



Hennepin County
 Regional Railroad Authority

Summary of Public Comments during the Bottineau Transitway Scoping Process

May 21, 2012

Overview

This document provides a summary of public comments received during the Scoping period (December 26, 2011 through February 17, 2012) for the Bottineau Transitway Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS). Comments received during the Scoping period will be used to finalize the Bottineau Transitway purpose and need, refine proposed alternatives, and identify environmental topic areas to be analyzed in the Draft EIS and their method of analysis. Comments will be addressed in the Scoping Decision Document, which is a summary of the Scoping process, comments received, and response to comments that is published after the Scoping public comment period ends. This report will be made available to the public and interested agencies.

One interagency Scoping meeting and four public Scoping Open Houses were held during the Scoping period to gain stakeholder input. At the interagency meeting on January 19, 21 participants representing municipalities and local, state, and federal government agencies reviewed and discussed concerns relative to the proposed project. The dates, locations, and number of people attending each of the open house meetings are provided in [Table 1](#).

Table 1 : Open House Meeting Attendance

Location of Open House	Date	Attendees*
Theodore Wirth Chalet	January 23, 2012	127
Brooklyn Park City Hall	January 24, 2012	44
Urban Research and Outreach/Engagement Center	January 25, 2012	47
Robbinsdale City Hall	January 31, 2012	165
Total	--	383

* Number of people who signed the sign-in sheet

Public and Agency Outreach

An extensive outreach effort was used to solicit public and agency comments for the Bottineau Transitway project during the formal Scoping period, which extended from December 26, 2011 to February 17, 2012. The Scoping Booklet, which contained a list of Scoping Open House locations, was provided to members of the Bottineau Transitway Advise, Review, and Communicate Committee (ARCC), Community Advisory Committee (CAC), and Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) and other interested stakeholders on the project mailing list. An extensive e-mail list of more than 600 individuals, neighborhood groups, special interest groups, agencies, businesses, churches, elected officials, and media outlets was used to distribute the Scoping Booklet. The Scoping Booklet was also posted on the project website and hard copies were provided to libraries and community centers in the project area. Notice of the Scoping Open Houses was sent via e-mail to Maple Grove Transit riders and posters were put up at the transit station. Notices of the meetings were also sent to more than 500 property owners within approximately 350 feet of the Bottineau Transitway alignments in Robbinsdale.

Comments Received during the Scoping Process

Open house attendees were encouraged to provide input on the purpose and need for the project, the alternatives proposed for the study, and the project impacts or benefits that should be evaluated or any other areas of interest or concern. Comments represent public comments plus those from organizations, groups, municipalities, and agencies. Nearly 300 comments were received via the various formats described below. Comments were forwarded to one central location where they were tabulated, analyzed, coded, and summarized.

Written Comments: As part of the Scoping process, Scoping comment forms were prepared and included with the Scoping Booklet (see attached comment form), available on the project website and at each of the public meetings. Interested individuals were invited to submit written comments, either in letter format, on the Bottineau Transitway Scoping comment form, or electronically, to the project manager or the project email address. Comments were also received by city officials and forwarded for inclusion in the scoping input.

Verbal Comments: A court reporter was available at each open house to record verbatim statements.

Table 2: Summary of Comment Types

Type of Comment	Number
Comment forms submitted at open houses	84
Verbal statements received at open houses	45
Written comments (mail and electronic) and additional comment forms	166
Total	295

As shown in [Table 2](#), 295 comments were received through February 17, 2012. Of these, 84 written comments and 45 verbal comments were received at the Scoping open houses. The balance was received by mail or e-mail prior to the end of the comment period and one person commented by phone. A few individuals provided comments using more than one format (e.g., email and comment form), or submitted comments to more than one recipient (e.g., project website and the city council). In addition to comments from the general public, written statements were also received from the following municipalities, agencies, and organizations: City of Crystal, City Brooklyn Park, City of Robbinsdale, City of Golden Valley, City of Maple Grove, City of Minneapolis, Minneapolis Park &

Recreation Board, Metropolitan Council’s Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, Shingle Creek Watershed Management Commission, Bassett Creek Watershed Commission, West Broadway Business and Area Coalition, Transit for Livable Communities, Alliance for Metropolitan Stability, North Loop Neighborhood Association, Harrison Neighborhood Association, ISAIAH, BNSF Railway, and the Bottineau Transitway CAC.

Comments by Topic

Purpose and Need for the Project

The Scoping comment form asked people to respond to the *purpose and need for the project*. General responses to this question indicated a need for better public transportation in the northwest portion the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area that would serve future growth in the northwest suburbs, support economic development, provide access to employment and school, and reduce traffic congestion and pollution. Responses to the purpose and need question, as well as other questions, provided information reflecting support or opposition to the transitway and preferences for LRT or BRT. The following tables summarize input received at the open houses (verbally and in comment forms) as well as in additional comments received during the Scoping process.

Comments that offered support for or opposition to the transitway are shown in [Table 3](#). The majority of comments indicated general support for the transitway.

Table 3: Public Comments – Support or Opposition to Transitway

Comment Source	Support	Oppose
Theodore Wirth Chalet Open House	12	--
Brooklyn Park City Hall Open House	9	--
UROC* Open House	6	2
Robbinsdale City Hall Open House	15	8
Additional comments	43	13
TOTAL	85	23

* Urban Research and Outreach/Engagement Center

Support for Transitway Project: Specific comments indicating support for the transitway included: economic growth, environmental sustainability, reduction in traffic congestion, and providing access to non-car owners and non-drivers (e.g., young, elderly, and disabled persons).

Opposition to the Transitway Project: Specific comments indicating opposition to the transitway included: social and environmental impacts, tax increases (including subsidies to maintain the transitway), much of the current plan is redundant to the existing transit system, the existing public transportation is underutilized, and the plan assumes people will actually use the transitway.

