

# Technical Report Visual Quality

## Executive Summary

**Table ES-1. Summary of Impacts and Mitigation Measures**

Impact Category	Impacts of Build Alternatives	Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures
Visual Quality	<p>Effects would range from minimal to high depending on the taking of properties for additional transitway right-of-way, removal of vegetation, and visual proximity.</p> <p>Overall potential for effects for each alternative are:</p> <p>A-C-D1: moderate potential effects</p> <p>B-C-D2: high potential effects</p> <p>A-C-D1: moderate potential effects</p> <p>B-C-D2: high potential effects</p>	<p>Where feasible, lost vegetation would be replaced with vegetation of a similar type. Where new physical features are introduced, efforts would be made to screen or enhance views of them with landscape treatments.</p> <p>Along D1, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Minneapolis, Golden Valley, and Robbinsdale would be involved in selecting compatible landscape treatments.</p> <p>Along D2, Robbinsdale and Minneapolis would be involved in the station design process and selection of landscape/streetscape elements.</p>

**Table ES-2. Summary of Construction Impacts and Mitigation Measures**

Impact Category	Construction Impacts of Build Alternatives	Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures
Visual Quality	<p>Construction phase effects would include the temporary presence of heavy equipment, traffic control measures, and impacts from construction operations. Vegetation and slopes may be temporarily impacted.</p>	<p>Vegetation impacted by temporary construction extents would be replaced with vegetation of a similar type following construction where the permanent conditions permit.</p>

Based on extensive field study and review of area mapping, this technical report provides a descriptive overview of the Project’s visual context and identifies the primary existing and proposed visual features. A collection of photographs is included in [Appendices A and B](#) to assist the reader in

understanding the existing visual context and visual features of the Study Area. The visual features are categorized as natural, built, or project features.

Each alternative alignment was analyzed to assess the effect of the Project's built features to existing visual features. Effects would range from minimal to high depending on the taking of properties for additional transitway right-of-way, removal of streetscape features, removal of vegetation, and visual proximity. A general comparison of the level of visual effect of each alignment is as follows.

- Alignment A would have minimal effects.
- Alignment B would have minimal to moderate effects.
- Alignment C would have minimal to moderate effects.
- Alignment D1 would have minimal to moderate effects.
- Alignment D2 would have minimal to high effects.
- Alignment D1/D2 Common Section would have minimal to high effects.

Each alignment was also analyzed to assess temporary construction phase effects on visual features. Anticipated effects on visual features during construction would be similar to those of typical roadway projects, including the presence of heavy equipment and traffic control measures. Users on roadways and trails that are in visual proximity to the transitway would encounter views of the construction. Where the transitway passes adjacent to residential neighborhoods, construction activities would likely be perceived as visually disruptive to typically more peaceful residential settings.

While it is inevitable that the Project would affect the general visual context and some specific visual features, it also would create opportunities to improve visual quality. Project elements themselves such as stations, bridges, and retaining walls can be designed to be aesthetically attractive and to sensitively complement the surroundings in critical areas. Additionally, the potential for new transit-oriented development in the future could improve the visual quality of the area's built environment.

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose of Report

This *Visual Quality Technical Report* has been prepared in support of the Bottineau Transitway Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS). The objective of this report is to evaluate the Project's potential effects on visual quality within the study area. This includes the following:

- Evaluating the Project's effect on the character of the natural visual features of the study area
- Evaluating the Project's effect on the character of the built visual features of the study area
- Evaluating the Project as it will be visually perceived by the affected population in the study area

### 1.2 Definition of Terms

#### Visual Features

The term *visual features* refers to the components of the natural, built, or project environments that are capable of being seen.

- Natural Visual Features include the land, water, vegetation, and animals that compose the natural environment. Although natural features may have been altered or imported by people, features which are primarily geological or biological in origin are considered natural.
- Built Visual Features include the buildings, structures, and artifacts that compose the surrounding built environment. These are features which were constructed by people.
- Project Visual Features include the geometrics, structures, and fixtures that compose the project environment. These are the constructed features which were or will be placed in the environment as part of the proposed project. For this project, the features include both the transitway and other infrastructure modified by the project.

### Visual Quality

The term *visual quality* refers to what viewers like and dislike about the visual features that compose a particular scene. Visual quality is inherently subjective - different viewers may evaluate visual features differently. In general, people respond favorably to scenes that create a sense of perceived harmony, order, and coherence. Based on the developed urban and suburban context of the study area, specific features were identified as “higher quality visual features” when they exemplify one of the following characteristics:

- A remnant natural feature exemplary of pre-settlement conditions
- A visually distinct natural or built feature that stands out from the surroundings and which contributes physically and symbolically in a positive way to the overall community’s visual quality
- A natural or built feature that is an integral component of the broader physical pattern of the community and is generally regarded positively

### Affected Population

The term affected population is defined as viewers who occupy land adjacent to the proposed project – either long term or short term. These people can be characterized by their association with a specific adjacent land-use, including: residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, recreational, and institutional parcels. An example of a long-term neighbor would be a homeowner with property along the transitway. An example of a short-term neighbor would be a runner using the trail in a park adjacent to the transitway.

### General Visual Context

The term *general visual context* is the appearance of the nearby surroundings from the vantage point of a person from ground level, i.e., as one would perceive it from a car, train, bus, bicycle, or on foot. The Project passes through developed urban and suburban areas with a wide range of development patterns. In Section 3.3 Affected Environment, a brief description of the general visual context of each area is provided as a basis for understanding the identified effects on specific visual features.

## 2.0 Project Description

### 2.1 Primary Project Visual Features

#### Overview

The Project has a number of constructed elements that would have a visual presence within the transitway right-of-way. These features are described in more detail below. This report will assess the relative effect of each of these features within each alignment.

### Alignment and Catenary

The continuous Light Rail Transit (LRT) track alignment and overhead catenary wires/supports would be a linear visual feature running the length of the transitway. The track itself would be either set in gravel ballast or embedded in the pavement. The catenary wires would be set at approximately twenty feet above the track and supported by metal poles. The alignment will be most visible when elevated to avoid conflict with other roadways and rail corridors. The elevated structures would be more visually prominent than track constructed at grade. Retaining walls would be necessary in some locations. Depending on the surrounding context, a clear anti-graffiti finish coating should be considered for bridges and walls to facilitate graffiti removal and maintain a desirable appearance.

In areas where the guideway is located in the median of a roadway, a chain/bollard (similar to CCLRT) would be included between the NB and SB tracks. In some areas, which are not determined at this time, fencing may be provided on either side of the BNSF right-of-way – likely in areas where it is provided today.

### Light Rail Vehicles

While their presence in any particular location would be dynamic and temporary, the light rail vehicles would be highly visible by the nature of their size and graphic markings. The typical vehicle would be comprised of two or three linked “cars” that would each be approximately 90 feet long. The perceived visual effect of the vehicles would depend on the operating frequency which would establish the number of times that a vehicle passes by in any given timeframe.

### Stations

Stations would also have a prominent visual presence within the transitway. Stations aid the traveling public in identifying access points to the transit service. Station elements include platform(s), shelters (overhead weather protection), wheelchair ramps, and amenities such as lighting, benches, security systems, and information displays. Platforms for the proposed Project alternatives would be compatible with low-floor LRT vehicles. The platform length would accommodate the vehicle length of three linked vehicles (approximately 270 feet) but may vary. In the BNSF corridor, fencing would be provided at station locations to restrict people from crossing the BNSF track.

### Park-and-Rides

Five potential park-and-ride sites are proposed near station locations: Hemlock Lane, Revere Lane, 93rd Avenue, 63rd Avenue, and Robbinsdale Transit Center. The attributes of each of the sites is described in [Table 1](#) below. Not all five sites will be constructed though. At the north end of the Project, only the sites associated with the final selected alignment (A or B) would ultimately be developed. The 63rd Avenue and Robbinsdale Transit Center sites along Alignment C would be developed in all of the alternatives.

**Table 1. Park-and-Rides**

Location	Alignment	Surface Parking	Parking Ramp Structure
Hemlock Lane	Alignment A	Yes	No
Revere Lane	Alignment A	Yes	No
93rd Avenue	Alignment B	Yes	No
63rd Avenue	Alignment C	Yes	Yes (Existing)
Robbinsdale Transit Center	Alignment C	Yes	Yes

There would be signage in the vicinity of the sites to direct drivers of passenger vehicles to the park-

and-ride lot and to the LRT station platform. The visual effect of a surface lot park-and-ride site is comparable to a surface parking lot for a commercial site with paved areas for vehicle parking, pedestrian walkways, and landscaping provided at site edges and interior islands. The visual effect of a parking ramp is comparable to a horizontal-oriented low to mid-height commercial building. Architectural treatment of the facades would be designed consistent with local codes.

