Appendix A-5: Biological Environment Documents

Appendix A-5: Biological Environment Documents is a companion document to the Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement containing Chapter 5 (Physical and Environmental Analysis). Metropolitan Council and the United States Department of Transportation - Federal Transit Administration are committed to ensuring that information is available in appropriate alternative formats to meet the requirements of persons who have a disability. If you require an alternative version of this file, please contact FTAWebAccessibility@dot.gov.

To request special accommodations, contact Kaja Vang, Community Outreach Coordinator, by phone at 612-373-3918 or by email at Kaja.Vang@metrotransit.org.

Documents include:

- United States Fish and Wildlife Service Biological Assessment April 2025
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service List of Threatened and Endangered Species
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service Minnesota-Wisconsin Endangered Species Determination Key
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service Rusty Patched Bumble Bee Range Wide Determination Key

The following document was published with the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement and is available online at https://metrocouncil.org/Transportation/Projects/Light-Rail-Projects/METRO-Blue-Line-Extension/Publications-And-Resources/Environmental/SDEIS/BLE_SDEIS_Appendix-A-5-Biological-Environment-Docu.aspx:

- Blandings Turtle Fact Sheet

METRO BLUE LINE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT (BLRT) EXTENSION

BIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Prepared using IPaC

Generated by Rebecca Beduhn (rbeduhn@sehinc.com)

April 9, 2025

The purpose of this document is to assess the effects of the proposed project and determine whether the project may affect any federally threatened, endangered, proposed, or candidate species. If appropriate for the project, this document may be used as a biological assessment (BA), as it is prepared in accordance with legal requirements set forth under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1536 (c)).

In this document, any data provided by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is based on data as of January 17, 2023.

Prepared using IPaC version 6.124.0-rc8

METRO BLUE LINE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT (BLRT) EXTENSION BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

1.1 PROJECT NAME

METRO Blue Line Light Rail Transit (BLRT) Extension

1.2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

No suitable habitat for any mussel species is present within the project corridor.

Tree clearing for the northern station and the operations and maintenance facility are likely the greatest impact to any critical habitat for any listed species in the project corridor. Work will be conducted over the winter months when the species are unlikely to be present to minimize impact.

Disturbed ground will be re-seeded with pollinator species and milkweeds to ensure adequate habitat for the monarch butterfly is present.

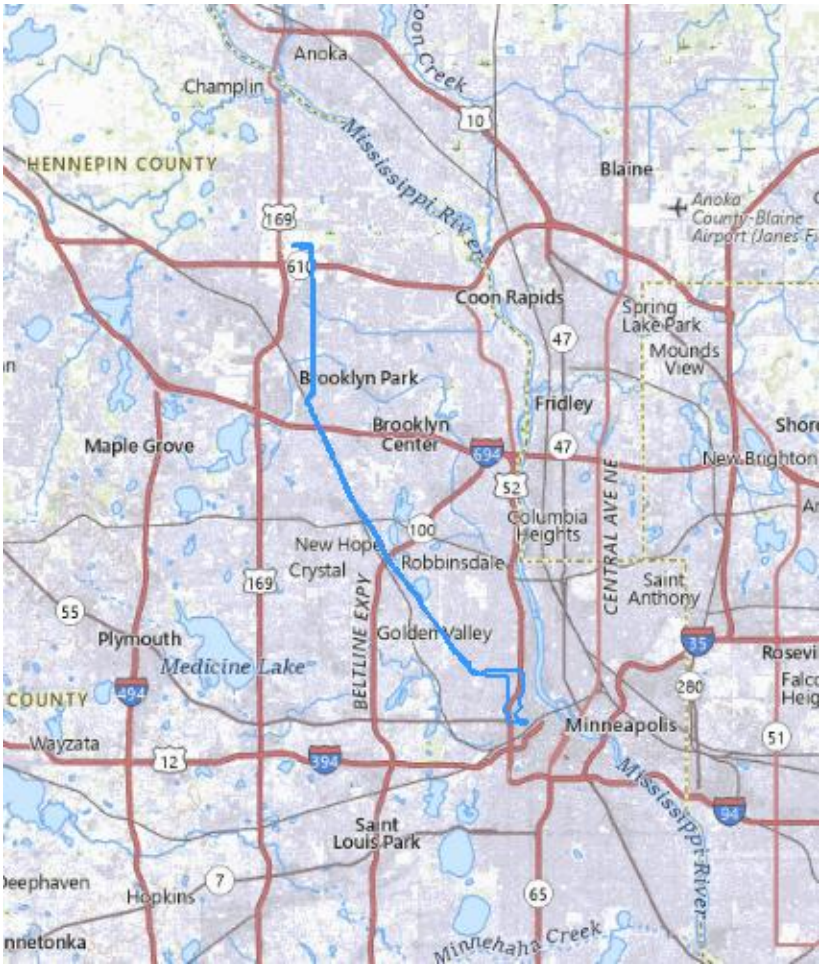
1.3 EFFECT DETERMINATION SUMMARY

SPECIES (COMMON NAME) OR CRITICAL HABITAT	SCIENTIFIC NAME	LISTING STATUS	PRESENT IN ACTION AREA	EFFECT DETERMINATION
Higgins Eye (pearlymussel)	Lampsilis higginsii	Endangered	No	NE
Monarch Butterfly†. **This species or critical habitat is covered by a DKey.**	Danaus plexippus	Proposed Threatened		NE
Northern Long-eared Bat	Myotis septentrionalis	Endangered	Yes	NLAA
Rusty Patched Bumble Bee	Bombus affinis	Endangered	Yes	NLAA
Salamander Mussel	Simpsonaias ambigua	Proposed Endangered	Excluded from analysis	Excluded from analysis
Snuffbox Mussel	Epioblasma triquetra	Endangered	No	NE
Tricolored Bat	Perimyotis subflavus	Proposed Endangered	Yes	NLAA
Whooping Crane†. **This species or critical habitat is covered by a DKey.**	Grus americana	Experimental Population, Non-Essential		NE
Winged Mapleleaf	Quadrula fragosa	Endangered	No	NE
Rusty Patched Bumble Bee critical habitat	Bombus affinis	Proposed	Yes	NLAA

† This species or critical habitat has been analyzed through a Determination Key.

1.4 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1.4.1 LOCATION



LOCATION
Hennepin County, Minnesota

1.4.2 DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT HABITAT

The project corridor is mostly comprised by urban land, previously disturbed. The majority of the proposed railline follows existing road right-of-way. At the northern end of the project, an operations and maintence facility and a park and ride/station platform is proposed on parcels that are not currently developed. These parcels are comprised of mostly upland, with few small, isolated wetland depressions. There is woodland and open meadow land.

1.4.3 PROJECT PROPONENT INFORMATION

Provide information regarding who is proposing to conduct the project, and their contact information. Please provide details on whether there is a Federal nexus.

REQUESTING AGENCY
SEH

FULL NAME
Rebecca Beduhn

STREET ADDRESS
3535 Vadnais Center Drive

CITY
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MN

ZIP
55110

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LEAD AGENCY
Department of Transportation

Federal Transit Administration

1.4.4 PROJECT PURPOSE

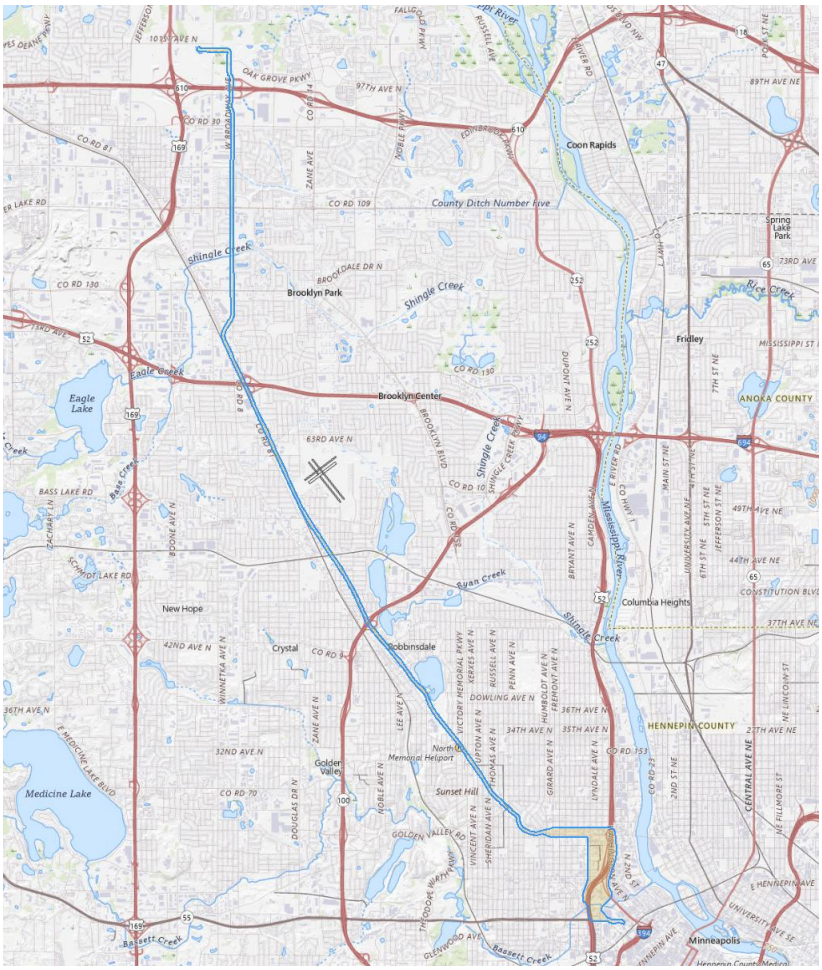
The purpose of the proposed Blue line Light Rail (BLRT) Extension project is to provide transit service, which will satisfy the long-term regional mobility and accessibility needs for businesses and the traveling public. Additionally, the BLRT Extension project will invest in a corridor that has experienced a history of systemic racism and disinvestment, provide improved connectivity andaccess for communities in the corridor, and advance local and regional equity.

The proposed BLRT Extension project would be located in Hennepin County, Minnesota, extending approximately 13 miles from downtown Minneapolis to the northwest, serving north Minneapolis and the suburbs of Robbinsdale, Crystal, and Brooklyn Park. The light rail transit (LRT) is anticipated to serve a broader area, including the communities of Golden Valley, New Hope, Brooklyn Center, Maple Grove, Osseo, Champlin, and Dayton.

1.4.5 PROJECT TYPE AND DECONSTRUCTION

This project is a public transportation project.

1.4.5.1 PROJECT MAP



LEGEND

Project footprint

Blue Line Railroad : Railroad track (structure)

1.4.5.2 RAILROAD TRACK

STRUCTURE COMPLETION DATE
October 15, 2027

REMOVAL/DECOMMISSION DATE (IF APPLICABLE)
Not applicable

STRESSORS

- Increase in air quality

DESCRIPTION
The planned METRO Blue Line Extension (Bottineau) light rail transit project will operate about 13 miles northwest from downtown Minneapolis through north Minneapolis, Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal and Brooklyn Park, drawing riders northwest of Brooklyn Park. The line will have 11 new stations. The project corridor is proposed in a previously disturbed, highly urban landscape.

