



Engagement Strategies and Approach

September – December 2023

Since August 2020, the project team, along with the community engagement cohort, Cultivate artists, Anti-Displacement Work Group, and committee members, have engaged with communities through a variety of activities, including in-person and virtual community meetings, door knocking, attending community events, online and paper surveys, and interactive maps. See below for the timing and project updates shared during each round of engagement.

- **Round 1** (August 2020 through January 2021): Input on project goals, concerns, opportunities, and thoughts on potential new routes
- **Round 2** (March to June 2021): Input on new route options released as part of the Initial Route Modification Report
- **Round 3** (July to August 2021): Input on the connections that light rail would make within communities and station locations within those areas
- **Round 4** (September to December 2021): Input on updated design concepts and potential opportunities and impacts of light rail options
- **Round 5** (April to May 2022): Input on the route recommendation as part of the Final Route Modification Report
- **Round 6** (September to December 2022):
 - **September** – Input on three route options between Target Field Station and West Broadway and four route options between Washington Avenue and Irving Avenue in Minneapolis.
 - **October – December** – Input on route options that will be studied in the environmental document, share updates on the anti-displacement working group’s work, and discuss next steps for the project.
- **Round 7** (January to May 2023): Input on the two route options between Target Field Station and West Broadway (East of I-94 or Lyndale Avenue) and two route options between Washington Avenue and Irving Avenue in Minneapolis (21st Avenue or West Broadway). Updated designs and options were also presented in Brooklyn Park, Crystal, and Robbinsdale for feedback.
- **Round 8** (June to August 2023): Input on the east of I-94 route options between Target Field Station and West Broadway:
 - **Option 1:** east of I-94 connection would run alongside the highway to become at grade and center running on Washington Avenue
 - **Option 2:** 10th Avenue to Washington Avenue (either with 10th Avenue being a transit mall or one-way northbound traffic)
 - Both would require a crossing over I-94 to either 21st Avenue or West Broadway Avenue.
 - Public input was solicited again on placing tracks on 21st Avenue instead of West Broadway in north Minneapolis.
- **Round 9** (September to December 2023): Feedback from business owners along the corridor. Staff also received feedback on two proposed route options in the North Loop neighborhood of Minneapolis.

This document summarizes the feedback received during the ninth round of public engagement from September to December 2023, including a summary of responses and questions received from public meetings, advisory committee meetings, online surveys, and the interactive feedback map. Project staff have engaged with the public about the project through the following events:



Public meetings (41 in-person, 1 virtual)

Virtual Meetings

- METRO Blue Line Extension Quarterly Community Meeting (~20 attendees total)
 - Tues, November 14 from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

In-person meetings

- Robbinsdale City Council Meeting (~53 attendees total)
 - Tues, September 5 from 7 – 9 p.m. Robbinsdale City Hall
- 918 Lofts Community Meeting (~27 attendees)
 - Tues, September 5 from 6 – 8 p.m. at METRO North Loop Garage
- Robbinsdale Chamber of Commerce Meet and Greet (~87 attendees total)
 - Mon, September 11 from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at Robbinsdale Ace Hardware
- North Loop Community Meeting (~150 attendees)
 - Wed, October 18 from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at The Neu Neu
- Ward 5 Blue Line Extension Community Discussion (~75 attendees)
 - Mon, October 30 from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at Juxtaposition Arts
- Workforce and DBE Meet and Greet (~20 attendees)
 - Tue, October 31 from 10 a.m. to noon
- METRO Blue Line Extension Quarterly Community Meeting (~21 attendees)
 - Wed, November 8 from 6 – 8 p.m. at Metro Transit North Loop Garage
- 2023 Transportation Summit (~100 attendees)
 - Wed, November 15 from 9 – 11 a.m. at The Hennepin
- Brainstorming Session with Asian American Chamber of Commerce and Businesses (~20 attendees)
 - Thu, Dec 7 from noon to 2 p.m. at UROC

- 28 Cultivate Arts Events in Minneapolis, Robbinsdale, Crystal and Brooklyn Park
- 4 Elevate Hennepin business support workshops:
 - Marketing: October 5
 - Business technology: October 26
 - Business finance: November 16
 - Legal services for business: December 7
- Many more one on one and stakeholder meetings