### **Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF)**

An approximately 14-acre site would be required for an operations and maintenance facility on the selected alignment at the north end of the line. The OMF site would be occupied by a storage and maintenance building that is approximately 128,000 SF, with surface parking provided for employees and visitors, trackwork, extensive catenary wires, and any required landscape yards consistent with local codes. The facility would include areas to store, service, and maintain light rail vehicles (LRVs) and office space to accommodate Metro Transit staff. While the primary visual character of the OMF would be industrial, the building facade would be architecturally treated consistent with local codes.

### **Traction Power Substations (TPSS)**

Traction Power Substations (TPSS) are proposed at approximately ¾-mile to 1-mile spacing along the transitway, with most located near LRT stations. Exact locations have not been determined but would generally be located on limited-access sites approximately 4,000 SF in size and able to accommodate a single-story building approximately 40 feet by 20 feet. Like the OMF building, the primary visual character of the TPSS buildings would be industrial; however, the building façade would be architecturally treated consistent with local codes and screened with appropriate landscaping.

## **3.0 Technical Analysis**

### **3.1 Regulatory Context/Methodology**

The methodology used for this analysis is composed of two primary aspects – inventory of existing features and assessment of project effects on those features. The project area was studied and inventoried using both mapping and direct observation from field visits. The conceptual project design and potential identified right-of-way impacts were considered in evaluating the potential visual change to the project area.

- Inventory of existing visual features (natural visual features and built visual features)
- Assessment of project effects to higher quality visual features

#### **Qualitative Assessment of the Degree of Visual Quality Effects**

In Section 3.4, Environmental Consequences, analysis of each alignment is broken down into smaller segments listed from north to south in tabular format. A three-tier scale (high, moderate, or minimal) was used to qualitatively assess the degree of visual quality effect that the project elements would have on higher quality visual features. The following definitions summarize each classification.

- High: Introduction of new elements that could substantially affect the quality of the visual/aesthetic features
- Moderate: Introduction of new elements that may have an effect on the quality of the visual/aesthetic features
- Minimal: Introduction of new elements that are not likely to have an effect on visual/aesthetic features

Where moderate and high effects to higher quality visual features are identified, further description will supplement the basis for the assessment level.

## 3.2 Study Area

The study area was defined as the right-of-way for the alternative alignments currently under consideration for the Bottineau Transitway and the immediately adjacent properties with a visual connection to the transitway. In select instances, the extent of analysis was expanded to account for specific features that were visible by field observation along the proposed transitway as a result of topography, physical scale, architectural distinction, or other considerations.

## 3.3 Affected Environment

The study area includes developed urban and suburban communities extending from Minneapolis into the northwest Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. It includes a diverse array of development patterns, railroads, highways, and local roadways. For each alignment under consideration, a summary of the general visual context and a listing of identified higher quality visual features is provided. Any unique project visual features are also noted. A collection of photographs is included in [Appendices A and B](#).

### 3.3.1 Alignment A

#### General Visual Context

Gravel mining operations are the primary current use of land around Alignment A between Hemlock Lane and US 169 in Maple Grove but future development of the area is planned. Industrial, Business Park, and institutional land uses can be found in Brooklyn Park around Alignment A. The mining area is characterized by large piles of soil, sand, and gravel, and large pits. Large equipment is used to dig, pile, and sort materials creating a continuously changing landscape. Vegetation in the active gravel mining area is sparse. There is a large interchange where Elm Creek Boulevard and Brooklyn Boulevard cross over US 169. Future redevelopment with higher intensity land uses is envisioned for the area, which would bring a more suburban development pattern with new streets, buildings, parking, and landscaping.

East of US 169, the transitway would pass the Hennepin Technical College campus and follow Brooklyn Boulevard, which is flanked by light-industrial sites and residential neighborhoods. Approximately one block west of Bottineau Boulevard, Shingle Creek passes under Brooklyn Boulevard through a culvert affording a brief view of the riparian corridor. The transitway would turn south along the BNSF Railroad corridor adjacent to Bottineau Boulevard, which is flanked by larger-scale commercial and industrial properties.

#### Higher Quality Visual Features

##### Shingle Creek (natural)

Brief, clear views of Shingle Creek and the associated wetland complex are possible from Brooklyn Boulevard and also from southbound Bottineau Boulevard. The wetland complex is sizable in this fully developed suburban setting, and the views of it soften the hard appearance of the industrial and commercial sites.

## Primary Project Visual Features

### Stations

- Hemlock Lane
- Revere Lane
- Hennepin Technical College
- 71st Avenue

### Park-and-rides

- Hemlock Lane
- Revere Lane

### Bridges and Structures

- Transitway bridge over US 169
- Transitway bridge over the BNSF railroad at the southeast quadrant of the Brooklyn Boulevard and Bottineau Boulevard intersection

### Operations and Maintenance Facility

- Potential site in the vicinity of the Zachary Lane and the future Arbor Lakes Parkway intersection

## 3.3.2 Alignment B

### General Visual Context

North of TH 610 up to 101<sup>st</sup> Avenue in the vicinity of Alignment B, open field agricultural land is the predominant land use with some remnant woodland and grassland areas. The recently constructed Target North Campus with its multi-story buildings is located along Oak Grove Parkway east of West Broadway Avenue and has landscaped grounds characterized by mowed lawn and trees. Future redevelopment with higher-intensity land use is envisioned for the area, which would likely bring a more suburban development pattern with new streets, buildings, parking, and landscaping.

South of TH 610, the adjacent land use transitions from agricultural to a mix of single-story commercial and light-industrial buildings and single-family residential neighborhoods. The commercial areas have front yards characterized by mowed lawn, trees, and stormwater treatment ponds. The homes face away from West Broadway Avenue, and fences and landscaping visually separate backyards from the roadway. North Hennepin Community College, located in the southeast corner of the West Broadway Avenue and 85th Avenue intersection is comprised of one and two-story buildings organized around a central green space. The perimeter of the campus is dominated by surface parking lots. Tessman Park is located south of the college and contains two ball fields and mowed lawn.

### Higher Quality Visual Features

#### Shingle Creek (natural)

Views of Shingle Creek where it crosses West Broadway Avenue north of Candlewood Drive soften the predominantly built appearance of the area. East of West Broadway Avenue, the creek has a natural meandering shape edged by tree cover. To the west, the creek has been straightened and there is

little tree cover.

#### West Broadway Avenue Bridge over TH 610

The West Broadway Avenue bridge over TH 610 was designed and constructed in accordance with MnDOT's TH 610 aesthetic design guidelines developed for bridges and other features throughout the corridor.

#### **Primary Project Visual Features**

##### Stations

- 97th Avenue
- 93rd Avenue
- 85th Avenue
- Brooklyn Boulevard
- 71st Avenue

##### Park-and-rides

- 93rd Avenue
- West Broadway Avenue (north of TH 610)

##### Bridges and Structures

- Transitway bridge over TH 610, which will be separate from and parallel to the West Broadway Avenue bridge

##### Operations and Maintenance Facility

- Potential site on either the northeast corner of the West Broadway Avenue and 93rd Avenue intersection or the northwest corner of the West Broadway Avenue and 101st Avenue intersection

### **3.3.3 Alignment C**

#### **General Visual Context**

In general on Alignment C, the transitway would follow the BNSF railroad. In some locations, the route would parallel a primary roadway. In other locations, it would be more secluded, running behind commercial and residential areas. At the north end of Alignment C, the route would pass under Interstate 94, and the development pattern in that vicinity is comprised of single-story commercial buildings oriented towards Bottineau Boulevard, primarily clustered at Interstate 94, 63rd Avenue, and Bass Lake Road. The transitway would parallel Bottineau Boulevard, a multi-lane divided-median county highway. Along the edges of the railroad right-of-way, rows of tree cover provide some visual buffer for adjacent residential properties. The railroad right-of-way is also a primary utility corridor and includes overhead utility lines and poles.

