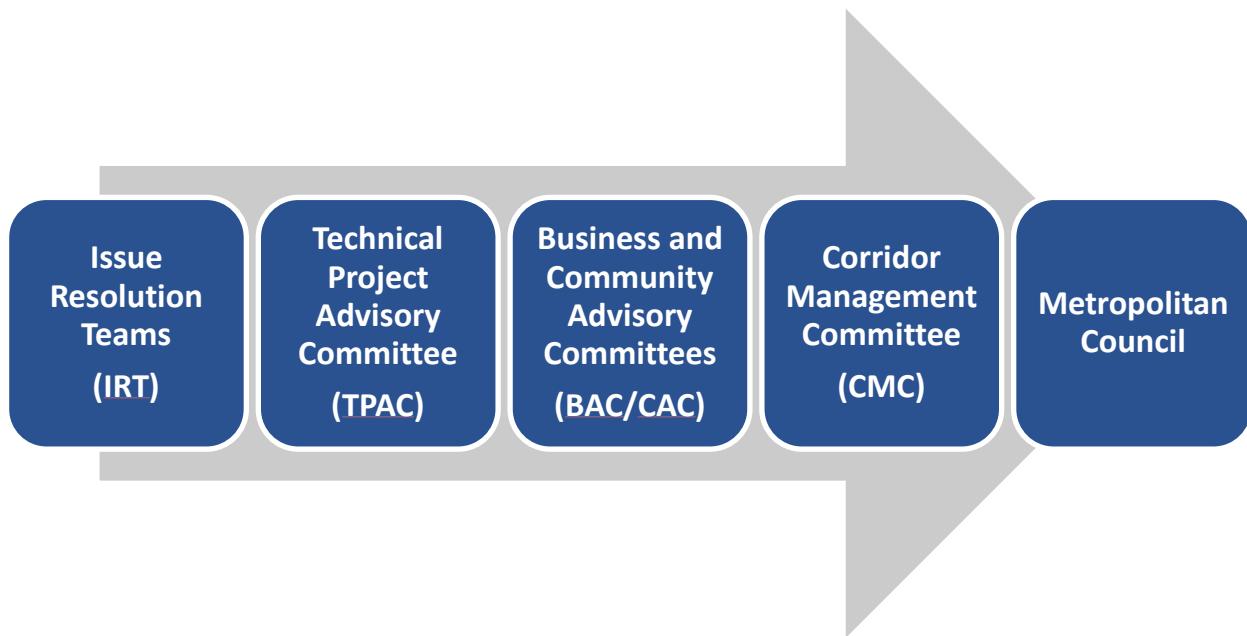
- **Advise, Review, and Communicate Committee (ARCC).** The ARCC included technical staff from agencies convened to advise project development. The ARCC provided advice regarding local governmental perspectives, issues of concern, technical methodologies, and study process details. The ARCC comprised staff from Hennepin County; the cities of Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Golden Valley, New Hope, Maple Grove, Minneapolis, Osseo, and Robbinsdale; the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB); Metro Transit; Maple Grove Transit; the Council; the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT); and consultants. The ARCC met on an approximately monthly basis to advise development of the alternatives and aid in the alternatives evaluation.
- **Policy Advisory Committee (PAC).** The PAC included elected officials, key policy leaders for Participating Agencies, business leaders, and institutional leaders. Members convened to review and contemplate policy decisions during development of the proposed BLRT Extension project. The PAC met on an approximately quarterly basis to advise on key decisions including refinement of the D2 alignment, EIS Scoping, and LPA recommendations.
- **Community Advisory Committee (CAC).** The CAC, established during the AA Study, included representatives from the cities as well as businesses and institutions in the study area for the proposed BLRT Extension project. Members provided a conduit for integrating the values and perspectives of citizens, communities, businesses, and institutions into the study process. The CAC met on several occasions to identify issues and to advise on refinement of the alternatives.



9.2.2 Advisory Committees from the Draft EIS through the Final EIS

After publication of the Draft EIS, the Council led the proposed BLRT Extension project's advisory committee process. During this phase of project development, the focus was on resolving technical, environmental, economic, and social issues. The process for decision-making is shown in **Figure 9.2-1**, and each advisory committee is summarized below.

