Bottineau Transitway Draft Environment Impact Statement Public Hearing Before Hennepin County Commissioner Linda Higgins Friday, May 14, 2014 Crystal, Minnesota

Reported By: Lori Morrow, RPR, CRR, CLR, CCP
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PANEL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Linda Higgins, Hennepin County Commissioner, District 2
Pat Backen, Robbinsdale City Council
Mike Freiberg, Minnesota House of Representatives,
   District 45B
Mark Hoffman, Crystal City Council, Ward 1
Andy Snope, Golden Valley City Council

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(Reporter's Note: The first speaker, Ms. Bonniwell, spoke directly to the comment reporter prior to the public hearing and then also spoke a second time publicly to the commission.)

MS. CONSTANCE BONNIWELL: My name is Constance Bonniwell, B-o-n-n-i-w-e-l-l. I live at 2812 - 30th Avenue South, Minneapolis, 55406.

These are the comments that I am making to the transcriber because I don't think I'll have time to finish my remarks within three minutes.

Eliminating BRT as an option is unacceptable. If you do, you will only increase opposition to LRT. You have planned a good BRT grid on the north side. If you ran BRT down 81, you would have enough money to add an east-west route that connects 81 with Lowry.

A lot of the public speakers at the May 7 public hearing spoke in support of Bus Rapid Transit. I would have, too, but my comments were cut off at three minutes. So this is the kind of Draft EIS you get when it's written to achieve one thing. LRT down the BN line is manipulative. 560 million for BRT. It's full of vague, rambling statements such as, Other elements of the project are established formally during subsequent engineering based on additional information, including openly near travel demand forecasts. Indeed, elements of
the project are established, but they are not divulged.

No map of the wetlands you intend to fill in, though you say you plan to fill in six acres with D1. No boring test results, which are of interest to property owners.

No map of staging areas, though Robbinsdale is already prepping your way into one in Sochacki Park. You could have more accurately designated traction power stations.

You came up with so many maps that did not include Turtle Pond and other wetlands. People wonder if you are so reticent with information because you're trying to minimize the window of opportunity we have to repel your plans. We wonder if you were even at the step to do a Draft EIS, it lacks so much information.

And then back to the quote. Other elements of the project are established formally during subsequent engineering. Does this include the social engineering you do to get this LRT built? All those it's happening in articles in newspapers when Bot No! has never gotten state matching funds? The social engineering with these public hearings is unimpressive also.

This Draft EIS gives us no reason to trust you with our woods.

Thank you for your consideration.

(Reporter's Note: The public hearing begins at this point.)
COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Good evening, everyone.

Thank you for coming to the meeting about the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Bottineau Transitway.

My name is Linda Higgins. I'm County Commissioner in District 2. The Bottineau Transitway line runs through two districts, the district that I get to represent, District 2, and District 1, the part of the line that goes through Commissioner Mike Opat's district. Mike was here earlier tonight. He's actually just outside coaching his son's baseball games. So he'll probably come popping his head in at some point.

We would invite you, if you have not had a chance to sign up and you would like to speak, we have a table over to your left at the front of the room. Go ahead and just sign up. And then we will have up on the screen the list of people so you'll know who is speaking, who is next. And so it will work out very well for that. So feel free to just get up and sign up.

We also have water and cookies from the Cookie Cart in the back of the room. They are really good. Be sure you have at least one.

At this point, I'm going to turn the microphone over to Joe Gladke, and he's going to tell you how we're going to proceed tonight and give you some other
information about the line.

MR. GLADKE: Great. Thank you, Commissioner Higgins.

I'm Joe Gladke, manager of Engineering and Transit Planning with Hennepin County. I'm just going to provide a brief overview tonight. I know I've seen some of you at some of the previous meetings, and some of you this may be your first meeting, so I'm just going to try and get through a brief overview of kind of where we've been with the project, where we're at right now, where the project is going.

COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Hey, Joe, we can't hear you back here. I don't know if people can hear you out there.

MR. GLADKE: There. Sounds even better. So I'm just going to go through a few brief slides, and then we'll get on to the public testimony.