Meeting Types

- Community Meeting/Quarterly Meeting
 - Community meetings featured presentations followed by a Q&A, informational boards displaying the route options and background information on the project as well as large engineering layouts with a more detailed view of route options. Staff were present to answer questions and take notes from community members as they explored the information.
- Virtual Community Meeting
 - On Microsoft Teams, staff presented the same information offered at the in-person meetings on the latest design of the route/stations, environmental review schedule, and updates on anti-displacement initiative. This was followed by a question-and-answer session.
- Cultivate Arts
 - Cultivate Arts is a collaborative effort to activate spaces, build connections, celebrate diversity, and promote opportunity through local artist-led creative placemaking projects in the Blue Line Extension corridor. Cultivate Arts has been working with local artists from September to December 2023 to creatively engage communities in various events to inform planning and design for the Blue Line Extension.

Other Meeting Metrics:

- 20 community meetings and pop-up events
- 36 events with stakeholder and business representatives
- 9 Advisory Committee meetings
- 446 interactive map and survey comments
- Many more questions and phone calls

Community Meeting Feedback

Comment Summary/Themes:

- Anti-displacement
 - Concern that residents and businesses will be bought out and replaced
 - Worry that the light rail will change neighborhood character, especially along West Broadway
 - Desire to advance anti-displacement strategies and funding
- Parking
 - Concern that loss of parking on West Broadway will negatively impact businesses by decreasing accessibility
 - More data on future parking and vehicle usage should be available
- Community empowerment and representation



Figure 1: Photo of project staff sharing updates at November 8 Quarterly Community Meeting



- Jobs and workforce training for community members
- Community well-being needs to be prioritized
- The project should help build generational wealth
- Desire to have the homeless population represented on committees
- Engagement should focus on ensuring the voices of younger generations are heard
- Staff accountability
 - The project office needs to offer solutions to recurring project concerns such as public safety, parking, displacement, etc.
 - Fear that promises will not be fulfilled
- Ridership
 - Understanding more about the FTAA Ridership Forecasting Model
- Construction
 - Construction impacts to community and businesses

Feedback from Business Owners

Throughout the months of September – December, project staff spoke to over 120 businesses along the Blue Line Extension route to better understand business needs and operations. Below are common themes/comments from businesses:

Benefits of Blue Line Extension

- Reliable means of transportation for customers and employees, especially those that are zero/one car households
- Bring in more and/or new customers to businesses
- Redevelopment of the area
- Reduce traffic in the area
- Improve accessibility

Concerns of Blue Line Extension

- Inconvenience during construction, what impacts will construction have on business?
- Noise disruption to businesses
- Safety concerns
 - At stations and on trains
 - Traffic – pedestrians and drivers
- Loss of street parking
- Property value decreasing, property taxes increasing

5. Where do you currently have access to your business from? (select one for each row)

	Yes	No	N/A
Main street	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Side street (s)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rear street	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. What are your typical staff hours?

7. What are your typical hours of operation, and when are you most busy?

8. How do your customers/clients get to and from your business (if known)?

9. Currently, are there barriers for your customers to access your business? Select all that apply.

- Poor lighting
- Safety
- Bad sidewalk conditions
- Public safety concerns
- Restricted parking rules
- Other (please specify)

Figure 2: Sample of questions on the Blue Line Extension Business Inventory Survey



North Loop Route Feedback

In September 2023, a proposed route for Minneapolis was developed based on community feedback and engineering analysis. The route is being advanced to a preliminary design and environmental analysis stage for city and federal review.

The proposed route (solid line) in the North Loop neighborhood of Minneapolis would use 10th Avenue to Washington Avenue to connect to 21st Avenue with a station located south of Plymouth Avenue. A secondary option (dashed line) is also being considered that would run along the east side of I-94 between 10th Avenue and 17th Avenue where it would connect with Washington Avenue before crossing I-94 at 21st Avenue.

