

Appendix C: Interagency Meeting Summary, Cooperating & Participating Agency Invite Letters (Examples), and Coordination Plan

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- Interagency Summary Letter
- Cooperating Agency Invite Letter (Example Letter)
- Participating Agency Invite Letter
 - Federal (Example Letter)
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- Coordination Plan, February 2012

Interagency Meeting Invitation

January 6, 2012

RE: Bottineau Transitway Interagency Scoping Meeting Invitation

Dear Agency Representative,

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority (HCRRA), and Metropolitan Council have initiated the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for the Bottineau Transitway project. The Bottineau Transitway is a proposed project that will provide for transit improvements in the highly traveled northwest area of the Twin Cities. The Bottineau Transitway is located in Hennepin County, Minnesota, extending approximately 13 miles from downtown Minneapolis to the northwest through north Minneapolis, and the suburbs of Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, New Hope, Brooklyn Park, Maple Grove, and Osseo.

The purpose of the project is to provide transit service which will satisfy the long-term regional mobility and accessibility needs for businesses and the traveling public.

Residents and businesses in the Bottineau Transitway project area need access to the region's economy. Access to jobs in Minneapolis, St. Paul, the University of Minnesota, and growing suburbs is crucial. Traffic congestion is expected to intensify in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area through 2030 and beyond. Current transit service in the Bottineau Transitway project area offers a limited number of reliable, efficient alternatives to personal vehicles. Without major transit investments, it will be difficult to effectively meet the transportation needs of people and businesses in the corridor, manage highway traffic congestion in the project area, and achieve the region's goal of doubling transit ridership by 2030.

A scoping booklet has been developed for this project and is available for review on the project website: www.bottineautransitway.org.

An Interagency Scoping meeting has been scheduled for January 19, 2012 from 9:00 – 11:00 am at the office of Kimley-Horn and Associates, 2550 University Avenue West, St. Paul. You and/or your delegate(s) are invited to represent your agency at this meeting. At the meeting, the project team will review:

- Project History
- Overview of Bottineau Transitway Project
- Purpose and Need for the Project
- Alternatives Currently Under Consideration for Further Study
- Overall Project Schedule
- General Discussion Regarding Potential Impact Areas
- Coordination Plan and Agency Involvement

Please contact me regarding questions about the project

Sincerely,



Brent Rusco
Bottineau Transitway Project Manager
Phone: 612.543.0579
E-mail: brent.rusco@co.hennepin.mn.us

cc: Lois Kimmelman, FTA



Regional Railroad Authority
Hennepin County

Peter McLaughlin Gail Dorfman Mark Stenglein Jan Callison Mike Opat Randy Johnson Jeff Johnson
Chair

Interagency Meeting Summary

INTERAGENCY MEETING SUMMARY

Thursday January 19, 2012
Kimley-Horn and Associates Office
2550 University Avenue West, Suite 238N
9:00 -11:00 am

Welcome and Introductions

Interagency meeting participants introduced themselves (both those at the meeting and on the phone).

Participants at the meeting included:

Lois Kimmelman, Federal Transit Administration (via phone)	Jennifer Ringold, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
Norman West, Environmental Protection Agency (via phone)	Joe Hogeboom, City of Golden Valley
Pat Bursaw, Minnesota Department of Transportation	Eric Eckman, City of Golden Valley
Carl Jensen, Minnesota Department of Transportation	Mark Ray, City of Golden Valley
Kathryn O'Brien, Metro Transit	Jim Voll, City of Minneapolis
Michael Mechtenberg, Metro Transit	Eric Weiss, City of New Hope
Mary Karlsson, Metropolitan Council	Marcia Glick, City of Robbinsdale
Ann Rexine, Three Rivers Park District	Beth Bartz, SRF Consulting, Inc.
Brent Rusco, Hennepin County	Lisa Rasmussen, Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.
Pete Lemke, Hennepin County	Christina Walsh, Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.
	Jeanne Witzig, Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.

Purpose of Meeting

The purpose of the meeting was to review the information developed during the scoping process and to listen to input from the agencies regarding the project's purpose and need, alternatives proposed for further study in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) and issues to be evaluated. The general format of the meeting was reviewed.

To provide an overview of the project, a video presentation prepared for the upcoming Scoping meetings was reviewed. This was followed by general conversation regarding the project purpose and need and round robin discussion regarding agency issues and concerns relative to the proposed project.

Project Overview and Scoping Video Presentation

A project overview was given to meeting attendees and the Scoping Booklet was distributed. In conjunction with the project video, the following points were highlighted:

- The Bottineau Transitway environmental process/document is following both Federal (National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA) and state (Minnesota Environmental Policy Act, or MEPA) requirements.
- The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is the lead federal agency. The Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA), in cooperation with the Metropolitan Council are the local project sponsors. The HCRRA is serving as the Responsible Governmental Unit (RGU) under the state process for the Draft EIS.
- The Scoping Booklet is part of the public outreach/agency coordination component of the NEPA process. It also serves as Scoping Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) under the State alternative review process.
- The referenced board and corresponding Scoping Booklet figure entitled “Build Alternatives Proposed for Further Study” depict the conclusions reached during the alternatives analysis (AA) study. The final AA Study report is on the Bottineau Transitway website (www.bottineautransitway.org).
- Clarification was provided regarding the following items:
 - Proposed D1 Alignment
 - The plan is to share the 100’ BNSF ROW with freight in the western 50 ft of the ROW and the transitway on the eastern 50 ft of the ROW.
 - Hennepin County is actively coordinating with BNSF and a geotechnical analysis of the soils within the D1 alignment is underway
 - Scoping Booklet- Figure 3: Build Alternatives Proposed for Study in the Draft EIS
 - LRT accommodates all four (4) alignment combinations (A-C-D1, A-C-D2, B-C-D1 and B-C-D2)
 - The most promising BRT alternative would follow the B-C-D1 alignment
 - The Northside Transportation Network (NTN)
 - The NTN is a grass roots group that formed during the alternatives analysis
 - The NTN has conducted their own public outreach
 - The NTN has representation on the PAC through the Urban League and provided input regarding the D2 options considered in fall 2011.
 - The NTN is currently revisiting the focus of the organization and may focus future efforts on ensuring the provision of connecting bus service for Minneapolis northside neighborhood residents

Round-Robin Discussion: Agency Issues and Concerns

Project Purpose and Need

Agency representatives raised the following issues during the discussion:

- Framing the Purpose and Need arguments from forecasted growth statistics
 - The project needs to make sure that there is a division between the entire state growth statistics and the population moving to the metro area.
- Development Opportunities in the Corridor