The Bottineau Project has a variety of agencies that are involved with this. At the Federal Government level, our lead agency is the Federal Transit Administration. And right now, Hennepin County is currently the lead agency locally on the project, and we work in partnership with the Metropolitan Council. And as the project advances, the project will be transitioning from Hennepin County on to Metropolitan
Council later on this summer. They will be responsible for preliminary engineering as well as the Final Environmental Impact Statement. They will be also in charge of construction should the project progress to that.

We also have all of our city partners along the line. We have five different cities that are involved with the project as well. They're in charge of the land use planning and some of the local impacts for these projects and making sure that this project will fit within the communities and looking at the station area planning, which I'll talk about momentarily.

You might also hear about the Metro Blue Line Extension. That's another name for the Bottineau LRT Project. The Metro Transit has recently kind of gone through a rebranding of some of their major transit routes. What was known as the Hiawatha Line is now known as the Metro Blue Line. This will be an extension from Target Field Station where the Hiawatha, or Metro Blue Line, ends today. It will go out west on Highway 55 and then up the railroad corridor up to West Broadway and then head up to just north of 610 near the Target North campus.

This slide right here kind of shows three independent processes that are happening that are
somewhat all interrelated. The first line across the
top, kind of the blue bars. That really gets into kind
of the process that the Federal Transit Administration
requires these projects to go through.

And then the middle line is kind of the
environmental, both the state and federal, requirement
that need to be met for projects like this.

And then across the bottom we have land use
planning. That looks at the half-mile radius around each
one of these stations. They look at pedestrian
connections, land use, how things may or may not want to
change in the future around some of these transit
stations.

Where we're at today right now, we're at kind
of the tail end of the Draft Environmental Impact
Statement phase.

So moving forward, there's still another year
to two years that will be part of the Final Environmental
Impact Statement. That won't begin until likely toward
the end of this year. Metropolitan Council currently has
a request for proposals out for the preliminary
engineering aspect. That consultant will be hired
probably towards the end of the summer or the fall. Will
be at least two years of engineering beyond that --
excuse me -- preliminary engineering and then an
additional year or two of engineering beyond that.

So I heard a couple questions tonight about when will this be opened up. This project still has a very long way to go, and there's quite a bit of process that has to happen as well as the funding has to all come together to make this project happen. So it will be quite some time before we worry about buying a ticket quite yet.

Early on in the process, we had kind of five goals that we looked at as far as what are we trying to accomplish with the project. Those five goals were to enhance regional access to activity centers, enhance the effectiveness of transit service within the corridor, provide a cost effective and financially feasible transit system, promote sustainable development patterns, support healthy communities and sound environmental practices. Those kind of led the overall efforts.

This slide here talks about kind of similar time periods about where we've been. Back in 2008, we started what was an alternatives analysis study. It looked at a variety of different options of trying to get kind of from the northwest area, kind of connecting into downtown. So there are a variety of different options on the north end and on the south end. We looked at a variety of options of what might be the best options
moving forward. Through that process, there was kind of a short list of projects that moved forward. I'll show you a map momentarily on that.

In early 2012, we had a series of public meetings that we went out and talked to people about issues and concerns that -- in fact, we studied them as part of the DEIS. So with the DEIS, we now have a lot of those issues and concerns that were brought up during the scoping process that have been identified. So hopefully, you'll see some of those things.

Everything is not fully known at this point in time. There's more engineering work that has to happen on this project that define this project as it is. And there's more environmental analysis that's needed for the project as well.

But kind of where we're at right now, we're kind of at the tail end of the DEIS. We have a public comment period right now. And I'll have a few more specifics on that momentarily.

Some people may know -- may want to know what is this DEIS that I've been referring to. And it really assists decision makers in the assessment of the impact associated with the projects. It documents the purpose and the need for the project as well as alternatives that are studied. It addresses transportation, social,
environmental, historical impacts as well as a whole host of others. We've got some handouts in the back if people want to see all of the different areas within the DEIS that are studied. And there's kind of a reference guide that can kind of steer you toward a specific period within the DEIS if you have a specific area of interest. It also defines potential mitigation measures. Mitigation measures are more further defined in the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

It does facilitate review by federal, state, and local agencies, as well as the general public. It satisfies both the federal and the state environmental laws that are necessary for a project like this. It also provides a comparison of alternatives and identifies the environmentally preferred alternative.