Moving south, the transitway would run adjacent to West Broadway Avenue, a lower speed two-lane county roadway. Between 47th Avenue and TH 100, a handful of mature trees are in a grass median between the railroad and West Broadway Avenue. Crossing over TH 100, the transitway would pass along the west edge of downtown Robbinsdale's commercial area between 42nd Avenue and Noble Avenue. Downtown Robbinsdale is an area primarily comprised of single-story storefront buildings and an enhanced streetscape with brick pavers, decorative lighting, and other features. Two neighborhood-scale parks with ball fields are located adjacent to the transitway, Triangle Park and



Lee Park. These parks are characterized by mowed lawn with some tree cover at the edges. Along the edges of the railroad right-of-way, rows of tree cover provide some visual buffer for adjacent residential properties and continuous chain link fencing restricts access.

In the segment between Noble Avenue and 36th Avenue, the transitway would be aligned at a skew from the neighborhood street grid, so vantage points would vary. At the edges of the railroad right-of-way, continuous chain link fencing restricts access. Near 36th Avenue, the railroad right-of-way is depressed with steep side slopes to allow clearance under the 36th Avenue bridge. South of 36th Avenue, the transitway would pass by Walter Sochaki Park – a narrow wooded park situated outside the west embankment of the BNSF right of way.

### **Higher Quality Visual Features**

#### Interstate 94 bridge over the BNSF railroad and Bottineau Boulevard

The Interstate 94 bridge was designed and constructed with aesthetic enhancements that are unique to this bridge and not a consistent theme throughout the Interstate 94 corridor.

#### City of Crystal gateway area

As part of the Bottineau Boulevard Roadway Reconstruction, an architectural gateway monument, landscaping, and decorative lighting were installed at the southwest corner of Bottineau Boulevard and Bass Lake Road to call attention to the entrance to Crystal's primary commercial area to the west. Street trees, landscaping, and decorative lighting extend in both directions along both Bass Lake Road and Bottineau Boulevard.

#### Bottineau Boulevard Bridge over Canadian Pacific railroad

As part of the Bottineau Boulevard Roadway Reconstruction, a new bridge with aesthetic treatments and long approaches supported by retaining walls was constructed.

#### Green boulevard on west side of West Broadway Avenue between 47th Avenue and TH 100

Mature trees in informal groupings are dispersed throughout a lawn area separating the roadway and railroad.

#### West Broadway Avenue and BNSF railroad bridges over TH 100

The West Broadway Avenue and BNSF railroad bridges over TH 100 were designed and constructed in accordance with MnDOT's TH 100 aesthetic design guidelines developed for bridges and other features throughout the corridor.

#### Historic Robbinsdale Public Library

Located south of 42nd Avenue and west of the BNSF right-of-way, a single-story library building, on the National Register of Historic Places, houses the Robbinsdale Historical Society and is residential in scale.

#### Sacred Heart Catholic Church

Located at the intersection of Hubbard Avenue and 40th Avenue, the prominent church spire rises vertically above all other buildings in the vicinity. Constructed of limestone, the building conveys a strong presence that visually anchors the southern end of downtown Robbinsdale.

## Primary Project Visual Features

### Stations

- 63rd Avenue
- Bass Lake Road
- Robbinsdale

### Park-and-rides

- 63rd Avenue parking ramp
- Robbinsdale Transit Center parking ramp

### Bridges and Structures

New bridge over the Canadian Pacific rail to accommodate the transitway

Reconstructed BNSF railroad bridge over TH 100 to accommodate the transitway

## 3.3.4 Alignment D1

### General Visual Context

Along the edge of the Robbinsdale and Minneapolis city limits, Alignment D1 would run in the eastern 50 feet of the total 100 foot wide BNSF railroad right-of-way alongside the BNSF Railroad tracks. This alignment is independent of other roads. From 36th Avenue southward, the transitway would be depressed in relation to the surroundings with wooded embankments on both sides. Adjacent land uses primarily include residential neighborhoods and public parkland.

While some of the residential areas are secluded from the rail corridor by wider vegetative buffers, others are in closer proximity or have less vegetative buffer such as along the eastern edge on Indiana Ave, Kewanee Way, parts of Xerxes Ave, and the area near the transition to TH 55. Along the western edge of the rail corridor, a linear natural area is comprised of a series of parks that are a natural retreat from the surrounding urban and suburban development including Walter Sochacki Park, South Halifax Park, Rice Lake Park, Mary Hills Nature Area, Glenview Terrace/Valley View Park, and Theodore Wirth Regional Park and Golf Course. Each is described in more detail below. Within Theodore Wirth Regional Park, Bassett Creek meanders through a patchwork of forested areas at the edge of the golf course as it heads south toward Bassett Lake and TH 55.

The railroad right-of-way is also a primary utility corridor. A power substation is located adjacent to the BNSF right-of-way near 34th Avenue. A high-voltage power line with metal lattice towers runs along the east side of the railroad corridor. The presence of the railroad and utilities through this generally green area environment indicates the natural area has been previously disturbed. At TH 55, the transitway would turn east under the TH 55 bridges over the BNSF right-of-way to the center median of TH 55.

### Higher Quality Visual Features

#### Theodore Wirth Regional Park and Golf Course

At 759 acres, Theodore Wirth Regional Park is the largest park in the Minneapolis Parks System and provides a diverse assortment of recreational opportunities. The golf course comprises most of the park area adjacent to the proposed transitway. It is a mixture of open spaces for the tees, fairways,

and greens bordered by densely wooded areas. The terrain is varied, ranging from flat in some areas to steeply sloped in others. The wooded area between the BNSF railroad and Theodore Wirth Parkway between Golden Valley Road and Plymouth Avenue forms a visual buffer from the active use areas of the park.

#### Bassett Creek and Bassett Lake

Bassett Creek flows along the eastern edge of Theodore Wirth Park within the park boundaries. It follows a meandering route that borders several golf holes. In some locations, views of the creek from the course are wide open, and in others the creek is secluded in dense vegetation. Connected with the creek, Bassett Lake is a wider body of water located within Theodore Wirth Park on the north side of TH 55.

#### Theodore Wirth Parkway

Theodore Wirth Parkway passes through Theodore Wirth Park and crosses over the BNSF right-of-way near Golden Valley Road. It is part of the Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway.

#### Walter Sochacki Park, South Halifax Park, Rice Lake Park, and Mary Hills Nature Center

These parks, although under different municipal jurisdictions, are adjacent to each other along the west side of the BNSF right-of-way. They are all densely wooded with a network of unpaved trails.

#### Glenview Terrace/Valley View Park

Glenview Terrace/Valley View Park is located east of the BNSF railroad north of Theodore Wirth Parkway. Near the railroad, it is densely wooded. Moving further east, it transitions to mowed lawn and has tennis courts and a playground.

#### Plymouth Avenue bridge over Bassett Creek and BNSF railroad

This bridge was designed with tall slender arching piers, an architectural railing, and decorative lighting. It serves as a gateway feature approaching Theodore Wirth Park on Plymouth Avenue from the east and affords a good vantage point down to the creek from the sidewalk.

### **Primary Project Visual Features**

#### Stations

- Golden Valley Road or Plymouth Avenue/Wirth Park
- Penn Avenue

#### Bridges and Structures

- Reconstructed westbound TH 55 bridge over the BNSF Railroad

### **3.3.5 Alignment D2**

#### **General Visual Context**

In Robbinsdale, Alignment D2 would pass through a residential neighborhood along 34th Avenue where most homes are single-family dwellings. There are mature boulevard street trees and yards with trees and lawn. Approaching Bottineau Boulevard, the transitway would pass the Terrace Mall commercial site and then North Memorial Medical Center, which is comprised of a number of

variously-scaled buildings in a campus layout. It would follow Bottineau Boulevard and West Broadway Avenue, which were both reconstructed within the past ten years to include streetscape enhancements such as decorative lighting and boulevard trees.

Entering Minneapolis, the buildings along West Broadway Avenue and Penn Avenue are a mix of commercial, residential, and civic structures. Commercial buildings are generally single-story structures. Some are free-standing and some are “storefront” buildings. Two three-story, multi-family residential structures were newly constructed within the last several years – one being a senior housing facility. Many single-family homes directly face these two streets with Penn Avenue being predominantly single-family residential. Much of the housing stock was constructed in the early to mid-1900s. Some of the building stock and tree cover in the neighborhood was affected by the 2011 tornado, and many repairs would appear to be still pending.

### **Higher Quality Visual Features**

#### Victory Memorial Parkway and Theodore Wirth Parkway

The parkways pass underneath Bottineau Boulevard. They are part of the Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway.