- The growth “cone” extends from 71st Avenue station with the potential for population growth
- Growth in Brooklyn Park goes up and beyond 85th Avenue
- Large areas of land available for development are located north of Osseo and west of US-169
- Alignment A and B
 - There is a gap of development along proposed Alignment A due to current mining activities
 - North of 93rd Avenue there’s land for new development, The Target North Campus is located in this area along Alignment B
 - Question about the feasibility of construction for both the A and B alignments - Alternatives analysis results show this scenario is not feasible in the foreseeable future due to higher project costs and little change to user benefits
- Robbinsdale
 - Potential for re-development
 - Increased enrollment in the Robbinsdale school district for the first time in years – increased amount of young families moving into the area
 - Pedestrian and bike modes in Robbinsdale allow for easy access to the stations
 - Focus on leveraging the transitway corridors to support the region’s growth
- Golden Valley
 - Alignment D1 runs on railroad property through Theodore Wirth Park, so there is a limited potential for growth
 - Courage Center located along the proposed D1 alignment
 - The Courage Center is a physical therapy and rehabilitation center serving in- and outpatients
 - The Center hosts an annual event that rents buses to transport people between Golden Valley and Target Field. The proposed Bottineau Transitway could be utilized for this event.
- Regional Perspective
 - Transportation benefits extend beyond the Bottineau corridor
 - Important that there is public awareness regarding how the transitway connects to the regional transit system (Hiawatha, Central, Northstar, future Southwest, etc.)
 - New color branding being applied to all LRT and Highway BRT transitway corridors will help clarify regional transit service characteristics.
- Crystal Lake Regional Trail Master Plan
 - 175,000 visits per year to Regional Trail System
 - 11 miles; connects Elm Creek to Minneapolis Park and Recreation system
 - There are other travel alternatives that connect to the Bottineau Transitway (bicycling, etc)
 - Robbinsdale segment of the Crystal Lake Regional Trail is scheduled to be completed in 2014
 - Brooklyn Park segment of the trail is currently unfunded
 - Hubbard Marketplace in Robbinsdale (Robbinsdale Segment C Station Location)
 - Currently provides good east-west bus connections and is proximate to the trail system
 - Bottineau Transitway would provide access to the Three Rivers Trail system

Alternatives/Alignments

Agency representatives raised the following issues:

- Anticipated public input about station locations proposed along the D1 alignment:
 - Golden Valley Road or Plymouth Avenue Station
 - City of Minneapolis and Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) may have differing views
 - Both entities suggested that the project continue analysis of both station options
 - Not likely that stations will be built at both Golden Valley Road and Plymouth Avenue due to higher project costs, longer travel times, and low ridership projections at these station locations
 - Station land use studies are currently at a local level
- Clarify build alternatives
 - BRT is proposed for study on the B-C-D1 alignment
 - Attendees identified that this needs to be emphasized for public understanding
 - Important to clearly outline how decisions on alternatives have been made for the project
- Noise and Vibration Concerns
 - BRT is perceived to have fewer issues
 - A screening level analysis has been completed for Alignments D1 and D2
 - After scoping, a more detailed study of Noise & Vibration will occur
 - Increased frequency of trains in Theodore Wirth Park
 - The difference between current freight and potential LRT noise should be identified and provided to the public.
 - Confirm existing freight rail track conditions in corridor (e.g. continuously welded rail).
 - Updated welded rail technology reduces noise and vibration impacts
- County Road Issues
 - Complete Streets and Active Living
 - Prefer Penn options that accomplish compatibility and promotes complete transit for bikes, pedestrians and goods and services
- Maintenance Storage Facilities
 - Dedicated operations and maintenance facilities—Hiawatha cannot accommodate
 - Alternative analysis study defines locations – facility locations continue to be under review and will be addressed in the Draft EIS

Analysis methodologies

Agency representatives raised the following issues:

- FTA focused on streamlining and creating a reader-friendly document, while considering all issues that warrant discussion.
- Crime
 - Does LRT import crime?
- Noise and Vibration
 - Concerned that area residents are used to quiet parks and the occasional freight train
 - Important to clearly understand and communicate existing freight operations on BNSF

- Environmental Justice
 - Emphasize that Environmental Justice populations (low income and minority) are significant all along corridor
- D1 alignment potentially creates a perceived barrier within Theodore Wirth Park
- Theodore Wirth Park
 - Part of Grand Rounds System
 - Important to clearly understand proposed station locations relative to park property. Areas of concern include:
 - Land replacement requirements
 - Specific covenants on land
 - Continuous driving experience on parkways
 - Reduce conflict for parking/users
- Xcel Energy transmission lines along the corridor
 - Prefer minimal impact
 - City of Golden Valley advised that awareness of relocation and burial requirements is needed. Project team will get city code language on this issue. While the City may have requirements regarding burial of electric utilities, burial, if technically feasible, may be considered a local betterment to be funded by the City because it is not required for transitway operation.
- Endangered Species Issues
 - Three Rivers Master Planning document has inventory of all Threatened and Endangered Species
 - Regional Crystal Lake Plan addresses Threatened and Endangered Species in a 2 mile radius from trails
- Important to provide a strong feeder bus network
- Station Security
 - Who responds to incidents?
 - City
 - Park
 - Metro Transit

Level of participation

Agency representatives raised the following issues:

- Email list
 - Roughly 600 contacts on current list
 - Main outreach method
 - May be added to list through website
- Golden Valley and Robbinsdale sent out mailings
 - Encourage public participation
 - Emphasize regional scope (not limited to specific public meeting)
 - Important to plan for participants at upcoming meetings that are not familiar with history of project
 - MPRB has been receiving feedback regarding concerns with potential impacts to Theodore Wirth Park

- Park Concerns
 - What are the impacts of the railroad ROW—the public perception of the park?
 - The park is on both sides and the stations need land
 - Floodplain and wetland mitigation within Park
 - Potential for more visual impact if mitigation measures occur within parkland/corridor
 - Tree removal due to tornadoes has caused increased sensitivity

Next Steps

- February 17th, 2012 - Scoping Comment Period Ends
- April 2012
 - ARCC, CAC and PAC meetings to discuss technical info and what was heard in the scoping process
- End of April 2012 / Early May 2012
 - Action by HCCRA on alternatives and issues to be studied in the Draft EIS (in cooperation with FTA and the Metropolitan Council)
 - Scoping Decision Document completed
 - Annotated Outline
 - Outlines alternatives and issues to be evaluated in the Draft EIS – Important document to FTA to clearly provide “blueprint” for Draft EIS and key issues to be evaluated.
- Summer and Early Fall 2012
 - Continued Technical Analysis and Outreach
- End of 2012 / Early 2013
 - Completion of the Draft EIS

Cooperating Agency Invite Letter (Example Letter)



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Transit
Administration**

MAR 26 2012

Kimley-Horn & Associates, Inc.
Twin Cities

REGION V
Illinois, Indiana,
Michigan, Minnesota,
Ohio, Wisconsin

200 West Adams Street
Suite 320
Chicago, IL 60606-5253
312-353-2789
312-886-0351 (fax)

March 20, 2012

Tony Sullins
Field Supervisor
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Twin Cities ES Field Office
4101 American Blvd. East
Bloomington, MN 55425-1665

Re: Invitation to Become a Cooperating Agency for the Bottineau Transitway Project in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the Following Suburbs: Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, New Hope, Brooklyn Park, Maple Grove, and Osseo

Dear Mr. Sullins:

For the purpose of complying with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority (HCRRA) are preparing a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Bottineau Transitway project, which would operate from downtown Minneapolis through the northwest suburban cities of Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, New Hope, Brooklyn Park, Maple Grove, and Osseo. Four Light Rail Transit (LRT) alternatives and one Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) alternative are being considered for analysis in the draft EIS. The Bottineau Transitway would add transportation system capacity in order to respond to growing travel demand and increasing traffic congestion in the project corridor, as well as provide an attractive, competitive transit option that would serve transit-dependent populations. This line would also be an expansion of the Minneapolis region's transitway system which includes the Hiawatha Light Rail Transit (LRT) and Northstar commuter rail line, as well as the planned Central Corridor LRT line.

