



DECEMBER 13, 2021

METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION

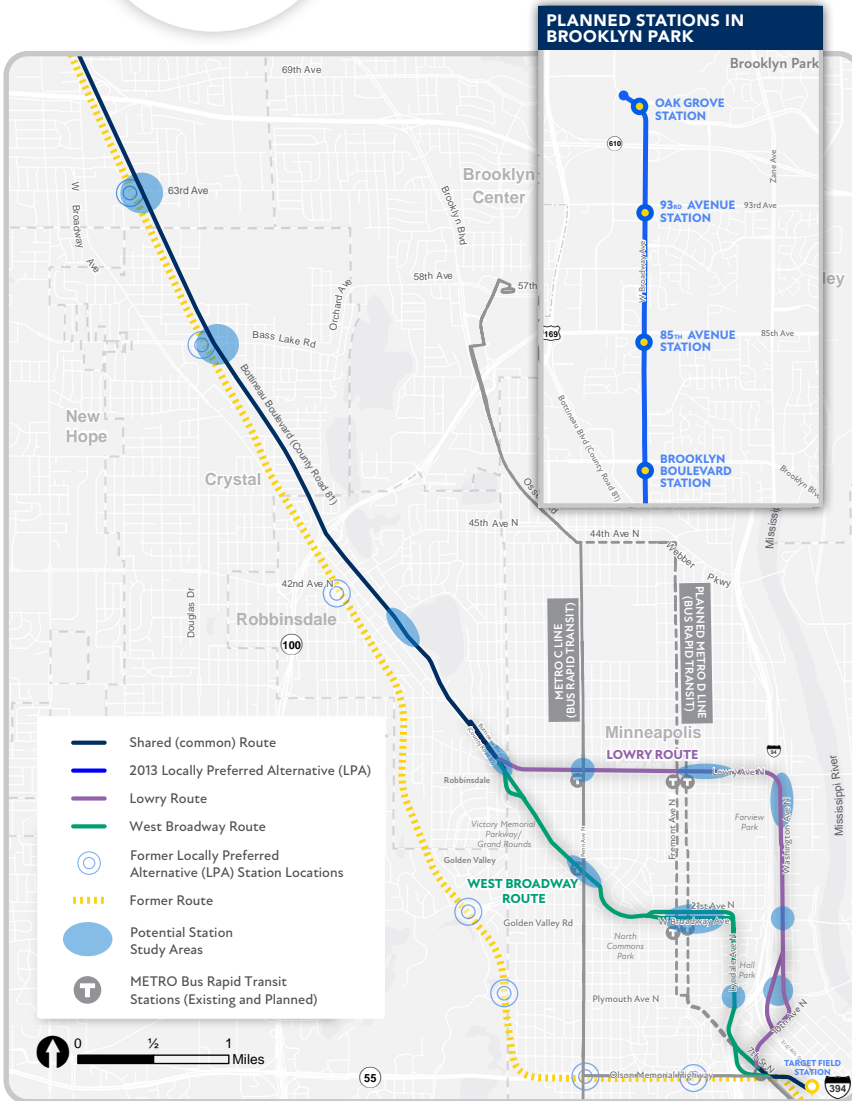
Draft Route Modification Report





METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION

Draft Route Modification Report Summary • December 2021



Background

Since August 2020, the Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County have partnered to evaluate revised route options that do not use freight rail property as previously planned for the METRO Blue Line Extension.

Brooklyn Park:

The former route and stations along West Broadway in Brooklyn Park remain the same.

Crystal and Robbinsdale:

The proposed route along Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) closely parallels the original route for most of this area.

Minneapolis:

Two route options are being evaluated—one along Lowry and Washington Avenues (shown in purple) and one along West Broadway Avenue (shown in green).

Purpose of the Report

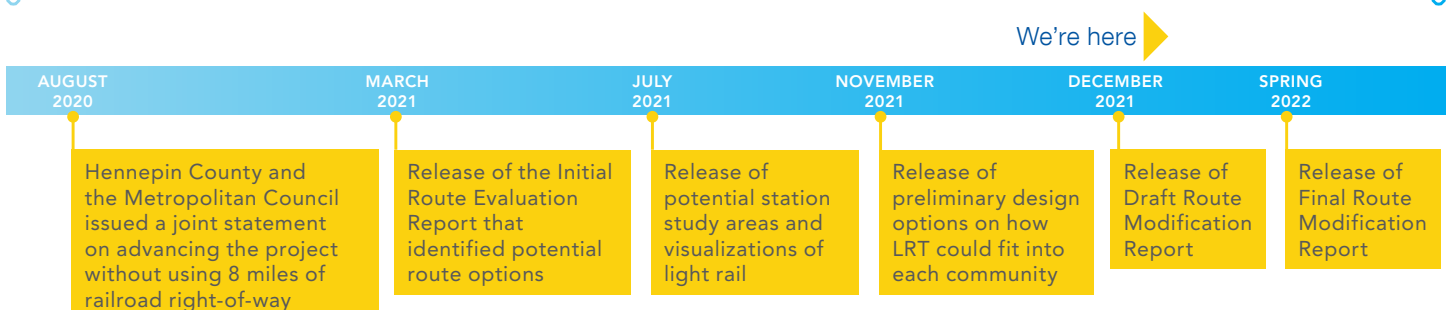
The Initial Route Evaluation Report released in March 2021 laid out a process and general timeline to identify a community-supported route for the project. Now, this Draft Route Modification Report describes the overall process, public input, and technical evaluation that will inform the recommendation of a modified route. The Final Route Modification Report will recommend a community supported route for further evaluation in spring 2022 that responds to the Project Principles and project goals.

Help us select a route!

Now is the time to give comments as your feedback will shape the final recommendation. To submit your comments on the Draft Route Modification Report and for a list of upcoming community meetings, visit BlueLineExt.org.

Schedule

ONGOING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT





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Community Engagement

The METRO Blue Line Extension Project relies on community voices to inform project decision-making. Since August 2020, the project has engaged with communities through a variety of activities, including in-person and virtual community meetings, door knocking, attending community events, online and paper surveys, and interactive maps. See below for the timing and project updates shared since August 2020.

- **Round 1 (August 2020 through January 2021):**
Input on project goals, concerns, opportunities, and thoughts on potential new routes
- **Round 2 (March 2021):**
Input on new route options released as part of the Initial Route Modification Report
- **Round 3 (July to August 2021):**
Input on the connections that light rail would make within communities and station locations within those areas
- **Round 4 (Late September to December 2021):**
Input on updated design concepts and potential opportunities and impacts of light rail options

Since March 2021, project staff have contracted directly with 12 community and cultural organizations to support a robust engagement process. These organizations are seeking feedback on the project by hosting activities prioritizing low-income communities, communities of color, and specific areas of the corridor. The community and cultural organizations include:

- Asian Media Access Inc
- CAPI USA
- Encouraging Leaders
- Harrison Neighborhood Association
- Juxtaposition Arts
- Lao Assistance Center of MN
- Liberian Business Association
- Northside Economic Opportunity Network
- Northside Residents Redevelopment Council
- West Broadway Business Coalition
- Jordan Area Community Council
- Hawthorne Neighborhood Council

Major themes heard from the community:

- Avoid impacts/disruption to communities and the environment
- Safety on transit and in communities served
- Easy pedestrian access to/from stations
- Anti-displacement efforts are a priority
- Support for businesses during construction
- Access to regional destinations
- Support economic development
- Improve the transit experience
- Improve access/serve transit dependent populations



October 9th Bike, Walk, Bus tour of Minneapolis route options and station study areas.

Anti-Displacement Initiative

The Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County are committed to delivering a light rail transit (LRT) investment that benefits current corridor residents and businesses. In response to feedback received during engagement activities, project partners are advancing efforts to address community concerns about housing affordability, business support, and displacement.

The project team is convening a diverse Anti-Displacement Workgroup with seats for agency and community partners to research and recommend programs and policies that will support this initiative. The Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) will lead and facilitate the Anti-Displacement Workgroup and provide recommendations in the next 18 months.

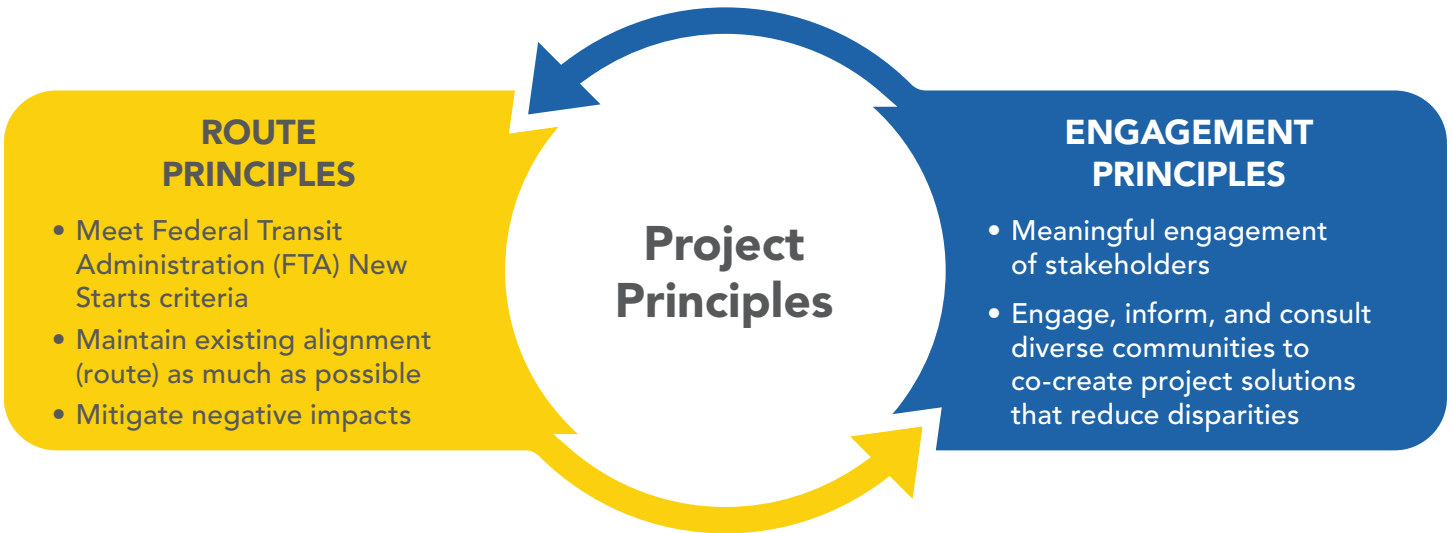


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Evaluation Process

To determine a community-supported route, the project team is considering Project Principles and goals, community and business feedback, and engineering requirements. Each route is evaluated against the project goals to see how it serves community needs.



Each route has been evaluated based on its ability to meet project goals. All the routes have received an overall assessment of “good” in their ability to serve the community. In some cases these routes achieve an excellent rating based on unique features and the potential to deliver exemplary positive benefits. None of the routes have been assessed as “poor,” which would mean they did not meet the project goals. The Evaluation Findings section of this report provides more detail on how each route was evaluated against the project goals.

ASSESSMENT OF ROUTE OPTIONS TO DEFINED GOALS

PROJECT GOAL	BOTTINEAU BOULEVARD (COUNTY ROAD 81) IN BROOKLYN PARK, CRYSTAL, AND ROBBINSDALE	LOWRY ROUTE	WEST BROADWAY ROUTE
Improve transit access and connections to jobs and regional destinations	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT
Improve frequency and reliability of transit service to communities in the corridor	EXCELLENT	GOOD	GOOD
Provide transit improvements that maximize transit benefits, while being cost competitive and economically viable	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD
Support communities' development goals	EXCELLENT	GOOD	EXCELLENT
Promote healthy communities and sound environmental practices including efforts to address climate change	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD
Advance local and regional equity and work towards reducing regional economic disparities	GOOD	GOOD	EXCELLENT



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Next Steps

The Draft Route Modification Report is available for public review, and comments will be accepted through **January 25, 2022**. The Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County will carefully review the community input received along with the findings from the technical analysis completed to date to recommend a community-supported route for further evaluation in spring 2022 as part of the Final Route Modification Report. Following that recommendation, design and technical evaluation of the recommended route will advance and will be documented in federal and state environmental review documents. Further robust community engagement will continue through these and future phases.

To submit your comments on the draft report and for a list of upcoming community meetings in January, visit BlueLineExt.org.