Figure 9.2-1. Advisory Committee Decision-Making Process



9.2.2.1 Issue Resolution Teams (IRTs)

The IRTs were formed to carry out the issue-resolution process for each of the 16 issues identified (for detailed information about the IRT process, see **Section 2.5.2.1**). IRTs were composed of representatives of the Council engineering and environmental staff from the proposed BLRT Extension project team and other Metro Transit departments, and staff from Hennepin County, MnDOT, municipalities along the proposed BLRT Extension project alignment, and administrators of park properties in the corridor. Each of the technical and system-wide issues was examined, and possible design adjustments to the Draft EIS LPA were analyzed. Results and recommendations from each of the IRTs were documented in a technical issue summary and incorporated into the elements for the proposed BLRT Extension project as presented in the Final EIS.



9.2.2.2 Technical Project Advisory Committee (TPAC)

The TPAC was established to provide technical input on BLRT Extension project-related design, engineering, construction, and operation issues. The TPAC includes senior-level staff as well as engineering and planning staff from BPO, Metro Transit Rail Operations, city and county staff, and MnDOT. The TPAC also advises on the communication of technical issues with other committees; supports integration of design work with community land-use and development goals and objectives; and identifies issues to avoid, minimize, and mitigate the impacts of the proposed BLRT Extension project. The TPAC is chaired by the Project Director for the proposed BLRT Extension project.

9.2.2.3 Corridor Management Committee (CMC)

The CMC comprises elected and appointed members to advise project development. The CMC advises the Council on all issues relating to the design and construction of the proposed BLRT Extension project. The CMC comprises representatives from Hennepin County; the cities of Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Golden Valley, Minneapolis, and Robbinsdale; MPRB; Metro Transit; the Council; MnDOT; and the Blue Line Coalition. The CMC has met on an approximately monthly basis to advise the Council on development of the proposed BLRT Extension project. CMC meeting summaries and membership can be found on the website for the proposed BLRT Extension project, www.BlueLineExt.org.

9.2.2.4 Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

The CAC serves as a voice for the community and advises the CMC during the planning and implementation phases of the proposed BLRT Extension project. The CAC comprises representatives from the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee; Masjid An-Nur; Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing; the Asian Economic Development Association; the cities of Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Golden Valley, Minneapolis, and Robbinsdale; and MPRB. The CAC has met on an approximately monthly basis to advise the Council on development of the proposed BLRT Extension project. CAC meeting summaries and membership can be found on the website for the proposed BLRT Extension project, www.BlueLineExt.org. The CAC is chaired by a resident of Brooklyn Park, and the co-chair is a resident of Robbinsdale.

9.2.2.5 Business Advisory Committee (BAC)

The BAC serves as a voice for the business community and advises the CMC during the planning and implementation phases of the proposed BLRT Extension project. The BAC comprises representatives from the TwinWest Chamber of Commerce; the North Hennepin Chamber of Commerce; the cities of Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Golden Valley, Minneapolis, and Robbinsdale; the Robbinsdale Chamber of Commerce; and the Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce. BAC meeting summaries and membership can be found on the website for the proposed BLRT Extension project, www.BlueLineExt.org. The BAC is chaired by a business owner from Crystal.



9.3 Agency Coordination

This section describes the proposed BLRT Extension project's Cooperating and Participating Agencies and the Council's agency coordination efforts that supported the development and evaluation of design adjustments to the proposed BLRT Extension project.

9.3.1 Cooperating and Participating Agencies

Applicable federal, state, regional, and local agencies were invited to be involved in the EIS process by becoming a Cooperating or Participating Agency via an invitation letter issued in March 2012. FTA was responsible for inviting Native American tribes (discussed more in [Section 4.4](#)) and federal agencies, while HCRRA invited state, regional, and local agencies.

Based on responses to the initial letters and subsequent follow-up, the agencies listed in [Table 9.3-1](#) are considered Cooperating or Participating Agencies in the EIS process.

Participating Agencies are agencies with an interest in the proposed BLRT Extension project. Cooperating Agencies have a more specific role and participate in the permitting and/or jurisdictional determination process for impacts related to the proposed BLRT Extension project. They work cooperatively with the lead agencies to resolve issues that could result in denial of regulatory approvals required for the proposed BLRT Extension project. Cooperating Agencies were also granted a preliminary review of the Draft EIS.