Comments pertaining to preferences for BRT or LRT are summarized below and in [Table 4](#).

Mode Preferences

Table 4: Public Comments – LRT or BRT Preference

Comment Source	Preference			
	LRT	BRT	Combination of LRT & Bus	Improve the Existing System
Theodore Wirth Chalet Open House	8	1	5	5
Brooklyn Park City Hall Open House	6	2	1	--
UROC* Open House	2	--	--	--
Robbinsdale City Hall Open House	2	1	--	--
Additional comments	18	2	--	--
TOTAL	36	6	6	5

* Urban Research and Outreach/Engagement Center

Preference for LRT: Many (36) people who provided comments indicated a preference for LRT over BRT. Specific reasons for supporting LRT included: cleaner and more efficient than buses, more environmentally responsible, faster travel time, require less maintenance than buses, more visually appealing, has more “personality” leading to higher ridership, transports a higher volume of riders, leads to higher surrounding land values, not as susceptible to weather, better long-term transportation solution than buses, and adds to the existing Metro LRT system. One person noted that with LRT, two Van White stations would not be needed (i.e., the Southwest Transitway and the Bottineau Transitway are close together). Several individuals noted that they preferred LRT or nothing and that they would not use a BRT system.

Preference for BRT: Several (6) people expressed a preference for BRT. Specific reasons for supporting BRT included: more flexibility in routing and vehicle sizes compared to buses, easier to board and exit, lower initial costs and lower operating costs than LRT, and represents a better use of tax dollars.

Preference for LRT and BRT: Transit for Livable Communities indicated that both LRT and BRT should be given full consideration. Several other comments also supported both LRT and BRT.

Preference for a combination of LRT and bus: Comments were received that favored the use of LRT with “feeder buses” to transport users to the LRT route.

Preference for improving the existing system: Several comments supported finding ways to improve the existing system and questioned the need for a dedicated transitway. One comment noted that using the existing system could avoid tax increases and avoid environmental impacts.

BNSF Railway input: HCRRA’s proposal to operate a BRT system immediately adjacent to BNSF trackage on the Monticello Subdivision has been reviewed by the BNSF Operations and Engineering Departments. After reviewing the proposal, BNSF will not support the BRT option.

Alignment Preferences

The Scoping comment form asked people to respond to the *alternatives proposed for study*. Responses to this question expressed preferences for or opposition to specific alignments. Comments offering suggestions for alternative alignments are provided at the end of this summary.

Statements of preference for the proposed alignments are summarized in [Table 5](#). Those who indicated support or a preference for a specific alignment are included under “support” column. Comments that expressed overall opposition to the transitway project are not represented in [Table 5](#). For the northern portion of the transitway, comments generally indicated a preference for the A (Maple Grove) or B (Brooklyn Park) alignment. For the southern portion of the transitway, comments generally indicated a preference for D1 (BNSF Railway – Olson Highway) or D2 (West Broadway – Penn Avenue) alignment.

Table 5: Public Comments – Alignment Preferences

Comment Source	Alignment A		Alignment B		Alignment D1		Alignment D2	
	Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose
Theodore Wirth Chalet Open House	2	--	--	--	7	12	12	2
Brooklyn Park City Hall Open House	3	1	10	--	2	1	6	1
UROC* Open House	--	--	1	--	3	3	10	1
Robbinsdale City Hall Open House	--	--	3	--	8	--	3	4
Additional comments	6	--	4	--	12	34	26	5
TOTAL	11	1	18		32	50	57	13

* Urban Research and Outreach/Engagement Center

Alignment A (Maple Grove)

Support: In addition to general support for Alignment A, comments indicated that this alignment would better serve access to employment and education opportunities. One individual indicated that a line terminating in Maple Grove would bring more job opportunities to the residents of Minneapolis and the inner-ring suburbs than a Brooklyn Park terminus. Another individual comment indicated that Alignment A facilitates the need for reverse commutes.

Oppose: One individual indicated that the route serves a minority of people and retail shoppers who would probably opt to drive. The comment also noted that Brooklyn Park alignment (B) has more industry along their corridor for commuting.

Concerns: The City of Maple Grove Resolution 12-016 supports further review of alternatives A-C-D1, A-C-D2, B-C-D1, and B-C-D2. However, the resolution outlines concerns regarding impacts related to Alignment A, including impacts to the Gravel Mining Area, the existing Maple Grove Transit operation, and the right-of-way of a future extension of Arbor Lakes Parkway. Details associated with these specific concerns are detailed in the City of Maple Grove’s Resolution No. 12-016.

Alignment B (Brooklyn Park)

Support: The City of Brooklyn Park supports Alignment B, indicating that this alignment will reach more of its residents and businesses than Alignment A. In addition to general public comments indicating support for Alignment B, comments providing specific reasons for preferring this Alignment included: would help Highway 610 business development and development in Brooklyn Park, would have a stop at the new Brooklyn Park library, provides better access to schools (i.e., North Hennepin Community College) and jobs (e.g., Target North Campus), and provides more opportunity for more riders to take public transportation on a regular basis.

Alignments A and B

Support: Several individuals suggested providing transit service along both the A and B alignments, indicating that both alignments provide opportunities for jobs, school, shopping, and commuting. The City of Crystal and Transit for Livable Communities support further study of both alignments. Transit for Livable Communities also supports the possibility of constructing both northern alignments for BRT.

Alignment C

The City of Crystal Resolution 2012-14 and the City of Robbinsdale Resolution No. 7143 support Alignment C. Comments providing specific reasons for supporting this alignment included: minimizes crossings at roadways and signalized intersections, offers reasonable opportunities for station siting, requires no additional right-of-way, provides a station within Crystal's most significant concentration of existing shopping and employment, and is adjacent to residential neighborhoods.