We're here ▶

1 YEAR

1.5 – 2 YEARS

1.5 – 2 YEARS

3 – 4 YEARS

- Identify community-supported route
- Environmental review
Document benefits and impacts of the project
Municipal Consent
Seek city support of the LRT design
- Engineering
Develop construction ready design plans
● Station area planning
- Construction and Full Funding Grant Agreement
Federal funding
- Goal — Line opens in 2028

LRT projects are complex and unforeseen challenges arise. Schedules and timelines are subject to change.

Blue Line Extension Community-Supported Route:

- Best meets the Project Principles and goals
- Grounded in community feedback through collaboration with stakeholders
- Supported by project corridor communities and decision-makers

Stay Connected!

For project questions or to invite us to an event, contact:

Brooklyn Park/Minneapolis/Robbinsdale/

Overall Project Questions:

Sophia Ginis – Sophia.Ginis@metrotransit.org

Crystal:

David Davies – David.Davies@metrotransit.org



Visit BlueLineExt.org for more information, to sign-up for the project newsletter, and share your comments, questions and concerns on our interactive feedback map.

@BluelineExt @Blue_Line_Extension

@METROBlueLineExtension

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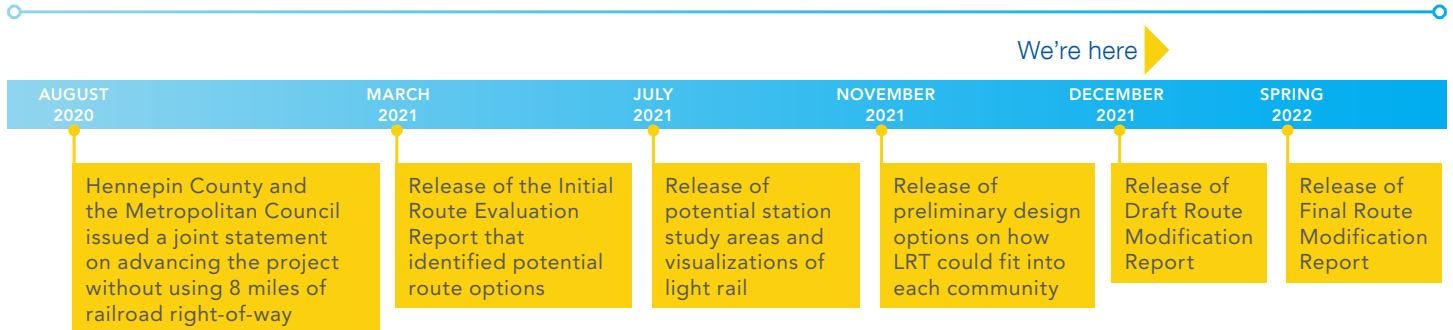
Purpose of Report

The Initial Route Evaluation Report released in March 2021 laid out a process and general timeline to identify a community-supported route for the Blue Line Extension Project (BLRT). This Draft Route Modification Report reflects the next step in the project development and describes the process, public input, and technical evaluation that will be used to recommend a modified route for BLRT. The recommended route modification will respond to the Project Principles listed on page 3 and the project goals listed below:

- Improve transit access and connections to jobs and regional destinations
- Improve frequency and reliability of transit service to communities in the corridor
- Provide transit improvements that maximize transit benefits while being cost competitive and economically viable
- Support communities' development goals
- Promote healthy communities and sound environmental practices including efforts to address climate change
- Advance local and regional equity and work towards reducing regional racial disparities

This recommendation will be presented in a Final Route Modification Report. Community feedback is essential to this process, and engagement efforts will be ongoing before and after the release of the Final Route Modification Report. A summary of the overall process is provided below.

ONGOING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



To find the best possible route for the communities around BLRT and the region as a whole, the project team needs your feedback. As you review this report, consider the following questions:

i As the project advances, what information would you find most useful for community decision-making?

🔧 Based on the information presented in the report, do you have a preferred route? Why?

! What issues or opportunities do you see with the routes and the information?

+ What else would you recommend?



Project Justification

Project Purpose

The BLRT project purpose statement was developed during the previous environmental planning phase of the project and remains the foundation of project work and decisions.

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

Project Need

A statement of need for the project was also developed during the previous environmental phase:

The BLRT project is needed to effectively address long-term regional transit mobility and local accessibility needs while providing efficient, travel-time competitive transit service that supports economic development goals and objectives of local, regional, and statewide plans.

In addition to the defined BLRT project purpose, need, and goals, a project such as BLRT can result in important and meaningful benefits through:



Infrastructure improvements beyond transit (e.g., roadway reconstruction, improved traffic design, placemaking and improvements to pedestrian realm, utility, and stormwater and sewer updates).



Streetscape and landscape improvements such as lighting, increasing green space, bicycle and pedestrian connections, and green space.



Environmental and community benefits by reducing vehicle miles traveled in single-occupancy automobiles, creating economic development benefits, and providing an affordable transportation option - of particular importance to environmental justice communities.

Project Milestones Before Route Modification

2013

After an alternatives analysis process, a locally preferred alternative (LPA) was selected.

2014

Station area planning work began that included health equity strategies. The FTA approved entry into the project development phase. Project was transferred from Hennepin County to Metropolitan Council.

2016

Hennepin County and cities along the route reviewed and approved preliminary designs. Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision was published by the FTA and Metropolitan Council.

2017-2018

The project entered the engineering phase, during which discussions took place with BNSF around co-locating light rail and freight lines.

2020

Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County issued a joint statement that the project will move forward without the use of the freight rail corridor.

Project History and Process Overview

Initial Route Evaluation Process and Report

The original route, pictured in Figure 1, used BNSF rail right-of-way for much of its length. BNSF is a private rail company with individual property rights that supersede state right to take private property for public use. Significant effort and resources, including offering to purchase the corridor, were taken at the local, regional, state, and federal level to advance required approvals by BNSF Railway. After several years of unsuccessful discussions, it was necessary to move the project forward without using freight rail property.

While this was a setback, it also provided an opportunity to improve the project by identifying potential routes that could serve even more people and destinations while maintaining as much of the existing route as possible. Once this decision was announced in August 2020, project partners and committees reconvened to assess next steps. They decided to build on completed work rather than starting from scratch; however, the change in direction also offered an opportunity to revisit the project’s key priorities. Project partners and stakeholders worked to develop a set of Project Principles to set the project scope and process going forward. These principles are foundational in the route modification decision-making.

Based on the Project Principles and existing data, project partners developed route options that would not use the freight rail corridor. A summary of the Project Principles is provided below.

Project Principles

Alignment (Route) Principles

As work on the development of potential new routes continues, these principles will serve as the foundation of the process.



MEET FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (FTA) NEW STARTS CRITERIA

- ✓ Maintain BLRT purpose and need
- ✓ Maintain mode
- ✓ Minimize travel time
- ✓ Maximize ridership
- ✓ Maximize community and economic development
- ✓ Maximize project rating
- ✓ When appropriate, pursue opportunities to serve even more people and destinations, especially areas with lower rates of car ownership/vehicular access and those with mobility challenges



MAINTAIN EXISTING ALIGNMENT (ROUTE) AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE

- ✓ Maintain existing termini: Target Field Station in Minneapolis and Oak Grove Station in Brooklyn Park
- ✓ Serve the existing corridor cities of Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Robbinsdale, Golden Valley, and Minneapolis and their major destinations



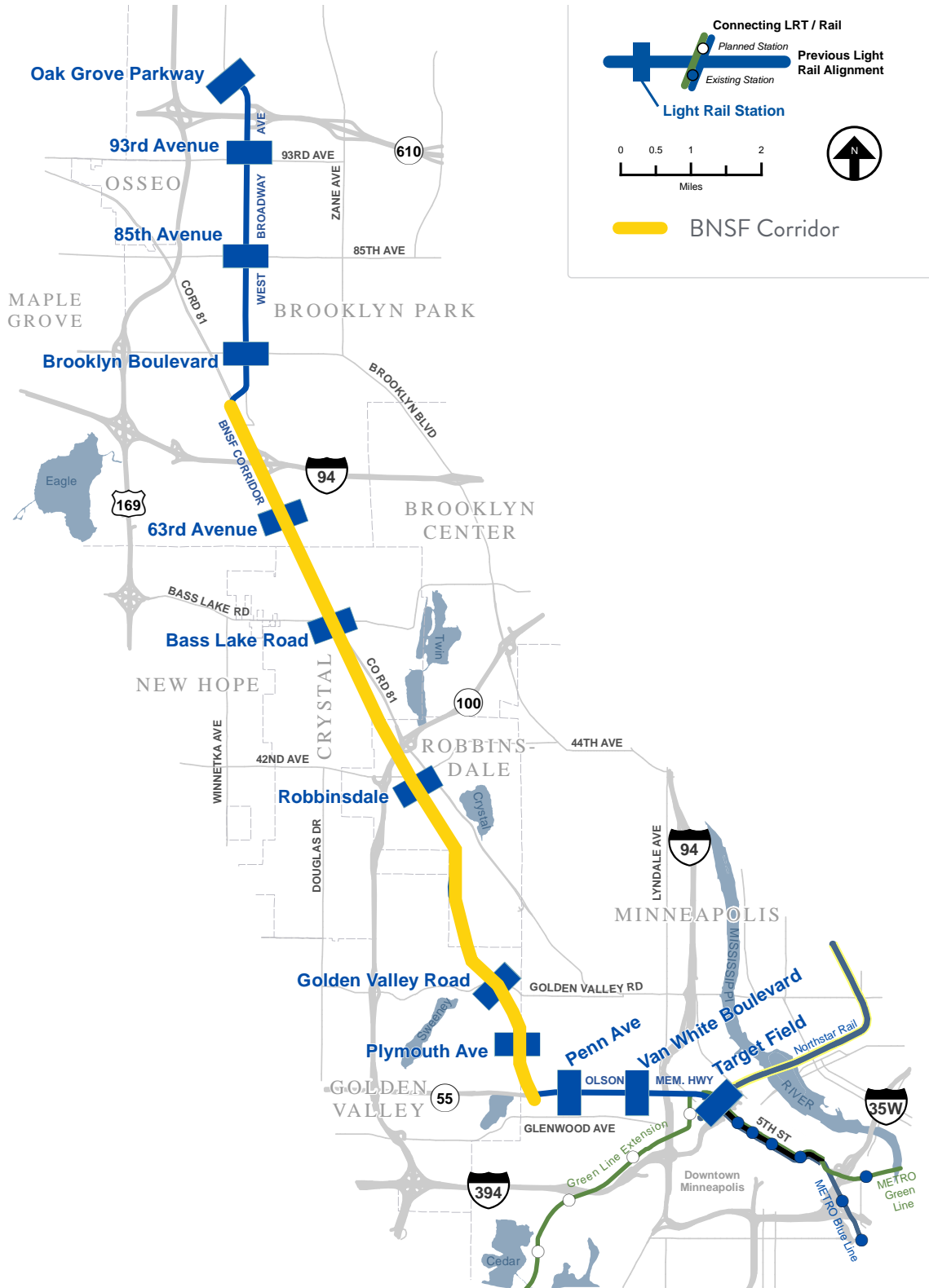
MITIGATE NEGATIVE IMPACTS

- ✓ Complement existing and planned METRO transitways
- ✓ Minimize residential, commercial, and environmental impacts
- ✓ Support safety and connections prioritizing people walking, biking, and rolling
- ✓ Maximize carbon pollution reduction



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Figure 1: 2013 Locally Preferred Alternative



Engagement Principles

As part of the commitment to the community, engagement principles were included as part of the adopted guidance for how to move the project forward. Including engagement as a core part of the overall project work helps ensure the project team is grounded in a community-centric approach that is adaptive to community needs.



