



Tracking the Blue Line Extension

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www.BlueLineExt.org

Blue Line Extension successfully gains municipal consent, looks ahead

“Successfully gaining municipal consent speaks to the strength of this project,” said Adam Duinck, Met Council Chair. “We have had strong partners in the cities, the county, and the businesses all along the line. Whether it was the Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute in Golden Valley, local businesses in each of the cities, or Fortune 500 companies like Target, their support has been key to building out a system that connects people with jobs. A robust, regional transit system stimulates job growth and investment in new businesses.”

Robbinsdale was the fifth and final city, in addition to Hennepin County, to take action, voting unanimously on March 2 in favor of the 13-mile line.

The Blue Line Extension Project – often called the Bottineau LRT – will expand the existing Blue Line from Target Field in downtown Minneapolis into the northwest suburbs through Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal and Brooklyn Park.

Wicked Wort brewpub opens in former bank a block from planned Robbinsdale Station

After a major renovation of a former bank building, Wicked Wort Brewing Co. opened in Robbinsdale on Jan. 22. Owner Steve Carlyle sees opportunities for his brewpub in the downtown setting.

“Robbinsdale’s a small town. It’s got a small-town feel,” Carlyle said.

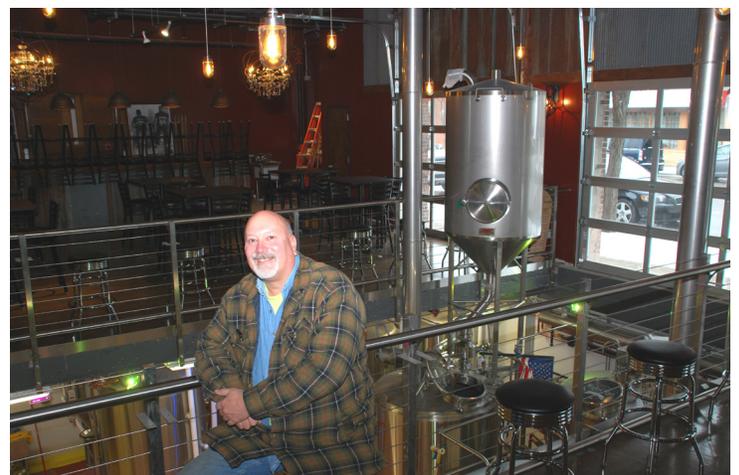
He acquired the former TCF Bank building for Wicked Wort knowing that the METRO Blue Line Extension LRT is set to have a station a block away. The station could give the downtown area a higher profile and more foot traffic, which fits in with Carlyle’s plans.

“A robust, regional transit system stimulates job growth and investment in new businesses.”

Adam Duinck, Metropolitan Council Chair

“We value being a major employer and partner to the Brooklyn Park community,” said John Mulligan, executive vice president and chief operating officer, Target. “We have a vested interest in helping to ensure it is growing and evolving to meet the needs of our team members and guests. The Bottineau LRT line will bring an affordable and convenient transportation option to the Northwest suburbs as well as faster public transit connections to destinations like downtown Minneapolis and MSP airport, benefits supported by the communities along the route.”

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Wicked Wort owner John Carlyle in the brewpub.

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"The Blue Line Extension LRT will provide a critical access point for our students, faculty and staff," said Dr. Barbara McDonald, President of North Hennepin Community College. "We are delighted to hear that the project has received municipal consent and look forward to the services it will provide our community."

At the McDonald's in Brooklyn Park on West Broadway, Yasmin Hyder is looking forward to the benefits of having a Blue Line light rail station just steps away.

"The Bottineau LRT line will bring an affordable and convenient transportation option to the Northwest suburbs as well as faster public transit connections to destinations like downtown Minneapolis and MSP airport"

