



APRIL 18, 2022

METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION

Route Modification Report





METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION

Route Modification Report Summary • April 2022



Route Recommendation

The Blue Line Extension will run from downtown Minneapolis to Brooklyn Park, connecting some of our region's most diverse communities to jobs, education, and opportunities. In Minneapolis, where two route options were evaluated, the West Broadway route is recommended.

The following full route, described from north to south, meets the project's principles and stated goals and is recommended to move forward for further evaluation:

- West Broadway Avenue from Oak Grove Parkway to 73rd Avenue in Brooklyn Park. Includes stations at Oak Grove, 93rd Avenue, 85th Avenue, and Brooklyn Boulevard.
- Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) between 73rd Avenue in Brooklyn Park to the intersection of County Road 81 and West Broadway Avenue. Includes stations at 63rd Avenue and Bass Lake Road in Crystal, and stations in the downtown and at North Memorial Hospital in Robbinsdale.
- West Broadway Avenue from County Road 81 to Lyndale Avenue through North Minneapolis. This includes a design option along 21st Avenue North from Irving Avenue to Lyndale Avenue, one block to the north of West Broadway Avenue.
- Lyndale Avenue to 7th Street or Olson Memorial Highway, eventually terminating at the existing Target Field Station in Downtown Minneapolis.





METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION

Route Modification Report Summary • April 2022

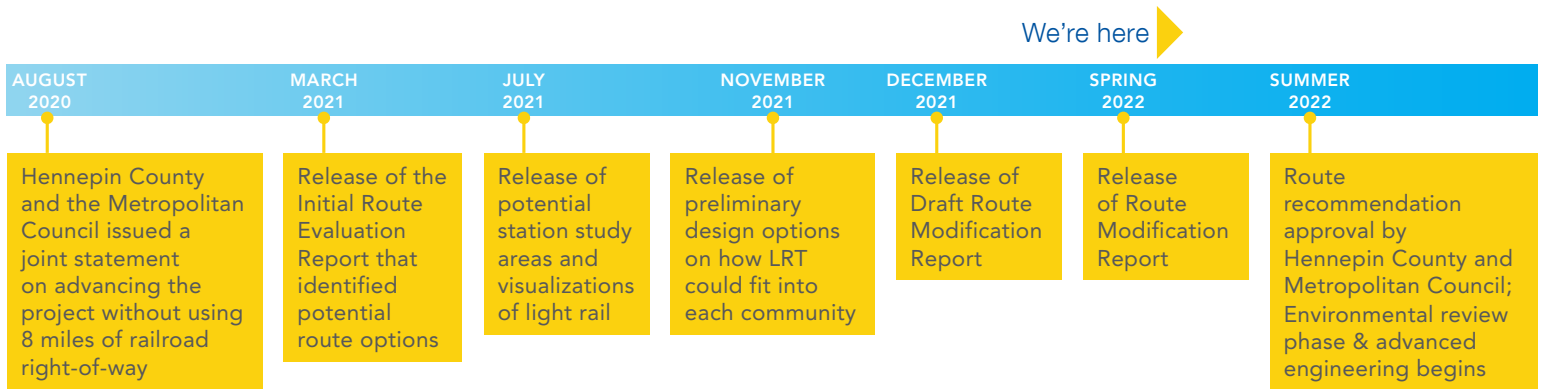
This route will:

- Connect people to new opportunities and destinations.
- Link people more efficiently to educational and employment opportunities, reduce transit commute times, and increase access to goods and services in an area where building community wealth is a priority.
- Improve public health and reduce pollution by connecting people to quality health care and providing clean active transportation options.
- Make a generational and unprecedented transit investment in a corridor that has experienced a history of systemic racism and high percentage of zero-car households.



Schedule

ONGOING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



To find the best possible route for the communities around BLRT and the region as a whole, the project team needs your feedback. As you review the route recommendation, consider the following questions:



Do you agree with the route recommendation? Why or why not?



What else do decision-makers need to know?



How can the route continue to be improved through the next phase of the project?

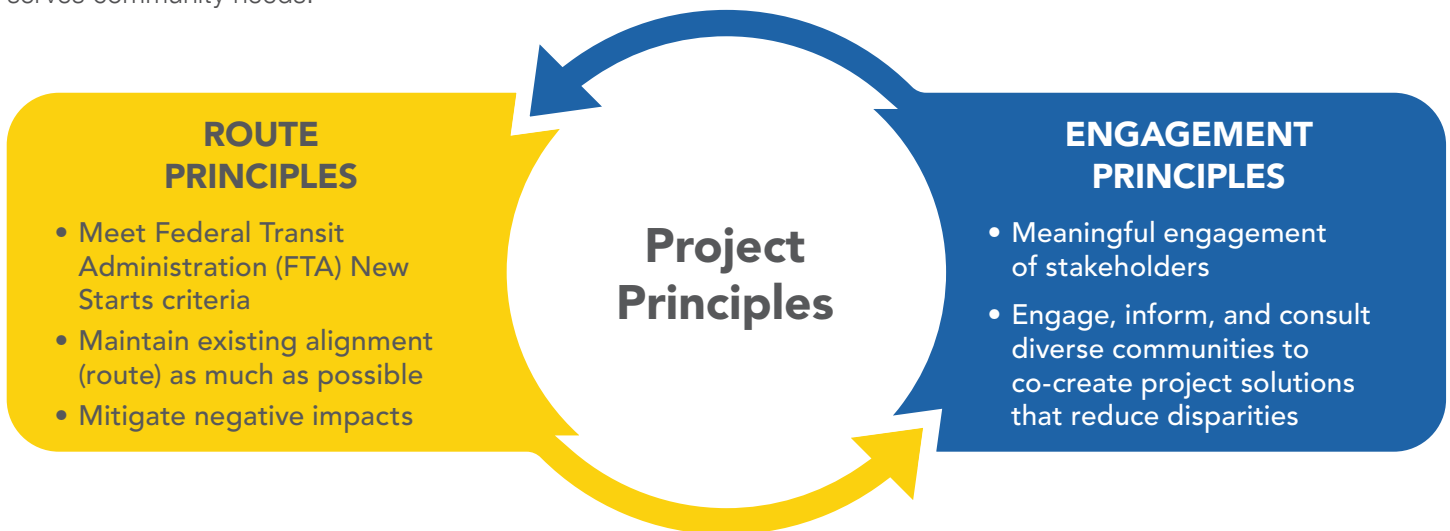


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Evaluation Process

To determine a community-supported route, the project team considered Project Principles and goals, community and business feedback, and engineering requirements. Each route was evaluated against the project goals to see how it serves community needs.



All the routes have received an overall assessment of “good” in their ability to serve the community. In some cases these routes achieve an excellent rating based on unique features and the potential to deliver exemplary positive benefits. None of the routes have been assessed as “poor,” which would mean they did not meet the project goals.

ASSESSMENT OF ROUTE OPTIONS TO DEFINED GOALS

PROJECT GOAL	BOTTINEAU BOULEVARD (COUNTY ROAD 81) IN BROOKLYN PARK AND CRYSTAL	BOTTINEAU BOULEVARD (COUNTY ROAD 81) IN ROBBINSDALE	LOWRY ROUTE	WEST BROADWAY ROUTE
Goal 1: Improve transit access and connections to jobs and regional destinations	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT
Goal 2: Improve frequency and reliability of transit service to communities in the corridor	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT	GOOD	GOOD
Goal 3: Provide transit improvements that maximize transit benefits, while being cost competitive and economically viable	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD
Goal 4: Support communities’ development goals	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD	EXCELLENT
Goal 5: Promote healthy communities and sound environmental practices including efforts to address climate change	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD
Goal 6: Advance local and regional equity and work towards reducing regional racial disparities	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD	EXCELLENT



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Next Steps

Further robust community engagement will continue through these and future phases. To submit your comments on the report and for a list of upcoming community meetings, visit BlueLineExt.org. The Route Modification Report is available for public review, and comments will be accepted through **May 18, 2022**. The Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County will carefully review the community input received to make any additional modifications before the recommended community-supported route moves forward for further evaluation in 2022.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We're here



LRT projects are complex and unforeseen challenges arise. Schedules and timelines are subject to change.

Blue Line Extension Community-Supported Route:

- Best meets the Project Principles and goals
- Grounded in community feedback through collaboration with stakeholders
- Supported by project corridor communities and decision-makers

Stay Connected!

For project questions or to invite us to an event, contact:

Brooklyn Park/Minneapolis:

Pa Nhue Vue – PaNhue.Vue@metrotransit.org

Robbinsdale/Crystal:

Kjerstin Yager – Kjerstin.Yager@metrotransit.org

Share your Blue Line Extension story at: mybluelineext.org



Visit BlueLineExt.org for more information, to sign-up for the project newsletter, share your comments, questions and concerns on our interactive map.

@BluelineExt @Blue_Line_Extension

@METROBlueLineExtension



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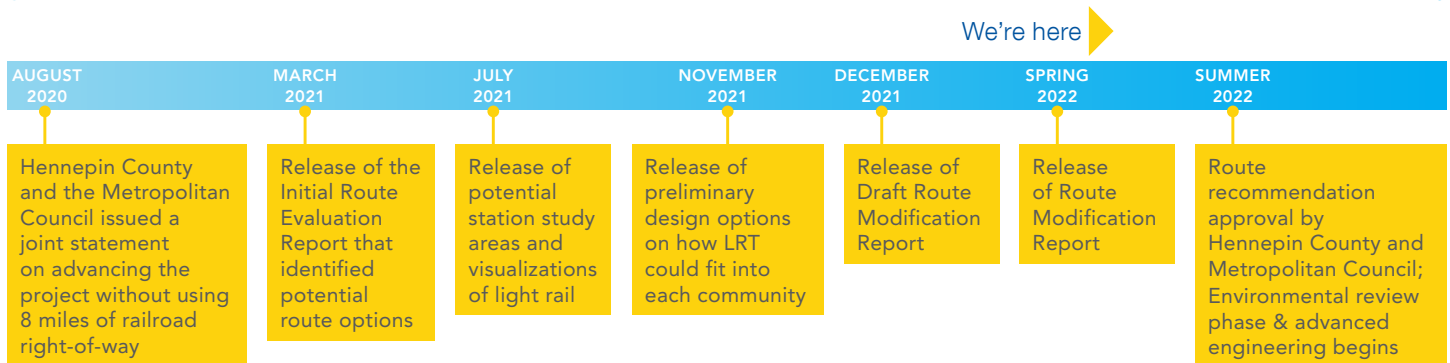
Purpose of Report

The Initial Route Evaluation Report released in March 2021 laid out a process and general timeline to identify a community-supported route for the Blue Line Extension Project (BLRT). The Draft Route Modification Report released in December 2021 reflected the next step in project development and described the process, public input, and technical evaluation used to recommend a modified route for BLRT. This revised Route Modification Report incorporates comments received on the draft and makes a recommendation for route modification based on the Project Principles listed on page 3 and the project goals listed below:

- 1 Improve transit access and connections to jobs and regional destinations
- 2 Improve frequency and reliability of transit service to communities in the corridor
- 3 Provide transit improvements that maximize transit benefits while being cost competitive and economically viable
- 4 Support communities' development goals
- 5 Promote healthy communities and sound environmental practices including efforts to address climate change
- 6 Advance local and regional equity and work towards reducing regional racial disparities

A summary of the overall process is provided below.

ONGOING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



To find the best possible route for the communities around BLRT and the region as a whole, the project team needs your feedback. As you review this report, consider the following questions:



Do you agree with the route recommendation? Why or why not?



What else do decision-makers need to know?



How can the route continue to be improved through the next phase of the project?



Project Justification

Project Purpose

The BLRT project purpose statement was developed during the previous environmental planning phase of the project and remains the foundation of project work and decisions.

The purpose of the BLRT project is to provide transit service that will satisfy long-term regional mobility and accessibility needs for businesses and the traveling public.

Project Need

A statement of need for the project was also developed during the previous environmental phase:

The BLRT 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.

In addition to the defined BLRT project purpose, need, and goals, a project such as BLRT can result in important and meaningful benefits through:



Infrastructure improvements beyond transit (e.g., roadway reconstruction, improved traffic design, placemaking and improvements to pedestrian realm, utility, and stormwater and sewer updates).



Streetscape and landscape improvements such as lighting, increasing green space, and bicycle and pedestrian connections.



Environmental and community benefits by reducing vehicle miles traveled in single-occupancy automobiles, creating economic development benefits, and providing an affordable transportation option - of particular importance to environmental justice communities.

Project Milestones Before Route Modification

2013

After an alternatives analysis process, a locally preferred alternative (LPA) was selected.

2014

Station area planning work began that included health equity strategies. The FTA approved entry into the project development phase. Project was transferred from Hennepin County to Metropolitan Council.

2016

Hennepin County and cities along the route reviewed and approved preliminary designs. A Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision were published by the FTA and Metropolitan Council.

2017-2018

The project entered the engineering phase, during which discussions took place with BNSF around co-locating light rail and freight lines.

2020

Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County issued a joint statement that the project will move forward without the use of the freight rail corridor.

Project History and Process Overview

Initial Route Evaluation Process and Report

The original route, pictured in Figure 1, used BNSF rail right-of-way for much of its length. BNSF is a private rail company with individual property rights that supersede the state’s right to take private property for public use. Significant effort and resources, including offering to purchase the corridor, were taken at the local, regional, state, and federal level to advance required approvals by BNSF Railway. After several years of unsuccessful discussions, it was necessary to move the project forward without using freight rail property.

While this was a setback, it also provided an opportunity to improve the project by identifying potential routes that could serve even more people and destinations while maintaining as much of the existing route as possible. Once this decision was announced in August 2020, project partners and committees reconvened to assess next steps. They decided to build on completed work rather than starting from scratch; however, the change in direction also offered an opportunity to revisit the project’s key priorities. Project partners and stakeholders worked to develop a set of Project Principles to set the project scope and process going forward. These principles are foundational in the route modification decision-making.

Based on the Project Principles and existing data, project partners developed route options that would not use the freight rail corridor. A summary of the Project Principles is provided below.

Project Principles

Alignment (Route) Principles

As work on the development of potential new routes continues, these principles will serve as the foundation of the process.



MEET FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (FTA) NEW STARTS CRITERIA

- ✓ Maintain BLRT purpose and need
- ✓ Maintain mode
- ✓ Minimize travel time
- ✓ Maximize ridership
- ✓ Maximize community and economic development
- ✓ Maximize project rating
- ✓ When appropriate, pursue opportunities to serve even more people and destinations, especially areas with lower rates of car ownership/vehicular access and those with mobility challenges



MAINTAIN EXISTING ALIGNMENT (ROUTE) AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE

- ✓ Maintain existing termini: Target Field Station in Minneapolis and Oak Grove Station in Brooklyn Park
- ✓ Serve the existing corridor cities of Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Robbinsdale, Golden Valley, and Minneapolis and their major destinations



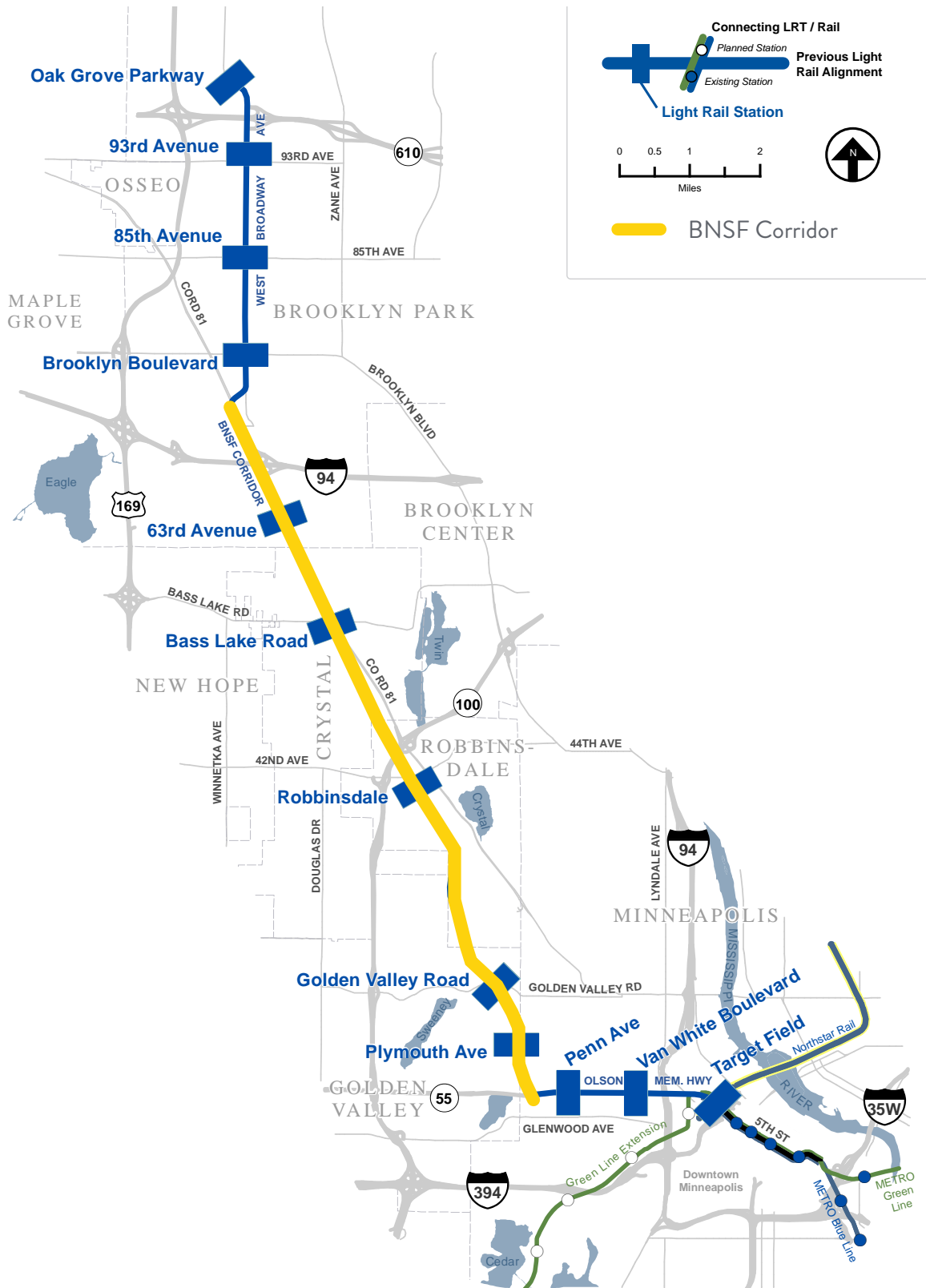
MITIGATE NEGATIVE IMPACTS

- ✓ Complement existing and planned METRO transitways
- ✓ Minimize residential, commercial, and environmental impacts
- ✓ Support safety and connections prioritizing people walking, biking, and rolling
- ✓ Maximize carbon pollution reduction



METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Route Modification Report

Figure 1: 2013 Locally Preferred Alternative



Engagement Principles

As part of the commitment to the community, engagement principles were included as part of the adopted guidance for how to move the project forward. Including engagement as a core part of the overall project work helps ensure the project team is grounded in a community-centric approach that is adaptive to community needs.



MEANINGFULLY ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS

- ✓ Honor and build on previous robust community engagement
- ✓ Tailor engagement practices to meet the needs of the individual communities in the corridor

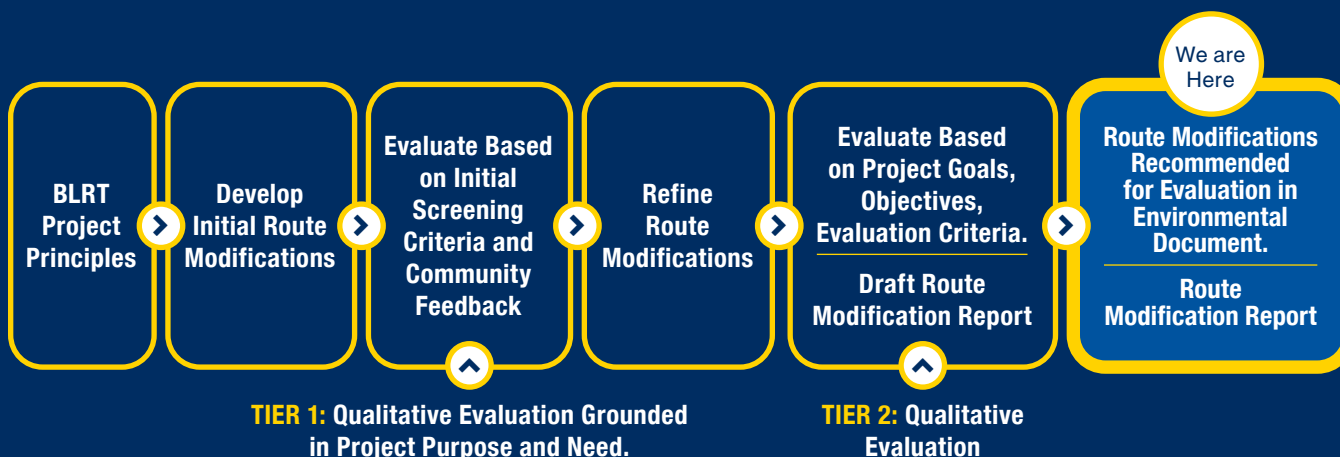


ENGAGE, INFORM, AND CONSULT DIVERSE COMMUNITIES TO CO-CREATE PROJECT SOLUTIONS THAT REDUCE DISPARITIES

- ✓ Ensure corridor communities of all races, ethnicities, incomes, and abilities are engaged so all communities and corridor cities share in growth opportunities, with an emphasis on low-income and cultural communities
- ✓ Use community goals, priorities, and criteria for growth to inform decision-making
- ✓ Adjust strategies and approach as needed to ensure corridor communities are fully represented in engagement efforts

Route Identification Process Overview

Since the Initial Route Evaluation Report was released in March 2021, the project has taken several steps to identify the route and station areas that best fit the goals of the project and address the needs of the corridor communities. This process has been guided by the Project Principles, project goals, and best practices in light rail development, including lessons learned from the development of three METRO light rail lines: the METRO Blue Line, METRO Green Line, and METRO Green Line Extension.





Collaborative Decision-Making Process

Partners and Stakeholders

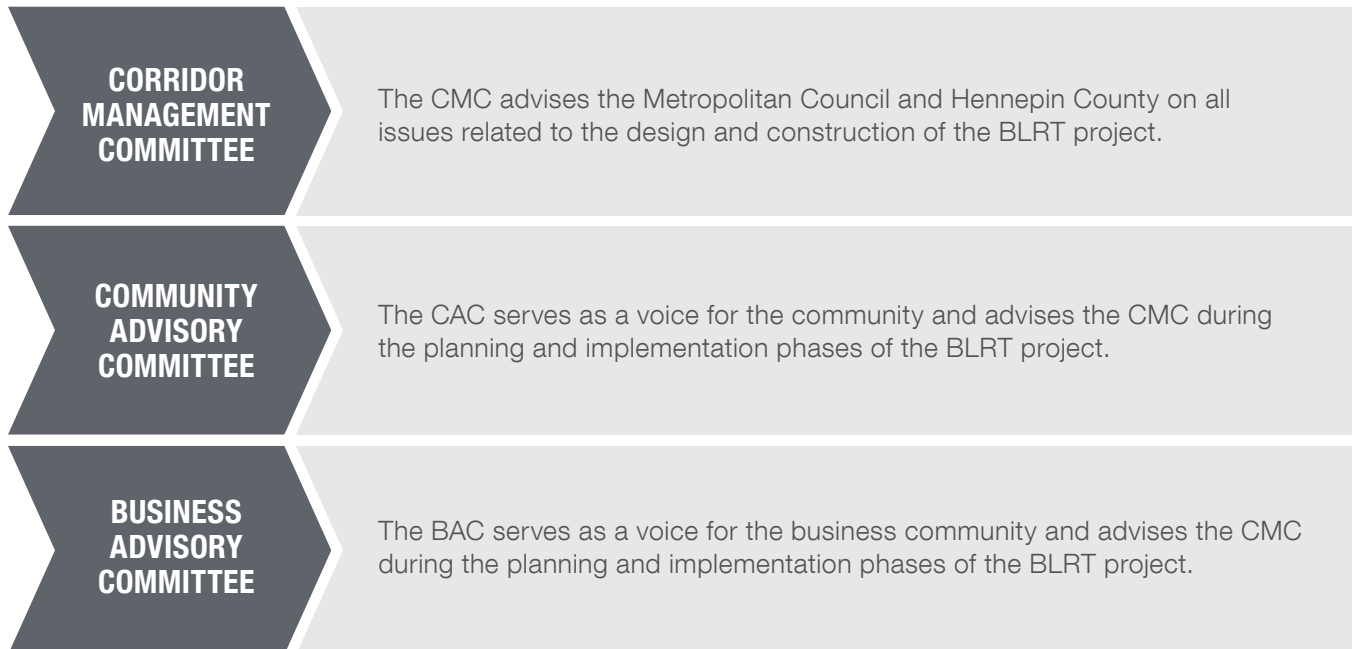
The decision-making process includes a deep connection between design considerations and feedback from project stakeholders (including city partners and organizations), advisory committee members (Technical Project Advisory Committee [TPAC], Business Advisory Committee [BAC], Community Advisory Committee [CAC], and Corridor Management Committee [CMC]), and leadership from project partners including the Metropolitan Council, Hennepin County, and the FTA.

The roles of the advisory committees are described below:

ADVISORY COMMITTEE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS



Advisory committees are a key avenue through which the Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County receive public input. Project advisory committees enable the project team to receive advice and feedback from policymakers, government entities, community groups, businesses, and citizens. Issue Identification Teams are a collaboration between city (or other partner’s) staff and the project’s technical team. These meetings include the input of planners and engineers, often from multiple departments, to assure technical issues are carefully considered in project development. They occur regularly, sometimes on a weekly basis. Community dialogue and informed decision-making is supported through the work of the CMC, CAC, and BAC.



Hennepin County has dedicated funding to light rail development through the Hennepin County Transportation Sales and Use Tax and the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority. The Metropolitan Council is responsible for the development of the project and reporting to the FTA to qualify for funding in the federal New Starts program.

COMMUNITY COHORT

The project has contracted with multiple community and cultural organizations to support a robust engagement process during the route selection and station study area process.

The community consultant organizations were selected to reflect constituencies identified in project stakeholder analysis along with their geographic focus within designated project areas, prioritizing low-income communities and communities of color. Twelve cohort members were selected to assist the project from March 2021 to January 2022, and six cohort members are contracted through summer 2022 to ensure ongoing engagement support through the route selection process. Selected consultants work as a team with complementary services and areas served. The cohort meets as a team with communications and engagement project staff to coordinate their efforts with the direction of the BLRT Project Management Team.

These organizations are using multiple methods to best reach their constituencies such as pop-up information tables at community events, social media, hosting virtual and in-person listening sessions, and presentations. Engagement activities were done in the context of the pandemic and social unrest.

Cohort members:

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COHORT	AREAS SERVED*
Asian Media Access Inc ↗	Area 1, 2, 3
CAPI USA	Area 1, 3
Encouraging Leaders ↗	Area 3
Harrison Neighborhood Association	Area 3
Juxtaposition Arts	Area 3
Lao Center of MN ↗	Area 1, 3
Liberian Business Association ↗	Area 1, 2
Northside Economic Opportunity Network ↗	Area 2, 3
Northside Residents Redevelopment Council	Area 3
West Broadway Business Coalition	Area 3
Jordan Area Community Council	Area 3
Hawthorne Neighborhood Council	Area 3
Pueblos de Lucha y Esperanza †	Area 1, 2, 3

* See Figure 2 for a map of the BLRT Study Areas

↗ Continuing cohort engagement in 2022

† Began in February 2022

Public Engagement

To inform project decision-making, public engagement was integrated throughout activities from 2020 to 2022. Summaries of what was heard and what was learned from this public engagement were included in the project's monthly meeting agendas and are linked later in this section. Public engagement included project-sponsored listening sessions, workshops, community presentations, and key stakeholder meetings. Engagement also included extending the project's reach into low-income communities and communities of color through the work of the Community Engagement Cohort, a group of community and culturally based organizations. In addition, there was a targeted effort to engage Robbinsdale residents through a series of informal driveway talks. Engagement efforts have included multiple phases that have provided the community with increasing levels of information, culminating in the release of the Draft Route Modification Report in December 2021 and this report in April 2022.



METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Route Modification Report

See below for a summary of outreach and engagement activities to date:

Outreach

Since August 2020, project staff have engaged with the public through the following activities:

- Online and in-person surveys
- Online interactive maps
- Online and in-person comment forms
- Phone calls and emails
- Door-knocking
- In-person and virtual project-hosted community meetings such as listening sessions, open houses, and workshops
- Stakeholder check-ins with community and business groups
- Community events attendance
- Pop-ups at bus stops, food shelves, community centers, and grocery stores
- Information at libraries
- Corridor tours

Communications

Methods to share project updates have included:

- Up-to-date website information
- Translated and public-facing summaries and fact sheets/one-pagers
- Advertisement in BIPOC newspapers
- BIPOC radio ads and interviews
- Engagement with CCX Media and other local broadcasters
- Social media
- Corridor postcards
- Property owner/tenant letters
- Door knocking and flyering for events

Metrics to Date

This engagement has resulted in:

- Approximately 4,000 survey responses
- 1,500 comments on the interactive map
- 300 events resulting in nearly 11,000 points of contact with the public
- 75,000 reached on social media and 1 million+ reached through paid ads on community and cultural media
- Corridor postcards - mailed to 26,000 households/businesses
- Over 500 emails and phone calls
- 217 comments from comment forms
- Majority of activities with environmental justice communities

Engagement Phases

Initial engagement efforts to begin identifying a community-supported route occurred during October 2020 through February 2021 (read the [engagement report](#) for a summary of feedback received). These efforts focused on engaging key stakeholders along with some listening sessions to educate the community on the new direction of the project and to collect input regarding community goals, concerns, opportunities, and thoughts on potential new routes. Previous engagement done through the station area planning process and FTA transit-oriented development pilot grant was also carried forward into this process.