Project staff hosted a North Loop community meeting as well as asked community members to share their preferences online via an updated survey launched October 30, 2023, from the survey in August 2023. The following were common themes/comments project staff collected:

Benefits

10th to Washington

- More businesses and residents in the area – connects local and nonlocal residents
- Easy access to and from the North Loop area
- Increase connection to other routes and amenities
- Makes stations more walkable
- Reduces car traffic in area
- Potential opportunities for future developments and serve pre-existing developments in the already populated and busy neighborhood – allows for natural expansion of the development along Washington
- Transit mall could be transformational for the area

10th to 17th to Washington

- Less construction impact for residents/businesses
- Little to no impact on flow of traffic
- Places station closer to residents on west side of I-94
- Keeps two-way traffic on 10th
- No risk to damaging historic buildings

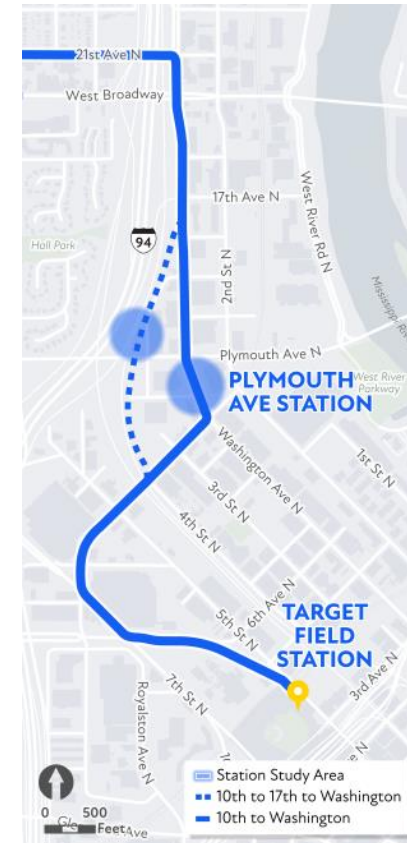


Figure 3: North Loop Route Options Map



Concerns

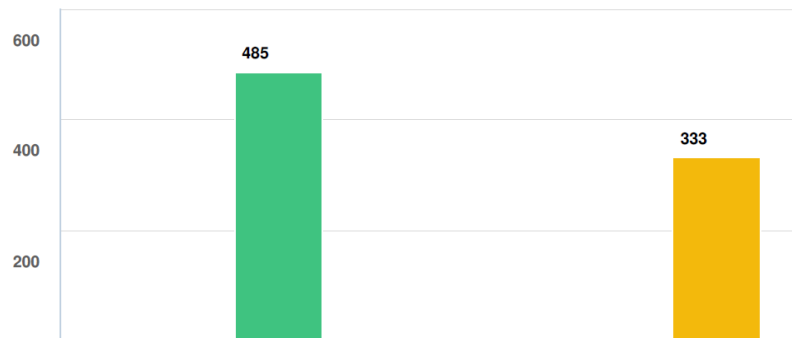
10th to Washington

- Possible impact on historic buildings during construction
- Noise during and after construction
- Many did not see any benefits to this route and preferred 10th to 17th
- Poses risk to pedestrians and bikers
- Too close in proximity to Target Field station
- Removing vehicle traffic makes it difficult for visitors/residents to access neighborhoods

10th to 17th to Washington

- Less accessibility to the North Loop neighborhood and businesses
- Further walking distance for residents and visitors
- Less pedestrian infrastructure makes it unsafe for people crossing
- Less opportunities for future development – more remote than 10th to Washington
- Lack of connection to other routes and North Loop neighborhood

Q1 If light rail is advanced east of I-94, which option do you prefer?



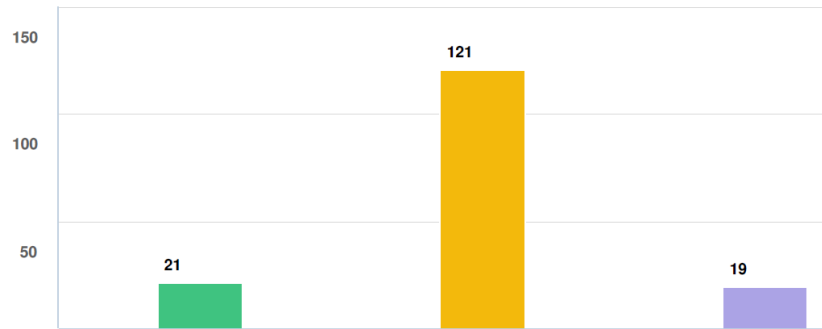
Question options

- Option 1 (pink line east of I-94 along highway)
- Option 2 (green line along 10th Ave)

Figure 4: North Loop Survey Results (from August 3, 2023 to October 26, 2023)



Q5 If light rail is advanced on 10th Avenue, which design do you prefer?