1.4.6 ANTICIPATED ENVIRONMENTAL STRESSORS

Describe the anticipated effects of your proposed project on the aspects of the land, air and water that will occur due to the activities above. These should be based on the activity deconstructions done in the previous section and will be used to inform the action area.

1.4.6.1 ANIMAL FEATURES

Individuals from the Animalia kingdom, such as raptors, mollusks, and fish. This feature also includes byproducts and remains of animals (e.g., carrion, feathers, scat, etc.), and animal-related structures (e.g., dens, nests, hibernacula, etc.).

1.4.6.2 PLANT FEATURES

Individuals from the Plantae kingdom, such as trees, shrubs, herbs, grasses, ferns, and mosses. This feature also includes products of plants (e.g., nectar, flowers, seeds, etc.).

1.4.6.3 AQUATIC FEATURES

Bodies of water on the landscape, such as streams, rivers, ponds, wetlands, etc., and their physical characteristics (e.g., depth, current, etc.). This feature includes the groundwater and its characteristics. Water quality attributes (e.g., turbidity, pH, temperature, DO, nutrients, etc.) should be placed in the Environmental Quality Features.

1.4.6.4 ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY FEATURES

Abiotic attributes of the landscape (e.g., temperature, moisture, slope, aspect, etc.).

1.4.6.4.1 INCREASE IN AIR QUALITY

ANTICIPATED MAGNITUDE

The addition of public transit is intended to remove vehicle traffic from the roadway in the surrounding areas. The reduction in traffic is expected to improve air quality.

STRESSOR LOCATION

LEGEND

Project footprint

Stressor location

CONSERVATION MEASURES

No conservation measures for this stressor

STRUCTURES AND ACTIVITIES

- Railroad track

1.4.6.5 SOIL AND SEDIMENT

The topmost layer of earth on the landscape and its components (e.g., rock, sand, gravel, silt, etc.). This feature includes the physical characteristics of soil, such as depth, compaction, etc. Soil quality attributes (e.g, temperature, pH, etc.) should be placed in the Environmental Quality Features.

1.4.6.6 ENVIRONMENTAL PROCESSES

Abiotic processes that occur in the natural environment (e.g., erosion, precipitation, flood frequency, photoperiod, etc.).

1.4.6.7 MISCELLANEOUS

Miscellaneous should only be used if the created feature does not fit into one of the other categories or if the creator is not sure in which category it should be placed.

1.5 ACTION AREA

LEGEND

Project footprint

Stressor location

1.6 CONSERVATION MEASURES

1.6.1 COMPLETE CONSTRUCTION AROUND SEASON WHENEVER POSSIBLE

DESCRIPTION
construction timing schedule

DIRECT INTERACTIONS
- auditory disturbance

1.6.2 PLANT MORE MILKWEEDS AROUND PROJECT AREA

DESCRIPTION
The project will use a restoration seed mix for disturbed sites that includes milkweeds.

DIRECT INTERACTIONS
- plant damage

1.7 PRIOR CONSULTATION HISTORY
Consultation with the USFWS occurred in 2015, during the initial NEPA review for the project area. The project alignment has shifted since that consultation.

1.8 OTHER AGENCY PARTNERS AND INTERESTED PARTIES
Metropolitan Council, USACE, State of Minnesota, MPCA, MNDNR, Hennepin County

1.9 OTHER REPORTS AND HELPFUL INFORMATION
URL to previously submitted EIS (including previous USFWS coordintaion):

https://metrocouncil.org/Transportation/Projects/Light-Rail-Projects/METRO-Blue-Line-Extension/Environmental/Final-EIS.aspx (https://metrocouncil.org/Transportation/Projects/Light-Rail-Projects/METRO-Blue-Line-Extension/Environmental/Final-EIS.aspx)

2 SPECIES EFFECTS ANALYSIS

This section describes, species by species, the effects of the proposed action on listed, proposed, and candidate species, and the habitat on which they depend. In this document, effects are broken down as direct interactions (something happening directly to the species) or indirect interactions (something happening to the environment on which a species depends that could then result in effects to the species).

These interactions encompass effects that occur both during project construction and those which could be ongoing after the project is finished. All effects, however, should be considered, including effects from direct and indirect interactions and cumulative effects.

2.1 HIGGINS EYE (PEARLYMUSSEL)

This species has been excluded from analysis in this environmental review document.

RELEVANT DOCUMENTATION

Although the project corridor crosses 3 watercourses, they are all considered too shallow for Higgins Eye. Primarily a sedentary species, the Higgins buries itself at the bottom of large rivers. The Mississippi River is the closest known resource with habitat suitable for the species and is located at least 0.5 miles away from the project footprint.

JUSTIFICATION FOR EXCLUSION

There is no suitable habitat within the project corridor.

2.2 NORTHERN LONG-EARED BAT

2.2.1 STATUS OF THE SPECIES

This section should provide information on the species' background, its biology and life history that is relevant to the proposed project within the action area that will inform the effects analysis.

2.2.1.1 LEGAL STATUS

The Northern Long-eared Bat is federally listed as 'Endangered' and additional information regarding its legal status can be found on the ECOS species profile.

2.2.1.2 RECOVERY PLANS

Available recovery plans for the Northern Long-eared Bat can be found on the ECOS species profile.

2.2.1.3 LIFE HISTORY INFORMATION

The northern long-eared bat is a medium-sized bat about 3 to 3.7 inches in length but with a wingspan of 9 to 10 inches. As its name suggests, this bat is distinguished by its long ears, particularly as compared to other bats in its genus, Myotis, which are actually bats noted for their small ears (Myotis means mouse-eared). The northern long-eared bat is found across much of the eastern and north central United States and all Canadian provinces from the Atlantic coast west to the southern Northwest Territories and eastern British Columbia. The species range includes 37 states. White-nose syndrome, a fungal disease known to affect bats, is currently the predominant threat to this bat, especially throughout the Northeast where the species has declined by up to 99 percent from pre-white-nose syndrome levels at many hibernation sites. Although the disease has not yet spread throughout the northern long-eared bats entire range (white-nose syndrome is currently found in at least 25 of 37 states where the northern long-eared bat occurs), it continues to spread. Experts expect that where it spreads, it will have the same impact as seen in the Northeast.

IDENTIFIED RESOURCE NEEDS

Hibernacula

Humidity: high, noise: low, with minimal distrubance, temperature: 0-9 degrees celsius, time of year: august through april, type: caves, mines, sewers, and spillways

Insects

Type: lepidoptera (moths and butterflies), coleoptera (beetles), trichoptera (caddisflies), diptera (flies), spiders, lepidopterous larvae

Open water

Type: streams, rivers, ponds, wetlands, lakes, road ruts

Travel corridors

Location: between forest patches and type: riparian corridors, wooded paths, hedgerows, fence rows

Trees

Size: > or equal to 3 inch dbh, spatial arrangement: within 1000 feet of forest, structure: cracks, crevices, cavities, exfoliating bark, time of year: april through august, type: dead, nearly dead, living tree with dead parts, and living with appropriate structure

2.2.1.4 CONSERVATION NEEDS

Conduct tree removal activities outside of the NLEB pup season (June 1 to July 31) and/or the active season (April 1 to October 31).

2.2.2 ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE

*The environmental baseline describes the species' health **within the action area only** at the time of the consultation, and does not include the effects of the action under review. Unlike the species information provided above, the environmental baseline is at the scale of the Action area.*

2.2.2.1 SPECIES PRESENCE AND USE
Trees on the northern end of the project may contain suitable habitat

2.2.2.2 SPECIES CONSERVATION NEEDS WITHIN THE ACTION AREA
Conduct tree removal activities outside of the NLEB pup season (June 1 to July 31) and/ or the active season (April 1 to October 31). This will minimize impacts to pups at roosts not yet identified.

2.2.2.3 HABITAT CONDITION (GENERAL)

INSECTS (TYPE: LEPIDOPTERA (MOTHS AND BUTTERFLIES), COLEOPTERA (BEETLES), TRICHOPTERA (CADDISFLIES), DIPTERA (FLIES), SPIDERS, LEPIDOPTEROUS LARVAE)
No insect survey has been completed. It is expected that many of these species are present in the project area

OPEN WATER (TYPE: STREAMS, RIVERS, PONDS, WETLANDS, LAKES, ROAD RUTS)
Wetland Delineation occurred in summer 2022.

TRAVEL CORRIDORS (LOCATION: BETWEEN FOREST PATCHES AND TYPE: RIPARIAN CORRIDORS, WOODED PATHS, HEDGEROWS, FENCE ROWS)
several streams/ riparian corridors present within project area

TREES (SIZE: > OR EQUAL TO 3 INCH DBH, SPATIAL ARRANGEMENT: WITHIN 1000 FEET OF FOREST, STRUCTURE: CRACKS, CREVICES, CAVITIES, EXFOLIATING BARK, TIME OF YEAR: APRIL THROUGH AUGUST, TYPE: DEAD, NEARLY DEAD, LIVING TREE WITH DEAD PARTS, AND LIVING WITH APPROPRIATE STRUCTURE)
no tree survey has been completed at this time- it is assumed that trees meeting this criteria is present.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION
- Wetland Delineation Report

2.2.2.4 INFLUENCES
The area is highly urbanized, and very developed already.

2.2.2.5 ADDITIONAL BASELINE INFORMATION
None

2.2.3 EFFECTS OF THE ACTION

This section considers and discusses all effects on the listed species that are caused by the proposed action and are reasonably certain to occur, including the effects of other activities that would not occur but for the proposed action.

2.2.3.1 INDIRECT INTERACTIONS

RESOURCE NEED	STRESSORS	CONSERVATION MEASURES	AMOUNT OF RESOURCE IMPACTED	INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED
Hibernacula (humidity: high, noise: low, with minimal distrubance, temperature: 0-9 degrees celsius, time of year: august through april, type: caves, mines, sewers, and spillways)			***This resource is not present in the action area*** Field visits with Habitat noted	***There will be no impacts to this resource, so no individuals will be affected.***
Insects (type: lepidoptera (moths and butterflies), coleoptera (beetles), trichoptera (caddisflies), diptera (flies), spiders, lepidopterous larvae)	No exposure path			***There will be no impacts to this resource, so no individuals will be affected.***
Open water (type: streams, rivers, ponds, wetlands, lakes, road ruts)	No exposure path			***There will be no impacts to this resource, so no individuals will be affected.***
Travel corridors (location: between forest patches and type: riparian corridors, wooded paths, hedgerows, fence rows)	No exposure path			***There will be no impacts to this resource, so no individuals will be affected.***
Trees (size: > or equal to 3 inch dbh, spatial arrangement: within 1000 feet of forest, structure: cracks, crevices, cavities, exfoliating bark, time of year: april through august, type: dead, nearly dead, living tree with dead parts, and living with appropriate structure)	No exposure path			***There will be no impacts to this resource, so no individuals will be affected.***

2.2.3.2 DIRECT INTERACTIONS

No direct interactions leading to effects on species are expected to occur from the proposed project.

Justification:

No direct impacts to bats are anticipated as this project does not propose to directly take any bats. Possible secondary impacts would be due to tree clearing and habitat loss

2.2.4 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

There are no planned future projects known. Because the project is increasing connectivity in the region, there is a possibility that additional buildings associated with residental and commercial uses will be built near the project area. No additional development is proposed at this time.

