



Executive Summary

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the lead federal agency, and the Metropolitan Council (Council), the project sponsor, have prepared this Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)/Supplemental Draft Section 4(f) and 6(f) Evaluation for the METRO Blue Line Light Rail Extension Project (Project) in Hennepin County, Minnesota. The Project would extend generally northwest for approximately 13.4 miles from Target Field Station in Downtown Minneapolis, as shown in Figure ES-1. Nearly 500 trains pass through Target Field Station each day, serving riders on the METRO Green and Blue Lines and Northstar Commuter Rail with connections to existing and planned light rail transit (LRT), bus rapid transit (BRT), and express bus routes. The Project and its 12 LRT stations would connect the Cities of Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Robbinsdale, and Minneapolis providing access to jobs, education, healthcare, culture, and recreation and a one-seat ride to the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, the Mall of America, and many other key destinations along the way (Figure ES-2). By coordinating this generational transit investment with strong strategies to build community prosperity and minimize displacement, the Project would help to reduce regional disparities and bring transformative benefits to current Project area residents and future generations. Major milestones in planning for light rail in the Project corridor are presented in Figure ES-3.

Why is the Project Publishing another Environmental Impact Statement?

FTA and the Council determined that design changes made to the Project following publication of the Final EIS/Section 4(f) Evaluation and Record of Decision (ROD) in 2016 have the potential to result in new adverse impacts. The 2016 Project Alignment (2016 Alignment) was an approximately 13.5 mile double-track extension of the METRO Blue Line connecting Downtown Minneapolis to the Cities of Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, and Brooklyn Park, as shown in Figure ES-2. The alignment included 11 new light rail stations, approximately 1,670 park-and-ride spaces, accommodations for drop-off and bicycle and pedestrian access, one operations and maintenance facility (OMF), and associated LRT equipment. Approximately 8 miles of the 2016 Alignment was located in freight rail right-of-way within the Monticello subdivision located between Olson Memorial Hwy (Trunk Highway [TH] 55) in the City of Minneapolis and 73rd Ave N in the City of Brooklyn Park. Negotiations to secure needed right-of-way and other commitments to allow construction of the Project in the freight rail right-of-way were unsuccessful, and in 2020 local Project sponsors determined that it was necessary to advance the Project by identifying a modified alignment that would avoid use of the freight rail rights-of-way.

This document complies with FTA procedures for conducting supplemental environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The purpose of this Supplemental Draft EIS is to evaluate impacts from the modified alignment (referred to in this Supplemental Draft EIS as the Project Alignment) in contrast to the 2016 Alignment and identify the potential for impacts to arise due to the Project Alignment that were not analyzed in the 2016 Final EIS and ROD. Impacts could occur due to changes in Study Area conditions or because of the Project Alignment and Project elements introduced to new locations. The Project Alignment would be center running along CR 81 south of about 73rd Ave N in the City of Brooklyn Park and transition to N 21st Ave east of Knox Ave, crossing I-94 on a new N 21st Ave bridge, and traversing Washington Ave, 10th Ave, and 7th Ave to Target Field Station.



Figure ES-1 Project Location

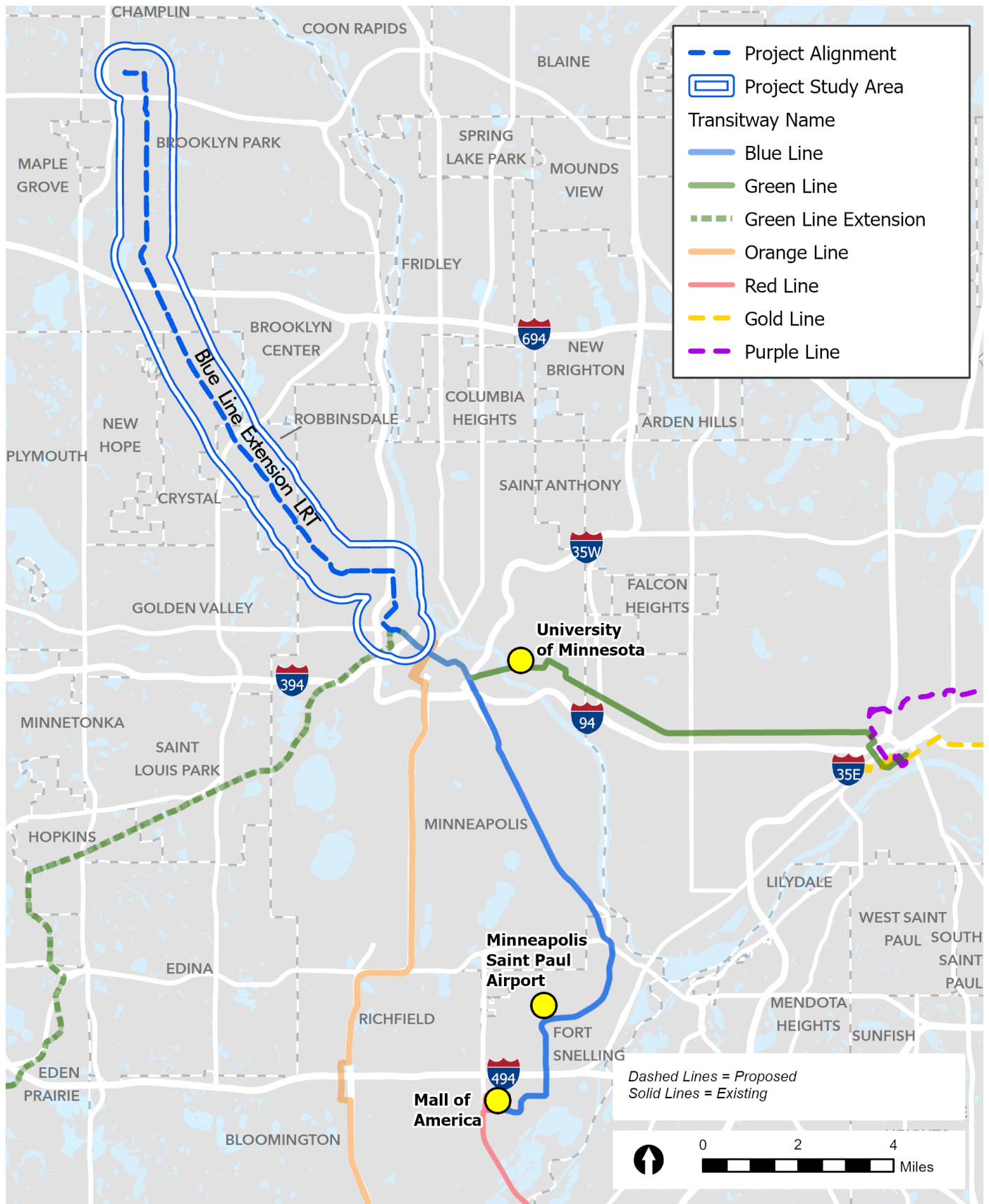




Figure ES-2 Project Alignments: 2016 Alignment and Build Alternative Project Alignment