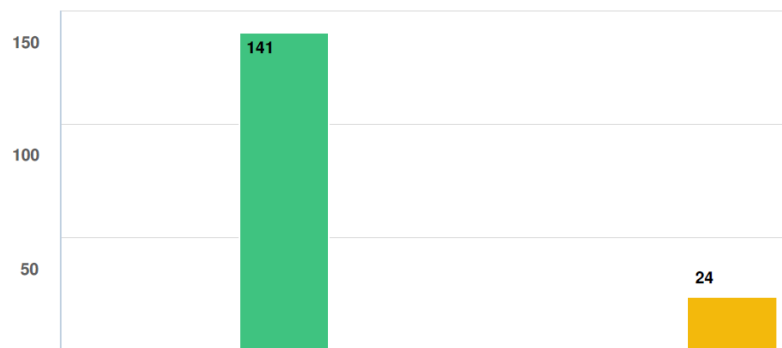


Question options

- One-way northbound traffic
- Transit Mall
- Other (please specify)

Figure 5: North Loop Survey Results (from October 30, 2023 to December 20, 2023)

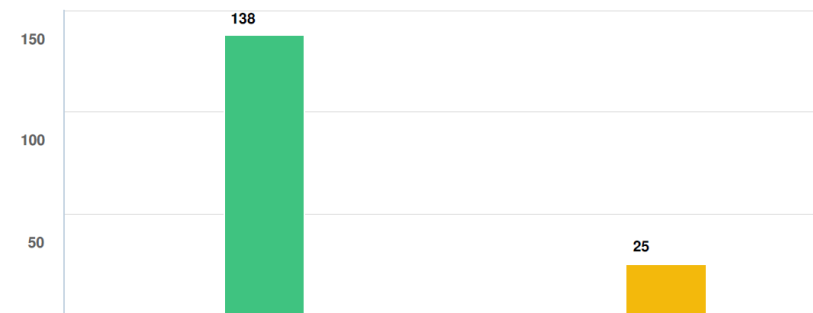
Q8 If the Blue Line Extension were accessible to you, would you take it?



Question options

- Yes
- No

Q9 Do you see the Blue Line Extension as a valuable transit addition to the North Loop area?



Question options

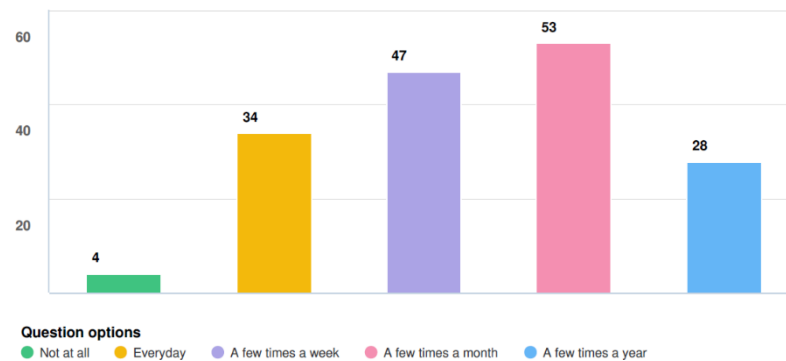
- Yes
- No



Public Engagement Report (September - December 2023)

METRO Blue Line Extension

Q7 How often do you currently use Metro Transit to get to your destinations?



Q10 How do you currently travel to and from destinations?