The formal scoping period for the project was held from December 23, 2011, to February 17, 2012. An interagency scoping meeting was held regarding the project on January 19, 2012, to which your agency was invited. The minutes for that meeting are attached, as well as the agency Coordination Plan.

Because your agency has jurisdiction and expertise with respect to endangered species in the Bottineau Transitway corridor, we are inviting your agency to be a cooperating agency with FTA in the review of the draft EIS and other NEPA documents for this project. This is in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR 1501.6).

Bottineau Transitway Cooperating Agency Letter
March 20, 2012

Pursuant to Section 6002 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) (23 USC §139), cooperating agencies are responsible to identify, as early as practicable, any issue of concern regarding the potential environmental or socioeconomic impacts of a project that could substantially delay or prevent an agency from granting a permit or other approval that is needed for a project. We suggest that your agency become involved in the development of this project in the following ways, as they relate to your area of expertise:

- 1) Provide timely review and written comment during the scoping process, and on the draft EIS and other project documents, to reflect your agency's views and concerns on the adequacy of the documents, proposed purpose and need, alternatives considered, anticipated impacts, and mitigation measures.
- 2) Participate in coordination meetings, conference calls, and joint field reviews, as appropriate.

To either accept or decline this invitation, please respond to FTA in writing prior to April 15, 2012. If your agency chooses to accept our invitation to become a cooperating agency, your participation will be highly valued during the scoping process and throughout the EIS. If you choose to decline the invitation, your response should state your reasons for declining.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the project in more detail, please contact Lois Kimmelman, Environmental Protection Specialist, at 312-353-4060.

Thank you for your cooperation and interest in this project.

Sincerely,



Marisol Simon
Regional Administrator

cc: Lois Kimmelman, FTA
William Wheeler, FTA
Cyrell McLemore, FTA
Joseph Gladke, HCRRA
Mary Karlsson, Metropolitan Council
Jeanne Witzig, Kimley-Horn & Associates

Attachments

Interagency Meeting Summary
Coordination Plan

Participating Agency Invite Letter (Federal Example Letter)



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Transit
Administration**

REGION V
Illinois, Indiana,
Michigan, Minnesota,
Ohio, Wisconsin

200 West Adams Street
Suite 320
Chicago, IL 60606-5253
312-353-2789
312-886-0351 (fax)

March 14, 2012

Mr. Willie R. Taylor
Director, Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance
U.S. Department of Interior
1849 C Street Northwest
MIB
MS 2462
Washington DC 20240

Re: Invitation to Become a Participating Agency for the Bottineau Transitway Project in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the Following Suburbs: Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, New Hope, Brooklyn Park, Maple Grove, and Osseo

Dear Mr. Taylor:

For the purpose of complying with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority (HCRRA) are preparing a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Bottineau Transitway project, which would operate from downtown Minneapolis through the northwest suburban cities of Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, New Hope, Brooklyn Park, Maple Grove, and Osseo. Four Light Rail Transit (LRT) alternatives and one Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) alternative are being considered for analysis in the draft EIS. The Bottineau Transitway would add transportation system capacity in order to respond to growing travel demand and increasing traffic congestion in the project corridor, as well as provide an attractive, competitive transit option that would serve transit-dependent populations. This line would also be an expansion of the Minneapolis region's transitway system which includes the Hiawatha Light Rail Transit (LRT) and Northstar commuter rail line, as well as the planned Central Corridor LRT line.

The formal scoping period for the project was held from December 23, 2011, to February 17, 2012. An interagency scoping meeting was held regarding the project on January 19, 2012, to which your agency was invited. The minutes for that meeting are attached, as well as the agency Coordination Plan.

Pursuant to Section 6002 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) (23 USC §139), FTA and HCRRA are responsible to identify, as early as practicable, federal agencies that may have an interest in the project, and to invite such agencies to become participating agencies in the environmental review process.

Accordingly, you are invited to become actively involved as a participating agency for the Bottineau Transitway project, as it relates to your agency's area of expertise. Participating agencies are typically afforded the opportunity to be involved in defining the purpose and need for the project, as well as determining the range of alternatives to be considered, and methods to be used for impact assessment. These agencies participate in project coordination meetings, conference calls, and joint field reviews; and review and comment on project documents.

Your agency does not have to accept this invitation. If, however, you elect not to become a participating agency, you must decline this invitation in writing, indicating that your agency has no expertise or information relevant to the project, and does not intend to submit comments on the project. Your agency will be treated as a participating agency unless your written response declining such designation is transmitted to this office not later than March 31, 2012.

If you do choose to accept our invitation to become a participating agency, your participation will be highly valued during the scoping process and throughout the EIS.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the project in more detail, please contact Lois Kimmelman, Environmental Protection Specialist, at 312-353-4060.

Thank you for your cooperation and interest in this project.

Sincerely,



for Marisol Simon
Regional Administrator

cc: Lois Kimmelman, FTA
William Wheeler, FTA
Cyrell McLemore, FTA
Joseph Gladke, HCRRA
Mary Karlsson, Metropolitan Council
Jeanne Witzig, Kimley-Horn & Associates

Attachments

Interagency Meeting Summary
Coordination Plan

Participating Agency Invite Letter (Local Example Letter)

March 26, 2012

Mr. Craig Affeldt
MN Pollution Control Agency
520 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155-3895

Re: Invitation to Become a Participating Agency for the Bottineau Transitway Project in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the Following Suburbs: Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, New Hope, Brooklyn Park, Maple Grove, and Osseo

Dear Mr. Affeldt:

For the purpose of complying with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority (HCRRA), and Metropolitan Council are preparing a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Bottineau Transitway project. The Bottineau Transitway would operate from downtown Minneapolis through the northwest suburban cities of Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, New Hope, Brooklyn Park, Maple Grove, and Osseo. Four Light Rail Transit (LRT) alternatives and one Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) alternative are being considered for analysis in the draft EIS. The Bottineau Transitway would add transportation system capacity in order to respond to growing travel demand and increasing traffic congestion in the project corridor, as well as provide an attractive, competitive transit option that would serve transit-dependent populations. This line would also be an expansion of the Minneapolis region's transitway system which includes the Hiawatha Light Rail Transit (LRT) and Northstar commuter rail line, as well as the planned Central Corridor LRT line.