Cooperating and Participating Agencies began active participation early in the EIS process. Responsibilities of both types of agencies included the following:

- Identifying the proposed BLRT Extension project's potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts and potential mitigation measures
- Providing input on the proposed BLRT Extension project's purpose and need, how impacts to resources will be evaluated, how alternatives will be evaluated, and the level of detail to be used in the analysis of alternatives
- Providing written comments on other deliverables for the proposed BLRT Extension project



Table 9.3-1. Cooperating and Participating Agencies in the Environmental Process

Agency	Type of Participation
Federal Agencies	
US Army Corps of Engineers	Cooperating
US Department of Transportation, Federal Aviation Administration	Cooperating
US Department of the Interior, National Park Service	Cooperating
US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration	Participating ¹
US Department of Housing and Urban Development	Participating
US Department of the Interior, Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance	Participating
US Environmental Protection Agency	Participating
US Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency	Participating
State Agencies	
Minnesota Department of Transportation	Participating ¹
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	Participating
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	Participating
Minnesota Department of Health	Participating
Minnesota Department of Agriculture	Participating
Regional and Local Agencies	
Three Rivers Park District	Participating
Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board	Participating
Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission	Participating
Shingle Creek and West Mississippi Watershed Management Commission	Participating
City of Minneapolis	Participating
City of Golden Valley	Participating
City of Robbinsdale	Participating
City of Crystal	Participating
City of New Hope	Participating
City of Brooklyn Park	Participating
City of Osseo	Participating
City of Maple Grove	Participating
Maple Grove Transit	Participating

¹ The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and MnDOT were Cooperating Agencies during the Draft EIS phase of the proposed BLRT Extension project, but requested to be reclassified as Participating Agencies for the Final EIS phase. While the proposed BLRT Extension project does not create jurisdictional involvement for FHWA, FHWA is interested in staying involved with the project from a technical expertise standpoint since the proposed BLRT Extension project would cross several major roads (TH 55, TH 100, Interstate Highway 94, and TH 610). FHWA is interested in the proposed designs implemented at these locations in terms of any potential for impacts associated with roadway operations and safety.



9.3.2 Agency Coordination since Publication of the Draft EIS

This section provides an overview of the Council's agency coordination efforts since publication of the Draft EIS that supported efforts to develop and evaluate design adjustments to the proposed BLRT Extension project, and that supported preparation of this Final EIS. These efforts were also supported by and implemented in coordination with the public involvement activities and advisory committees (CMC, CAC, and BAC). Substantive comments received on the Draft EIS are documented and responded to in this Final EIS below in [Section 9.4](#).

Key elements of the proposed BLRT Extension project's agency coordination efforts since publication of the Draft EIS included the following:

- **Technical Issue Resolution.** Following publication of the Draft EIS, the Council implemented a process to help identify and evaluate design adjustments to the LPA. The design adjustment process was organized around technical issues. Each issue was addressed in detail by the Council, working closely with cities, MPRB, the Three Rivers Park District, and representatives of other affected agencies.
- **Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act Coordination.** Methods for avoidance, minimization, or mitigation of effects on historic properties (any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places) were developed by FTA in consultation with the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office and other Section 106 consulting parties. On March 1, 2016, pursuant to the Section 106 regulations [36 CFR Part 800.6(a)(1)], FTA notified the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) of the final determination of an adverse effect and was provided an opportunity to enter into the consultation process. ACHP declined the invitation in correspondence dated March 15, 2016. FTA delegated authority to the MnDOT Cultural Resources Unit to aid FTA in many aspects of the Section 106 process. For more information about the Section 106 process, see [Section 4.4](#).
- **Clean Water Act Section 404 Coordination.** Coordination throughout the Final EIS on the Clean Water Act included cities, watershed management organizations, Hennepin County, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, and the US Army Corps of Engineers. Coordination efforts focused on Wetlands Technical Evaluation Panel meetings at which agency representatives reviewed and approved delineated wetland boundaries, discussed jurisdictional issues, reviewed impacts, and evaluated avoidance, minimization, and mitigation strategies.
- **Floodplains.** Coordination throughout the Final EIS on floodplain impacts included cities, watershed management organizations, MPRB, and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR).