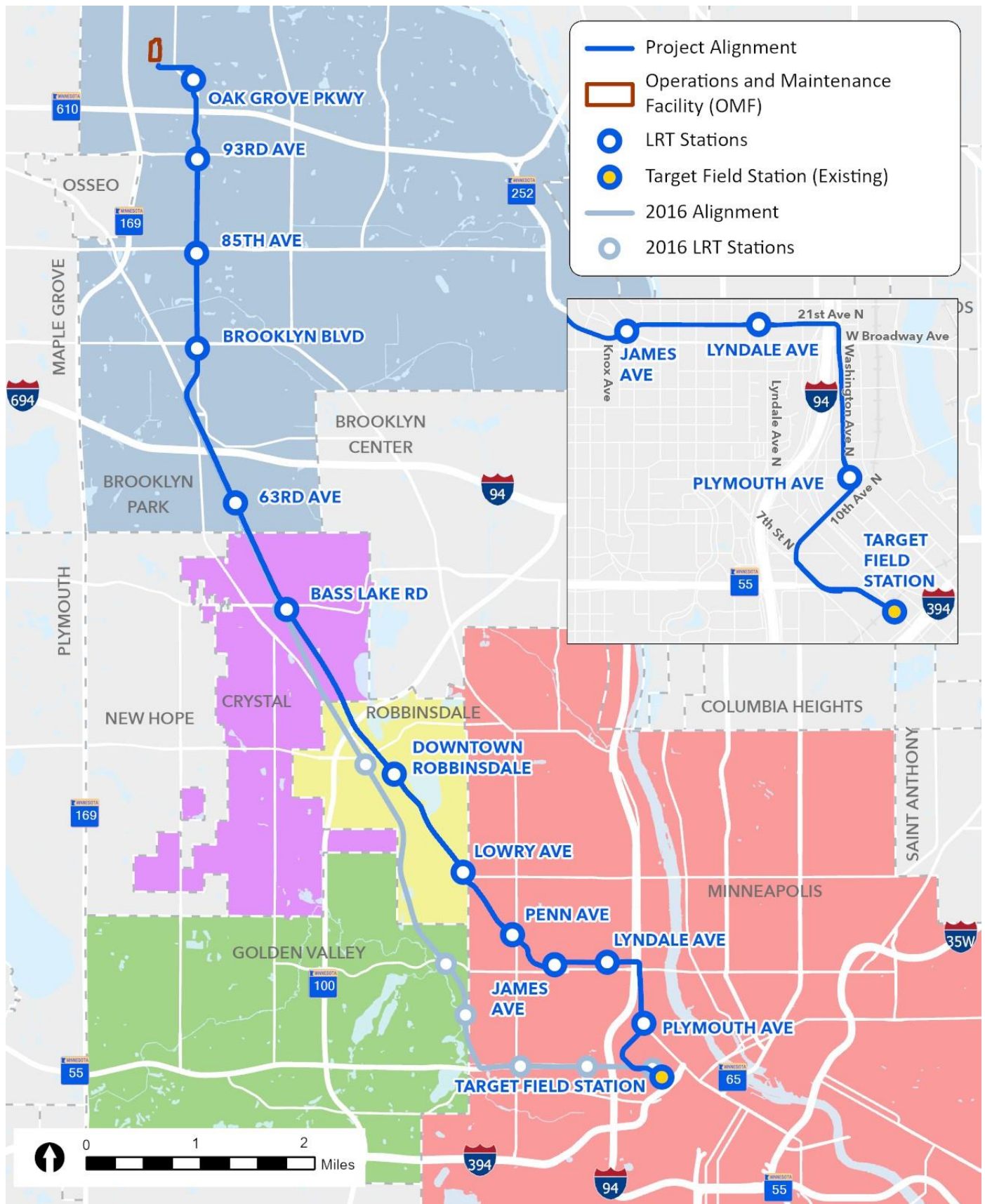




Figure ES-3 Summary of Major Planning Milestones

2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bottineau Transitway Alternatives Analysis (AA) (Hennepin County) 	
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Action Plan (City of Minneapolis) 	
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bottineau Transitway Draft EIS (FTA, HCRRRA and Metropolitan Council) 	
2015		
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • METRO Blue Line Light Rail Extension Final EIS (FTA, Metropolitan Council), Record of Decision (FTA) and Determination of Adequacy (Metropolitan Council) 	
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan (MnDOT) 	
2018		
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2040 Comprehensive Plan (Hennepin County) • Spatial Direct Demand Model (Metropolitan Council) 	
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County issue joint statement on advancing the METRO Blue Line Light Rail Extension project without BNSF right-of-way • Thrive MSP Transportation Policy Plan – 2020 Amendment (Metropolitan Council) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Transportation Advisory Council Recommendations Summary (MnDOT) • Minneapolis 2040 (City of Minneapolis) • Transportation Action Plan (City of Minneapolis) • Bus Service Allocation Study Final Report (Metropolitan Council)
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • METRO Blue Line Light Rail Extension Draft Route Modification Report (Metropolitan Council) • Sustainable Transportation Advisory Council 2021 Recommendations (MnDOT) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity Considerations for Place-Based Advocacy and Decisions in the Twin Cities Region (Metropolitan Council) • Long-Range population and jobs forecast (Metropolitan Council)
2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • METRO Blue Line Light Rail Extension Route Modification Report (Metropolitan Council) • Route Modification Report Addendum (Metropolitan Council) • NEPA Re-Evaluation Technical Memorandum (Metropolitan Council) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan (MnDOT) Update • Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) Notice of Intent to Prepare Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement Published (EQB Monitor)
2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • METRO Blue Line Light Rail Extension Anti-Displacement Recommendations Report is published • Minnesota State Legislature appropriates a \$50M grant in fiscal year 2024 to Hennepin County for the METRO Blue Line Light Rail Extension including but not limited to pre-design, design, engineering, environmental analysis and mitigation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 106 Consultation is reopened • National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Notice of Intent to Prepare Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement Published (Federal Register) • METRO Blue Line Light Rail Extension Corridor Management Committee issue Action of support for Preferred Alignment



Would There be Additional Adverse Impacts from the Project Alignment?

The Council has identified adverse impacts of the Project Alignment that were not identified in the 2016 Final EIS and ROD. A comparison of the impacts and mitigation measures identified in the Final EIS/ROD with those identified in this Supplement Draft EIS is provided in Table ES-1 below. Because the identified adverse impacts of the Project Alignment would not be mitigated by applying the mitigation measures previously identified in the Final EIS/ROD, the Council will identify additional mitigation measures through design advancement and by conducting additional field surveys, environmental monitoring, consultation with regulatory agencies, and with input of impacted communities. The Council has identified that these adverse impacts would be borne predominantly by environmental justice populations. The FTA has encouraged consultation with the affected environmental justice communities to identify acceptable alternatives, such as betterments or enhancements that would off-set the adverse impacts, since these impacts would not be fully mitigated with the mitigation measures identified thus far. The Council will continue this consultation via targeted outreach to the affected environmental justice communities during the Supplemental Draft EIS public comment period. Additional mitigation measures will be described in the Supplemental Final EIS and Amended ROD.