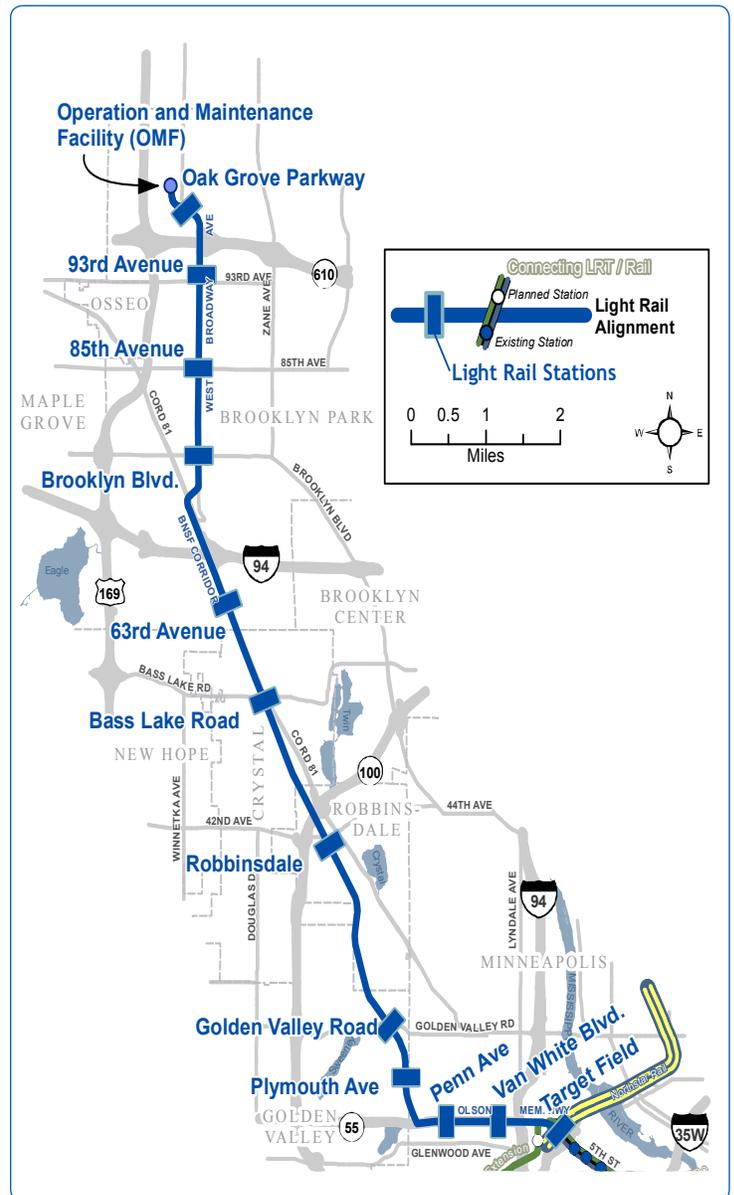
John Mulligan, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Target



Target Corporation's Northern Campus in Brooklyn Park is near the Blue Line Extension's proposed Oak Grove Parkway Station.

The Hyder family owns 11 McDonald's total, including four in Brooklyn Park. Another Hyder-owned McDonald's in Crystal is located a quarter-mile from the planned Bass Lake Road station.

With about 40-50 employees in each store, the improved transit option "would mean now we can expand our hiring



and make it easier for employees to travel where they live and go to school," Hyder said. "In other locations, light rail is such a good source of transportation, easy and reliable."

Municipal consent is required by Minnesota state law, including a system's physical design components such as tracks, bridges, stations, roads and support structures. The Met Council approved the project's scope and \$1.496 billion cost estimate in December.

In August 2016, staff will finalize the 30 percent design plans and specifications and apply with the Federal Transit Administration to enter the Engineering phase of the project.

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Heavy construction is set to occur in 2018–2020, with passenger service beginning in 2021.

When completed, the line will offer a one-seat ride from the Target Northern Campus in Brooklyn Park to the Mall of America in Bloomington, with stops throughout Minneapolis and at the MSP International Airport. Passengers will also be able to transfer to the existing Green Line, to access the University of Minnesota, destinations along University Avenue or Downtown St. Paul as well as to the job-dense Southwest Corridor on the planned Green Line Extension.



North Hennepin Community College is located near the Blue Line Extension's proposed 85th Avenue Station.

What's next for the Blue Line Extension?

With municipal consent action now complete, the Blue Line Extension Project staff will continue to advance their work.

Engineering will progress from the current 15 percent level of design to 30 percent by late summer, when they will seek technical feedback from the cities' and county's public works departments. At that time, the project's scope and \$1.496 billion cost estimate will be updated.

The Final Environmental Impact Statement is expected to be published in summer 2016.