The second round of public engagement sought feedback from the public and stakeholders on the new route options released in March 2021 as part of the Initial Route Evaluation Report. The key questions of this phase were to ask the community if anything had been missed and if these route options seemed right. Project staff also asked about major destinations, issues or opportunities, and potential design options to help inform the next phase. [Read the full engagement report here.](#)

Public Engagement Activities Since March 2021

MARCH 2021

The Initial Route Evaluation Report was published. It identified routes for consideration in Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Robbinsdale, and Minneapolis. The routes in this report reflected a preliminary screening for land use and right-of-way space and were further designed with the following primary considerations: potential property impacts, impacts to parking, design feasibility, driveway or other vehicle access, and traffic implications. Project partners began gathering public feedback on project goals and route options. January to March engagement activities to solicit feedback on the project goals and route options presented included 25 listening session/stakeholder meetings, seven advisory committee meetings, and three community townhalls.

APRIL 2021

Advisory committees met and shared feedback on an anti-displacement plan. April engagement activities included five advisory committee meetings, 13 stakeholder/community meetings, and several pop-ups at vaccination events and other community events.

MAY 2021

Public engagement focused on continuing the conversation on opportunities and concerns about the project, route options, and project goals. May engagement activities included five advisory committee meetings, two Facebook Live events, 15 stakeholder meetings, chamber of commerce presentations, and several pop-ups at vaccination events and other community events.

JUNE 2021

Twenty-two community meetings in June focused on station study areas and included driveway chats hosted by Hennepin County commissioners, three advisory committees, four stakeholder meetings, and over 10 community events at festivals, vaccination events, and farmers' markets.

JULY-AUGUST 2021

Station study areas were determined based on initial feedback and design considerations. Corridor visualizations were released to see how light rail could fit in the community. July through August engagement activities included eight corridor-wide open houses (virtual and in-person), three advisory

committee meetings, several driveway chats hosted by commissioners, and 32 pop-up tables at community events such as grocery stores, vaccination sites, farmers' markets, festivals, and national night out events.

SEPTEMBER 2021

Stakeholder and advisory committee meetings were ongoing. The Hennepin County Board took action to hire the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) to facilitate an Anti-Displacement Workgroup. September engagement continued the conversation about station study areas and visualizations. Thirty-two events included four advisory committee meetings, an open house in Crystal, driveway talks hosted by commissioners, and three stakeholder meetings.

OCTOBER 2021

An initial evaluation of potential building impacts was completed and options for alignments linking BLRT to Target Field were advanced. October engagement activities included an open house in Robbinsdale, two advisory committee meetings, corridor tours, driveway talks hosted by commissioners, and one-on-one stakeholder meetings.

NOVEMBER 2021

Updated design concepts for various options along West Broadway and Lowry Avenue were released. Six public workshops were held in Minneapolis for the community to review potential opportunities and impacts of the light rail options and evaluate how they meet the project goals. Stakeholder and advisory committee meetings were ongoing.

DECEMBER 2021-JANUARY 2022

A Draft Route Modification Report was released in December 2021 for public comment. The report provided an initial evaluation of the route options against community-informed project goals. The project team held in-person and virtual meetings to gather feedback on the report and route evaluation.

MARCH 2022

A virtual information session was held March 15th to share how public comments and questions received during the Draft Route Modification Report comment period were shaping the next draft of the report.



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The third round of public engagement from July to August 2021 was focused on the connections that light rail would make within communities. Station study areas were identified, and staff asked the community about where they would like stations within those areas, if the right number of station study areas had been identified, and if they were overall in the correct location. [Read the full engagement report here.](#) Visualizations also began the conversation about how light rail might fit into the community, including impacts outside of the current curb lines.

A fourth round of public engagement from September to December 2021 focused on receiving input on updated design concepts and potential opportunities and impacts of light rail options. Potential traffic, parking, and property impacts were identified, and we asked about any other community concerns or things to be mindful about as a final route option is identified. [Read the full engagement report here.](#)

Additionally, the comment period for the Draft Route Modification Report extended from December 13, 2021 through January 25, 2022. Feedback was received during the comment period through responses and questions at public meetings, community cohort engagement, an online comment form, and an interactive feedback map. Read the full engagement report in Appendix A.

Engagement in Brooklyn Park

The following themes were identified through engagement activities held in Brooklyn Park during 2021:

- Need for safe pedestrian crossings
- Need for a safe bike/walking route to nearby trails/destinations
- Transit connections to create opportunities for future development around stations
- Park-and-rides should be walkable

Engagement in Crystal

The following themes were identified through engagement activities held in Crystal during 2021:

- Concern about traffic impacts on County Road 81 and reducing travel lanes
- Concern about money already spent on roadway improvements
- Need for safe pedestrian crossings and minimized crossing distances, especially for those with mobility challenges
- Support for grade-separation of County Road 81, coupled with desire to make sure the station is visible and feels safe
- Concern about noise or vibration increases near residential areas



November 16 Workshop at the Capri Theater

Engagement in Robbinsdale

The following themes were identified through engagement activities held in Robbinsdale during 2021. One of the key features of engagement was a series of driveway talks with community residents and city council members, hosted by Hennepin County Commissioner Lunde, community residents, and Robbinsdale policymakers from May to October 2021. This approach of meeting people where they are uncovered and documented key community issues and aspirations. This input was included in the public input summaries to inform project decision-making.

The following themes emerged from this input:

- Need for safe pedestrian crossings
- Questions about the history of the project and why freight rail property could not be used
- Desire for station design to focus on safety, greenery, and access to nearby bicycle and pedestrian facilities
- Concern about impacts to homes and businesses along and adjacent to County Road 81
- Visual and safety concerns about LRT being grade separated
- Concern about traffic impacts on County Road 81

Engagement in Minneapolis

The following main themes were identified through engagement in Minneapolis in 2021:

ROUTE FEEDBACK

- Preference for alternatives that balance fairness of impacts and that avoid impacts to major North Minneapolis assets
- Support of the LRT investment, coupled with the request to ensure the top community priorities are being considered and addressed, such as anti-displacement, safety, parking, business support during construction, and supporting the community's vision for development



Lao Center of MN listening session March 2021



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Below is a summary of the feedback received on the Lowry route and the West Broadway route; two routes under consideration for Minneapolis (see section titled Overview of Routes for Consideration for more information on these routes):

- Preference for routing on Lowry due to its proximity to residential areas, potential for development, fewer business impacts, and the limited space on West Broadway
- Preference for routing on West Broadway due to density of businesses, housing, schools, etc., potential for reduction of racial disparities, and could provide economic benefits for Northside residents and businesses, but concerned about how tight the right-of-way is
- Prefer neither option because both bring negative impacts to residents and small businesses

DISPLACEMENT AND GENTRIFICATION

- Minimize impacts, disruption, and displacement of businesses and residents
- Displacement and gentrification occurring along the route is the highest concern; need upfront commitment from the project team on these issues
- Need to address how the project will create new ownership opportunities for affordable housing, new development, and generate jobs and apprenticeship opportunities
- Incorporate lessons learned from past transportation projects that negatively impacted BIPOC communities

STATION LOCATION AND LRT DESIGN

- Stations should be well lit and heated, include wayfinding to local destinations and incorporate street beautification/public art
- Stations should reflect local communities, culture, and history and should enhance neighborhoods
- Easy/safe pedestrian access to stations
- Concern about traffic and parking impacts with removing lanes and on-street parking
- Need for better traffic enforcement such as people running traffic lights and causing collisions with the trains
- Feel that light rail should be built above/below ground
- Locate stations at major intersections



October 9, 2021 Bike, Walk, Bus tour of Minneapolis route options and station study areas

Draft Route Modification Feedback

This section summarizes the feedback received during the comment period for the Draft Route Modification Report from December 13, 2021 through January 25, 2022, including a summary of responses and questions received from public meetings, an online comment form, and an interactive feedback map.

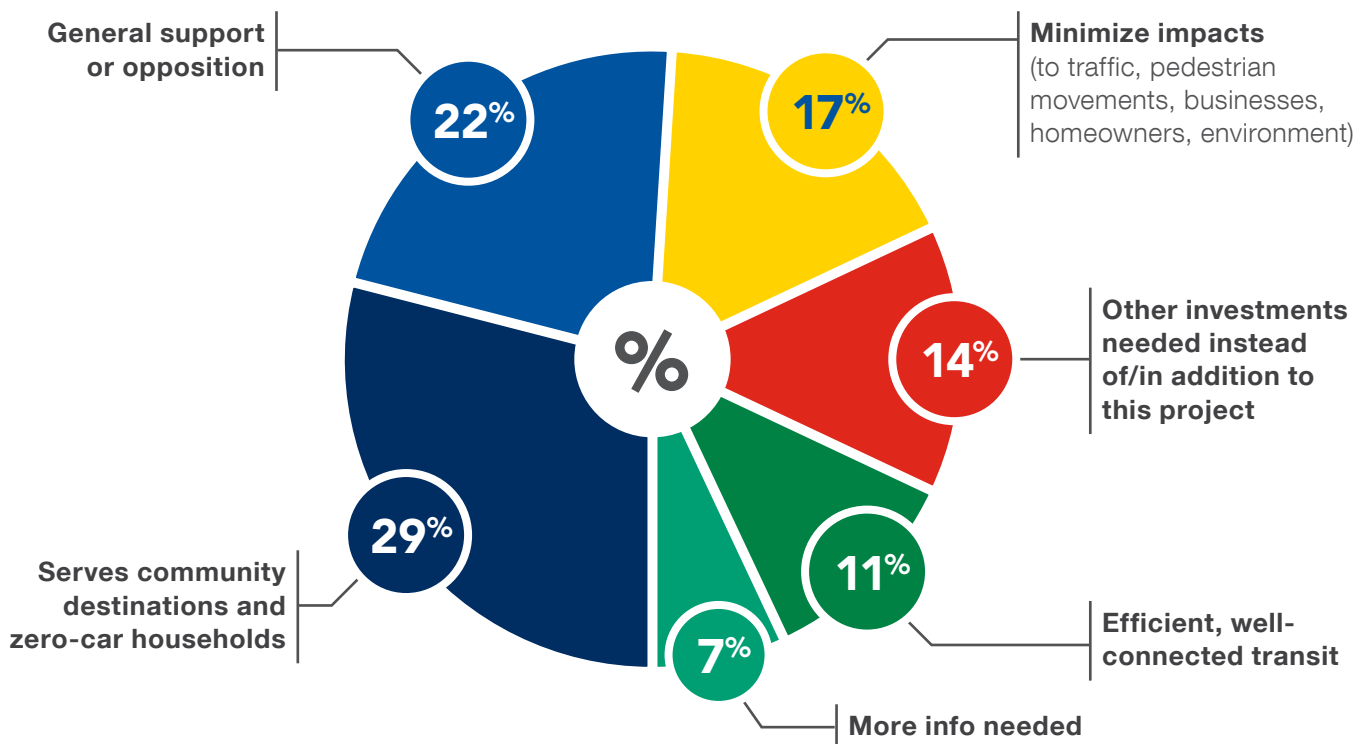
COMMON THEMES

Below are the common themes that emerged from feedback received during the comment period:

- Need for an efficient transit option that also connects to other modes/transit routes
- Select a route that serves zero-car households and provides access to more businesses/destinations
- Other investments are needed as part of the project related to traffic, buses, bikes and pedestrian, and safety
- General support or opposition for the West Broadway route, the Lowry route, or the overall project
- More information is needed about:
 - Project ridership and travel times
 - Safety impacts
 - Station renderings
 - Cost of each route option
 - Transit-oriented development produced by each route option
 - Construction timelines/impacts
 - Funding for equitable community development along the route

Additional public feedback related to specific goals used to evaluate route options can be found in Appendix C with the detailed summary of the comment period responses.

Figure 2: Percentage of Comments by Overall Themes





How Comments Shape Decision-Making

Public and agency comments are important in project decision-making. Specific comments on content have been reviewed and incorporated into this report where applicable. Combined with high-level technical evaluation, more general comments of support or opposition can also paint a clearer picture of which route is preferred by the community. A virtual information session was held March 15, 2022 to share how public comments and questions received during the Draft Route Modification Report comment period were shaping this version of the report.

Many of the comments received over the past engagement efforts will continue to be addressed in future phases of the project regardless of which route moves forward through more detailed engineering, environmental review, and station area planning. Public engagement will continue throughout all of these future phases of the project and will be integral in shaping project decision-making.



Talk Out Lao'd Facebook live event hosted by Lao Center of MN on May 26, 2021

Anti-Displacement Initiative

The Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County are committed to delivering an LRT investment that benefits current corridor residents and businesses. In response to the feedback received during engagement events, both agencies are advancing efforts to address community concerns about housing affordability, business support, and displacement.

As part of this commitment, the project sought the leadership of a local group to lead an anti-displacement initiative. A committee that included corridor community and business representation selected University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) to lead this effort.

CURA, in partnership with Hennepin County and the Metropolitan Council, will work with community, local governments, and philanthropy among other partner stakeholders to evaluate the potential for current and future displacement related to planning, construction, and operation of BLRT.

Over 18 months, CURA plans to seek input from corridor residents and stakeholders throughout the course of their work. Building upon their years of study on gentrification and displacement in Minneapolis and the northwest suburbs and other extensive work in those communities CURA will generate a report that outlines the needs found in the community, actionable policy steps, and potential funding strategies and resources.

Central to the work will be the Anti-Displacement Workgroup, composed of community leaders, residents, and business owners potentially at risk of displacement, as well as other experts and staff from key nonprofit, philanthropic, and agency partners. Members will help guide anti-displacement strategies and policy development by providing personal insight, local expertise, and direct connections to communities impacted by the project. In addition, CURA will be providing new scholarship on displacement in the Twin Cities and specifically within the BLRT corridor to help members discern the best strategies to prevent displacement.

Commitments to the Community

Metropolitan Council, Hennepin County, and cities along the corridor are committed to:

- Implementing a comprehensive and innovative set of strategies to prevent multiple forms of displacement
- Maximizing community benefits
- Building wealth in place
- Centering community voices
- Building on, supporting, and protecting existing community assets
- Providing more opportunities for equitable housing, employment, business development, cultural experiences, and other activities of daily life

Actions

- A diverse Anti-Displacement Workgroup with seats for agency and community partners to research and recommend programs and policies will support this initiative
- CURA will lead and facilitate the Anti-Displacement Workgroup
- CURA will provide recommendations in the next 18 months

CURA's Reparative Justice Framework and Organizing Methodology help inform the work that CURA believes should be done with the Anti-Displacement Work Group. As should be expected, neighborhood residents, community based organizations, Hennepin County, the Met Council, and other relevant governments should reasonably expect that at the completion of CURA's work, there will be a clear request from the community on how to prevent displacement as a result of the Blue Line Extension's construction and completion. Further, stakeholders should expect to have developed a shared analysis of the problem, shared intent on how to address the issues, and mutual accountability to see this work through.

To accomplish this, the Anti-Displacement Workgroup will center its work around four day-long workshops between May 2022 and February 2023 on the following topics: lessons from the existing Blue and Green lines (including Blue Line Extension planning), housing and cultural displacement, business displacement, and finalizing recommendations. During this time, qualitative and quantitative research will be ongoing based on topics that are related to the day-long sessions and that are co-developed with community partners. The final recommendations will be developed by the group and through the research process. An implementation plan will be developed together with staff from Hennepin County, Metropolitan Council, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, and the Cities of Minneapolis, Brooklyn Park, Robbinsdale and Crystal to assure that the initiatives developed in this process are successful. All meetings and other resources related to this effort are available online at BlueLineExt.org.



Expected Outcomes

A research report that details displacement risk as a result of planning and constructing the Blue Line Extension, indicators that will alert Hennepin County to displacement, and recommendations for how Hennepin County can mitigate risk for displacement as a result of Blue Line Extension completion

- A developed constituency both in community and government, namely Hennepin County, to do anti-displacement work
- A recommended plan for Hennepin County investment and policy to prevent displacement along Blue Line Extension Corridor, including:
 - A recommendation that addresses potential displacement of residents
 - A recommendation that addresses potential displacement of commercial businesses
 - A recommendation that addresses displacement during planning, construction, and long-term effects after line completion
- A recommendation for Hennepin County, the Met Council, and city governments investment to address other negative externalities of the Blue Line, including:
 - A recommendation that addresses any residual concerns regarding transit connections, bicycle and pedestrian connections, cultural preservation, and others.
- Guidance on implementation of recommendations for Hennepin County, the Met Council, and city governments.



Overview of Routes for Consideration

In the March 2021 Initial Route Evaluation Report, the corridor was divided into three areas identifying potential route modifications that avoid use of freight rail property (Figure 3). The March 2021 report also identified the potential routes for each of the study areas (Table 1 and Figure 3).

In response to comments made on the December 2021 Draft Route Modification Report, Area 2 has been divided into two parts to reflect differences in roadway characteristics:

- 2A, reflecting the section of Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) within the cities of Brooklyn Park and Crystal, from approximately 73rd Avenue to Highway 100
- 2B, reflecting the section of Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) within the city of Robbinsdale, from approximately Highway 100 to the proposed North Memorial Station

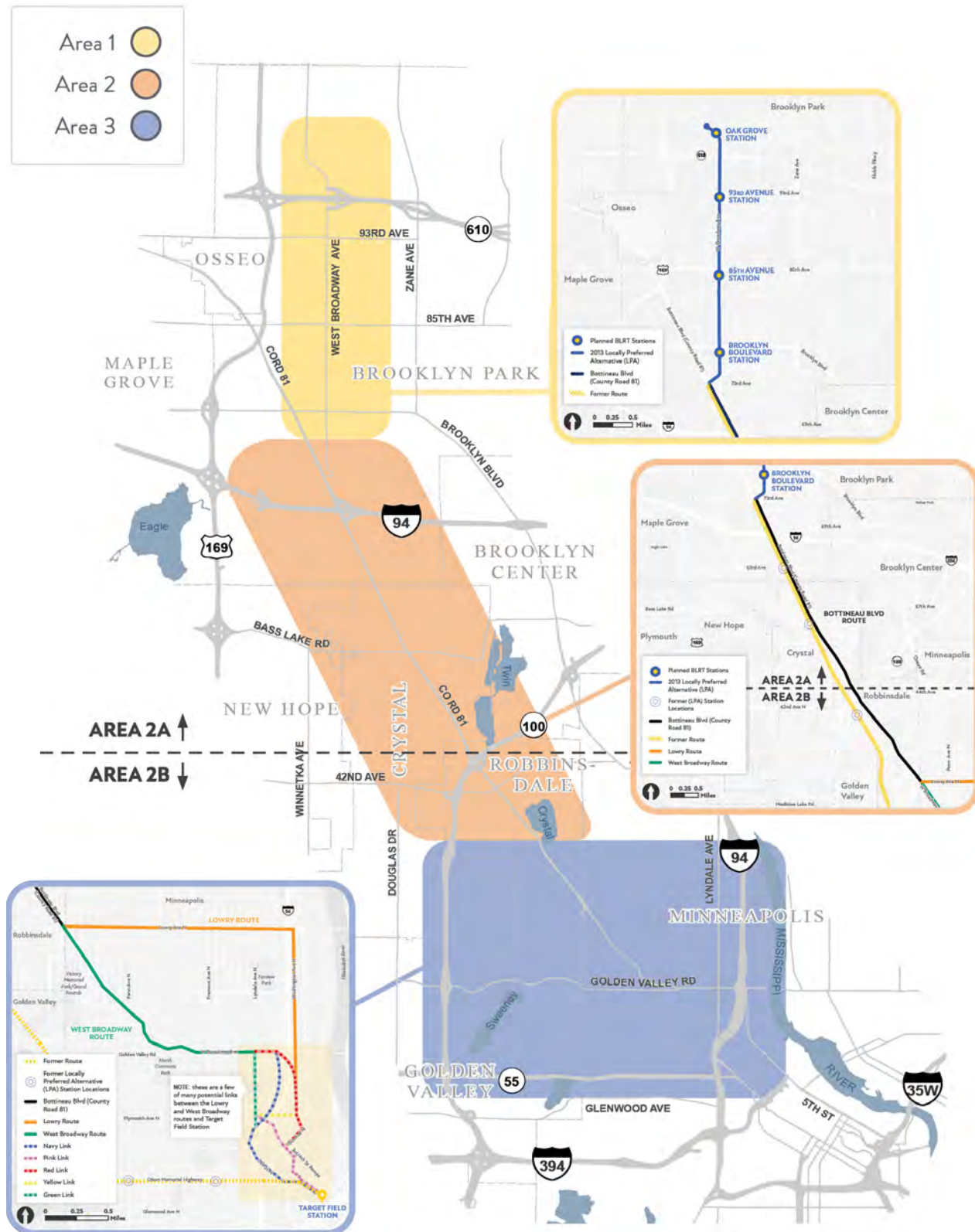
Table 1: Summary of Routes by Area

AREA	LEVEL OF CHANGE	DESCRIPTION
Area 1: Brooklyn Park	None	The proposed alignment has not been changed from the original route.
Area 2A: Brooklyn Park and Crystal	Low-Medium	Proposed route along Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) parallels original route on rail right-of-way for most of this area.
Area 2B: Robbinsdale	Medium-High	Proposed route along Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) remains parallel to the original route on rail right-of-way but distance ranges from 1,000 to 4,000 feet to the east.
Area 3: Minneapolis	High	Instead of following freight rail right-of-way, the route would run through North Minneapolis along either Lowry and Washington Avenues or West Broadway and Lyndale Avenues.



METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Route Modification Report

Figure 3: BLRT Study Areas and Potential Routes



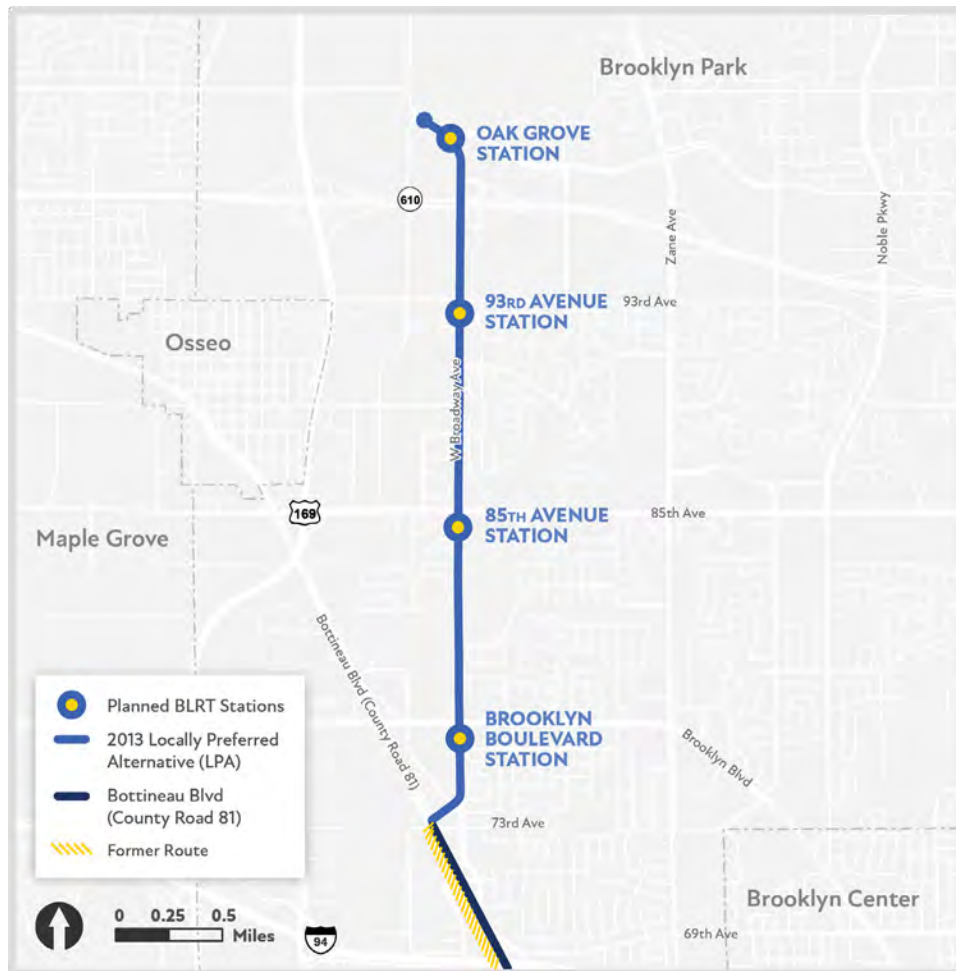
Since March 2021, the project team has been working with corridor communities and the advisory committees to advance the definition of the proposed routes and station areas.

Specific to defining station areas, the following elements were considered:

- Previously planned stations
- Stakeholder and community input
- Access to destinations
- Transit connections
- 0.5 to 1 mile spacing
- Overall number of stations

Area 1: Brooklyn Park

Figure 4: Proposed Route in Brooklyn Park



No changes have been made to the route in Area 1. Area 1 runs on West Broadway Avenue from the Oak Grove station in Brooklyn Park to approximately 85th Avenue. Stations in this section of the overall corridor, from north to south, include Oak Grove Station, 93rd Avenue Station, 85th Avenue Station, and Brooklyn Boulevard Station.

How was this route option determined?

As this section of the overall corridor does not require use of freight rail property, the route as previously defined is proposed to be preserved. This recommendation is consistent with the Project Principle of maintaining the existing alignment as much as possible, along with the project goal of improving transit access and connections to jobs and regional destinations. Additionally, maintaining the existing route provides the opportunity to continue to advance transit-oriented development opportunities.

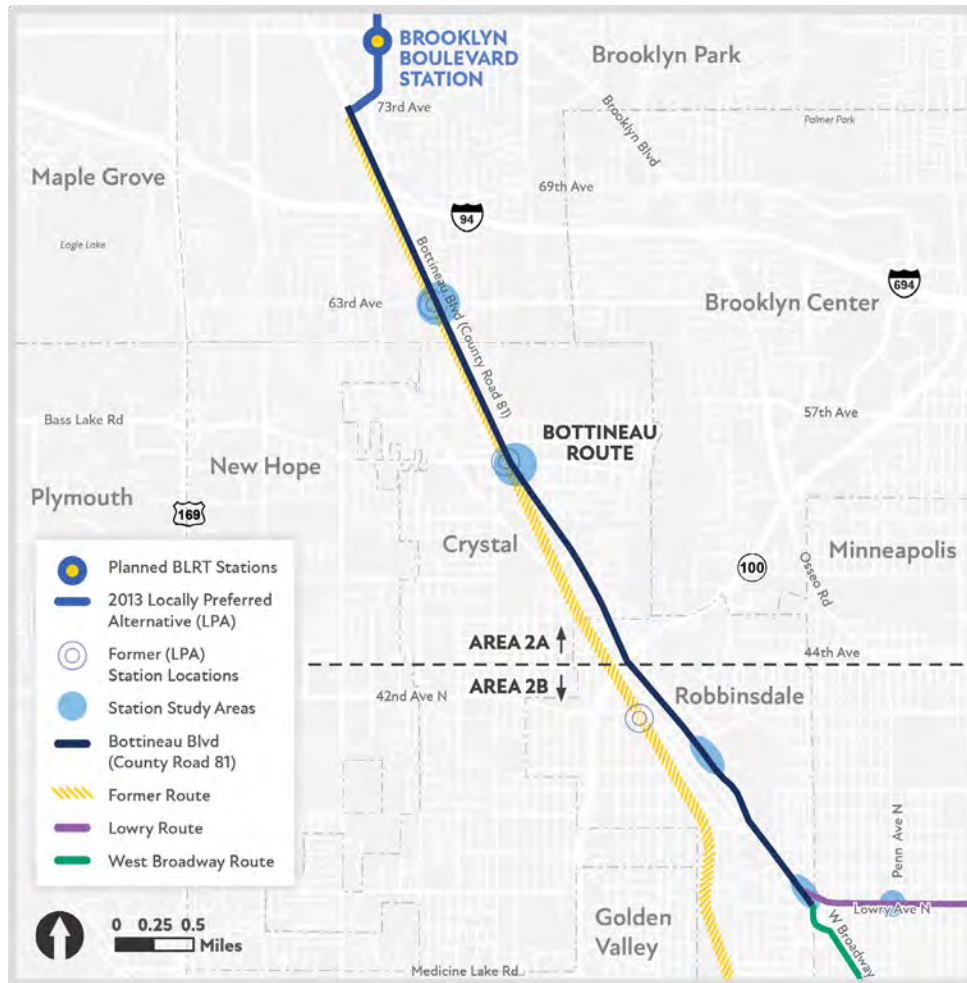


METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Route Modification Report

As the project advances through the design and environmental review phase, the Metropolitan Council will continue to work with Hennepin County on the design of the West Broadway Avenue reconstruction project in Brooklyn Park.

Area 2: Brooklyn Park, Crystal, and Robbinsdale

Figure 5: Proposed Route in Brooklyn Park, Crystal, and Robbinsdale



This section of the route along Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) replaces the route in the freight rail right-of-way. Bottineau Boulevard runs within 100 feet parallel to the railway for much of Area 2A. In Area 2B, the railway and roadway remain parallel but the distance between ranges from 1,000 to 4,000 feet.

How was this route option determined?

Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) is about 100 feet east of the freight rail corridor for much of this area. Within Area 2, there are a number of topographic features that limit development of a route for the BLRT, including Crystal Lake, the Twin Lakes, and the Crystal Airport. Considering these constraints, the Project Principle to maintain the existing route as much as possible, and the location of key destinations to serve with transit (such as North Memorial Hospital), Bottineau Boulevard has been identified as the priority route for consideration within Area 2. Stations are proposed at 63rd Avenue, Bass Lake Road, Downtown Robbinsdale, and North Memorial Hospital.

Figures 6-17 reflect visualizations prepared for Bottineau Boulevard and shared at community workshops to provide a visual of what BLRT could look like at individual locations along the considered route. Figures 6-11 reflect Area 2A in Brooklyn Park and Crystal and are listed in Table 2 for reference. Figures 12-17 reflect Area 2B in Robbinsdale and are listed in Table 2 for reference.

Table 2: Figures in Area 2A

FIGURE TITLE	DESCRIPTION
Figure 6: Existing Conditions, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) Near the Crystal Airport, Crystal	Figure 6 is a visualization of a section of Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) in Crystal as it exists today.
Figure 7: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) Near the Crystal Airport, Crystal	Figure 7 represents how light rail could fit in Crystal along Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81). This picture uses the typical width of the roadway at this location.
Figure 8: Existing Conditions, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) South of Bass Lake Road, Crystal	Figure 8 is a visualization of a section of Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) in Crystal as it exists today.
Figure 9: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) South of Bass Lake Road, Crystal	Figure 9 represents how light rail could fit in Crystal along Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81). This picture uses the typical width of the roadway at this location.
Figure 10: Existing, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) at 48th Avenue, Crystal	Figure 10 is a visualization of a section of Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) in Crystal as it exists today.
Figure 11: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) at 48th Avenue, Crystal	Figure 11 represents how light rail could fit in Crystal along Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81). This picture uses the typical width of the roadway at this location.



METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Route Modification Report

Figure 6: Existing Conditions, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) Near the Crystal Airport, Crystal



Figure 7: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) Near the Crystal Airport, Crystal

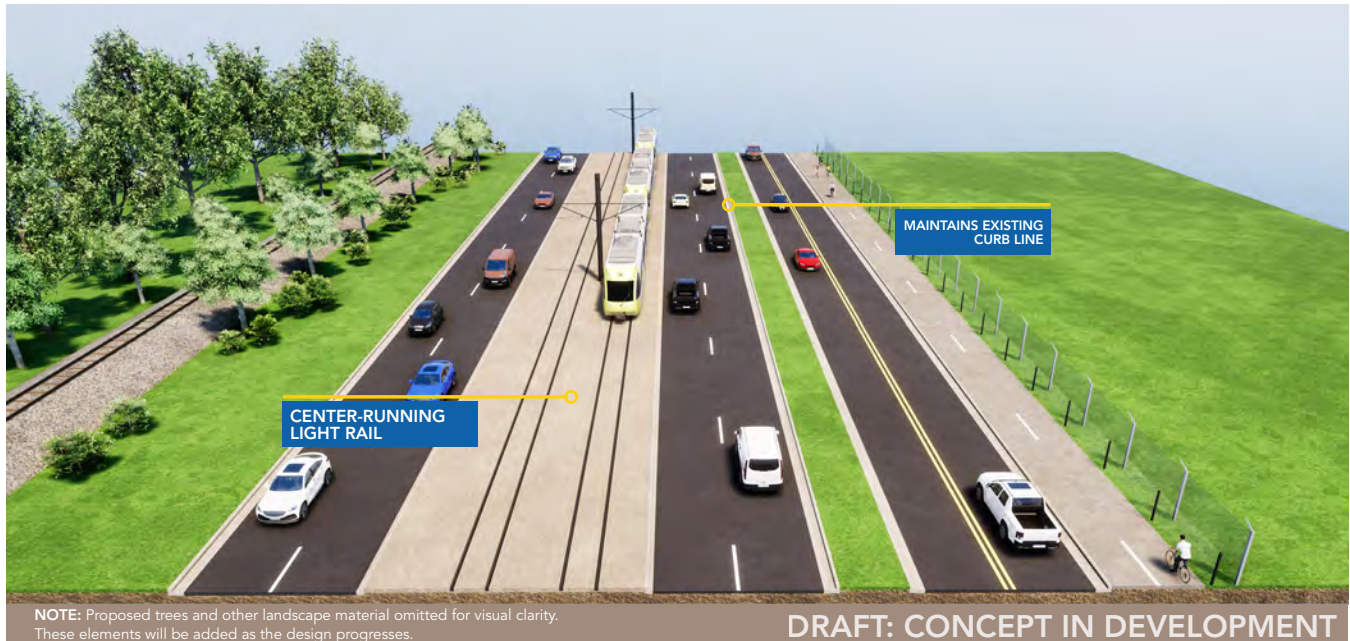


Figure 8: Existing Conditions, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) South of Bass Lake Road, Crystal



Figure 9: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) South of Bass Lake Road, Crystal





METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Route Modification Report

Figure 10: Existing, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) at 48th Avenue, Crystal



Figure 11: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) at 48th Avenue, Crystal

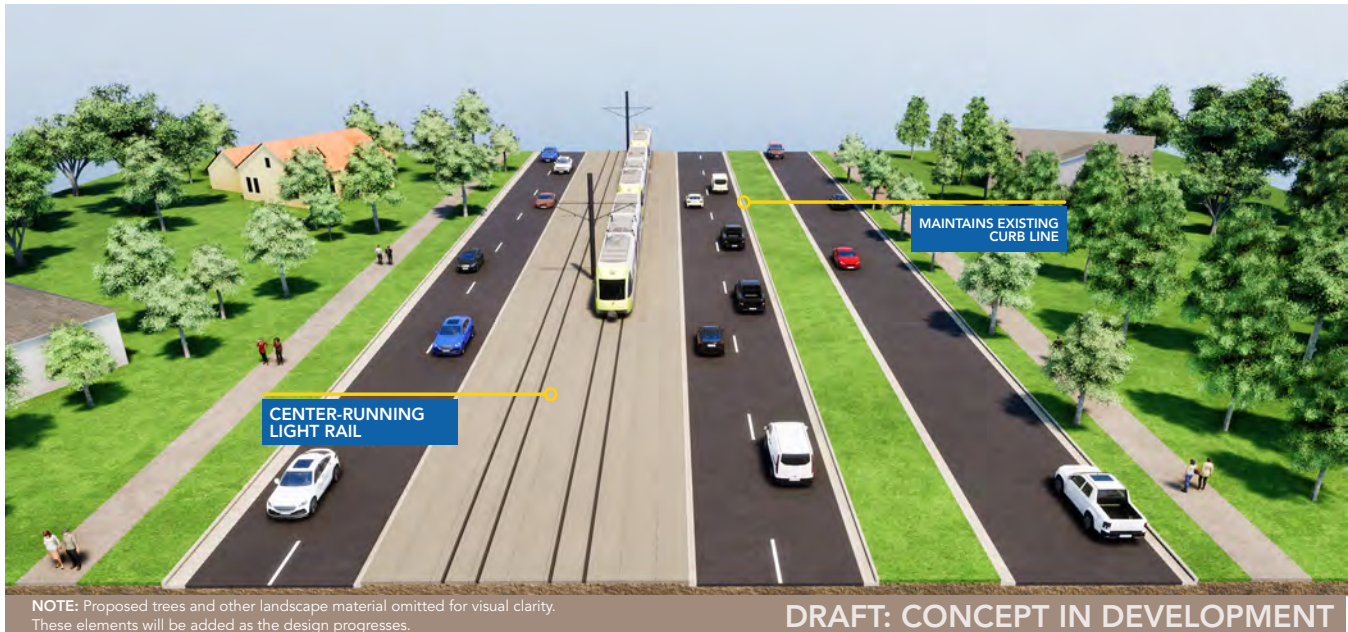


Table 3: Figures in Area 2B

FIGURE TITLE	DESCRIPTION
Figure 12: Existing, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) at 40th Avenue, Robbinsdale	Figure 12 is a visualization of a section of Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) in Robbinsdale as it exists today.
Figure 13: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) at 40th Avenue, Robbinsdale	Figure 13 represents how light rail could fit in Robbinsdale along Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81). This picture uses the typical width of the roadway at this location.
Figure 14: Existing, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) near Crystal Lake, Robbinsdale	Figure 14 is a visualization of a section of Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) in Robbinsdale as it exists today.
Figure 15: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) near Crystal Lake, Robbinsdale	Figure 15 represents how light rail could fit in Robbinsdale along Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81). This picture uses the typical width of the roadway at this location.
Figure 16: Existing, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) near North Memorial, Robbinsdale	Figure 16 is a visualization of a section of Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) in Robbinsdale as it exists today.
Figure 17: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) near North Memorial, Robbinsdale	Figure 17 represents how light rail could fit in Robbinsdale along Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81).



METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Route Modification Report

Figure 12: Existing, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) at 40th Avenue, Robbinsdale



Figure 13: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) at 40th Avenue, Robbinsdale



Figure 14: Existing, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) near Crystal Lake, Robbinsdale



Figure 15: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) near Crystal Lake, Robbinsdale





METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Route Modification Report

Figure 16: Existing, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) near North Memorial, Robbinsdale



Figure 17: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) near North Memorial, Robbinsdale



Area 3: Minneapolis

Area 3 is the most complex in terms of potential route modifications. As summarized in the March 2021 report, an initial range of route options were identified and then screened from further evaluation as they did not effectively meet the Project Principles and goals.

A summary of the routes previously screened, including the BNSF railway, is presented below. Please note that the Highway 100 and BNSF routes extend into Area 2.

Figure 18: Route Options Screened from Further Analysis



- 1 HIGHWAY 100**
 Although the Highway 100 corridor is relatively wide, it does not travel through areas that serve more people and destinations as compared to other route options. It also deviates rather far from the original alignment along the BNSF rail corridor.
- 2 BNSF RAILWAY**
 The BNSF Railway is a private company with individual property rights that supersede the state's right to take private property for public use. Significant effort and resources, including offering to purchase the corridor, were taken at the local, regional, state, and federal level to advance required approvals by BNSF Railway. After several years of unsuccessful discussions, it was necessary to move the project forward without using freight rail property.



3 PENN AVENUE, FREMONT AVENUE, OR EMERSON AVENUE

These roadway corridors are relatively narrow, which would require significant property impacts. In addition, these corridors already accommodate valuable METRO transit services through the planned D Line and existing C Line arterial bus rapid transit.

4 LYNDALE AVENUE NORTH OF WEST BROADWAY

North of West Broadway Avenue, Lyndale Avenue transitions to a two-lane roadway without much room to accommodate light rail, and there are houses that closely front the roadway. This would require significant property impacts.

Within Area 3, development of a potential BLRT route started with identification of points of connection. To the south, the existing METRO station at Target Field represents the connection between the existing METRO Blue Line and the planned BLRT. To the north, the area around North Memorial Hospital has been identified as the location where the BLRT would transition to Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) in Area 2.

Several factors were considered when identifying new routes, including:

- **Available public right-of-way:** A light rail guideway requires approximately 30 feet of width (more at stations) for street level service. Additional space is needed for vehicular traffic, bike lanes, and sidewalks. See Figure 19: Public Right-of-Way Widths
- **Continuity:** A light rail corridor needs a continuous, relatively straight alignment to follow for efficient travel times.
- **Context:** A light rail line and its stations are better suited to some areas and less suited to others. Higher density residential and commercial areas are best suited to accommodate light rail and maximize community and economic development opportunities.
- **Project Principles:** Several of the adopted Project Principles directly influence consideration of candidate routes including: “minimize residential, commercial and environmental impacts,” “complement existing and planned METRO transitways,” and others.

Figure 19: Public Right-of-Way Widths

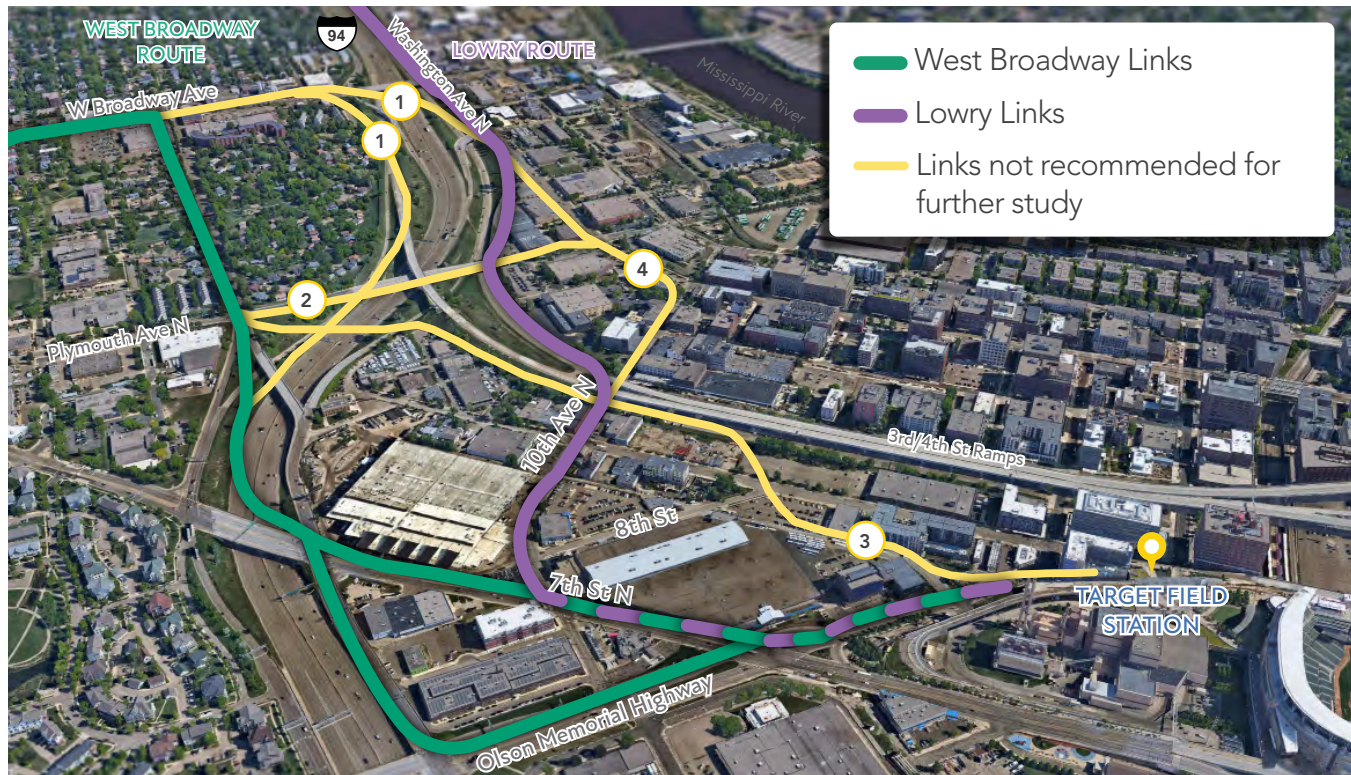


Note: This map indicates the right-of-way width for streets that are known to be more than 55 feet.

Route Link Options

The March 2021 report identified two primary routes and various linking sections. Since March 2021, the project team has been evaluating these two routes in more detail, along with the various links in Area 3. Through that process, several of the links previously identified have been screened from further consideration based on the elements described in Figure 20.

Figure 20: Route Link Options in Minneapolis



LINKS NOT RECOMMENDED FOR FURTHER STUDY

- 1 West Broadway between Interstate 94 and Lyndale Avenue accommodates a large volume of traffic and adding light rail would require widening the corridor. This would create significant property impacts.
- 2 The design intent is for light rail to stay on one side of Interstate 94. Crossing twice would introduce additional construction impacts and costs that will not add many benefits to the project.
- 3 There are operational issues associated with the light rail track connection between the existing METRO Green Line and future BLRT at Target Field Station that prevent the track from separating before 7th Street.
- 4 This option has been removed after further study determined there was not suitable right-of-way to accommodate LRT and required vehicular movements.



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Figure 21 reflects the proposed routes in Minneapolis that are under evaluation in this report.

Figure 21: Proposed Routes in Minneapolis



Note: Station study areas reflect general geographic areas where stations could be located. As the community-supported route advances, final station locations will be identified. Through the process, station study areas currently identified in this report may shift, be removed, or be added.



Proposed Alignments

Area 3: West Broadway and Lowry Routes

Lowry

This route option, reflected as the purple route in Figure 21, would connect to Washington Avenue either via 10th Avenue and along 3rd/4th Street. At Washington Avenue, the route would head north until it reaches Lowry Avenue, where it would continue west on Lowry Avenue to the connecting point at Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81).

Figures 22-31 represent the options at intersections along Washington Avenue and Lowry Avenue. Each of these design options and associated visualizations were shared at the November 2021 in-person and virtual workshops held in Minneapolis. Table 4 provides a summary of the figures for reference.



METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Route Modification Report

Table 4: Figures in Area 3 (Lowry Route)

FIGURE TITLE	DESCRIPTION
Figure 22: Existing Conditions, Washington Avenue at 14th Avenue	Figure 22 shows Washington Avenue at 14th Avenue as it exists today.
Figure 23: Concept, Washington Avenue at 14th Avenue	Figure 23 shows center-running light rail and lane reductions on Washington Avenue at 14th Avenue.
Figure 24: Existing Conditions, Washington Avenue at 18th Avenue	Figure 24 shows Washington Avenue at 18th Avenue as it exists today.
Figure 25: Concept, Washington Avenue at 18th Avenue	Figure 25 shows center-running light rail and an added parking lane on Washington Avenue at 18th Avenue.
Figure 26: Existing Conditions, Washington Avenue at 29th Avenue	Figure 26 shows Washington Avenue at 29th Avenue as it exists today.
Figure 27: Concept, Washington Avenue at 29th Avenue	Figure 27 shows side-running light rail on Washington Avenue at 29th Avenue, with a sidewalk added.
Figure 28: Existing Conditions, Lowry Avenue at Lyndale Avenue	Figure 28 shows Lowry Avenue as it exists today.
Figure 29: Concept, Lowry Avenue at Lyndale Avenue	Figure 29 shows center-running light rail and an added bike lane on Lowry Avenue at Lyndale Avenue.
Figure 30: Existing Conditions, Lowry Avenue at Newton Avenue	Figure 30 shows Lowry Avenue at Newton Avenue as it exists today.
Figure 31: Concept, Lowry Avenue at Newton Avenue	Figure 31 shows center-running light rail and a lane reduction on Lowry Avenue at Newton Avenue.

Figure 22: Existing Conditions, Washington Avenue at 14th Avenue



Figure 23: Concept, Washington Avenue at 14th Avenue





METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Route Modification Report

Figure 24: Existing Conditions, Washington Avenue at 18th Avenue



Figure 25: Concept, Washington Avenue at 18th Avenue



Figure 26: Existing Conditions, Washington Avenue at 29th Avenue



Figure 27: Concept, Washington Avenue at 29th Avenue





METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Route Modification Report

Figure 28: Existing Conditions, Lowry Avenue at Lyndale Avenue



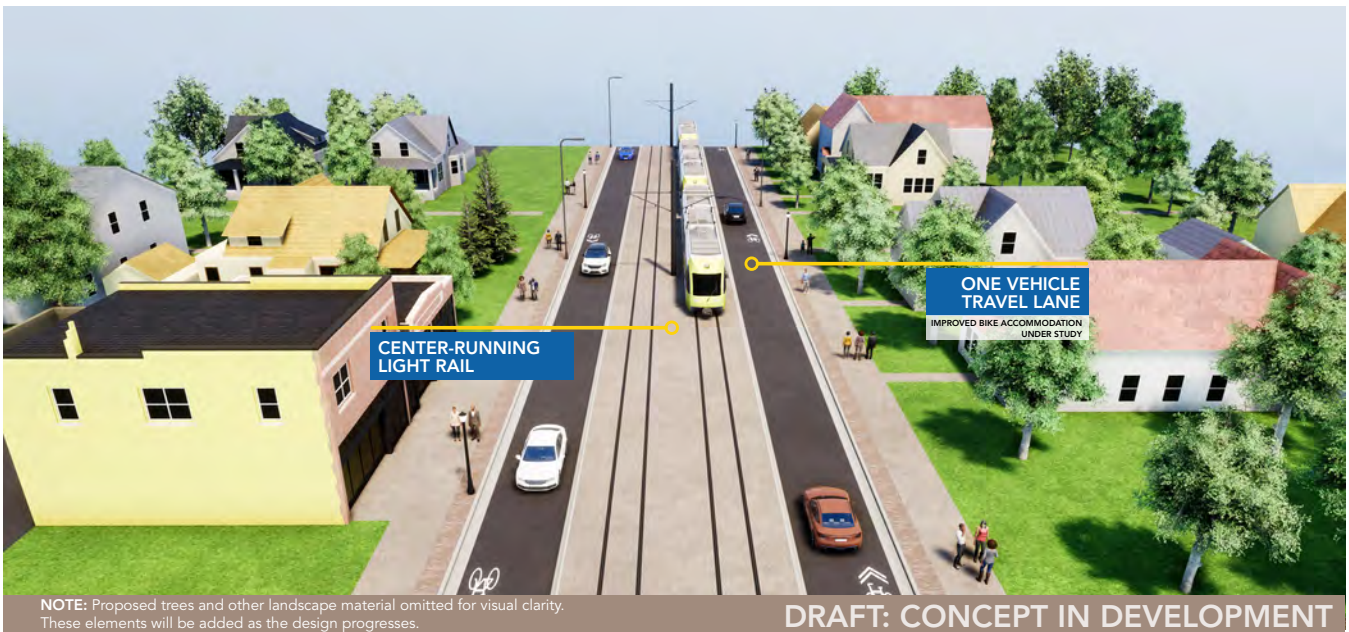
Figure 29: Concept, Lowry Avenue at Lyndale Avenue



Figure 30: Existing Conditions, Lowry Avenue at Newton Avenue



Figure 31: Concept, Lowry Avenue at Newton Avenue





West Broadway

This route option, reflected in green in Figure 23, would connect to Lyndale Avenue either via 7th Street or Olson Memorial Highway (Highway 55) and then continue on Lyndale Avenue until it reaches West Broadway Avenue, where it would head west on West Broadway Avenue to the common connection at Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81). To address right-of-way constraints along West Broadway Avenue, route and design options have been developed both along West Broadway Avenue and along 21st Avenue North, which is located one block to the north of West Broadway Avenue.

Figures 32-36 reflect visualizations that have been prepared for the various options along Lyndale Avenue, West Broadway Avenue, and 21st Avenue North in Minneapolis between Lyndale Avenue and Irving Avenue. Each of these design options and associated visualizations were shared at the November 2021 in-person and virtual workshops held in Minneapolis. Table 5 provides a summary of the figures for reference.

Table 5: Figures in Area 3 (West Broadway Route)

FIGURE TITLE	DESCRIPTION
Figure 32: Existing Conditions, West Broadway and 21st Avenues from Lyndale to Irving Avenue	Figure 32 shows West Broadway and 21st Avenues from Lyndale to Irving Avenue as they exist today.
Figure 33: Center-Running Light Rail Concept, West Broadway Avenue from Lyndale to Irving Avenue	Figure 33 shows center-running light rail and two lanes of traffic on West Broadway Avenue.
Figure 34: Side-Running Light Rail with Split Traffic Concept, West Broadway Avenue from Lyndale to Irving Avenue	Figure 34 shows side-running light rail on West Broadway Avenue. Traffic is split with one lane on West Broadway Avenue and two lanes on 21st Avenue North.
Figure 35: Split Light Rail Concept, West Broadway Avenue from Lyndale to Irving Avenue	Figure 35 shows side-running light rail and traffic split between West Broadway Avenue and 21st Avenue North.
Figure 36: Light Rail on 21st Avenue North Concept, Lyndale to Irving Avenue	Figure 36 shows light rail only on 21st Avenue North and four lanes of traffic on West Broadway Avenue (as it exists today).

Figure 32: Existing Conditions, West Broadway and 21st Avenues from Lyndale to Irving Avenue



 WEST BROADWAY AVENUE: EXISTING

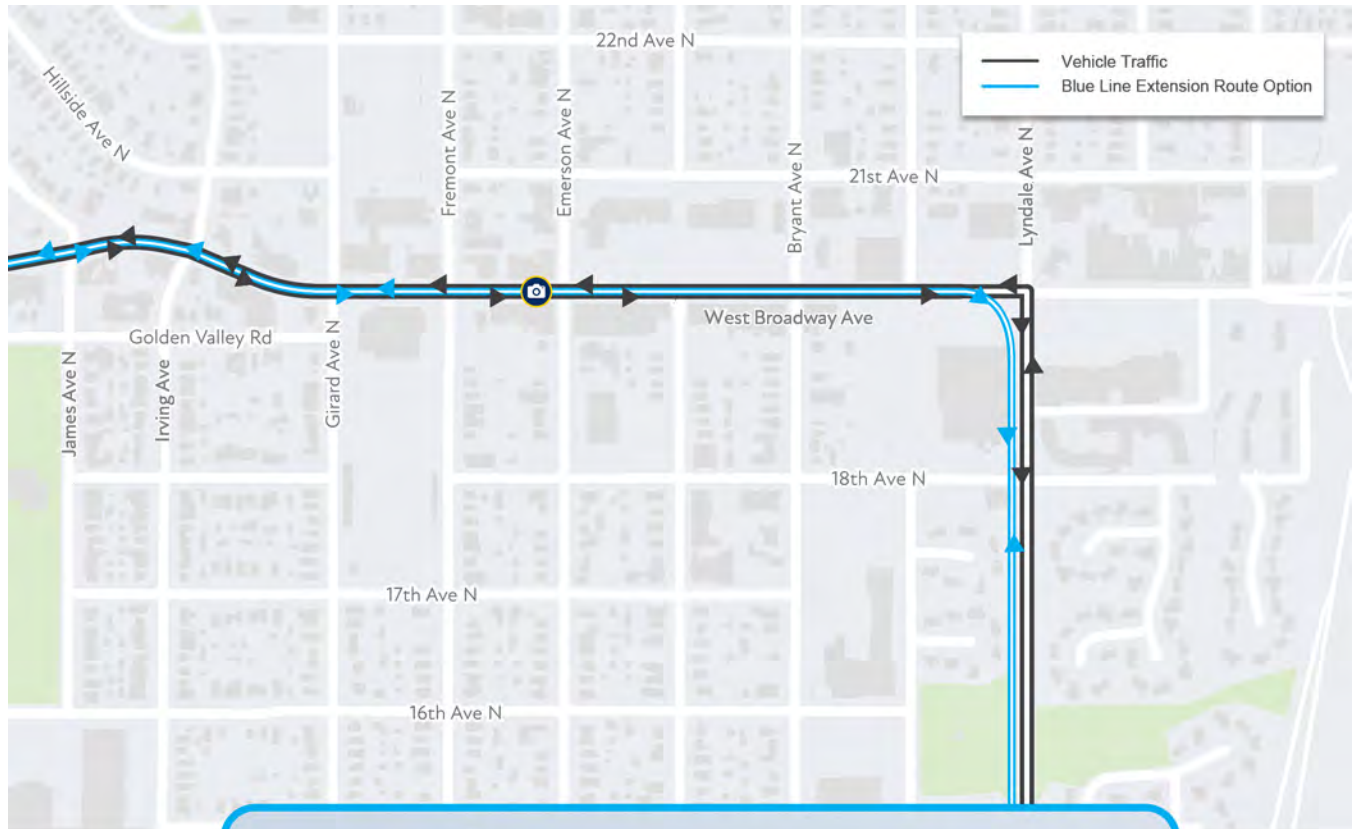


 21ST AVENUE NORTH: EXISTING



METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Route Modification Report

Figure 33: Center-Running Light Rail Concept, West Broadway Avenue from Lyndale to Irving Avenue



WEST BROADWAY AVENUE: CONCEPT

This visualization shows an option without the addition of required stations and turn lanes

Note: This visualization shows an option without the addition of required stations and turn lanes. This was a baseline concept used to develop other alternatives which minimize right-of-way impacts.

Figure 34: Side-Running Light Rail with Split Traffic Concept, West Broadway Avenue from Lyndale to Irving Avenue



WEST BROADWAY AVENUE: CONCEPT



21ST AVENUE NORTH: CONCEPT



METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Route Modification Report

Figure 35: Split Light Rail Concept, West Broadway Avenue from Lyndale to Irving Avenue




 WEST BROADWAY AVENUE: CONCEPT



 21ST AVENUE NORTH: CONCEPT

Figure 36: Light Rail on 21st Avenue North Concept, Lyndale to Irving Avenue



 WEST BROADWAY AVENUE: MAINTAINS EXISTING



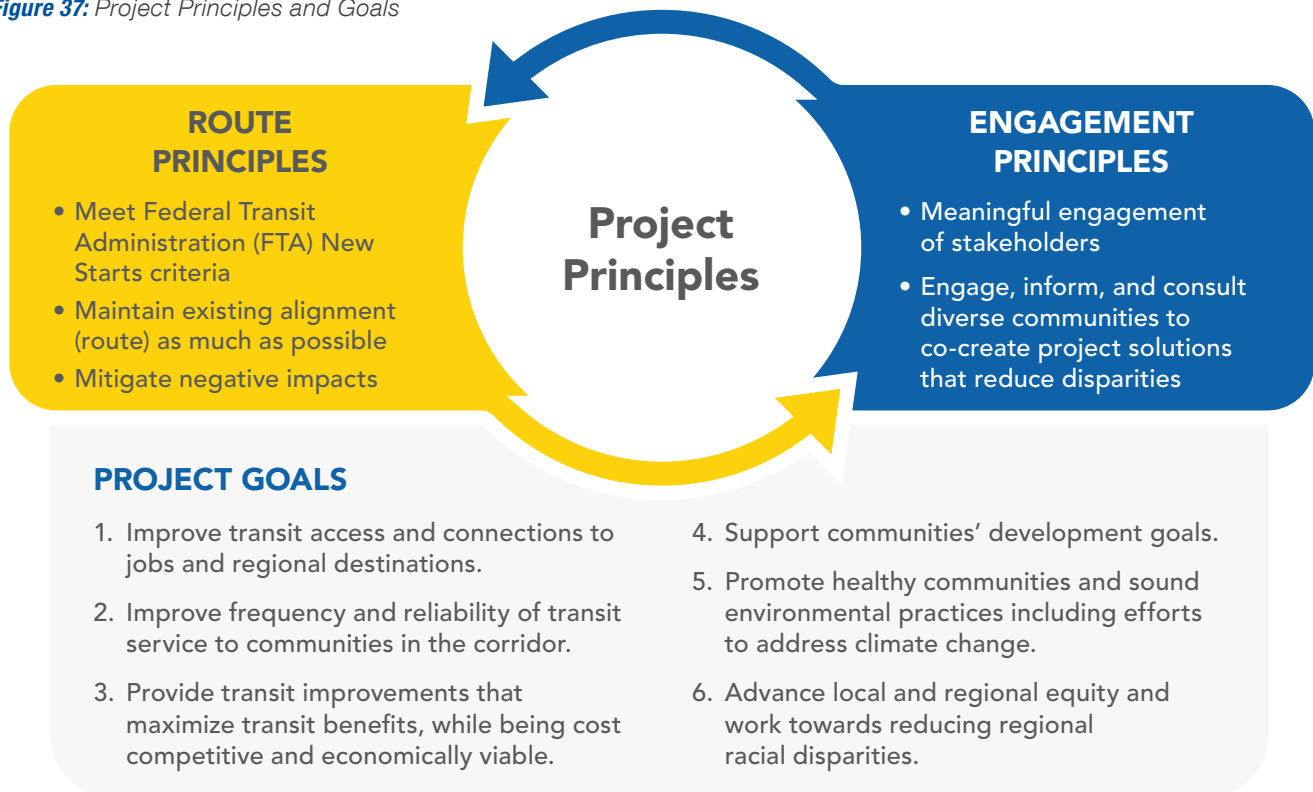
 21ST AVENUE NORTH: CONCEPT



How Route Options Are Evaluated

The route evaluation process is guided by the Project Principles, project goals that were originally developed during the previous environmental review process and updated through input received through engagement activities, community and business feedback, and engineering requirements. Project goals express overall project priorities, while evaluation criteria provide specific, measurable ways to assess how well route options meet and inform these goals. Performance on how a route can achieve defined project goals will be used to recommend a route to evaluate in more detail in a federal and state environmental review document.