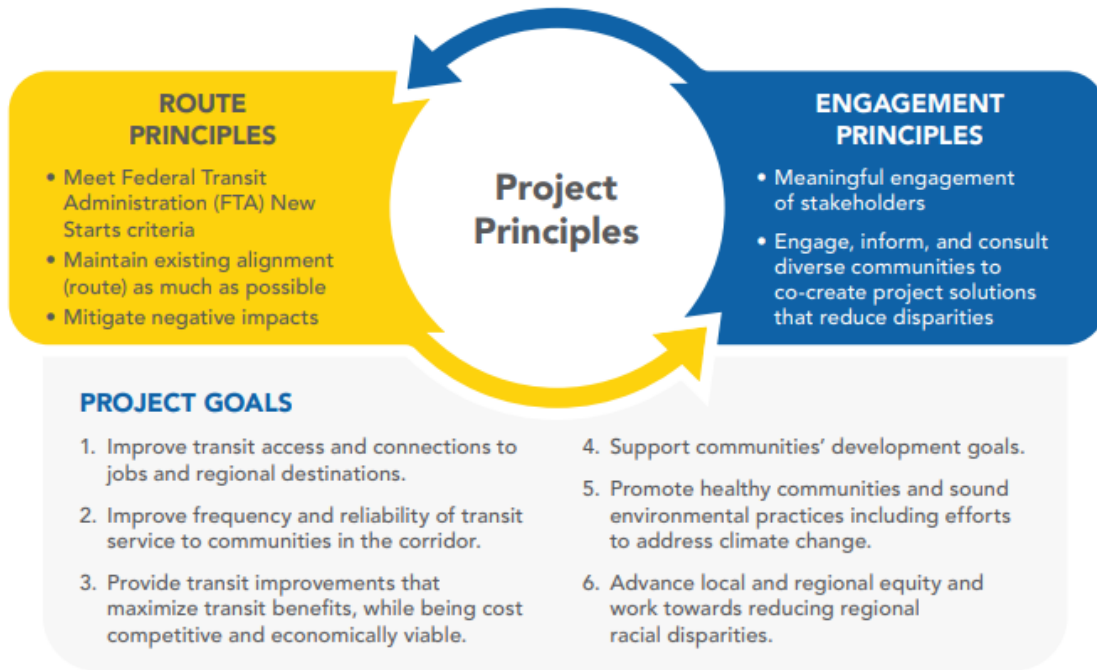
What is the Purpose and Need for the Project?

The purpose of the Project is to provide transit service that will satisfy the long-term regional mobility and accessibility needs for businesses and the traveling public. The 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. The purpose and need for the Project remain unchanged from 2016. The need for the Project is further explained in Chapter 1.

What are the Project Principles and Goals?

Project principles and goals were developed in collaboration with the community and guide the decision-making process for the analysis of alignment options and design decisions (Figure ES-4). These Project principles and goals align with the 2016 Project goals, with an additional goal of advancing equity and reducing regional racial disparities. The potential for the Project to result in displacement of low-income people and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) is a major concern for the communities along the alignment that experienced disinvestment and were harmed by past transportation decisions. The Anti-Displacement Work Group, led by the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) in partnership with Hennepin County and the Council, was formed to address these concerns. The work group's 26 members include residents and business owners in the Project area, people with lived experience of displacement, and people from the philanthropic community and government agencies. The initial policy recommendations and ongoing engagement efforts are summarized in Chapter 7.

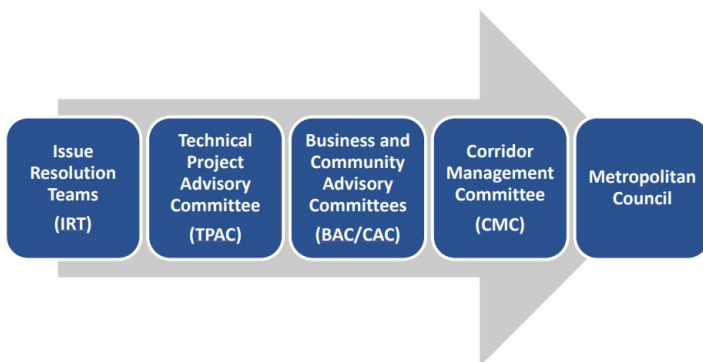
Figure ES-4 Project Principles and Goals



What Alternatives are Considered in the Supplemental Draft EIS?

The Council and Hennepin County completed a Route Modification and Design Decision process in collaboration with Project advisory committees, community cohorts, and the public to arrive at a community-supported alignment. This process, shown in Figure ES-5, led to a locally adopted Build Alternative outlined in the August 2023 resolution issued by the Corridor Management Committee (CMC). The CMC was established to guide Project decisions that are reflective of community values. The CMC is composed of representatives from the Council; Hennepin County; the Community Advisory Committee; the Business Advisory Committee; the Cities of Minneapolis, Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, Brooklyn Park, Brooklyn Center, Maple Grove (non-voting), New Hope (non-voting), and Osseo (non-voting); and municipal agencies.

Figure ES-5 Decision-Making Framework



Alignment and Design Options

Maintaining as much of the 2016 Alignment as possible was a key principle that guided the development of alignments and design options. Because the 2016 Alignment from Oak Grove Pkwy to 73rd Ave N in the City of Brooklyn Park avoided the use of the freight rail right-of-way, this portion of the original project was retained and



unmodified (including the Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF), stations, and park-and-ride location). As a result, the Route Modification and Design Decision processes focused on the area to the south of 73rd Ave N to Target Field Station in Downtown Minneapolis.

During the Route Modification Process, several routes between the City of Brooklyn Park and North Minneapolis were found to be unreasonable due to the number of right-of-way constraints and adverse property impacts when compared to an alignment on County Road (CR) 81. In North Minneapolis, W Broadway Ave and Lowry Ave N/Washington Ave alignments were considered. The W Broadway Ave alignment was advanced for detailed analysis in this Supplemental Draft EIS as it was found to have clear advantages over the Lowry N/Washington Ave alignment. While the Lowry Ave alignment would serve a higher total population between Lowry Ave and Target Field Station, the W Broadway Ave alignment would serve a higher percentage of low-income and BIPOC populations and zero-vehicle households between Lowry Ave and Target Field Station. The W Broadway Ave alignment would serve the W Broadway business community and facilitate several design options for connection with Target Field Station in the City of Minneapolis described below. The analysis and decision-making regarding these routes are documented in the *Final Route Modification Report (April 18, 2022)*ⁱ and *Route Modification Report Addendum (June 2, 2022)*.ⁱⁱ