Alignment D1 (BNSF Railway-Olson Highway)

Support: The City of Brooklyn Park and the City of Robbinsdale Resolution No. 7143 support Alignment D1. In addition to general public comments stating support for Alignment D1, comments providing specific reasons for preferring this alignment included: using the existing rail line is much less disruptive to the residential neighborhood, more people would use due to faster travel time (e.g., fewer stops and signalized intersections), allows people living farther out to get downtown quickly, will serve more people in the long-term, and is more compatible with general motor vehicle, bus, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic as compared to Alignment D2. One comment stated that Broadway should be reserved for future street car reintroduction.

Oppose: The Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board (MPRB) opposes the Alignment D1 due to potential impacts to natural resources, parkland, and the recreational opportunities it is entrusted to protect. MPRB correspondence details concerns regarding the historic nature of the Grand Rounds, park and trail impacts, bus transportation restrictions on MPRB parkways, pedestrian and wildlife barriers associated with the transitway, floodway and floodplain impacts, and the potential removal of disease resistant elms. If the Alignment D1 is selected, the MPRB requests the environmental review of both the Golden Valley Road and Plymouth Avenue stations.

The majority of public comments opposing this alignment are related to environmental (e.g., wetlands, floodplains, wildlife, and ecosystems) and recreational impacts (e.g., safety and increased noise) to Theodore Wirth Park. Many comments expressed opposition to D1 indicating that it would disregard people in north Minneapolis who most need the service. Other reasons for opposition included: does not serve a high ridership, provides no service destinations (e.g., restaurants, shops,

hospital), impacts quality of life for nearby residents, bypasses North Memorial Medical Center, does not provide an opportunity for economic development, efficient transit is already available to downtown, influx of crime and/or “undesirable people,” decrease in property values, increase in taxes, noise and vibration impacts, increased traffic, the residents do not need it/will not use it, would encourage sprawl, oppose as a way for suburban commuters to avoid racial diversity, and there is no parking available on the D1 alignment (e.g., people would park on local streets).

Concerns: Correspondence from the City of Golden Valley sets forth specific concerns associated with Alignment D1. Golden Valley asks that, if study of the D1 Alignment continues, the following items be addressed: natural resources (e.g., recreational and environmental impacts), station location (Golden Valley Road and Plymouth Avenue), property impacts (e.g., property values, noise and vibration impacts, lighting impacts), and community resources (e.g., public services, utilities). Details are provided in correspondence from the City of Golden Valley dated February 21, 2012.

Scoping comments received from the City of Minneapolis Scoping also address specific concerns regarding Alignment D1. The City specifies that Alignment D1 largely bypasses transit-dependent communities in north Minneapolis and does not extend the transportation and economic development benefits provided by the transitway directly to these communities. Details related to this concern, along with the need for future arterial/regional transitway improvements, are provided in the City of Minneapolis Bottineau DEIS Scoping Comments approved by City Council on February 15, 2012.

Alignment D2 (West Broadway-Penn Avenue)

Support: The MPRB supports Alignment D2 because it believes that this alignment presents the greatest opportunities for urban revival, economic development, strong ridership, and transportation equity in north Minneapolis. Many public comments addressed the need for the transitway to be close to where people live. Comments providing specific reasons for preferring Alignment D2 included: serves more people (greater ridership) than D1, has more stations and better station access (including by foot) than D1, supports economic growth in the area, would better serve low-income community, better serves non-car owners, provides equity in infrastructure and access to employment/education/healthcare, and provides a better long-term transit strategy. One individual stated that “a growing and accessible north Minneapolis community where people want to live is essential for stabilizing surrounding communities.”

Oppose: The City of Crystal opposes the D2 alignment because it sacrifices travel times and higher overall ridership offered by the D1 alignment, requires two additional station stops and seven additional signalized intersections as compared to Alignment D1, has significant technical challenges associated with operating a transitway in a largely residential neighborhood and on arterial streets with relatively narrow existing right-of-way, duplicates existing bus service, and has substantial property, right-of-way, and community impacts. In addition, residents of north Minneapolis signed a “petition against the D2 LRT plan down the streets of Oliver and Penn.” The petition, signed by 118 residents, was submitted to the Bottineau Transitway PAC prior to the scoping process.

Additional reasons for opposition to Alignment D2 included: will destroy the neighborhood, negatively impact property values, remove too many houses (cost of right-of-way and relocation), damage the character of the neighborhood, exacerbate congestion, present potential safety concerns, and remove parking on city streets. One individual indicated that outsiders are bringing in the idea that the transitway is going to be really good for economic development. Another individual stated that Penn needs to be protected as a north/south thoroughfare.

Concerns: Comments received from the City of Minneapolis presented specific concerns regarding Alignment D2. The City specifies that the D2 Alignment has significant community impacts related to

removal of single-family homes on the west side of the street, the reduction of traffic lanes on West Broadway Avenue, and the removal of existing off-peak on-street parking. Details related to these concerns, along with the need for future arterial/regional transitway improvements, are provided in the City of Minneapolis Bottineau Draft EIS Scoping Comments.

Alignments D1 and D2:

Support: Several comments suggested providing transit service along *both* the D1 and D2 alignments, indicating that both alignments have benefits. Transit for Livable Communities also supports further study of the D1 and D2 alignments. One individual suggested that D1 could be BRT, facilitating transport to D2. Several comments expressed a desire for transit along the D2 alignment if it were possible without the loss of so many homes.

Alignment Options D2A, D2B, and D2C

Multiple comments stated support for D2A and D2B, or other parallel routes, indicating that these alignments are preferable because they would result in fewer property impacts. One individual stated that at the last North Side meeting, the option going down Oliver Avenue was the preferred choice of neighborhood residents because it would be less destructive to homes and businesses. Transit for Livable Communities indicated that the D2A, D2B, and D2C alignments should be given further consideration. In November 2011, the Bottineau Transitway Policy Advisory Committee decided to continue study of Alignment D2 Option C (all vehicle and LRT traffic on Penn Avenue).