#### City of Robbinsdale gateway area

Located on Bottineau Boulevard north of the bridge over Lowry Avenue and the parkways, architectural gateway monuments, landscaping, and decorative lighting were installed along the roadway to call attention to the entrance to the City of Robbinsdale. This work was part of the Bottineau Boulevard Roadway Reconstruction project.

#### City of Minneapolis gateway area

Located on Bottineau Boulevard south of the bridge over Lowry Avenue and the parkways, an architectural gateway monument, landscaping, and decorative lighting were installed along the roadway to call attention to the entrance to the City of Minneapolis.

#### Church of St. Anne

Located at the northwest corner of the Queen Avenue and 26th Avenue intersection. The church is a prominent stone structure with a tall vertical tower visible which rises above surrounding buildings and is visible from a distance.

#### 5 Points Building plaza

Recently constructed, the plaza at the southeast corner of the West Broadway Avenue and Penn Avenue intersection includes a sculptural transit shelter with a flower motif, benches, and landscaping.

#### Minneapolis Urban League building

Located in the northeast corner of the Penn Avenue and Plymouth Avenue intersection, this community gathering place has a tall tower with signage on Penn Avenue and an exterior entrance plaza with seating. It is constructed of brick masonry with large windows and has a solid visual presence on the street corner.

#### NorthPoint Health & Wellness Center

Located in the northwest corner of the intersection of Penn and Plymouth Avenues, the NorthPoint Health & Wellness Center is a modern-style building with curved and rectilinear forms and brick veneer and is sited close to the street.

#### Lincoln Community School

Located in the southeast corner of the intersection of Penn and 12th Avenues, the school is a three-story, brick façade structure constructed in the early 20th century with arched entry portals and extensive windows.

#### International Foursquare Gospel Church

Located in the northwest corner of the intersection of Penn and Oak Park Avenues, the church is a painted brick structure with a prominent tower visible from a distance down Penn Avenue.

### **Primary Project Visual Features**

#### Stations

- North Memorial
- Broadway/Penn
- Penn/Plymouth

#### Bridges and Structures

- Depressed transitway at curve from BNSF right-of-way to 34th Avenue
- Halifax Avenue bridge over depressed transitway noted above
- Transitway bridge at curve from 34th Avenue to Bottineau Boulevard. Transitway extends on aerial structure over Bottineau Boulevard to just north of Victory Memorial Parkway.

### **3.3.6 Alignment D1/D2 Common Section**

#### **General Visual Context**

The Alignment D1/D2 Common Section runs along TH 55 (Olson Memorial Highway) towards downtown Minneapolis. As part of the Minneapolis Near Northside Master Plan (2000), TH 55 was envisioned as a “gateway” corridor. It was acknowledged in this plan that LRT would need to be accommodated in the right-of-way in the future. Since the plan’s adoption, a number of improvements have been implemented, including new boulevard and median tree plantings to complement the mature trees along the south frontage road.

Along TH 55, homes in the adjacent residential neighborhoods face inward to the local streets and do not face the highway directly. Some multi-family residential buildings ranging from two to six stories do have some units facing the highway. On the south side of TH 55, Harrison Park includes ball fields and a community center building. Additionally, several civic buildings and spaces have prominent locations.

East of Interstate 94, industrial and civic buildings line the route, and there is little greenery. The intersection of TH 55, 6th Avenue, and 7th Street is a skewed configuration and a challenging area to

navigate visually. Seventh Street branches off as a multi-lane one-way road to access downtown Minneapolis. Approaching The Interchange site at Target Field, 6th Avenue realigns to the street grid of downtown becoming 5th Street. The roadway narrows where it runs parallel to the existing Hiawatha and Central Corridor LRT alignment. The taller buildings of downtown Minneapolis are visible in the near distance.

### **Higher Quality Visual Features**

#### Boulevard and median trees along TH 55 west of Interstate 94

Linear rows of trees frame the roadway corridor. They are a mixture of mature and newly planted trees, which reinforces the City's desired "gateway" character for the roadway.

#### Harrison Neighborhood gateway sculptures

Located on the south side of TH 55 at the Penn Avenue intersection, these artistic gateway features are approximately ten feet tall and are topped with figural sculptures of children and colorful symbols.

#### Floyd B. Olson memorial

Located on the south side of the TH 55 just east of the Penn Avenue intersection, a small plaza surrounds an approximately ten foot tall figural stone sculpture of Floyd B. Olson, a Minnesota politician from the early 20th century.

#### Zion Baptist Church

Located on the north side of TH 55 just west of Logan Avenue, the building is a modern three-story brick and glass structure.

#### Seed Academy and Wayman Church

Located on the north side of TH 55 east of Humboldt Avenue, the multi-purpose building has a two-story brick façade with a mosaic appearance.

#### Sumner Library

Located at the northwest corner of TH 55 and Van White Memorial Boulevard, the historic two-story building, on the National Register of Historic Places, has prominent gabled roof peaks and a brick façade that faces TH 55.

#### Metro Transit headquarters

Located at the corner of 6th Avenue and 7th Street, the five-story modern building has a brick, metal, and glass façade.

#### HERC site landscaping

Located at the southeast corner of 6th Avenue and 7th Street, this landscaped area stands out because there is very little other vegetation in the vicinity.

#### Ford Building

Located at the northeast corner of the intersection of 5th Street and 5th Avenue, the historic ten-story building has a brick façade with large window openings and a recently renovated primary entrance oriented towards the parking lot off 5th Avenue.

**Primary Project Visual Features**

Stations

- Van White Memorial Boulevard
- The Interchange

Bridges and Structures

- Modified TH 55 bridge over Interstate 94

**3.4 Environmental Consequences**

**3.4.1 Operating Phase Impacts**

**No-Build Alternative**

No effects identified.

**Enhanced Bus/Transportation System Management Alternative**

A transit center and park-and-ride facility would be constructed at 97th Avenue and West Broadway Avenue, north of TH 610 and would alter the current landscape characterized by agricultural, grass land, and remnant woodland at the edge of suburban development.

**Build Alternatives**

The following section and **Tables 2-7** summarizes the degree of effect to existing visual features along each alternative LRT alignment. **Table 8** summarizes the anticipated effects by alternative.

**Alignment A**

Alignment A would use land in Maple Grove that is either currently being used for gravel mining or is existing road or freight rail right-of-way. Potential effects to visual quality would be generally minimal throughout Alignment A.

**Table 2. Summary of Effects to Visual Quality – Alignment A**

Location	Alignment, Catenary, Bridges, and Retaining Walls	Stations and Park-and-Rides	Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) and Traction Power Substations (TPSS)	Change to Visual Context
Hemlock Lane to US 169	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal
US 169 to Bottineau Boulevard and Brooklyn Boulevard Intersection	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal

Location	Alignment, Catenary, Bridges, and Retaining Walls	Stations and Park-and-Rides	Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) and Traction Power Substations (TPSS)	Change to Visual Context
Bottineau Boulevard and Brooklyn Boulevard Intersection to 73 <sup>rd</sup> Avenue	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal

**Effects to Higher Quality Visual Features**

Shingle Creek

Views of Shingle Creek would be minimally affected by the proposed project. The new transitway bridge that would curve from the south side of Brooklyn Boulevard onto the BNSF right-of-way would also span Shingle Creek; it would therefore not impede views from eye level. The retaining walls at the end of the bridge in BNSF right-of-way would end before the wetland complex adjacent to the creek; it would therefore not impede views from Bottineau Boulevard.

**Alignment B**

Alignment B utilizes the existing right-of-way of West Broadway Avenue. For much of Alignment B the transitway would be located in the center of the roadway and would have minimal to moderate effects to visual quality.

**Table 3. Summary of Effects to Visual Quality – Alignment B**

Location	Alignment, Catenary, Bridges, and Retaining Walls	Stations and Park-and-Rides	Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) and Traction Power Substations (TPSS)	Change to Visual Context
North of TH 610	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal
TH 610 to 93 <sup>rd</sup> Avenue	Minimal	Minimal: the surface park-and-ride lot would be visually consistent with much of the nearby industrial and commercial land use	Minimal: if the OMF is located at the 93 <sup>rd</sup> Avenue site, it would be visually consistent with much of the nearby industrial and commercial land use	Minimal
93 <sup>rd</sup> Avenue to 85 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	Minimal	Minimal	Moderate: if the OMF is located at the 93 <sup>rd</sup> Avenue site, it would be visible to residential neighbors immediately south of 93 <sup>rd</sup> Avenue	Minimal
85 <sup>th</sup> Avenue to Brooklyn Boulevard	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal



Location	Alignment, Catenary, Bridges, and Retaining Walls	Stations and Park-and-Rides	Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) and Traction Power Substations (TPSS)	Change to Visual Context
Brooklyn Boulevard to 73rd Avenue	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal  (exception) Moderate where full and partial right-of-way takes would affect the size and features of residential yards

**Effects to Higher Quality Visual Features**

Shingle Creek

Views of Shingle Creek would be minimally affected. The only transitway features in the vicinity would be the tracks and catenary in the center median of the roadway, and they would not visually interrupt clear views to the creek.