Figure 37: Project Principles and Goals



While the evaluation process has been broken into three geographic areas to reflect the level of evaluation required to avoid use of the freight rail right-of-way, it is important to keep the overall project corridor in perspective, as reflected in Figure 38. Additionally, the evaluation will focus on Areas 2A/2B and Area 3 as the route and stations in Area 1 remain the same as the 2013 locally preferred alternative and have been addressed previously in this report.

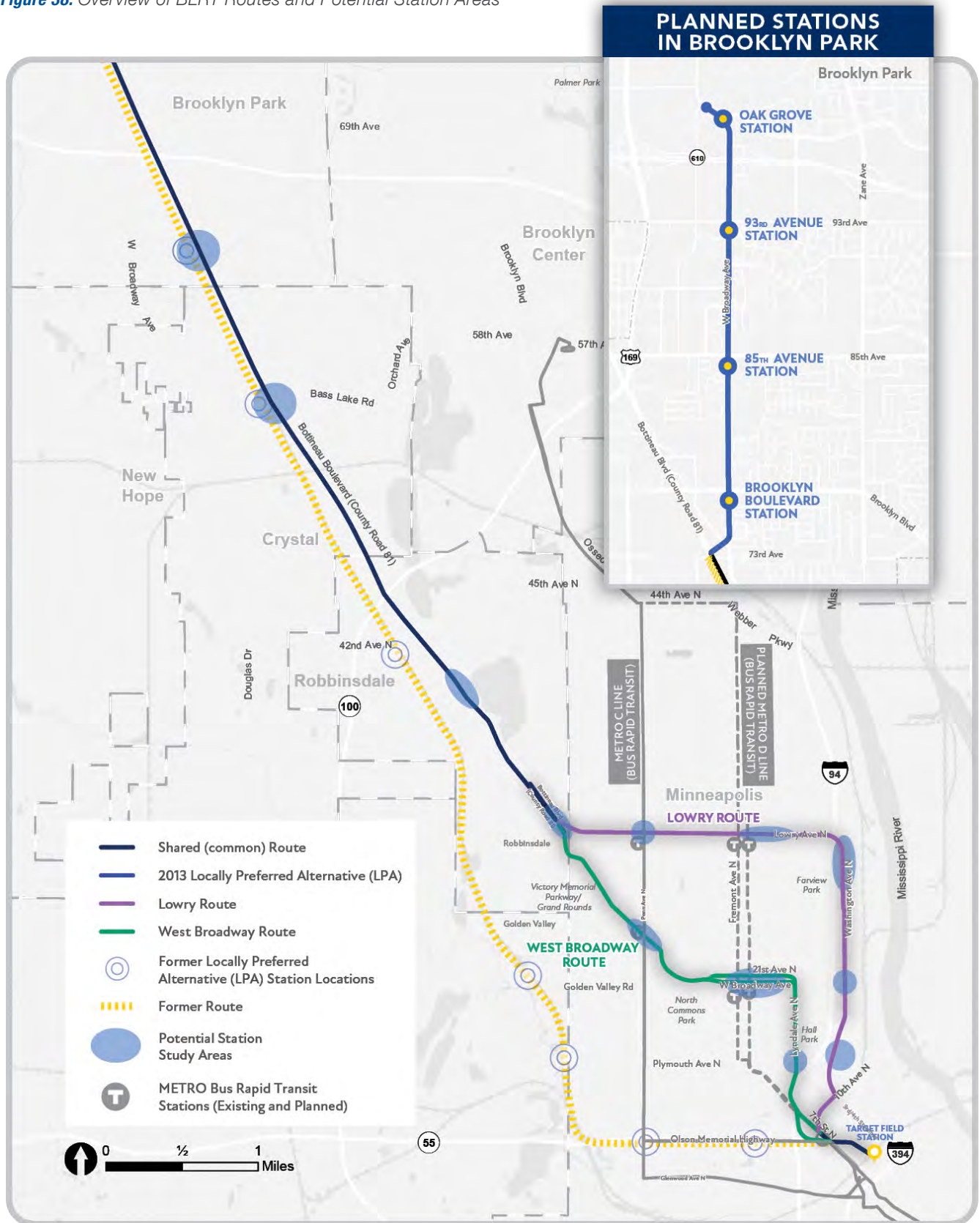
On the following pages, Areas 2A/2B and Area 3 are each evaluated by project goal. This includes:

- **What informs the goal**, a compilation of objectives and evaluation criteria that are reflective of the project's purpose and need;
- **Data used in the assessment**, or a list of data sources (for Area 3, by request of City of Minneapolis);
- **Assessment against the goal**, which provides a background on the route rating for that goal and a concluding rating statement.

Each area is evaluated based on its ability to effectively meet the defined project goals:

- **Excellent** – unique and/or high potential to provide exemplary positive benefits
- **Good** – meets project goal
- **Poor** – does not meet project goal

Figure 38: Overview of BLRT Routes and Potential Station Areas





Evaluation Findings

Area 2A: Brooklyn Park and Crystal

Area 2A is proposed to run on Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) from approximately 73rd Avenue to Highway 100. This area traverses the cities of Brooklyn Park and Crystal, ending near the Robbinsdale border. The roadway speed limit is 45 miles per hour or more. Stations in this section are proposed at 63rd Avenue and Bass Lake Road. This section of the route along Bottineau Boulevard replaces the route in the freight rail right-of-way.

The March 2021 report reflected locating LRT on Bottineau Boulevard in this area. Bottineau Boulevard is approximately 100 feet east of the rail corridor for much of this area. Constraining features in this section of the corridor include the Crystal Airport located just to the east of existing Bottineau Boulevard near 63rd Avenue. While shifting from the original route to this proposed route will create different impacts and a need for new engineering solutions, a route along Bottineau Boulevard is the closest possible to the original, which is consistent with the Project Principle of maintaining existing alignment as much as possible. This is also an important consideration relative to the station area planning work that was previously completed in each of these communities. While there is one route proposed in this area to avoid use of the freight rail right-of-way, it is important to assess its ability to meet the established project goals. This section summarizes how the proposed route on Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) meets each of the project goals. These goal-specific summary statements serve as supporting information to the summary table presented on page 57.



GOAL 1: Improve transit access and connections to jobs and regional destinations.

Route rating: **EXCELLENT**

What informs this goal

- Overall ridership and ability to expand and improve service to people with limited or no access to cars
- Reverse commute and off-peak transit opportunities
- Opportunity to expand and improve transit system linkages and multimodal transportation opportunities

Assessment against the goal

As stated previously, the proposed route on Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) in Area 2A would include potential station areas at 63rd Avenue and Bass Lake Road. The potential station areas at 63rd Avenue and Bass Lake Road are relatively close to the previously planned stations and would therefore provide similar access and connections to jobs and regional destinations as under the 2013 locally preferred alternative.

For these reasons Area 2A receives a rating of **Excellent** for Goal 1, improve transit access and connections to jobs and regional destinations.



GOAL 2: Improve frequency and reliability of transit service to communities in the corridor.

Route rating: **EXCELLENT**

What informs this goal

- Improve mobility for transit riders and attract new riders
- Expand and improve safe and efficient connections to existing and planned METRO transitways along with balancing improved transit accessibility with traffic mobility

Assessment against the goal

Providing transit in a dedicated guideway improves transit service reliability. Additionally, transit service frequency and regional connectivity would improve. Specific to traffic, in Crystal, redesignating one lane in each direction on Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) from general-purpose traffic lanes to LRT and the proposed grade-separation of County Road 81 at Bass Lake Road would result in similar intersection delay and travel times compared to No-Build conditions. The City of Crystal has noted concerns regarding impacts of the proposed lane reduction on vehicular mobility and potential mitigation measures, and requests more in-depth technical analysis and community input. As the design advances, additional coordination will take place with the city to address traffic and safety concerns. The proposed route could provide roadway and overall safety improvements at both signalized and unsignalized intersections in areas such as: incorporation of additional green space, pedestrian intervals to give pedestrians a head start crossing an intersection, potential for narrowing travel lanes to shorten pedestrian crossing distances and calm traffic, pedestrian crossing signals, new pavement, and pedestrian crossings that meet all current accessibility requirements.

For these reasons Area 2A receives a rating of **Excellent** for Goal 2, improve frequency and reliability of transit service to communities in the corridor.



GOAL 3: Provide transit improvements that maximize transit benefits, while being cost competitive and economically viable.

Route rating: **GOOD**

What informs this goal

- Balance project benefits and costs through a tiered approach to capital, operating, and maintenance cost estimates

Assessment against the goal

Detailed capital cost estimates will be prepared as the community-supported route advances into more detailed design. Consistent with the Project Principle of meeting the FTA's New Starts criteria, which includes cost effectiveness criteria, the Metropolitan Council will work to define and advance a route that effectively balances capital and operating costs with overall transit system benefits. As the route on Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) is proposed to be at-grade and would run in existing transportation right-of-way, it is anticipated to be cost competitive.

With this approach in mind, the Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) route is assessed at achieving this goal with a **Good** rating.



GOAL 4: Support communities' development goals.

Route rating: **GOOD**

What informs this goal

- Assessment of capacity and likelihood of transit-oriented development and/or redevelopment opportunities in station areas
- Assessment of consistency with approved plans and policies, including policies related to affordable housing and prioritization of transportation modes

Assessment against the goal

Based on experience with both the Blue and Green Lines in the Twin Cities, it is anticipated that public and private investment would be made before, during, and after BLRT is open. As the potential station areas at 63rd Avenue and Bass Lake Road are near the original station locations, it is anticipated that previous work on transit-oriented development plans and policies at these stations would be applicable. Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County are committed to working with the cities of Brooklyn Park and Crystal to implement a comprehensive, innovative set of strategies to help communities build wealth in place. These strategies will ensure the investment builds on, supports, and protects existing community assets and provides more opportunities for equitable housing, employment, business development, cultural experiences, and other activities of daily life.

Area 2A receives a rating of **Good** for its ability to support the communities' development goals.



GOAL 5: Promote healthy communities and sound environmental practices including efforts to address climate change.

Route rating: **GOOD**

What informs this goal

- Minimize impacts to natural and cultural resources
- Assessment of connections from stations to recreation and healthy food options to maximize health and environmental benefits to BLRT communities
- Assessment of existing and future sidewalks and/or trail connection opportunities at stations to improve the safety, connections, and accessibility for people walking, biking, and rolling to the BLRT
- Assessment of potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through reducing vehicle miles traveled

Assessment against the goal

The proposed route would support advancing both the Minnesota Department of Transportation and Hennepin County’s vehicle miles traveled reduction goals. Additionally, the proposed route provides an opportunity to locate LRT in an existing transportation facility, which could minimize overall environmental impacts and provide opportunities to improve pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The proposed route would provide access to area grocery stores and the regional park system. As reflected in the Next Steps section of this report, detailed environmental analysis and development of appropriate mitigation measures will be conducted as part of the federal and state environmental review process, including potentially sensitive areas around parks and historic resources.

This results in a **Good** rating for meeting the goal of promoting healthy communities and sound environmental practices including efforts to address climate change.



GOAL 6: Advance local and regional equity and work towards reducing regional racial disparities.

Route rating: **GOOD**

What informs this goal

- Opportunities to invest in historically disinvested communities and minimize displacement of corridor residents and businesses
- Maximizing cohesion, preservation, and enhancement of BLRT communities through assessment of improved access and connections to cultural and community assets along with opportunities to honor local heritage and character of BLRT communities
- Minimizing short-term and long-term impacts to property and property access, including property vehicle access, sidewalk access, on-street parking, and right-of-way acquisition

Assessment against the goal

The proposed BLRT route would be located along Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81), a current transportation facility, which minimizes right-of-way acquisition and supports cohesion. As reflected in previous goals, the route would improve accessibility and connectivity to the broader regional transit system, thereby improving overall



access to jobs and activity centers throughout the region. Additionally, this route furthers regional equity by providing METRO access to environmental justice communities, particularly in Brooklyn Park and Crystal.

This supports a rating of **Good** for Area 2A, demonstrating it meets the goal of advancing local and regional equity and work toward reducing regional racial disparities.

Area 2B: Robbinsdale

Area 2B is proposed to run on Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) from Highway 100 to the proposed North Memorial station. This area lies within the City of Robbinsdale. Stations in this section are proposed at downtown Robbinsdale and North Memorial. This section of the route along Bottineau Boulevard replaces the route in the freight rail right-of-way.

The March 2021 report reflected locating LRT on Bottineau Boulevard in this area. Bottineau Boulevard is approximately 1,000 feet east of the rail corridor and the distance widens to approximately 4,000 feet near North Memorial Health Hospital. Constraining features in this section of the corridor include Twin and Crystal Lakes, both located just to the east of existing Bottineau Boulevard. The elevation difference between West Broadway Avenue and the Lakeland Avenue frontage road on the east side of Bottineau Boulevard was also noted as a constraining feature by the City of Robbinsdale. While shifting from the original route to this proposed route will create different impacts and a need for new engineering solutions, a route along Bottineau Boulevard is the closest possible to the original, which is consistent with the Project Principle of maintaining existing alignment as much as possible.

This is also an important consideration relative to the station area planning work that was previously completed. While there is only one route proposed in this area to avoid use of the freight rail right-of-way, it is important to assess its ability to meet the established project goals. This section summarizes how the proposed route on Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) meets each of the project goals. These goal-specific summary statements serve as supporting information to the summary table presented on page 57. Previous station area planning efforts did not extend as far east as the stations along the proposed alignment and would require additional station area planning efforts.



GOAL 1: Improve transit access and connections to jobs and regional destinations.

Route rating: **EXCELLENT**

What informs this goal

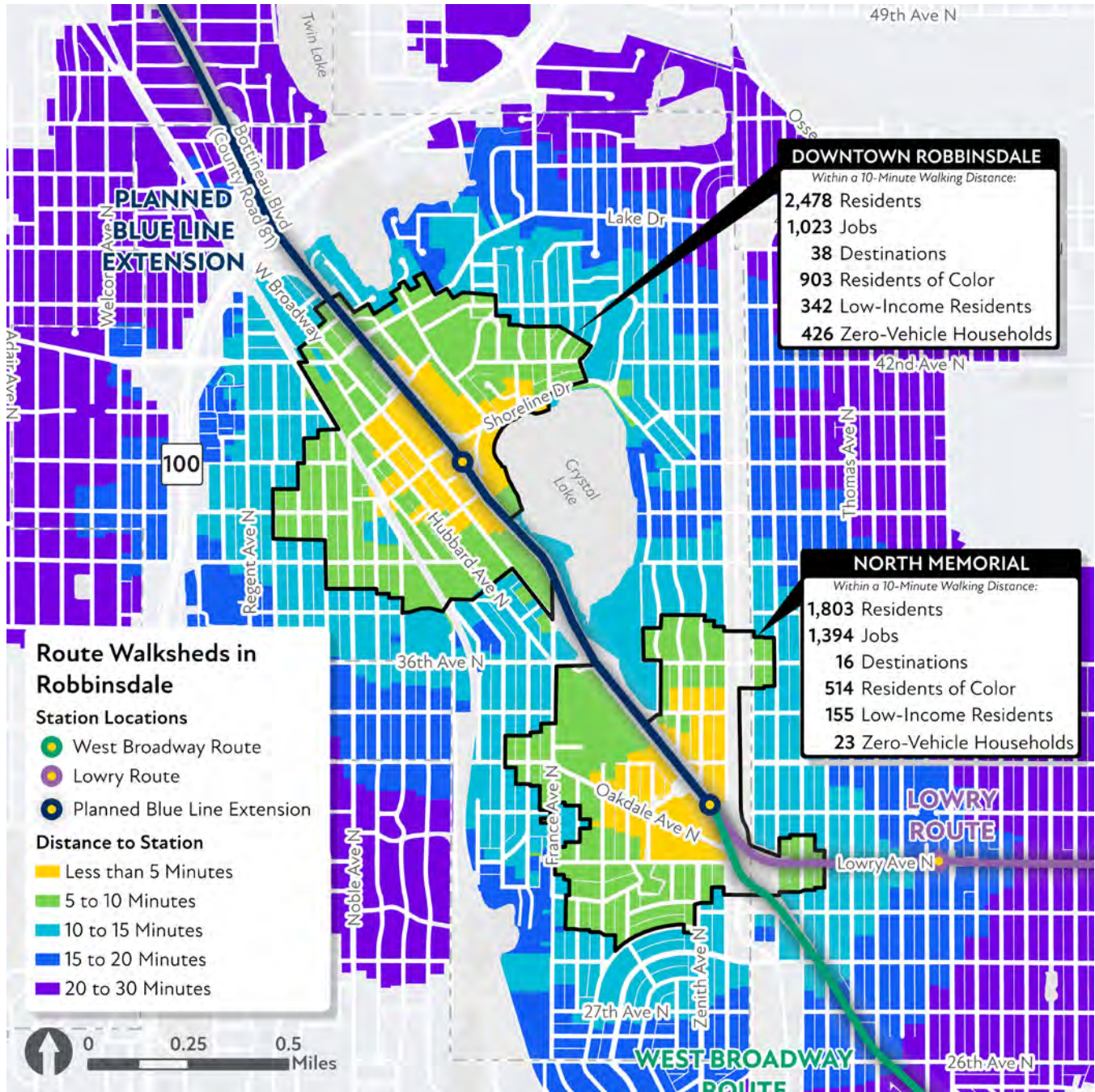
- Overall ridership and ability to expand and improve service to people with limited or no access to cars
- Reverse commute and off-peak transit opportunities
- Opportunity to expand and improve transit system linkages and multimodal transportation opportunities

Assessment against the goal

The proposed route on Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) in Area 2B would include potential station areas at Downtown Robbinsdale and North Memorial. As reflected in Figure 38, the potential Downtown Robbinsdale and North Memorial station areas have the ability to serve a broad walkshed area that includes the Downtown Robbinsdale area and the North Memorial medical complex, respectively. The North Memorial station would also provide access to Theodore Wirth Regional Park, Victory Park, and North Minneapolis.

For these reasons Area 2B receives a rating of **Excellent** for Goal 1, improve transit access and connections to jobs and regional destinations.

Figure 39: Robbinsdale Station Area Walksheds



Data Source: 2019 American Community Survey Data, Urban Footprint

Note: Specific station locations have been identified here for purposes of the walkshed evaluation.



GOAL 2: Improve frequency and reliability of transit service to communities in the corridor.

Route rating: **EXCELLENT**

What informs this goal

- Improve mobility for transit riders and attract new riders
- Expand and improve safe and efficient connections to existing and planned METRO transitways along with balancing improved transit accessibility with traffic mobility

Assessment against the goal

Providing transit in a dedicated guideway improves transit service reliability. Additionally, transit service frequency and regional connectivity would improve. Adding LRT in the median of Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) is expected to operate with similar intersection delay to the No-Build condition because the number and configuration of lanes is essentially unchanged. As the design advances, additional coordination will take place with the city to address traffic and safety concerns. The proposed route could provide roadway and overall safety improvements at both signalized and unsignalized intersections in areas such as: pedestrian intervals to give pedestrians a head start crossing an intersection, potential for narrowing travel lanes to shorten pedestrian crossing distances and calm traffic, pedestrian crossing signals, new pavement, and pedestrian crossings that meet all current accessibility requirements.

For these reasons Area 2B receives a rating of **Excellent** for Goal 2, improve frequency and reliability of transit service to communities in the corridor.



GOAL 3: Provide transit improvements that maximize transit benefits, while being cost competitive and economically viable.

Route rating: **GOOD**

What informs this goal

- Balance project benefits and costs through a tiered approach to capital, operating, and maintenance cost estimates

Assessment against the goal

Detailed capital cost estimates will be prepared as the community-supported route advances into more detailed design. Consistent with the Project Principle of meeting the FTA's New Starts criteria, which includes cost effectiveness criteria, the Metropolitan Council will work to define and advance a route that effectively balances capital and operating costs with overall transit system benefits. As the route on Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) is proposed to be at-grade and would run in existing transportation right-of-way, it is anticipated to be cost competitive.

With this approach in mind, the Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) route is assessed at achieving this goal with a **Good** rating.



GOAL 4: Support communities' development goals.

Route rating: **GOOD**

What informs this goal

- Assessment of capacity and likelihood of transit-oriented development and/or redevelopment opportunities in station areas
- Assessment of consistency with approved plans and policies, including policies related to affordable housing and prioritization of transportation modes

Assessment against the goal

Based on experience with both the Blue and Green Lines in the Twin Cities, it is anticipated that public and private investment would be made before, during, and after BLRT is open. The City's 2040 Comprehensive Plan notes several areas of infill potential along County Road 81 and West Broadway just to the west.¹ These areas are better served by a BLRT alignment on County Road 81 vs. the previous alignment on the railroad right-of-way.

Through coordination with the City of Robbinsdale both the Downtown Robbinsdale and North Memorial Stations will be integrated into the surrounding communities. Additionally, the Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County are committed to working with Robbinsdale to implement a comprehensive, innovative set of strategies to help communities build wealth in place. These strategies will ensure the investment builds on, supports, and protects existing community assets and provides more opportunities for equitable housing, employment, business development, cultural experiences, and other activities of daily life.

For these reasons, Area 2B would be a candidate for a rating of Excellent; however, based on feedback from the City of Robbinsdale on challenges in realizing their development goals, Area 2B receives a rating of **Good**.



GOAL 5: Promote healthy communities and sound environmental practices including efforts to address climate change.

Route rating: **GOOD**

What informs this goal

- Minimize impacts to natural and cultural resources
- Assessment of connections from stations to recreation and healthy food options to maximize health and environmental benefits to BLRT communities
- Assessment of existing and future sidewalks and/or trail connection opportunities at stations to improve the safety, connections, and accessibility for people walking, biking, and rolling to the BLRT
- Assessment of potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through reducing vehicle miles traveled

¹ Robbinsdale 2040 Comprehensive Plan, Figure 9, p. 19



Assessment against the goal

The proposed route would support advancing both the Minnesota Department of Transportation and Hennepin County's vehicle miles traveled reduction goals. Additionally, the proposed route provides an opportunity to locate LRT in an existing transportation facility, which could minimize overall environmental impacts and provide opportunities to improve pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The proposed route would provide access to area grocery stores and the regional park system. As reflected in the Next Steps section of this report, detailed environmental analysis and development of appropriate mitigation measures will be conducted as part of the federal and state environmental review process, including potentially sensitive areas around parks, historic resources and North Memorial.

This results in a **Good** rating for meeting the goal of promoting healthy communities and sound environmental practices including efforts to address climate change.



GOAL 6: Advance local and regional equity and work towards reducing regional racial disparities.

Route rating: **GOOD**

What informs this goal

- Opportunities to invest in historically disinvested communities and minimize displacement of corridor residents and businesses
- Maximizing cohesion, preservation, and enhancement of BLRT communities through assessment of improved access and connections to cultural and community assets along with opportunities to honor local heritage and character of BLRT communities
- Minimizing short-term and long-term impacts to property and property access, including property vehicle access, sidewalk access, on-street parking, and right-of-way acquisition

Assessment against the goal

The proposed BLRT route would be located along Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81), utilizing existing public right-of-way. As reflected in previous goals, the route would improve accessibility and connectivity to the broader regional transit system, thereby improving overall access to jobs and activity centers throughout the region. Additionally, this route furthers regional equity by providing METRO access to environmental justice communities.

This supports a rating of **Good** for Area 2B, demonstrating it meets the goal of advancing local and regional equity and work toward reducing regional racial disparities.

Summary of Area 2 Evaluation

The Area 2 route on Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) has been evaluated based on its ability to effectively meet the defined project goals. As reflected in the following table, this route meets the project goals, as reflected in an overall assessment of “good.” Goals that achieve an “excellent” assessment include specific areas that inform that goal that are unique and/or have a high potential to provide exemplary positive benefits. As reflected in the table, this route has not been assessed at a “poor” level, which would represent not meeting the defined project goal.

Table 6: Area 2 Evaluation Summary

ASSESSMENT OF ROUTE OPTION TO DEFINED GOALS		
PROJECT GOAL	AREA 2A: BROOKLYN PARK AND CRYSTAL	AREA 2B: ROBBINSDALE
Goal 1: Improve transit access and connections to jobs and regional destinations	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT
Goal 2: Improve frequency and reliability of transit service to communities in the corridor	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT
Goal 3: Provide transit improvements that maximize transit benefits, while being cost competitive and economically viable	GOOD	GOOD
Goal 4: Support communities’ development goals	GOOD	GOOD
Goal 5: Promote healthy communities and sound environmental practices including efforts to address climate change	GOOD	GOOD
Goal 6: Advance local and regional equity and work towards reducing regional racial disparities	GOOD	GOOD



Area 3: Minneapolis

For the purposes of this evaluation, the routes being considered in Minneapolis can be divided into two sections: the Lowry route and the West Broadway route. Under the umbrella of each route option, several different designs are being considered to minimize impacts and maximize benefits. These are determined in part by engineering standards and constraints.

This section will discuss each of the project goals and how the two main route options for Minneapolis address those goals. For each goal, an overview is provided followed by a comparative evaluation of the Lowry and West Broadway routes. The section concludes with a summary of differentiating characteristics between the two routes that inform the evaluation findings.

Of the three areas, Area 3 has the most changes to the proposed route from the former route, and the evaluation for this area has correspondingly more detail. In its comments on the Draft Route Modification Report, the City of Minneapolis also requested additional data to support the evaluation findings, which has been added.

Route Characteristics

General characteristics of the two route options are summarized below:

	LOWRY ROUTE	WEST BROADWAY ROUTE
Route length	Approximately 4.3 miles	Approximately 3.5 miles
Travel time	Approximately 16 minutes	Approximately 14 minutes
Potential Stations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plymouth • Washington at West Broadway • Lowry at Washington • Lowry at Emerson/Fremont • Lowry at Penn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lyndale at Plymouth • West Broadway at Emerson/Fremont • West Broadway at Penn
Roadways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7th Street • 10th Avenue • 3rd Street • Washington Avenue • Lowry Avenue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7th Street • 21st Street • Olson Memorial Highway • East Lyndale Avenue • Lyndale Avenue • West Broadway

Note: Station locations reflect general study areas. The number of stations and exact locations may change.



GOAL 1: Improve transit access and connections to jobs and regional destinations.

Route rating: Lowry route **EXCELLENT**; West Broadway route **EXCELLENT**

WHAT INFORMS THIS GOAL	DATA USED IN THIS ASSESSMENT
Overall ridership potential and ability to expand and improve service to people with limited or no access to cars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population density • Households without access to vehicles (percent and raw numbers) • Median household income, residents of color (percent and raw numbers) • Number of residents, jobs, destinations • 10-minute walking distance of each of the proposed stations • Number of people affected by geographic barriers
Reverse commute and off-peak transit opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metropolitan Council job and activity centers
Opportunity to expand and improve transit system linkages and multimodal transportation opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing transit system – LRT, arterial bus rapid transit (BRT), local bus routes • Metro Transit's Network Next 2040 plan – potential candidate BRT corridors
Maximize transit access to housing, employment, schools, community services, health care facilities, shopping, parks, activity centers, and other destinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of residents, jobs, destinations within 10-minute walking distance of proposed stations • Land use along proposed routes

Overview

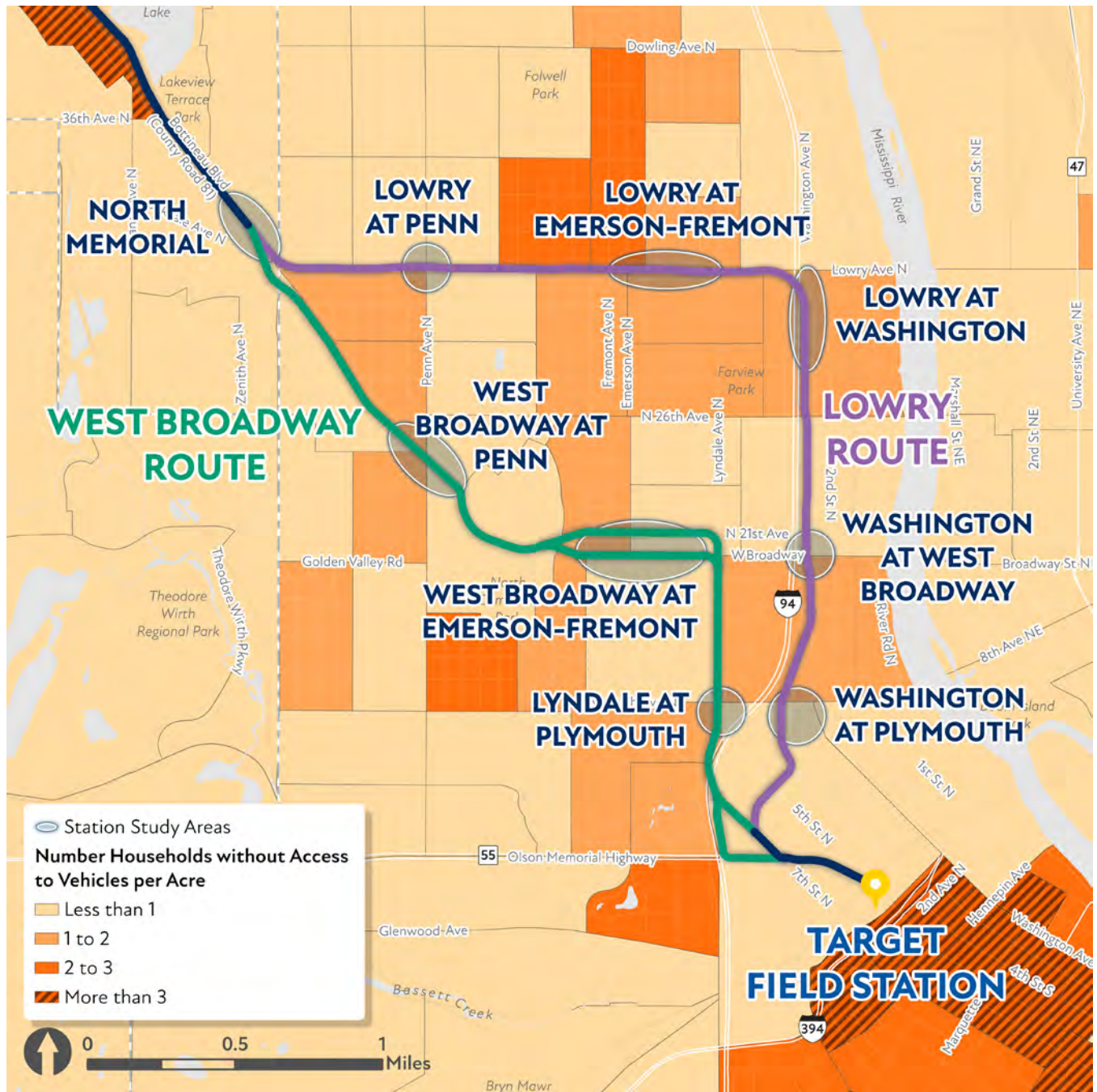
TRANSIT ACCESS BY DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Both the Lowry and West Broadway routes would serve neighborhoods where there is limited or no access to personal vehicles (Figure 40), households that are generally below the Hennepin County median household income (Figure 41), and a relatively high percentage (60 percent or more) of residents of color (Figure 42). Through the information on each of these figures, it can be concluded that both the Lowry and West Broadway routes would serve neighborhoods where improved transit accessibility and ability to connect with jobs and regional destinations is important. The comparative evaluation in the next section of this report takes a deeper look into the specific differences between the West Broadway and Lowry routes in relation to these factors.