- **Section 7 Consultation/State-listed Species.** Coordination throughout the Final EIS on endangered species included the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and DNR. The Council and FTA discussed with USFWS the approach to addressing the federally listed threatened northern long-eared bat and the appropriate avoidance and minimization measures. Discussions with DNR focused on state-listed species, especially Blanding’s turtle, and the implementation of appropriate avoidance and minimization measures.
- **Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) and State Grant-Funded Parks.** Parkland coordination throughout the Final EIS included cities, MPRB, the Three Rivers Park District, DNR, FTA, the US Department of the Interior (USDO I), and the National Park Service. Evaluation of project design elements, potential effects on park property, avoidance alternatives, and measures to minimize harm were discussed in periodic Parks Issue Resolution Team meetings. Compliance with Section 4(f), Section 6(f), and state grant-funded park requirements were discussed with DNR, FTA, USDO I, and the National Park Service.
- **Runway Protection Zone.** Runway Protection Zone coordination throughout the Final EIS included the Metropolitan Airports Commission and the Federal Aviation Administration. For additional information, see [Section 3.6](#).
- **Tribal Coordination.** In January 2012, FTA sent coordination letters to Native American tribes that might have an interest in the proposed BLRT Extension project. The letters requested that tribes identify any historic, cultural, archaeological, or other concerns regarding the proposed BLRT Extension project and invited them to public EIS Scoping meetings scheduled later that month. The letters also invited tribes to let FTA know if they would prefer to schedule a separate meeting to discuss any specific tribal issues and concerns. No requests for separate meetings were made. For additional information, see [Section 4.4.4.2](#).



9.4 Summary of Public and Agency Comments on the Draft EIS

The public comment period for the Draft EIS began upon the Notice of Availability published in the Federal Register on April 11, 2014 and concluded on May 29, 2014. Complete public comments and their responses are in **Appendix G** of this Final EIS. A summary of this information is provided below.

9.4.1 Draft EIS Comments Received and Responses

A total of approximately 1,250 comments were submitted in the form of letters, emails, public testimony at the public hearings, and comment cards received at the public open houses and public hearings (for more information about public involvement, see **Section 9.1**). Comments were received from individuals, businesses, public interest groups, and public agencies, including local communities and regulatory agencies.

The Council summarized the comments and responses as follows:

- Related to the purpose of and need for the proposed BLRT Extension project
 - Several commenters questioned the need for the proposed BLRT Extension project. The Council responded to these types of comments by noting that the purpose and need had been studied extensively, and that the proposed BLRT Extension project best meets the transportation goals and objectives (for example: more travel choices, faster travel times, connections to activity centers, supporting economic development) while minimizing impacts.
- Related to the fiscal effects and schedule
 - Several commenters questioned the cost of the proposed BLRT Extension project, especially when compared to other transportation options such as highways. The Council responded to these types of comments by informing the commenter of the location of cost information in the Draft EIS, demonstrating that the proposed BLRT Extension project meets federal cost criteria for these types of projects, and that one of the key purposes is to provide a transportation option that is viable for transit-dependent populations.
- Related to NEPA process and public involvement
 - Several commenters stated that not enough time was available to review the Draft EIS. The Council responded to these types of comments by confirming that the Draft EIS notification of availability and comment period followed the legal requirements.
 - Several commenters stated that they felt public opinion was being ignored. The Council responded to these types of comments by directing commenters to **Chapter 9** of the Draft and Final EIS documents and to the website for the proposed BLRT Extension project, where a summary of the public outreach events is provided. The Council also noted the community representation on the committees (CAC, BAC, and CMC) for the proposed BLRT Extension project, and how public comments were brought forth by community representatives for consideration in the project development process.



- Related to social and economic effects, including economic and business impacts, right-of-way, and safety and security
 - Several comments were received regarding property values; many were concerned that the proposed BLRT Extension project would reduce the value of their homes. The Council responded to these types of comments by noting that a variety of market conditions affect property values, and that the impacts of a specific LRT project on property values are difficult to conclusively assess. However, a study of property values along the existing Blue Line LRT (formerly known as the Hiawatha LRT) corridor indicated that a general increase in property values occurred beyond that attributable to broader market forces.
 - Several comments were received regarding the potential for the proposed BLRT Extension project to split connections within and between communities. The Council responded to these types of comments by directing people to review [Section 4.2](#), which discusses community cohesion. The Council also noted that the pedestrian crossing improvements and trail enhancements that are part of the proposed BLRT Extension project would result in better connections across the corridor and between neighboring communities.
 - Several comments were received indicating concern about the loss of homes and/or businesses. The Council responded to these types of comments by indicating that preliminary design efforts have resulted in a significant reduction in acquisitions. The Final EIS documents 14 total acquisitions; 1 undeveloped residential property and 13 commercial/ industrial properties.
 - Several comments were received regarding concerns about crime, safety, and security. The Council responded to these types of comments by indicating that [Section 4.7](#) addresses safety and security. Safety for rail users, area residents, local pedestrians and bicyclists, operators, and vehicle occupants is an important consideration for the proposed BLRT Extension project. The framework for ensuring the safety of these groups will be established through conformance with the Council's Safety and Security Management Plan and the Met Transit Security and Emergency Preparedness plan. Proposed BLRT Extension project operations in conformance with these plans will necessarily be closely coordinated with local area law enforcement, medical, fire, transportation, and other organizations with related emergency responsibilities within the proposed corridor.
 - Several comments were received regarding impacts to and benefits for environmental justice communities (minority and low-income populations); many of these focused on a perceived lack of transit service to North Minneapolis. The Council responded to these types of comments by noting how the Van White Boulevard, Penn Avenue, and Plymouth Avenue stations would serve North Minneapolis communities without the extensive residential and business acquisitions, parking, and traffic impacts of the D2 (Penn Avenue) alignment. The Council also noted that a bus rapid transit line is being developed that would provide additional service to North Minneapolis residents without the extensive social, economic, and environmental impacts of the D2 alignment.