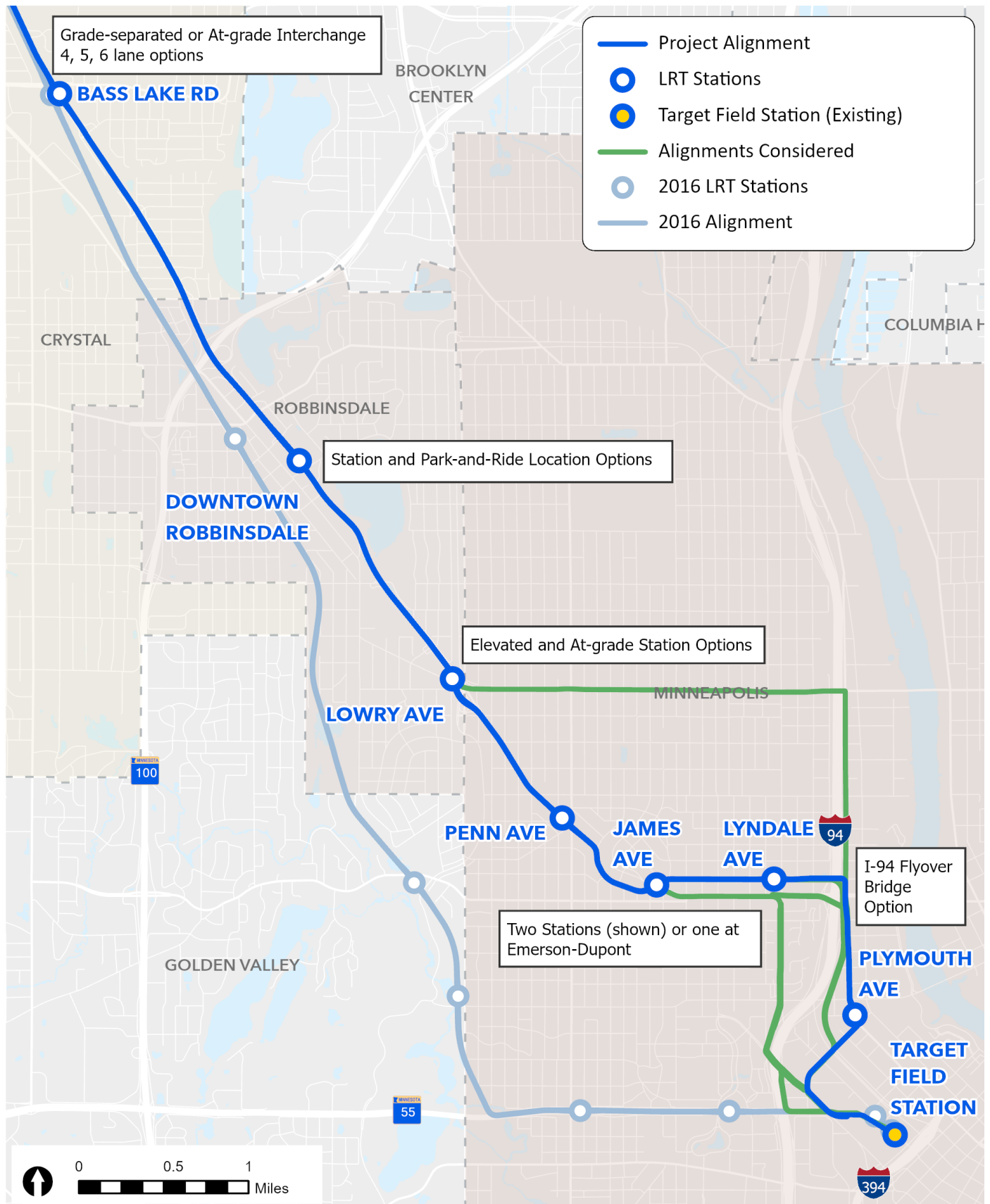
The design decision process reflected the outcomes of the Route Modification process and included evaluation of alignment and design options to address public feedback. The alignments and design options evaluated during the design decision process are listed in Table ES-1 and shown in Figure ES-6.

Table ES-1 Alignment and Design Options Evaluated During the Design Decision Process

Location (City)	Alignment and Design Option Locations Considered
Brooklyn Park	Integrating W Broadway Ave (CR 103/130) and associated roadway reconstruction into the Project definition
Crystal	CR 81/Bass Lake Rd intersection design: at-grade or grade separated
Crystal	CR 81 lane configuration: 4-, 5- and 6-lane options for interchange and roadway expansion
Robbinsdale	Downtown Robbinsdale LRT station: south of 41st Ave N station or north or south of 40th Ave N
Robbinsdale	City of Robbinsdale downtown area park-and-ride location: U.S. Bank, Upper Robin Center URC, or Elim Church
Robbinsdale	Lowry Station at-grade or elevated
Minneapolis	LRT track routing on E Lyndale Ave N/TH 55 or N 7th St
Minneapolis	LRT track routing on Lyndale Ave N or east side of Interstate 94 (I-94)
Minneapolis	LRT track routing on W Broadway Ave or N 21st Ave approximately between Knox Ave N and Lyndale Ave N or Knox Ave N and I-94
Minneapolis	One or two stations between Knox and Lyndale Ave on either W Broadway Ave or N 21st Ave alignments
Minneapolis	Flyover bridge or at-grade span crossing of I-94 at N 21st Ave
Minneapolis	East Lyndale Ave N/TH 55 connection to Target Field Station
Minneapolis	East side of I-94 alignments: N Washington Ave and directly adjacent to I-94 right-of-way or N Washington Ave to N 10th Ave



Figure ES-6 Alignment and Design Options





The rationale for advancing certain options over others is described in Chapter 2 and Appendix A-2, which includes a comparison of the potential social, economic, and environmental impacts of the East of I-94 and E Lyndale Ave N alignments under the W Broadway Ave and N 21st Ave alignments.

No-Build Alternative

NEPA requires examination of a No-Build Alternative, which is an alternative to examine the conditions that would exist if the proposed action were not implemented. The No-Build Alternative serves as a baseline against which the potential benefits and impacts of the Build Alternative can be compared. The No-Build Alternative includes a variety of projects, funding packages, and proposals in the Twin Cities region that are planned to occur with or without the Project. Based on the Council’s 2040 Transportation Policy Plan (2040 TPP), major transportation improvements assumed under the No-Build Alternative include the following:

- TH 65 and 3rd Ave S Bridge rehabilitation over the Mississippi River in the City of Minneapolis
- TH 252 freeway conversion/I-94 from TH 610 to Dowling Ave and installation of E-ZPass lanes

The adopted regional 2040 TPP includes several improvements in its fully funded transit scenario. This includes the currently operating METRO C Line and METRO D Line. The plan assumes modest changes to transit service in the Project area, particularly the arterial BRT lines or feeder service to the METRO Green Line Extension.

Build Alternative

From the northern terminus in the City of Brooklyn Park, the Build Alternative includes a center-running LRT guideway on W Broadway Ave between Oak Grove Pkwy and approximately 73rd Ave N, running southeast in the median of CR 81 through the Cities of Crystal and Robbinsdale to North Minneapolis. Between Lowry Ave and Knox Ave in North Minneapolis, the center-running guideway would continue on CR 81 before heading east on N 21st Ave, crossing over I-94, and running south on Washington Ave, southwest on 10th Ave, and southeast on 7th Ave to reach Target Field Station.

The Build Alternative would include 12 LRT stations, three park-and-rides, the OMF, and ancillary facilities. In the City of Minneapolis, the Build Alternative would convert two streets to transit malls with improved bicycle and pedestrian access, where general traffic would be redirected to adjacent roadways. The Build Alternative would include construction of a grade-separated interchange at Bass Lake Rd, roadway reconstructions with limited roadway expansion, and construction of new bridges. The components of the Build Alternative are listed by city in Table ES-2, and major components are shown in Figure ES-7.

Table ES-2 Build Alternative Description by Project City

City	Alignment	Stations	Other Features
Alignment/Components Evaluated in the 2016 Final EIS			
Brooklyn Park (Evaluated in 2016 Final EIS)	Center running along W Broadway Ave between north of TH 610 and about 73rd Ave N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oak Grove Pkwy • 93rd Ave N • 85th Ave N • Brooklyn Blvd 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OMF north of Oak Grove Pkwy Station • Park-and-ride facility at Oak Grove Pkwy Station • Reconstruction and expansion of W Broadway Ave between TH 610 and Winnetka Ave N • Realignment and reconstruction of Winnetka Ave N, Oak Grove Pkwy (for station and OMF), and 101st Ave N • Construction of new roads – Rhode Island Ave and 99th Ave N