The formal scoping period for the project was held from December 23, 2011, to February 17, 2012. An interagency scoping meeting was held regarding the project on January 19, 2012, to which your agency was invited. The minutes for that meeting are attached, as well as the agency Coordination Plan.

Pursuant to Section 6002 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) (23 USC §139), FTA, HCRRA, and Metropolitan Council are responsible to identify, as early as practicable, federal agencies that may have an interest in the project, and to invite such agencies to become participating agencies in the environmental review process. Accordingly, you are invited to become actively involved as a participating agency for the Bottineau Transitway project, as it relates to your agency's area of expertise.



Regional Railroad Authority
Hennepin County

Peter McLaughlin Gail Dorfman Mark Stenglein Jan Callison Mike Opat Randy Johnson Jeff Johnson
Chair

Participating agencies are typically afforded the opportunity to be involved in defining the purpose and need for the project, as well as determining the range of alternatives to be considered, and methods to be used for impact assessment. These agencies participate in project coordination meetings, conference calls, and joint field reviews; and review and comment on project documents.

Your agency does not have to accept this invitation. If, however, you elect not to become a participating agency, you must decline this invitation in writing, indicating that your agency has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the project, no expertise or information relevant to the project, and does not intend to submit comments on the project. The declination may be transmitted electronically to brent.rusco@co.hennepin.mn.us; please include the title of the official responding. In order to give your agency adequate opportunity to weigh the relevance of your participation in this environmental review process, written response to this invitation are due March 31, 2012.

If you do choose to accept our invitation to become a participating agency, your participation will be highly valued during the scoping process and throughout the EIS.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the project in more detail, please contact me at 612.543.0579.

Thank you for your cooperation and interest in this project.

Sincerely,



Brent Rusco
Bottineau Transitway Project Manager

cc: Lois Kimmelman, FTA
William Wheeler, FTA
Cyrell McLemore, FTA
Joseph Gladke, HCRRA
Mary Karlsson, Metropolitan Council
Jeanne Witzig, Kimley-Horn & Associates
Carin Kromra, MN PCA

Attachments

Interagency Meeting Summary
Coordination Plan

Coordination Plan, February 2012

Coordination Plan

Bottineau Transitway

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT



Hennepin County
Regional Railroad Authority
Minnesota

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Agency Coordination Plan

February 17, 2012

1.0 Summary of Document

This Coordination Plan (Plan) includes the background and purpose of the Plan, followed by a presentation of participating and cooperating agency roles, federal permits/approvals anticipated to date and decision-making roles. Key coordination points throughout the process are also identified, including opportunities for engagement and review of project materials.

The current draft of this document is intended to provide cooperating and participating agencies with a preview of expected roles and responsibilities. As the study schedule evolves, this document will be updated to include a more detailed schedule with anticipated review periods of study materials. Section 7.0 of this document includes a list of anticipated plan updates, relative to milestones in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) process.

The Coordination Plan describes a process rather than a result. The Plan is intended to be dynamic to allow revisions and additions to best respond to feedback and project management changes as needed. In addition, information about public involvement, agency coordination, and materials associated with the Bottineau Transitway project are and will continue to be available on the project website at: www.bottineautransitway.org.

2.0 Project Overview and Purpose of Plan

2.1 Project Overview

Environmental Review Process

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is the lead federal agency for the Bottineau Transitway project, and the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority (HCRRA) is the joint lead agency and local project sponsor (see Section 3.1). In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is being prepared for the project.

The EIS process occurs in three stages – Scoping, Draft EIS and Final EIS – and culminates in a federal Record of Decision (ROD) under NEPA and a state Determination of Adequacy under the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). Each of the three stages includes publication of a document for public comment and narrows the number of alternatives, with the Final EIS identifying a single Preferred Alternative for the project.

The EIS process requires a detailed assessment of a broad range of significant social, economic, and environmental impacts anticipated as a result of alterations to the natural and built environment, such as those proposed for the Bottineau Transitway. The EIS process starts with Scoping and concludes with identification of a preferred alternative.

New Starts Program

The New Starts Program is the federal capital funding program for major transit projects like the Bottineau Transitway. The region is considering applying for funding through the FTA's New Starts

Program to build the Bottineau Transitway. The New Starts Program has several evaluation criteria and the Bottineau Transitway needs to score well in all of them to be considered for New Starts Program funding. The Bottineau Transitway is competing with similar projects around the country for this limited federal funding.

2.2 Purpose/Intent of Coordination Plan

Section 6002 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU 6002) requires the lead agencies to establish a plan for coordinating public and agency involvement during the environmental review process.

The purpose of this Plan is to define the process by which the HCRRA in coordination with the FTA and the Metropolitan Council will communicate information about the Bottineau Transitway EIS to agencies and the public, and how input from agencies will be solicited and considered.

In addition, the intent of the Plan is to ensure the timely and efficient development of technical information, review of technical information by stakeholders, and the timely availability of input for decision-making throughout the process. The Plan will be updated periodically to reflect adjustment to the technical scope of work refinements and results, stakeholder input, and schedule adjustments that occur over the course of the project.

The Plan is meant to promote an efficient and streamlined environmental review process and good project management through coordination, scheduling, and early identification and resolution of issues.

2.3 Project Description

The Bottineau Transitway is a proposed project that will provide for transit improvements in the highly traveled northwest area of the Twin Cities. The Bottineau Transitway is located in Hennepin County, Minnesota, extending approximately 13 miles from downtown Minneapolis to the northwest through north Minneapolis and the suburbs of Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, New Hope, Brooklyn Park, Maple Grove and Osseo. The transitway is anticipated to serve broader areas to the northwest, including the communities of Dayton, Rogers, and Hassan Township. **Figure 1** illustrates the project area. The Build Alternatives being considered for further study in the Draft EIS (four LRT and one BRT) are the most promising alternatives identified during the Alternatives Analysis (AA) study, completed in 2010 by the HCRRA (**Figure 2**).

The purpose of the Bottineau Transitway is to provide transit service which will satisfy the long-term regional mobility and accessibility needs for businesses and the traveling public.

Five factors contribute to the need for the Bottineau Transit project:

- Growing travel demand
- Increasing traffic congestion
- People who depend on transit
- Limited transit service to suburban destinations (reverse commute opportunities) and time-efficient transit options
- Regional objectives for growth

As part of the Bottineau Transitway EIS, a Purpose and Need Statement is being developed and refined based on input from agencies and the public during the initial coordination/scoping process.