2.2.5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

DETERMINATION: NLAA

COMPENSATION MEASURES

Any tree clearing needed for the project will be completed outside the active season. There are no other direct impacts proposed to the bat.

2.3 RUSTY PATCHED BUMBLE BEE

2.3.1 STATUS OF THE SPECIES

This section should provide information on the species' background, its biology and life history that is relevant to the proposed project within the action area that will inform the effects analysis.

2.3.1.1 LEGAL STATUS

The Rusty Patched Bumble Bee is federally listed as 'Endangered' and additional information regarding its legal status can be found on the ECOS species profile.

2.3.1.2 RECOVERY PLANS

Available recovery plans for the Rusty Patched Bumble Bee can be found on the ECOS species profile.

2.3.1.3 LIFE HISTORY INFORMATION

Historically, the rusty patched bumble bee was broadly distributed across the eastern United States, Upper Midwest, and southern Quebec and Ontario in Canada. Since 2000, this bumble bee has been reported from only 13 states and 1 Canadian province: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, Wisconsin and Ontario, Canada.

Rusty patched bumble bees live in colonies that include a single queen and female workers. The colony produces males and new queens in late summer. Queens are the largest bees in the colony, and workers are the smallest. All rusty patched bumble bees have entirely black heads, but only workers and males have a rusty reddish patch centrally located on the back.

See www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/insects/rpbb (http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/insects/rpbb/index.html) for more.

IDENTIFIED RESOURCE NEEDS

Air temperature

Degrees celsius: 3, degrees celsius: 35, and time of year: march to october

Burrows

Species: abandoned rodent

Freshwater resources

Location: < 1.5 km from nesting and overwintering sites and time of year: march to october

Grass

Time of year: march to october and type: bunch grass

Leaf litter

Depth: 2-4" and time of year: october-april

Nectar

Location: grassland, woodland, mixed farmland, prairie, marsh, urban park, gardens, range: < 1.5 km from nesting and overwintering sites, source: flowers (blue, purple, yellow, and not red), source: perennial flowers, and time of year: march to october

Pollen

Location: woodland, shrubland, mixed farmland, prairie, marsh, urban parks, gardens, range: < 1.5 km from nesting and overwintering habitat, source: flowers (blue, purple, yellow, and not red), source: perennial flowers, and time of year: march to october

Soil

Location: < 1.5 km from foraging sites and stability: loose

2.3.1.4 CONSERVATION NEEDS

Conservation efforts focusing on habitat protection, restoration, and creation to ensure sufficient foraging and nesting sites are critical for the Rusty Patched Bumble Bee. Key needs include reducing pesticide use, particularly harmful neonicotinoids, and managing diseases and parasites. Addressing climate change impacts through research and enhancing habitat connectivity is crucial. Public awareness and engagement in conservation activities are vital, alongside conducting regular population monitoring and studying the bee's habitat requirements. Strengthening legal protections and promoting pollinator-friendly policies are essential for the long-term survival of this species.

2.3.2 ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE

*The environmental baseline describes the species' health **within the action area only** at the time of the consultation, and does not include the effects of the action under review. Unlike the species information provided above, the environmental baseline is at the scale of the Action area.*

2.3.2.1 SPECIES PRESENCE AND USE

The northern portion of the project limits are dominated by mesic and upland prairie and there are flowering species present that the bumblebee may utilize for pollination.

RELEVANT DOCUMENTATION

- Wetland Delineation Report

2.3.2.2 SPECIES CONSERVATION NEEDS WITHIN THE ACTION AREA

Within the action area, conservation efforts will be focused to habitat protection, restoration, and creation. The project will minimize habitat impacts to the greatest extent possible, but mitigate any potential impacts to habitat by restoring and creating new habitat near the project site.

2.3.2.3 HABITAT CONDITION (GENERAL)

AIR TEMPERATURE (DEGREES CELSIUS: 3, DEGREES CELSIUS: 35, AND TIME OF YEAR: MARCH TO OCTOBER)
MN would typically have temperatures between 3 -35 from march to october

BURROWS (SPECIES: ABANDONED RODENT)
While not directly observed, burrows are likely present near the project action area

FRESHWATER RESOURCES (LOCATION: < 1.5 KM FROM NESTING AND OVERWINTERING SITES AND TIME OF YEAR: MARCH TO OCTOBER)
There are several wetlands with surface waters within 1.5km of the potential habitat

GRASS (TIME OF YEAR: MARCH TO OCTOBER AND TYPE: BUNCH GRASS)
grassland present in northern portion of project limits

LEAF LITTER (DEPTH: 2-4" AND TIME OF YEAR: OCTOBER-APRIL)
Forest in northern portion of project limits might have leaf litter

NECTAR (LOCATION: GRASSLAND, WOODLAND, MIXED FARMLAND, PRAIRIE, MARSH, URBAN PARK, GARDENS, RANGE: < 1.5 KM FROM NESTING AND OVERWINTERING SITES, SOURCE: FLOWERS (BLUE, PURPLE, YELLOW, AND NOT RED), SOURCE: PERENNIAL FLOWERS, AND TIME OF YEAR: MARCH TO OCTOBER)
Grassland and prairie in northern portion of project limits

POLLEN (LOCATION: WOODLAND, SHRUBLAND, MIXED FARMLAND, PRAIRIE, MARSH, URBAN PARKS, GARDENS, RANGE: < 1.5 KM FROM NESTING AND OVERWINTERING HABITAT, SOURCE: FLOWERS (BLUE, PURPLE, YELLOW, AND NOT RED), SOURCE: PERENNIAL FLOWERS, AND TIME OF YEAR: MARCH TO OCTOBER)
Woodland, forests, prairies and wetlands are present within the project area

2.3.2.4 INFLUENCES
The area in and around the project area is highly developed and urbanized. Most of the open fields with pollinator species has been previously impacted and converted.

2.3.2.5 ADDITIONAL BASELINE INFORMATION
N/A

2.3.3 EFFECTS OF THE ACTION

This section considers and discusses all effects on the listed species that are caused by the proposed action and are reasonably certain to occur, including the effects of other activities that would not occur but for the proposed action.

2.3.3.1 INDIRECT INTERACTIONS

RESOURCE NEED	STRESSORS	CONSERVATION MEASURES	AMOUNT OF RESOURCE IMPACTED	INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED
Air temperature (degrees celsius: 3, degrees celsius: 35, and time of year: march to october)	No exposure path			***There will be no impacts to this resource, so no individuals will be affected.***
Burrows (species: abandoned rodent)	No exposure path			***There will be no impacts to this resource, so no individuals will be affected.***
Freshwater resources (location: < 1.5 km from nesting and overwintering sites and time of year: march to october)	No exposure path			***There will be no impacts to this resource, so no individuals will be affected.***
Grass (time of year: march to october and type: bunch grass)	No exposure path			***There will be no impacts to this resource, so no individuals will be affected.***
Leaf litter (depth: 2-4" and time of year: october-april)	No exposure path			***There will be no impacts to this resource, so no individuals will be affected.***
Nectar (location: grassland, woodland, mixed farmland, prairie, marsh, urban park, gardens, range: < 1.5 km from nesting and overwintering sites, source: flowers (blue, purple, yellow, and not red), source: perennial flowers, and time of year: march to october)	No exposure path			***There will be no impacts to this resource, so no individuals will be affected.***
Pollen (location: woodland, shrubland, mixed farmland, prairie, marsh, urban parks, gardens, range:	No exposure path			***There will be no impacts to this resource, so no***

RESOURCE NEED	STRESSORS	CONSERVATION MEASURES	AMOUNT OF RESOURCE IMPACTED	INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED
< 1.5 km from nesting and overwintering habitat, source: flowers (blue, purple, yellow, and not red), source: perennial flowers, and time of year: march to october)				***individuals will be affected.***
Soil (location: < 1.5 km from foraging sites and stability: loose)			***This resource is not present in the action area*** no loose soil is present in the project area	***There will be no impacts to this resource, so no individuals will be affected.***

2.3.3.2 DIRECT INTERACTIONS

DIRECT INTERACTION	CONSERVATION MEASURES	INDIVIDUALS IMPACTED	IMPACT EXPLANATION
Auditory disturbance	Complete construction around season whenever possible	Yes	unknown

2.3.4 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

North of the project area, the land is not yet developed. With the addition of the commuter train rail, its likely more development will move into the area

2.3.5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

DETERMINATION: NLAA

COMPENSATION MEASURES

Planting of pollinator species post project construction

2.4 SALAMANDER MUSSEL

This species has been excluded from analysis in this environmental review document.

JUSTIFICATION FOR EXCLUSION

The only known occurrences of this species are in the Mississippi River and the project is not impacting any portion of the river.

2.5 SNUFFBOX MUSSEL

This species has been excluded from analysis in this environmental review document.

RELEVANT DOCUMENTATION

The snuffbox prefers rivers with steady current and sand and gravel substrates. The three watercourses within the project alignment do not meet these criteria as they dry up during periods of less precipitation and typically only have fast moving current during the wetter spring months.

JUSTIFICATION FOR EXCLUSION

There is no suitable habitat within the project corridor.

2.6 TRICOLORED BAT

2.6.1 STATUS OF THE SPECIES

This section should provide information on the species' background, its biology and life history that is relevant to the proposed project within the action area that will inform the effects analysis.

2.6.1.1 LEGAL STATUS

The Tricolored Bat is federally listed as 'Proposed Endangered' and additional information regarding its legal status can be found on the ECOS species profile.

2.6.1.2 RECOVERY PLANS

Available recovery plans for the Tricolored Bat can be found on the ECOS species profile.

2.6.1.3 LIFE HISTORY INFORMATION

The tricolored bat is a small insectivorous bat that is distinguished by its unique tricolored fur and often appears yellowish to nearly orange. The once common species is wide ranging across the eastern and central United States and portions of southern Canada, Mexico and Central America. During the winter, tricolored bats are often found in caves and abandoned mines, although in the southern United States, where caves are sparse, tricolored bats are often found roosting in road-associated culverts where they exhibit shorter torpor bouts and forage during warm nights. During the spring, summer, and fall, tricolored bats are found in forested habitats where they roost in trees, primarily among leaves of live or recently dead deciduous hardwood trees, but may also be found in Spanish moss, pine trees, and occasionally human structures. Tricolored bats face extinction due primarily to the rangewide impacts of white-nose syndrome, a deadly disease affecting cave-dwelling bats across the continent. White-nose syndrome has caused estimated declines of more than 90 percent in affected tricolored bat colonies across the majority of the species range. To address the growing threat of white-nose syndrome to the tricolored bat and other bats across North America, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is leading the White-nose Syndrome National Response Team, a coordinated effort of more than 150 non-governmental organizations, institutions, Tribes, and state and federal agencies. Together we are conducting critical white-nose syndrome research and developing management strategies to minimize impacts of the disease and recover affected bat populations. For more information on white-nose syndrome, please see: https://www.whitenosesyndrome.org/ For more information on tricolored bats, please see: https://www.fws.gov/species/tricolored-bat-perimyotis-subflavus

IDENTIFIED RESOURCE NEEDS

Tree cavities

During the spring, summer and fall - collectively referred to as the non-hibernating seasons - tricolored bats primarily roost among live and dead leaf clusters of live or recently dead deciduous hardwood trees.