Other Alignments

Several people indicated that they preferred the proposed alignment to use the existing BNSF railway line, but did not specify a preference for Alignment D1. One commenter indicated a preference for Alternative 1 or 5 and D2C. Another commenter noted a preference for Alternative 7. Alternatives 1¹, 5², and 7³ were among the universe of alternatives considered in the Alternatives Analysis Study. Finally, other comments suggested various combinations of buses and light rail to provide transit services. Several comments specified the use of feeder buses in conjunction with LRT. Specific suggestions for alternative alignments are provided under *Project/Alternative Suggestions* at the end of this summary.

Potential Project Impacts and Other Topics of Public Concern

The Scoping comment form asked for input regarding *project impacts or benefits that should be evaluated* and also asked for *other comments*. Responses to these questions, as well as to other comment form questions, identified topics of public concern and are summarized in [Table 6](#). The table also includes topics of concern provided in verbal and written comments from the public. Each topic listed in the table is discussed in the subsequent text. Specific concerns raised by the general public are provided under the heading [from public comments](#). Specific concerns raised by particular

¹ Alternative 1 – BRT/LRT, BNSF right-of-way – Olson Memorial Highway

² Alternative 5 – BRT, Bottineau Boulevard – West Broadway Avenue – Lyndale Avenue – 7th Street North

³ Alternative 7 – BRT/LRT, Bottineau Boulevard – West Broadway Avenue – Lowry Avenue – Emerson/Fremont – 7th Street North

groups are summarized under the heading [from organizations, groups, municipalities, and agencies](#), with additional detail provided in correspondence from the group or within city resolutions.

A list of project impacts or benefits that should be evaluated is provided at the end of this summary.

Table 6: Summary of Potential Project Impacts and Other Topics of Public Concern

Topics of Concern	Number
Social and Economic Impacts and Relocations	126
Noise and Vibration	55
Natural Resources	40
Parks	38
Traffic, Congestion, and Accessibility	25
Safety and Security	22
Station Locations	15
Trails	14
Parking	14
Project Cost	12
Feeder Buses	12
Transit Operations	8
Public Engagement Process	6
Visual Impacts	5
Crime	5
Data Assumptions	4
Emergency Services	3
Cultural Resources	3
Wagner's Drive-In	3
Health	3
Construction Impacts	2
ADA Accessibility	1

Social and Economic Impacts and Relocation:

From public comments: Many comments (70) indicated concern about decreases in property values and increases in taxes as a result of the proposed transitway. Other comments expressed concern about impacts to homes/businesses and stated the importance of minimizing impacts to properties and providing appropriate compensation. One comment noted that removal of housing along the west side of Penn Avenue would mean the loss of millions of dollars of NRP investment and would affect neighborhood/area stability and result in a dwindling tax base.

Comments expressed concerns regarding environmental impacts (e.g., noise, vibrations, light pollution, safety and security) and losses in property values resulting from the location of the transitway near their properties. Specifically, individuals asked if property owners are compensated and what agency is responsible for providing compensation. One individual requested that compensation be discussed directly with affected residents, as opposed to communication with

community organizations who do not necessarily act in the residents' best interest. One individual [Noble Avenue] noted that his property is located only a few feet from the existing railroad fence and asked what criteria are used for buying out homes that would be severely impacted. Several people were skeptical that property values would increase. Several comments addressed the importance of working with landlords, rather than just renters, during relocations and noted the need to ensure that renters receive assistance.

Numerous comments (30) related to social impacts expressed concerns about the importance of providing affordable, accessible, and equitable transportation to low-income and minority residents so that they can have access to financial opportunities (jobs), educational opportunities, health services, and healthy food alternatives. Comments emphasized the importance of avoiding disparities in transportation, in some cases indicated that this should be a primary consideration in the Scoping alternatives. Eight comments reflected a general need to run the transitway in corridors where the greatest number of residents and businesses can be served.

A total of 18 comments noted the importance of the transitway in spurring economic development, business investment, and revitalization in north Minneapolis and Brooklyn Park.

One verbal statement expressed concern about impacts to community facilities, specifically Estes Funeral Chapel, noting that the chapel has provided services to the community for 54 years. Several comments addressed impacts to North Point Health and Wellness Center stating that African American people and lower income people go there for health care.

From organizations, groups, municipalities, and agencies: Environmental justice concerns were clearly evident in correspondence from the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability, the Harrison Neighborhood Association, and ISAIAH (a coalition of churches advocating for racial and economic justice). Specific concerns are detailed in correspondence received from these organizations. In addition, the City of Minneapolis recommends further analysis of the distribution of the project's benefits relative to the transit-dependent, minority, and low-income communities in the D1 Alignment corridor. Further discussion is provided in the City of Minneapolis Bottineau Draft EIS Scoping Comments.

The West Broadway Business & Area Coalition stressed the importance of applying the best management practices learned from Blue Line (Hiawatha), Central, and Southwest Transit Lines to any line that comes through north Minneapolis. The Coalition wants small businesses to survive and thrive through construction, and wants rail stops be designed for the best accessibility to existing businesses.

Noise and Vibration

From public comments: Numerous comments (55) addressed concerns about noise and vibration impacts (during construction and during operation) and the need to mitigate them. Comments expressed concerns about noise generated by the train whistle and the arm of the crossing guard, vibration damage to foundations, health impacts, impacts to children and pets, and noise affecting quality of life (e.g., loss of peacefulness, inability to sleep). In addition, specific inquiries about sound walls along alleys or Queen and Russell (D2) or for Highway 55 to Plymouth Avenue (D1) were made. One individual noted that "there is very little information on the specifics about what else might be going in (sound barriers or other sound or motion issues)." Questions related to noise and vibration included: Will soundproofing be provided for homes? Will the project include sound barriers/earth berms? What kind of vibration impacts will there be? How do BRT and LRT compare in terms of noise and disruption? What is the impact?