MEANINGFULLY ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS

- ✓ Honor and build on previous robust community engagement
- ✓ Tailor engagement practices to meet the needs of the individual communities in the corridor

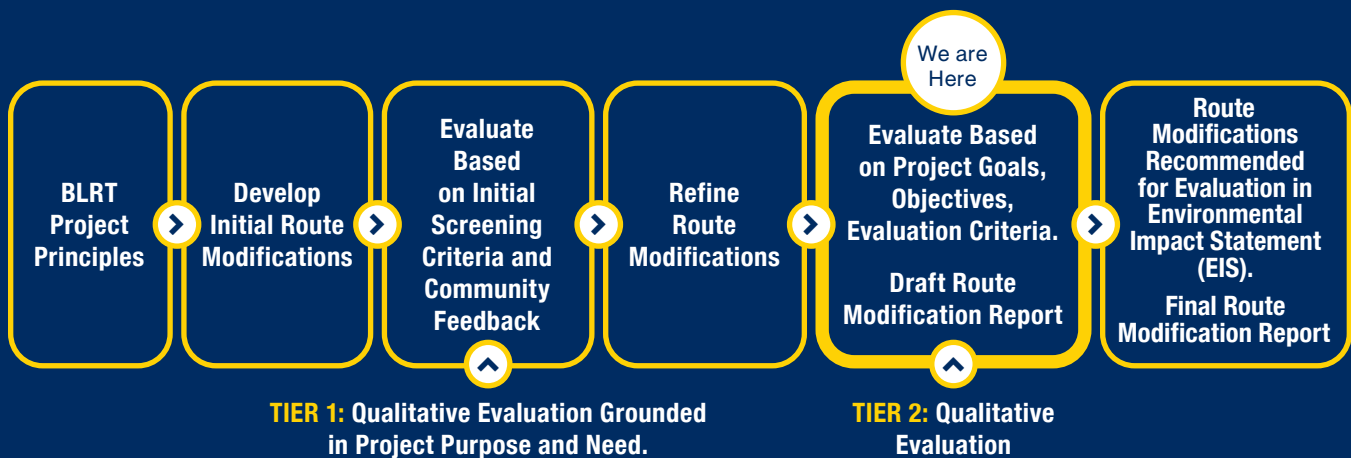


ENGAGE, INFORM, AND CONSULT DIVERSE COMMUNITIES TO CO-CREATE PROJECT SOLUTIONS THAT REDUCE DISPARITIES

- ✓ Ensure corridor communities of all races, ethnicities, incomes, and abilities are engaged so all communities and corridor cities share in growth opportunities, with an emphasis on low-income and cultural communities
- ✓ Use community goals, priorities, and criteria for growth to inform decision-making
- ✓ Adjust strategies and approach as needed to ensure corridor communities are fully represented in engagement efforts

Route Identification Process Overview

Since the Initial Route Evaluation Report was released in March 2021, the project has taken several steps to identify the route and station areas that best fit the goals of the project and address the needs of the corridor communities. This process has been guided by the Project Principles, project goals, and best practices in light rail development, including lessons learned from the development of three METRO light rail lines: the METRO Blue Line, METRO Green Line, and METRO Green Line Extension.





Collaborative Decision-Making Process

Partners and Stakeholders

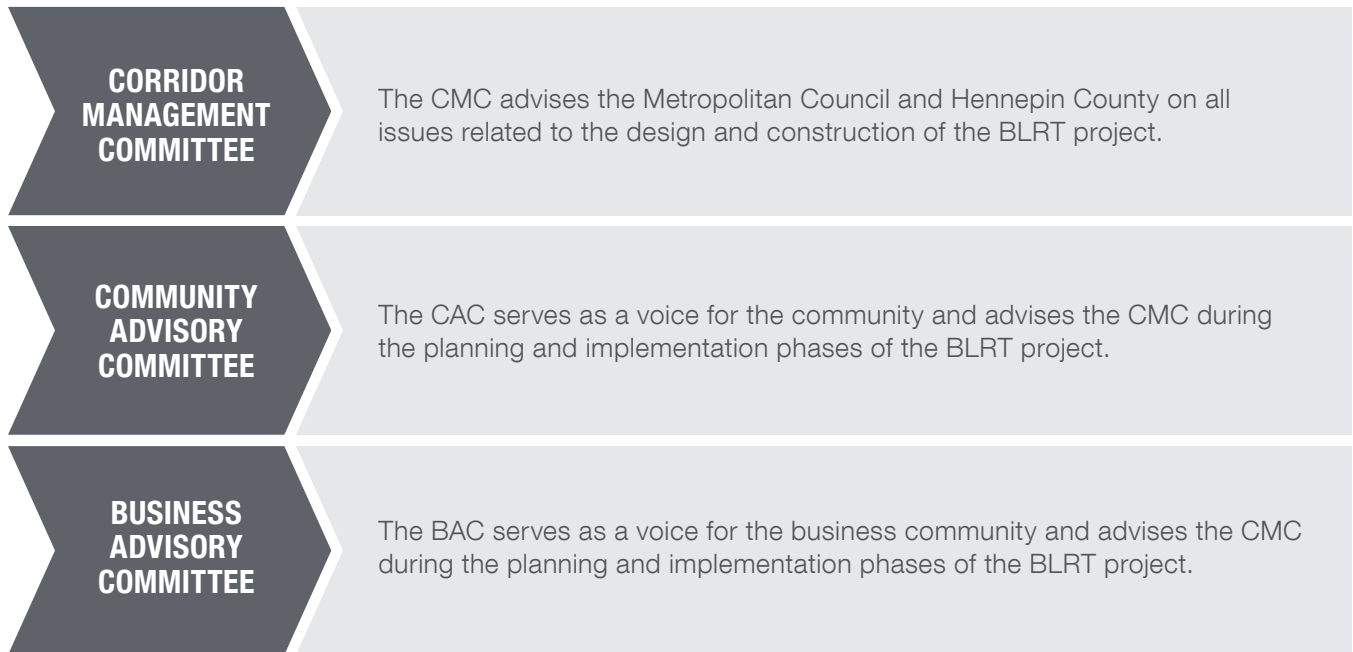
The decision-making process includes a deep connection between design considerations and feedback from project stakeholders (including city partners and organizations), advisory committee members (Technical Project Advisory Committee [TPAC], Business Advisory Committee [BAC], Community Advisory Committee [CAC], and Corridor Management Committee [CMC]), and leadership from project partners including the Metropolitan Council, Hennepin County, and the FTA.

The roles of the advisory committees are described below:

ADVISORY COMMITTEE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS



Advisory committees are a key avenue through which the Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County receive public input. Project advisory committees enable the project team to receive advice and feedback from policymakers, government entities, community groups, businesses, and citizens. Community dialogue and informed decision-making is supported through the work of the CMC, CAC, and BAC.



Hennepin County has dedicated funding to light rail development through the Hennepin County Transportation Sales and Use Tax and the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority. The Metropolitan Council is responsible for the development of the project and reporting to the FTA to qualify for funding in the federal New Starts program.

COMMUNITY COHORT

Beginning in March 2021, project staff contracted directly with 12 community and cultural organizations to support a robust engagement process during the route selection and station study area process. This relationship is a continuation of an approach that began in 2014 with health equity engagement during station area planning.

The current community consultant organizations were selected to reflect constituencies identified in project stakeholder analysis along with their geographic focus within designated project areas, prioritizing low-income communities and communities of color. Selected consultants work as a team with complementary services and areas served. The cohort meets as a team with communications and engagement project staff to coordinate their efforts with the direction of the BLRT Project Management Team.

These organizations are seeking feedback on the project through pop-up information tables at community events, hosting virtual and in-person listening sessions, and presentations. Engagement activities were done in the context of acknowledging complicating factors during a pandemic and social unrest.

Cohort members:

- Asian Media Access Inc
- CAPI USA
- Encouraging Leaders
- Harrison Neighborhood Association
- Juxtaposition Arts
- Lao Assistance Center of MN
- Liberian Business Association
- Northside Economic Opportunity Network
- Northside Residents Redevelopment Council
- West Broadway Business Coalition
- Jordan Area Community Council
- Hawthorne Neighborhood Council

Public Engagement

To inform project decision-making, public engagement was integrated throughout activities in 2021. Summaries of what was heard and what was learned from this public engagement were included in the project's monthly meeting agendas and are linked later in this section. Public engagement included project sponsored listening sessions, workshops, community presentations, and key stakeholder meetings. Engagement also included extending the project's reach into low-income communities and communities of color through the work of the Community Engagement Cohort, a group of 12 community and culturally based organizations. In addition, there was a targeted effort to engage Robbinsdale residents through a series of informal Driveway Talks. In total there have been 270 events that engaged over 9,000 community members.

Engagement Phases

Initial engagement efforts to begin identifying an improved route occurred during fall 2020 through January 2021 (read the [engagement report](#) for a summary of feedback received). These efforts focused on engaging key stakeholders along with some listening sessions to educate community on the new direction of the project and to collect input regarding community goals, concerns, opportunities, and thoughts on potential new routes. Previous engagement done through the station area planning process and FTA transit-oriented development pilot grant was also carried forward into this process.

The second round of public engagement sought feedback from the public and stakeholders on the new route options released in March 2021 as part of the Initial Route Modification Report. The key questions of this phase were to ask the community if anything had been missed and if these route options seemed right. Project staff also asked about major destinations, issues or opportunities, and potential design options to help inform the next phase. [Read the full engagement report here.](#)

The third round of public engagement from July to August 2021 was focused on the connections that light rail would make within communities. Station study areas were identified, and staff asked the community about



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where they would like stations within those areas, if the right number of station study areas had been identified, and if they were overall in the correct location. [Read the full engagement report here](#). Visualizations also began the conversation about how light rail might fit into the community.

Engagement in Robbinsdale

The following themes were identified through engagement activities held in Robbinsdale during the fall of 2021. One of the key features of engagement was a series of driveway talks hosted by Commissioner Lunde, community residents, and Robbinsdale policy makers from May to October 2021. This approach of meeting people where they are uncovered and documented key community issues and aspirations. This input was included in the public input summaries to inform project decision-making.

The following themes emerged from this input:

- Concerns about safe pedestrian crossing, including the need for pedestrian facilities such as a bridge to avoid traffic and visual details that encourage cars to slow down
- Questions about the history of the project and why freight rail property could not be used
- Desire for station design to focus on safety elements
- Ensure greenery is part of future design
- Ensure access to park, boat launch, and bike trails
- Some concern about noise increases near residential areas

Engagement in Crystal

The following themes were identified through engagement activities held in Crystal during the fall of 2021:

- Comments expressed support that the station area was similar and that the need for this transit connection was important
- Asked for designers to focus on safe pedestrian crossings and to minimize crossing distances, especially for those with mobility challenges
- Support for grade-separation of County Road 81, coupled with desire to make sure the station is visible and feels safe
- Some concern about noise or vibration increases near residential areas



November 16 Workshop at the Capri Theater

Current Public Engagement Feedback

In the most recent and fourth round of public engagement (September – December 2021), project staff shared design concepts and the potential opportunities and impacts of light rail options in Minneapolis. The following summarizes feedback on Minneapolis route options received through public meetings, comment forms, an interactive feedback map, and an online survey during this round.

ROUTE OPTIONS IN MINNEAPOLIS

Two main themes emerged from engagement in Minneapolis:

- A preference for alternatives that balance fairness of impacts and that avoid major North Minneapolis assets
- Support of the LRT investment, coupled with the request to ensure the top community priorities are being considered and addressed, such as parking, safety, anti-displacement, support during construction, and supporting the community's vision for development

While we have been hearing more initial support for the West Broadway route, we have received comments with preference for both routes. Some of the reasons include:

- Preference for routing on Lowry due to its proximity to residential areas, potential for development, fewer business impacts, and the limited space on West Broadway
- Preference for routing on West Broadway due to density of businesses, housing, schools, etc., reduction of racial disparities, and providing economic benefits for Northside residents and businesses, but concerned about how tight the right-of-way is
- Prefer neither option because both bring negative impacts to residents and small businesses
- Concerns about traffic impacts of removing lanes with either option
- Concern about how light rail will fit on the narrow streets in Minneapolis without impacting homes and businesses
- Concern about at-grade design
 - Need for better traffic enforcement such as people running traffic lights and causing collisions with the trains
 - Feel that light rail should be built above/below ground like in other major cities



Lao Assistance listening session March 2021



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DISPLACEMENT AND GENTRIFICATION

- Minimize impacts, disruption, and displacement of businesses and residents
 - Displacement and gentrification occurring along the route is the highest concern; need up front commitment from the project team on these issues before selecting a route
 - Need to address how those impacted by light rail will be compensated and how the project will create new ownership opportunities for housing
 - Concerned with limited development options after light rail is built
- Many of the people that live in the light rail corridor are immigrants and refugees who are low- to middle-income; they can't afford to be displaced
- Need to support young people on the Northside by generating jobs and apprenticeship opportunities
- How are we incorporating lessons learned from past transportation projects that negatively impacted Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities to inform our approach – such as Green Line and Blue Line?
- Need for affordable housing
- Need to preserve affordable commercial space for small businesses

STATION LOCATION AND LRT DESIGN

- Stations should be well lit and heated
- Stations should reflect local communities, culture, history; should enhance neighborhood aesthetically, not just for their function
- Easy/safe pedestrian access to stations is key; improve sidewalk connections
- Concern about lack of parking at stations will cause riders to park in neighborhoods
- Locate stations at major intersections
- Include wayfinding to local businesses, places to get food, etc.
- Incorporate street beautification and public art



Talk Out Lao'd Facebook live event hosted by Lao Assistance Center on May 26, 2021

Outreach

Since August 2020, project staff have engaged with the public through the following activities:

- Online and in-person surveys
- Online interactive maps
- Online and in-person comment forms
- Phone call and emails
- Door-knocking
- In-person and virtual project hosted community meetings such as listening sessions, open houses, and workshops
- Stakeholder check-ins with community and business groups
- Community events attendance
- Pop-ups at bus stops, food shelves, community centers, and grocery stores
- Information at libraries
- Corridor tours

Communications

Methods to share project updates have included:

- Up-to-date website information
- Translated and public facing summaries and fact sheets/one-pagers
- Advertisement in BIPOC newspapers
- BIPOC radio ads and interviews
- Engagement with CCX Media and other local broadcasters
- Social media
- Corridor postcards
- Property owner/tenant letters
- Door knocking and flyering for events

Metrics to Date

This engagement has resulted in:

- Approximately 4,000 survey responses
- Over 1,200 comments on the interactive map
- 270 events resulting in nearly 9,000 points of contact with the public
- Over 500 emails and phone calls
- Majority of activities with environmental justice communities
- 30 comments from comment forms

Anti-Displacement Initiative

The Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County are committed to delivering an LRT investment that benefits current corridor residents and businesses. In response to the feedback received during engagement events, both agencies are advancing efforts to address community concerns about housing affordability, business support, and displacement.