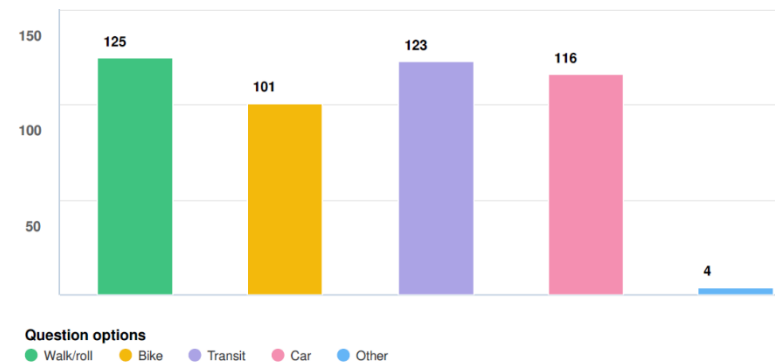


Figure 66: North Loop Online Survey Results (from October 30, 2023 to December 20, 2023)

Project staff asked the community if the Transit Mall option on 10th Avenue advances, what other improvements would you like to see to the area. Below are suggestions taken from survey results:

- Better bike connections to other parts of North Loop
- Bike amenities – dedicated lanes, racks, lockers, etc.
- Stop lights at intersections along Washington Ave
- Signal priority for trains
- Police presence
- Create retail, coffee shop, wine bar, etc. businesses near Transit Mall
- Wayfinding signage for bikes and pedestrians from Transit Mall to West River Road bike path and to Cedar Lake trail
- Signage so traffic knows not to drive on the Transit Mall
- Make the area more walkable
- More landscaping, trees, shade canopies
- Public art spaces
- Better lighting

From late October to January 31, 2023, project staff updated the North Loop Survey to prioritize receiving feedback regarding benefits and drawbacks of the two proposed route options, 10th to Washington and 10th to 17th.



Public Engagement Report (September - December 2023)

METRO Blue Line Extension

For the 10th to Washington route, 77% of survey respondents said there were many benefits to this route including better connections to people and amenities, less noise to residents, and the reduction in traffic. Drawback that 19% of respondents shared included removal of vehicles lanes would lead to more backups, increase crime to riders, and the disruption of North Loop residents due to train and construction noise and the possibly of displacement.

For 10th to 17th, 43% of people saw benefits to this route that included easier access to I-94, less impact to residents, and keeps traffic on 10th Avenue. 45% of respondents shared drawbacks and no benefits to this route that included feedback such as creating a bypass of Washington Avenue would end chances of creating a local downtown community atmosphere, increase walking distance to North Loop area, and that it doesn't serve a great number of pre-existing residences, offices, and businesses.

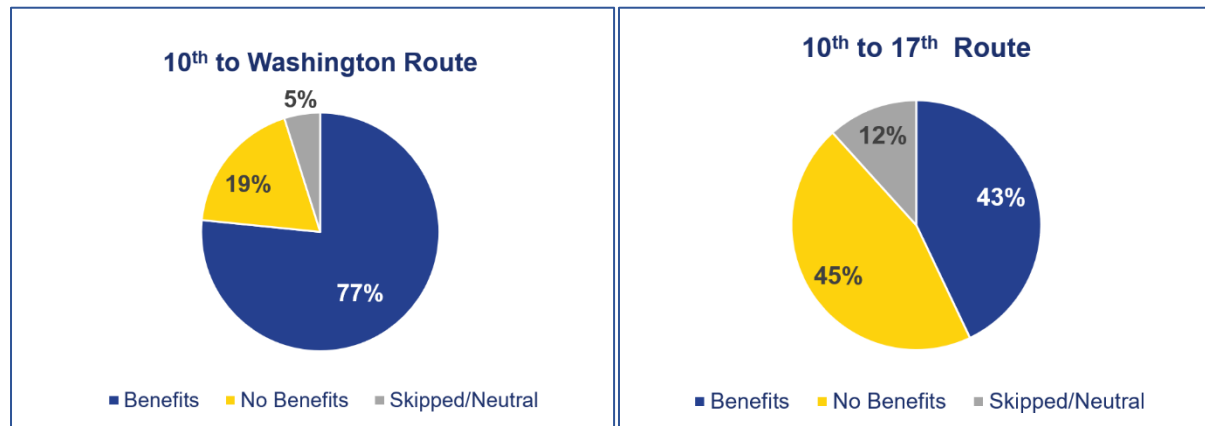


Figure 7: North Loop Online Survey Results (as of January 31, 2024)



Interactive Map Comments (September – December 2023)