West Broadway Avenue Bridge over TH 610

The bridge would be minimally affected. The new transitway bridge that would parallel the West Broadway Avenue Bridge over TH 610 would block views of the West Broadway bridge, but the transitway bridge could be designed to be consistent with the TH 610 aesthetic guidelines.

**Alignment C**

Alignment C utilizes the existing BNSF right-of-way. Effects to visual quality would generally be minimal because the transitway would run closely parallel to the existing railroad, resulting in a modification to an existing freight rail route. Some moderate effects are identified.

**Table 4. Summary of Effects to Visual Quality – Alignment C**

Location	Alignment, Catenary, Bridges, and Retaining Walls	Stations and Park-and-Rides	Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) and Traction Power Substations (TPSS)	Change to Visual Context
73rd Avenue to 63rd Avenue	Minimal	Minimal: park-and-ride already exists	Minimal	Minimal
63rd Avenue to Bass Lake Road	Minimal	Minimal: park-and-ride already exists	Minimal	Minimal
Bass Lake Road to 47th Avenue	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal

Location	Alignment, Catenary, Bridges, and Retaining Walls	Stations and Park-and-Rides	Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) and Traction Power Substations (TPSS)	Change to Visual Context
47th Avenue to 42nd Avenue	Moderate: green boulevard with trees on west side of West Broadway Avenue would be narrowed by the transitway	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal
42nd Avenue to 34th Avenue	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal

**Effects to Higher Quality Visual Features**

Interstate 94 bridge over the BNSF railroad and Bottineau Boulevard

Since no modifications to the Interstate 94 bridge are required, visual effects to this resource would be minimal.

City of Crystal gateway area

Visual effects to the gateway area would be minimal. The gateway sign and landscaping are near the intersection corner and would not be in conflict with the station location.

Bottineau Boulevard Bridge over Canadian Pacific railroad

Visual effects to the bridge would be minimal. It would not be physically impacted at all, and since the new bridge for the transitway over the railroad is separated visually by commercial development, there will be minimal visual influence between them.

Green boulevard on west side of West Broadway Avenue between 47th Avenue and TH 100

The construction of the transitway would require the removal of some mature trees and reduce the width of the green space separating the roadway and railroad. Visual effects would be high.

West Broadway Avenue and BNSF Railroad bridges over TH 100

The reconstructed BNSF Railroad bridge would be in the same location but widened to accommodate the transitway. It could be designed to be consistent with the TH 100 aesthetic guidelines.

Historic Robbinsdale Public Library

Visual effects to the library would be minimal since the transitway infrastructure will run within the existing BNSF right-of-way and would not alter views of the building.

Sacred Heart Catholic Church

Visual effects to the church would be minimal since the transitway infrastructure would run within the existing BNSF right-of-way and would not alter views of the building.

**Alignment D1**

Alignment D1 utilizes the existing BNSF right-of-way between 34th Avenue and TH 55. The transitway would run closely parallel to the existing BNSF freight rail tracks and, as such, would be a modification to an existing dedicated rail corridor rather than the introduction of a new rail corridor. Still, the implementation of LRT would bring an increased frequency of vehicles passing through.

Effects to visual quality would be minimal to moderate. In some locations, the tracks would be in a depressed cut section and shielded by the topography and vegetation. In other instances though, residential and park areas on both the east and west sides have more of a visual connection based on close proximity and varying degrees of openness of existing vegetation. Both temporary and permanent effects to the vegetation along the BNSF right-of-way from construction may alter the views and amount of screening of adjacent neighborhoods to the east and parks to the west.

**Table 5. Summary of Effects to Visual Quality – Alignment D1**

Location	Alignment, Catenary, Bridges, and Retaining Walls	Stations and Park-and-Rides	Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) and Traction Power Substations (TPSS)	Change to Visual Context
34th Avenue to Golden Valley Road	Moderate: transitway features in proximity to park trails would affect users' experience of currently secluded green space by introducing additional utilitarian elements in the railroad corridor	Minimal	Minimal	Moderate: potential effects to vegetation on side slopes may open views from the neighborhood to the railroad corridor
Golden Valley Road to Plymouth Avenue	Moderate: transitway features in proximity to park trails would affect park users' experience of currently secluded green space by introducing additional utilitarian elements in the railroad corridor	Minimal	Minimal	Moderate: potential effects to vegetation on side slopes may open views from the neighborhood and Wirth Park to the railroad corridor
Plymouth Avenue to TH 55	Moderate: transitway features in proximity to the edge of Wirth Park golf course and trails would affect park users' experience by introducing additional utilitarian elements in the railroad corridor	Minimal	Minimal	Moderate: potential effects to vegetation on side slopes may open views from the neighborhood and Wirth Park to the railroad corridor

**Effects to Higher Quality Visual Features**

Theodore Wirth Regional Park and Golf Course

Theodore Wirth Regional Park and Golf Course would be moderately affected, since views to the BNSF right-of-way may be opened up by grading and vegetation thinning for the transitway. The additional utilitarian features - including catenary wires, support poles, tracks, and traction and power substations, and the light rail vehicles - would add visual intrusions to the perceived “natural”

character of the park, beyond the existing railroad and overhead utilities.

#### Bassett Creek and Bassett Lake

Bassett Creek and Bassett Lake would be moderately affected similarly to Theodore Wirth Regional Park since they are part of the park's natural scenery.

#### Theodore Wirth Parkway

Theodore Wirth Parkway would be minimally affected since it passes over the transitway on a bridge only briefly. Some views to the BNSF right-of-way may be opened up in the approaches by grading and vegetation thinning for the transitway but will be peripheral to the immediate scenery adjacent the Parkway.

#### Walter Sochacki Park, South Halifax Park, Rice Lake Park, and Mary Hills Nature Center

These parks would be moderately affected. The additional utilitarian features, as listed above in the description of effects to Theodore Wirth Regional Park, will add additional visual intrusions to the perceived "natural" character of the parks beyond the existing railroad and overhead utilities.

#### Glenview Terrace/Valley View Park

Glenview Terrace/Valley View Park would be minimally affected. The presence of wetlands in the BNSF right-of-way adjacent the park means that there won't be cutting into side slopes and minimal removal of trees. The active uses of the park are well-buffered by a wooded area.

#### Plymouth Avenue bridge over Bassett Creek and BNSF railroad

While some modifications to the bridge are necessary to make space for the transitway, the overall visual quality of the bridge would be minimally affected since the primary aesthetic features including the pier arches, railing, and lighting on the deck would remain unchanged. In order to accommodate the new LRT tracks an area below the bridge would be altered from a paved slope to a clear opening with infill walls added to two of the existing arched piers for crash protection and to retain grade. This modification would only be visible from the pedestrian trail west of the BNSF track and would be unnoticeable from Plymouth Avenue above.

### **Alignment D2**

At the northern end of Alignment D2, the transitway transitions from running in the BNSF right-of-way to running within road right-of-way. As it would enter suburban and urban neighborhoods with denser development patterns than other alignments, the transitway would be in closer visual proximity to a greater number of people. Along Penn Avenue, the transitway cross section design requires the full taking of a number of properties resulting in a high degree of visual impacts. Minimal to moderate effects are also identified.