2.6.1.4 CONSERVATION NEEDS

The primary cause of tricolored bats' steep and sudden decline is white-nose syndrome. The Fish and Wildlife Service also identifies climate change and habitat loss as key threats.

2.6.2 ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE

*The environmental baseline describes the species' health **within the action area only** at the time of the consultation, and does not include the effects of the action under review. Unlike the species information provided above, the environmental baseline is at the scale of the Action area.*

2.6.2.1 SPECIES PRESENCE AND USE

Tricolored bats could use trees located at the northern end of the project corridor to roost in the non-hibernating seasons.

2.6.2.2 SPECIES CONSERVATION NEEDS WITHIN THE ACTION AREA

Tricolored bats rely on mature and old-growth forests with closed canopies for roosting and foraging, which are not present within the project area.

2.6.2.3 HABITAT CONDITION (GENERAL)

It is unlikely habitat for the tricolored bat is present in the project site as there are no old growth forests.

2.6.2.4 INFLUENCES

The site has been urbanized for many decades. Most tree clearing occurred 20-50 years ago.

2.6.2.5 ADDITIONAL BASELINE INFORMATION

None.

2.6.3 EFFECTS OF THE ACTION

This section considers and discusses all effects on the listed species that are caused by the proposed action and are reasonably certain to occur, including the effects of other activities that would not occur but for the proposed action.

2.6.3.1 INDIRECT INTERACTIONS

RESOURCE NEED	STRESSORS	CONSERVATION MEASURES	AMOUNT OF RESOURCE IMPACTED	INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED
Tree cavities (during the spring, summer and fall - collectively referred to as the non-hibernating seasons - tricolored bats primarily roost among live and dead leaf clusters of live or recently dead deciduous hardwood trees.)			***This resource is not present in the action area*** no old growth trees exist in the project area, only newer plantings of smaller trees.	***There will be no impacts to this resource, so no individuals will be affected.***

2.6.3.2 DIRECT INTERACTIONS

No direct interactions leading to effects on species are expected to occur from the proposed project.

Justification:

It is unlikely the habitat for the tricolored bat is present in the project area as there are no old growth forests.

2.6.4 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

None

2.6.5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

DETERMINATION: NLAA

COMPENSATION MEASURES

Tree clearing will occur outside of the active season. There are no direct impacts to the tricolored bat proposed.

2.7 WINGED MAPLELEAF

This species has been excluded from analysis in this environmental review document.

RELEVANT DOCUMENTATION

The Winged Mapleleaf is a native freshwater mussel species of fast-flowing riffles in medium-sized rivers. All watercourse crossings within the project area are considered small and are not suitable for the winged mapleleaf.

JUSTIFICATION FOR EXCLUSION

There is no suitable habitat within the project corridor.

3 CRITICAL HABITAT EFFECTS ANALYSIS

3.1 RUSTY PATCHED BUMBLE BEE CRITICAL HABITAT

3.1.1 CRITICAL HABITAT DESCRIPTION

Critical habitat has been designated for the **'Rusty Patched Bumble Bee'**, the final rule can be found at ECOS species profile. The rule outlines required physical and biological features needed for critical habitat to be present.

3.1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE

The environmental baseline describes the condition of the critical habitat within the action area only at the time of the consultation, and does not include the effects of the action under review.

3.1.2.1 CONDITION OF PHYSICAL AND BIOLOGICAL FEATURES

You indicated that Rusty Patched Bumble Bee critical habitat is present in your action area it in the following manner.

There is some possible habitat in the northern most portion of the project site. It is a large meadow, not dominated by native species

3.1.2.2 CONSERVATION NEEDS OF PHYSICAL AND BIOLOGICAL FEATURES

Avoiding ground disturbance in the north during the nesting season (April 9th - Oct 9th)

3.1.2.3 INFLUENCES

invasive speices

3.1.2.4 ADDITIONAL BASELINE INFORMATION

none

3.1.3 EFFECTS OF THE ACTION

No stressors are expected to impact Rusty Patched Bumble Bee critical habitat.

3.1.4 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

The entire project corridor is previously disturbed and highly developed

3.1.5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

DETERMINATION: NLAA

4 SUMMARY DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

4.1 SUMMARY DISCUSSION

The project site is highly developed and previously impacted and is unlikely to have adverse effects on critical habitat.

4.2 CONCLUSION

Tree clearing for the northern station and the operations and maintenance facility are likely the greatest impact to any critical habitat for any listed species in the project corridor. Work will be conducted over the winter months when the species are unlikely to be present to minimize impact. Disturbed ground will be re-seeded with pollinator species and milkweeds to ensure adequate habitat for the monarch butterfly is present.

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office
3815 American Blvd East
Bloomington, MN 55425-1659
Phone: (952) 858-0793

In Reply Refer To: 03/03/2025 13:43:18 UTC
Project Code: 2023-0034074
Project Name: METRO Blue Line Light Rail Transit (BLRT) Extension

Subject: List of threatened and endangered species that may occur in your proposed project location or may be affected by your proposed project

To Whom It May Concern:

This response has been generated by the Information, Planning, and Conservation (IPaC) system to provide information on natural resources that could be affected by your project. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) provides this response under the authority of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531-1543), the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 668-668d), the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. 703-712), and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. 661 *et seq.*).

Threatened and Endangered Species
The enclosed species list identifies threatened, endangered, proposed and candidate species, as well as proposed and final designated critical habitat, that may occur within the boundary of your proposed project and may be affected by your proposed project. The species list fulfills the requirement for obtaining a Technical Assistance Letter from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

New information based on updated surveys, changes in the abundance and distribution of species, changed habitat conditions, or other factors could change this list. Note that under 50 CFR 402.12(e) of the regulations implementing section 7 of the Act, the accuracy of this species list should be verified after 90 days. The Service recommends that verification be completed by visiting the IPaC website at regular intervals during project planning and implementation for updates to species lists and information. An updated list may be requested through the IPaC system by completing the same process used to receive the enclosed list.

Consultation Technical Assistance
Please refer to refer to our Section 7 website for guidance and technical assistance, including step-by-step instructions for making effects determinations for each species that might be present and for specific guidance on the following types of projects: projects in developed areas, HUD, CDBG, EDA, USDA Rural Development projects, pipelines, buried utilities, telecommunications, and requests for a Conditional Letter of Map Revision (CLOMR) from FEMA.

We recommend running the project (if it qualifies) through our **Minnesota-Wisconsin Federal Endangered Species Determination Key (Minnesota-Wisconsin ("D-key"))**. A demonstration video showing how-to access and use the determination key is available. Please note that the Minnesota-Wisconsin D-key is the third option of 3 available d-keys. D-keys are tools to help Federal agencies and other project proponents determine if their proposed action has the potential to adversely affect federally listed species and designated critical habitat. The Minnesota-Wisconsin D-key includes a structured set of questions that assists a project proponent in determining whether a proposed project qualifies for a certain predetermined consultation outcome for all federally listed species found in Minnesota and Wisconsin (except for the northern long-eared bat- see below), which includes determinations of “no effect” or “may affect, not likely to adversely affect." In each case, the Service has compiled and analyzed the best available information on the species’ biology and the impacts of certain activities to support these determinations.

If your completed d-key output letter shows a "No Effect" (NE) determination for all listed species, print your IPaC output letter for your files to document your compliance with the Endangered Species Act.

For Federal projects with a “Not Likely to Adversely Affect” (NLAA) determination, our concurrence becomes valid if you do not hear otherwise from us after a 30-day review period, as indicated in your letter.

If your d-key output letter indicates additional coordination with the Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office is necessary (i.e., you get a “May Affect” determination), you will be provided additional guidance on contacting the Service to continue ESA coordination outside of the key; ESA compliance cannot be concluded using the key for “May Affect” determinations unless otherwise indicated in your output letter.

Note: Once you obtain your official species list, you are not required to continue in IPaC with d-keys, although in most cases these tools should expedite your review. If you choose to make an effects determination on your own, you may do so. If the project is a Federal Action, you may want to review our section 7 step-by-step instructions before making your determinations.

Using the IPaC Official Species List to Make No Effect and May Affect Determinations for Listed Species

1. If IPaC returns a result of “There are no listed species found within the vicinity of the project,” then project proponents can conclude the proposed activities will have **no effect** on any federally listed species under Service jurisdiction. Concurrence from the Service is not required for **no effect** determinations. No further consultation or coordination is required. Attach this letter to the dated IPaC species list report for your records.
2. If IPaC returns one or more federally listed, proposed, or candidate species as potentially present in the action area of the proposed project – other than bats (see below) – then project proponents must determine if proposed activities will have **no effect** on or **may affect** those species. For assistance in determining if suitable habitat for listed, candidate, or proposed species occurs within your project area or if species may be affected by project activities, you can obtain Life History Information for Listed and Candidate Species on our office website. If no impacts will occur to a species on the IPaC species list (e.g., there is no habitat present in the project area), the appropriate determination is **no effect**. No further consultation or coordination is required. Attach this letter to the dated IPaC species list report for your records.

3. Should you determine that project activities **may affect** any federally listed, please contact our office for further coordination. Letters with requests for consultation or correspondence about your project should include the Consultation Tracking Number in the header. Electronic submission is preferred.

Northern Long-Eared Bats
Northern long-eared bats occur throughout Minnesota and Wisconsin and the information below may help in determining if your project may affect these species.

Suitable summer habitat for northern long-eared bats consists of a wide variety of forested/wooded habitats where they roost, forage, and travel and may also include some adjacent and interspersed non-forested habitats such as emergent wetlands and adjacent edges of agricultural fields, old fields and pastures. This includes forests and woodlots containing potential roosts (i.e., live trees and/or snags ≥3 inches dbh for northern long-eared bat that have exfoliating bark, cracks, crevices, and/or hollows), as well as linear features such as fencerows, riparian forests, and other wooded corridors. These wooded areas may be dense or loose aggregates of trees with variable amounts of canopy closure. Individual trees may be considered suitable habitat when they exhibit the characteristics of a potential roost tree and are located within 1,000 feet (305 meters) of forested/wooded habitat. Northern long-eared bats have also been observed roosting in human-made structures, such as buildings, barns, bridges, and bat houses; therefore, these structures should also be considered potential summer habitat and evaluated for use by bats. If your project will impact caves or mines or will involve clearing forest or woodland habitat containing suitable roosting habitat, northern long-eared bats could be affected. For bat activity dates, please review Appendix L in the Range-wide Indiana Bat and Northern Long-Eared Bat Survey Guidelines.

Examples of unsuitable habitat include:
- Individual trees that are greater than 1,000 feet from forested or wooded areas,
- Trees found in highly developed urban areas (e.g., street trees, downtown areas),
- A pure stand of less than 3-inch dbh trees that are not mixed with larger trees, and
- A monoculture stand of shrubby vegetation with no potential roost trees.

If IPaC returns a result that northern long-eared bats are potentially present in the action area of the proposed project, project proponents can conclude the proposed activities **may affect** this species **IF** one or more of the following activities are proposed:
- Clearing or disturbing suitable roosting habitat, as defined above, at any time of year,
- Any activity in or near the entrance to a cave or mine,
- Mining, deep excavation, or underground work within 0.25 miles of a cave or mine,
- Construction of one or more wind turbines, or
- Demolition or reconstruction of human-made structures that are known to be used by bats based on observations of roosting bats, bats emerging at dusk, or guano deposits or stains.