City	Alignment	Stations	Other Features
Project Alignment/Project Components Evaluated in this Supplemental Draft EIS			
Brooklyn Park (Project Alignment)	Center running along W Broadway Ave from about 73rd Ave N, then transitioning to the median of CR 81	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 63rd Ave N 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridge from W Broadway Ave to CR 81 • Pedestrian bridge at 63rd Ave N Station • Reconstruction and expansion of W Broadway Ave from 79th Ave N to 94th Ave N • Reconstruction of segments of 93rd Ave N, 85th Ave N, Brooklyn Blvd, and Jolly Lane
Crystal	Center running along CR 81	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bass Lake Rd 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade-separated interchange at Bass Lake Rd with four through lanes. • Park-and-ride facility adjacent to station
Robbinsdale	Center running along CR 81	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downtown Robbinsdale (either north or south of 40th Ave N) • Lowry Ave (at-grade) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park-and-ride facility in the City of Robbinsdale downtown area (U.S. Bank site) • Reconstruction of CR 81/Lowry Ave intersection • Relocated Robbinsdale Transit Center
Minneapolis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center running along CR 81 between Lowry Ave and Knox Ave • Transitions to N 21st Ave east of Knox Ave; tracks on the south side of N 21st Ave • Conversion of N 21st Ave between James Ave Station and I-94 to a transit mall • Crosses I-94 on a new N 21st Ave bridge • Turns south to be center running along Washington Ave • Turns southwest to follow 10th Ave, then turns southeast on 7th Ave to Target Field Station 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penn Ave • James Ave • Lyndale Ave • Plymouth Ave 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconstruction of W Broadway Ave between Knox Ave and Lyndale Ave N • Enhanced pedestrian and bicycle accommodations along cross streets connecting W Broadway Ave and N 21st Ave • New multimodal bridge connecting N 21st Ave across I-94 requiring modification of the I-94 westbound off ramp • Conversion of 10th Ave between Washington Ave and N 5th St to a transit mall.



Figure ES-7 Components of the Build Alternative





What are the Potential Impacts of the Build Alternative?

Beneficial and Adverse Effects

The Build Alternative would benefit the region by providing frequent and reliable high-capacity transit service 24 hours per day/7 days per week. The light rail system would provide efficient transit travel times and increase transportation capacity in the corridor. Daily ridership is estimated to generate approximately 12,700 boardings in the forecast horizon year of 2045.

The Build Alternative is consistent with and would support regional and local land use plans to encourage urban growth centers of mixed-use density. The Build Alternative would benefit the region by decreasing daily vehicle miles traveled by approximately 39,600 miles in the horizon year 2045, which would result in lower energy use and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Build Alternative would improve overall community cohesion by creating community connections to key destinations via reliable and efficient transportation. Station areas would provide opportunities for transit-oriented development (TOD) and public realm improvements that support community interaction. A new multimodal bridge across I-94 would improve connectivity across the highway, which has long been a barrier between North Minneapolis and the Mississippi River and the rest of the City of Minneapolis. The Build Alternative would link affordable housing to jobs and result in economic growth in an area harmed by redlining, racial covenants, land acknowledgments, and freeway development. Construction of the Build Alternative would increase employment and spending in the region over the 4-year period.

The Build Alternative would not have long-term impacts on geology, soils, aviation, or freight rail. During construction, traffic and access may be adversely affected, which can affect adjacent businesses and residents. Construction would also result in dust, noise, and vibration, as well as lower visual quality around the construction site. Construction effects would be mitigated through adherence to best management practices and compliance with relevant laws and regulations. There may be temporary impacts on wetlands and an increase in sediment loads in fish-bearing streams. A number of parks would be used or affected during construction, but the Council would mitigate adverse impacts by restoring these parklands to current or improved conditions. A comparison of the potential adverse and beneficial effects of the No-Build and Build Alternatives is provided in Table ES-3.

Environmental Justice

Chapter 7 of this Supplemental Draft EIS assesses whether the Project would result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority and/or low-income populations. It also describes engagement with minority and low-income populations and discusses the benefits of the Project to these populations. After considering the Project's potential effects, taking into account mitigation and avoidance measures as well as anticipated benefits to minority and low-income populations, FTA would determine whether the Project would have disproportionately high and adverse impacts on minority and low-income populations. The Project would provide benefits to minority and low-income residents, including improved access to all transit modes, a more reliable and more efficient transportation system, improved mobility through the project vicinity, transit travel time savings, improved accessibility to employment, and extended transit service hours. Although all populations would have access to these benefits to the same extent, they would accrue to a higher degree to BIPOC and low-income populations because these groups are more likely to use transit and much of the Project is within and serves environmental justice communities.

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (Section 106) requires federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties that are listed in, or meet the eligibility criteria for listing in, the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The Section 106 process includes identifying the Area of Potential Effect (APE) for architecture/history properties and archaeological resources; identifying and evaluating historic properties



within the APE; assessing the effects of the Project on identified historic properties; and consultation to determine methods to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects on historic properties. The steps in the Section 106 process are ongoing and will continue through completion in consultation with the Minnesota Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and other consulting parties. In 2016, 18 historic architectural properties were identified within the APE of the 2016 Alignment and a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between FTA and SHPO was executed stipulating the measures for minimizing and mitigating identified adverse effects on 11 historic properties. If a finding of Adverse Effect is made for properties within the modified APE (Table ES-4) of the Build Alternative, FTA would consult with SHPO, the Council, and consulting parties pursuant to Stipulation XIV of the MOA to determine the appropriate means to resolve the adverse effects and develop mitigation plans as required. The MOA would be amended to document the historic properties within the APE for the Build Alternative, the resolution of adverse effects on those properties, and other necessary updates. The Project's amended MOA will also include measures for continuing review of the Project's design to verify that no ground-disturbing activities would affect areas of archaeological sensitivity. A detailed description of Section 106 coordination is provided in Chapter 9 (see Section 9.2.2 and Appendix A-4). To date, FTA's Section 106 compliance process has included consultation with SHPO, Native American tribes, local governments, and other interested parties.

Section 4(f) and 6(f) Evaluation

Chapter 8 of the Supplemental Draft EIS reviews compliance with Section 4(f) and 6(f) of the United States Department of Transportation Act. Section 4(f) is a statute that protects significant historic properties, publicly owned parks, publicly owned recreation areas, and fish and wildlife refuges. It prevents FTA from approving a project that adversely affects these properties unless (1) there is no feasible and prudent alternative, and (2) the project minimizes the impacts as much as possible. When FTA determines that the use of a Section 4(f) property has only a *de minimis* impact, the Section 4(f) restrictions do not apply. FTA is issuing revised, preliminary Section 4(f) *de minimis* use for six parks and temporary occupancy use determinations for seven parks affected by the Build Alternative. The rationale for the revised, preliminary determinations is documented in Appendix A-8. An Amended Section 4(f) Evaluation will be prepared addressing the Adverse Effects on historic properties identified through the Section 106 consultation process. Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act governs parkland that has received funding from the LWCF and would be converted to a non-public use such as transportation right-of-way. However, there are no Section 6(f) properties in the study area.