**Table 6. Summary of Effects to Visual Quality – Alignment D2**

Location	Alignment, Catenary, Bridges, and Retaining Walls	Stations and Park-and-Rides	Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) and Traction Power Substations (TPSS)	Change to Visual Context
34th Avenue to 29th Avenue	<p>High: the transitway would introduce utilitarian features along 34th Avenue through the smaller-scale residential neighborhood</p> <p>High: east of France Avenue, new bridges would affect steep vegetated slope, Bottineau Boulevard community gateway features, and be visible to the residential area on the east side of Bottineau Boulevard</p>	Moderate: North Memorial Station would affect steep vegetated slope and neighbors views	Minimal	Moderate: taking of twelve homes in a row along the transitway edges would affect the neighborhood's visual quality by potentially removing quality housing stock (further detailed building evaluation may be necessary)
29th Avenue to Penn Avenue and West Broadway Avenue Intersection	Moderate: both single-family and multi-family residential areas are in close visual proximity to West Broadway Avenue and the transitway	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal
Penn Avenue and West Broadway Avenue Intersection to Golden Valley Road	Moderate: construction of the transitway down a relatively narrow street would be in close proximity to the frontages of the remaining residential properties on the east side of Penn Avenue	Minimal	Minimal	High: taking of an extensive length (approximately 11 blocks) of commercial, civic, and residential properties on the west side of Penn Avenue would affect the neighborhood's visual quality by potentially removing quality building stock that is integral to the street character as well (further detailed building evaluation may be necessary)

Location	Alignment, Catenary, Bridges, and Retaining Walls	Stations and Park-and-Rides	Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) and Traction Power Substations (TPSS)	Change to Visual Context
Golden Valley Road to TH 55	Moderate: construction of the transitway down a relatively narrow street would be in proximity to the frontages of the remaining residential properties on the east side of Penn Avenue	Minimal	Minimal	High: taking of an extensive length (approximately 11 blocks) of commercial, civic, and residential properties on the west side of Penn Avenue would affect the neighborhood's visual quality by potentially removing quality building stock that is integral to the street character as well (further detailed building evaluation may be necessary)

**Effects to Higher Quality Visual Features**

Victory Memorial Parkway and Theodore Wirth Parkway

The parkways would be minimally affected since the new transitway bridge will cross over them in conjunction with the existing Bottineau Boulevard bridges.

City of Robbinsdale gateway area

A number of streetscape features in the center median of Bottineau Boulevard including a monument sign, landscaping, and lighting would be highly affected by the proposed transitway bridge which curves from 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue onto Bottineau Boulevard, requiring their removal.

City of Minneapolis gateway area

A number of streetscape features in the center median of Bottineau Boulevard including a monument sign, landscaping, and lighting would be highly affected by the proposed transitway bridge which curves from 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue onto Bottineau Boulevard, requiring their removal.

Church of St. Anne

The church would be minimally affected since it is a full block away from the transitway and buffered by other buildings.

5 Points Building plaza

The plaza would be minimally affected since it is already located at a high-traffic intersection. There may potentially be curb or sidewalk alterations based on the conceptual plan, but the sculptural transit shelter, furnishings, and landscaping in the plaza would not be affected.

Minneapolis Urban League building

The Urban League building would be moderately affected. Even though the transitway will be on the opposite side of Penn Avenue and won't affect the building itself, building users would be subject to potential increased distraction as a result of the addition of LRT vehicle frequency. The exterior gathering areas around the building have some buffering from Penn Avenue by a retaining wall and railing since they are set below the sidewalk grade but will still feel quite close visually.

Northpoint Health and Wellness Center

The Northpoint Health and Wellness Center would be moderately affected since the transitway will be on the west side of Penn Avenue and would require partial taking of the property frontage. Some building modifications would be necessary to create adequate space for the transitway.

Lincoln Community School

The Lincoln Community School would be moderately affected. Even though the transitway will be on the opposite side of Penn Avenue and won't affect the building itself, building users would be subject to potential increased distraction as a result of the addition of LRT vehicle frequency.

International Foursquare Gospel Church

The church would be highly affected visually since the transitway will be on the west side of Penn Avenue and require full taking of the property and removal of the building to create adequate space for the transitway.

**Alignment D1/D2 (Common Section)**

In Alignment D1/D2 (Common Section), the transitway would run along TH 55, a highway that currently accommodates a relatively high amount of traffic. Although it is envisioned as a "gateway" corridor to downtown Minneapolis, the Minneapolis Near Northside Master Plan envisioned that LRT can be accommodated without sacrificing the overall desired character in the context of a redesigned TH 55 right of way with a widened center median. This project would not reconstruct the entire highway cross section, and the construction of the transitway within the existing median would alter its existing green character. Considering the existing industrial character of the visual context east of Interstate 94 approaching downtown, it is anticipated that minimal visual effects would occur in that area.

**Table 7. Summary of Effects to Visual Quality – Alignment D1/D2 Common Section**

Location	Alignment, Catenary, Bridges, and Retaining Walls	Stations and Park-and-Rides	Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) and Traction Power Substations (TPSS)	Change to Visual Context
Penn Avenue to Humboldt Avenue	High: the transitway running down the center median of TH 55 would affect the “gateway” character of the highway by removing trees and green area, but green edge areas would remain	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal
Humboldt Avenue to Interstate 94	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal
Interstate 94 to the Interchange	Moderate: HERC landscaping affected	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal

Boulevard and median trees along TH 55 west of Interstate 94

The TH 55 center median would be highly affected. Newly planted trees would need to be removed for the transitway alignment. After the transitway is constructed in the center median, there would not be adequate space for new trees alongside it. Trees at the highway edges would remain and continue to support the “gateway” appearance of the corridor though.

HERC site landscaping

The HERC site landscaping would be moderately affected. The transitway would run parallel to 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue in a widened right-of-way which would require partial removal of planter wall, trees, and the lawn area at the southeast corner of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 7<sup>th</sup> Street.

Harrison Neighborhood gateway sculptures

The sculptures would be minimally affected since the transitway turns onto TH 55 and does not conflict with their siting.

Floyd B. Olson memorial

The memorial would be minimally affected since the transitway turns onto TH 55 and does not conflict with its siting.

Zion Baptist Church

The church would be minimally affected since it is visually buffered by the north frontage road along TH 55, and use of church sanctuaries are typically inward-focused and it is already located along a busy highway.



Seed Academy and Wayman Church

The school and church would be minimally affected since the use of church sanctuaries are typically inward-focused and it is already located along a busy highway.

Sumner Library

The library would be minimally affected visually since it is already located along a busy highway.

Metro Transit headquarters

Metro Transit’s building would be minimally affected visually since it is already located along a busy highway and serves as a transit vehicle service and storage site.

Ford Building

The Ford Building would be minimally affected because the Hiawatha LRT alignment already passes the building along 5th Street.

**Table 8. Effects by Alternative**

Alternative	Alignment/Station Impact	Park-and-Ride Impact	OMF Impact	Total Impact
<b>No-Build Alternative</b>	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal	<b>Minimal</b>
<b>TSM Alternative</b>	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal	<b>Minimal</b>
<b>Alternative A-C-D1</b>	Moderate [Golden Valley]	Minimal	Minimal	<b>Moderate</b>
	Moderate [Plymouth Ave]			
<b>Alternative A-C-D2</b>	High	Minimal	Minimal	<b>High</b>
<b>Alternative B-C-D1</b>	Moderate [Golden Valley]	Minimal	Moderate [93rd]	<b>Moderate</b>
	Moderate [Plymouth Ave]		Minimal [101st]	
<b>Alternative B-C-D2</b>	High	Minimal	Moderate [93rd]	<b>High</b>
			Minimal [101st]	

Where the identified degree of effect differs between the alignments that comprise each alternative, the highest effect anticipated for any given alignment is noted in the table.

**3.4.2 Construction Phase Impacts**

**No-Build Alternative**

None identified.

**Enhanced Bus/Transportation System Management Alternative**

None identified.

## Build Alternatives

### General

Anticipated visual effects during construction would be similar to the appearance of typical roadway projects including the temporary presence of heavy equipment, traffic control measures, and construction activities. Where the transitway passes along residential neighborhoods, the construction activity will likely be perceived as visually disruptive to typically more peaceful residential settings.

### Alignment A

The Project Area between Hemlock Lane and US 169 is currently used for gravel mining operations. Future redevelopment of the area is planned, but would not be implemented prior to the transitway. Therefore without any active land use except gravel mining, there are no construction phase effects anticipated in that segment.

### Alignment B

The construction of the new bridge for the transitway over TH 610 will be highly visible to travelers along TH 610.

### Alignment C

The reconstruction of the BNSF bridge over TH 100 to create adequate width for the transitway will be highly visible to travelers along TH 100. Where the transitway passes along residential neighborhoods, the construction activity will likely be perceived as more visually disruptive to these typically peaceful residential settings.