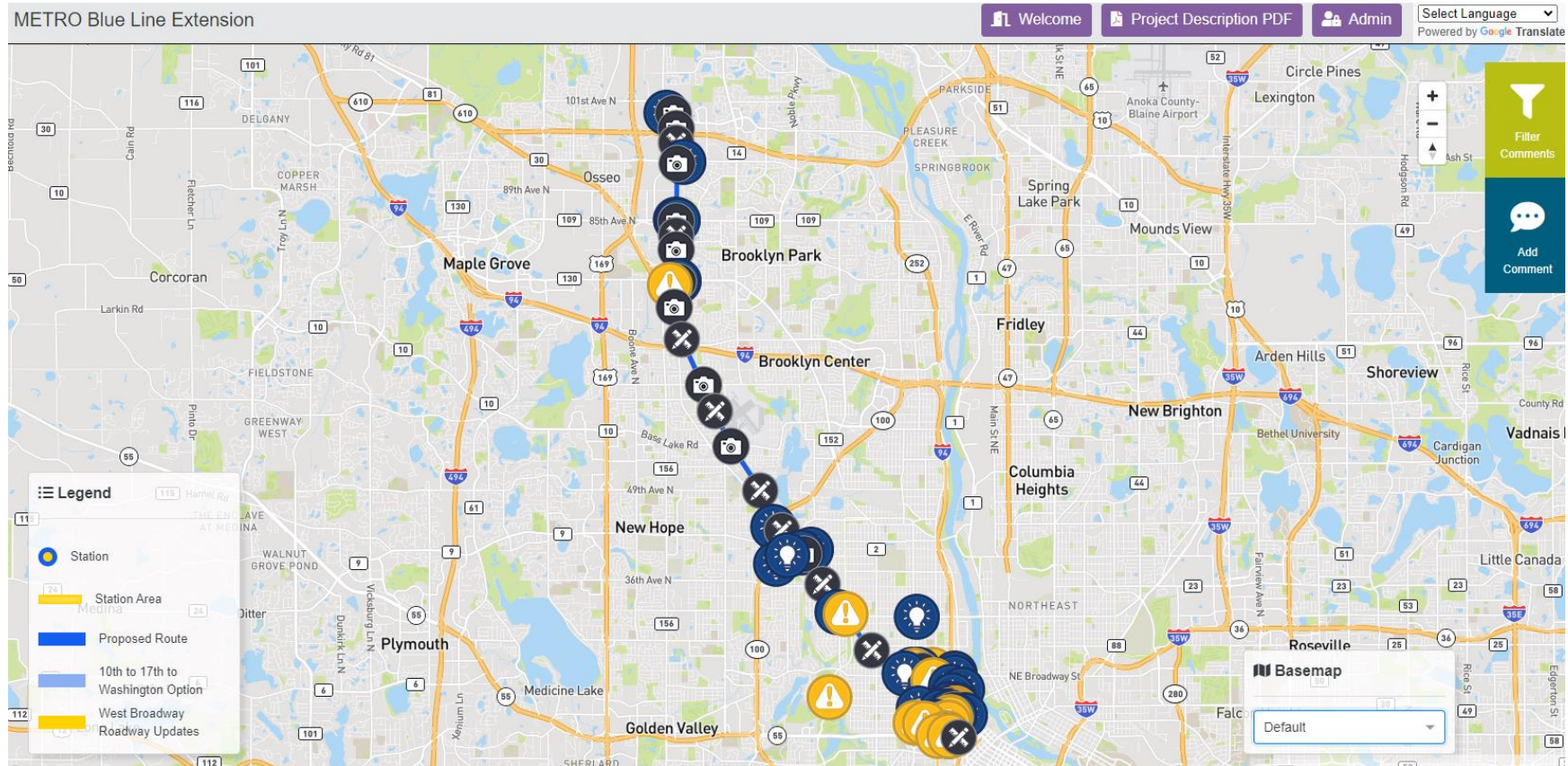


Figure 8: Comment pins on interactive map

The interactive map (updated in September 2023) featured and sought feedback on the proposed route in Minneapolis. In Minneapolis, the recommendation is to extend light rail from Target Field Station along 10th Avenue and Washington Avenue, and on 21st Avenue between I-94 and James Avenue, where it would join West Broadway Avenue. Related construction and improvements would be pursued on West Broadway Avenue between Lyndale and James avenues. **282** comments were received between September and December 2023.