One comment questioned the noise and vibration assessment, specifically the noise impact for D1 (Moderately High) and D2 (Moderate). The comment indicated that it was extremely difficult to believe that LRT along a relatively straight, long-established, and in use railroad track would have a greater

noise impact than LRT down city streets where no rail transit currently exists and that would require at least two sharp turns and many crossing signals. The commenter asked how overall noise/vibration impact scores were calculated. The commenter requested an explanation of how the seemingly arbitrary vibration impacts for D2 LRT and D3 LRT were determined.

Natural Resources

From public comments: A total of 40 comments expressed concerns about natural resources, many of which were associated with Alignment D1. Comments expressed concerns about negative impacts to resources (e.g., wetlands, floodplains, vegetation, wildlife and habitat, ecosystems, etc.). Many comments specifically noted concerns about resource impacts in Theodore Wirth Park, Mary Hills Nature Area, and Sochacki Park. Several comments mentioned concerns about light pollution and pollution in general. One individual noted the demolition and disposal of homes along Penn Avenue as an environmental impact. Another individual asked if any necessary landscaping could be done with native plants. One individual cautioned that the proposed D1 Alignment poses a fire risk because of all the fallen trees in the area between the tracks and private properties between Plymouth Avenue and Highway 55. Another person asked if the “availability of LRT lessened air and soil pollution in Twin Cities neighborhoods where it has been put into service.”

From organizations, groups, municipalities, and agencies: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) identified the potential for wetland impacts along Theodore Wirth Park (D1) and noted that moving the Golden Valley Station from Golden Valley Road to Plymouth Avenue also has the potential for wetland impacts. The USFWS also indicated that although there are no known eagle nests within the action area, existing data may not be current. The USFWS advises that if Alignment D1 advances for further study in the Draft EIS, eagle nest surveys should be incorporated in the EIS for any forested areas planned for development. The surveys should be performed a few years prior to construction. If eagle nests are identified, construction timetables should be designed to do much of the work outside the eagle nesting season or outside a 660 foot buffer from the nest.

Shingle Creek Watershed Management Commission (Commission) is currently undergoing rule revisions. Changes that may affect the Bottineau Transitway project are outlined in correspondence from the Commission.

The Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission (BCWMC) noted that portions of two of the proposed alignments are located in the jurisdiction of the BCWMC; nearly all of Alignment D1 and a portion of Alignment D2 near the Robbinsdale/Crystal border. Correspondence from the BCWMC provided detailed comments regarding floodplain issues, runoff and rate control, water quality, maintenance, erosion control, and wetland management.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) offered several comments regarding regulatory requirements. Specific concerns related to permitting, impaired waters, and contamination are addressed in correspondence from the MPCA.

Parks

From public comments: A total of 38 comments addressed concerns related to recreational (e.g., safety and disruption of peacefulness/tranquility) and environmental (e.g., wildlife, wetlands, vegetation, etc.) impacts to parkland. Theodore Wirth Park, Mary Hills Nature Area, and Sochacki Park were specifically mentioned. In addition to concerns about habitat loss and danger to wildlife, people were concerned that they would no longer be able to observe wildlife near their home and/or neighborhood. One individual noted that a light rail line would cut off access for residents living on the east side of Sochacki Park and Mary Hills Nature Area. Two people indicated that Alignment D1 would not interfere with their enjoyment of the Theodore Wirth Park. One comment expressed concerns about Triangle Park and Lee Park, given their proximity to the existing railroad tracks and questioned whether or not they would still be usable.

Traffic, Congestion, and Accessibility

From public comments: Many comments (25) identified concerns regarding increases in congestion and traffic and noted that Penn Avenue is too congested already. Another comment expressed concern about the access and the ability to cross Penn Avenue with the transitway running down the center. One commenter indicated that impacts would occur on the busy and speedy Golden Valley Road, which is not in great shape. Another commenter identified disruptions to commuting patterns if Golden Valley Road was closed during construction. Several comments expressed a desire to not bring more buses in the area to bring people in to get on the train.

Safety and Security

From public comments: Numerous comments (22) addressed safety for neighborhood children, trail users, pedestrians crossing the tracks, and commuters using the transitway. Transit for Livable Communities indicated that safe and convenient access to any future stations for pedestrians and bicyclists must be addressed. One comment expressed concern regarding the safety of riders on LRT versus BRT given that a driver is not present in the cars with the passengers. Several comments expressed concerns about the safety issues related to running a transitway through a residential area.

From organizations, groups, municipalities, and agencies: The City of Minneapolis recommends that the Draft EIS evaluate the impacts of the transitway and associated roadway design on pedestrian safety along Highway 55 and identify safe and convenient pedestrian infrastructure improvements. This concern is discussed further in the City of Minneapolis Bottineau DEIS Scoping Comments.

Station Locations

From public comments: A total of 15 comments addressed station locations. Comments addressed dissatisfaction with some station locations and also suggested locations for additional stations/stops. One individual commented that no one is going to walk 15-20 minutes or more to get to a station. Another person indicated that the North Memorial Medical Center station is too far from the hospital and another noted that the Golden Valley stop and the Plymouth stop (D1) are inaccessible for many people. Several comments noted that the stops on D2 are too far apart and too far for an elderly person to walk, especially in the winter. One comment indicated that the inclusion of park-and-ride may not be needed in neighborhoods with high numbers of zero-car households. Another comment noted that it is "stupid to put a big stop right before a neighborhood that terrifies most people from the suburbs."