Table ES-3 Build/No-Build Alternative Evaluation Summary

Section	Topic	No-Build Alternative	Build Alternative
4.1	Land Use Plan Compatibility	The No-Build Alternative would not advance regional growth objectives or as robustly work towards transit-related goals of Project cities and county plans.	The Build Alternative is consistent with regional growth objectives and would address the transit-related goals included in Project cities and county plans.
4.2	Community Amenities, Character, and Cohesion	The No-Build Alternative would not impact community amenities or affect community character and cohesion.	The Build Alternative would result in both impacts and benefits to community amenities, character, and cohesion. Minor impacts to community amenities would occur in the Cities of Brooklyn Park, Crystal, and Robbinsdale. The challenge of fitting the Project into the denser urban environment in the City of Minneapolis would result in the relocation of seven community amenities. Noise impacts in certain locations along the Project Alignment could affect community character; mitigation strategies could reduce these impacts. However, improved transit, pedestrian, and bicycle conditions would improve community cohesion and improve the accessibility of community amenities. Additional mitigation measures will be considered in the Supplemental Final EIS.
4.3	Acquisitions and Relocations	No acquisitions or relocations would occur under the No-Build Alternative.	The Build Alternative would require property acquisitions in each of the four Project cities. Most of the building acquisitions would occur in the City of Minneapolis. 36 relocations are currently estimated; 27 of those would occur in the City of Minneapolis. All acquisitions and relocations would be mitigated through compensation and relocation assistance. Additional Project commitments specific to environmental justice communities will be considered in the Supplemental Final EIS.
4.4	Cultural Resources	The No-Build Alternative would not result in adverse effects to historic properties or archaeological resources.	The identification of properties eligible for the NRHP and assessment of effects on those properties is underway. Determinations of effect will be documented in the Supplemental Final EIS, and mitigation commitments will be documented in an amendment to the existing Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement. Note that compliance with Section 106 requirements during the Build Alternative planning process affords the opportunity to identify and protect historic resources.



Section	Topic	No-Build Alternative	Build Alternative
4.5	Visual/Aesthetics	The No-Build Alternative would not affect the visual character of the Project area.	The Build Alternative would generally have a neutral impact on the majority of the visual character of the Project area. Adverse visual impacts would occur at the northern terminus of the Project where the OMF would be constructed. Mitigation could include screening, lighting design, and context-sensitive design elements for the OMF.
4.6	Economic Effects	The No-Build Alternative would not impact economic conditions in the Project area. However, opportunities for long-term earnings and employment growth afforded by improved transportation access and associated TOD would not be realized.	The Build Alternative would result in economic growth through improved access to housing, employment, and businesses. Induced development (TOD) around LRT stations could result in increased property values and associated taxes, which could displace current residents and business owners. These impacts would be minimized through the implementation of anti-displacement measures and policies.
4.7	Safety and Security	The No-Build Alternative would not introduce LRT infrastructure into the Project area.	The Build Alternative would be designed and constructed in accordance with relevant codes, standards and guidance and would not adversely impact safety and security in the Study Area. Public transportation is one of the safest mobility options and the Build Alternative would include many features that would improve safety for the traveling public in the Study Area. The actions outlined in Metro Transit’s Safety & Security Action Plan to make transit safer and more welcoming would be applied to the Project.
5.1	Utilities	The No-Build Alternative would not affect utilities.	The Build Alternative would require the relocation of both underground and above-ground utilities in the Project area. Utility impacts would be addressed on a case-by-case basis and relocation requirements would be coordinated with utility owners. Utility relocation affords owners the opportunity to repair and/or upgrade old utilities and therefore better serve their customers.
5.2	Floodplains	The No-Build Alternative would not affect floodplains.	The Build Alternative would potentially impact about 12.2 acres of floodplain. As design advances, opportunities to minimize this impact would be explored, and mitigation would be developed in the form of replacement flood storage areas. Replacement flood storage areas would be integrated into the landscape and may not only address project impacts, but also improve overall flood management of affected basins.



Section	Topic	No-Build Alternative	Build Alternative
5.3	Wetlands and Other Aquatic Resources	The No-Build Alternative would not affect wetlands and other aquatic resources.	The Build Alternative is estimated to impact a total of about 8.56 acres of wetland and stormwater basins. Mitigation for these impacts would be coordinated with the United States Army Corps of Engineers and Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) local government units. A Section 404 permit was issued, and a WCA wetland replacement plan was approved in 2018 under the 2016 Final EIS and ROD; the permit would be modified to reflect current impacts and replacement wetland mitigation. The Project as currently defined has less impact on wetlands than the defined 2016 Final EIS and ROD.
5.4	Geology, Soils, and Topography	The No-Build Alternative would not impact geology, soils, or topography.	The Build Alternative would not have long-term impacts on geology, soils, or topography. During construction, areas of poor soils may need to be modified using typical geotechnical methods to provide a stable base for Project elements.
5.5	Hazardous Materials Contamination	The No-Build Alternative would not affect contaminated properties.	A total of 152 high risk known or potentially contaminated sites were identified within 500 to 550 feet of the Project Alignment. A Phase II Environmental Site Assessment will be conducted and documented in the Supplemental Final EIS to confirm the presence, extent, and magnitude of soil and/or groundwater contamination that could be affected by the Project. While contamination presents a risk that needs to be managed during construction, implementing the Build Alternative would afford an opportunity to remove contaminated materials and potentially reduce exposure risks after construction.
5.6	Noise	The No-Build Alternative would not impact noise-sensitive receptors.	The Build Alternative would result in moderate noise impacts at 2 institutions and 29 residential properties (244 dwelling units), the majority (18 residences with 211 dwelling units) of which would be in the City of Minneapolis. Severe impacts would result at 15 properties (173 dwelling units), all within the City of Minneapolis. Noise mitigation will be considered in the Supplemental Final EIS.
5.7	Vibration and Ground-Borne Noise	The No-Build Alternative would have vibration impacts.	The Build Alternative would result in vibration impacts at 2 residential properties (28 dwelling units). Vibration mitigation options would be evaluated as Project design advances and documented in the Supplemental Final EIS.



Section	Topic	No-Build Alternative	Build Alternative
5.8	Biological Environment	The No-Build Alternative would not impact biological resources.	The Build Alternative would impact about 10 acres of forested habitat suitable for northern long-eared bats and tricolored bats, and about 50 acres of meadow/prairie habitat suitable for monarch butterflies. Forested habitat would also be suitable for nesting of various migratory bird species. Mitigation for these impacts will be considered, including potential limitations on tree clearing timing to avoid nesting/roosting periods. Construction in wetland/water basin areas could affect the Blanding’s turtle; best management practices to prevent turtles from entering construction zones would be implemented.
5.9	Water Quality and Stormwater	The No-Build Alternative would not affect existing water quality or stormwater management infrastructure.	The Build Alternative would result in an increase in impervious surface of 58.3 acres and require the installation of drainage systems and extension of multiple stormwater drainpipes. Stormwater treatment ponds, infiltration basins, and filtration basins and systems would be installed to provide rate control, volume control, and address water quality. Recent stormwater regulations are more restrictive than past regulations; the stormwater management improvements required for implementation of the Build Alternative would have a positive effect on water quality in the Project area.
5.10	Air Quality/Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions	The No-Build Alternative would not affect existing air quality or GHG emissions. The general downward trend of carbon monoxide (CO) and mobile source air toxics (MSATs) would continue.	The Build Alternative would result in a regional reduction in GHG emissions and support the general downward trend of CO and MSAT emissions.
5.11	Energy	Regional transportation energy use would remain unaltered under the No-Build Alternative.	The reduction in vehicle miles traveled combined with the greater energy efficiency of LRT as a transportation mode would result in a reduction in regional transportation energy use.