If none of the above activities are proposed, project proponents can conclude the proposed activities will have **no effect** on the northern long-eared bat. Concurrence from the Service is not required for **No Effect** determinations. No further consultation or coordination is required. Attach this letter to the dated IPaC

species list report for your records.

If any of the above activities are proposed, and the northern long-eared bat appears on the user's species list, the federal project user will be directed to either the northern long-eared bat and tricolored bat range-wide D-key or the Federal Highways Administration, Federal Railways Administration, and Federal Transit Administration Indiana bat/Northern long-eared bat D-key, depending on the type of project and federal agency involvement. Similar to the Minnesota-Wisconsin D-key, these d-keys helps to determine if prohibited take might occur and, if not, will generate an automated verification letter. Additional information about available tools can be found on the Service's northern long-eared bat website.

Whooping Crane
Whooping crane is designated as a non-essential experimental population in Wisconsin and consultation under Section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act is only required if project activities will occur within a National Wildlife Refuge or National Park. If project activities are proposed on lands outside of a National Wildlife Refuge or National Park, then you are not required to consult. For additional information on this designation and consultation requirements, please review "Establishment of a Nonessential Experimental Population of Whooping Cranes in the Eastern United States."

Other Trust Resources and Activities
Bald and Golden Eagles - Although the bald eagle has been removed from the endangered species list, this species and the golden eagle are protected by the Bald and Golden Eagle Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. It is the responsibility of the project proponent to survey the area for any migratory bird nests. If there is an eagle nest on-site while work is on-going, eagles may be disturbed. We recommend avoiding and minimizing disturbance to eagles whenever practicable. If you cannot avoid eagle disturbance, you may seek a permit. A nest take permit is always required for removal, relocation, or obstruction of an eagle nest. For communication and wind energy projects, please refer to additional guidelines below.

Migratory Birds - The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) prohibits the taking, killing, possession, transportation, and importation of migratory birds, their eggs, parts, and nests, except when specifically authorized by the Service. The Service has the responsibility under the MBTA to proactively prevent the mortality of migratory birds whenever possible and we encourage implementation of recommendations that minimize potential impacts to migratory birds. Such measures include clearing forested habitat outside the nesting season (generally March 1 to August 31) or conducting nest surveys prior to clearing to avoid injury to eggs or nestlings.

Communication Towers - Construction of new communications towers (including radio, television, cellular, and microwave) creates a potentially significant impact on migratory birds, especially some 350 species of night-migrating birds. However, the Service has developed voluntary guidelines for minimizing impacts.

Transmission Lines - Migratory birds, especially large species with long wingspans, heavy bodies, and poor maneuverability can also collide with power lines. In addition, mortality can occur when birds, particularly hawks, eagles, kites, falcons, and owls, attempt to perch on uninsulated or unguarded power poles. To minimize these risks, please refer to guidelines developed by the Avian Power Line Interaction Committee and the Service. Implementation of these measures is especially important along sections of lines adjacent to wetlands or other areas that support large numbers of raptors and migratory birds.

Wind Energy - To minimize impacts to migratory birds and bats, wind energy projects should follow the Service's Wind Energy Guidelines. In addition, please refer to the Service's Eagle Conservation Plan Guidance, which provides guidance for conserving bald and golden eagles in the course of siting, constructing, and operating wind energy facilities.

State Department of Natural Resources Coordination
While it is not required for your Federal section 7 consultation, please note that additional state endangered or threatened species may also have the potential to be impacted. **Please contact the Minnesota or Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for information on state listed species that may be present in your proposed project area.**

Minnesota
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources - Endangered Resources Review Homepage
Email: Review.NHIS@state.mn.us

Wisconsin
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources - Endangered Resources Review Homepage
Email: DNRERReview@wi.gov

We appreciate your concern for threatened and endangered species. Please feel free to contact our office with questions or for additional information.

Attachment(s):

- Official Species List
- USFWS National Wildlife Refuges and Fish Hatcheries
- Bald & Golden Eagles
- Migratory Birds
- Wetlands

OFFICIAL SPECIES LIST

This list is provided pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, and fulfills the requirement for Federal agencies to "request of the Secretary of the Interior information whether any species which is listed or proposed to be listed may be present in the area of a proposed action".

This species list is provided by:

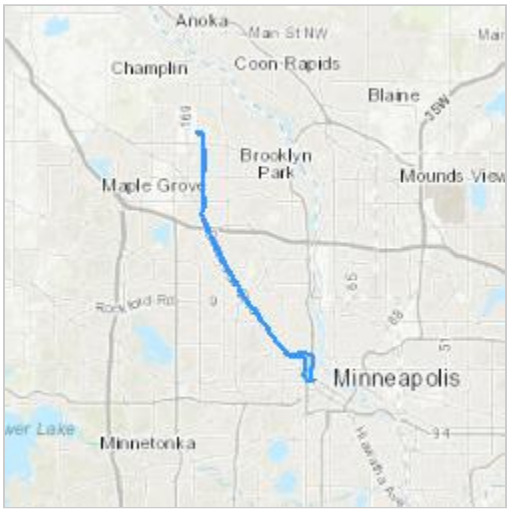
Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office
3815 American Blvd East
Bloomington, MN 55425-1659
(952) 858-0793

PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Code: 2023-0034074
Project Name: METRO Blue Line Light Rail Transit (BLRT) Extension
Project Type: Railroad - New Construction
Project Description: The proposed Blue Line Light Rail Transit (BLRT) Extension Project is a 13-mile corridor of transportation improvements that extends from downtown Minneapolis to the northwest, serving north Minneapolis, Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, New Hope, Osseo, Brooklyn Park, and Maple Grove.

Project Location:

The approximate location of the project can be viewed in Google Maps: https://www.google.com/maps/@45.0603696,-93.36217594244053,14z



Counties: Hennepin County, Minnesota

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT SPECIES

There is a total of 9 threatened, endangered, or candidate species on this species list.

Species on this list should be considered in an effects analysis for your project and could include species that exist in another geographic area. For example, certain fish may appear on the species list because a project could affect downstream species.

IPaC does not display listed species or critical habitats under the sole jurisdiction of NOAA Fisheries[1], as USFWS does not have the authority to speak on behalf of NOAA and the Department of Commerce.

See the "Critical habitats" section below for those critical habitats that lie wholly or partially within your project area under this office's jurisdiction. Please contact the designated FWS office if you have questions.

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1. NOAA Fisheries, also known as the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), is an office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration within the Department of Commerce.

MAMMALS

NAME	STATUS
Northern Long-eared Bat *Myotis septentrionalis* No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9045	Endangered
Tricolored Bat *Perimyotis subflavus* No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10515	Proposed Endangered

BIRDS

NAME	STATUS
Whooping Crane *Grus americana* Population: U.S.A. (AL, AR, CO, FL, GA, ID, IL, IN, IA, KY, LA, MI, MN, MS, MO, NC, NM, OH, SC, TN, UT, VA, WI, WV, western half of WY) No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/758	Experimental Population, Non-Essential

CLAMS

NAME	STATUS
Higgins Eye (pearlymussel) *Lampsilis higginsii* No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/5428	Endangered
Salamander Mussel *Simpsonaias ambigua* There is **proposed** critical habitat for this species. Your location does not overlap the critical habitat. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/6208	Proposed Endangered
Snuffbox Mussel *Epioblasma triquetra* There is **proposed** critical habitat for this species. Your location does not overlap the critical habitat. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/4135	Endangered
Winged Mapleleaf *Quadrula fragosa* Population: Wherever found, except where listed as an experimental population No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/4127	Endangered

INSECTS

NAME	STATUS
Monarch Butterfly *Danaus plexippus* There is **proposed** critical habitat for this species. Your location does not overlap the critical habitat. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9743	Proposed Threatened

NAME	STATUS
Rusty Patched Bumble Bee *Bombus affinis* There is **proposed** critical habitat for this species. Your location overlaps the critical habitat. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9383 General project design guidelines: https://ipac.ecosphere.fws.gov/project/UJA36TBNJ5F3ZM37LPAOUN545Y/documents/generated/5967.pdf	Endangered

CRITICAL HABITATS

There is 1 critical habitat wholly or partially within your project area under this office's jurisdiction.

NAME	STATUS
Rusty Patched Bumble Bee *Bombus affinis* https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9383#crithab	Proposed

USFWS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE LANDS AND FISH HATCHERIES

Any activity proposed on lands managed by the National Wildlife Refuge system must undergo a 'Compatibility Determination' conducted by the Refuge. Please contact the individual Refuges to discuss any questions or concerns.

THERE ARE NO REFUGE LANDS OR FISH HATCHERIES WITHIN YOUR PROJECT AREA.

BALD & GOLDEN EAGLES

Bald and Golden Eagles are protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act [2] and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) [1]. Any person or organization who plans or conducts activities that may result in impacts to Bald or Golden Eagles, or their habitats, should follow appropriate regulations and consider implementing appropriate avoidance and minimization measures, as described in the various links on this page.

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1. The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940.
2. The Migratory Birds Treaty Act of 1918.
3. 50 C.F.R. Sec. 10.12 and 16 U.S.C. Sec. 668(a)

There are Bald Eagles and/or Golden Eagles in your project area.

Measures for Proactively Minimizing Eagle Impacts

For information on how to best avoid and minimize disturbance to nesting bald eagles, please review the National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines. You may employ the timing and activity-specific distance recommendations in this document when designing your project/

activity to avoid and minimize eagle impacts. For bald eagle information specific to Alaska, please refer to Bald Eagle Nesting and Sensitivity to Human Activity.

The FWS does not currently have guidelines for avoiding and minimizing disturbance to nesting Golden Eagles. For site-specific recommendations regarding nesting Golden Eagles, please consult with the appropriate Regional Migratory Bird Office or Ecological Services Field Office.

If disturbance or take of eagles cannot be avoided, an incidental take permit may be available to authorize any take that results from, but is not the purpose of, an otherwise lawful activity. For assistance making this determination for Bald Eagles, visit the Do I Need A Permit Tool. For assistance making this determination for golden eagles, please consult with the appropriate Regional Migratory Bird Office or Ecological Services Field Office.

Ensure Your Eagle List is Accurate and Complete
If your project area is in a poorly surveyed area in IPaC, your list may not be complete and you may need to rely on other resources to determine what species may be present (e.g. your local FWS field office, state surveys, your own surveys). Please review the Supplemental Information on Migratory Birds and Eagles, to help you properly interpret the report for your specified location, including determining if there is sufficient data to ensure your list is accurate.

For guidance on when to schedule activities or implement avoidance and minimization measures to reduce impacts to bald or golden eagles on your list, see the "Probability of Presence Summary" below to see when these bald or golden eagles are most likely to be present and breeding in your project area.