Also in 2016, final decisions on which properties will need to be acquired will be determined as engineering plans become more detailed. For details shared previously on property acquisitions, see page 3 of the May 2015 project newsletter: metro council.org/ble/newsletter/2015/may/pdf.

"The Blue Line Extension LRT will provide a critical access point for our students, faculty and staff"

*Dr. Barbara McDonald, President
North Hennepin Community College*

Herzing University in Crystal would be short walk from future Bass Lake Road Station

Herzing University in Crystal is looking forward to the arrival of the Blue Line Extension, which would have a station just a short walk away at Bass Lake Road and Bottineau Boulevard.

The Blue Line Extension would "connect us to a segment of the population that doesn't have access" to

Herzing currently, said John Slama, the president at the Herzing campus in Crystal. To the north, the Blue Line Extension would travel through Crystal to Brooklyn Park, and to the south, it would move through Robbinsdale and Golden Valley on its way to downtown Minneapolis.

The school where 300 students study nursing, dental and occupational therapy assistant work would benefit from sidewalk improvements between the school's location and the new station at Bass Lake Road, Slama said.

Currently, transit options aren't ideal for students, Slama said. The school offers a variety of class schedules for its students, who have an average age

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Small Brooklyn Center engineering firm helps build Green, Blue Line Extensions

Progressive Consulting Engineers Inc. has intentionally remained a small company, but its 10-person staff has utilized their expertise on some of the biggest public works projects in Minnesota history.

The Brooklyn Center-based engineering firm, incorporated in 1979, is doing utility-related work on both the South-west LRT (METRO Green Line Extension) and the METRO Blue Line Extension projects. That follows work the firm did on the Blue and Green Lines starting more than 10 years ago.

While PCE had already built up a solid client base before starting to work on Metropolitan Council LRT projects, Naeem and Nuzhat Qureshi -- the firm's husband-and-wife owners -- say the state's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program helped open doors.

"DBE provides you an opportunity to prove yourself," Naeem Qureshi said.

Both of the Qureshis grew up in Pakistan and were married there before coming to the United States to further their educations in the mid-1970s.

The move to Minnesota followed Naeem's brother, who had come to the state in the 1950s. Naeem, who had been educated as an engineer, landed a job with Minneapolis' Public Works Department soon after his arrival. He later earned a master's degree in civil engineering from the University of Minnesota.

Naeem started PCE in his spare time while still working for the city of Minneapolis and made the firm his full-time job in the mid-1980s. PCE has

been in its current office in Brooklyn Center for more than 20 years, but it does business across Minnesota. Client cities stretch from Cloquet to Oakdale, and Naeem regularly travels the state to make contacts and market PCE.

Nuzhat has an MBA degree from the University of St. Thomas and has long been the vice president and controller of PCE, handling the company's finances.

A big break for PCE came in the late 1990s, when work began on the Blue Line LRT project along Hiawatha Avenue in Minneapolis. The lead engineering contractor wanted a local firm that was familiar with Minneapolis' public works staff for the utility work. That job was also PCE's first experience with the state's DBE program.

When the Qureshis first heard of the DBE program, "both Naeem and I did not like that idea at all," said Nuzhat Qureshi. "We are professionals."

But they were told the program could give their firm leads on more projects, and they signed on.

Requirements for participating in the DBE program include limits on personal net worth (less than \$1.32 million). Also, participating companies need to meet Small Business Administration size standards as measured by annual gross receipts. Those standards vary by industry. Also, ownership must be at least 51 percent minority or female.



Naeem and Nuzhat Qureshi.

The DBE goal is 19 percent for the Green Line Extension LRT Project's advanced design contract and for the Blue Line Extension engineering contract.

The Hiawatha Avenue project in the late 1990s went well for PCE. As time went on and more transit-related projects, such as the METRO Blue Line LRT project, progressed, the Qureshis realized the DBE program was an opportunity, Nuzhat said. "We wouldn't have gotten the light rail work without DBE," Naeem said.

The firm's engineering expertise is centered on water supply and utility design, handling everything from water tower and water treatment plant designs, to site plans and required approvals from watershed districts. On the METRO Green Line and Blue Line Extension projects, PCE's work is focused on utility design and relocation.