- Related to environmental effects, including water resources, wetlands, species and habitat, air quality, and Section 4(f) properties
 - Several comments were received regarding concerns about impacts to wetland and water resources. The Council responded to these types of comments by indicating that water resource impacts associated with the proposed BLRT Extension project were considered in relation to the extensive residential and business impacts along the D2 (Penn Avenue) alignment. While the proposed BLRT Extension project has greater water resource impacts than the D2 alignment, the proposed BLRT Extension project had fewer overall social, economic, and environmental impacts. In addition, preliminary design efforts on the proposed BLRT Extension project have reduced the amount of water resource impacts from what was reported in the Draft EIS.
 - Several comments were received regarding impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitat. The Council responded to these types of comments by indicating that the proposed BLRT Extension project includes mitigation commitments to address impacts to terrestrial and aquatic habitat. Terrestrial habitat mitigation will be accomplished through revegetation of areas not permanently incorporated into the proposed BLRT Extension project. Aquatic habitat will be mitigated through the creation of wetland mitigation sites and purchase of wetland credits. Wetland mitigation is anticipated to be completed at a 2 (mitigation acreage) to 1 (impact acreage) ratio, so no net loss of aquatic habitat would result.
 - Several comments expressed concerns about air quality during proposed BLRT Extension project construction and operation. The Council responded to these types of comments by noting the construction-phase air quality mitigation measures (avoiding idling of construction equipment, use of water trucks to reduce particulate matter, and similar methods). No operating-phase air quality impacts would occur.
 - Several comments expressed concerns about impacts to park property adjacent to the proposed BLRT Extension project, especially Theodore Wirth Regional Park and Sochacki Park. The Council responded to these comments by noting how Council staff coordinated closely with staff from MPRB, the Three Rivers Park District, and the cities along the corridor to develop designs that minimized impacts to park property, and to identify opportunities to mitigate impacts to park features or enhance park features. Revegetation, aesthetic design details, and new or improved trail connections were highlighted as examples of mitigation and/or enhancements.
- Related to noise and vibration
 - Several commenters were concerned about the impacts of noise and vibration on homes and other resources along the proposed BLRT Extension project corridor. The Council responded to these types of comments by providing the results of noise and vibration analyses, and the potential mitigation options that would be implemented in specific areas of impact.