Figure 1. Bottineau Transitway Project Area

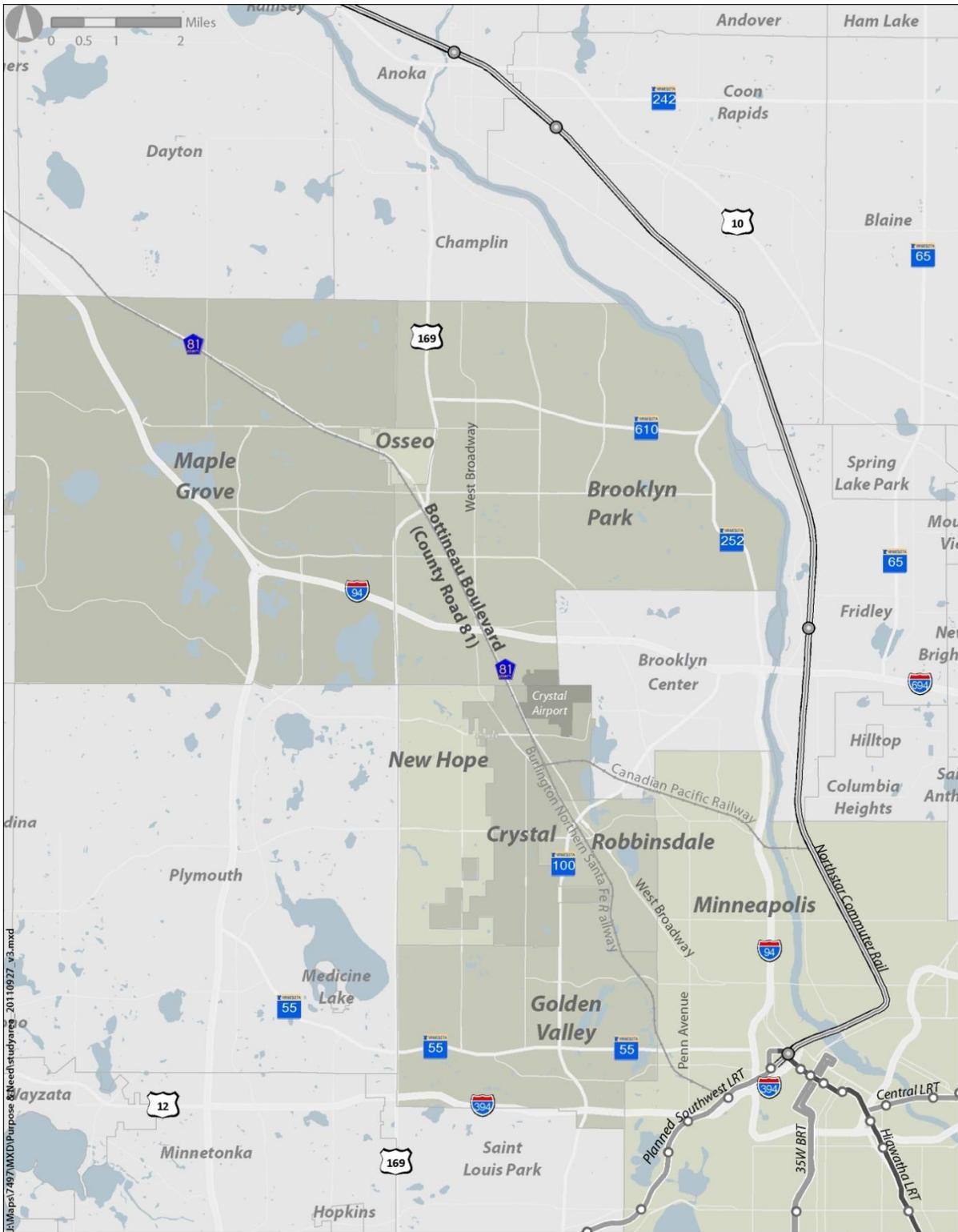
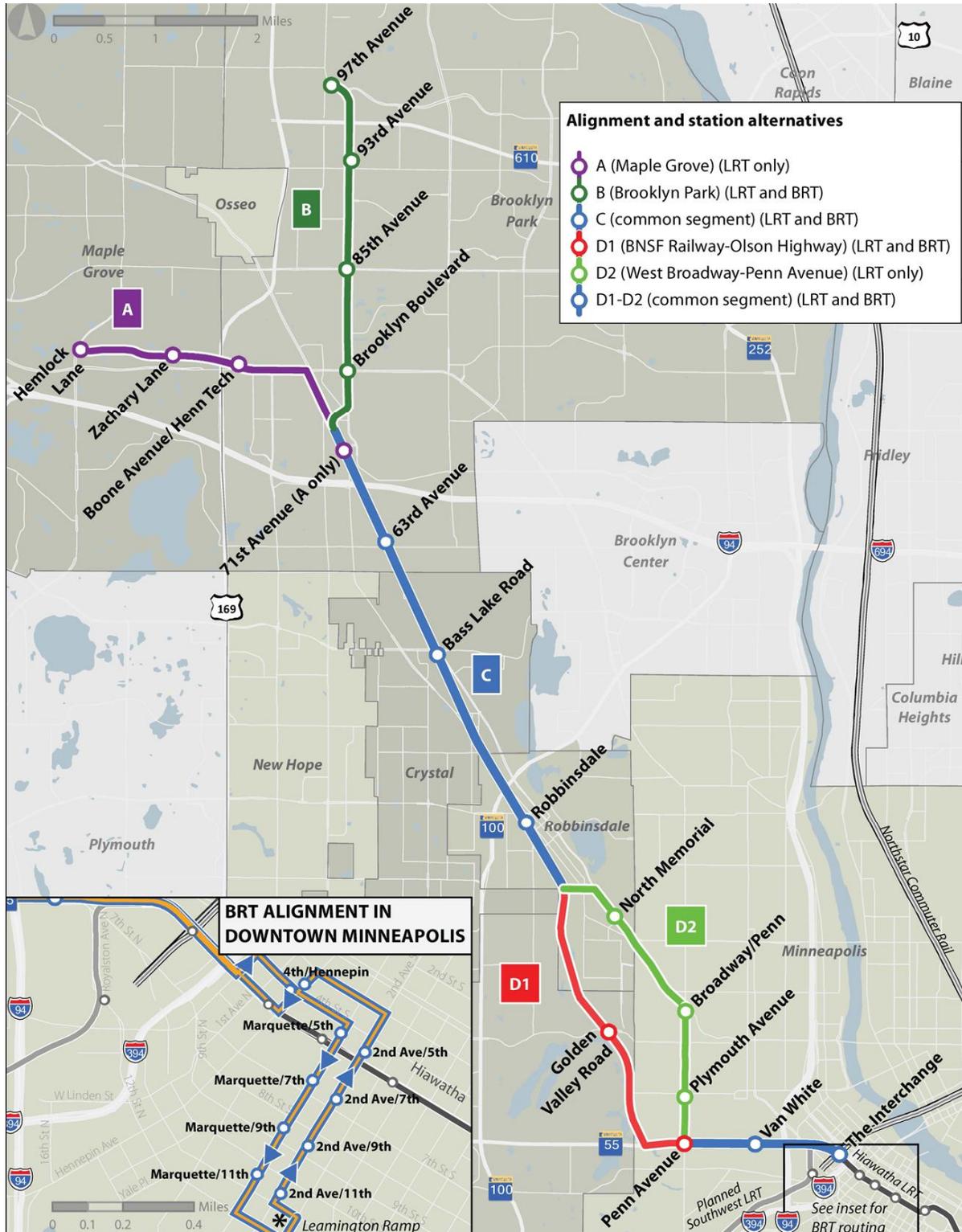


Figure 2. Build Alternatives Proposed for Study in the Draft EIS



3.0 Agencies and Roles

3.1 Lead Agencies

The roles of the lead agencies for the Bottineau Transitway project are described below. Section 3.2 defines the terms cooperating agency and participating agency, and outlines the responsibilities of each.