As part of this commitment, the project sought the leadership of a local group to lead an anti-displacement initiative. A committee that included corridor community and business representation selected University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) to lead this effort. CURA, in partnership with Hennepin County and the Metropolitan Council, will work with community and partner stakeholders to evaluate the potential for current and future displacement related to planning, construction, and operation of BLRT.

Over 18 months, CURA plans to seek input from more than 5,000 individual corridor residents and stakeholders over the course of their contract. They will draw from years of study on gentrification and displacement in Minneapolis and the northwest suburbs and extensive work in those communities to generate a report that will outline the needs found in the community, actionable policy steps, and potential funding strategies and resources.



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Central to the work will be the Anti-Displacement Workgroup, comprised of community leaders, residents, and business owners potentially at risk of displacement, as well as other experts and staff from key nonprofit, philanthropic, and agency partners. Members will help guide anti-displacement strategies and policy development by providing personal insight, local expertise, and direct connections to communities impacted by the project.

COMMITMENTS TO THE COMMUNITY

Metropolitan Council, Hennepin County, and cities along the corridor are committed to:

- Implementing a comprehensive and innovative set of strategies to prevent multiple forms of displacement
- Maximizing community benefits
- Building wealth in place
- Centering community voices
- Building on, supporting, and protecting existing community assets
- Providing more opportunities for equitable housing, employment, business development, cultural experiences, and other activities of daily life

ACTIONS

- A diverse Anti-Displacement Workgroup with seats for agency and community partners to research and recommend programs and policies will support this initiative
- CURA will lead and facilitate the Anti-Displacement Workgroup
- CURA will provide recommendations in the next 18 months



October 9th Bike, Walk, Bus tour of Minneapolis route options and station study areas

Public Engagement Activities Since March 2021

MARCH 2021

The Initial Route Evaluation Report was published that identified routes for consideration in Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Robbinsdale, and Minneapolis. The routes in this report reflected a preliminary screening for land use and right-of-way space and were further designed with the following primary considerations: potential property impacts, impacts to parking, design feasibility, driveway or other vehicle access, and traffic implications. Project partners began gathering public feedback on project goals and route options. January to March engagement activities to solicit feedback on the project goals and route options presented included 25 listening session/stakeholder meetings, seven advisory committee meetings, and three community townhalls.

APRIL 2021

Advisory committees met and shared feedback on an anti-displacement plan. April engagement activities included five advisory committee meetings, 13 stakeholder/community meetings, and several pop-ups at vaccination events and other community events.

MAY 2021

Public engagement focused on continuing the conversation on opportunities and concerns about the project, route options, and project goals. May engagement activities included five advisory committee meetings, two Facebook Live events, 15 stakeholder meetings, chamber of commerce presentations, and several pop-ups at vaccination events and other community events.

JUNE 2021

Twenty-two community meetings in June focused on station study areas and included driveway chats hosted by Hennepin County commissioners, three advisory committees, four stakeholder meetings, and over 10 community events at festivals, vaccination events, and farmers markets.

JULY-AUGUST 2021

Station study areas were determined based on initial feedback and design considerations. Corridor visualizations were released to see how light rail could fit in the community. July through August engagement activities included eight corridor-wide open houses (virtual and in-person), three advisory committee meetings, several driveway chats hosted by commissioners, and 32 pop-up tables at community events such as grocery stores, vaccination sites, farmers markets, festivals, and national night out events.

SEPTEMBER 2021

Stakeholder and advisory committee meetings were ongoing. The Hennepin County Board took action to hire CURA to facilitate an Anti-Displacement Workgroup. September engagement continued the conversation about station study areas and visualizations. Thirty-two events included four advisory committee meetings, an open house in Crystal, driveway talks hosted by commissioners, and three stakeholder meetings.

OCTOBER 2021

An initial evaluation of potential building impacts was completed and options for alignments linking BLRT to Target Field were advanced. October engagement activities included an open house in Robbinsdale, two advisory committee meetings, corridor tours, driveway talks hosted by commissioners, and one-on-one stakeholder meetings.

NOVEMBER 2021

Updated design concepts for various options along West Broadway and Lowry Avenue were released. Six public workshops were held in Minneapolis for the community to review potential opportunities and impacts of the light rail options and evaluate how they meet the project goals. Stakeholder and advisory committee meetings were ongoing.



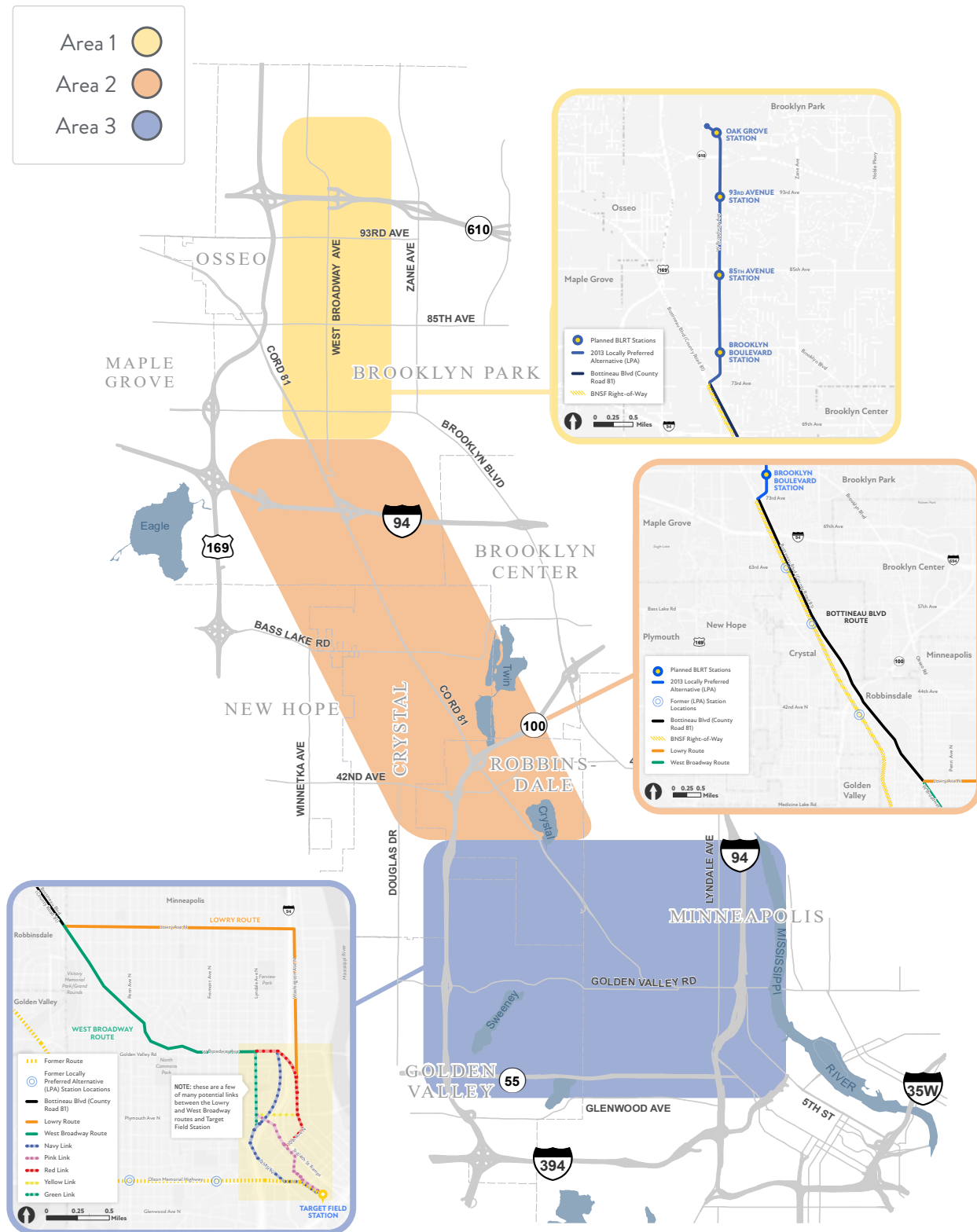
Overview of Routes for Consideration

Based on the March 2021 Initial Route Evaluation Report, the approach was to divide the corridor into three areas identifying potential route modifications that avoid use of freight rail property (Figure 2). The March 2021 report also identified the potential routes for each of the study areas (Table 1 and Figure 2). For more information about route options and to view exhibits about each option, visit BlueLineExt.org.

Table 1: Summary of Routes by Area

AREA	LEVEL OF CHANGE	DESCRIPTION
Area 1: Brooklyn Park	None	The proposed alignment has not been changed from the original route.
Area 2: Brooklyn Park, Crystal, and Robbinsdale	Low-Medium	Proposed route along Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) parallels original route on rail right-of-way for most of this area.
Area 3: Minneapolis	High	Instead of following freight rail right-of-way, the route would run through North Minneapolis along either Lowry and Washington Avenues or West Broadway and Lyndale Avenues.

Figure 2: BLRT Study Areas and Potential Routes Identified in March 2021 Report





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Since March 2021, the project team has been working with corridor communities and the advisory committees to advance the definition of the proposed routes and station areas.

Specific to defining station areas, the following elements were considered:

- Previously planned stations
- Stakeholder and community input
- Access to destinations
- Transit connections
- 0.5 to 1 mile spacing
- Overall number of stations

Area 1: Brooklyn Park

Figure 3: Proposed Route in Brooklyn Park



No changes have been made to the route in Area 1. Area 1 runs on West Broadway Avenue from the Oak Grove station in Brooklyn Park to approximately 85th Avenue. Stations in this section of the overall corridor, from north to south, include Oak Grove Station, 93rd Avenue Station, 85th Avenue Station, and Brooklyn Boulevard Station.

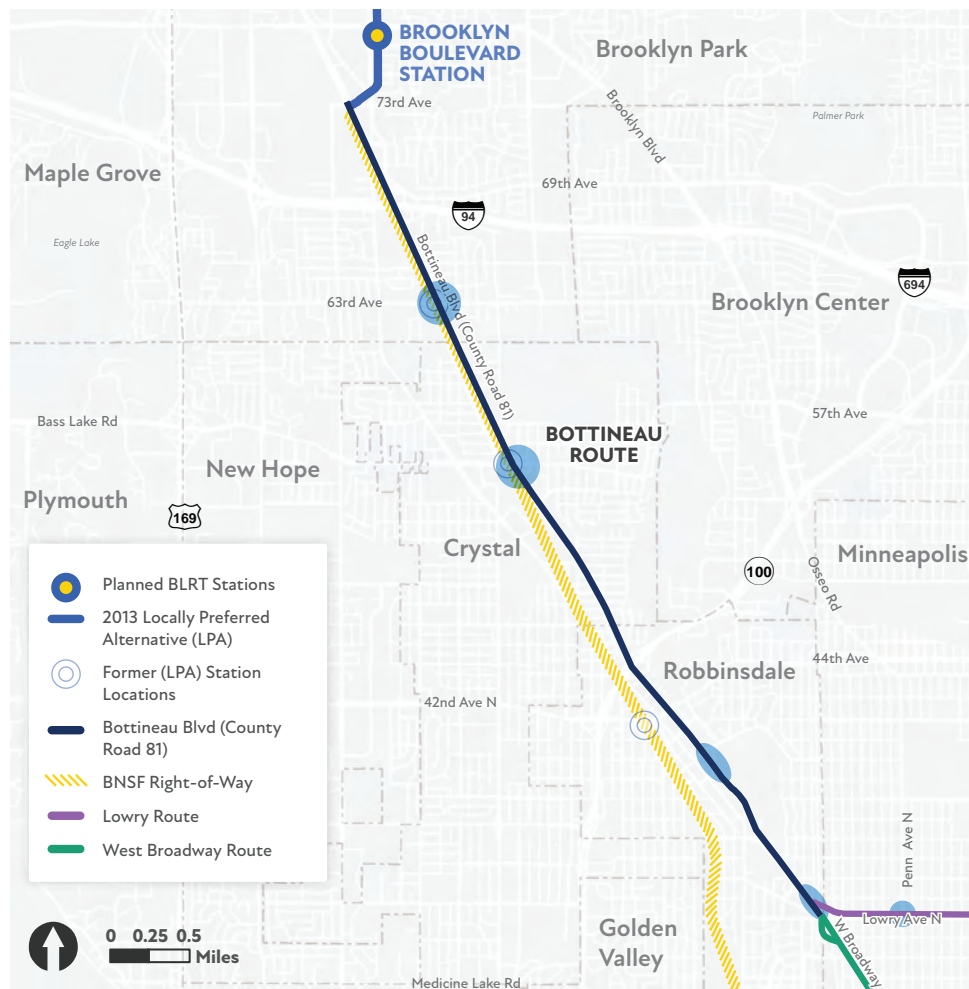
How was this route option determined?