Suggested station locations included: a stop between Robbinsdale and Bass Lake Road, between 42nd and Plymouth, at Lowry and Olson Memorial, at 36th, and at the former Robbinsdale Farm and Garden. One comment suggested moving the proposed Golden Valley Road station to Plymouth Avenue. Another individual indicated that if the Maple Grove terminal is chosen, it must serve Arbor Lakes and added that the current stations are too far from the mall. One commenter noted that there is no need for rail stops at Plymouth Avenue and Golden Valley Road and added that buses already exist and are working well. Another comment noted that Golden Valley Road option has more space and visibility and is less disruptive to private residences.

From organizations, groups, municipalities, and agencies: The City of Crystal commented that the lack of parking facilities suggests that the Crystal station will serve walk-up riders only, compromising pedestrian safety and posing traffic/pedestrian conflicts as riders are dropped off and picked up on adjacent roadways. City of Crystal comments also emphasized that the safety of pedestrians and non-motorized traffic near stations must be protected. In addition, the siting of the Crystal station at a location between Bass Lake Road and Wilshire Boulevard is dependent on considerations such as adjacent opportunities for development, visual prominence, traffic delays at nearby crossings, and noise impacts on adjacent residential properties.

The City of Minneapolis recommends that the Draft EIS include an evaluation of the benefits and costs of including stations at both Golden Valley Road and Plymouth Avenue along Alignment D1. The City also recommends that the Draft EIS evaluate alternative Target Field station location options and/or pedestrian access improvements for the BRT alternative that provide more convenient access to Target Field and the Interchange than the proposed Border Avenue station. These concerns are discussed further in the City of Minneapolis Draft EIS Scoping Comments.

Trails

From public comments: A total of 14 comments addressed potential trail impacts, specifically mentioning concerns about safety for trail users in Theodore Wirth Park, Mary Hills Nature Area, and Sochacki Park. One individual noted a possible loss of access to Wirth Lake as a result of the transitway. Another individual noted that, because of the lack of sidewalks in portions of Golden Valley, these trails are “the only place for kids to ride their bikes or for pet-owners to walk their dogs.” Others commented on the need to provide trail connectivity with the transitway.

One individual suggested a walk/bike bridge over Hwy 81 so people from the north side would have a safe path to the station. One individual asked how bike trails and the Luce Line proposed links (including a north-south route through Golden Valley and a route down Golden Valley Road to Theodore Wirth Park) would fit into this plan. Another person asked if there could be a tie in to Greenway-type bike trails along the rail line indicating that a trail would be more likely to be used by residents than BRT or LRT.

Parking

From public comments: A total of 14 comments addressed parking concerns. Comments addressed the need for more parking options near stations, including bicycle parking. One comment noted that there needs to be an adequate park-and-ride near Penn Avenue and Olson Memorial Highway to provide access for northsiders. Comments also expressed concern that the lack of parking at stations would result in transit users parking on residential streets and resulting in the loss of street parking.

Project Cost

From public comments: A dozen comments addressed concerns about the cost of the project, cost to taxpayers, misappropriation of “scarce public funds,” transitway subsidies, and the likelihood that the transitway will not be able to support itself solely with fares. One individual asked that the project be respectful of tax dollars, noting that there is no need to incur the extra initial cost and the additional operating expenses of LRT.

Feeder Buses

From public comments: A dozen comments stressed the importance of maintaining a system of “feeder buses” to provide access to transit stations.

Transit Operations

From public comments: Eight comments and suggestions were made regarding transit operations. Specific comments included: Trains should be three cars long and run every 7-10 minutes, commuters should pay *before* entering the train platforms, trains should be given green lights at intersections, the ride needs to be more pleasant than on a Metro Transit bus, and service should be available during the evening and on weekends.

Several comments noted a need to study how the Bottineau transitway interconnects with other non-car transportation. One comment noted that the BRT alternative does not appear to provide direct service to neighborhoods in north Minneapolis. Regarding existing transit operations, one individual expressed concern that the 760 bus would be eliminated.

Public Engagement Process

From public comments: Six comments addressed the public engagement process, indicating that not enough has been done to involve the community members. One comment indicated that a notice in the newspaper is not sufficient, especially in a neighborhood that does not have a high literacy rate. The commenter suggested announcements on KMOJ Radio. Another individual indicated that little advanced notice was given and the hours for review quite limited. One individual asked if a public meeting had been considered for the Maple Grove community and why public comments are only being received through February 17. One individual indicated that the neighborhood was not being heard regarding their preference for the Oliver Avenue option. Several individuals noted that many of the elderly do not have computers/internet and do not know much about the proposed alternatives. Other individuals commented that it appears their input does not matter.

Visual Impacts

From public comments: Five comments expressed concern with the aesthetic impacts as a result of the transitway. Comments referred to the transitway infrastructure as “ugly” and called it “visual pollution.” Concerns related to visual impacts included loss of aesthetics associated with park properties. Comments also noted light pollution as a visual impact.

Crime

From public comments: Five comments mentioned concerns about increases in crime to their neighborhoods as a result of the transitway. One individual asked if “the availability of LRT lessened theft, homicide, and other crime in Twin Cities neighborhoods where it has been put into service.” Another comment indicated that LRT will make it easier for “thugs” to get to the Mall of America.

Data Assumptions

From public comments: Four comments challenged the accuracy of statistics for population and employment growth that were provided in the Scoping Booklet and presented at the Scoping Open Houses. Comments noted that the economic downturn may have an effect on the accuracy of the data provided. The data accuracy for senior population growth and their use of public transit as a segment of the population who depend on transit was also questioned.

One comment challenged the data used for traffic congestion. The comment noted that the traffic data forecast growth between years 2005 and 2030, which were generated during a period of optimistic economic outlooks. In addition, the comment asked for the source of the forecast, the assumptions on which it was based, and whether these assumptions are still reasonable.