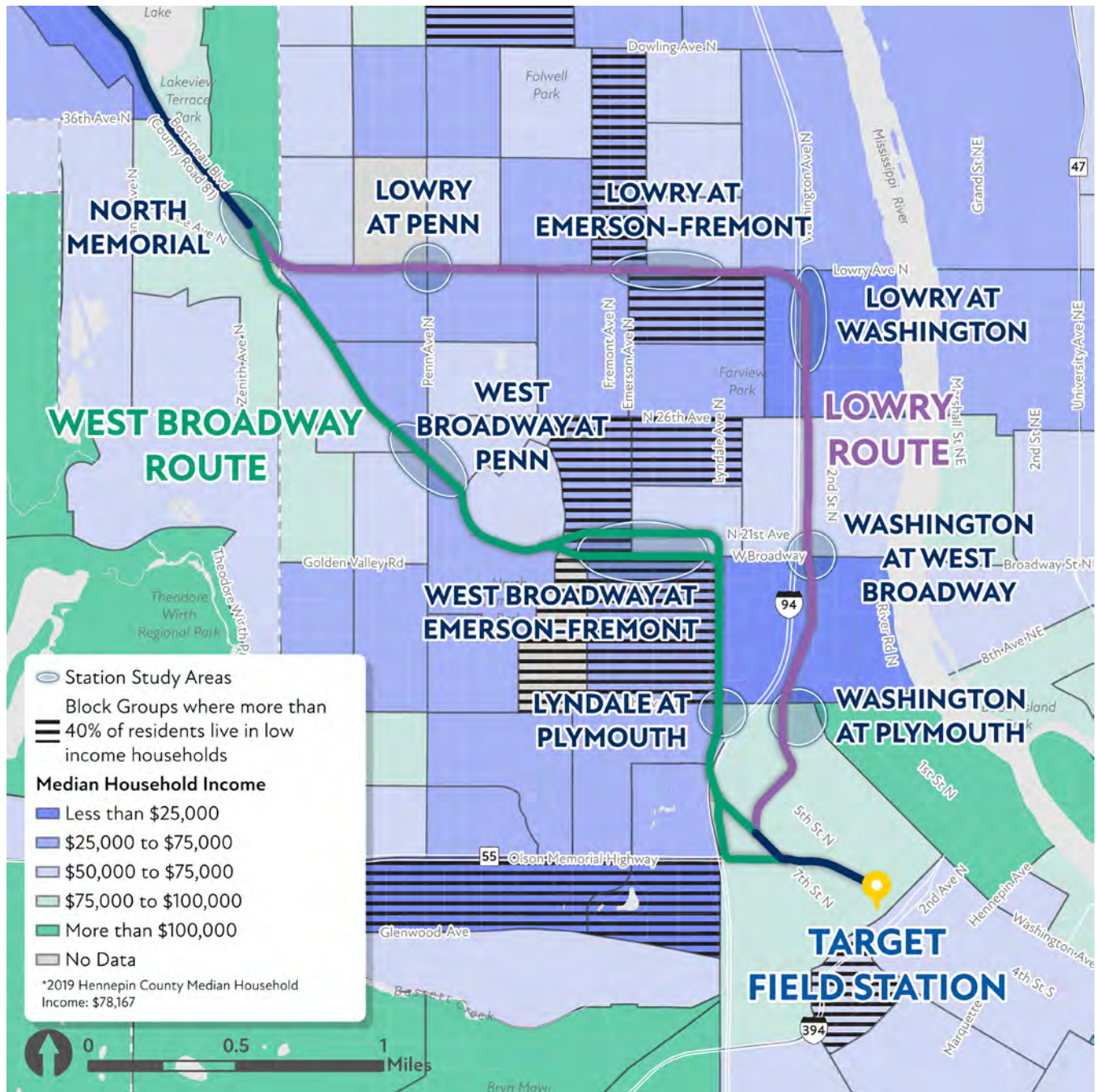
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Figure 40: Households Without Access to Vehicles by Block Group (Area 3 - West Broadway and Lowry Routes)



Data Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey Data

Figure 41: Median Household Income by Block Group (Area 3 - West Broadway and Lowry Routes)



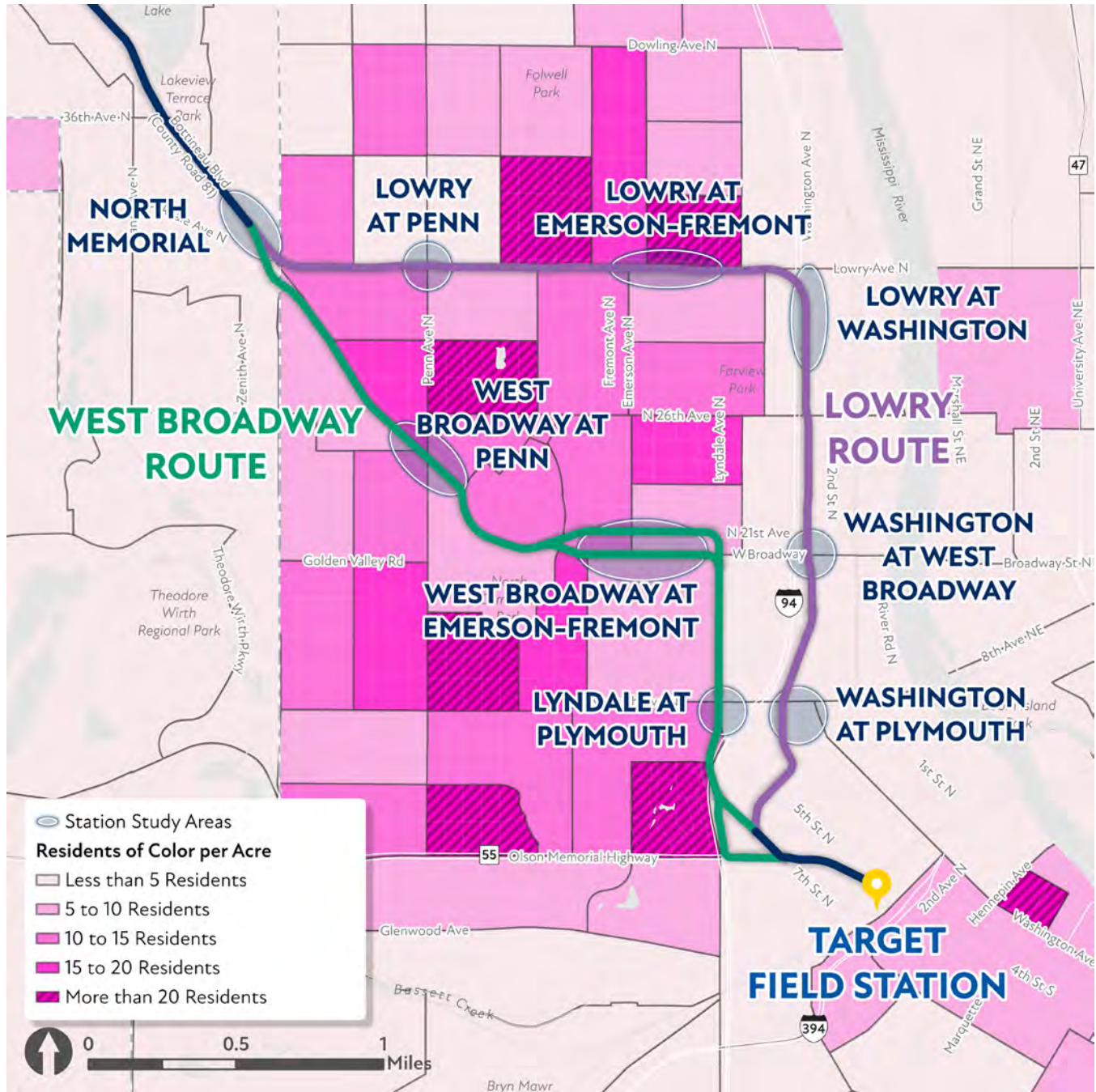
Data Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey Data

Low-Income was calculated using American Community Survey poverty status statistics. The American Community Survey uses a set of income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty



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Figure 42: Residents of Color by Block Group (Area 3 - West Broadway and Lowry Routes)

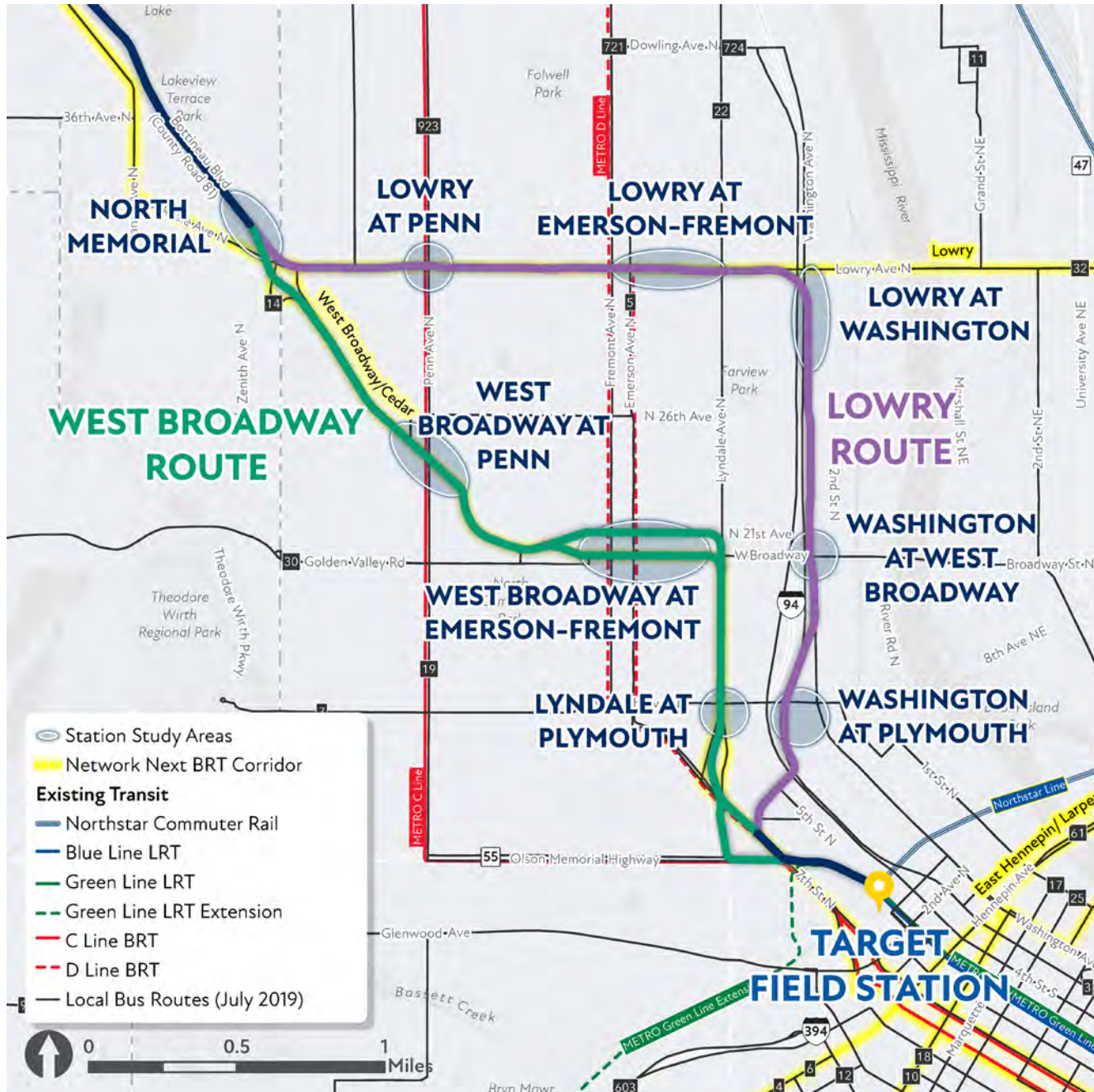


Data Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey Data

CONNECTIONS TO REGIONAL TRANSIT SYSTEM

Both routes would also provide improved regional transit system connectivity through access to Northstar Commuter Rail, existing and planned LRT lines at Target Field Station, existing and planned arterial BRT lines, and express and local bus service. Increasing transit connections to the overall regional transit system in turn increases opportunities for all riders to access employment and job opportunities. This is particularly important to the environmental justice communities that would be served.

Figure 43: Existing and Future Transit Network (Area 3 - Lowry Route)



Data Source: Metropolitan Council

Network Next establishes Metro Transit’s vision for the bus network of 2040. It identifies opportunities to bring better transit to more people over the next 20 years in the Twin Cities.



Comparative Evaluation

People Served by BLRT Stations

Building off previous Figures 40-43, Figures 41-63 show the results of a walkshed analysis conducted to assess the populations served by each proposed station, where yellow indicates areas less than five minutes from a station and dark purple indicates a walking time of over 30 minutes to a station. Table 6 provides an at-a-glance comparison of people and places within a 10-minute walking distance to each station along the Lowry and West Broadway routes.

The Draft Route Modification Report noted that the walksheds along the Washington Avenue section of the Lowry route are constrained by Interstate 94. The freeway has limited pedestrian crossings at Plymouth Avenue, West Broadway Avenue, 26th Avenue, and Lowry Avenue. In order to access these crossings, riders have to double back on their routes in many cases and may not feel safe walking over the freeway. When the physical barrier is considered as illustrated in Figure 44, a significant portion of the community is barred from accessing stations along Washington Avenue because of the added challenge of crossing the freeway. Additionally, the Plymouth station area walkshed would overlap with the existing Target Field station. By contrast, only a small portion of the Lyndale at Plymouth walkshed is barred along the West Broadway route shown in Figure 45.

Although the Lowry route serves a higher total population through its five stations, the West Broadway route serves a higher percentage of low-income populations, residents of color, and zero-vehicle households through three stations on a shorter route. This is especially true if only the non-barriered populations are considered. Both routes serve a significant amount of people and people that are important to serve.

Table 7: People and Destinations Served by BLRT Stations

NAME	TOTAL POPULATION	LOW INCOME POPULATION	PERCENT LOW INCOME	RESIDENTS OF COLOR	PERCENT RESIDENTS OF COLOR	TOTAL JOBS	DESTINATIONS	TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	ZERO-VEHICLE HOUSEHOLDS	PERCENT ZERO-VEHICLE HOUSEHOLDS
Lowry Route										
Washington at Plymouth	2,663	477	18%	1,085	41%	5,083	34	1,510	257	17%
Washington at West Broadway	1,227	372	30%	994	81%	1,570	46	438	193	44%
Washington at Lowry	1,284	329	26%	1,076	84%	1,153	9	471	206	44%
Lowry at Emerson-Fremont	6,165	1,920	31%	4,970	81%	374	43	1,871	489	26%
Lowry at Penn	4,737	952	20%	3,548	75%	360	38	1,536	264	17%
Total*	14,674	3,700	25%	10,580	72%	7,700	163	5,358	943	18%
Barriered Population	1,883	522	28%	1,413	75%	-	-	666	198	30%
Total Unbarriered	12,791	3,178	25%	9,167	72%	-	-	4,692	745	16%

NAME	TOTAL POPULATION	LOW INCOME POPULATION	PERCENT LOW INCOME	RESIDENTS OF COLOR	PERCENT RESIDENTS OF COLOR	TOTAL JOBS	DESTINATIONS	TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	ZERO-VEHICLE HOUSEHOLDS	PERCENT ZERO-VEHICLE HOUSEHOLDS
West Broadway Route										
Lyndale and Plymouth Ave	1,771	633	36%	1,380	78%	1,855	51	587	175	30%
West Broadway at Emerson-Fremont	4,317	1,901	44%	3,636	84%	1,550	107	1,147	247	22%
West Broadway at Penn	5,619	1,283	23%	4,606	82%	644	41	1,618	269	17%
Total*	10,893	3,499	32%	8,987	83%	3,648	156	3,119	631	20%
Barriered Population	105	26	25%	37	35%	-	-	58	9	16%
Total Unbarriered	10,788	3,473	32%	8,950	83%	-	-	3,061	622	20%

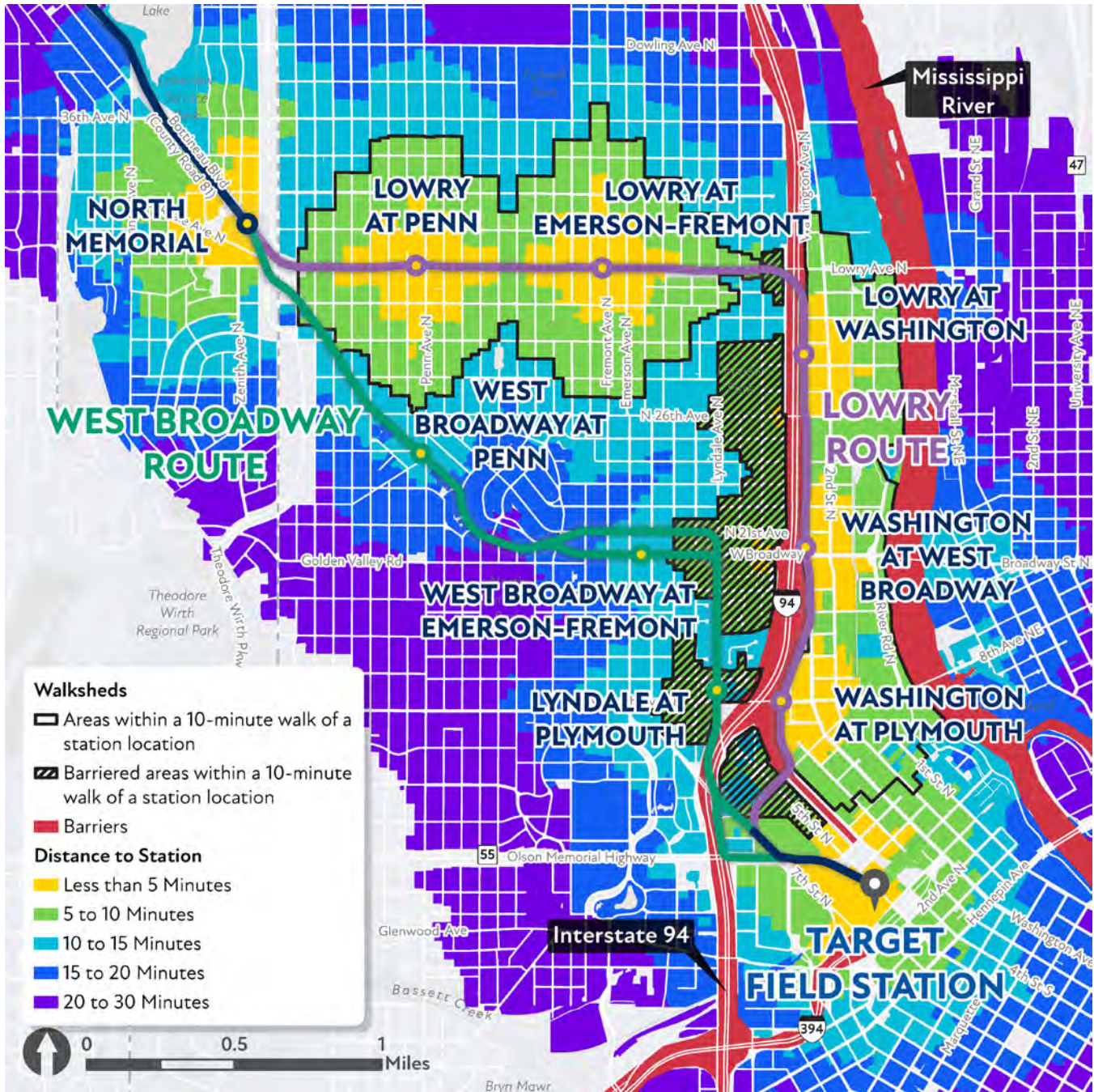
*Because station walksheds overlap total route numbers do not reflect the summation of the number for each station.

Note: Numbers in this table differ from those shared in the Draft Route Modification Report. A portion of the route along 10th Avenue was eliminated based on feedback from the City of Minneapolis. Because of this, the station study area for Washington & Plymouth moved to around Washington and 3rd, which resulted in different walkshed numbers.



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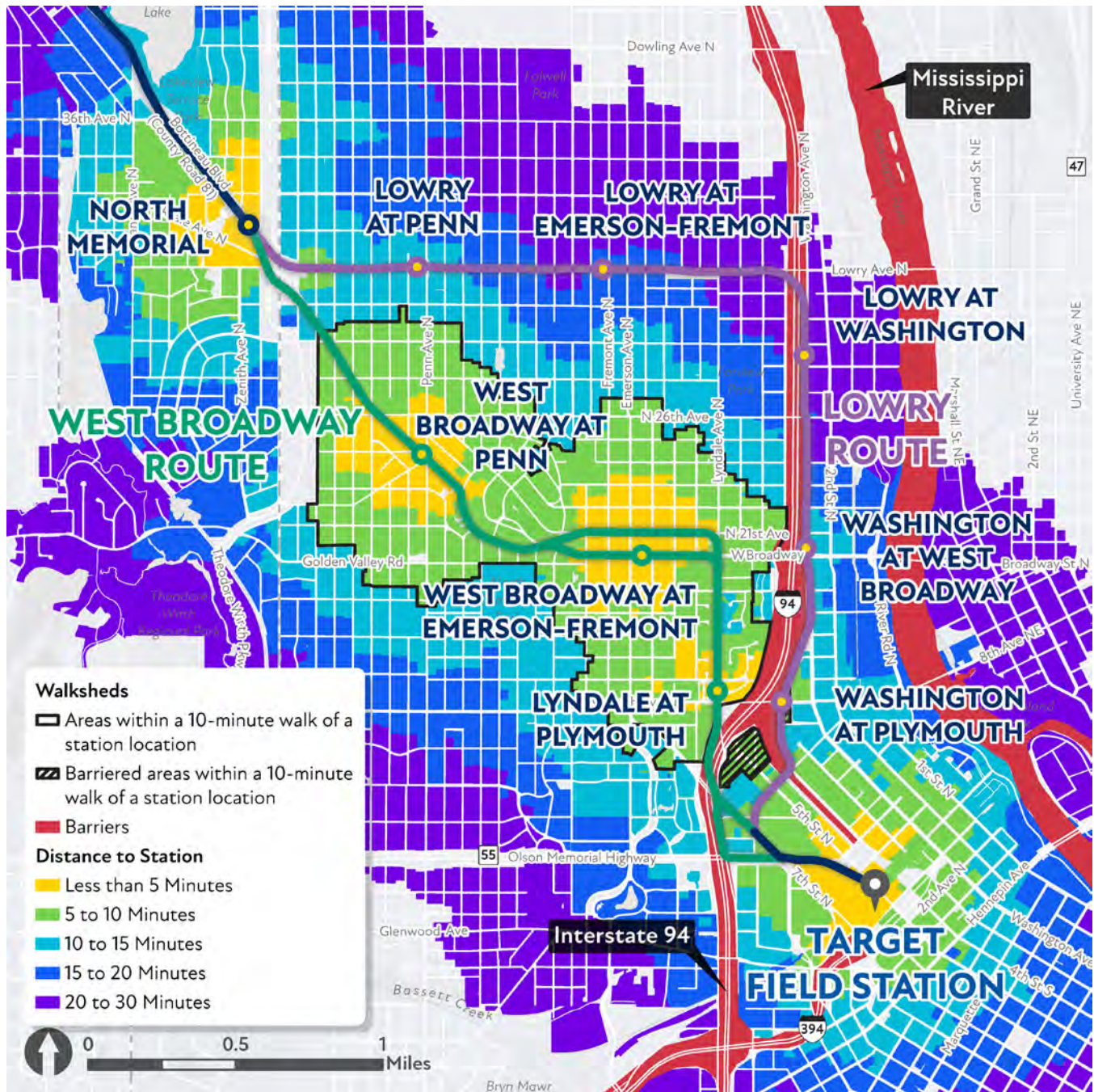
Figure 44: 10-Minute Route Walksheds and Barriers (Area 3 - Lowry Route)



Data Source: Urban Footprint

Urban Footprint is an analysis software that generates travel time in minutes walking from a parcel to the nearest point of interest based on the shortest distance within the existing pedestrian network.

Figure 45: 10-Minute Route Walksheds and Barriers (Area 3 - West Broadway Route)



Data Source: Urban Footprint

Urban Footprint is an analysis software that generates travel time in minutes walking from a parcel to the nearest point of interest based on the shortest distance within the existing pedestrian network.



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Figure 46: 10-Minute Route Walksheds and Barriers (Washington at Plymouth and Target Field Station)



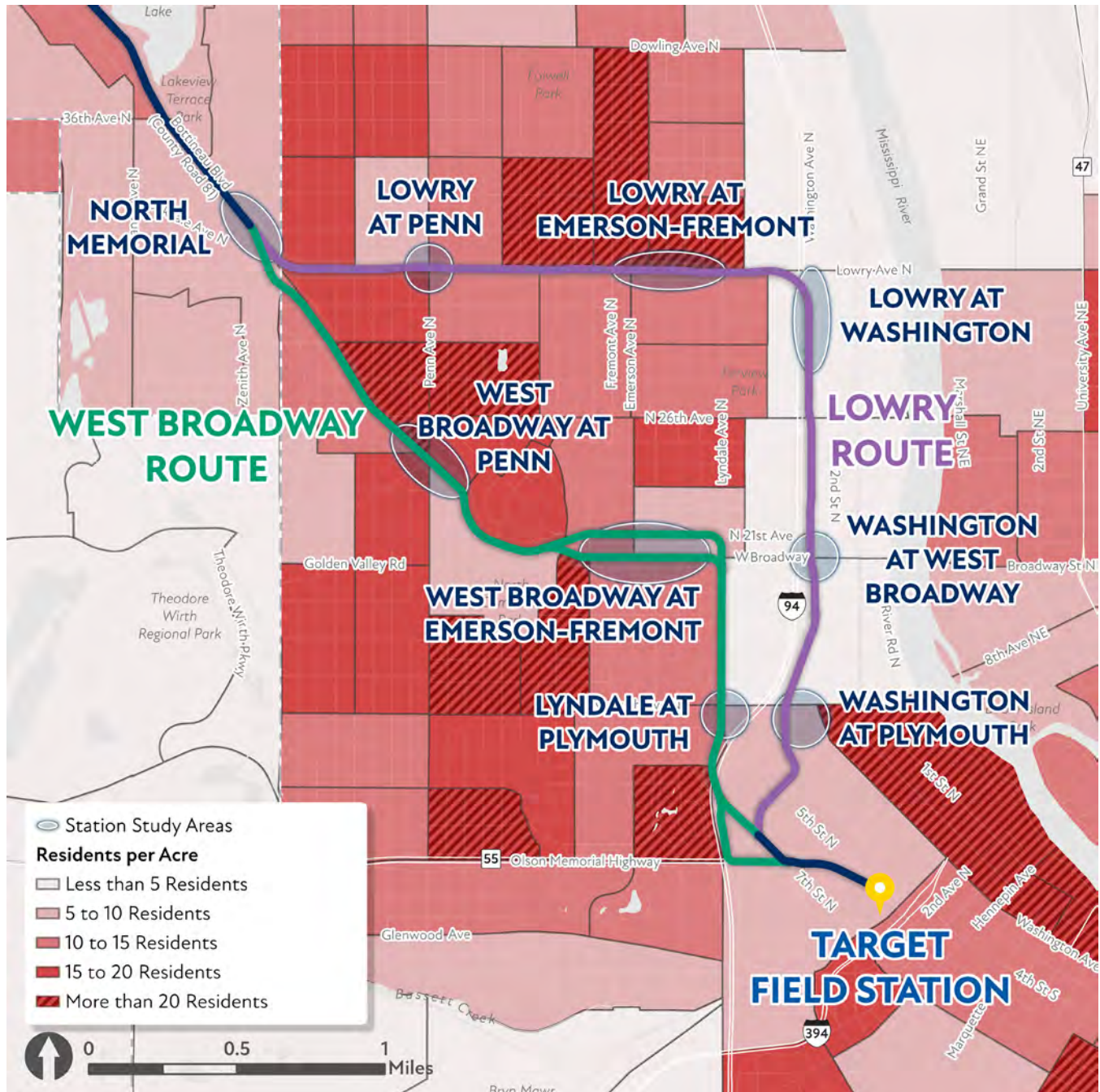
Data Source: Urban Footprint

Urban Footprint is an analysis software that generates travel time in minutes walking from a parcel to the nearest point of interest based on the shortest distance within the existing pedestrian network.

Population Density

The proposed stations along the Lowry Avenue section of the Lowry route would serve neighborhoods with relatively high population density. Population density along the Washington Avenue section of the route, by contrast, is very low. This can be attributed to the industrial nature of that section and the presence of Interstate 94. The proposed stations along the West Broadway route would serve neighborhoods with a higher population density than the Lowry route.