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PCE anticipates utility issues similar to what it saw when it worked on the Green Line in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Naeem said. Cities and utility companies have lines running under stretches of LRT right-of-way, and those lines need to be relocated so utility crews can maintain them in the future without interfering with LRT service. Existing sewer lines, water lines or electrical lines sometimes are located near each other.

“Competing interests have to be accommodated,” he said. The various groups involved need to be satisfied with the process on relocations and the final outcome.

On the METRO Green Line Extension project, the overall design work is ongoing, and PCE’s work has focused on utility coordination with the project stakeholders and private utilities, sanitary sewer and water main relocation and design, said Bojan Mistic, who

leads the engineering work on the civil, utility and LRT track parts of the project.

That work also includes meeting regularly with private utility companies, such as gas and electrical firms, to discuss design and future construction work. The actual utility relocation work on the METRO Green Line Extension won’t start until the project’s environmental review is complete, which is expected later this year.

“They do great work,” Mistic said of PCE. The firm’s work is well known in the Twin Cities area from its previous experience on large civil and transportation projects, he said. PCE’s work will also continue during construction, as crews identify other underground issues.

The Qureshis are members of the Boomer generation, and have started thinking about the future of PCE after

they retire. PCE’s work on the light rail projects will continue for about five more years, and then the Qureshis say they’ll start looking for a way to transition the firm’s leadership, possibly to a current employee.

“We want the company to be sustainable. It has to live,” Nuzhat Qureshi said. “We want to see the values and strategies continue.”

Small minority-owned or women-owned companies that want information about the DBE program and working on the LRT projects should contact senior equal opportunity consultant Andrew Larson of the Metropolitan Council’s Office of Equal Opportunity at Andrew.Larson@metc.state.mn.us or 612-373-3896.

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Wicked Wort “is an event center built around a brewery,” he said.

When Carlyle first drove by the former TCF Bank, looking for a site for a brew pub, he didn’t think much of the building. When he got inside, though, he found a building that was built like a fortress, with a concrete floor above a sizable basement level. Then he heard a suggestion that he could cut a hole in the floor to open up the space.

“Any dude’s going to want to cut a hole in the floor,” he said.

The floor cut exposes the downstairs brewery and event space to the first-floor tap room. Carlyle is also working on plans for a rooftop patio.

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close to 30 and are disproportionately first-generation college students.

But the Blue Line Extension would provide frequent, reliable service with a wealth of connections to bus lines that intersect the new LRT route. The line would also connect to the region’s larger transit network, opening up schools like Herzing to an expanded base of potential students.

John Slama of Herzing University (right) is looking forward to the Blue Line Extension.



Meet the Community Outreach Coordinators

The Blue Line Extension Project's dedicated public involvement specialists provide information and assistance.



BROOKLYN PARK

Stations: Oak Grove Parkway, 93rd Avenue, 85th Avenue, Brooklyn Boulevard, 63rd Avenue

Juan Rangel

612-373-5338

Juan.Rangel@metrotransit.org



CRYSTAL, ROBBINSDALE, GOLDEN VALLEY

Stations: Bass Lake Road, Robbinsdale, Golden Valley Road, Plymouth Avenue

David Davies

612-373-5336

David.Davies@metrotransit.org



MINNEAPOLIS

Stations: Penn Avenue, Van White Boulevard, Target Field

Sophia Ginis

612-373-3895

Sophia.Ginis@metrotransit.org

About the project

The planned METRO Blue Line Extension (Bottineau) light rail transit project will operate about 13 miles northwest from downtown Minneapolis through north Minneapolis, Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal and Brooklyn Park, drawing riders northwest of Brooklyn Park. The proposed alignment will have 11 new stations in addition to Target Field Station where it will continue as the METRO Blue Line, providing one-seat rides to Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and the Mall of America. It will connect Minneapolis and the region's northwest communities with existing LRT on the METRO Green Line, future LRT on the METRO Green Line Extension (Southwest LRT), bus rapid transit on the METRO Red Line, the Northstar commuter rail line and local and express bus routes.

The Metropolitan Council will be the grantee of federal funds and is charged with building the line in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Transportation. The Blue Line Extension Corridor Management Committee, which includes local officials from Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, Brooklyn Park and Minneapolis, provides advice and oversight. Funding is provided by the Federal Transit Administration, Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB), Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA), and the state of Minnesota.

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