As this section of the overall corridor does not require use of freight rail property, the route as previously defined is proposed to be preserved. This recommendation is consistent with the Project Principle of maintaining the existing alignment as much as possible, along with the project goal of improving transit access and connections to jobs and regional destinations. Additionally, maintaining the existing route provides the opportunity to continue to advance transit-oriented development opportunities.

As the project advances through the design and environmental review phase, the Metropolitan Council will continue to work with Hennepin County on the design of the West Broadway Avenue reconstruction project in Brooklyn Park.

Area 2: Brooklyn Park, Crystal, and Robbinsdale

Figure 4: Proposed Route in Brooklyn Park, Crystal, and Robbinsdale



This section of the route along Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) replaces the route in the freight rail right-of-way. Bottineau Boulevard runs parallel to the railway for much of this stretch, meaning that the shift in the route is relatively small.

How was this route option determined?

Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) is about 100 feet east of the freight rail corridor for much of this area. Within Area 2, there are a number of topographic features that limit development of a route for the BLRT, including Crystal Lake, the Twin Lakes, and the Crystal Airport. Considering these constraints, the Project Principle to maintain the existing route as much as possible, and the location of key destinations to serve with transit (such as North Memorial Hospital), Bottineau Boulevard has been identified as the priority route for consideration within Area 2. Stations are proposed at 63rd Avenue, Bass Lake Road, Downtown Robbinsdale, and North Memorial Hospital.



METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Draft Route Modification Report

Figures 5-16 reflect visualizations prepared for Bottineau Boulevard and shared at community workshops to provide a visual of what BLRT could look like at individual locations along the considered route. Table 2 provides a summary of the figures for reference.

Table 2: Figures in Area 2

FIGURE TITLE	DESCRIPTION
Figure 5: Existing Conditions, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) Near the Crystal Airport, Crystal	Figure 5 is a visualization of a section of Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) in Crystal as it exists today.
Figure 6: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) Near the Crystal Airport, Crystal	Figure 6 represents how light rail could fit in Crystal along Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81). This picture uses the typical width of the roadway at this location.
Figure 7: Existing Conditions, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) South of Bass Lake Road, Crystal	Figure 7 is a visualization of a section of Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) in Crystal as it exists today.
Figure 8: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) South of Bass Lake Road, Crystal	Figure 8 represents how light rail could fit in Crystal along Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81). This picture uses the typical width of the roadway at this location.
Figure 9: Existing, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) at 48th Avenue, Crystal	Figure 9 is a visualization of a section of Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) in Crystal as it exists today.
Figure 10: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) at 48th Avenue, Crystal	Figure 10 represents how light rail could fit in Crystal along Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81). This picture uses the typical width of the roadway at this location.
Figure 11: Existing, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) at 40th Avenue, Robbinsdale	Figure 11 is a visualization of a section of Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) in Robbinsdale as it exists today.
Figure 12: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) at 40th Avenue, Robbinsdale	Figure 12 represents how light rail could fit in Robbinsdale along Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81). This picture uses the typical width of the roadway at this location.
Figure 13: Existing, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) near Crystal Lake, Robbinsdale	Figure 13 is a visualization of a section of Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) in Robbinsdale as it exists today.
Figure 14: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) near Crystal Lake, Robbinsdale	Figure 14 represents how light rail could fit in Robbinsdale along Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81). This picture uses the typical width of the roadway at this location.
Figure 15: Existing, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) near North Memorial, Robbinsdale	Figure 15 is a visualization of a section of Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) in Robbinsdale as it exists today.
Figure 16: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) near North Memorial, Robbinsdale	Figure 16 represents how light rail could fit in Robbinsdale along Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81).

Figure 5: Existing Conditions, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) Near the Crystal Airport, Crystal



Figure 6: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) Near the Crystal Airport, Crystal





METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Draft Route Modification Report

Figure 7: Existing Conditions, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) South of Bass Lake Road, Crystal



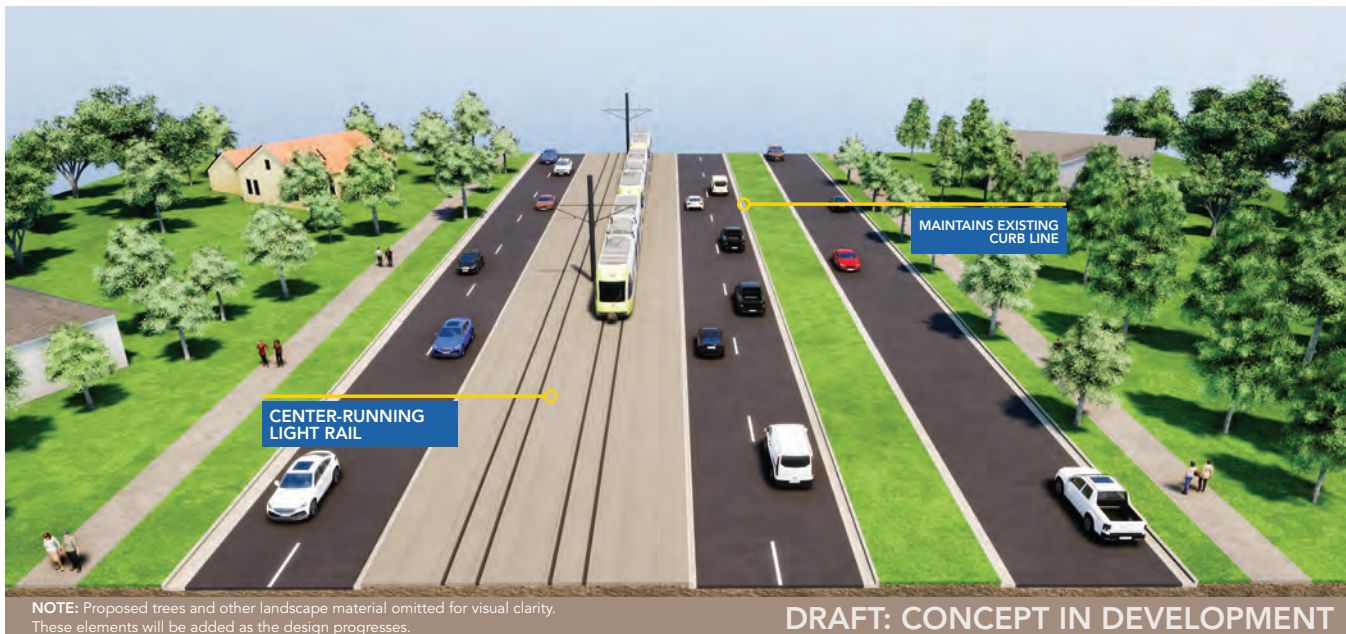
Figure 8: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) South of Bass Lake Road, Crystal



Figure 9: Existing, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) at 48th Avenue, Crystal



Figure 10: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) at 48th Avenue, Crystal





METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Draft Route Modification Report

Figure 11: Existing, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) at 40th Avenue, Robbinsdale



Figure 12: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) at 40th Avenue, Robbinsdale



Figure 13: Existing, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) near Crystal Lake, Robbinsdale



Figure 14: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) near Crystal Lake, Robbinsdale





METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Draft Route Modification Report

Figure 15: Existing, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) near North Memorial, Robbinsdale



Figure 16: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) near North Memorial, Robbinsdale



Area 3: Minneapolis

Area 3 is the most complex in terms of potential route modifications. As summarized in the March 2021 report, an initial range of route options were identified and then screened from further evaluation as they did not effectively meet the Project Principles and goals.

A summary of the routes previously screened, including the BNSF railway, is presented below. Please note that the Highway 100 and BNSF routes extend into Area 2.

Route options screened from further analysis

HIGHWAY 100

Although the Highway 100 corridor is relatively wide, it does not travel through areas that serve more people and destinations as compared to other route options. It also deviates rather far from the original alignment along the BNSF rail corridor.

BNSF RAILWAY

The BNSF Railway is a private company with individual property rights that supersede state right to take private property for public use. Significant effort and resources, including offering to purchase the corridor, were taken at the local, regional, state, and federal level to advance required approvals by BNSF Railway. After several years of unsuccessful discussions, it was time to move the project forward without using freight rail property.

PENN AVENUE, FREMONT AVENUE, OR EMERSON AVENUE

These roadway corridors are relatively narrow, which would require significant property impacts. In addition, these corridors already accommodate valuable METRO transit services through the planned D Line and existing C Line arterial bus rapid transit.

LYNDALE AVENUE NORTH OF WEST BROADWAY

North of West Broadway Avenue, Lyndale Avenue transitions to a two-lane roadway without much room to accommodate light rail, and there are houses that closely front the roadway. This would require significant property impacts.

Within Area 3, development of a potential BLRT route started with identification of points of connection. To the south, the existing METRO station at Target Field represents the connection between the existing METRO Blue Line and the planned BLRT. To the north, the area around North Memorial Hospital has been identified as the location where the BLRT would transition to Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) in Area 2.

Several factors were considered when identifying new routes, including:

- **Available public right-of-way:** A light rail guideway requires approximately 30 feet of width (more at stations) for street level service.
- **Continuity:** A light rail corridor needs a continuous, relatively straight alignment to follow for efficient travel times.
- **Context:** A light rail line and its stations are better suited to some areas and less suited to others. Higher density residential and commercial areas are best suited to accommodate light rail and maximize community and economic development opportunities.
- **Project Principles:** Several of the adopted Project Principles directly influence consideration of candidate routes including: “minimize residential, commercial and environmental impacts,” “complement existing and planned METRO transitways,” and others.

The March 2021 report identified two primary routes and various linking sections. Since March 2021, the project team has been evaluating these two routes in more detail, along with the various links. Through that process, several of the links previously identified have been screened from further consideration based on the elements described in Figure 17.



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Figure 17: Route Link Options in Minneapolis



LINKS NOT RECOMMENDED FOR FURTHER STUDY

- 1 West Broadway between Interstate 94 and Lyndale Avenue accommodates a large volume of traffic and adding light rail would require widening the corridor. This would create significant property impacts.
- 2 The design intent is for light rail to stay on one side of Interstate 94. Crossing twice would introduce additional construction impacts and costs that will not add many benefits to the project.
- 3 There are operational issues associated with the light rail track connection between the existing METRO Green Line and future BLRT at Target Field Station that prevent the track from separating before 7th Street.

Figure 18 reflects the proposed routes in Minneapolis that are under evaluation in this report.

Figure 18: Proposed Routes in Minneapolis



Note: Station study areas reflect general geographic areas where stations could be located. As the community-supported route advances, final station locations will be identified. Through the process, station study areas currently identified in this report may shift, be removed, or be added.



Lowry

This route option, reflected as the purple route in Figure 18, would connect to Washington Avenue either via 3rd/4th Street or 10th Street. At Washington Avenue, the route would head north until it reaches Lowry Avenue, where it would continue west on Lowry Avenue to the connecting point at Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81).

Figures 19-28 represent the options at intersections along Washington Avenue and Lowry Avenue. Each of these design options and associated visualizations were shared at the November 2021 in-person and virtual workshops held in Minneapolis. Table 3 provides a summary of the figures for reference.