Figure 47: Population Density by Block Group (Area 3 - West Broadway and Lowry Routes)



Data Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey Data



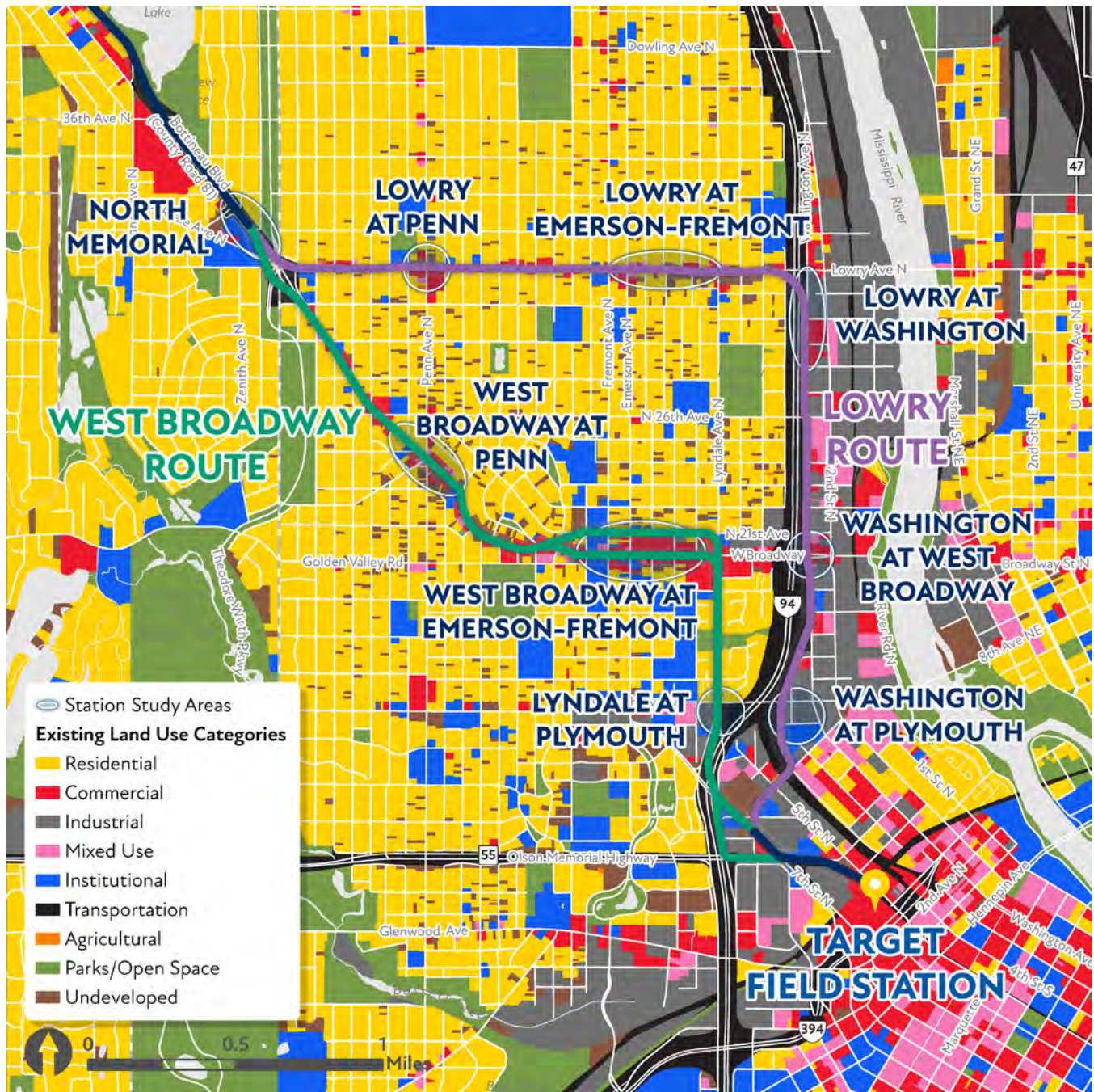
Existing and Future Land Use

Existing land use for both routes is depicted in Figure 48. The proposed route on Lowry Avenue is surrounded primarily by residential land uses and some commercial uses. On the east side of Washington Avenue, land use is industrial and commercial, with Interstate 94 to the west of the proposed route.

Along the West Broadway route, commercial land uses are concentrated proximate to the proposed route on West Broadway Avenue, with residential areas to the north and south of these commercial areas. The Lyndale Avenue section is mostly residential along with institutional uses to the west. The West Broadway route would serve the heart of the West Broadway business district, most notably at the Emerson-Fremont station area. The West Broadway at Penn station area would also serve a highly residential area.

Future (2040) land use is illustrated in Figure 49. Along the Lowry route, land use is anticipated to be primarily corridor mixed-use immediately adjacent to the Lowry Avenue portion. Along the Washington Avenue portion, land use would be mostly production and processing. For the West Broadway Avenue route, there is some production mixed-use and some urban neighborhood use anticipated along the Lyndale portion, and nodes of corridor, community, and destination mixed-use along West Broadway itself. Both routes are anticipated to serve mixed-use areas in the future. The Lowry route would also serve significant production and processing areas. The mixed-use areas served by the West Broadway route are more likely to be destinations for visitors outside the neighborhood, with an emphasis on street-level commercial retail.

Figure 48: Existing Land Use (Area 3 - West Broadway and Lowry Routes)



Data Source: Metropolitan Council - Existing Land Use (2017)



METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Route Modification Report

Figure 49: Future Land Use – Minneapolis 2040 (Area 3 - West Broadway and Lowry Routes)



Data Source: City of Minneapolis

Destinations

Figure 50 shows existing destinations within a half mile from the proposed station areas in Minneapolis as well as destinations that were identified as important places through community input. The Washington Avenue section of the Lowry route and its proposed stations serve a fewer number of existing destinations compared with the West Broadway route. Additionally, this section is constrained by Interstate 94 on the west and the Mississippi River to the east. The Lowry Avenue section would serve some community destinations, including the North Regional Library. Because the Upper Harbor Terminal development is an important regional destination, access to the site was evaluated in detail and the results are shown in Appendix A. While the south end of Upper Harbor Terminal is within a 15-minute walk from the Washington at Lowry station area, the proposed land uses within this area are mostly manufacturing or industrial. Proposed destinations such as the Upper Harbor Terminal amphitheater, residences, and main area of the park are all more than a 20-minute walk from the station area, meaning for most riders to access those areas by transit, additional connections would need to be created.

The West Broadway route and proposed stations would serve numerous existing community destinations, most notably in the West Broadway and Emerson-Fremont area: Capri Theatre, Masjid An-Nur, Shiloh Temple, Juxtaposition Arts, and North Community High School are examples of key community hubs along this route. Minneapolis Public Schools district offices and the West Broadway business district contribute to making West Broadway, near this station area an important Job and Activity Center (Figure 50).

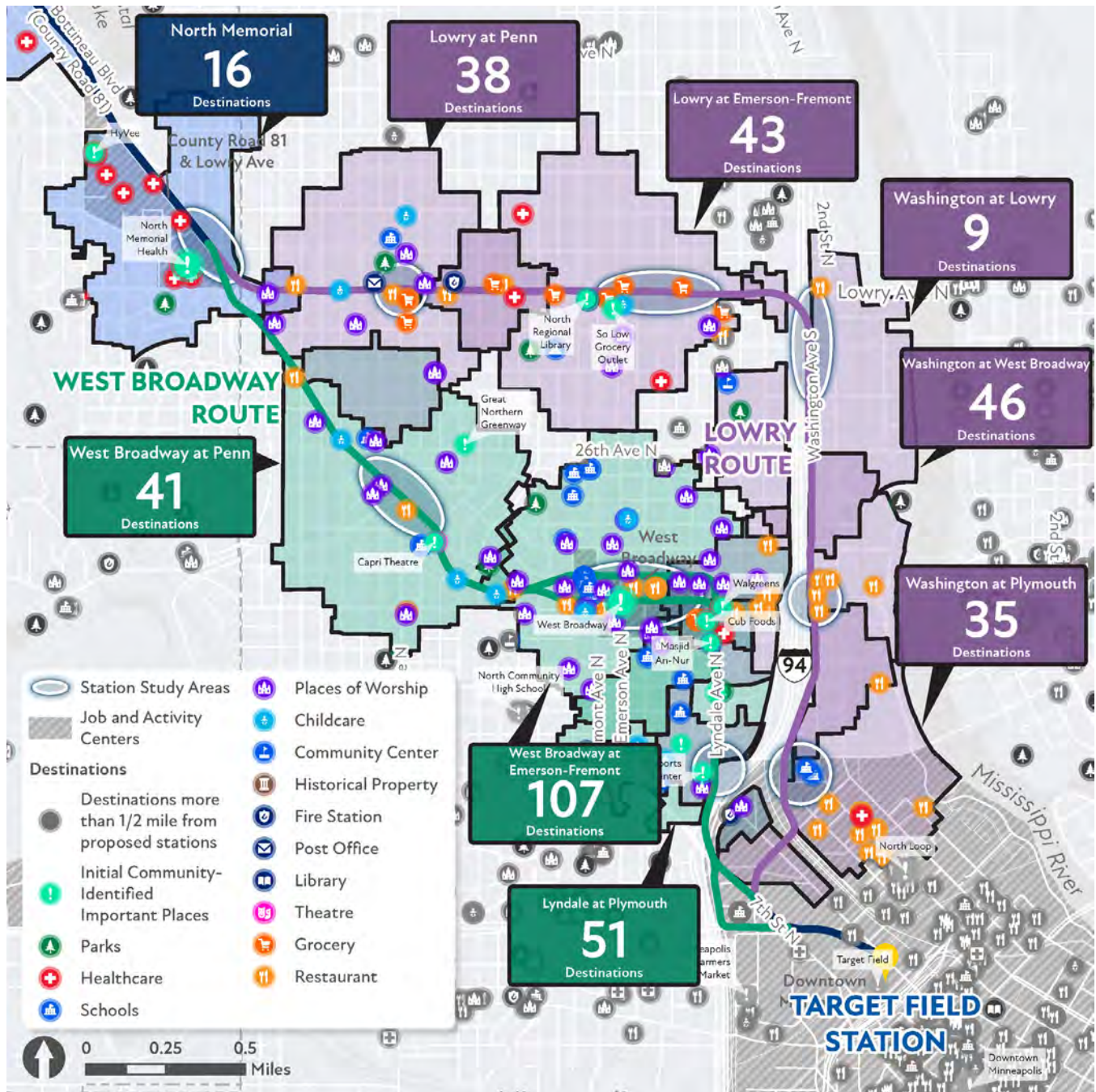
In addition to these important community assets, it is also recognized that the West Broadway corridor in particular serves several regional destinations that attract people from outside the immediate neighborhoods. In the Emerson-Fremont area this includes cultural assets as noted above like the Capri Theater and job and economic activity centers like the West Broadway business district and Minneapolis Public Schools district offices. The Lyndale at Plymouth station area is home to major recreational and social service destinations like the V3 Sports Center and the Hennepin County Service Center. This highlights the importance of West Broadway as a hub of local and regional activity.

Over the past year, the community has identified locations that are important assets to preserve and promote along the corridor. Some of these initial locations are shared in Figure 50. Visit [BlueLineExt.org](https://www.metrotransit.org/blue-line-ext) to continue to share more locations on our interactive feedback map.



METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Route Modification Report

Figure 50: Destinations and Community-Identified Important Places (Area 3 - West Broadway and Lowry Routes)



Data Source: Hennepin County, City of Minneapolis, Metropolitan Council, and Community Input

Ridership Potential

As indicated in Table 6, both routes would serve low-income, minority, and zero-car households. This indicates strong ridership potential for both routes.



GOAL 2: Improve frequency and reliability of transit service to communities in the corridor.

Route rating: Lowry route **GOOD**; West Broadway route **GOOD**

WHAT INFORMS THIS GOAL	DATA USED IN THIS ASSESSMENT
Improve mobility for transit riders and attract new riders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Length of proposed routes Existing and planned transit serving the Lowry and West Broadway routes Walkshed maps including geographic barriers
Expand and improve safe and efficient connections to existing and planned METRO transitways along with balancing improved transit accessibility with traffic mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing average daily traffic on proposed route roadways Preliminary traffic analysis conducted on proposed route roadway intersections Bike and pedestrian connections Cross-reference access maps from Goal 6

Overview

Both the Lowry and West Broadway routes would improve overall transit service to communities. BLRT would operate at 10-minute frequencies during the weekday and would provide improved regional transit connectivity through connections to local and arterial BRT (C and D Lines), along with connections to the regional LRT system at Target Field Station (Figure 43). The Lowry route would provide a connection that does not exist today from Lowry Avenue into downtown Minneapolis without a transfer. Under the West Broadway route, Metro Transit currently operates local route 14. As route selection advances, coordination with Metro Transit would take place to determine the overall local transit route structure to maintain and improve overall system connectivity for the transit user.

Providing transit in a dedicated guideway improves transit service reliability as the LRT is not subject to congestion delays associated with auto traffic. The routes under evaluation in Area 3 would result in lane reductions to accommodate LRT. In general, the Lowry and West Broadway routes have similar existing traffic volumes, which range from around 10,000 vehicles per day near Robbinsdale to around 20,000 vehicles per day near downtown Minneapolis (Figure 51).



METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Route Modification Report

Figure 51: Existing Average Daily Traffic



Comparative Evaluation

Travel time and ridership

As stated under Goal 1, ridership potential on the West Broadway route is expected to be similar to the Lowry route, as both serve low-income, minority, and zero-car households. This indicates strong ridership potential for both routes.

Traffic

Intersections along Lowry Avenue would have similar operations with the lane configurations proposed with LRT. The intersections along Washington Avenue would be expected to have increases in delays due to the lane reductions required to accommodate LRT, specifically at West Broadway Avenue and 17th Avenue North.

Due to high peak hour directionality of traffic volumes, most intersections along West Broadway Avenue in Minneapolis would experience increased delays and queues with the proposed lane reductions, particularly at intersections east of Irving Avenue North.

There is no clear differentiation between routes regarding traffic impacts. Both routes would experience similar levels of lane reductions and traffic delays at intersections.



GOAL 3: Provide transit improvements that maximize transit benefits, while being cost competitive and economically viable.

Route rating: Lowry route **GOOD**; West Broadway route **GOOD**

WHAT INFORMS THIS GOAL	DATA USED IN THIS ASSESSMENT
Balance project benefits and costs through a tiered approach to capital, operating, and maintenance cost estimates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of general route requirements such as LRT guideway, required street reconstruction, bridges and retaining walls, use of public right-of-way, and potential private right-of-way acquisition Walkshed maps including geographic barriers Examples of safety and security measures at stations

Assessment against the goal

Detailed capital cost estimates will be prepared as the community-supported route advances into more detailed design. That said, consistent with the approved Project Principle of meeting the FTA's New Starts criteria, which includes cost effectiveness, the project team will work to define and advance a route that effectively balances capital and operating costs with overall transit system benefits. Important considerations in developing cost estimates will include overall length of the LRT guideway, required street reconstruction, bridges and retaining walls, and right-of-way acquisition. With this approach in mind, both routes are assessed at achieving this goal with a "good" rating.



GOAL 4: Support communities' development goals.

Route rating: Lowry route **GOOD**; West Broadway route **EXCELLENT**

WHAT INFORMS THIS GOAL	DATA USED IN THIS ASSESSMENT
Assessment of capacity and likelihood of transit-oriented development and/or redevelopment opportunities in station areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map and table of undeveloped parcels Maps of existing and future land use in station areas
Assessment of consistency with approved plans and policies, including policies related to affordable housing and prioritization of transportation modes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of existing federal, state, regional, and local plans related to expanding multimodal transportation options, equity, and reduction in vehicle miles traveled

Overview

TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Based on experience with both the Blue Line and the Green Line in the Twin Cities, it is anticipated that public and private investment would be made during design, construction, and after the BLRT is open. Through the programs and policies that come out of the Anti-Displacement Workgroup, the intent would be to focus the investments on housing and business development and redevelopment that benefits the community.

One indication of redevelopment potential is the presence of undeveloped parcels in vicinity of station areas. Figure 52 shows undeveloped parcels within a 10-minute walking distance of proposed station areas. As summarized in Table 8, the average size of undeveloped parcels is similar along the two routes. There are more undeveloped properties along the West Broadway route, which accounts for the higher acreage of vacant land.

The summary of undeveloped parcels also includes identification of how many are owned by a public entity. With publicly-owned parcels, there may be greater flexibility to deploy programs that support building wealth in place for existing businesses, including BIPOC-owned businesses.

Other public realm improvements could be part of the BLRT project, including improvements to existing infrastructure, and other community investment to improve safety, access, or the overall look and function of infrastructure.

Table 8: Undeveloped Parcels within 10-minute walkshed

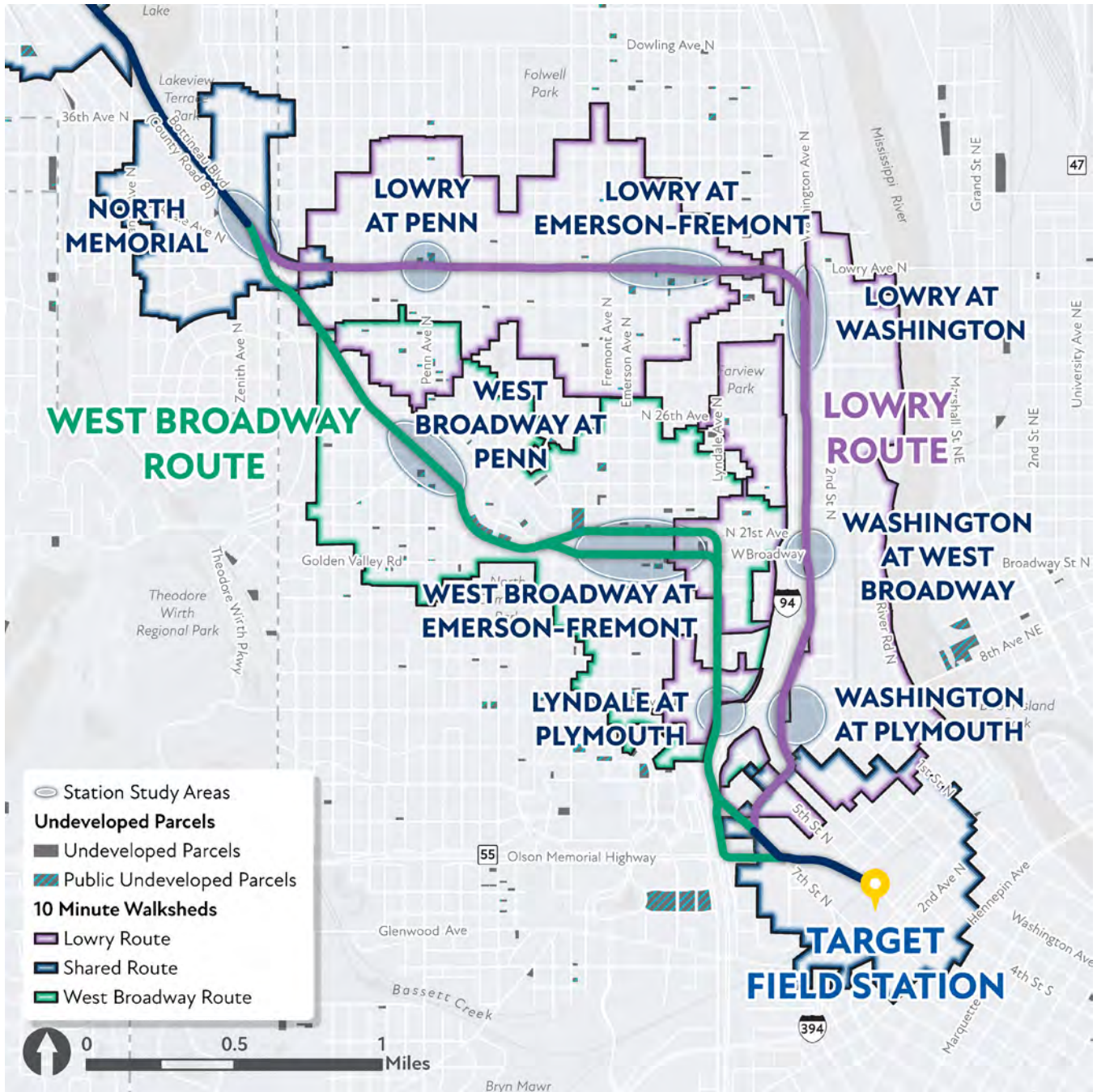
STATION WALKSHED	NUMBER OF UNDEVELOPED PARCELS	NUMBER OF PUBLIC UNDEVELOPED PARCELS	TOTAL UNDEVELOPED PARCEL AREA (ACRES)	AVERAGE UNDEVELOPED PARCEL SIZE (ACRES)
Target Field	0	0	0	--
North Memorial	1	0	0.15	0.15
West Broadway Route				
Lyndale and Plymouth Ave	11	4	1.37	0.12
West Broadway at Emerson-Fremont	49	36	7.49	0.15
West Broadway at Penn	52	39	6.41	0.12
Lowry Route				
Washington at Plymouth	0	0	0	--
Washington at West Broadway	6	4	1.44	0.24
Washington at Lowry	9	6	1.32	0.15
Lowry at Emerson-Fremont	27	20	3.62	0.13
Lowry at Penn	28	19	3.48	0.12
Lowry Route Total	62	45	8.76	0.14
West Broadway Route Total	107	75	14.6	0.14

Data Source: Metropolitan Council - 2020 Land Use



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Figure 52: Undeveloped Parcels (Area 3 - West Broadway and Lowry Routes)



Data Source: Metropolitan Council - 2020 Land Use

*Undeveloped: Land not currently used for any defined purpose that may or may not contain buildings or other structures or has no discernible use based upon the aerial photos or available data. Undeveloped may include non-protected wetlands or lands currently under development.

Note: This map uses data developed in 2016 and may not represent current conditions or planned development.

CONSISTENCY WITH AND SUPPORT OF EXISTING PLANS

A federal initiative and state, regional, and local plans have identified specific goals related to expanding multimodal transportation options, equity, and reduction in vehicle miles traveled. Both the Lowry and West Broadway routes would advance achieving the specified goals. Below is a selection of relevant plans, studies, and policies and how they support or rely on the implementation of BLRT.

Justice40 Initiative

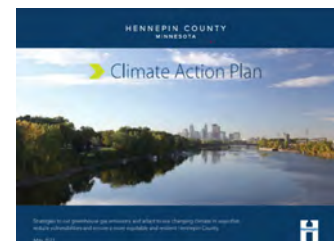
Justice40 is a federal initiative which directs that 40 percent of benefits from certain federal investments should go to disadvantaged communities. Programs and investments covered under Justice40 include those related to climate change and clean transportation, and potential benefits include greenhouse gas emissions reductions; reduction of exposure to emissions; improvement in public transit accessibility, reliability, and options; access to clean, high-frequency transportation; and increased bicycle and walking paths. As a major transit investment, BLRT will provide these benefits along either alignment and throughout the region. See Goal 6 for more on how these benefits will flow to disadvantaged communities.

Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) Sustainable Transportation Advisory Council (STAC) Recommendations

STAC's recommendations, adopted by MnDOT in March 2021, include a goal of 20 percent reduction in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) statewide by 2050. Replacing trips in personal vehicles with trips by BLRT would make significant progress towards this goal.

Hennepin County Climate Action Plan

Hennepin County's Climate Action Plan, adopted in May 2021, uses STAC's 20 percent VMT reduction goal as a threshold and states that the county will develop a more ambitious goal for VMT reduction by June 2022. Realizing this goal will require replacing single-occupancy vehicle travel with transit trips.



Minneapolis 2040

Minneapolis' 2040 Plan, which took effect in 2020, guides Minneapolis' growth over the next two decades. A pillar of the plan is that everyone should benefit from this growth, since past growth and investment have resulted in inequities. While the plan is broad in scope, covering land use, housing, jobs, environment, and more, equitable transportation is one of its fundamental goals. The plan seeks to implement frequent, reliable, and accessible transit to help people reach housing and jobs, and to do so in a way that ensures everyone benefits from major transit investments. With its emphasis on connecting people to regional job centers and creating equitable access to transit, BLRT along either route supports these goals.



Minneapolis Transportation Action Plan

Minneapolis' Transportation Action Plan, adopted in December 2020, calls for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled and prioritization of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, complete streets, and transit access. Specific goals include:

- Increase trips taken by walking, rolling, biking or transit to be 3 of every 5 trips taken by 2030.
- Increase transit coverage so that 75 percent of city residents are located within a quarter mile and 90 percent of residents are located within a half mile of high frequency transit corridors.





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- 500 million less vehicle miles traveled by 2030 (from 2018 baseline); 1,868,057,420 miles traveled in 2030.
- 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 (from 2006 baseline – or 700,000 metric tons in 2030).
- Plan, design and construct high capacity, neighborhood-based transit along the West Broadway corridor from downtown Minneapolis to the northwest suburbs.
- Advocate and provide continued support for the METRO Blue Line Extension light rail project, connecting Minneapolis with the region's northwestern communities. As the transit service is reevaluated, ensure new routing alignments provide high-quality service for residents of North Minneapolis and safety improvements are made to the prior alignment along Olson Memorial Highway, bringing reduced speeds and more people-focused and urban scale improvements to the corridor.
- Create and improve pedestrian connections across freeways, highways, rivers, and railroads.
- Build bikeway connections that overcome significant physical barriers during the buildout of the All Ages and Abilities Network.
- Support bus rapid transit on Olson Memorial Highway (Highway 55) extending to the region's western communities.
- Advocate for light rail and bus rapid transitways that provide direct connections to regional job centers and other destinations outside of the downtown core within Minneapolis, connecting Minneapolis residents with the regional rail system.
- Advocate for transitway alignments that are conducive to transit-oriented development and that would include preservation, maintenance and construction of housing at all levels of affordability.

These goals work in tandem with BLRT. Expanding light rail will enhance regional transit access, while improving the pedestrian and bicycle network will help more riders access BLRT.

Metropolitan Council's Thrive MSP 2040 and 2040 Transportation Plan

Thrive MSP 2040, the region's long-term vision, identifies five desired outcomes: stewardship, prosperity, equity, livability, and sustainability. As stated in the plan:

"Equity connects all residents to opportunity and creates viable housing, transportation, and recreation options for people of all races, ethnicities, incomes, and abilities so that all communities share the opportunities and challenges of growth and change. For our region to reach its full economic potential, all of our residents must be able to access opportunity. Our region is stronger when all people live in communities that provide them access to opportunities for success, prosperity, and quality of life."



Promoting equity means:

- Using our influence and investments to build a more equitable region
- Creating real choices in where we live, how we travel, and where we recreate for all residents, across race, ethnicity, economic means, and ability
- Investing in a mix of housing affordability along the region's transit corridors
- Engaging a full cross-section of the community in decision-making

The 2040 Transportation Policy Plan identifies six broad goals for the regional transportation system and provides a framework to achieve them. The goals include transportation system stewardship, safety and security, access to destinations, competitive economy, health and equitable communities, and leveraging transportation investments to guide land use.

Access to opportunity is central to these plans and to the goals of BLRT. See Goal 1 for more on how BLRT would increase access to job opportunities and community destinations.

Bottineau Transitway Health Impact Assessment, Hennepin County

In 2013, Hennepin County conducted a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) for the BLRT. While the HIA was based on the 2013 locally preferred alternative, there are relevant elements of the study as the BLRT community supported route evaluation advances specific to how the project can work towards improving the health of surrounding communities. A summary of the findings from the study are provided below:

The Bottineau Transitway (now called BLRT) could:

- Increase people's daily physical activity
- Improve access to jobs for communities in the station areas
- Make the combined costs of housing and transportation more affordable
- Improve traffic safety
- Provide access to educational and vocational institutions
- Improve access to healthy food
- Promote better health for disadvantaged communities

Comparative Evaluation

The Lowry route and potential stations could provide access to Upper Harbor Terminal, a planned development project along the Mississippi River. The plan for the site, a former barge shipping terminal, includes market-rate and affordable housing, commercial and industrial uses, parks, and a performing arts venue.¹ Due to its proximity to this site, the Lowry route would provide greater access to Upper Harbor Terminal than the West Broadway route, most notably at the proposed Washington at Lowry station area. Additionally, there is currently vacant publicly owned land on Lowry Avenue. However, since most of the planned uses are at a walking distance of more than 20 minutes (see Appendix A), it's likely that additional transit connections would need to be provided from this route to effectively serve Upper Harbor Terminal.

Along the West Broadway route, there are several undeveloped parcels of land or properties that are currently vacant or owned by a public entity. These parcels provide an opportunity for development or redevelopment. West Broadway Avenue's commercial character would provide greater business development or redevelopment opportunities in comparison to Lowry Avenue.

Under both routes, the Metropolitan Council, Hennepin County, and the City of Minneapolis are committed to implementing a comprehensive, innovative set of strategies to help communities build wealth in place. These strategies will ensure the investment builds on, supports, and protects existing community assets and provides more opportunities for equitable housing, employment, business development, cultural experiences, and other activities of daily life.

¹ <http://upperharbormpls.com/>



GOAL 5: Promote healthy communities and sound environmental practices including efforts to address climate change.

Route rating: Lowry route **GOOD**; West Broadway route **GOOD**

WHAT INFORMS THIS GOAL	DATA USED IN THIS ASSESSMENT
Minimize impacts to natural and cultural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Screening-level review of buffer areas (ranging from 350 feet to 1 mile from centerline of route) including water resources, wildlife, wildlife habitat and threatened and endangered species, parks, visual assessment, noise and vibration, and cultural resources
Assessment of connections from stations to recreation and healthy food options to maximize health and environmental benefits to BLRT communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map of community destinations
Assessment of connections to community destinations supporting transit use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map of community destinations Examples of potential roadway improvements
Assessment of existing and future sidewalks and/or trail connection opportunities at stations to improve the safety, connections, and accessibility for people walking, biking, and rolling to the BLRT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map of trails, bike lanes, and sidewalks Assessment of safety and security features proposed at new stations
Assessment of potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through reducing vehicle miles traveled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for reduction in vehicle miles traveled

Overview

Both route options would provide roadway and overall safety improvements. Figures 53 and 54 reflect both an unsignalized and signalized intersection along University Avenue (Green Line), highlighting various project-related improvements that were constructed. These figures are included as an example of features that could be included as part of BLRT to provide safe and efficient connections to transit in Minneapolis.