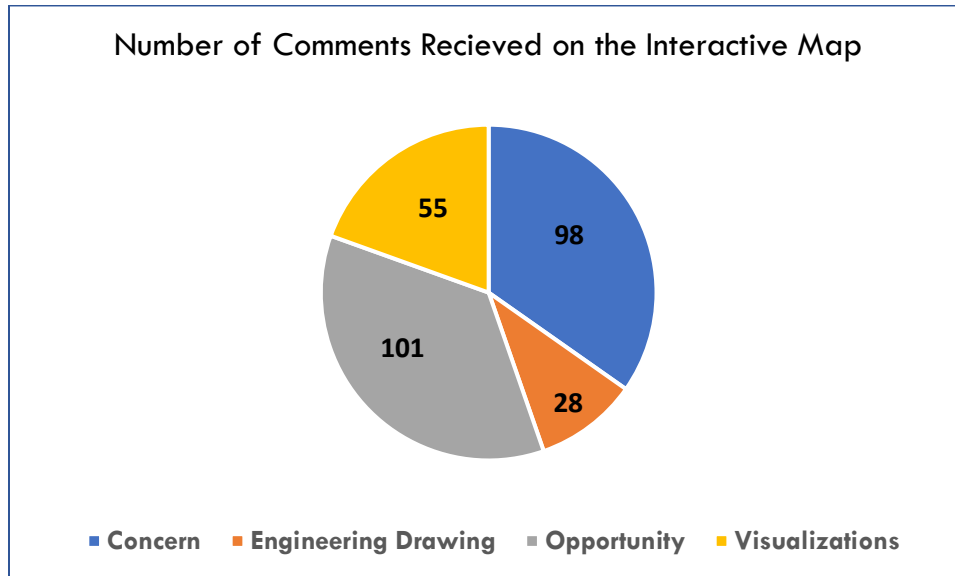


Figure 9: Comments received on interactive map

Concerns

- Properties along 21st lose parking when roads are shared with tracks
- Lack of easy transfer to the D line
- Increase pedestrian and bike accessibility near Olson Memorial Highway due to unsafe conditions
- Putting a station in the middle of Washington Ave has potential safety impacts, especially with pedestrians crossing traffic
- Concern for bus and student safety

Opportunities

- Serve residents near Theodore Wirth Park, as well as at 7th Street
- LRT will lead to redevelopment of some of the industrial spaces on Washington Ave into much needed housing for our city
- Improve mid-block pedestrian access between 2nd and Washington Ave
- A stop at Washington and Broadway would benefit popular local establishments
- Connecting a protected bike path to downtown Robbinsdale station creates more accessibility for residents



Visualizations

- 10th Ave transit mall makes the neighborhood even more walkable
- Excitement for bike lanes on the 21st Ave bridge
- Preference for no car access on the 21st Ave bridge
- Plymouth Ave station would provide great transit options for northern part of the North Loop

Engineering Drawings

- Find an opportunity to connect the D and C line for easy transfer
- 21st Ave N should be just a transit/pedestrian/bike mall where possible
- Lowry Avenue station should be moved up to Abbott so commercial area just north of there can be better served

Public Comment Compilation

Project staff posted a new way to share public comments that have been collected since August 2020. The comments shown in this dashboard summary were gathered from written feedback from surveys, interactive map comments, comment forms, and community meetings, not encompassing other comments received. More information can be found at: <https://metro council.org/Transportation/Projects/Light-Rail-Projects/METRO-Blue-Line-Extension/Community-Engagement/Reports-and-Comments.aspx>