Emergency Services

From public comments: Three comments addressed impacts to emergency services. One comment stated that “all the ambulances go through our street [3300 block of France Avenue North] and with the transit they are going to have to reroute all of them and it will take longer.” Another comment addressed concerns about emergency access to North Memorial Medical Center, noting that due to existing infrastructure, direct routes to the hospital are already limited. The comment indicated that access to emergency services needs to be addressed and suggested that legal advice be sought on the issue of longer emergency transport times and survival rates, adding that the risk and cost of any potential litigation be included in the assessment of Alignment D2 costs in the Draft EIS.

Cultural Resources

From public comments: Three comments mentioned historic or archaeological resources. One comment noted that the Terrace Theater is a historic building and should not be tampered with as part of the plan. One comment indicated that there is an “Indian burial ground” claim pending in the area of the BNSF track (Alignment D1).

Wagner's Drive In

From public comments: Three individuals who attended the open house in Brooklyn Park noted the importance of avoiding impacts to *Wagner's Drive-In*. This family-owned drive-in restaurant is located on West Broadway Avenue.

Health

From public comments: Three comments mentioned general health concerns as related to the transitway.

Construction Impacts

From public comments: One comment specifically noted that construction would disrupt access to Highway 100 from Golden Valley Road for the house north of the Church of St. Margaret Mary. Another comment expressed concern that transitway construction will create traffic problems and generate noise.

ADA Accessibility

From public comments: One individual expressed concern for ADA accessibility, specifically mentioning the need to ensure access to people at the Courage Center.

From organizations, groups, municipalities, and agencies: The Metropolitan Council's Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee (TAAC) requested that if the BRT alternative advances, to carefully consider whether wheelchairs need to be secured on a BRT vehicle, and if so, how to secure them effectively and efficiently to minimize transit travel time. The TAAC requested that if commuter bus service is assumed in the baseline alternative, providing paratransit service that complements the commuter bus service so this kind of connecting transit service is available to people of all ages and abilities should be considered. If the Bottineau project proceeds into preliminary engineering, the TAAC requests that a TAAC member be named to one of the project advisory committees to provide advice on accessibility for people with disabilities. The TAAC also requests a meeting with Hennepin County Public Works ADA Title II specialist, if one exists and the Bottineau project moves forward into preliminary engineering.

Alternative and Station Location Suggestions

Many individuals provided suggestions regarding alternative routes and station locations. These suggestions are listed below:

From public comments:

- Consider constructing on Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81)
- Keep in mind expanding west along 610 from Target North Campus to area of Home Depot and new hospital, with possible spur from Maple Grove transit center along Hemlock/Zachary to 610
- Reconsider a 7th Street/Freemont – Lowry Avenue alternative
- Consider Hubbard station to D1 straight across to Plymouth Avenue then along D1 to Penn or across Golden Valley Road to Broadway/Penn D2
- Consider incremental approach such a building only to Crystal
- Project should end at 63rd; development drops off north of there
- A good alternative would be West Broadway to Washington Avenue and then into The Interchange
- Suggests that LRT down 81 to 41st or 42nd would be much more beneficial
- Suggests BRT down County Road 81 makes the most financial sense

- Suggest alternative with LRT along Bottineau transitway on rail and intersect with Hwy 100, follow to Hwy 55 with transit stations along Hwy 55
- Suggest a hub at 41st for bus transit; there is space available for LRT coming in from the north side
- D1 should be considered for a greenway with a non-motorized trail, allowing access to other trails/downtown (similar to the Kenilworth Trail, Cedar Lake Trail, and Midtown Greenway)
- Integrate a safe and useful non-motorized corridor
- Sometime in the future, extend the transitway to Rogers and possibly Albertville
- Somehow tie the line in with the Northstar Commuter Rail in Big Lake
- Stop at Hubbard Market Place and encourage supportive shuttles to the main stop
- Build a park-and-ride ramp at the NE corner of 85th and Broadway to increase ridership

From organizations, groups, municipalities, and agencies:

- Transit for Livable Communities correspondence provides multiple comments regarding alternatives proposed for study.

Project Suggestions

Many individuals provided suggestions regarding various aspects of the transitway project. These suggestions are listed below:

From public comments:

- D2 Option – the bridge that crosses Theodore Wirth Parkway has been repaired for a 20-year commitment; suggest switching the parkway so it goes over 81 instead of under it
- D2 Option – reinitiate the old traffic circle
- Could some of the roads around D2 be redone to avoid forcing people to move?
- D1 and D2 have undesirable sharp bends and speed-limiting wiggles that should be eliminated
- The houses on Penn Avenue that are worth saving can be moved to vacant lots that the city owns – the houses can be rehabbed and sold as affordable homes
- Demolish substandard/vacant housing on Penn Avenue
- Study should propose feeder bus routes for public evaluation
- Put bus on Lake Drive again – a bus will be needed to connect that part of Robbinsdale to the Bottineau transitway
- Buy a fleet of small electric buses and vans to service suburbs on major routes/side streets
- Target should finance services to their facility
- Keep motorcycles in mind during design
- Hire local workers
- Rock ballast = Big mistake in our area!
- Consider double-decker buses to maximize ridership per square foot of road space used

Project Impacts or Benefits that Should be Evaluated

The comment forms asked for input regarding project impacts or benefits that should be evaluated. A list of impacts and benefits to be evaluated is provided below:

From public comments:

- Study all D2 options (D2-A, D2-B, D2-C, D2-D, and D2-W)