Figure 53: Potential Roadway Improvements - Signalized Intersection





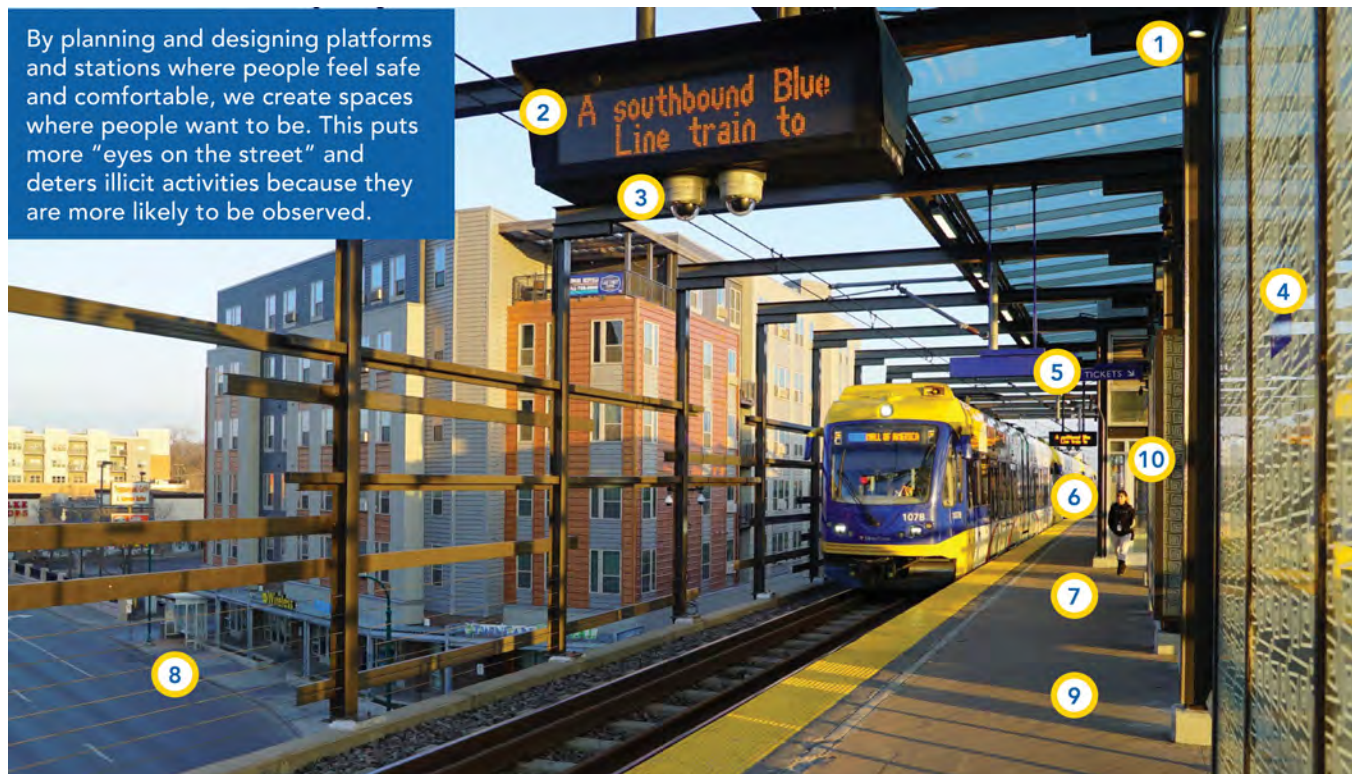
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Figure 54: Potential Roadway Improvements - Unsignalized Intersection



Additionally, the project team has consistently heard through one-on-one conversations and input at workshops that safety at stations is a critical concern. As reflected in Figure 55, safety and security are key considerations factored into the planning and design of LRT before the line is built and while it is in operation.

Figure 55: Safety and Security Features at a Station



- 1 Appropriate lighting in the station area and on the trains
- 2 Real-time information
- 3 Security cameras
- 4 Open-air and/or transparent shelters and waiting facilities
- 5 Consistent wayfinding and signage
- 6 A human-scale feel, which means facilities are designed to be comfortable to riders of all abilities
- 7 Clear sight lines that allow train operators and riders to see each other
- 8 Visibility from nearby roadways so riders feel safe and drivers are aware of transit stops
- 9 Intuitive circulation, which allows riders to safely access the trains
- 10 Emergency telephones



Comparative Evaluation

WATER RESOURCES (WETLANDS, FLOODPLAINS, PUBLIC WATERS, IMPAIRED WATERS)

The Washington Avenue segment of the Lowry route is within $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of the Mississippi River (a floodplain, public water, and impaired water resource) and may have a greater potential for impacts to this resource. The Lowry route crosses the Bassett Creek tunnel; the potential for conflict with the creek/tunnel would need to be evaluated. Overall, the Lowry route has a greater potential for impacts to water resources.

The West Broadway route is separated from the Mississippi River by $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile or more and would be less likely to impact this resource. The West Broadway route crosses the Bassett Creek tunnel; the potential for conflict with the creek/tunnel would need to be evaluated. Overall, the West Broadway route has a lower potential for impacts to water resources.

WILDLIFE, WILDLIFE HABITAT, AND THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

The Lowry and West Broadway routes lie in urban land with small patches of parkland and residential gardens that may provide habitat for pollinators. The Washington Avenue segment of the Lowry route is adjacent to an Important Bird Area associated with the Mississippi River. The Washington Avenue segment is also within $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of the Mississippi River, where rare mussel species have been identified. The Lowry route therefore may have greater potential for impacts to birds; impacts to mussel species are unlikely. Overall, the Lowry route has a greater potential for impacts to wildlife, wildlife habitat, and threatened and endangered species.

The location of the West Broadway route relative to the Mississippi River makes it unlikely that impacts to the Important Bird Area or rare mussel species would occur. Overall, the West Broadway route has a lower potential for impacts to wildlife, wildlife habitat, and threatened and endangered species.

PARKS

Both routes would provide improved transit access to Theodore Wirth Regional Park at the proposed North Memorial station area. The northern end of both the Lowry route and the West Broadway route intersects Theodore Wirth Parkway (part of the Minneapolis park system); there is a potential for impacts to the parkway at this location. The Lyndale Avenue segment of the West Broadway route passes between the east and west portions of Hall Park; there is a potential for impacts to this park, specifically the existing pedestrian bridge over Lyndale Avenue. Overall, the Lowry route option would potentially impact fewer parks than the West Broadway route option.



An aerial view of North Memorial

VISUAL IMPACTS

The Lowry and West Broadway routes are located in similar setting, and both are anticipated to have a similar effect on visual quality.

NOISE AND VIBRATION

Relative to the West Broadway route, the Lowry route has a greater number of residential properties that may be affected by noise, but fewer institutions (schools, theater, and similar facilities) that may be affected by noise. The Lowry and West Broadway routes have a similar number of properties that may be affected by vibration.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Historic properties were identified along the Lowry and West Broadway routes through a review of existing survey data. Impacts to cultural resources at this stage of project development were limited to an identification of potential National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) listed and eligible properties, using publicly available sources of information. Known historic properties are those sites that have been determined eligible for listing on the NRHP, are currently listed in the NRHP, are National Historic Landmarks, are listed in the State Register of Historic Places, are State Historic Districts, or are locally designated historic properties or places. At this stage of project development, making any determination of potential effects of the project on these properties has not been done. However, a planning-level assessment of potential effects was undertaken and limited to an identification of known historic properties within ½ mile of each route and known historic properties with potential right-of-way impacts.

Lowry Route

The listed Frederica Bremer School at 1214 Lowry Avenue is the only NRHP-listed or determined-eligible property along the length of east-west Lowry Avenue. Surveys of the corridor's commercial and residential fabric appear to be 10-20 years old and resurvey will likely be required.

The Lowry route turns south along Washington Avenue, where most of the determined-eligible properties on the east side of the route and the freeway are south of the potential Upper Harbor Terminal Historic District. No identified properties are adjacent to the route; however, approaching Target Field, the Lowry route has about as much exposure to an edge of the NRHP-listed Minneapolis Warehouse District as does the West Broadway route. The LaVoris Chemical Company Building at 918 3rd Street North is a prominent building near the Plymouth station.

West Broadway Route

Based on the preliminary review, along West Broadway there are many pre-1975 churches and institutional and commercial buildings in addition to dwellings. Plymouth Masonic Lodge, Durham Hall, and the Minneapolis Public Library (1834 Emerson Avenue, previous library now under different use, is NRHP and locally designated) are located near the potential Emerson-Fremont station and are determined eligible properties.

Approaching Target Field, the route edges two blocks of the NRHP-listed Minneapolis Warehouse District and its historic rail corridor.

Both Routes

The north end of the Lowry and West Broadway routes begins at the edge of the Victory Memorial Drive Historic District, part of the Minneapolis Grand Rounds. This Drive (Parkway) was evaluated in 2005 and has been determined NRHP eligible. The City of Minneapolis lists it among locally designated properties. Depending on potential direct and indirect effects, intensive Section 106 review would be expected.

The adjacent North Memorial (Victory Memorial) Hospital was previously recommended as not eligible. Both routes are also adjacent to the Pilgrim Heights Community Church at 3120 Washburn Avenue North.

Approaching Target Field, both routes are adjacent to contributing properties to the historic district, including the Ford Plant at 420 5th Street North and six other properties along 3rd Avenue North opposite Target Field.

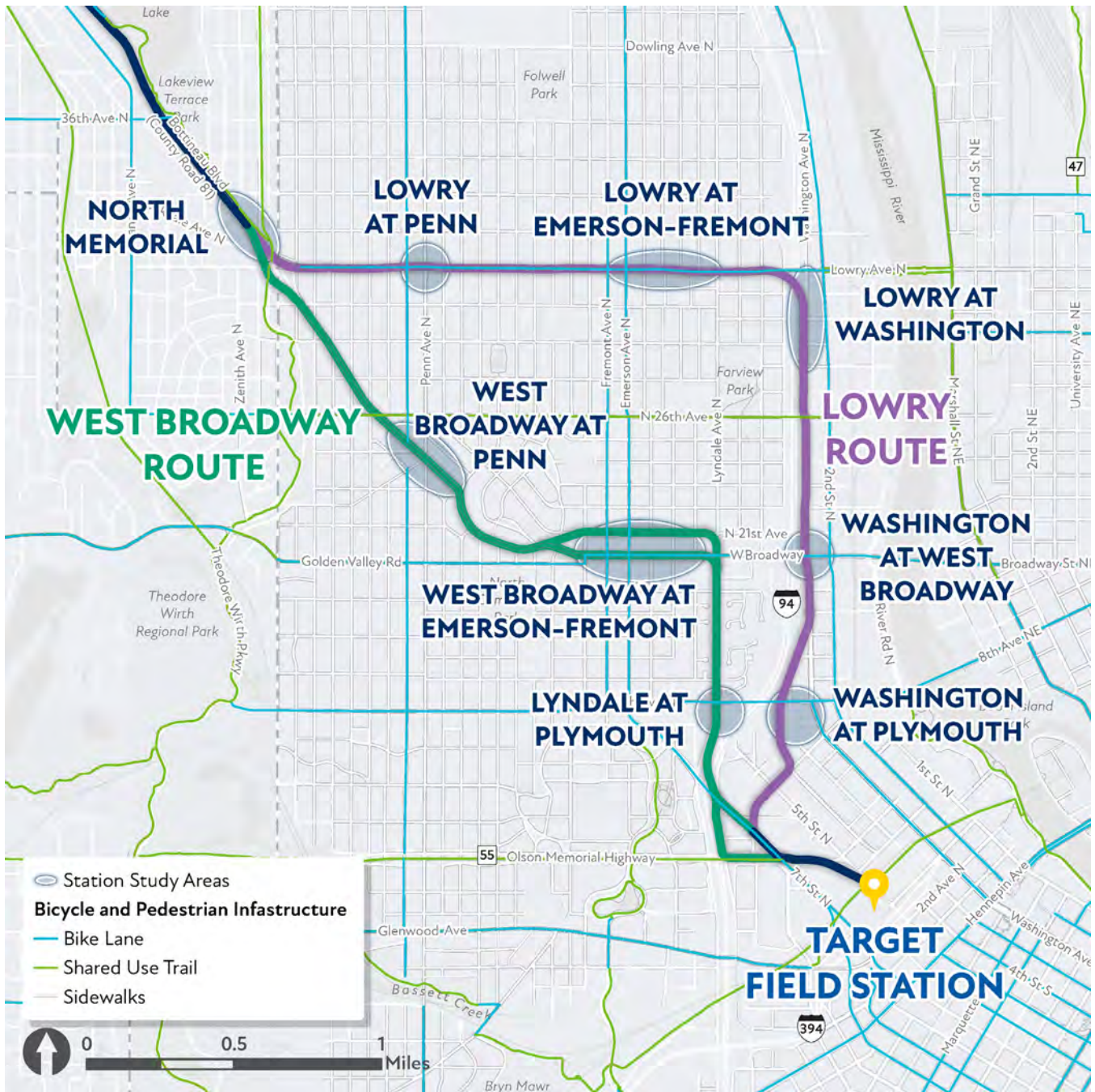
TRAIL CONNECTIONS

Both the West Broadway and Lowry routes would provide good connections to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. However, the Lowry route faces several barriers. While there are some pedestrian bridges over Interstate 94 to the west, it still presents a challenge for pedestrians navigating the area, and to the east, the Mississippi River creates a natural barrier. Figure 56 shows pedestrian and bicycle connections in the area.



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Figure 56: Area Trails and Sidewalks (Area 3 - West Broadway and Lowry Routes)



Data Source: Hennepin County, City of Minneapolis

Vehicle Miles Traveled

Reduction in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is an important metric in assessing greenhouse gas emissions and health impacts. Based on factors such as how riders access the stations, the distance they are traveling to and from the stations, and potential for new riders attracted to the project, both the Lowry and West Broadway routes would result in a similar reduction in VMT.



GOAL 6: Advance local and regional equity and work towards reducing regional racial disparities.

Route rating: Lowry route **GOOD**; West Broadway route **EXCELLENT**

WHAT INFORMS THIS GOAL	DATA USED IN THIS ASSESSMENT
Opportunities to invest in historically disinvested communities and minimize displacement of corridor residents and businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redlining and racial covenants map • Existing and future land use maps
Maximizing cohesion, preservation, and enhancement of BLRT communities through assessment of improved access and connections to cultural and community assets along with opportunities to honor local heritage and character of BLRT communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access change maps • Walkshed and barrier maps
Minimizing short-term and long-term impacts to property and property access, including vehicle access, sidewalk access, on-street parking, and right-of-way acquisition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access change maps • Map of existing parking availability

Overview

Neighborhoods served by both the Lowry and West Broadway routes have historically experienced underinvestment (Figure 57).

As reflected previously in this report, the project team is convening a diverse Anti-Displacement Workgroup with participation by agency and community partners to create programs and policies aimed at preventing displacement. This work will continue regardless of the route that is advanced for further study.

Preventing the multiple forms of displacement (physical, economic, and cultural), maximizing community benefits from BLRT, and reflecting priorities expressed by corridor cities are all priorities for the Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County. Investment in current businesses could be part of programs established by the Anti-Displacement Workgroup.

The Metropolitan Council, Hennepin County, and corridor cities are committed to helping communities build wealth in place. Innovative strategies will ensure the investment builds on, supports, and protects existing community assets.

History of Disinvestment

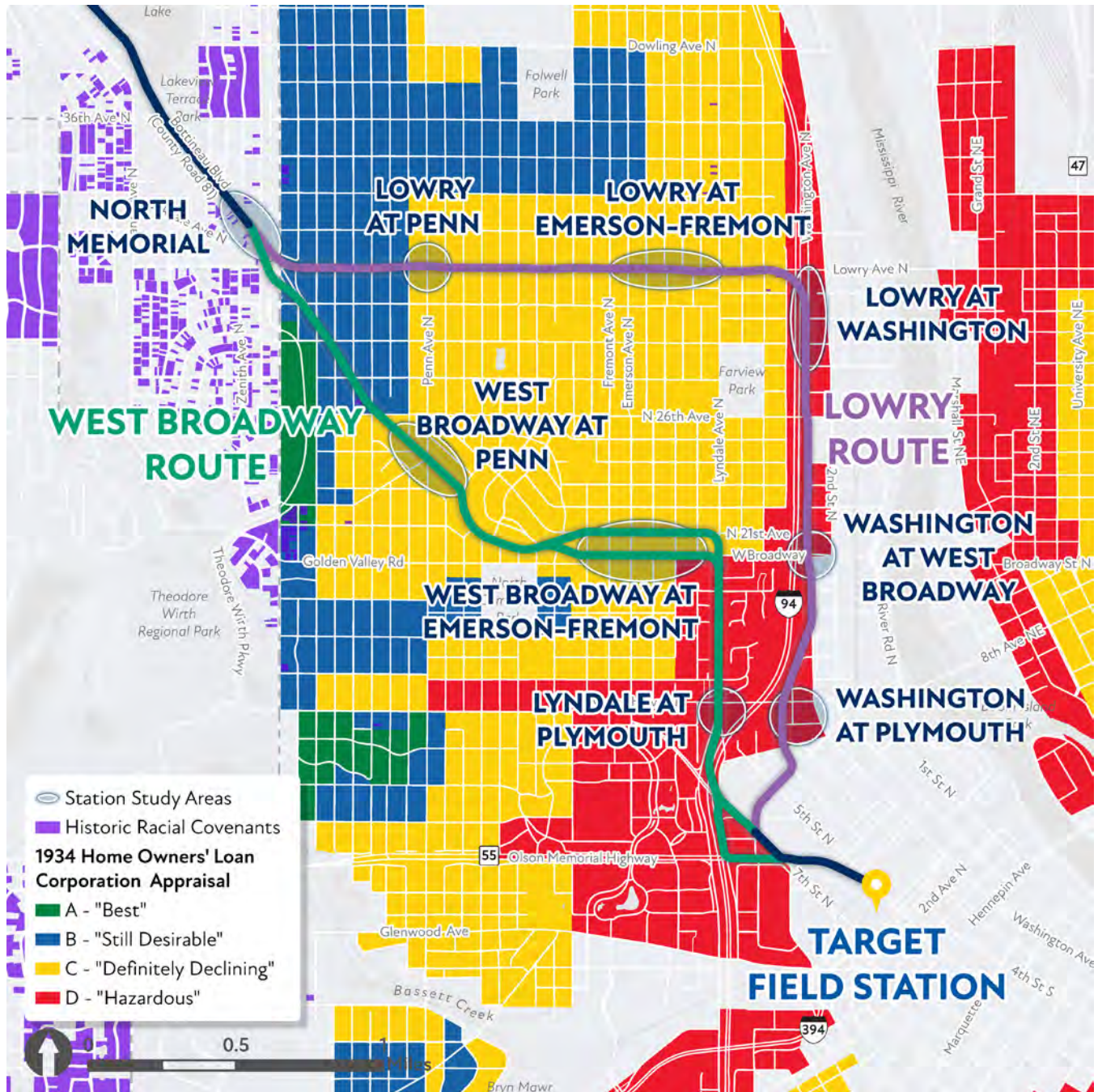
Figure 57 shows lending designations by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) in the 1930s and historic racial covenants, which dictated that homes could not be sold to people of certain races. HOLC designations were used to make lending inaccessible to homeowners and homebuyers in neighborhoods with high concentrations of people of color. Put together, these policies locked people of color out of the housing



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market and prevented investment in their communities, and the impacts of this disinvestment are still felt today in the areas around the proposed BLRT routes. With both the Lowry and West Broadway routes there is an opportunity to rectify this lack of investment and provide significant benefits to the community.

Figure 57: Redlining and Racial Covenants (Area 3 - West Broadway and Lowry Routes)



Data Source: Metropolitan Council

Note: Areas not rated A through D in the map above were not part of the appraisal in 1934.

Jobs and Training

Specific to jobs and training, Metro Transit is committed to hiring women and minorities and contracting with disadvantaged business enterprises (DBE) on its projects. Metro Transit offers job training opportunities to help build a diverse workforce. Depending on the project type and the availability of DBE participants, the percentage is typically between 15-20% of contract dollar amounts. As an example, the METRO Green Line extension partnered with 10 building and construction trade unions and Twin Cities RISE to create the Building Strong Communities program, an apprenticeship preparatory program that prepares adults and high school graduates for careers in the construction industry.

Comparative Evaluation

Property Impacts

Large transit investments typically involve some property impacts, and this is true for both the Lowry and West Broadway routes; however, the Metropolitan Council is committed to minimize and find solutions for these potential impacts. A number of design options have been developed for both the Lowry and West Broadway routes and were included as project materials for public review on the project website and at the November 2021 community workshops. Potential building impacts have been included on the exhibits, which can be viewed at [BlueLineExt.org](https://www.metrotransit.org/blue-line-extension). As one of the Project Principles is to minimize residential, commercial, and environmental impacts, several of the design options were specifically developed to minimize property impacts. To this end, previous West Broadway alternative 3A-a and Lowry alternatives 5B-a and 5B-b have been eliminated from further consideration due to high number of potential property impacts (Figure 58). While it is the project's intent to work within existing available right-of-way as much as possible, there are properties that will be impacted. For the Lowry route, property impacts are most prevalent along Lowry Avenue, and on the West Broadway route, most impacts are along West Broadway Avenue. Conversely, under the Lowry route, the Washington Avenue section has adequate right-of-way to accommodate LRT. Similarly, under the West Broadway route, Lyndale Avenue is not anticipated to have building impacts.

Both route options through Area 3 include the expectation of private property impacts. These impacts result from the relatively dense urban environment along portions of West Broadway Avenue and Lowry Avenue, and the proximity of existing buildings (commercial and residential) to the roadway. The property impacts fall into three general categories:

- **Low Impact:** the project may need to purchase a small portion of the property from its owner, but the fundamental use of the property would not need to fundamentally change
- **Medium Impact:** the project would need to purchase a portion of the property such that the existing primary structure is impacted, requiring a review of options to modify the existing structure or purchase the entire property
- **High Impact:** the project would need to purchase a significant enough portion of the property and its primary structure that the fundamental use of the property is compromised, requiring the owner to be accommodated for through a full purchase and planned relocation process

The number of impacts for each route option have not been tallied because the route layouts are conceptual in nature, and many sections of the layouts include multiple design options, each of which have differing numbers and categories of property impacts. Based on a general review of the layout drawings developed for each section of both route options, there is no clear differentiator as to the relative level of impacts between the two routes. A more detailed assessment of private property impacts will occur as a part of the federal environmental review process during the next phase of project planning and design. This environmental review will include a detailed summation of associated property impacts and the planned mitigations for those impacts.



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Figure 58: Alternatives Identified for the Potential Routes



*Alternatives 3A-a, 5B-a, and 5B-b are no longer being considered

Table 9: Route Options Building Impacts Summary

SECTION NUMBER AND STREETS	NUMBER OF ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS	# OF BUILDINGS POTENTIALLY IMPACTED (PER OPTION)	# OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS POTENTIALLY IMPACTED
West Broadway Route			
Section 1 6th Avenue, 7th Street, Lyndale Avenue	1A-A	0-4	0
	1B-A		
Section 2 Lyndale Avenue	2A-A	0	0
	2A-B		
Section 3 West Broadway Avenue	3A-b	5-19	0-5
	3B-a		
	3B-b		
	3C-a		
	3D-a		
Section 4 West Broadway Avenue	4A-a	12-16	0
	4A-b		
Lowry Route			
Section 5 7th Street, Oak Lane Avenue, 10th Avenue to 4th Street , Access Road near I-94, Washington Avenue	5A	3	0
Section 6 Washington Avenue	6A-a	0	0
	6A-b		
Section 7 Lowry Avenue	7A-a	15-26	0
	7A-b		

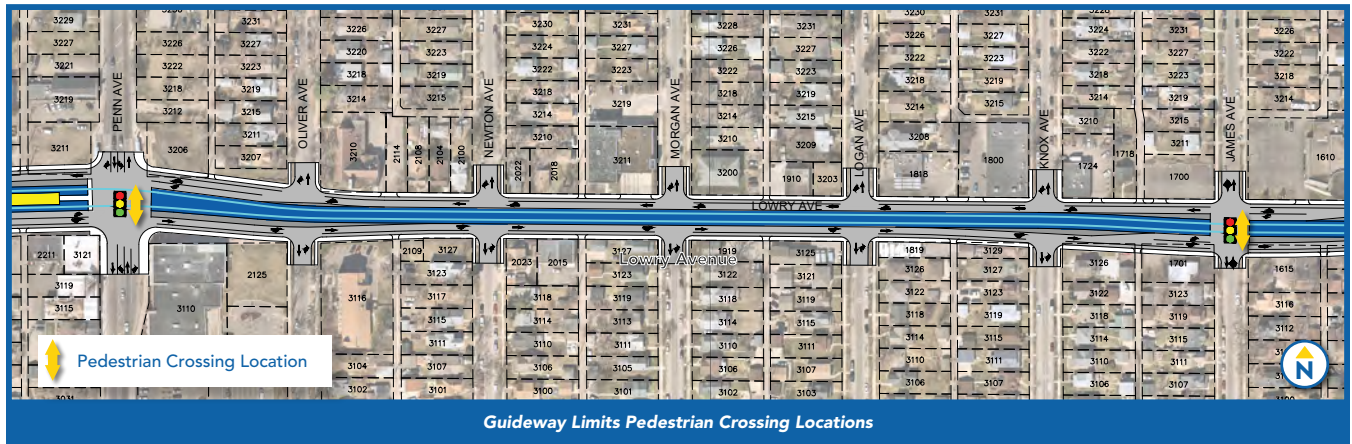
**Alternatives 3A-a, 5B-a, and 5B-b are no longer being considered*



Access Impacts

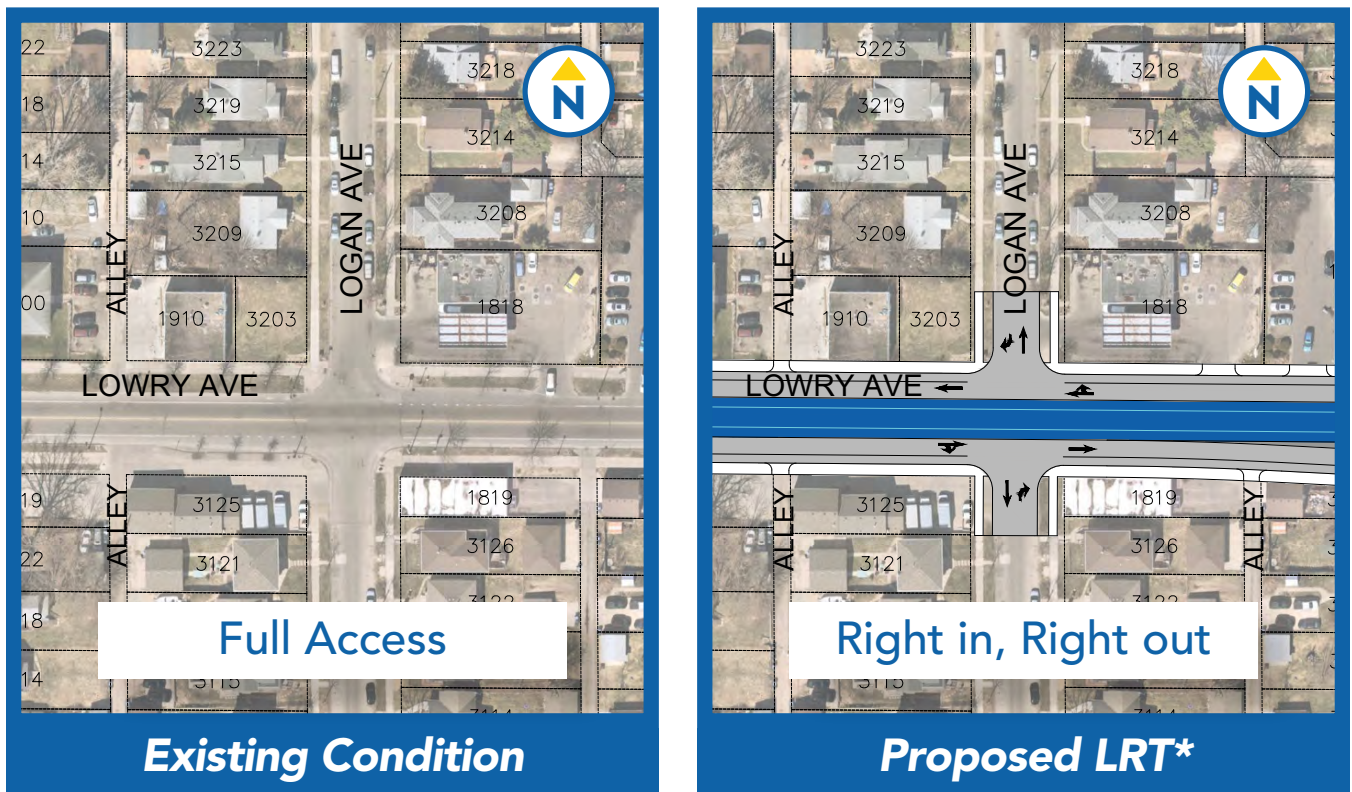
As reflected in Figures 59-62, the inclusion of LRT under both the Lowry and West Broadway routes will impact accessibility from streets, alleys, and driveways that are located on the proposed route. Specifically, access would be primarily limited to right-in/right-out for vehicles. Full crossing access for vehicles, as well as pedestrian and bicyclists, would be provided at major streets with full access control. As design advances, locations for mid-block pedestrian and bike crossings will be explored. However, due to right-of-way constraints, these locations could result in additional right-of-way impacts.

Figure 59: Lowry Avenue Pedestrian Access



Note: Additional pedestrian crossings are likely but could result in additional right-of-way impacts.