As the lead federal agency, **FTA** will coordinate with the local project sponsor to accomplish the following actions:

- Prepare the EIS in accordance with NEPA, SAFETEA-LU, and other applicable federal laws and Executive Orders.
- Coordinate with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPO), and other consulting parties, in order to complete the Section 106 process for the project.
- Concur with the list of cooperating and participating agencies identified by the local project sponsor (see Section 3.2).
- Implement and update this Plan.

In addition, FTA has the following responsibilities:

- Extend invitations to federal agencies to be cooperating or participating agencies (see Section 3.2).
- Invite Native American tribes to participate in the EIS process.
- Review the project purpose and need statement and the range of alternatives to be evaluated in the EIS.
- Approve the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) recommended by the local project sponsor, and decide what level of detail to develop the LPA in the Draft EIS.
- Review and issue comments on technical reports and other project documents.
- Issue a final Section 4(f) evaluation decision, if required.
- Issue the final environmental determination for the project (i.e. ROD). Monitor the project sponsor's compliance with the mitigation commitments identified in the EIS.

As the local project sponsor and joint lead agency for the project, **HCRRA**'s responsibilities include:

- Identify key stakeholders and cooperating/participating agencies, and involve them in the EIS process.
- Develop and update the Public Involvement Plan (PIP) and this Plan.
- Disseminate project information so that the public and cooperating/participating agencies can provide input on key project decisions.
- Collaborate with cooperating/participating agencies to define the project purpose and need, determine the range of alternatives to be considered, select appropriate methods of analysis, identify potential environmental impacts, and suggest mitigation measures.
- Select an LPA.
- Work with FTA to prepare the EIS.

- Under the state environmental review program (MEPA), serve as the Responsible Governmental Unit (RGU) for the Draft EIS (signatory to the Draft EIS).
- Actively engage the project Advise, Review and Communicate Committee (ARCC), the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC).

In addition, the **Metropolitan Council** will ultimately operate the transit system and has the following responsibilities:

- Participate in the issues resolution process identified in this document (see Section 6.0).
- Provide input on the purpose and need, methodologies, and level of detail to be used in the analysis of alternatives.
- Provide input on how the performance of alternatives will be evaluated or how the impacts of alternatives on various resources will be assessed.
- Review and approve the recommended LPA.
- Formally amend the region's Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) to include the approved LPA.
- Provide review and signature for public release of the Draft EIS.

Should New Starts funding be pursued for the project and FTA approval received to enter into preliminary engineering, the Metropolitan Council will take administrative responsibility for completing all NEPA requirements, including obligations for agency coordination.

3.2 Cooperating and Participating Agencies

According to CEQ (40 CFR 1508.5), "cooperating agency" means any federal agency, other than a lead agency, that has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved in a proposed project or project alternative. A state or local agency of similar qualifications or, when the effects are on lands of tribal interest, a Native American tribe may, by agreement with the lead agencies, also become a cooperating agency. Participating agencies are those with an interest in the project. The standard for participating agency status is more encompassing than the standard for cooperating agency status described above. Therefore, cooperating agencies are, by definition, also participating agencies, but not all participating agencies are cooperating agencies. It is important to note that non-governmental organizations and private entities cannot serve as cooperating or participating agencies.

Cooperating agencies will participate in the permitting and/or jurisdictional determination process for impacts related to the project. They will work cooperatively with the lead agencies to resolve issues that could result in denial of regulatory approvals required for the project (See Section 6.0).

Cooperating and participating agencies will begin active participation as early as possible during the EIS process. Responsibilities of both types of agencies include the following:

- Identify the project's potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts and potential mitigation measures.
- Provide input on the project purpose and need, how impacts to resources will be evaluated, how project alternatives will be evaluated, and the level of detail to be used in the analysis of alternatives.
- Provide written comments on project deliverables. Wherever possible, such comments will be provided within 15 days of receipt of a written request for comments.

The agencies listed in [Table 1](#) will be invited to be involved in the project EIS process by becoming a cooperating or participating agency. Agencies invited to be cooperating agencies will also be invited to be participating agencies. FTA will be responsible for inviting federal agencies and Native American tribes, and the HCRRA will invite state, regional, and local agencies.

If a federal agency chooses to decline the invitation, the response letter must state that the agency:

- Has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the project;
- Has no expertise or information relevant to the project; or
- Does not intend to submit comments on the project.

If the federal agency's response does not state the agency's position in these terms, then the agency will be treated as a participating agency. State, regional, and local agencies, as well as Native American tribes, must respond affirmatively to the invitation in order to be designated as participating agencies."

Table 1. Agencies to Be Invited to Participate in the Environmental Process

Agency	Type of Participation
Federal Agencies	
U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), Federal Highway Administration	Cooperating
U.S. DOT, Federal Railroad Administration	Cooperating
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Cooperating
U.S. DOT, Federal Aviation Administration	Participating
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Participating
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development	Participating
U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance	Participating
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation	Participating
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	Participating
U.S. Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency	Participating
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Participating
State Agencies	
Minnesota Department of Transportation	Cooperating
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Transportation	Cooperating
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	Participating
Minnesota Department of Health	Participating
Indian Affairs Council	Participating
Board of Water and Soil Resources	Participating
Office of the State Archaeologist	Participating
Minnesota Department of Agriculture	Participating
Minnesota Department of Commerce	Participating
State Historic Preservation Office	Participating
Regional and Local Agencies	
Metropolitan Airports Commission	Participating
Three Rivers Park District	Participating

Agency	Type of Participation
Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board	Participating
Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission	Participating
Middle Mississippi Watershed Management Organization	Participating
Shingle Creek and West Mississippi Watershed Management Commission	Participating
City of Minneapolis	Participating
City of Golden Valley	Participating
City of Robbinsdale	Participating
City of Crystal	Participating
City of New Hope	Participating
City of Brooklyn Park	Participating
City of Osseo	Participating
City of Maple Grove	Participating
Maple Grove Transit	Participating
Native American Tribes	Participating – To Be Determined (TBD)

3.3 Anticipated Federal Project Permits and Approvals

It is anticipated that the following federal permits, approvals, and consultation activities will be required for the project (Table 2).