### Alignment D1

Users of Theodore Wirth Park, Walter Sochacki Park, South Halifax Park, and Rice Lake Park, and Mary Hills Nature Area will likely perceive construction activity as undesirable and not consistent with their anticipated recreational experience. The reconstruction of the westbound TH 55 bridge over the BNSF railroad and depressed transitway with retaining walls curving onto TH 55 will be highly visible to travelers along TH 55. Based on final construction limits, there may be temporary grading for the construction of retaining walls or other features that would affect slopes and vegetation. Any effects to slopes and vegetation will be mitigated.

### Alignment D2

Construction of the fly-over bridge from 34th Avenue to Bottineau Boulevard and North Memorial Station will be highly visible to travelers along Bottineau Boulevard, West Broadway Avenue, Lowry Avenue, Victory Memorial Parkway, and Theodore Wirth Parkway. With the relatively narrow street width, homes with frontages along West Broadway Avenue on the east side of Penn Avenue would be subject to the construction activity in close proximity.

### Alignment D1/D2 (Common)

The reconstruction of the TH 55 bridge over Interstate 94 to create adequate width for the transitway will also be highly visible to travelers along Interstate 94.

## 3.5 Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation

The various build alternatives would not result in a substantial change to the visual character of the corridor as a whole. The most dramatic (high) visual effects would occur as part of alternatives A-C-D2 and B-C-D2, particularly along Alignment D2 where a significant number of homes would be removed and the D1/D2 Common Section where the existing center green median of TH 55 would be affected.

Under these alternatives, the community would be involved in the station design process, and the process of selecting landscaping and streetscape elements that would complement and benefit the visual nature of this neighborhood. Along TH 55, Coordination will take place with MnDOT and MPRB to identify potential opportunities for tree replacement.

Moderate visual effects are anticipated as a result of alternatives A-C-D1 and B-C-D1, particularly along Alignment D1 in the vicinity of Theodore Wirth Regional Park and the string of several other community parks. In this location, transitway elements added to the rail corridor may be visually screened or softened using landscaping where adequate space permits, and the loss of existing vegetation on side slopes for grading or access purposes would be replaced to the extent feasible. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Minneapolis, Golden Valley, and Robbinsdale would be involved in selecting landscape treatments that would be compatible with the character of the parks and the surrounding neighborhoods.

As components of the various build alternatives, minimal effects to visual quality are anticipated to result under Alignments A, B, and C for the most part. In Alignment B, the potential construction of the OMF at 93<sup>rd</sup> Avenue would have a moderate effect on the neighborhood across the street. City code requirements for a front landscape yard would provide some screening. In general where feasible, lost vegetation would be replaced with vegetation of a similar type. Where new physical features of the transitway are introduced, efforts will be made to screen or soften the view. No other specific mitigation is proposed.

APPENDIX A  
Photos of Project Area Visual Context

## Alignment A



Figure 1 - View northwest from Zachary Lane. Multi-unit housing along Hemlock Lane in the background.



Figure 2 - View southeast from Jefferson Highway North. Elm Creek Boulevard Bridge over TH 169 in background.



Figure 3 - View looking east across Hennepin Technical College front lawn.



Figure 4 - View looking east down Brooklyn Boulevard at Northland Drive.



Figure 5 - View looking west along the south side of Brooklyn Boulevard. Shingle Creek is at left.



Figure 6 - View looking south along the west side of Bottineau Boulevard at the Brooklyn Boulevard intersection.

## Alignment B



Figure 7 - View looking southeast along W. Broadway Avenue toward the Oak Grove Parkway North intersection.



Figure 8 - View looking north on the west side of the W. Broadway Avenue Bridge over TH 610.



Figure 9 - View looking south from the west side of West Broadway Avenue. 93rd Avenue North is in the distance.



Figure 10 - View looking northeast at 85th Avenue North. North Hennepin Community College is south east of this intersection.



Figure 11 - View looking north from the west side of West Broadway Avenue at 76th Avenue North. Brooklyn Boulevard is in the distance.



Figure 12 - View looking east across parking lot at retail complex between Lakeland Avenue North and Jolly Lane.

Alignment C



Figure 13 - View south along BNSF right of way south of 71st Avenue. Bottineau Boulevard at left. West Broadway Avenue at right.



Figure 14 - View south along Bottineau Boulevard approaching the Interstate 94 overpass bridge. BNSF right of way at right.



Figure 15 - View south along BNSF right of way from 63rd Avenue. Bottineau Boulevard at left.



Figure 16 - View north along BNSF right of way from Bass Lake Road. Bottineau Boulevard at right.



Figure 17 - View south along BNSF right of way south of Corvallis Avenue.



Figure 18 - View north along West Broadway Avenue from 47th Avenue. BNSF right of way at left.

Alignment C



Figure 19 - View north along BNSF right of way north of 45 1/2 Avenue.



Figure 20 -View south along BNSF right of way from 45 1/2 Avenue. West Broadway Avenue at left.



Figure 21 - View north across TH 100. BNSF bridge at left. West Broadway Avenue bridge at right.



Figure 22 - View south along BNSF right of way south of TH 100. Regent Avenue cul de sac at right.



Figure 23 - View north along BNSF right of way from Noble Avenue.



Figure 24 - View south along BNSF right of way south of 40th Avenue. Railroad Avenue at right.



Alignment C



Figure 25 - View south along BNSF right of way from Lee Park.



Figure 26 -View south along Indiana Avenue south of 36th Avenue.

Alignment D1



Figure 27 - View of BNSF right of way looking south from 36th Avenue Bridge. Walter Sochacki Park is on the right.



Figure 28 - View looking south along the BNSF right of way from Walter Sochacki Park.



Figure 29 - View of BNSF right of way looking south from the Golden Valley Road Bridge. Theodore With Parkway Bridge is in the distance.



Figure 30 - View of BNSF right of way looking south from the Plymouth Avenue Bridge. Theodore Wirth Park and golf course is on the right.



Figure 31 - View of BNSF right of way looking northwest from neighborhood at North Vincent Avenue.



Figure 32 - View looking south at the TH 55 Bridge over the BNSF right of way from neighborhood at North Vincent Avenue.

Alignment D2



Figure 33 - View east along 34th Avenue from Indiana Avenue.



Figure 34 - View east along 34th Avenue from Halifax Avenue.



Figure 35 - View east along 34th Avenue west of France Avenue.



Figure 36 - View east along 34th Avenue between Chowen Avenue and Beard Avenue.



Figure 37 - View west along step slope at the southern edge of the Terrace Mall site.



Figure 38 - View north along Bottineau Boulevard from Abbott Avenue intersection. Lakeland Avenue at right.

Alignment D2



Figure 39 - View north along Bottineau Boulevard from bridge over Lowry Avenue. Robbinsdale gateway features in center median at left and at right. North Memorial Medical Center at left.



Figure 40 - View south along Theodore Wirth Parkway approaching Lowry Avenue and Bottineau Boulevard bridges overhead.



Figure 41 - View south along West Broadway Avenue. Minneapolis gateway feature in center median at left



Figure 42 - View north along Washburn Avenue north of 29th Avenue. West Broadway Avenue at left.

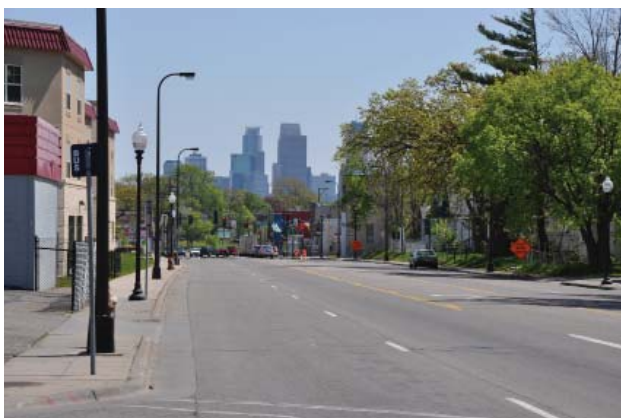


Figure 43 - View south along West Broadway Avenue south of 26th Avenue. Downtown Minneapolis skyline in distance.

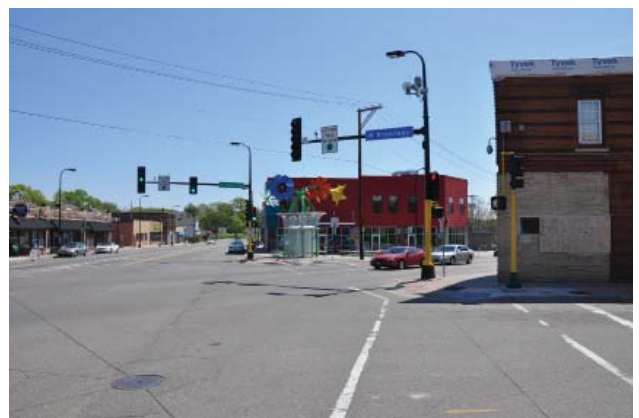


Figure 44 -View south at West Broadway Avenue and Penn Avenue intersection.