Comparison of Adverse Effects – Build Alternative and 2016 Alignment

The Build Alternative would result in fewer impacts in some environmental categories and more or greater impacts in others. Compared to the Build Alternative, the 2016 alignment would have resulted in:

- Fewer displacements (10 compared to the 37 under the Build Alternative);
- More wetland impacts (approximately 13.19 acres compared to 8.56 acres under the Build Alternative);
- More adverse visual impacts due to the high-quality visual features found along the Freight Rail Right-of-Way alignment;
- A greater number of moderate (366) and severe noise impacts (618) without mitigation, most of which could be mitigated by implementing Quiet Zones, noise walls, and wayside devices;
- Same number of long-term vibration impacts (at 29 residential dwelling units);
- Fewer on-street parking spaces removed, 92 spaces compared to approximately 746 spaces lost in North Minneapolis under the Build Alternative;
- One impact to a Section 6(f) resource, direct use of two Section 4(f) resources, and *de minimis* impact on two additional resources.

FTA found that the 2016 Alignment had the potential for high and adverse impacts on environmental justice populations due to the loss of five businesses serving environmental communities. The Build Alternative would have the potential for high and adverse impacts on environmental justice populations due to the displacement of 36 land uses (all in environmental justice areas), impacts to community character because of displacement of community resources, and moderate and severe noise impacts in the City of Minneapolis.



Table ES-4 Comparison of Impacts and Mitigation – 2016 Alignment and Project Alignment

Resource	Did FEIS/ROD Identify an Impact and Mitigation?	Do the Proposed Modifications Change the Impacts to this Resource?	Do the Proposed Modifications Change the Mitigation?	Section Where Additional Information can be Found
Transit Conditions	Yes, intermittent impacts to bus operations during construction including temporary stop relocations or closures and route detours to be mitigated through communication strategies.	No	No	3.1
Freight Rail Conditions	Yes, relocation of Freight Rail Right-Of-Way track and potential for temporary service impacts during construction to be mitigated through a coordination plan and use of flaggers to reduce impact to freight rail operations.	Project avoids impact to Freight Rail Right-Of-Way.	No mitigation required.	3.6
Vehicular Traffic	Yes, increase in number of intersections operating at unacceptable levels of service and traffic disruption during construction including lane, intersection, and roadway closure and detours. Long-term impacts mitigated through intersection improvements and short-term impacts mitigated through Construction Mitigation Plan, Construction Communication Plan, and construction staging.	Yes, increased number of intersections operating at unacceptable levels of service, vehicular access changes, roadway geometric changes, new LRT crossings.	Yes, in addition to the mitigation measures listed in 2016 ROD, the Council will explore additional mitigation measures as design development progresses.	3.4
Pedestrians and Bicyclists	Yes, temporary closures or detours during construction mitigated through improvements to crossings, connections and facilities and Construction Communication Plan.	No	No	3.2/3.3
Parking	Yes, loss of 92 on-street and 225 off-street parking spaces; potential “spill-over” parking in neighborhoods adjacent to LRT stations; and increased demand due to TOD. Loss of off-street parking compensated via the Uniform Act; loss of on-street parking to be mitigated by coordination with local jurisdictions to identify whether suitable replacement locations are necessary.	Increased number in on-street parking loss at an estimated 746 on-street parking spaces.	Yes, in addition to the mitigation measures listed in 2016 ROD, parking utilization studies would be completed to better understand parking needs and identify locations to preserve parking.	3.5
Aviation	Yes, construction of catenary in the Runway Protection Zone (RPZ) mitigated through an RPZ Alternatives Analysis.	Project avoids impact to the RPZ.	No mitigation required.	3.7
Land Use Compatibility	No	No	No	4.1
Community Facilities and Character	Yes, construction period impacts to be mitigated through a Construction Mitigation Plan, Construction Communications Plan, Construction Phasing Plan, and restoration and enhancement of parks.	Yes, adverse effect on community character at certain locations along the corridor due to noise impacts and displacement of community facilities.	Yes, mitigation measures would be developed in coordination with affected environmental justice communities between Supplemental Draft EIS and Supplemental Final EIS.	4.2
Displacement of Residents and Businesses	Yes, displacement of 10 businesses, 14 full acquisitions, 278 partial acquisitions, and 29 acres of temporary easements to be mitigated in accordance with the Uniform Act.	Increased number of acquisitions and displacements, including 36 full acquisitions (27 in the City of Minneapolis).	Yes, in addition to the mitigation measures listed in 2016 ROD, measures would be explored in coordination with the environmental justice community.	4.3
Cultural Resources	Yes, adverse effect on 2 historic properties and 4 historic districts to be mitigated through measures identified in Section 106 MOA.	Section 106 consultation process currently underway. Updated assessment of effects due to the proposed modifications would be published in the Supplemental Final EIS.	Section 106 consultation process currently underway. Updated measures to resolve adverse effects would be discussed in the Supplement Final EIS.	4.4
Visual/Aesthetics	Yes, impacts to high-quality visual features because of alignment along Freight Rail Right-Of-Way and at OMF to be mitigated through design guidelines and landscaping.	Project reduces number of visual impacts. No change in impact at the OMF.	Yes, in addition to the mitigation measures listed in 2016 ROD, design would be developed with community input.	4.5
Economic Effects	Yes, loss of tax revenue caused by ROW acquisition, partially offset by increases in other tax revenues.	No	No	4.6



Resource	Did FEIS/ROD Identify an Impact and Mitigation?	Do the Proposed Modifications Change the Impacts to this Resource?	Do the Proposed Modifications Change the Mitigation?	Section Where Additional Information can be Found
Safety and Security	Yes, increased development around transit stations could place greater demands on safety and security systems and increased congestion during construction mitigated through Safety and Security Management Plan (SSMP), design, Construction Mitigation Plan, coordination with emergency service providers.	No	No	4.7
Utilities	Yes, potential for stray currents to be mitigated through protection measures and minor disruptions to services to be mitigated by contractor notifications and best practices.	No	No	5.1
Floodplains	Yes, two floodplain areas affected – 16,800 cubic yards (10.41 acres) in Bassett Creek and 200 cubic yards (0.12 acres) in Grimes Pond to be mitigated through permit conditions and best management practices.	Reduced overall impact to floodplains. No impact to the Bassett Creek and Grimes Pond.	No	5.2
Wetlands and Aquatic Resources	Yes, impacts to 13.19 acres of wetlands for alignment and 2.5 acres for construction access route to be mitigated through compensatory wetland mitigation credits.	Reduced overall impact to wetlands.	No	5.3
Geology, Soils, and Topography	Yes, soil correction in areas of poor soils and short-term dewatering to be mitigated through permit requirements.	No	No	5.4
Hazardous Materials	Yes, identified 24 high-potential and 135 medium potential sites to be mitigated through Phase II sampling, Response Action Plan, Construction Contingency Plan, and contractor specifications.	Additional high- and medium- potential sites identified.	No	5.5
Noise	Yes, 366 moderate and 618 severe noise impacts and construction noise to be mitigated through implementation of Quiet Zones, noise barriers, and contractor Noise Control Plan.	Fewer moderate and severe noise impacts that include 246 moderate and 173 severe impacts that could not be mitigated through Quiet Zones, noise barriers, or noise control plans.	Yes, Council will evaluate design and receiver-based mitigation options and mitigation will be identified in Supplemental Final EIS.	5.6
Vibration	Yes, 28 vibration impacts at residences and construction vibration to be mitigated through ballast mats and contractor requirements for pre-construction surveys and potential monitoring.	Same number of vibration impacts from Project Alignment at different locations. Vibration impact locations identified in 2016 FEIS/ROD are no longer valid.	No	5.7
Biological Environment	Yes, clearing 28 acres of forested land and potential effects on wildlife crossings to be mitigated through city tree ordinances, seasonal restrictions on tree removal, bald eagle nest surveys, and enhanced culvert crossings.	Lessened impact on forested land and potential wildlife crossing at about 10 acres.	No	5.8
Water Quality and Stormwater	Yes, 83-percent increase in impervious area to be mitigated through designing and constructing detention and infiltration facilities and permit requirements for potential construction effects.	Lessened impacts.	No	5.9
Air Quality	Yes, construction-phase potential for increased emissions mitigated through BMPs.	No	No	5.10
Energy	No	No	No	5.11
Cumulative Effects	Yes, cumulative impacts of increased density could result in additional demand for transportation and services and diminish environmental and cultural resources to be mitigated or regulated through municipal codes.	No	No	6.3
Environmental Justice	Yes, disproportionately high and adverse effects due to displacements of 5 businesses mitigated through the Uniform Act and continued outreach to environmental justice populations.	Increased impacts due to displacement of community facilities, businesses and residents, and noise impacts and adverse effects on community character.	Yes, mitigation measures will be developed in coordination with affected environmental justice communities and reflected in the Supplemental Final EIS.	7.4
Section 4(f)/6(f)	Yes, Section 4(f) use of multiple properties and Section 6(f) conversion of parkland in Sochacki Park to be mitigated in accordance with Section 6(f) requirements.	Reduced impacts on Section 4(f) resources and avoidance of Section 6(f) resources.	Mitigation not required; impacts are <i>de minimis</i> .	8.3
Joint Development	Yes, increased transit and parking demand and addition of multi-story building would affect visual environment and require additional utility changes.	Yes, eliminates the joint development project.	Mitigation not required.	NA