As far as the options that were studied in the DEIS, this map here shows those options. On the north end, we have two different options that were studied, one that connected over toward Maple Grove, which is Option A, and the other option was Option B, which goes up to Brooklyn Park. Option C was common to all of the options. And then on the southern end, we had Option D1, which stays within the railroad corridor, and Option D2, which exits the rail corridor just south of 36, heads down West Broadway, south on Penn, and then they all end
up at the Target Field Station downtown.

I just mentioned the five goals that we had early on in the process. If we look at those five goals, there were 22 different evaluation criteria that came out of those five goals. If we go through kind of a ranking of those 22 criteria, we kind of come up with somewhat of a score associated with each one of those. So we have a no-build option as well as an enhanced bus option and then the four LRT build options that I talked about earlier.

And if you look at the overall summary ranking of those, the LRT Option BCD1 is the alternative that is known as the locally preferred alternative as well as the environmentally preferred alternative. And this here is the map of the locally preferred alternative and the environmentally preferred alternative. This is the option that will then move forward as part of preliminary engineering as well as the FEIS.

This is the last of the four public hearings and open houses that we've had. We've had good turnout at all the events thus far. And in addition to providing verbal testimony here tonight, we have comment forms in the back as well so people can provide written comments, or you can provide verbal testimony here tonight. We also have comment forms available on the website if you
would like to take some more time to submit them via mail or email. We ask for your email so we can keep in touch with you and acknowledge that we actually have received your comments. We would also want to let people know that these projects take quite some time to move forward. So you're not going to see your comments get addressed until we get into that Final Environmental Impact Statement. So it might be a year or two before we have more detailed answers to some of the questions that still remain that you ask right now. We're going take those comments. We're going to post them all on the project website so people can see a variety of comments that were received on the project. We're also going to take those comments and try and classify them into different categories so that they can then be passed on to the firms that will be working on the FEIS and engineering and the staff so that they see that these are issues that still need further analysis before further advances.

So with that, I'm going to turn it over to Commissioner Higgins to begin the public hearing. I've had a chance to talk with some of you already. But if you still have more questions, please feel free to see the staff that's in the back room there. We'll be there to address any questions. The public testimony will begin as part of the -- if you have more questions, and
you want to have some dialogue, come see the staff in the back. We also have the on deck seats up here in the front. So if you see your name, you can come on up front and be prepared to provide your testimony.

COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Thank you, Joe.

The way we have it set up is that each person will get three minutes to speak. And we have a timer, who will give you a little yellow flag at 30 seconds, and then the red card will come up at the end of the three-minute period, and we'll ask you to wrap up your thoughts at that point.

Joe's turning the microphone around so that you can speak to us here at the table. I'm going to let you know that this is a way for you to comment. This isn't a question-and-answer period. If you have questions about the line, Joe and others will be in the back of the room or back where we have the open house for you to personally ask your questions and take as much time as you want to with that. But that's not the purpose of the hearing here tonight.

Let me introduce the people who are sitting here at the table before we get started. To my far left is Council Member Andy Snope, one of the Golden Valley City Council members. Next to him is Representative Mike Freiberg, also from Golden Valley, but also represents
Crystal and Robbinsdale and New Hope. Okay. Got that  
amost right. Council Member Mark Hoffman is from the  
City of Crystal. And to my right, Council Member  
Pat Backen is from Robbinsdale, and Council Member  
George Selman is from Robbinsdale as well.  

We want you to know that we'll be listening  
intently.  

And we also have a court reporter here so that  
we can accurately capture your comments so that we can  
reflect those as we go forward with the environmental  
impact work that we will be doing.  

So as you see up in front on the screen, we  
will have a list of people who have signed up to speak.  
You'll see who is speaking and then who will be up next.  
If you are one of the upcoming speakers, if you would  
like to move to one of the seats in the front row, that  
would be great. That will make it just a little easier  
to pass from one person to another.  

Any questions?  

If not, the first speaker is Constance  
Bonniwell. Welcome.  