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* This is not a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) in this area, but warrants attention because of the Eagle Act or for potential susceptibilities in offshore areas from certain types of development or activities. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1626	Breeds Dec 1 to Aug 31
Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* This is not a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) in this area, but warrants attention because of the Eagle Act or for potential susceptibilities in offshore areas from certain types of development or activities. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1680	Breeds elsewhere

PROBABILITY OF PRESENCE SUMMARY

The graphs below provide our best understanding of when birds of concern are most likely to be present in your project area. This information can be used to tailor and schedule your project activities to avoid or minimize impacts to birds. Please make sure you read "Supplemental Information on Migratory Birds and Eagles", specifically the FAQ section titled "Proper Interpretation and Use of Your Migratory Bird Report" before using or attempting to interpret this report.

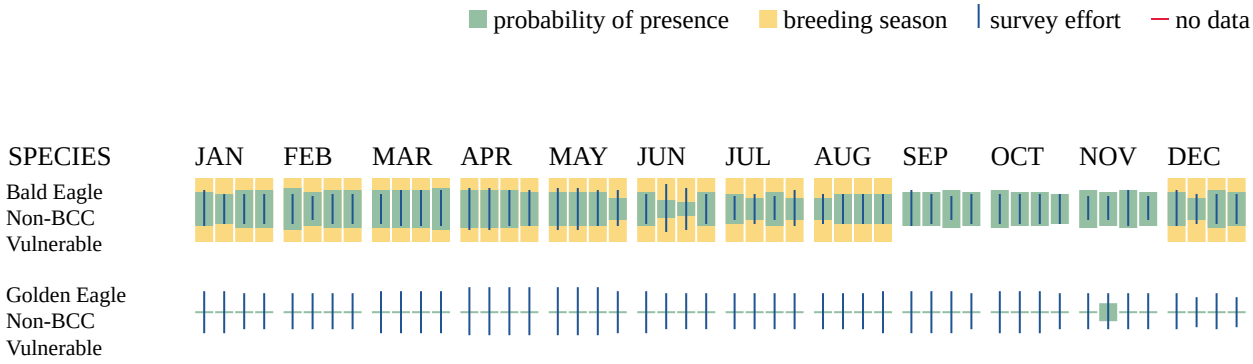
Probability of Presence (■)

Green bars; the bird's relative probability of presence in the 10km grid cell(s) your project overlaps during that week of the year.

Breeding Season (▪)
Yellow bars; liberal estimate of the timeframe inside which the bird breeds across its entire range.

Survey Effort (|)
Vertical black lines; the number of surveys performed for that species in the 10km grid cell(s) your project area overlaps.

No Data (–)
A week is marked as having no data if there were no survey events for that week.



Additional information can be found using the following links:

- Eagle Management https://www.fws.gov/program/eagle-management
- Measures for avoiding and minimizing impacts to birds https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/avoiding-and-minimizing-incidental-take-migratory-birds
- Nationwide avoidance and minimization measures for birds https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/nationwide-standard-conservation-measures.pdf
- Supplemental Information for Migratory Birds and Eagles in IPaC https://www.fws.gov/media/supplemental-information-migratory-birds-and-bald-and-golden-eagles-may-occur-project-action

MIGRATORY BIRDS

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) [1] prohibits the take (including killing, capturing, selling, trading, and transport) of protected migratory bird species without prior authorization by the Department of Interior U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). The incidental take of migratory birds is the injury or death of birds that results from, but is not the purpose, of an activity. The Service interprets the MBTA to prohibit incidental take.

1. The Migratory Birds Treaty Act of 1918.
2. The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940.
3. 50 C.F.R. Sec. 10.12 and 16 U.S.C. Sec. 668(a)

For guidance on when to schedule activities or implement avoidance and minimization measures to reduce impacts to migratory birds on your list, see the "Probability of Presence Summary" below to see when these birds are most likely to be present and breeding in your project area.

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
American Golden-plover *Pluvialis dominica* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10561	Breeds elsewhere
Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* This is not a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) in this area, but warrants attention because of the Eagle Act or for potential susceptibilities in offshore areas from certain types of development or activities. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1626	Breeds Dec 1 to Aug 31
Black Tern *Chlidonias niger surinamenisis* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/3093	Breeds May 15 to Aug 20
Black-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus erythropthalmus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9399	Breeds May 15 to Oct 10
Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9454	Breeds May 20 to Jul 31
Canada Warbler *Cardellina canadensis* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9643	Breeds May 20 to Aug 10
Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9406	Breeds Mar 15 to Aug 25
Eastern Whip-poor-will *Antrostomus vociferus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10678	Breeds May 1 to Aug 20

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* This is not a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) in this area, but warrants attention because of the Eagle Act or for potential susceptibilities in offshore areas from certain types of development or activities. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1680	Breeds elsewhere
Golden-winged Warbler *Vermivora chrysoptera* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/8745	Breeds May 1 to Jul 20
Grasshopper Sparrow *Ammodramus savannarum perpallidus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/8329	Breeds Jun 1 to Aug 20
Le Conte's Sparrow *Ammospiza leconteii* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9469	Breeds Jun 1 to Aug 15
Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9679	Breeds elsewhere
Long-eared Owl *asio otus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/3631	Breeds Mar 1 to Jul 15
Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9561	Breeds elsewhere
Red-headed Woodpecker *Melanerpes erythrocephalus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9398	Breeds May 10 to Sep 10
Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres morinella* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10633	Breeds elsewhere
Rusty Blackbird *Euphagus carolinus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9478	Breeds elsewhere

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9603	Breeds elsewhere
Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9480	Breeds elsewhere
Western Grebe *aechmophorus occidentalis* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/6743	Breeds Jun 1 to Aug 31
Wood Thrush *Hylocichla mustelina* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9431	Breeds May 10 to Aug 31

PROBABILITY OF PRESENCE SUMMARY

The graphs below provide our best understanding of when birds of concern are most likely to be present in your project area. This information can be used to tailor and schedule your project activities to avoid or minimize impacts to birds. Please make sure you read "Supplemental Information on Migratory Birds and Eagles", specifically the FAQ section titled "Proper Interpretation and Use of Your Migratory Bird Report" before using or attempting to interpret this report.

Probability of Presence (■)

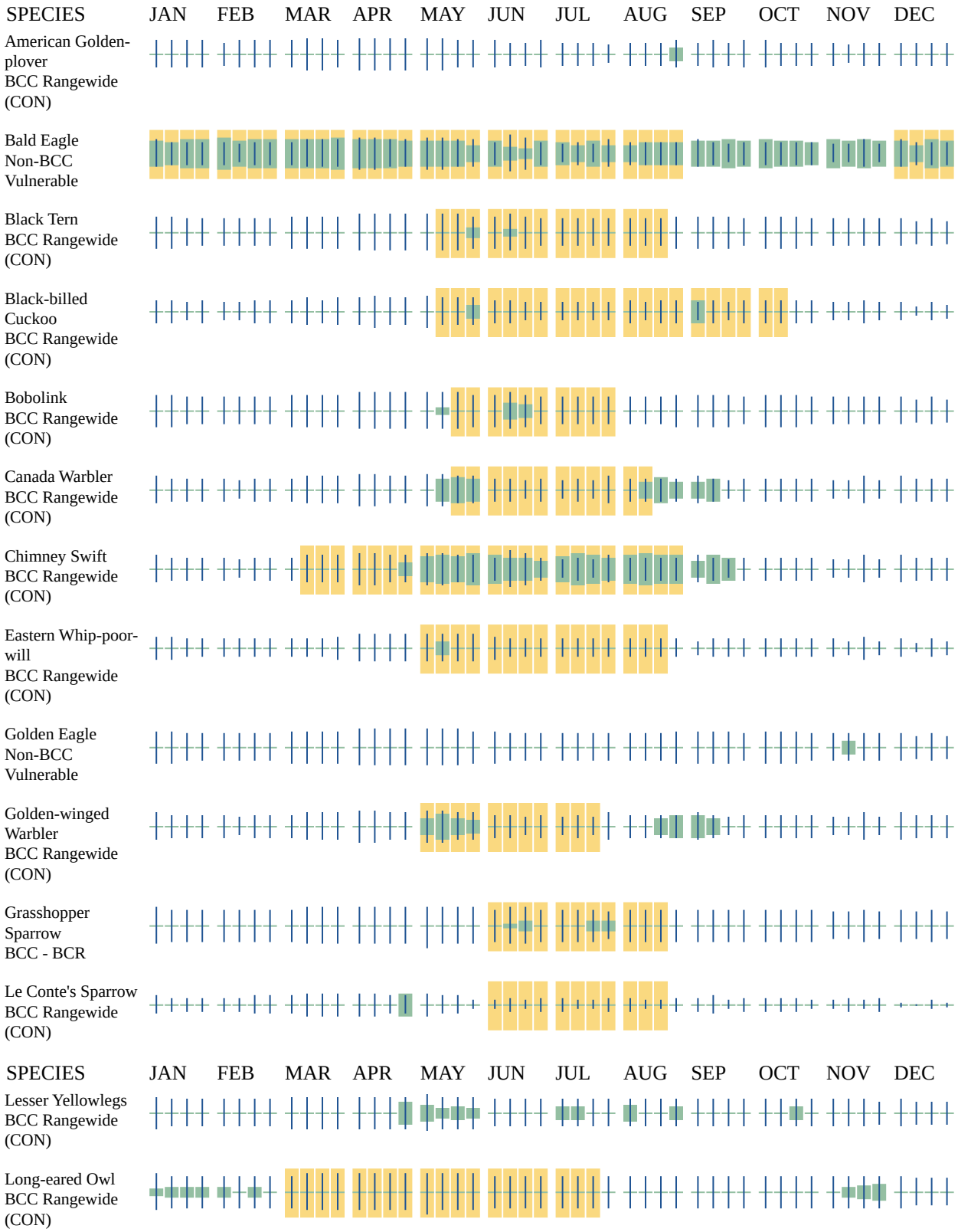
Green bars; the bird's relative probability of presence in the 10km grid cell(s) your project overlaps during that week of the year.