Table 2.0 Anticipated Permits, Approvals and Consultation Activities

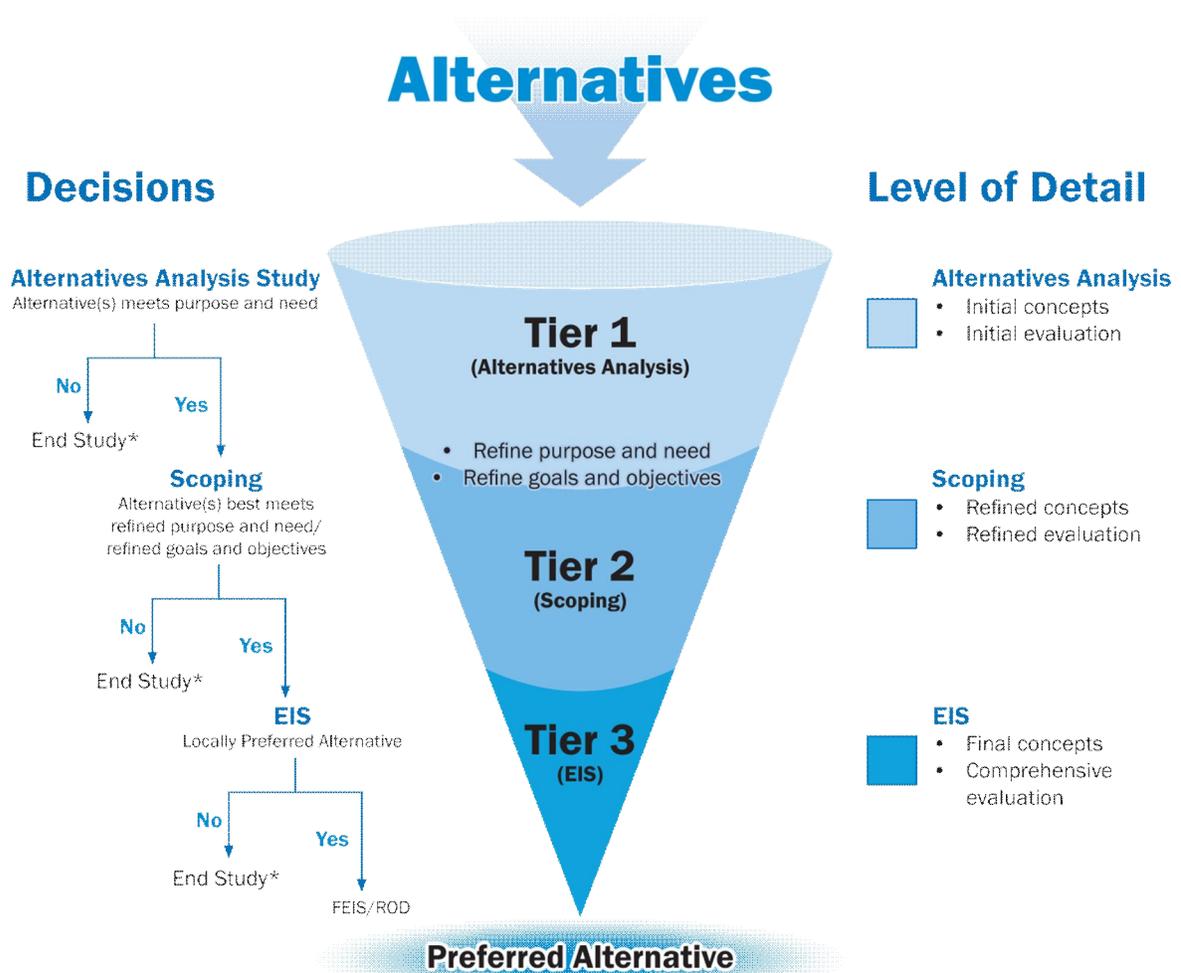
Agency	Applicable Regulation	Requirement
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Federal Endangered Species Act, Section 7	Consultation required for effects to federal special status species
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Federal Clean Water Act, Section 404	Permit required for effects to wetlands and waters of the U.S.
U.S. Department of the Interior	Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act	Consultation required for effects to National Register-eligible archaeological and architectural properties
Federal Railroad Administration		Coordination may be required regarding sharing a common corridor and crossing railroad

Agency	Applicable Regulation	Requirement
		right-of-way
Federal Aviation Administration		Coordination with the FAA regarding clearances associated with the Crystal Airport airspace.

4.0 Points of Coordination

The Draft EIS process involves several activities that include cooperating and participating agency coordination and public participation. Agency coordination will be ongoing, as the project progresses through the tiers represented in Figure 3. The figure illustrates the key stages or tiers in the decision making, which are further refined/explained in the section below, starting with the scoping process and progressing through the completion of the Draft EIS.

Figure 3. Project Process



4.1 Scoping/Early Coordination

Early coordination includes an opportunity for cooperating and participating agencies to provide input and guidance on the purpose and need for the project, range of alternatives, and scope of the issues to be studied in the Draft EIS. During the project scoping process, each potential cooperating/participating agency will be provided with an invitation to participate, a Scoping Booklet, and this Plan. An Interagency scoping meeting was held on January 19, 2012 to discuss scoping topics and to obtain agency input. Input was provided verbally at the meeting. Agency comments can also be submitted in writing by February 17, 2012. An agency's intention to accept or decline the invitation to become a cooperating or participating agency is not due until the date stated in the invitation letter.

Any comments received during the scoping period on the draft purpose and need statement, proposed alternatives, and analytical methodologies will be considered by FTA and the HCRRA in coordination with the Metropolitan Council, in developing the final purpose and need statement and the identification of the alternatives to be included in the Draft EIS. According to previous guidance issued by the Council on Environmental Quality, which was affirmed by Congress in its conference report on SAFETEA-LU, other federal agencies should afford substantial deference to the FTA's articulation of the purpose and need for a transportation action. Agencies that desire collaboration during the development of methods that will be used to evaluate the effects of the alternatives on specific elements of the environment should identify their interest during the scoping process.

4.2 Alternatives Analysis/Draft EIS Preparation

A multidisciplinary approach for screening and evaluating alternatives will be implemented with the goal to identify an LPA. The evaluation process will utilize qualitative and quantify factors such as ridership potential; right of way impacts, capital costs; land use; economic development, and environmental impacts; traffic issues; conceptual engineering; and public preferences. The Draft EIS will be prepared to assess, compare and contrast the impacts and benefits of the build alternatives compared to the No-Build Alternative, identify potential design alternatives to avoid or reduce adverse impacts, recommend means and methods to mitigate unavoidable adverse impacts and disclose and recommend an LPA.