MS. CONSTANCE BONNIWELL: I live at 2812 - 30th  
Avenue South in Minneapolis, but I grew up in  
Robbinsdale. My father bought the property at 2923  
France in 1960.
The BCD1 plan would go through St. Mary Hills Park on its eastern border, Sochacki on its eastern border, Wirth on its eastern and sometimes western borders, South Halifax Park on its western border, and St. Mary Hills Nature Area is very close to that. That's five parks.

There's reasons why the FDA discourages LRT through parks, one being to avoid projects getting stalled by widespread opposition. Here I would like to give you a copy of 96 owners around this woods who don't want LRT going down the BN line. I've got more. I'm still working on it, but that can go to you.

The number one reason people give for their opposition is protecting the woods. I can say with assurance that the true and localized you can get preference is no build. I have listened to many owners of wildlife habitat that abuts the BN line or park wildlife habitat. This Draft EIS gives us no reason to trust you with our woods.

We do not understand your aversion to Bus Rapid Transit down Bottineau Boulevard, also known as Highway 81, the originally planned route. Your $56 million estimated cost for Bus Rapid Transit would probably make it the most expensive BRT per mile project in the country. You achieve this poor economic showing
for Bus Rapid Transit by calculating the cost of it going down a railroad track. Your environmental report never mentions that zero emission natural gas buses are available. So you certainly don't calculate how many of them you could have bought with all the money you've already spent on studies to give yourself permission to put LRT down the BN line. More people prefer that you buy zero emission gas buses as soon as possible.

BRT down 81 is very popular. It keeps LRT out of our woods, it's closer to more densely populated areas, and it's cheaper. It's the mass transit of the 21st Century. A state-of-the-art BRT system in the Northwest Metro would be a fine legacy for Met Council and Hennepin County planners to provide transit users.

Eliminating BRT as an option, as you're trying to do with this Draft EIS, is unacceptable. If you do, you will only increase opposition.

More than half of the speakers at the May 7 public hearing spoke in favor of Bus Rapid Transit. And I would have, too, but my comments were cut off at three minutes.

COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Thank you very much.

MS. CONSTANCE BONNIWELL: Am I done?

COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Yes.

MS. CONSTANCE BONNIWELL: I was going to talk
about how your cutting us off denies us the right to hear our fellow citizens. Not only does it discount the amount of time you have to --

COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Thank you.

MS. CONSTANCE BONNIWELL: -- listen to us, it prevents us from hearing our fellow citizens.

COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: You're also welcome always to give us your comments in writing. I see you have notes there. We would be happy to take those in writing as well.

Thank you very much, Constance.

MS. CONSTANCE BONNIWELL: Bot No! Bot No!

COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Thank you. The next speaker is Barb Thoman.

MS. BARB THOMAN: Good evening. My name is Barb Thoman. I work for an organization called Transit for Livable Communities. We're located in St. Paul, Minnesota. And we have members all across the metro area and a few in Greater Minnesota. All of our members are people who want expanded public transit and more options for walking and biking. We have a number of members with disabilities who cannot drive and people who cannot afford a motor vehicle.

So this project, the Bottineau Project, is a really important link in an expanded transit system that
our region sorely needs. The project, along with arterial rapid bus, more express bus service, more local service, and additional rail lines are greatly needed in this region. They are long overdue. We are a very -- a region with a very large regional highway system. We've spent a tremendous amount of money widening local roads and widening highways. And now it's time that we really invest in public transit and sidewalks and trails and building out these other systems that we have neglected.

This line is really important. It's going to connect people to schools, to jobs, to entertainment, and to parks. One of the things you'll note about many of our parks is they have a parking problem. And there are a lot of people who can't get to parks because there isn't a transit option. LRT is a clean travel option. It reduces emissions. It's very cost efficient. When you look at the numbers from the Federal Transit Administration and you look at the subsidy per passenger, they are always the lowest on light rail because they carry a lot of people in both directions all day long, and they serve our high capacity corridors.

Sadly, our region doesn't have the money it needs to build out our full public transit system, including the Bottineau Line. We don't have the funding they have in Dallas and Denver and Houston and Seattle.
especially, Vancouver, Calgary, all of these other places. And so we hope that all of you and people who support this line will support the Move Minnesota effort to increase funding for public transit, walking, biking and for road repair. And if anyone wants to know more about that, they can talk to me in the back of the room. Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Thank you.