- On various alternatives, engineering, and design elements including alignments, the Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF), and station(s)
 - Several comments were received indicating a preference for the D2 (Penn Avenue) alignment over the proposed BLRT Extension project. The Council responded to these comments by highlighting the key factors that were used to make the decision on the proposed BLRT Extension project alignment. These factors were primarily the extent of impacts to homes, businesses, parking, and traffic along Penn Avenue, and the fact that these impacts would be borne primarily by environmental justice populations.
 - Several comments were received regarding the location of the OMF. The Council responded to these types of comments by reviewing the process by which the OMF alternatives were originally selected, and by highlighting the process by which the current OMF location (101st Avenue) was refined to avoid park and wetland impacts.
 - Several comments were received regarding the need for stations at Plymouth Avenue and/or Golden Valley Road. The Council responded to these types of comments by summarizing the process by which both station locations were evaluated in coordination with stakeholders, especially the cities of Golden Valley and Minneapolis, and MPRB. The Council noted that the result of this process was the inclusion of both stations in the proposed BLRT Extension project scope by the Corridor Management Committee.
- On transportation system effects
 - Several comments were received regarding the impacts to pedestrian and bicycle traffic, especially along Olson Memorial Highway. The Council responded to these types of comments by highlighting the focused effort of the Council and stakeholders on developing safe pedestrian and bicycle facilities at and near stations and crossings. Specific to Olson Memorial Highway, the Council indicated that **Chapter 2** of the Final EIS summarizes the process that the Council conducted with the city of Minneapolis on the design of Olson Memorial Highway. While a six-lane roadway will be maintained, the lane widths will be reduced to 11 feet to accommodate pedestrian crossing length. The design speed and posted speed limit will be reduced to 35 miles per hour. Existing sidewalks will be replaced with 6-foot-wide sidewalks on the north and south sides of the highway. Pedestrian refuges will be added in the median of the highway. ADA-compliant pedestrian crossings of Olson Memorial Highway will be facilitated by proposed signalized intersections at Bryant Avenue North, Van White Boulevard, Humboldt Avenue, James Avenue, Morgan Avenue, and midblock crossings between Newton Avenue and Oliver Avenue, Penn Avenue, Russell Avenue, and Thomas Avenue. The proposed BLRT Extension project will provide space on the north side of Olson Memorial Highway for a 10-foot two-way cycle track (to be constructed by others) between Thomas Avenue and Van White Memorial Boulevard. The proposed BLRT Extension project will construct a multi-use trail on the north side of the reconstructed westbound Olson Memorial Highway bridge. These proposed BLRT Extension project elements will enhance the safety of pedestrian and bicycle traffic in the Olson Memorial Highway corridor.



- Several comments were received regarding concerns about impacts to vehicular traffic at intersections along and adjacent to the proposed BLRT Extension project corridor. The Council responded to these types of comments by referring to the traffic analysis presented in **Section 3.3**, and noting that impacts to traffic operations would be mitigated through intersection improvements, and the results were that degradation of traffic operations was not anticipated.

All substantive comments received during the Draft EIS comment period and responses to the comments are provided in **Appendix G** of this Final EIS.

9.5 Permits and Approvals

Permits, approvals, or reviews required for the proposed BLRT Extension project are summarized in **Table 9.5-1**. The Council continues to work with the applicable agencies on the permits, approvals, and reviews required for the proposed BLRT Extension project.

Table 9.5-1. Permits and Approvals Required

Permit or Decision	Jurisdiction(s)
Federal Approvals	
Record of Decision	Federal Transit Administration
Section 4(f) Determination	Federal Transit Administration
Section 6(f) Conversion Approval	National Park Service
Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement	Federal Transit Administration, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
Section 404 Wetland Permit	US Army Corps of Engineers
Section 7 Concurrence	US Fish and Wildlife Service
Letter of No Objection for Use within Runway Protection Zone	Federal Aviation Administration
Letter of Map Revision Approval	Federal Emergency Management Agency
State Approvals	
Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement	State Historic Preservation Office
Right-of-Way Permit	Minnesota Department of Transportation
Application for Drainage Permit	Minnesota Department of Transportation
Application for Utility Accommodation on Trunk Highway Right-of-Way	Minnesota Department of Transportation
Application for Miscellaneous Work on Trunk Highway Right-of-Way	Minnesota Department of Transportation
National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Section 401 Water Quality Certification	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Public Waters Wetland Permit	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Water Appropriation Permit	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Grant-funded Park Conversion Approval	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources



Table 9.5-1. Permits and Approvals Required

Permit or Decision	Jurisdiction(s)
Response Action Plan	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Noxious Weed Management Plan	Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Local Approvals	
EIS Adequacy Determination	Metropolitan Council
Road Crossing/Right-of-Way Permits	Hennepin County and cities of Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Golden Valley, Maple Grove, Minneapolis, and Robbinsdale
Utility permits	Cities of Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Golden Valley, Maple Grove, Minneapolis, and Robbinsdale
Building permits	Cities of Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Golden Valley, Maple Grove, Minneapolis, and Robbinsdale
Sediment- and erosion-control permits	Cities of Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Golden Valley, Maple Grove, Minneapolis, and Robbinsdale; Mississippi Watershed Management Organization; Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission; and Shingle Creek and West Mississippi Watershed Management Organization
Wetland Conservation Act Approval	Cities of Crystal, Golden Valley, and Minneapolis; Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission; Shingle Creek Watershed Management Commission; and West Mississippi Watershed Management Commission



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