How Would Adverse Impacts be Avoided, Minimized, or Mitigated?

The Council is committed to meeting applicable federal, state, and local environmental regulations and applying reasonable mitigation measures to reduce significant adverse impacts. Avoidance and minimization measures committed to as part of the Project are identified along with other potential measures that would reduce or eliminate impacts. A preliminary list of mitigation commitments for the Build Alternative in the impact areas that might not be fully mitigated is as follows:

- **Property Acquisition.** Property owners would be compensated for property acquisition in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act, which was established to ensure that individuals do not suffer disproportionate impacts because of programs and projects designed for the benefit of the public as a whole and to minimize the hardship of displacement on such purposes.
- **Transportation.** Mitigation of changes in intersection level of service on streets may include restriping, adding right- or left-turn lanes, allowing U-turn movements at intersections, signalization, or implementing traffic management strategies.
- **Noise.** The Council would evaluate both design and receiver-based mitigation options, such as special trackwork, relocation of rail crossovers, building insulation, and other measures, as applicable, to reduce the number of properties affected.
- **Vibration.** The Council would evaluate the effectiveness of ballast mats, resilient rail fasteners, and other specialized trackwork as applicable.
- **Ecological Resources.** For impacts to ecological areas (wetlands, terrestrial and aquatic resources, and floodplains), mitigation measures would be developed in coordination with the regulatory agencies responsible for issuing permits. Potential mitigation measures include the purchase of wetland mitigation bank credits from approved wetland bank accounts to offset permanent impacts, construction timing to avoid nesting seasons, and other measures. A Section 404 permit was issued, and a Wetland Conservation Act wetland replacement plan was approved in 2018, under the 2016 Final EIS and ROD. The permit extension was issued in 2023. The permit would be modified to reflect current impacts and replacement wetland mitigation. The Project as currently defined has less impact on wetlands than the 2016 Final EIS and ROD.

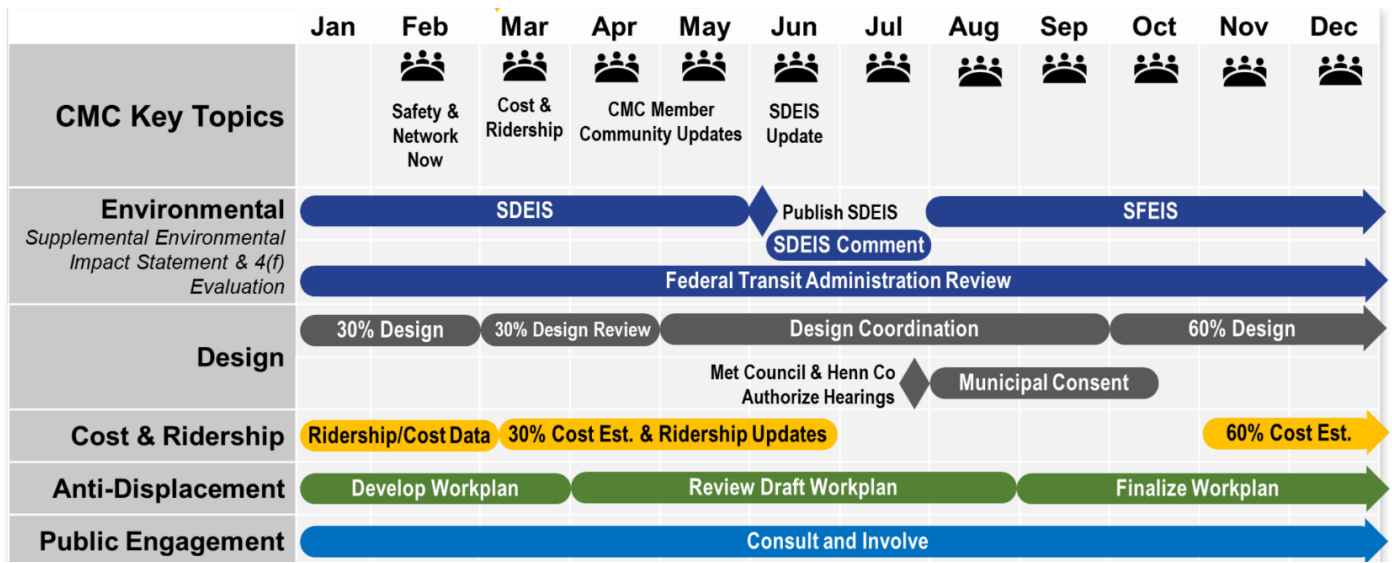
What are the Next Steps?

The Supplemental Draft EIS has been distributed to appropriate local, regional, State, and federal agencies as well as the public for their review and comment. Public comment on the Supplemental Draft EIS will be considered and addressed in the Supplemental Final EIS and Amended ROD (Figure ES-8). Local elected officials and the public have been and will continue to be involved in the Project throughout design and construction through online Project website dashboards, public meetings, advisory committee and stakeholder meetings, and individual briefings.

A 45-day public comment period will begin at publication of the Supplemental Draft EIS. Responses to substantive comments received during circulation of this Supplemental Draft EIS will be developed, and both the comments and responses will be documented in the Supplemental Final EIS. A public hearing will be held to provide a forum for agency and citizen participation and comment during the public comment period.



Figure ES-8 2024 Anticipated Timeframes



ⁱ Metropolitan Council, *METRO Blue Line Extension Route Modification Report* (Saint Paul: Metropolitan Council, 2022), <https://metrocouncil.org/Transportation/Projects/Light-Rail-Projects/METRO-Blue-Line-Extension/Route.aspx>.

ⁱⁱ Metropolitan Council, *Route Modification Report Addendum* (Saint Paul: Metropolitan Council, 2022), <https://metrocouncil.org/Transportation/Projects/Light-Rail-Projects/METRO-Blue-Line-Extension/Route.aspx>.