Table 3: Figures in Area 3 (Lowry Route)

FIGURE TITLE	DESCRIPTION
Figure 19: Existing Conditions, Washington Avenue at 14th Avenue	Figure 19 shows Washington Avenue at 14th Avenue as it exists today.
Figure 20: Concept, Washington Avenue at 14th Avenue	Figure 20 shows center-running light rail and lane reductions on Washington Avenue at 14th Avenue.
Figure 21: Existing Conditions, Washington Avenue at 18th Avenue	Figure 21 shows Washington Avenue at 18th Avenue as it exists today.
Figure 22: Concept, Washington Avenue at 18th Avenue	Figure 22 shows center-running light rail and an added parking lane on Washington Avenue at 18th Avenue.
Figure 23: Existing Conditions, Washington Avenue at 29th Avenue	Figure 23 shows Washington Avenue at 29th Avenue as it exists today.
Figure 24: Concept, Washington Avenue at 29th Avenue	Figure 24 shows side-running light rail on Washington Avenue at 29th Avenue, with a sidewalk added.
Figure 25: Existing Conditions, Lowry Avenue at Lyndale Avenue	Figure 25 shows Lowry Avenue as it exists today.
Figure 26: Concept, Lowry Avenue at Lyndale Avenue	Figure 26 shows center-running light rail and an added bike lane on Lowry Avenue at Lyndale Avenue.
Figure 27: Existing Conditions, Lowry Avenue at Newton Avenue	Figure 27 shows Lowry Avenue at Newton Avenue as it exists today.
Figure 28: Concept, Lowry Avenue at Newton Avenue	Figure 28 shows center-running light rail and a lane reduction on Lowry Avenue at Newton Avenue.

Figure 19: Existing Conditions, Washington Avenue at 14th Avenue



Figure 20: Concept, Washington Avenue at 14th Avenue



NOTE: Proposed trees and other landscape material omitted for visual clarity. These elements will be added as the design progresses.



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Figure 21: Existing Conditions, Washington Avenue at 18th Avenue



Figure 22: Concept, Washington Avenue at 18th Avenue



Figure 23: Existing Conditions, Washington Avenue at 29th Avenue



Figure 24: Concept, Washington Avenue at 29th Avenue





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Figure 25: Existing Conditions, Lowry Avenue at Lyndale Avenue



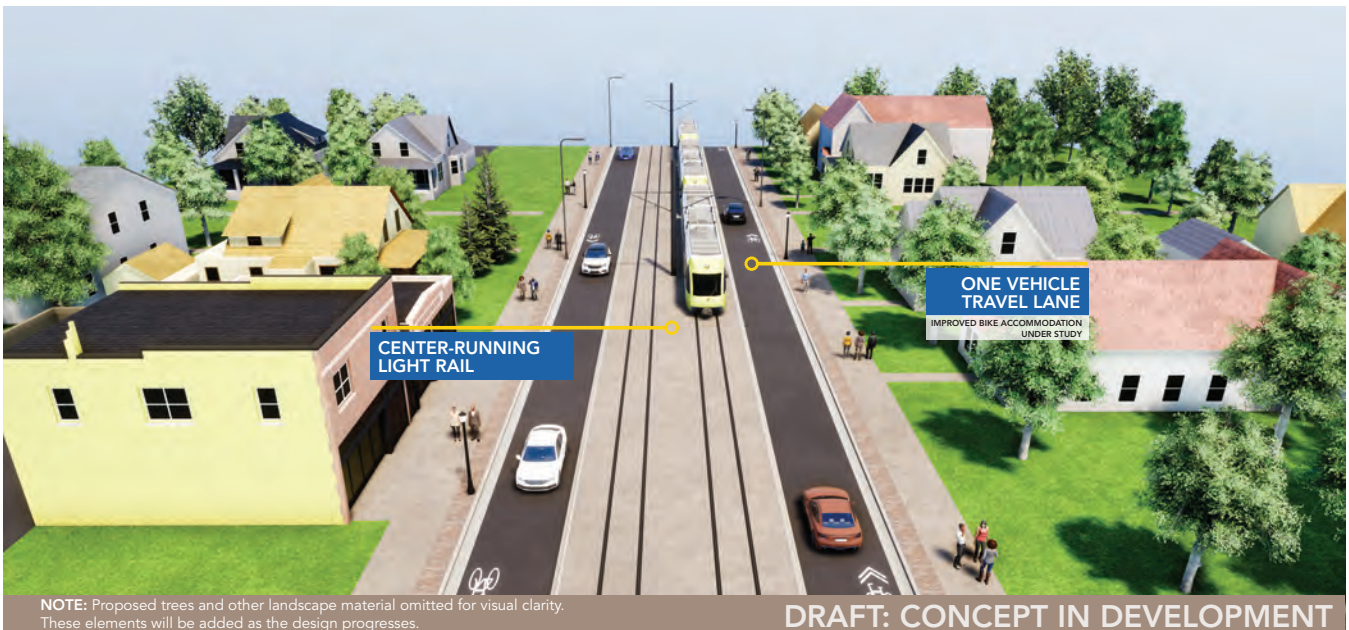
Figure 26: Concept, Lowry Avenue at Lyndale Avenue



Figure 27: Existing Conditions, Lowry Avenue at Newton Avenue



Figure 28: Concept, Lowry Avenue at Newton Avenue



NOTE: Proposed trees and other landscape material omitted for visual clarity. These elements will be added as the design progresses.



West Broadway

This route option, reflected in green in Figure 18, would connect to Lyndale Avenue either via 7th Street or Olson Memorial Highway (Highway 55) and then continue on Lyndale Avenue until it reaches West Broadway Avenue, where it would head west on West Broadway Avenue to the common connection at Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81). To address right-of-way constraints along West Broadway Avenue, route and design options have been developed both along West Broadway Avenue and along 21st Avenue North, which is located one block to the north of West Broadway Avenue.

Figures 29-33 reflect visualizations that have been prepared for the various options along Lyndale Avenue, West Broadway Avenue, and 21st Avenue North in Minneapolis. Each of these design options and associated visualizations were shared at the November 2021 in-person and virtual workshops held in Minneapolis. Table 4 provides a summary of the figures for reference.

Table 4: Figures in Area 3 (West Broadway Route)

FIGURE TITLE	DESCRIPTION
Figure 29: Existing Conditions, West Broadway and 21st Avenues from Lyndale to Irving Avenue	Figure 29 shows West Broadway and 21st Avenues from Lyndale to Irving Avenue as they exist today.
Figure 30: Center-Running Light Rail Concept, West Broadway Avenue from Lyndale to Irving Avenue	Figure 30 shows center-running light rail and two lanes of traffic on West Broadway Avenue.
Figure 31: Side-Running Light Rail with Split Traffic Concept, West Broadway Avenue from Lyndale to Irving Avenue	Figure 31 shows side-running light rail on West Broadway Avenue. Traffic is split with one lane on West Broadway Avenue and two lanes on 21st Avenue North.
Figure 32: Split Light Rail Concept, West Broadway Avenue from Lyndale to Irving Avenue	Figure 32 shows side-running light rail and traffic split between West Broadway Avenue and 21st Avenue North.
Figure 33: Light Rail on 21st Avenue North Concept, Lyndale to Irving Avenue	Figure 33 shows light rail only on 21st Avenue North and four lanes of traffic on West Broadway Avenue (as it exists today).

Figure 29: Existing Conditions, West Broadway and 21st Avenues from Lyndale to Irving Avenue

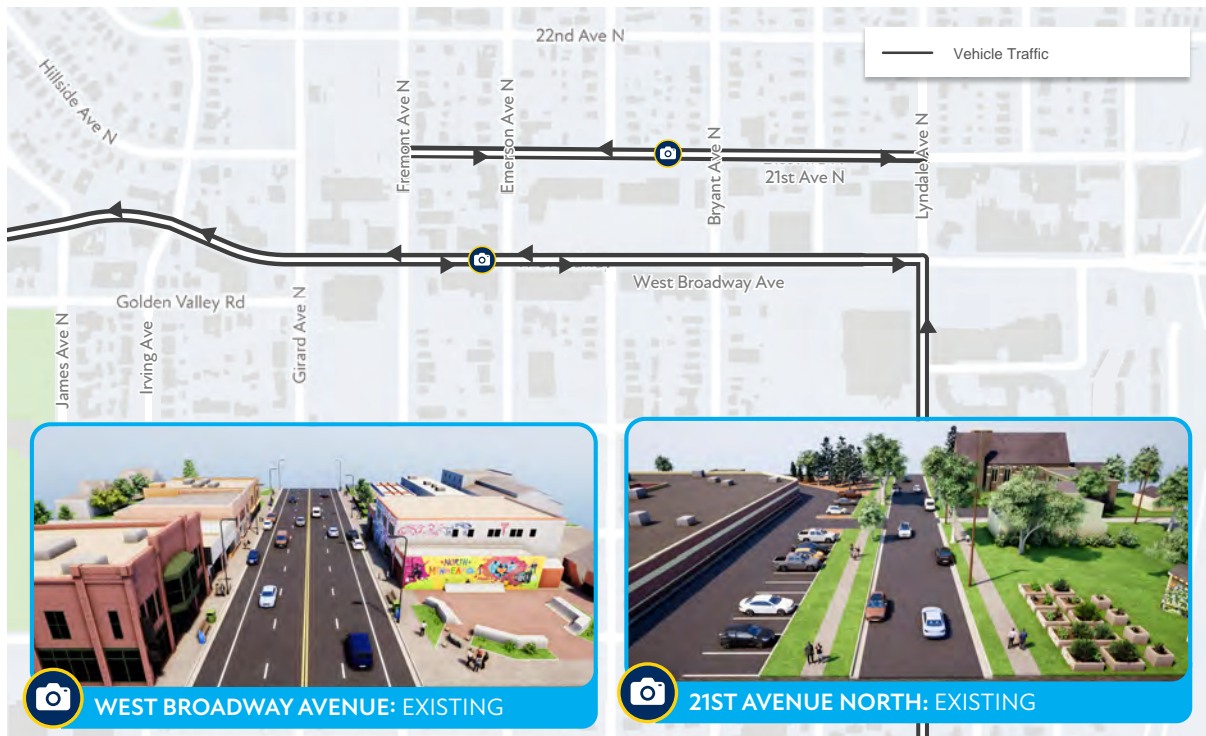
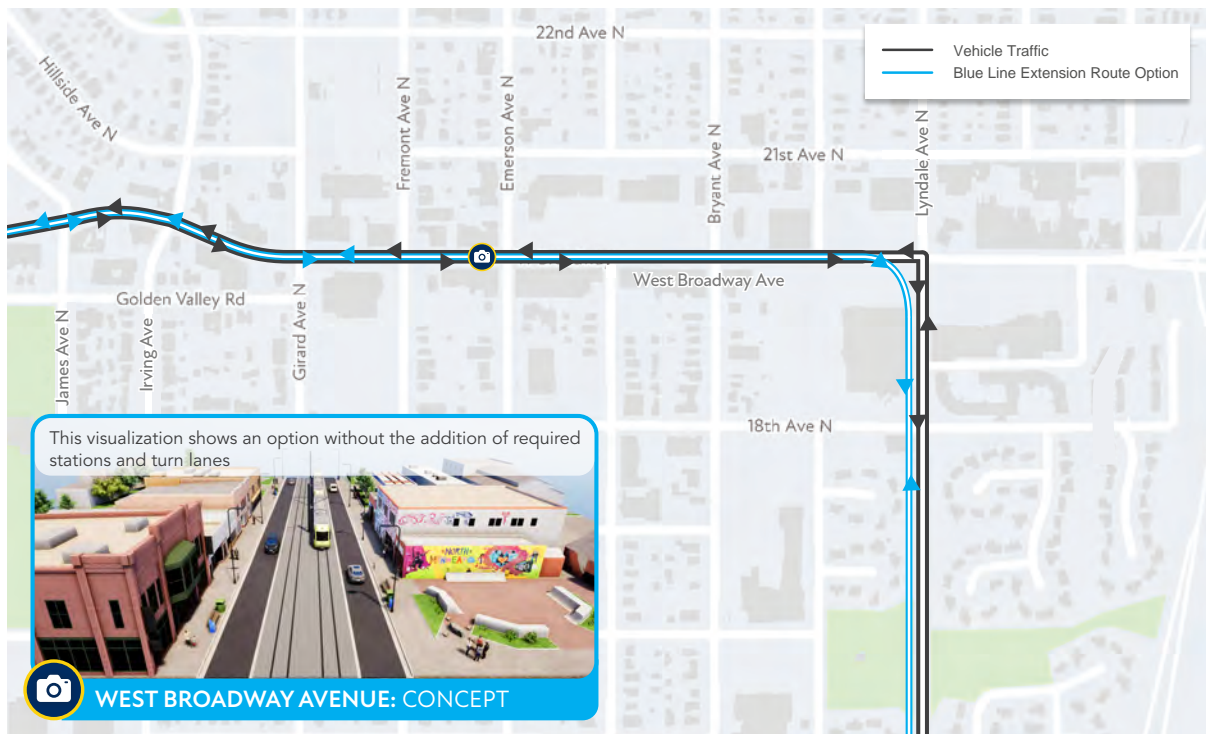