The next speaker is Scott Nieman followed by Jolene Nelson.

MR. SCOTT NIEMAN: Hi. I'm Scott Nieman. I have a property -- I live at 4548 Zenith Avenue North and have had a property in North Minneapolis at 3306 Thomas Avenue North, and I've been on the north side for over 30 years.

And one of the observations that I have, there's no one here from the City of Minneapolis, the city council. And I do want to make a statement that, first of all, I'm very much in favor of the Bottineau Transitway, but I do think it's under serving North Minneapolis in its current preferred option.

One of the things I want to highlight is that Section 2.6, there's a statement on the least damage to the environment. It contradicts the statements in the
summary of Table 5.21, which shows that there was 18 -- over 18,000 cubic yards of flood plain impact. That is not the least damage. I think most people know that the Theodore Wirth Parkway, the D1-7 wetland floods every single year. It flooded last week. We had to shut down the Theodore Wirth Parkway road. That concerns me significantly because of what would be planned for mitigation of that would probably be drudging or some other means to divert water which is in the floodplain. We would have some serious ripple effect as far as the ecological -- the ecosystem that lives down there. So I don't think we can make nature better by drudging that area.

I really think that the D2 alternative was not adequately looked at. I do not see any evidence of a subway option being investigated to go underneath West Broadway and have a substation at where the old Burger King resided. An escalator going down and having a subway under Penn Avenue, which would have reduced impact to land acquisitions, would have lower, long-term maintenance cost. It would have really no impact to vehicle traffic except during construction. And it would have improved safety risks for pedestrians and vehicles. Similar -- you know, we've had lots of accidents on Hiawatha. We don't want anymore, especially in this
area.

I do think that placing a substation at Penn and Broadway provides incredible economic development opportunities in an area that's been long trying to have an arts district serving the Capri Theater and other venues in the 5 Corners [sic] development effort. That has just basically failed. So -- done?

So I will have a four-page summary that I'll be emailing.

COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Thank you.

Jolene Nelson followed by Bob Fischer.

MS. JOLENE NELSON: Hi. I'm Jolene Nelson, 6008 Hampshire Avenue North, Crystal, Minnesota.

The line runs right behind my house, so the railroad is right behind my house. And my main concern with this is with the track moving, it's going to move closer to my home causing -- the railroad track itself, causing more noise and vibration. And currently, there's trees that have grown up around there and in my backyard where my son plays. So my concern would be those trees are going to be removed, and I'm not going to see the train right away, and the highway noise from County Road 81, in addition to the light rail running, it's going to cause more noise there and vibration as well. And so my concern is how fast the speeds are going to be.
Is there going to be any kind of noise mitigation, whether that be trees planted in place of what's taken down? Is there going to be a new wall to minimize the amount of noise and vibration that would happen? I think it's going to affect a lot of people in that same way. And so I am a proponent of the light rail as long as those concerns are taken care of. And that's it.

COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Thank you very much.

Bob Fischer, followed by Daniel Couture.

MR. BOB FISCHER: Good evening. Thank you first of all. I've had the -- I live on Hampshire Avenue, so I'm actually Jolene's neighbor.

A couple of points. I certainly won't take my three minutes. I've lived in a city, in D.C., that had the Metro. So I know the advantages of that. So I'm 100 percent supportive of this. And I'm also supportive that it's going in my backyard. To Jolene's point, there needs to be some type of a barrier established. Whether it's natural or if it's a wall or if it's a wall with sound board, there certainly needs to be something, because it's disappointing to see the goals and not -- there could be as easy a sixth goal of protecting the people that will be involved in this. I know it's built into that and it's threaded in that, but I think there's a better opportunity to involve more people, because I
work with developmentally disabled adults and senior populations. This just opens up a whole new world for them. So I applaud that.

And my last comment. Extremely disappointed with the gentleman from Crystal. I've lived in my house for three years. I've not gotten one piece of mail telling me that this was going to happen in my backyard. So I don't think that's asking for too much, because I know our neighbors up and down Hampshire Avenue would all take the same position as I have. I accidentally found out about this. And I know you've met your obligations by posting this how you need to, and it's on the public forum. But I think a piece of snail mail in three years would have been appropriate. So I'm very disappointed in that lack of communication.