Alignment D2



Figure 45 - View north along Penn Avenue north of Golden Valley Road.



Figure 46 - View of entrance to Northpoint Health and Wellness Center from Penn Avenue north of Plymouth Avenue.



Figure 47 - View east along Plymouth Avenue sidewalk from Penn Avenue. Urban League building at left.

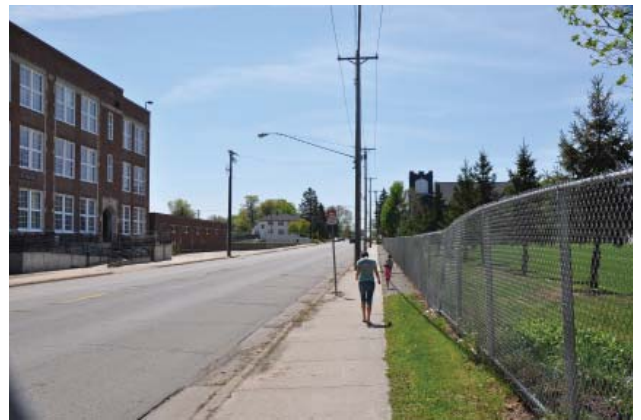


Figure 48 - View south along Penn Avenue. Lincoln Community School at left. Foursquare Gospel Church in distance.



Figure 49 - View south along Penn Avenue north of TH 55.

Alignment D1/D2 (Common)



Figure 50 - View east along the south boulevard of TH 55. South Frontage Road at right.



Figure 51 -View west along the center median of TH 55 west of Humboldt Avenue.



Figure 52 -View southeast across TH 55 from Summit Academy. Downtown Minneapolis skyline in distance.



Figure 53 - View west along the north side of TH 55 east of Bryant Avenue.



Figure 54 - View west along 6th Avenue from the 5th St intersection. HERC and future Interchange site at left.

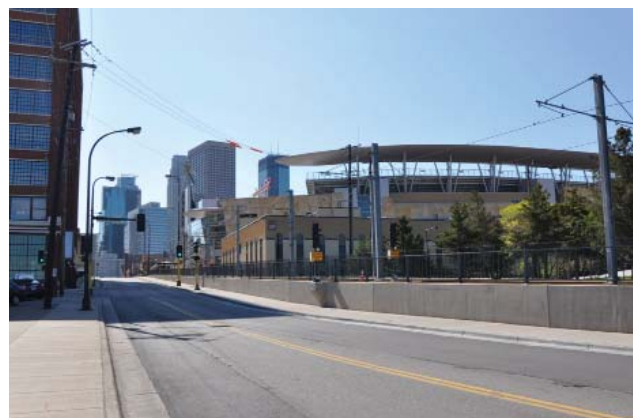


Figure 55 - View southeast along 6th Avenue from the 5th St intersection. Ford Center at left. Target Field and future Interchange site at right. Downtown Minneapolis skyline in distance.

APPENDIX B  
Photos of Higher Quality Visual Features

Alignment A



Figure 1 - View of Shingle Creek and vegetation where it passes under Brooklyn Boulevard



Figure 2 - View of Shingle Creek from Brooklyn Boulevard



Alignment B



Figure 3 - View of Shingle Creek and vegetation where it passes under West Broadway Avenue



Figure 4 - View of West Broadway Bridge over TH 610

## Alignment C



Figure 5 - View of Interstate 94 bridge over BNSF railroad and Bottineau Boulevard from Bottineau Boulevard looking south



Figure 6 - City of Crystal gateway area at Bottineau Boulevard and Bass lake Road intersection



Figure 7 - View of green boulevard at right looking south along West Broadway Avenue between 47th Avenue and TH 100



Figure 8 - View of BNSF railroad bridge over TH 100



Figure 9 - View of West Broadway Avenue bridge over TH 100



Figure 10 - View of Historic Robbinsdale Public Library

Alignment C



Figure 11 - View of Sacred Heart Catholic Church

Alignment D1



Figure 12 - View of Theodore Wirth Park and Golf Course



Figure 13 - View of Theodore Wirth Parkway



Figure 14 - View of Bassett Creek



Figure 15 - View of Bassett Lake



Figure 16 - View of Plymouth Avenue Bridge over Bassett Creek and BNSF railroad



Figure 17 - View of recreational trail in park along the BNSF railroad

Alignment D2



Figure 18 - View Victory Memorial Drive looking north



Figure 19 - View of Theodore Wirth Parkway



Figure 20 - View of Robbinsdale gateway area looking north along Bottineau Boulevard from the bridge over Lowry Avenue



Figure 21 - View of Minneapolis gateway area looking south along Bottineau Boulevard from the bridge over Lowry Avenue



Figure 22 - View of Church of St. Anne



Figure 23 - View of 5 Points Building plaza from Penn Avenue looking north

Alignment D2



Figure 24 - View of Minneapolis Urban League building clock tower from Penn Avenue



Figure 25 - View of Northpoint Health and Wellness Center from Penn Avenue



Figure 26 - view of Lincoln Community School from Penn Avenue



Figure 27 - View of International Foursquare Gospel Church from Penn Avenue

Alignment D1/D2 Common Section



Figure 28 - View of planted median along TH 55 looking west



Figure 29 - View of wide planted boulevard along south side of TH 55 looking east



Figure 30 - View of Harrison Neighborhood gateway sculpture near the intersection of TH 55 and Penn Avenue



Figure 31 - View of Floyd B. Olson Memorial near the intersection of TH 55 and Penn Avenue



Figure 32 - View of Zion Baptist Church from TH 55

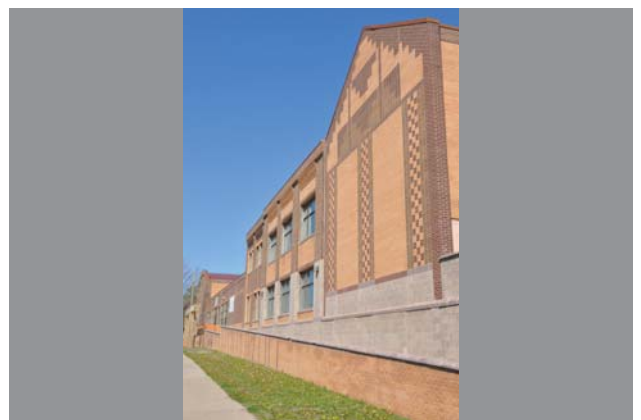


Figure 33 - View of Seed Academy and Wayman Church from the frontage road on the north side of TH55

Alignment D1/D2 Common Section



Figure 32 - View of Sumner Library at the northwest corner of TH 55 and Van White Memorial Boulevard



Figure 33 - View of Metro Transit headquarters looking northwest along 6th Avenue



Figure 34 - View of HERC site landscaping at corner of 6th Avenue and 7th St.

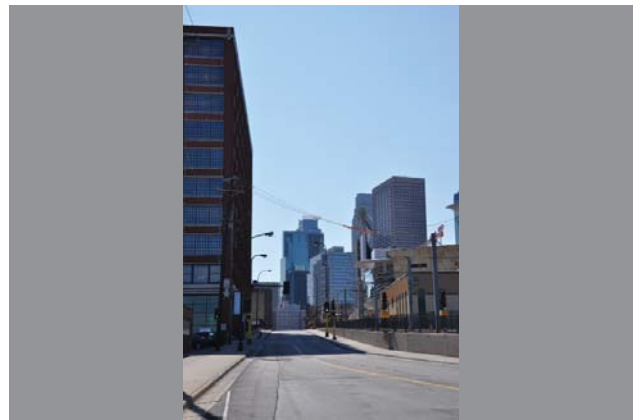


Figure 35 - View of the Ford Building at left looking east along 5th St.



APPENDIX C  
List of References

Visual Quality Scoping Guidelines, MnDOT, last updated 2010

Central Corridor LRT FEIS, Metropolitan Council, 2009

Near Northside Master Plan, City of Minneapolis, 2000

Maple Grove Code of Ordinances

Brooklyn Park Code of Ordinances

Crystal Code of Ordinances

Robbinsdale Code of Ordinances