Figure 30: Center-Running Light Rail Concept, West Broadway Avenue from Lyndale to Irving Avenue





METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Draft Route Modification Report

Figure 31: Side-Running Light Rail with Split Traffic Concept, West Broadway Avenue from Lyndale to Irving Avenue

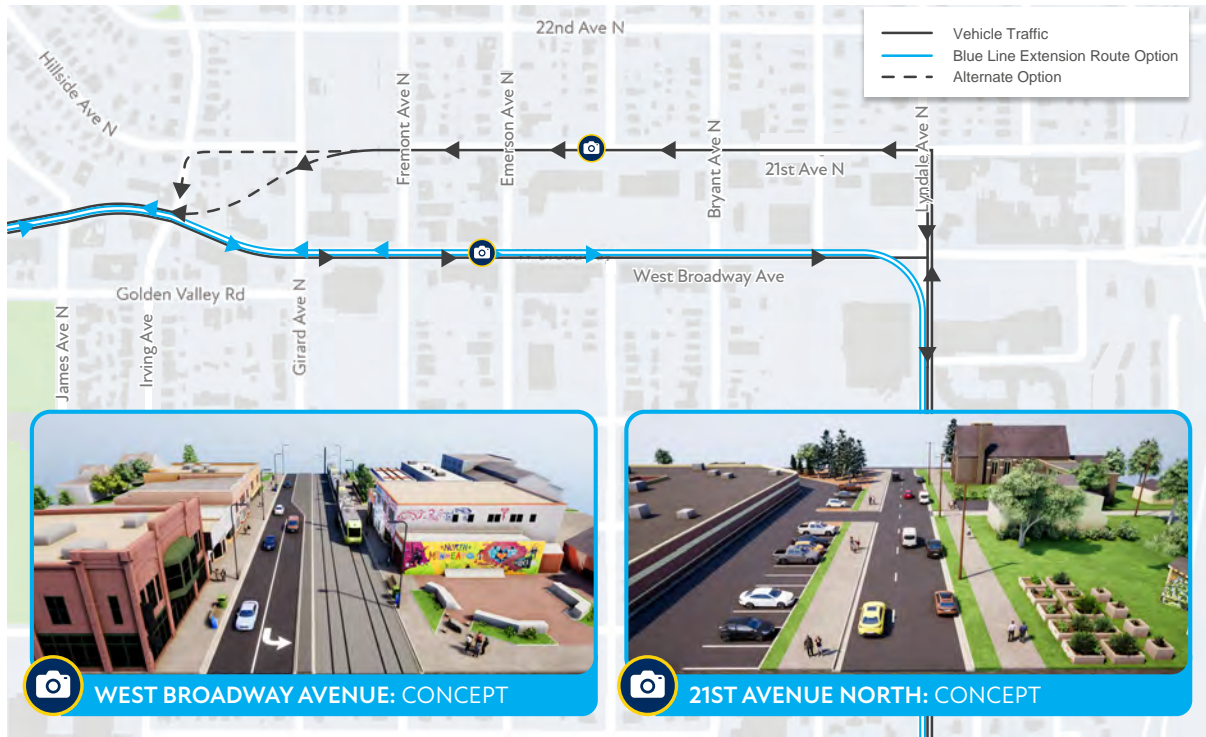


Figure 32: Split Light Rail Concept, West Broadway Avenue from Lyndale to Irving Avenue

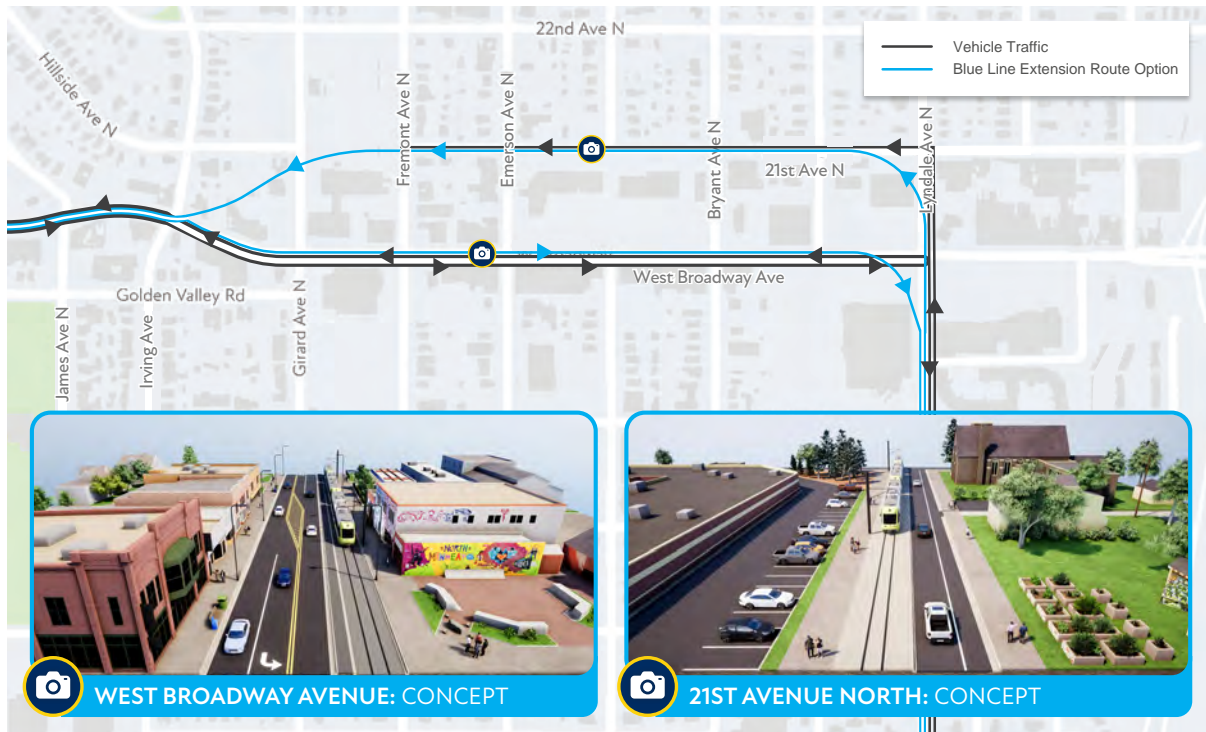


Figure 33: Light Rail on 21st Avenue North Concept, Lyndale to Irving Avenue

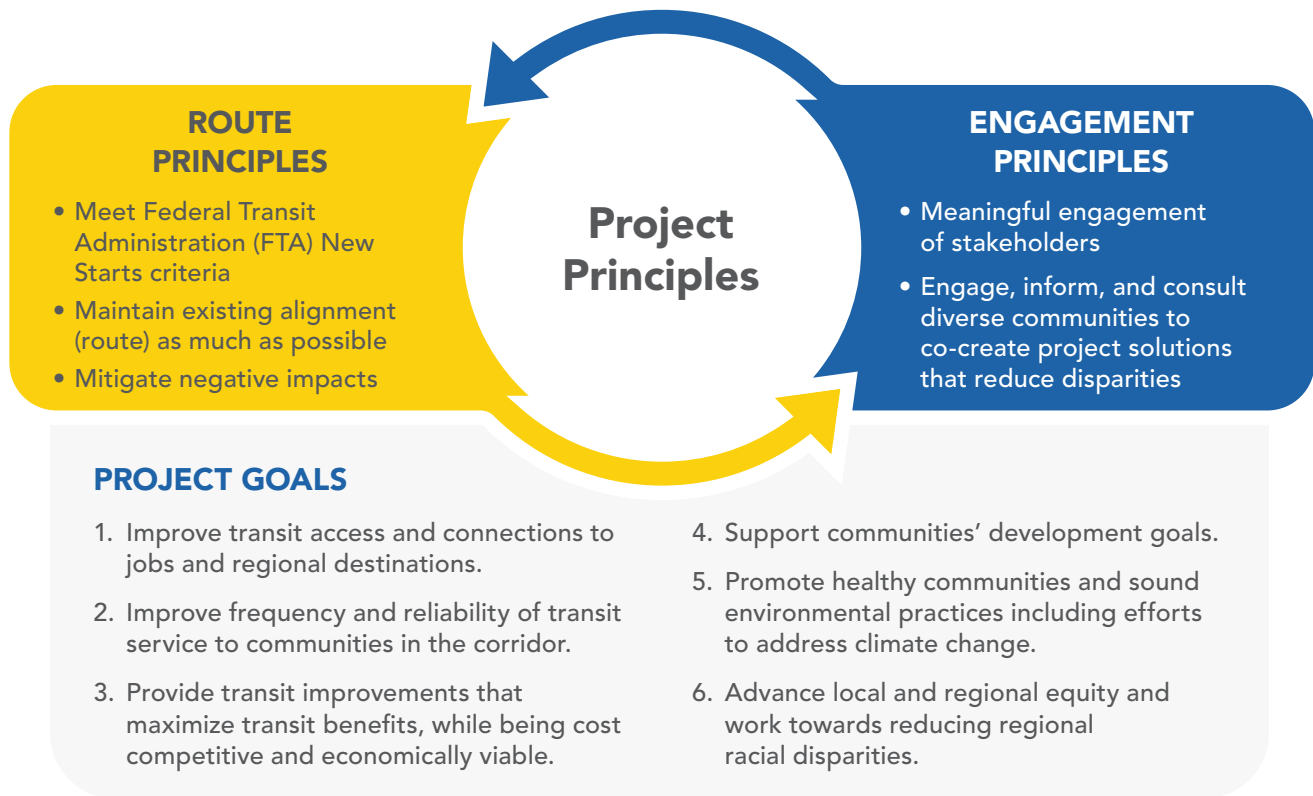




How Route Options Are Evaluated

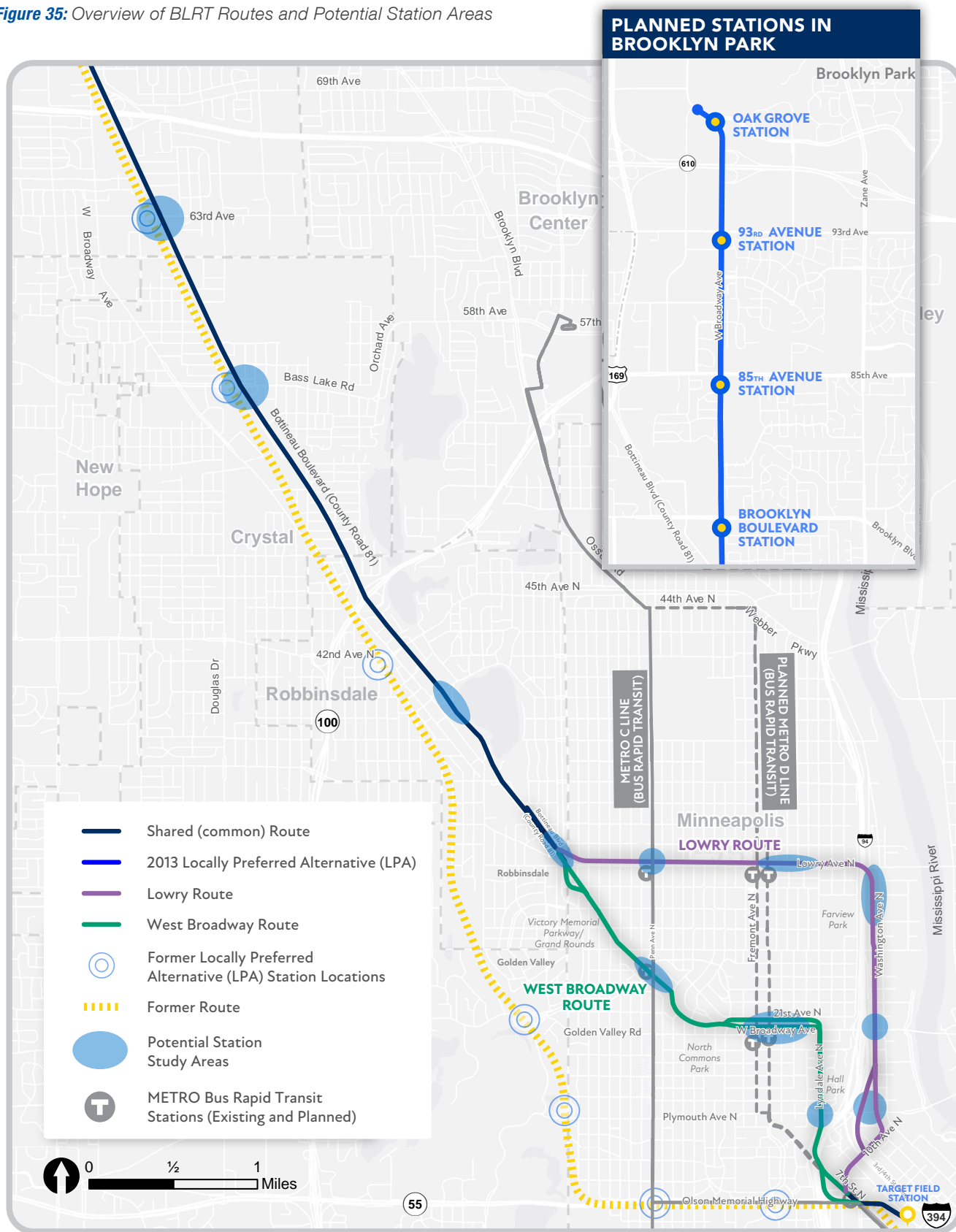
The route evaluation process is guided by the Project Principles, project goals that were originally developed during the previous environmental review process and updated through input received through engagement activities, community and businesses feedback, and engineering requirements. Project goals express overall project priorities, while evaluation criteria provide specific, measurable ways to assess how well route options meet and inform these goals. Performance on how a route can achieve defined project goals will be used to recommend a route to evaluate in more detail in a federal and state environmental review document.