Cooperating and participating agencies will be invited to attend both public and committee meetings to provide input during the alternatives evaluation conducted as part of the Draft EIS process and document. The purpose of these meetings is to focus input on issues and impact methodology, as well as development of potential mitigation measures for the alternatives evaluated in the Draft EIS. Input will be requested in writing by a due date to be clearly identified. Based on interest expressed during the scoping process, agencies will be engaged in the development of analysis methodology. If a cooperating or participating agency opposes a proposed methodology to be used in the analysis of alternatives, an alternate methodology must be proposed with a reason given for its preference.

An LPA is anticipated to be identified in the Draft EIS. In deciding whether to accept the identification of an LPA, FTA will consider the ability to comply with Federal requirements such as Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act, the Section 404(b) (1) of the Clean Water Act, Executive Order 11988 on Floodplain Management, etc. The acceptance of a preferred alternative is not a commitment by FTA to issue a ROD for that alternative or to fund that alternative.

If an LPA is recommended by HCRRA, adopted by Metropolitan Council into its TPP) and accepted by FTA, that alternative may be developed to a higher level of detail in the Draft EIS. SAFE TEA-LU, Section 6002, permits this higher level of detail compared to the other alternatives to facilitate the development of mitigation measures or to provide concurrent compliance with other applicable environmental laws. FTA must weigh the issue of whether developing the preferred alternative more

fully would cause an imbalanced comparison among alternatives because of time, money, or energy expended. FTA must be confident that all alternatives would be equally considered at the end of the NEPA environmental process.

During this phase of the process, HCRRA in consultation with FTA and the Metropolitan Council will work closely with the project committees regarding the refinement of the alternatives evaluated in the Draft EIS, findings from the impact analysis, development of mitigation measures, and strategies to effectively engage the public in the process.

To expedite review of specific technical areas, technical memos will be prepared for key impact areas and provided to appropriate participating agencies for review prior to the release of the Draft EIS.

4.3 Draft EIS Review Phase

HCRRA in coordination with the Metropolitan Council will prepare the Draft EIS with FTA oversight and review from cooperating agencies. Communications with individual agencies will continue as needed once the Draft EIS has been released for public and agency review. A Notice of Availability (NOA) of the Draft EIS will be published in the *Federal Register* and the *Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) Monitor* and cooperating and participating agencies will receive a copy of the notice. During the public review period for the document, a public hearing or series of public hearings will be held. Participating agencies and the public will be offered the opportunity to review and comment on the content of the Draft EIS during the public review period. Comments will be considered in the preparation of the Final EIS and selection of mitigation measures for the Preferred Alternative.

Table 3 summarizes the Draft EIS process milestone schedule. Cooperating and participating agencies will be notified of schedule modifications by e-mail alert that provides a link to the project website, or by other means deemed appropriate.

Table 3. Project Milestone Schedule

Action	Timeframe
Distribution of Scoping Booklet	December 2011
Minnesota EQB Monitor Publication	December 23, 2011
Notice of Intent Published in Federal Register	January 10, 2012
Scoping Comment Period	December 23, 2011 – February 17, 2012
Interagency Scoping Meeting	January 19, 2012
Public and Agency Scoping Meetings	January 23, 24, 25 and 31, 2012
Scoping Decision Document	Spring 2012
Locally Preferred Alternative Recommendation to Metropolitan Council	Spring 2012
Draft EIS Preparation	January – December 2012
Draft EIS Comment Period	Early 2013
Draft EIS Public Hearing(s)	Early 2013

The following table summarizes the identified coordination points, information requirements and responsibilities of the lead, Cooperating and participating agencies through the release of the Draft EIS.

Table 4. Coordination Points, Information Requirements, and Agency Responsibilities

Coordination Point	Information Out	Information In	Agencies Responsible for Comments
Issue Notice of Intent	Public notice of intent to prepare a Draft EIS; notice of upcoming scoping meetings	Comments on notice	Lead agencies
Purpose and Need	Narrative and data supporting need for the project Information included/summarized in Scoping Booklet and refined in Scoping Decision Document	Comments on purpose and need and issues of concern	All participating and cooperating agencies and the public
Range of Alternatives	Information on how alternatives were screened/selected; description of each alternative moving forward to Draft EIS Information included/summarized in Scoping Booklet and refined in Scoping Decision Document	Comments on range of alternatives and issues of concern	All participating and cooperating agencies and the public
Impact Assessment Methodologies	Description of methodology to be used to evaluate impacts Information included/summarized in Scoping Booklet and refined in Scoping Decision Document	Input on how impacts will be assessed, data and methodology to be used	All participating and cooperating agencies and the public
Review of Draft EIS	Full administrative draft copies and public review copy of Draft EIS	Comments on content of Draft EIS	Lead and cooperating agencies – courtesy review prior to public release; participating agencies and the public – during public

Coordination Point	Information Out	Information In	Agencies Responsible for Comments
			comment period
Selection of Locally Preferred Alternative	LPA Technical Report	Comments on the Draft LPA Report	Lead agencies, project committees and Metropolitan Council

5.0 Opportunities for Public Input

As required by NEPA, a project specific plan for soliciting public input has been developed and is documented in the project's separate PIP. The PIP describes strategies for encouraging public input and describes the opportunities to be provided to the public to encourage early and ongoing involvement in the project development process. As required by SAFETEA-LU Section 6002, the public will be provided opportunities to provide specific input on the purpose and need and the range of alternatives during the scoping phase, and will be invited to provide comments on the Draft EIS during a formal document review period.

6.0 Process for Issue Resolution

The lead agencies and cooperating/participating agencies shall work cooperatively in accordance with this section to identify and resolve issues that could delay completion of the environmental review process or could result in denial of any approvals required for the project under applicable laws.

Based on information received from the lead agencies, cooperating/participating agencies shall identify, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding the project's potential environmental or socioeconomic impacts. Issues of concern include any issues that could substantially delay or prevent an agency from granting a permit or other approval that is needed for the project.

The following general issue resolution process will be followed:

- Supporting technical information will be prepared to inform the issue specific discussion. If further coordination is required, a meeting(s) will be held during the course of the NEPA process to further discuss and resolve the issue(s) at hand. Documentation will be prepared regarding the conclusions and actions reached on the specific issue.
- If issues are not being resolved in a timely manner (for purposes of this Draft Plan "timely" is assumed to be 30 days):
 - An official issue resolution meeting will be scheduled by the HCRRA in consultation with the Metropolitan Council and the FTA.
 - If resolution cannot be achieved within 30 days following such a meeting and a determination has been made by the FTA that all information necessary to resolve the issues has been obtained, then
 - FTA shall notify the heads of all participating agencies, HCRRA, Metropolitan Council, the Committee on Environment and Public Works of the U.S. Senate, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives, and the Council of Environmental Quality that a resolution could not be reached, and FTA shall publish such notice in the *Federal Register*.

7.0 Anticipated Coordination Plan Updates

The Bottineau Transitway Coordination Plan will be updated twice during the Draft EIS process and circulated to cooperating and participating agencies. The updates will be coordinated with key points in the overall project schedule and include:

- Late Spring 2012
- Late Summer/Early Fall 2012