So thank you.

COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Thank you very much.

Daniel Couture followed by Christopher Reiter.

MR. DANIEL COUTURE: Good evening. My name is Dan Couture. I'm here representing Brooklyn Park, specifically segment B along West Broadway.

I'm not against light rail. I understand the need for transit basically to support, you know, the growing population needs and disperse populations.

However, I am coming here tonight to basically speak out
against the locally preferred options known as BCD1 in favor of ACD1 primarily because -- and it's unfortunate that the Draft Environmental Impact Statement doesn't accurately reflect the impact to the properties along West Broadway between 78th Avenue and 93rd Avenue to the north.

Because of a concurrent county project, which is barely referenced in the 800 pages -- it's one paragraph out of the 800 pages where it talks about this project. Because of it, there's 100 homes that are going to be impacted, property that's going to be taken. About half those homes, at least 50 of them, the families are going to be displaced. And they're probably the lucky ones, because it's probably going to be financially devastating to the ones that are left behind. The ones that are going to be stuck with homes that could be as little as 50 feet away from the transit line, that are going to be virtually unsellable, would not be the kind of place, I think, anybody would want to live because these trains run 21 hours a day every 10 minutes, and they have very loud bells that clang anywhere near a station. And 85th Avenue would be a station.

These are modest homes. This is a working-class neighborhood. Folks who live there are -- there's a large number of seniors, a large minority
population. A lot of the folks can't make it to meetings like here tonight because they're still at work or they are having dinner with -- sitting down to dinner with their families.

I think, unfortunately, if the folks who are evaluating those various alternatives knew about these additional 100 homes that are going to be impacted, if they knew about the additional 50 families that would need to be displaced, I think it would definitely have affected the community cohesion score that the B segment would have received. I think that would have made it easier for folks to vote in favor of the Option A for the locally preferred option.

The benefits -- the price tags for the A versus B are the same. Both a billion dollars. Both have similar ridership of about 27,000 average riders a day. They both have a college as a destination. They both have major employers as well as residents at the tail end of the property. But the one thing that Maple Grove has that Brooklyn Park doesn't offer is a major regional retail center. So for that reason, I hope that it's not too late that the commissioners involved with making a final decision on what route is chosen could reconsider their option to go down West Broadway and vote in favor of ACD1.
Thank you.

COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Thank you.

Christopher Reiter followed by Chris Berne.

It's the Chris section of the lineup.

MR. CHRISTOPHER REITER: Hi. Christopher Reiter, 3612 June Avenue North in Robbinsdale.

First off, which by the way, we've had hearings -- public hearings in Minneapolis, Brooklyn Park, Crystal, and one more.

COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Golden Valley.

MR. CHRISTOPHER REITER: Golden Valley. But there hasn't been one for Robbinsdale, which I don't think is very fair. I think there should be one set up. There's a lot of homeowners that are going to be impacted, many severely, according to the noise portion of this analysis, including myself. And I'm also listed as an impacted property. There's a line through my tool and lawn shed in the back. And so it looks like my fence and my shed and the power line pole and probably a few trees and numerous shrubberies that block that whole sight line towards the railroad tracks would have to be removed. I do see -- I'm reviewing the impact statement here that they plan on putting up -- there's a plan to put up some barriers, but it doesn't say how high they are. And with these scheduled to go by every 10 minutes,
I can envision the value of my property plummeting to about probably maybe 70 percent of what it's worth right now if this goes through. And that's pretty optimistic, in my opinion.

I honestly think that either the line should run on Highway 81 and then Bottineau Boulevard. I don't think it should not only [sic] be going through all those houses that are impacted in Crystal and many in Robbinsdale, but if it's going to go to the -- if it has to go in as opposed to buses -- I know Connie mentioned the natural gas buses, which I think would be a great alternative. We could use existing infrastructure for that. It wouldn't have not only the impact of all the light rails going by every 10 minutes, but the construction. So I think that it should -- the whole line should run along there. And as opposed to the 42nd Avenue Station by the police department there, they should just have a station down at the corner of 42nd and Bottineau Boulevard. And right now, there's quite a good section of Bottineau that already has a major median running down the middle of it, which could be expanded out a little bit to accommodate the light rail.