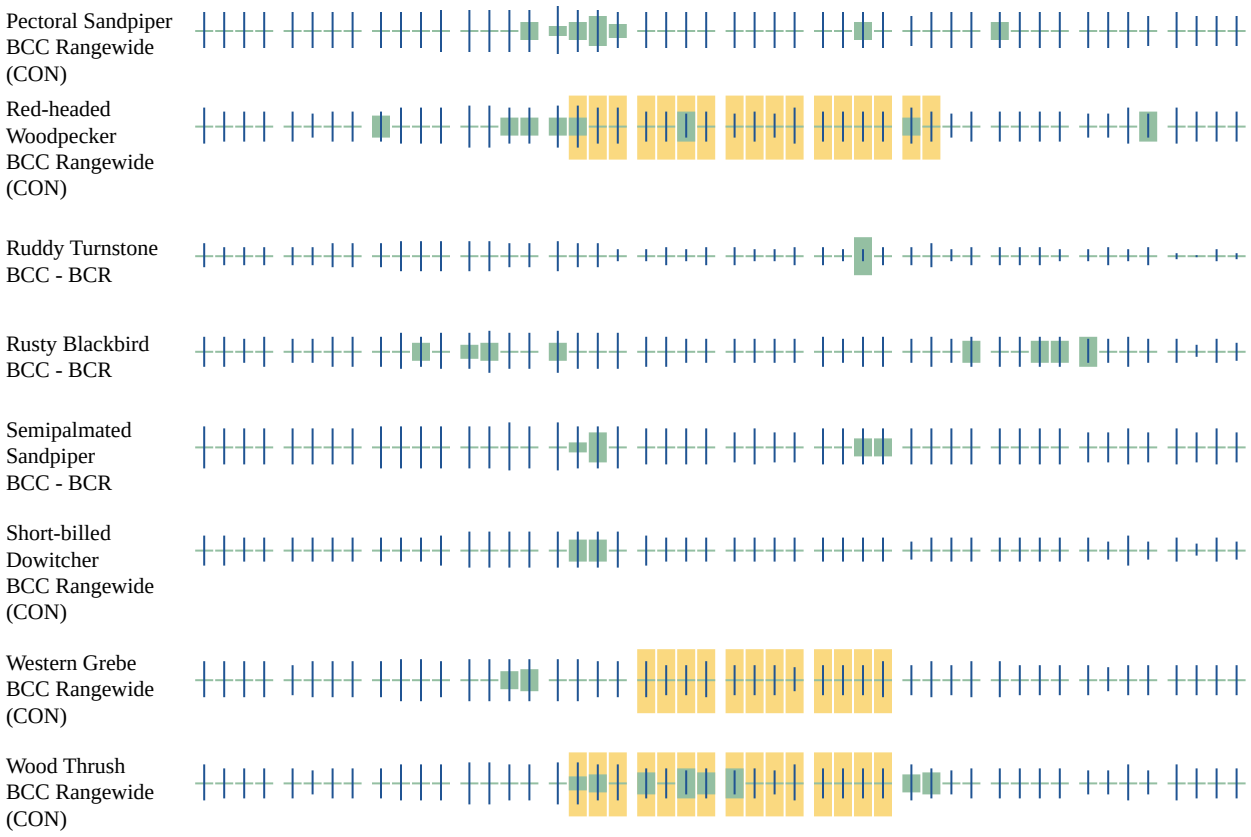
Breeding Season (■)
Yellow bars; liberal estimate of the timeframe inside which the bird breeds across its entire range.

Survey Effort (|)
Vertical black lines; the number of surveys performed for that species in the 10km grid cell(s) your project area overlaps.

No Data (–)
A week is marked as having no data if there were no survey events for that week.

■ probability of presence ■ breeding season | survey effort – no data


SPECIES
JAN
FEB
MAR
APR
MAY
JUN
JUL
AUG
SEP
OCT
NOV
DEC
American Golden-plover BCC Rangewide (CON)
Bald Eagle Non-BCC Vulnerable
Black Tern BCC Rangewide (CON)
Black-billed Cuckoo BCC Rangewide (CON)
Bobolink BCC Rangewide (CON)
Canada Warbler BCC Rangewide (CON)
Chimney Swift BCC Rangewide (CON)
Eastern Whip-poor-will BCC Rangewide (CON)
Golden Eagle Non-BCC Vulnerable
Golden-winged Warbler BCC Rangewide (CON)
Grasshopper Sparrow BCC - BCR
Le Conte's Sparrow BCC Rangewide (CON)
SPECIES
JAN
FEB
MAR
APR
MAY
JUN
JUL
AUG
SEP
OCT
NOV
DEC
Lesser Yellowlegs BCC Rangewide (CON)
Long-eared Owl BCC Rangewide (CON)



Additional information can be found using the following links:

- Eagle Management https://www.fws.gov/program/eagle-management
- Measures for avoiding and minimizing impacts to birds https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/avoiding-and-minimizing-incidental-take-migratory-birds
- Nationwide avoidance and minimization measures for birds
- Supplemental Information for Migratory Birds and Eagles in IPaC https://www.fws.gov/media/supplemental-information-migratory-birds-and-bald-and-golden-eagles-may-occur-project-action

WETLANDS

Impacts to NWI wetlands and other aquatic habitats may be subject to regulation under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, or other State/Federal statutes.

For more information please contact the Regulatory Program of the local U.S. Army Corps of Engineers District.

Please note that the NWI data being shown may be out of date. We are currently working to update our NWI data set. We recommend you verify these results with a site visit to determine the actual extent of wetlands on site.

FRESHWATER EMERGENT WETLAND

- PEM1F
- PEM1Ax
- PEM1A
- PEM1Ad
- PEM1Cx
- PEM1C

FRESHWATER POND

- PUBHx
- PUBF
- PABH
- PUBH

RIVERINE

- R5UBH
- R2UBFx
- R5UBFx

FRESHWATER FORESTED/SHRUB WETLAND

- PFO1A

IPAC USER CONTACT INFORMATION

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LEAD AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Lead Agency: Federal Transit Administration

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
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3815 American Blvd East
Bloomington, MN 55425-1659
Phone: (952) 858-0793

In Reply Refer To: 04/09/2025 16:09:31 UTC
Project code: 2023-0034074
Project Name: METRO Blue Line Light Rail Transit (BLRT) Extension

Subject: Technical Assistance letter for 'METRO Blue Line Light Rail Transit (BLRT) Extension' for specified threatened and endangered species that may occur in your proposed project location consistent with the Minnesota-Wisconsin Endangered Species Determination Key (Minnesota-Wisconsin DKey).

Dear Rebecca Beduhn:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) received on **April 09, 2025** your effect determination(s) for the 'METRO Blue Line Light Rail Transit (BLRT) Extension' (Action) using the Minnesota-Wisconsin DKey within the Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) system. You have submitted this key to satisfy requirements under Section 7(a)(2). The Service developed this system in accordance of with the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA) (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C 1531 et seq.).

Based on your answers and the assistance of the Service's Minnesota-Wisconsin DKey, you made the following effect determination(s) for the proposed Action:

Species	**Listing Status**	**Determination**
Higgins Eye (pearlymussel) (*Lampsilis higginsii*)	Endangered	May affect
Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*)	Proposed Threatened	No effect
Salamander Mussel (*Simpsonaias ambigua*)	Proposed Endangered	May affect
Snuffbox Mussel (*Epioblasma triquetra*)	Endangered	May affect
Whooping Crane (*Grus americana*)	Experimental Population, Non-Essential	No effect
Winged Mapleleaf (*Quadrula fragosa*)	Endangered	May affect

Determination Information
Consultation with the Service is not complete. Further consultation with the Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office is required for those species with a determination of

"May Affect," listed above. Please email our office at TwinCities@fws.gov and attach a copy of this letter, so we can discuss methods to avoid or minimize potential adverse effects to those species.

Additional Information

Sufficient project details: Please provide sufficient project details on your project homepage in IPaC (Define Project, Project Description) to support your conclusions. Failure to disclose important aspects of your project that would influence the outcome of your effects determinations may negate your determinations and invalidate this letter. If you have site-specific information that leads you to believe a different determination is more appropriate for your project than what the Dkey concludes, you can and should proceed based on the best available information.

Future project changes: The Service recommends that you contact the Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office or re-evaluate the project in IPaC if: 1) the scope or location of the proposed Action is changed; 2) new information reveals that the action may affect listed species or designated critical habitat in a manner or to an extent not previously considered; 3) the Action is modified in a manner that causes effects to listed species or designated critical habitat; or 4) a new species is listed or critical habitat designated. If any of the above conditions occurs, additional consultation with the Service should take place before project changes are final or resources committed.

Species-specific information

Freshwater Mussels: Freshwater mussels are one of the most critically imperiled groups of organisms in the world. In North America, 65% of the remaining 300 species are vulnerable to extinction (Haag and Williams 2014). Implementing measures to conserve and restore freshwater mussel populations directly improves water quality in lakes, rivers, and streams throughout Minnesota and Wisconsin. An adult freshwater mussel filters anywhere from 1 to 38 gallons of water per day (Baker and Levinton 2003, Barnhart pers. comm. 2019). A 2015 survey found that in some areas, mussels can reduce the bacterial populations by more than 85% (Othman et al. 2015 in Vaughn 2017). Mussels are also considered to be ecosystem engineers by stabilizing substrate and providing habitat for other aquatic organisms (Vaughn 2017). In addition to ecosystem services, mussels play an important role in the food web, contributing critical nutrients to both terrestrial and aquatic habitats, including those that support sport fish (Vaughn 2017). Taking proactive measures to conserve and restore freshwater mussels will improve water quality, which has the potential to positively impact human health and recreation in the States of Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Federally listed mussels may be present in the Action area. Projects may adversely affect listed mussels if they permanently affect local hydrology, directly impact a stream (e.g., stream/road crossings, new stormwater outfall discharge, dams, other in-stream work, etc.), and/or indirectly impact a stream or riparian zone (e.g., cut and fill, horizontal directional drilling, construction, vegetation removal, discharge, etc.). Please coordinate with the Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office to further evaluate effects of the Action on Federally listed mussels.

Bald and Golden Eagles: Bald eagles, golden eagles, and their nests are protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (54 Stat. 250, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 668a-d) (Eagle Act). The Eagle Act prohibits, except when authorized by an Eagle Act permit, the "taking" of bald

and golden eagles and defines “take” as “pursue, shoot, shoot at, poison, wound, kill, capture, trap, collect, molest or disturb.” The Eagle Act’s implementing regulations define disturb as “… to agitate or bother a bald or golden eagle to a degree that causes, or is likely to cause, based on the best scientific information available, (1) injury to an eagle, (2) a decrease in its productivity, by substantially interfering with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior, or (3) nest abandonment, by substantially interfering with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior.”

The following species and/or critical habitats may also occur in your project area and **are not** covered by this conclusion:

- Northern Long-eared Bat *Myotis septentrionalis* Endangered
- Rusty Patched Bumble Bee *Bombus affinis* Endangered
- Tricolored Bat *Perimyotis subflavus* Proposed Endangered

Coordination with the Service is not complete if additional coordination is advised above for any species.

Mussel References

Baker, S.M. and J. Levinton. 2003. Selective feeding by three native North American freshwater mussels implies food competition with zebra mussels. Hydrobiologia 505(1):97-105.

Haag, W. R. and J.D. Williams, 2014. Biodiversity on the brink: an assessment of conservation strategies for North American freshwater mussels. Hydrobiologia 735:45-60.

Morowski, D., L. James and D. Hunter. 2009. Freshwater mussels in the Clinton River, southeastern Michigan: an assessment of community status. Michigan Academician XXXIX: 131-148.

Othman, F., M.S. Islam, E.N. Sharifah, F. Shahrom-Harrison and A. Hassan. 2015. Biological control of streptococcal infection in Nile tilapia Oreochromis niloticus (Linnaeus, 1758) using filter-feeding bivalve mussel Pilsbryoconcha exilis (Lea, 1838). Journal of Applied Ichthyology 31: 724-728.

Vaughn, C.C. 2017. Ecosystem services provided by freshwater mussels. Hydrobiologia DOI: 10.1007/s10750-017-3139-x.

Action Description
You provided to IPaC the following name and description for the subject Action.

1. Name

METRO Blue Line Light Rail Transit (BLRT) Extension

2. Description

The following description was provided for the project 'METRO Blue Line Light Rail Transit (BLRT) Extension':

> The proposed Blue Line Light Rail Transit (BLRT) Extension Project is a 13-mile corridor of transportation improvements that extends from downtown Minneapolis to the northwest, serving north Minneapolis, Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, New Hope, Osseo, Brooklyn Park, and Maple Grove.