- Ridership/number of jobs and residences served
- Environmental justice
- Access to jobs/employment, education, shopping, entertainment
- Transit equity
- Mobility for seniors/poor people/limited mobility
- Impacts to minority business owners
- Project cost/operating costs
- Subsidy per ridership
- Cost savings of BRT/LRT compared to existing roadway transportation
- Comparison of BRT/LRT costs and benefits
- Differences in travel for various options such as D1 vs. D2
- Consider acceptance of buses and LRT based on demographics
- Balance between neighborhood impacts and benefits of transitway
- Cost/benefit and positive economic benefits of the D2 alternative
- Economic development potential in the alternative selection
- Economic impact to surrounding residential and commercial communities
- Mitigation/compensation to residences and businesses
- Property impacts/property values (How can this be evaluated? What has the result been for other neighborhoods?)
- Impacts to emergency services
- Health impact on communities
- Commuter safety at stops, stations, and while on board
- Environmental impacts (CO₂, wildlife and habitat, wetlands, ecosystems)
- Historical impacts
- Park impacts
- Traffic congestion
- Repositioning of bike and walking path in Theodore Wirth Park
- Noise and vibration impacts and mitigation
- Interference with sensitive equipment and sensors along the route
- Regional trail access should be included as part of the criteria
- Trail impacts (serenity, quiet, peacefulness)
- Consider regional trail access in conjunction with transitway
- Connectivity to bike, pedestrian, and BRT alternatives
- Design and appearance of area adjacent to the transitway (i.e., plantings, trees, etc.)
- Design and appearance of stations
- Vehicular traffic (intersection crossings, congestion, traffic flows on alternative roads)
- Consider the number of buses that could be cut if the LRT runs down Penn/Broadway
- Construction impacts
- Parking (more options, safety on local streets)
- Increase in crime
- Compare automobile (No Build Alternative) travel to Transitway
- Analysis of bus vs. light rail
- Do a better job at highlighting the economic benefits of LRT for north Minneapolis at future presentations
- Systematic investigation as to where to locate transit station – Golden Valley Road vs. Plymouth – based on transit need – maybe consider both as transit stops
- Can any of these effects be mollified? Possible additions to design that would mitigate effects of pollutants associated with increased traffic and those associated with light rail
- Clarification of additional traffic needs per diversion from freeway system – including 18 wheelers and large trucks

- Impact of EMFs [electromagnetic fields] given the close proximity of the proposed Plymouth station to overhead power lines
- Safety/security risks associated with the Plymouth station, a known “heavy crime” area

From organizations, groups, municipalities, and agencies:

- The City of Robbinsdale Resolution No. 7143 provides a detailed list of items to be studied in detail for the C-D1 and D2 alternatives
- The City of Crystal Resolution 2012-14 provides a detailed list of project impacts or benefits to be evaluated
- The City of Minneapolis Bottineau DEIS Scoping Comments provides a detailed list of recommendations for further study
- Transit for Livable Communities correspondence lists detailed impacts and benefits to be evaluated
- Scoping input from the Bottineau Transitway CAC provides a detailed list of challenges, impacts, and benefits to be evaluated

Specific Questions

In addition to responding to the Scoping Comment Form, people asked the following questions about the transitway:

From public comments:

- Would the proposed track for D1 be on the east side or the west side of the BNSF track?
- Would light rail trains share tracks with BNSF freight trains or run on streets?
- Please describe the fence – how high? Chain link?
- Has anyone done a study of how train will affect rush hour traffic in areas already congested? (Lyndale-Bryant, Emerson, Humboldt, Penn?)
- How disruptive will the 55th LRT segment be to traffic and what will it do to the 55/94 intersection?
- Please show the details of turn at Penn and Olson Highway
- What would “Option A” do to transportation options for the new library [Brooklyn Park]?
- How close does any option come to Brookdale?
- Could the Bottineau Corridor be extended farther northwest if demand warrants?
- Why not run on West Broadway?
- Why not run on France Avenue north of 36th Avenue?
- Why not run along 694/94 to downtown Minneapolis?
- Why has the route closer to the old shopping center on 34th Street not given more consideration?
- Wouldn't the property in the area of Inglewood Avenue North and Thomas Avenue North, right off of Glenwood Avenue, be a more viable location for a transit or railway stop?
- What does the benefit of the LRT look like in context of a potential Minneapolis streetcar?
- The flyer indicates that there are “property impacts” between Indiana and France. Does that mean that houses are torn down?
- How far off is the construction of this project, if all goes according to plan?
- Has revenue from fares been enough for the upkeep of the Blue Line (Hiawatha) LRT?
- Information presented at the open house stated that the population in the project area is expected to increase significantly in the coming years. What kind of plan is on the table for people to come here?

- What about what we were told last year during the discussions of improvements to France Avenue south of Oakdale, the widening and realignment of the intersection? Did all of this have to do with the rail line? And was a choice already made to run down Oakdale Avenue?
- Is there going to be a barrier, once they get rid of the houses on Penn, that is going to go all the way or are there going to be breaks in the barrier? How is that going to work?
- Have they decided to take one side of the street, which is the west side, and leave the east side? Or are they going to take both sides? [in reference to Penn Avenue]
- Have people who currently live along the proposed route been contacted to see if the transitway would be valuable for daily commuting?
- Are penalties built into the agreement with contractors if they go over budget? How about incentives for keeping costs down, completing on time, etc.?
- Would 40th Avenue at Major be closed?
- How many of the 130+ properties impacted by D2C are actually owner occupied and how many are rentals and/or vacant?
- What is the decision making process to determine if the project will be approved altogether and which route?
- Was this project option already approved by the Park and Recreation Board?
- I live on the corner of France and Oakdale (38XX Oakdale Ave.) in the condos on that corner. Do you have any information about how this will affect me and my property?
- How is moving a freight rail and laying new rail in a wetland be cheaper than laying rail on a concrete foundation in a developed area? [The comment expressed interest having access to data that indicate that D1 is cheaper to build than D2.]
- Since the D1 option has been in consideration since 1985, why has there not been an assessment of the environmental impact to date? (The commenter noted that D1 was tabled during the early days of consideration when it became public that the train running on the existing tracks carried hazardous waste, a danger to those riding the light rail)
- Will existing power lines be moved to accommodate space for additional rail? If so, where will these power lines be moved and what impact will there be to nearby residents?