But I just -- I don't see the benefit of this program to anybody that happens to be severely impacted or even marginally impacted by this line. And I know
we've had some other hearings, and I've been to one or
two other hearings previously. And I just don't
understand why with all this major impact to homeowners
who -- like in my case, this is my first house. I bought
it in 2008. And I don't really have the means to
relocate right now, although I would like to because I
know, like I said, just as soon as the work starts, the
value of my property -- the ability to sell it is going
to -- it's going to be hard to even sell at that point.
And I don't know -- I don't know how I'm possibly going
to sleep at night with trains going by every 10 minutes
and get up for work at Hennepin County. I really wish
you would take a close look at reexamining the whole line
that runs off of already existing thoroughfares.

And I appreciate the opportunity to get my
comments.

I also would like to reiterate that I do think
there should be a Robbinsdale public hearing. With the
massive number of people that are impacted in
Robbinsdale, they should have their say as well.

That's all I have to say.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Thank you very much.

And just a reminder, if anybody has come in who
would like to testify and hasn't signed up, please go to
the table at the front of the room and at the far left, and we'll get you on the list. Also, for people who don't feel like talking, there are paper forms in the back where you can write to your heart's content and either give them back or email them or even put them on the website.

So Chris Berne, you're next.

MR. CHRIS BERNE: Thank you. It's Chris Berne.

COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: I've gotten everyone's name wrong tonight. I'm sorry.

MR. CHRIS BERNE: It's okay. Everybody does it, even last night from your cohort, Mr. Opat.

So Chris Berne, and I live at 8743 North Maplebrook Circle in Brooklyn Park.

As I intimated, I was at the hearing last night. And the reason I am here tonight is to make sure -- because I knew there was going to be new -- different officials here tonight and a different group of residents, I thought it was important for them to hear what was said last night.

The issue for us up in Brooklyn Park, as Dan Couture talked about a little bit earlier, is the final terminus route of this project up through the West Broadway corridor in Brooklyn Park. We are on an extremely fast track up there because the county in its
wisdom is going to be rebuilding West Broadway. And what they want to do is make assumptions at this point in time that the rail line is going to go through, and they want to build the road with that in mind. The problem is it's going to take 30 to 50 homes with the idea that this might come through, and they want to do it starting this fall. So we're very concerned about that.

Most of these homes are modest income, low income. There's a lot of minorities. The other thing that we have in Brooklyn Park is a lot of immigrants. And a lot of immigrant families who have come to this country with the great old American dream of home ownership are now going to be told you have to leave your home. That's not the message that we as Americans want to send to those that come to our country.

But we have also offered an alternative pathway just three blocks adjacent to West Broadway that does not require taking any homes. It does not require any industrial buildings to be taken or any businesses in any way to be taken. The Brooklyn Park City Council is now going to be taking a look at that. And so there may be some delays on this project because they want to take a look at what's happening up there. So I just wanted to make sure that everybody is aware of that. What's going on on the north end hasn't been talked about too much
here tonight, but that is part and parcel of this project.

None of us want to have a repeat of the Southwest Light Rail Project nightmare. There's already too much rancor. There's already too much delay, too many tens of millions of dollars that are being wasted. And we would like to see this done in a better manner on this one. And hopefully, some cooler heads will prevail.

Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Thank you. Is there anybody else who hasn't signed up or would like to talk as long as we're here?

Okay. Then if you came in during the presentations, if you would like to stop back and look at some of the maps and the documents, they are on the other side of this wall. Enjoy the cookies, talk to your neighbors, say good night, and go enjoy this beautiful evening.

Thank you all for coming.

(Concluded at 6:40 p.m.)

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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

STATE OF MINNESOTA)
    ) ss.
COUNTY OF HENNEPIN)

I hereby certify that I reported the Draft Environmental Impact Statement Public Hearing on the 14th day of May, 2014, in Crystal, Minnesota;

That the proceedings transcribed by me are a true record of the proceedings held;

WITNESS MY HAND AND SEAL, this 19th day of May, 2014.

Lori L. Morrow, RPR, CRR, CLR
Notary Public, Hennepin County, Minnesota
My commission expires: January 31, 2015