Figure 60: Lowry Avenue Vehicle Access



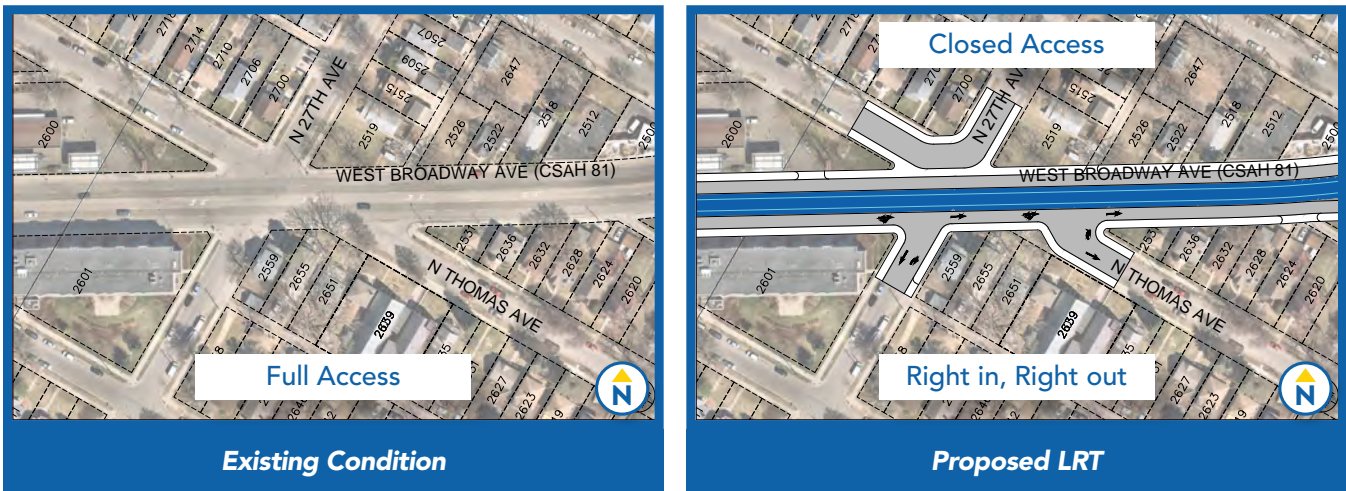
*Note: The alleys labeled above would have a similar right in, right out access restriction.

Figure 61: West Broadway Avenue Pedestrian Access



Note: Additional pedestrian-only crossings are likely but could result in additional right-of-way impacts.

Figure 62: West Broadway Avenue Vehicle Access



Note: These figures are examples of access impacts, not a full survey of potential impacts.



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The types of anticipated access changes are summarized by route in Table 10. The Lowry route does have significantly more access modifications than the West Broadway route, especially regarding alleys. As shown in Figure 63, extensive access modifications would be made along Lowry Avenue under the proposed Lowry route, with some additional modifications along Washington Avenue. The West Broadway route has more access closures, occurring mostly along North 21st and West Broadway Avenues between Lyndale and Girard Avenues, where the route splits. There would also be some access modifications in this area, and several modifications made along West Broadway Avenue between Logan Avenue and 29th Avenue. This analysis shows the access changes anticipated using alternatives with the median-highest access impacts. The West Broadway Alternatives used were 1A-a, 2A-a, 3C-a, 4A-a. The Lowry Alternatives used were 5A, 6A-a, 7A-b.

Table 10: Estimated Access Changes by Route

	LOWRY ROUTE	WEST BROADWAY ROUTE
Roadway Access Changes	37	16-26
Driveway Access Changes	35	35-40
Alley Access Changes	35	5-7
Pedestrian Access Changes	17-18	11-12
Total Access Changes	107	59-71

Anticipated pedestrian access closures are illustrated in Figure 64. Access closures for pedestrians would occur at almost every block along the Lowry Avenue portion of the Lowry route. There would be a range of 17-23 pedestrian access closures along the Lowry route. While there are also closures along the West Broadway route, there are fewer and tend to be more spaced out, totaling 11 to 12 closures. While design options are still being finalized, the Lowry route seems likely to involve more limited crossings and turns, creating a physical and traffic barrier through this area. In addition, pedestrian movements across Lowry would be greatly impacted. This could have the effect of dividing the neighborhood north and south of Lowry Avenue. Access impacts along Lowry Avenue are more likely to affect residents, while access impacts along West Broadway Avenue are more likely to affect both residents and businesses and commercial areas.

Figure 63: Vehicle Access Closures and Modifications (Area 3 - West Broadway and Lowry Routes)



*Closures are permanent removals of roadway, driveway, or alley access, while modifications are adjustments of access such as "Right-In, Right-Out"



METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Route Modification Report

Figure 64: Pedestrian Access Closures (Area 3 - West Broadway and Lowry Routes)



*Closures are the permanent removals of pedestrian access at an intersection because of light rail tracks preventing crossings where crossing is currently permitted.

*Bikeways include designated bike trails, shared use trails, and on-street bike lanes.

Data source: City of Minneapolis

Parking Impacts

A parking utilization review for both routes was completed in June and July 2021 (see Appendix B). This data was averaged from the amount of occupied curb space along each block with available parking to identify areas of high and low parking use.

Implementation of light rail transit on either route would result in significant loss of on-street parking, and will also offer another option for people to access businesses via transit. Mitigation solutions will vary based on specific needs of surrounding land uses, and will be coordinated with property owners. The Metropolitan Council is committed to finding alternative solutions to accommodate the needs of small businesses, including consideration of multi-modal solutions in addition to parking solutions.

Summary of Differentiating Evaluation Findings

As reflected throughout this document, the performance on how a route can achieve defined project goals will be used to recommend a route to evaluate in more detail as the project advances. This section summarizes the differentiating elements for each of the routes under evaluation in Area 3 and serves as supporting information to the summary table presented on page 103.

Lowry Route



GOAL 1: IMPROVE TRANSIT ACCESS AND CONNECTIONS TO JOBS AND REGIONAL DESTINATIONS

- This route is approximately 0.8 mile longer than the West Broadway route and has up to two more proposed stations, meaning more access points for the community. It is important to point out that the station locations reflect general areas and could change in location and number as the project advances.
- Overall, this route would serve neighborhoods with limited or no access to personal vehicles, households that are generally below the Hennepin County median household income, and a high proportion (70 percent or more) of residents of color.
- Interstate 94, however, serves as a barrier to access potential stations along Washington Avenue, including zero-car households and environmental justice communities west of the highway.
- Access to community destinations would also be provided by this route, primarily along the Lowry Avenue section.
- The station at Plymouth would serve an important geographic area of the city, including the North Loop area. However, many of these riders would already have transit access via Target Field Station.



GOAL 2: IMPROVE FREQUENCY AND RELIABILITY OF TRANSIT SERVICE TO COMMUNITIES IN THE CORRIDOR

- The Lowry route would improve overall transit service to communities, most notably east-west transit service along Lowry Avenue.
- As the Lowry route is longer than the West Broadway route, the travel time is approximately two minutes longer.
- Intersections along Washington Avenue are expected to have increases in delays due to the proposed lane reductions to accommodate LRT, specifically at West Broadway Avenue and 17th Avenue North.



GOAL 3: PROVIDE TRANSIT IMPROVEMENTS THAT MAXIMIZE TRANSIT BENEFITS, WHILE BEING COST COMPETITIVE AND ECONOMICALLY VIABLE

- Consistent with the approved Project Principle of meeting the FTA's New Starts criteria, which includes cost effectiveness, the Metropolitan Council will work to define and advance a route that effectively balances capital and operating costs with overall transit system benefits.



METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Route Modification Report



GOAL 4: SUPPORT COMMUNITIES' DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- This route would provide connections to various economic development opportunities like the Upper Harbor Terminal project.
- Existing undeveloped land that is vacant or owned by a public entity provides opportunity for development and redevelopment.



GOAL 5: PROMOTE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES AND SOUND ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES INCLUDING EFFORTS TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE

- The Lowry route would provide roadway and overall safety improvements.
- There would be environmental, social, and cultural resource impacts associated with this route.



GOAL 6: ADVANCE LOCAL AND REGIONAL EQUITY AND WORK TOWARDS REDUCING REGIONAL RACIAL DISPARITIES

- There would be property impacts associated with this route. The addition of mid-block crossings for pedestrians, while a benefit for north/south access, could also result in additional right-of-way impacts.
- LRT along Lowry Avenue would limit north/south access, which could adversely divide this residential area.

West Broadway Route



GOAL 1: IMPROVE TRANSIT ACCESS AND CONNECTIONS TO JOBS AND REGIONAL DESTINATIONS

- This route serves the commercial and cultural heart of North Minneapolis, where people live, work, and spend their time. This route would provide access to numerous community-identified cultural assets and destinations.
- Overall, this route would serve neighborhoods with limited or no access to personal vehicles, households that are generally below the Hennepin County median household income, and a high proportion (70 percent or more) of residents of color.



GOAL 2: IMPROVE FREQUENCY AND RELIABILITY OF TRANSIT SERVICE TO COMMUNITIES IN THE CORRIDOR

- This route would improve overall transit service to the community.
- This route would provide the most efficient connection to regional destinations and connections as people travel from others parts of the metro area to destinations along the corridor and from North Minneapolis to regional jobs and destinations.
- Most intersections along West Broadway Avenue would experience increased delays with the proposed lane reductions, particularly intersections east of Irving Avenue North.



GOAL 3: PROVIDE TRANSIT IMPROVEMENTS THAT MAXIMIZE TRANSIT BENEFITS, WHILE BEING COST COMPETITIVE AND ECONOMICALLY VIABLE

- Consistent with the approved Project Principle of meeting the FTA's New Starts criteria, which includes cost effectiveness, the Metropolitan Council will work to define and advance a route that effectively balances capital and operating costs with overall transit system benefits.



GOAL 4: SUPPORT COMMUNITIES' DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- This route would serve the heart of the West Broadway business district and North Minneapolis.
- Existing undeveloped parcels of land or properties that are vacant or owned by a public entity provide opportunity for development and redevelopment in the existing business district.



GOAL 5: PROMOTE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES AND SOUND ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES INCLUDING EFFORTS TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE

- The West Broadway route would provide roadway and overall safety improvements.
- There would be environmental, social, and cultural resource impacts associated with this route.
- Because of West Broadway’s importance as a commercial hub and gathering place, impacts during construction are a concern to the community and will require development of effective mitigation measures.



GOAL 6: ADVANCE LOCAL AND REGIONAL EQUITY AND WORK TOWARDS REDUCING REGIONAL RACIAL DISPARITIES

- There would be property impacts associated with this route.
- This route has the potential to support community wealth-building in an area that has historically had limited investment. The commercial district along West Broadway is highly valued by the community.
- The addition of mid-block crossings for pedestrians, while a benefit to north-south access, could also result in additional right-of-way impacts.

Summary of Area 3 Evaluation

Both Area 3 routes – Lowry and West Broadway – have been evaluated based on their ability to effectively meet the defined project goals. As reflected in the following table, both route options meet the project goals, as reflected in an overall assessment of “good.” Goals that achieve an “excellent” assessment include specific areas that inform that goal that are unique and/or have a high potential to provide exemplary positive benefits. As reflected in the table, neither of the routes have been assessed at a “poor” level, which would represent not meeting the defined project goal.

Table 10: Area 3 Evaluation Summary

ASSESSMENT OF ROUTE OPTIONS TO DEFINED GOALS		
PROJECT GOAL	LOWRY ROUTE	WEST BROADWAY ROUTE
Goal 1: Improve transit access and connections to jobs and regional destinations	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT
Goal 2: Improve frequency and reliability of transit service to communities in the corridor	GOOD	GOOD
Goal 3: Provide transit improvements that maximize transit benefits, while being cost competitive and economically viable	GOOD	GOOD
Goal 4: Support communities’ development goals	GOOD	EXCELLENT
Goal 5: Promote healthy communities and sound environmental practices including efforts to address climate change	GOOD	GOOD
Goal 6: Advance local and regional equity and work towards reducing regional racial disparities	GOOD	EXCELLENT



Route Recommendation

The Blue Line Extension will run from downtown Minneapolis to Brooklyn Park, connecting some of our region's most diverse communities to jobs, education, and opportunities. In Minneapolis, where two route options were evaluated, the West Broadway route is recommended.

The following full route, described from north to south, meets the project's principles and stated goals and is recommended to move forward for further evaluation:

- West Broadway Avenue from Oak Grove Parkway to 73rd Avenue in Brooklyn Park. Includes stations at Oak Grove, 93rd Avenue, 85th Avenue, and Brooklyn Boulevard.
- Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) between 73rd Avenue in Brooklyn Park to the intersection of County Road 81 and West Broadway Avenue. Includes stations at 63rd Avenue and Bass Lake Road in Crystal, and stations in the downtown and at North Memorial Hospital in Robbinsdale.
- West Broadway Avenue from County Road 81 to Lyndale Avenue through North Minneapolis. This includes a design option along 21st Avenue North from Irving Avenue to Lyndale Avenue, one block to the north of West Broadway Avenue.
- Lyndale Avenue to 7th Street or Olson Memorial Highway, eventually terminating at the existing Target Field Station in Downtown Minneapolis.

This route will:

- Connect people to new opportunities and destinations.
- Link people more efficiently to educational and employment opportunities, reduce transit commute times, and increase access to goods and services in an area where building community wealth is a priority.
- Improve public health and reduce pollution by connecting people to quality health care and providing clean active transportation options.
- Make a generational and unprecedented transit investment in a corridor that has experienced a history of systemic racism and high percentage of zero-car households.

This route **serves people** and **accesses economic activity and regional destinations** within each community including:

West Broadway/Brooklyn Park

- Job, economic, educational and cultural centers like the Target campus, North Hennepin Community College, and commercial nodes at Brooklyn Boulevard as well as a thousands of industrial jobs.
- Large percentage of high-priority communities including people of color, zero-car households, and low-income households.

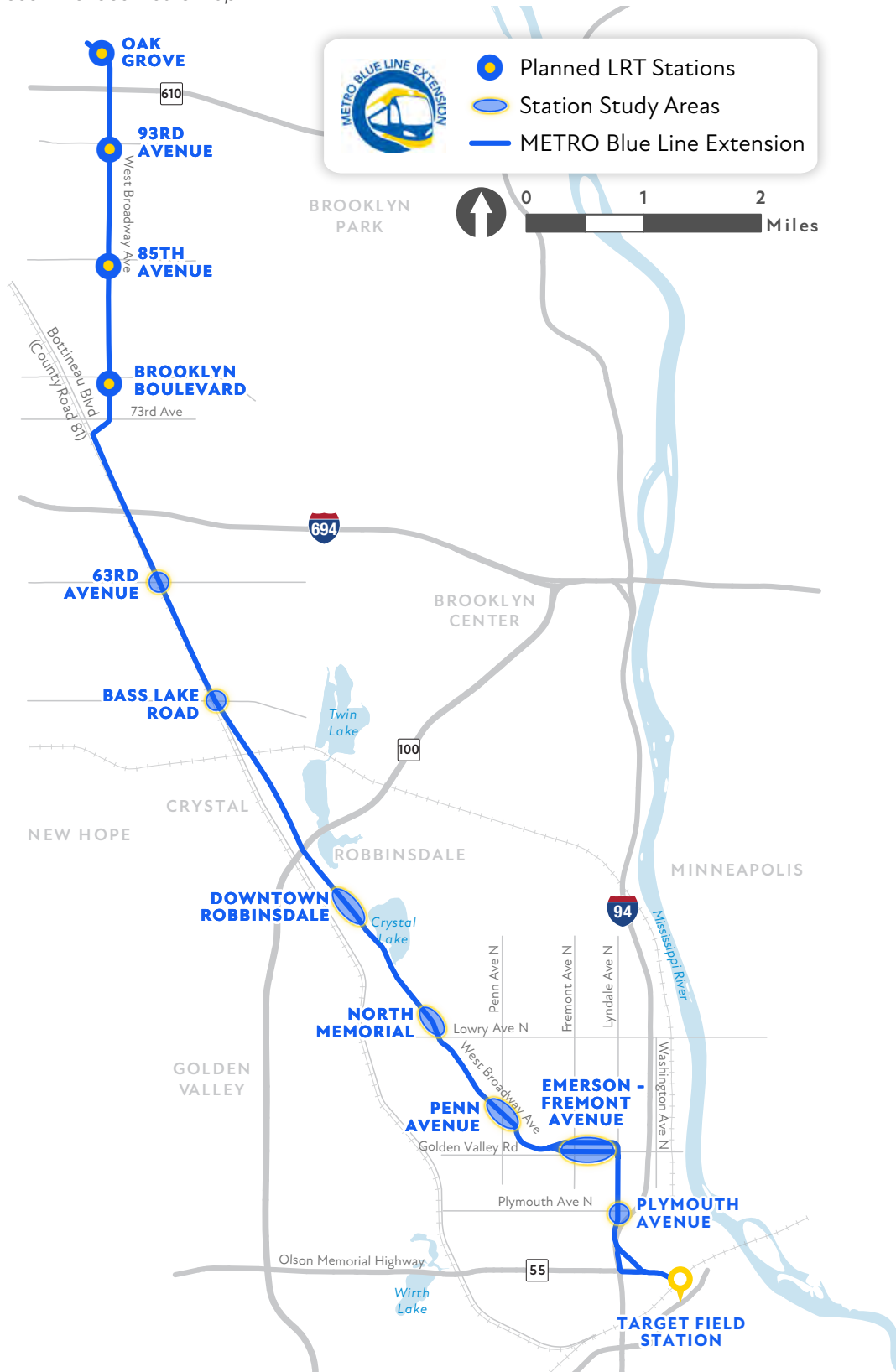
County Road 81/Crystal and Robbinsdale

- Multifamily housing in Crystal, including assisted living facilities.
- People with disabilities and other special needs living at facilities in Robbinsdale.
- Job and economic centers including commercial nodes at Bass Lake Road and downtown Robbinsdale.
- Regional destinations like North Memorial Hospital (a regional healthcare facility) and associated clinics.

West Broadway/Minneapolis

- Large percentage of high-priority communities including people of color, zero-car households, and low-income households.
- High concentration of jobs and economic activity, including the West Broadway business district, Minneapolis Public Schools, and downtown Minneapolis.
- Regional destinations such as Capri Theater, V3 Sports Complex, Hennepin County Service Center, and Target Field.

Figure 65: Recommended Route Map





METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Route Modification Report



Next Steps

This Route Modification Report will be available for public comment for 30 days, ending May 18, 2022. The Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County will consider this input along with findings from technical analyses before approving a final route.

Decision-Making Process

The decision-making process is as follows:

- Major project decisions are recommended by the project's Corridor Management Committee (CMC) and acted on by the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners and Metropolitan Council. A route recommendation is documented in this April 2022 Route Modification Report and provided to the Corridor Management Committee, Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County Board of Commissioners to take an action on.
- When a new light rail route or station location is proposed, the Metropolitan Council seeks Municipal Consent from the affected communities. The Municipal Consent process is defined in state law (Minn. Stat. 473.3994) and requires a process of local review and approval of the physical light rail component (general dimensions and location). During this process, the public can review the plans and provide comments directly to local governments or to the Metropolitan Council. The Metropolitan Council, Hennepin County, the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA), and the cities along the light rail route are required to hold public hearings and receive comments on the Municipal Consent Plans. This part of the process will take place after a route has been determined and engineering design has advanced, tentatively in early to mid-2023.

After a route is officially adopted by the Metropolitan Council, work on the design and environmental review will advance. The schedule below shows generally when these next steps will occur.



LRT projects are complex and unforeseen challenges arise. Schedules and timelines are subject to change.

Blue Line Extension Community Supported Route:

- Best meets the project Principles and Goals
- Grounded in community feedback through collaboration with stakeholders
- Supported by project corridor communities and decision-makers

Advancing the Alignment

It is acknowledged that corridor cities made several comments on the Draft Route Modification Report that were more detailed in nature and beyond the scope of identifying initial route modifications. These comments will be addressed through the next steps in the station area planning, engineering, and environmental processes as summarized below. The final alignment will be refined based on this further study.

Station Area Planning

What is Station Area Planning?

The area within a half-mile radius (or a 10-minute walk) of planned light rail transit stations is commonly referred to as the “station area.” Typically, this is where investments in transit infrastructure are expected to generate the greatest community opportunities and impacts. Station area planning typically happens once a final route has been identified and engineering and design are underway.

Station area planning is meant to provide policy and implementation guidance for each station area once the locations have been determined. Some station area plans will remain the same, such as those in Brooklyn Park where the route is expected to remain the same. In cities like Crystal and Robbinsdale where the change in route may be less significant, some parts of the previous station area plans can be preserved while others will need to be updated. In Minneapolis where the route options are entirely new, communities will have the opportunity to develop fresh visions for station areas. These revised plans will include guidance to capitalize on available opportunities to improve transit, pedestrian and bicycle access, future development near stations, and creating conditions that ensure that zero-car households will remain in the area.



Station Environment

The design of the station environment is an opportunity to create a place with a focus on:

- **Safe stations** – stations are visible with eyes on the station to ensure that transit riders are seen from the street and surrounding buildings, reducing the potential for crime.
- **Comfortable stations** – stations are designed to be accessible for people of all ages and abilities.
- **Vibrant and aesthetically pleasing stations** – stations are designed to create a place of arrival and departure for transit users.

The project team will work with partners including businesses, chambers of commerce, neighborhoods, and other community groups to develop a streetscaping plan to accommodate light rail. This may include streetscape elements like landscaping, lighting, and street furniture to blend light rail into the community.

Station Connections

Walking, biking, and rolling connections between stations and station area neighborhoods is another critical piece of station area planning. This typically includes sidewalk and bike lane improvements to connect to the stations and creating links to existing destinations. The project team will work with local agencies to incorporate designated bike and sidewalk improvements identified in plans of local jurisdictions.

Environmental Review

Through federal and state environmental review, a detailed evaluation of the community-supported route will be completed and documented. As part of this process, impacts and proposed mitigation in areas such as access, property, parking loss, construction, pedestrian safety, traffic congestion, and noise will be defined. The FTA is the lead federal agency for the environmental review and is also a critical funding partner. The Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County are in close coordination with the FTA on the local decision-making process currently underway as well as the upcoming environmental process requirements. Additionally, through the environmental review process, the Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County will work closely with project partners at all levels to effectively address and advance defined goals and policies set forth in adopted plans and applicable design guidelines.

The environmental analysis will be informed by advanced design and input from the Anti-Displacement Workgroup. Based on the community-supported route that advances, coordination with reviewing and permitting agencies and each of the corridor cities will continue to further define the project, anticipated limits of disturbance for evaluation, and development of mitigation measures as noted above.

A brief summary of some of the additional analysis to be completed during the environmental review phase is provided below.

Water Resources (Wetlands, Floodplains, Public Waters, Impaired Waters)

For an initial understanding of potential impacts to water resources, standard publicly available data sources were reviewed through a desktop Geographic Information Systems (GIS) analysis process. As the project progresses, water resource agencies will be consulted to better understand impacts and mitigation requirements. These agencies may include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR), and watershed districts/watershed management organizations. If necessary, field surveys may be conducted to gain additional information regarding water resources in the project area.

Wildlife, Wildlife Habitat, and Threatened and Endangered Species

The Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS), a MNDNR database of known federal and state rare, threatened, and endangered species and critical habitat areas, was reviewed to assess the potential for impacts to these natural resources. Agencies such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the MNDNR will be consulted to better understand potential natural resource impacts and any required mitigation. If necessary, field surveys will be conducted to gain additional information regarding natural resources in the project area.

Parks

Parks in the project area were identified through a review of publicly available data from jurisdictions and the Metropolitan Council through a desktop GIS analysis process. Although there are many parks and recreational areas identified within the project area, the potential for direct impacts is limited to two parks. Both of these parks are managed by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. At 740 acres, Theodore Wirth Regional Park is the largest park in the Minneapolis park system. The portion that could be affected is located at the very northern limit of the park, where it transitions to Victory Memorial Parkway. Hall Park is a six-acre park in the Near North neighborhood of Minneapolis, divided into two sections by Lyndale Avenue but connected by a pedestrian bridge that provides access across Lyndale. The recommended route is anticipated to impact the existing pedestrian crossings. Impacts to these parks, as well as any others that could be affected by the project, will require close coordination with the agencies that have jurisdiction over the parks. Avoiding direct impacts to parks and recreational facilities is important, and as the project advances, opportunities to avoid impacts will be explored.

Visual Impacts

At this stage of project design, the potential for visual impacts was assessed by identifying the locations where major project elements, such as bridges, stations, and park-and-ride facilities, would be located. As the project moves into the design process, visual effects will be assessed by evaluating visual character, reviewing proposed plans and features, and documenting existing conditions to evaluate impacts. If an impact is identified that cannot be avoided, mitigation such as minimizing nighttime operational lighting and visual screening of project facilities would be identified.

Noise and Vibration

A preliminary assessment of the project's potential for noise and vibration impacts was completed based on known land uses, determined using GIS information provided by jurisdictions and the Metropolitan Council as well as input from early outreach activities. The assessment used current guidance from the FTA on how an assessment of noise and vibration impacts should be conducted. This includes looking at categories of potential impact, including sites of high sensitivity (e.g., recording studios and concert halls), residential uses, and institutional uses like schools, theaters, and churches. Three properties that were noted during early outreach activities were North Memorial Hospital (sensitive to vibration, according to the FTA impact assessment methodology), the Capri Theater, and KMOJ radio station (sensitive to noise). For these and all potentially sensitive properties, a detailed assessment of impacts will be conducted when the project advances. Opportunities to successfully mitigate impacts for noise include applying vehicle and equipment noise specifications, operational restrictions, and measures to keep all rail equipment in optimal operating condition. Vibration mitigation measures could include special systems installed to support the LRT tracks and measures to keep the tracks and vehicles in optimal operating condition. It is important to note that a full understanding of vibration impacts requires knowing the location of vibration sensitive activities and equipment within a building. For example, North Memorial Hospital is identified as a complex with a high sensitivity to vibration from the project; however, many of the structures near the proposed BLRT tracks are used for parking and other types of uses that likely would not be affected by LRT-generated vibration. The detailed noise and vibration impact assessment completed for the project when it advances will evaluate this in greater detail.



Cultural Resources

As the project advances, impacts to cultural resources will proceed in consultation with the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office, FTA, and other interested parties, including the public. These steps will include defining the project's area of potential effect (APE), identifying all listed and eligible historic properties within this area, assessing whether there will be any adverse impacts of the project on these properties, and (if required) committing to mitigation that will offset adverse effects.

Environmental Justice

Executive Order 12898: Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations (1994) serves as the basis for implementation of environmental strategies in all federal agencies within the executive branch. As a federal agency, the FTA is required to identify and address "disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations and to include environmental justice analysis in the National Environmental Policy Act process."

As the BLRT project advances into the federal and state environmental review process, the Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County will work with the communities to minimize impacts and maximize benefits to environmental justice communities served throughout the corridor, from Minneapolis to Brooklyn Park. Input from the Anti-Displacement Workgroup will also be an important element in this evaluation and development of appropriate mitigation strategies.

Engineering and Design

Light rail design

- The final location of tracks (train guideway) within the selected alignment will be determined through engineering, public outreach, coordination with cities, and environmental study. This will be happening as part of the design phase from summer 2022 to winter 2024.
- The guideway is generally expected to be center running (in the middle of the road). Center running train operations are efficient because they are compatible with the through vehicle traffic movements. One area that is an exception is Lyndale Avenue, where side running guideway would be more effective.
- The light rail is generally anticipated to be at grade. As the design progresses, there may be short sections of the corridor that are required to be elevated. This will most likely be due to changes in the natural grade of the road or existing infrastructure that will be better accommodated by elevated track.
- Any areas considered for elevated guideway will be evaluated during the environmental review process, which includes extensive public engagement.
- Underground guideway is very unlikely due to the cost of construction, the large impacts to the surrounding areas, and the high water table in much of the corridor.

Station locations

- Proposed station locations generally match the location of the formerly planned BLRT stations in relation to key roadways and bus rapid transit lines. Station locations were reviewed through multiple rounds of public engagement between the summer of 2021 and the winter of 2022.
- The number of stations and their locations will be finalized as design advances and through community engagement between the summer of 2022 and winter of 2024.

Impacts to property and the surrounding areas

- One Project Principle is to minimize residential, commercial, and environmental impacts. To accomplish this, the intent of the project is to work within existing available public right-of-way as much as possible to avoid or minimize impacts to homes and businesses. Some sections of the route include several design options that explore ways to reduce property impacts.
- Final property impacts will be determined in the next phase between summer 2022 and winter 2024. At the same time, the environmental process will help determine appropriate mitigation measures to assure the light rail is being planned in a way that can address existing and prevent future environmental injustices.
- Impacts during construction will take place beyond 2024. Having a plan that considers the impacts of construction is part of the anti-displacement initiative. More detail on the anti-displacement efforts will be developed over the next year and recommendations will be developed by spring 2023.

Pedestrian access

- Safe and efficient pedestrian connections between stations and station area neighborhoods are critical in station area planning, and a key criterion to achieve federal funding. Pedestrian facilities support connections to nearby destinations and provide access for people of all ages and abilities to light rail. This part of design and engineering will take place between summer 2022 and winter 2024.

Bicycle access

- Safe and efficient bicycle connections between stations and station area neighborhoods help expand access to a broader area. Bicycle facilities includes both designated infrastructure improvements and stations features such as bicycle parking. This part of design and engineering will take place between summer 2022 and winter 2024.

Parking and park and rides

- At this time the following locations are being considered for some form of park and ride: Oak Grove Parkway Station, 63rd Avenue Station, Bass Lake Road Station, and the Downtown Robbinsdale Station.
- Where current on-street parking is impacted by the project, further study will be completed as part of the environmental phase to determine what options may be needed to address lost parking.



Public Review and Upcoming Engagement

The Route Modification Report is available for public review, and comments will be accepted through **May 18, 2022**. The Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County will carefully review the input received to make any additional modifications before the recommended route moves forward for approval.

Further robust community engagement will continue through these and future phases. To submit your comments on the report and for a list of upcoming community meetings, visit BlueLineExt.org.

Comment Form



Comment Form METRO Blue Line Extension

Route Modification Report Comment Form

We want to hear from you! Please use this form to provide your comments and questions to the project team on the evaluation of the route options presented in the Route Modification Report. The Report documents the overall process, public input, and technical evaluation completed to date that informs the recommendation of a modified route for the Blue Line Extension project.

To help you frame your comments, here are suggested questions:

- **Do you agree with the route recommendation, why or why not?**
- **What else do you want decision makers to know?**
- **How can the route continue to be improved through the next phase of the project?**

Comments:

Questions:



Comment Form
METRO Blue Line Extension

To find the Route Modification Report online and provide additional comments on our interactive map, visit: BlueLineExt.org



We are accepting comments on the Report through **May 18, 2022**

 **CONTACT INFO**

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Email: _____

Please add me to the project email list

.....

To provide these responses via email or phone, or for questions, contact Sophia Ginis, Manager of Public Involvement: sophia.ginis@metrotransit.org or 651.592.1911.



Comment Form

METRO Blue Line Extension

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Stay Connected!

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Visit BlueLineExt.org for more information, to sign-up for the project newsletter, and share your comments, questions and concerns on our interactive feedback map.

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