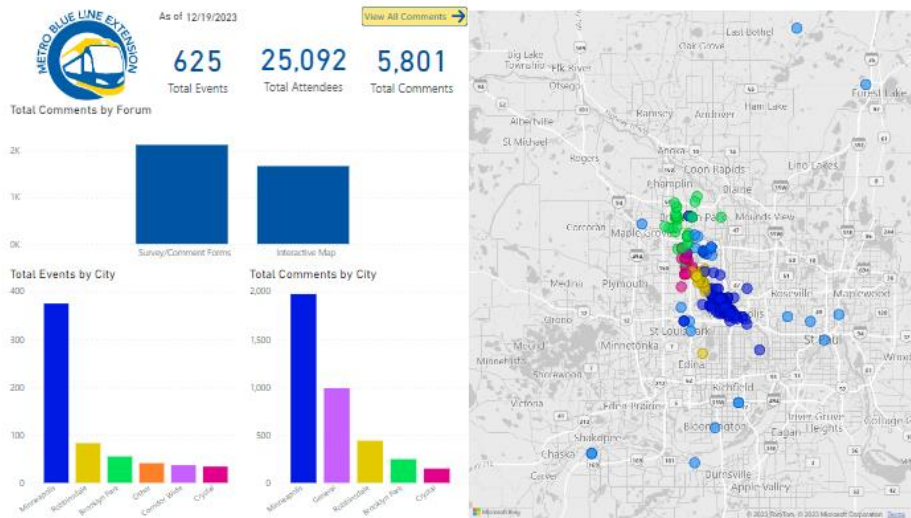


Figure 10: Dashboard Summary of Comments Received



Advisory Committees

The Business Advisory Committee (BAC), Community Advisory Committee (CAC), and Corridor Management Committee (CMC) met monthly from September through December (October meetings were cancelled) to introduce review committee charters, discuss the latest project updates from staff. Discussion during these meetings included:

- **BAC:**
 - At the September meeting, members were presented with the route alignment presentation that included visual representations of stations and highlighted investments around some of these stations. Members observed these investments and assumed that the light rail project would stimulate growth in all areas of the alignment. Discussion ensued, with members questioning why North Minneapolis was not offered a P&R facility, in contrast to Robbinsdale, Crystal, and Brooklyn Park, which were provided with parking options. This raised concerns about building trust within communities, particularly when North Minneapolis seemed to be lacking in equitable development.
 - In November, primary concerns of BAC members centered around Anti-Displacement, particularly urging a detailed examination of how zoning, assessments, and real estate taxes will affect businesses along the corridor.
 - During the December meeting, the committee members appreciated the update regarding communications. A good portion of the meeting focused on the uncertainty with the project and the anxiety that comes with that. The committee members acknowledged the reality that some key components of the project are out of the hands of the Blue Line Extension (BLE) project team such as parking decisions along the route, zoning, and taxation.
- **CAC:**
 - At the September meeting, CAC members engaged in extensive discussions regarding various aspects of the light rail project. The topics covered included the placement of stations, particularly the station in Robbinsdale in relation to Park and Ride (P&R) facilities. There was a strong emphasis on ensuring that the station remains conveniently accessible by foot, with considerations even extending to the potential construction of a pedestrian flyover bridge connecting the station to the P&R. Additionally, discussions touched on Anti-Displacement measures and determining the optimal timing for engaging with businesses to propose potential solutions. There was overall satisfaction from the CAC members with the alignment recommended by staff.
 - In November, conversation was had regarding ridership numbers and how that affects federal funding with the FTA's new Ridership Forecasting Model (STOPS model). Members asked project staff for an update about what they've heard regarding the North Loop alignment.
 - In December, committee members appreciated the update on communications, and it was noticed that most or all the footage for the Campaign Recap Video was shot locally and they recognized some of the people. The CAC committee members would like to see more videos of this nature and were happy to hear the communications team is planning to begin a podcast and produce more videos in 2024. Committee members appreciated the effort made to update the design for the Lowry Station and this updated design will definitely help with some of the concerns residents have voiced and provides better connection in the area.
- **CMC:**
 - In September, members reviewed track alignments and stations for the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement.
 - In November, members were provided with an overview of the proposed alignment for the Blue Line Extension, which extends the current Blue Line from Minneapolis to Brooklyn Park and was presented with the staff-recommended alignment map. Several



Public Engagement Report (September - December 2023)

METRO Blue Line Extension

members expressed gratitude for the work being done with the Anti-Displacement Working Group and look forward to hearing a more detailed account of the expected outcomes and milestones. Conversations were also had to understand the project's rating process mandated by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

- In December, committee members were provided a project update regarding Lowry Avenue Station, communications updates, process update on anti-displacement, and end of year reports from the Community and Business Advisory committees.