The approximate location of the project can be viewed in Google Maps: https://www.google.com/maps/@45.0603696,-93.36217594244053,14z

QUALIFICATION INTERVIEW

1. This determination key is intended to assist the user in evaluating the effects of their actions on Federally listed species in Minnesota and Wisconsin. It does not cover other prohibited activities under the Endangered Species Act (e.g., for wildlife: import/export, Interstate or foreign commerce, possession of illegally taken wildlife, etc.; for plants: import/export, reduce to possession, malicious destruction on Federal lands, commercial sale, etc.) or other statutes. Additionally, this key DOES NOT cover wind development, purposeful take (e.g., for research or surveys), communication towers that have guy wires or are over 450 feet in height, aerial or other large-scale application of any chemical (such as insecticide or herbicide), and approval of long-term permits or plans (e.g., FERC licenses, HCP's).

   Click **YES** to acknowledge that you must consider other prohibitions of the ESA or other statutes outside of this determination key.

   Yes
2. Is the action being funded, authorized, or carried out by a Federal agency?

   Yes
3. Are you the Federal agency or designated non-federal representative?

   Yes
4. Does the action involve the installation or operation of wind turbines?

   No
5. Does the action involve purposeful take of a listed animal?

   No
6. Does the action involve a new communications tower?

   No
7. Does the activity involve aerial or other large-scale application of ANY chemical, including pesticides (insecticide, herbicide, fungicide, rodenticide, etc)?

   No
8. Will your action permanently affect local hydrology?

   Yes

9. Does your project have the potential to impact the riparian zone or indirectly impact a stream/river (e.g., cut and fill; horizontal directional drilling; construction; vegetation removal; pesticide or fertilizer application; discharge; runoff of sediment or pollutants; increase in erosion, etc.)?

   Note: Consider all potential effects of the action, including those that may happen later in time and outside and downstream of the immediate area involved in the action.

   Endangered Species Act regulation defines "effects of the action" to include all consequences to listed species or critical habitat that are caused by the proposed action, including the consequences of other activities that are caused by the proposed action. A consequence is caused by the proposed action if it would not occur but for the proposed action and it is reasonably certain to occur. Effects of the action may occur later in time and may include consequences occurring outside the immediate area involved in the action. (50 CFR 402.02).

   Yes

10. Will your action disturb the ground or existing vegetation?

    Note: This includes any off-road vehicle access, soil compaction (enough to collapse a rodent burrow), digging, seismic survey, directional drilling, heavy equipment, grading, trenching, placement of fill, pesticide application (herbicide, fungicide), vegetation management (including removal or maintenance using equipment or prescribed fire), cultivation, development, etc.

    Yes

11. Will your action include spraying insecticides?

    No

12. Does your action area occur entirely within an already developed area?

    Note: Already developed areas are already paved, covered by existing structures, manicured lawns, industrial sites, or cultivated cropland, AND do not contain trees that could be roosting habitat. Be aware that listed species may occur in areas with natural, or semi-natural, vegetation immediately adjacent to existing utilities (e.g. roadways, railways) or within utility rights-of-way such as overhead transmission line corridors, and can utilize suitable trees, bridges, or culverts for roosting even in urban dominated landscapes (so these are not considered "already developed areas" for the purposes of this question). If unsure, select NO..

    No

13. [Semantic] Does the project intersect the Salamander mussel AOI?

    Automatically answered
    Yes

14. Have you determined that the action will have no effect on individuals within the whooping crane nonessential experimental population (NEP)?

    Yes

15. [Hidden Semantic] Does the action area intersect the monarch butterfly species list area?

    Automatically answered
    Yes

16. Under the ESA, monarchs remain warranted but precluded by listing actions of higher priority. The monarch is a candidate for listing at this time. The Endangered Species Act does not establish protections or consultation requirements for candidate species. Some Federal and State agencies may have policy requirements to consider candidate species in planning. We encourage implementing measures that will remove or reduce threats to these species and possibly make listing unnecessary.

    If your project will have no effect on monarch butterflies (for example, if your project won't affect their habitat or individuals), then you can make a "no effect" determination for this project.

    Are you making a "no effect" determination for monarch?

    No

17. Is this project funded, authorized, or carried out by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

    No

IPAC USER CONTACT INFORMATION

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Email rbeduhn@sehinc.com
Phone: 6514902146

LEAD AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Lead Agency: Federal Transit Administration

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office
3815 American Blvd East
Bloomington, MN 55425-1659
Phone: (952) 858-0793

In Reply Refer To: 04/09/2025 16:23:45 UTC
Project code: 2023-0034074
Project Name: METRO Blue Line Light Rail Transit (BLRT) Extension

Federal Nexus: yes

Federal Action Agency (if applicable): Federal Transit Administration
Subject: Technical Assistance letter for 'METRO Blue Line Light Rail Transit (BLRT) Extension' for rusty patched bumble bee that may occur in your proposed project location consistent with the Rusty Patched Bumble Bee Range Wide Determination Key (RPBB DKey).

Dear Rebecca Beduhn:

This letter records your determination using the RPBB DKey within the Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) system provided to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on **April 09, 2025**, for 'METRO Blue Line Light Rail Transit (BLRT) Extension' (here forward, Project). This project has been assigned Project Code '2023-0034074' and all future correspondence should clearly reference this number. **Please carefully review this letter. Your Endangered Species Act (Act) requirements are not complete.**

Ensuring Accurate Determinations When Using IPaC Determination Keys

The USFWS developed the IPaC system and associated species' determination keys in accordance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA; 87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.). All information submitted by the Project proponent into the IPaC must accurately represent the full scope and details of the Project. **Failure to accurately represent or implement the Project as detailed in IPaC or the RPBB DKey, invalidates this letter.**

Determination for the Rusty Patched Bumble Bee

Based on your answers and the assistance of the USFWS' RPBB DKey, you made the following effect determination for the proposed Action:

Species	Listing Status	Determination
Rusty Patched Bumble Bee (*Bombus affinis*)	Endangered	May affect

Consultation with the USFWS is not complete. This determination was reached because the RPBB DKey was unable to provide a conclusion for activities which you were either unsure about the determination or you chose to make a "may affect" determination. If the RPBB DKey was unable to provide a conclusion, this does not necessarily mean that the project is likely to adversely affect the species.

Your agency's ESA section 7 consultation requirement for rusty patched bumble bee with the USFWS is not complete, and further consultation with the USFWS is required. Please email the local USFWS Ecological Services Field Office and attach a copy of this letter, so we can discuss methods to avoid or minimize potential adverse impacts.

Other Species and Critical Habitat that May be Present in the Action Area

The IPaC-assisted determination key for the rusty patched bumble bee **does not** apply to the following ESA-protected species and/or critical habitat that also may occur in your Action area:

- Higgins Eye (pearlymussel) *Lampsilis higginsii* Endangered
- Monarch Butterfly *Danaus plexippus* Proposed Threatened
- Northern Long-eared Bat *Myotis septentrionalis* Endangered
- Salamander Mussel *Simpsonaias ambigua* Proposed Endangered
- Snuffbox Mussel *Epioblasma triquetra* Endangered
- Tricolored Bat *Perimyotis subflavus* Proposed Endangered
- Whooping Crane *Grus americana* Experimental Population, Non-Essential
- Winged Mapleleaf *Quadrula fragosa* Endangered

Critical Habitats:

- Rusty Patched Bumble Bee Bombus affinis Endangered

Coordination with the USFWS is advised for any species and/or critical habitat listed above.

You should coordinate with our Office to determine whether the Action may affect the species and/or critical habitat listed above and if further consultation is required. Note that reinitiation of consultation would be necessary if a new species is listed or critical habitat designated that may be affected by the identified action before it is complete.

If you have any questions regarding this letter or need further assistance, please contact the local Ecological Services Field Office and reference Project Code '2023-0034074' associated with this Project. See the top of this letter for the Project Code.

Additional Information

Sufficient project details: Please provide sufficient project details on your project homepage in IPaC (Define Project, Project Description) to support your conclusions. Failure to disclose important aspects of your project that would influence the outcome of your effects

determinations may negate your determinations and invalidate this letter. If you have site-specific information that leads you to believe a different determination is more appropriate for your project than what the Dkey concludes, you can and should proceed based on the best available information.

Future project changes: The Service recommends that you contact the local Ecological Services Field Office or re-evaluate the project in IPaC if: 1) the scope or location of the proposed Action is changed; 2) new information reveals that the action may affect rusty patched bumble bee in a manner or to an extent not previously considered; 3) the Action is modified in a manner that causes effects to rusty patched bumble bee; or 4) or critical habitat is designated. If any of the above conditions occur, additional consultation with the Service should take place before project changes are final or resources are committed.

Species-specific information

Bald and Golden Eagles: Bald eagles, golden eagles, and their nests are protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (54 Stat. 250, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 668a-d) (Eagle Act). The Eagle Act prohibits, except when authorized by an Eagle Act permit, the “taking” of bald and golden eagles and defines “take” as “pursue, shoot, shoot at, poison, wound, kill, capture, trap, collect, molest or disturb.” The Eagle Act’s implementing regulations define disturb as “… to agitate or bother a bald or golden eagle to a degree that causes, or is likely to cause, based on the best scientific information available, (1) injury to an eagle, (2) a decrease in its productivity, by substantially interfering with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior, or (3) nest abandonment, by substantially interfering with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior.”

If you observe a bald eagle nest in the vicinity of your proposed project, you should follow the National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines (May 2007). For more information on eagles and conducting activities in the vicinity of an eagle nest, please visit our regional eagle website or contact the local Ecological Services Field Office. If the Action may affect bald or golden eagles, additional coordination with the Service under the Eagle Act may be required.

Action Description
You provided to IPaC the following name and description for the subject Action.

1. Name

METRO Blue Line Light Rail Transit (BLRT) Extension

2. Description

The following description was provided for the project 'METRO Blue Line Light Rail Transit (BLRT) Extension':

> The proposed Blue Line Light Rail Transit (BLRT) Extension Project is a 13-mile corridor of transportation improvements that extends from downtown Minneapolis to the northwest, serving north Minneapolis, Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, New Hope, Osseo, Brooklyn Park, and Maple Grove.

The approximate location of the project can be viewed in Google Maps: https://www.google.com/maps/@45.0603696,-93.36217594244053,14z

QUALIFICATION INTERVIEW

1. Is the action authorized, funded, or being carried out by a Federal agency?

   Yes

2. Are you the Federal agency or designated non-federal representative?

   Yes

3. Does the action area overlap with a rusty patched bumble bee high potential zone?

   Automatically answered
   Yes

4. Is the action being implemented under a Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or FSA (Farm Service Agency) program?

   Note: Farm Bill programs include, the Conservation Reserve Program, Environmental Quality Incentive Program, NRCS Easement Program, Farm Loan Program, Farm Storage Facility Loan Program.

   No

5. Does the action include or is it reasonably certain to cause intentional take of rusty patched bumble bee (RPBB)?

   Note: This could include, for example, surveys or studies that include handling or capture of the species.

   No

6. Does the action include – or is it reasonably certain to result in – construction of one or more new roads or rail lines that will increase vehicle traffic in a rusty patched bumble bee HPZ?

   Yes

IPAC USER CONTACT INFORMATION

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State: MN
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LEAD AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Lead Agency: Federal Transit Administration