Figure 34: Project Principles and Goals



While the evaluation process has been broken into three geographic areas to reflect the level of evaluation required to avoid use of the freight rail right-of-way, it is important to keep the overall project corridor in perspective, as reflected in Figure 35. Additionally, the evaluation will focus on Areas 2 and 3 as the route and stations in Area 1 remain the same as the 2013 locally preferred alternative and have been addressed previously in this report.

Figure 35: Overview of BLRT Routes and Potential Station Areas





Evaluation Findings

Area 2: Brooklyn Park, Crystal, and Robbinsdale

Area 2 is proposed to run on Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) from approximately 73rd Avenue to the station at North Memorial. Stations in this section are proposed at 63rd Avenue, Bass Lake Road, downtown Robbinsdale, and North Memorial in Robbinsdale. This section of the route along Bottineau Boulevard replaces the route in the freight rail right-of-way.

The March 2021 report reflected locating LRT on Bottineau Boulevard in this area. Bottineau Boulevard is approximately 100 feet east of the rail corridor for much of this area. Constraining features in this section of the corridor include the Crystal Airport along with Twin and Crystal Lakes, all located just to the east of existing Bottineau Boulevard. While shifting from the original route to this proposed route will create different impacts and a need for new engineering solutions, a route along Bottineau Boulevard is the closest possible to the original, which is consistent with the Project Principle of maintaining existing alignment as much as possible. This is also an important consideration relative to the station area planning work that was previously completed in each of these communities.

While there is one route proposed in this area to avoid use of the freight rail right-of-way, it is important to assess its ability to meet the established project goals. This section summarizes how the proposed route on Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) meets each of the project goals. These goal-specific summary statements serve as supporting information to the summary table presented on page 44.



GOAL 1: IMPROVE TRANSIT ACCESS AND CONNECTIONS TO JOBS AND REGIONAL DESTINATIONS.

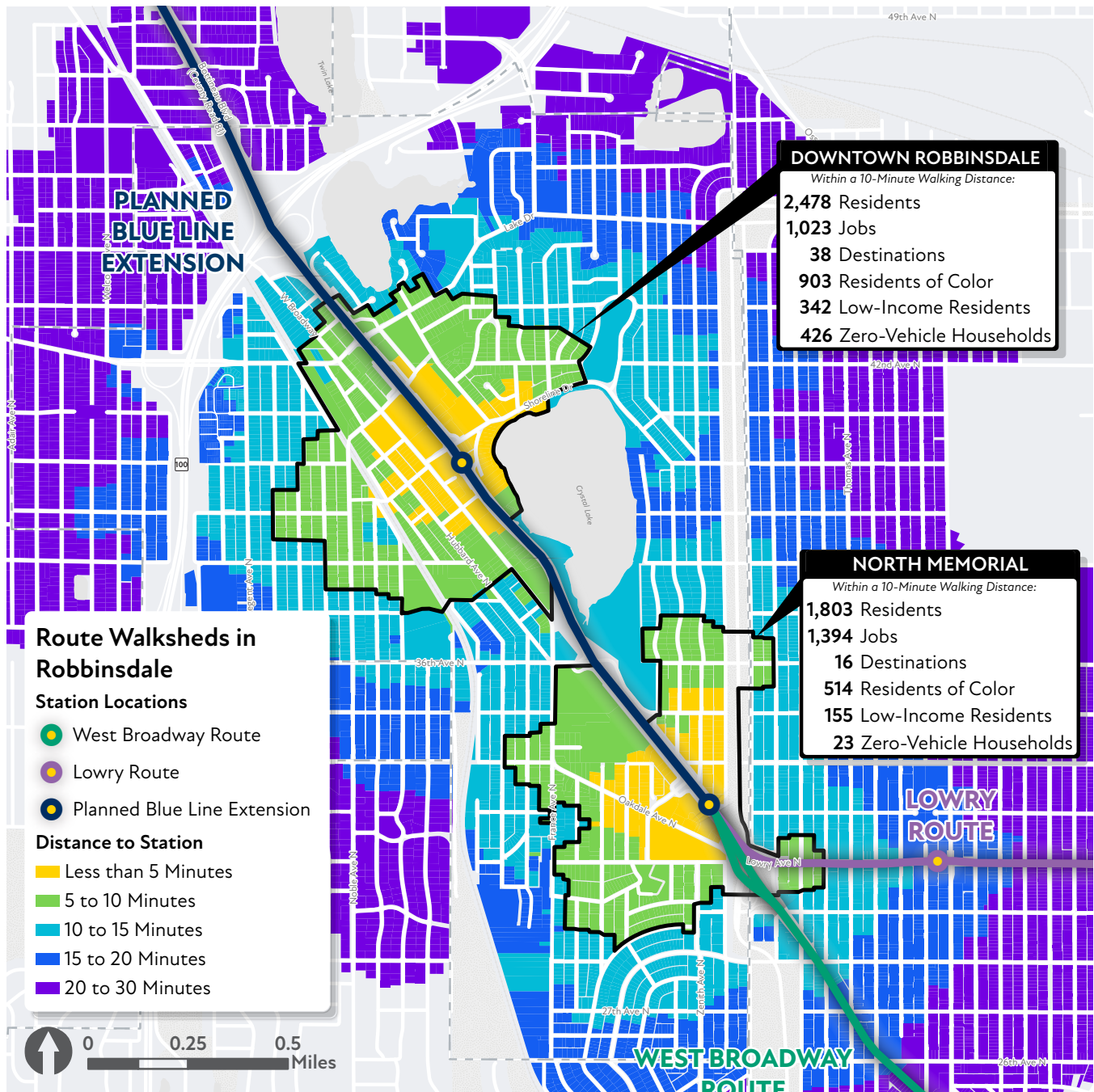
What informs this goal

- Overall ridership and ability to expand and improve service to people with limited or no access to cars
- Reverse commute and off-peak transit opportunities
- Opportunity to expand and improve transit system linkages and multimodal transportation opportunities

Assessment against the goal

As stated previously, the proposed route on Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) would include potential station areas at 63rd Avenue, Bass Lake Road, Downtown Robbinsdale and North Memorial. The potential station areas at 63rd Avenue and Bass Lake Road are relatively close to the previously planned stations, and would therefore provide similar access and connections to jobs and regional destinations as under the 2013 locally preferred alternative. In contrast, the potential station areas in Downtown Robbinsdale and North Memorial have the opportunity to provide access and connections to neighborhoods not directly served under the 2013 locally preferred alternative. As reflected in Figure 36, the potential Downtown Robbinsdale and North Memorial station areas have the ability to serve a broad walkshed area that includes the Downtown Robbinsdale area and the North Memorial medical complex, respectively. The North Memorial station would also provide access to Theodore Wirth Regional Park, Victory Park, and North Minneapolis.

Figure 36: Robbinsdale Station Area Walksheds



Source: 2019 U.S. Census American Community Survey Data, Urban Footprint

Note: Specific station locations have been identified for purposes of the walkshed evaluation.



GOAL 2: IMPROVE FREQUENCY AND RELIABILITY OF TRANSIT SERVICE TO COMMUNITIES IN THE CORRIDOR.

What informs this goal

- Improve mobility for transit riders and attract new riders
- Expand and improve safe and efficient connections to existing and planned METRO transitways along with balancing improved transit accessibility with traffic mobility

Assessment against the goal

Providing transit in a dedicated guideway improves transit service reliability. Additionally, transit service frequency and regional connectivity would improve. Specific to traffic, in Crystal, redesignating one lane in each direction on Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) from general-purpose traffic lanes to LRT and the proposed grade-separation of County Road 81 at Bass Lake Road would result in similar intersection delay and travel times compared to No-Build conditions. In Robbinsdale, adding LRT in the median of Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) would result in similar intersection delay compared to No-Build conditions due to the minor impact LRT would have on intersection geometrics. As the design advances, additional coordination will take place with both cities to address traffic and safety concerns.

The proposed route could provide roadway and overall safety improvements at both signalized and unsignalized intersections in areas such as: incorporation of additional green space, pedestrian intervals to give pedestrians a head start crossing an intersection, potential for narrowing travel lanes to shorten pedestrian crossing distances and calm traffic, pedestrian crossing signals, new pavement, and pedestrian crossings that meet all current accessibility requirements.



GOAL 3: PROVIDE TRANSIT IMPROVEMENTS THAT MAXIMIZE TRANSIT BENEFITS, WHILE BEING COST COMPETITIVE AND ECONOMICALLY VIABLE.

What informs this goal

- Balance project benefits and costs through a tiered approach to capital, operating, and maintenance cost estimates

Assessment against the goal

Detailed capital cost estimates will be prepared as the community-supported route advances into more detailed design. Consistent with the Project Principle of meeting the FTA's New Starts criteria, which includes cost effectiveness criteria, the Metropolitan Council will work to define and advance a route that effectively balances capital and operating costs with overall transit system benefits. As the route on Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) is proposed to be at-grade and would run in existing transportation right-of-way, it is anticipated to be cost-competitive. With this approach in mind, the Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) route is assessed at achieving this goal with a "good" rating.



GOAL 4: SUPPORT COMMUNITIES' DEVELOPMENT GOALS.

What informs this goal

- Assessment of capacity and likelihood of transit-oriented development and/or redevelopment opportunities in station areas
- Assessment of consistency with approved plans and policies, including policies related to affordable housing and prioritization of transportation modes

Assessment against the goal

Based on experience with both the Blue and Green Lines in the Twin Cities, it is anticipated that public and private investment would be made before, during, and after BLRT is open. As the potential station areas at 63rd Avenue and Bass Lake Road are proximate to the original station locations, it is anticipated that previous work on transit-oriented development plans and policies at these stations would be applicable. Coordination with the City of Robbinsdale would continue to effectively integrate both the Downtown Robbinsdale and North Memorial stations into the surrounding community. Additionally, the Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County are committed to working with the cities of Crystal and Robbinsdale to implement a comprehensive, innovative set of strategies to help communities build wealth in place. These strategies will ensure the investment builds on, supports, and protects existing community assets and provides more opportunities for equitable housing, employment, business development, cultural experiences, and other activities of daily life.



GOAL 5: PROMOTE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES AND SOUND ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES INCLUDING EFFORTS TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE.

What informs this goal

- Minimize impacts to natural and cultural resources
- Assessment of connections from stations to recreation and healthy food options to maximize health and environmental benefits to BLRT communities
- Assessment of existing and future sidewalks and/or trail connection opportunities at stations to improve the safety, connections, and accessibility for people walking, biking, and rolling to the BLRT
- Assessment of potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through reducing vehicle miles traveled

Assessment against the goal

The proposed route would support advancing both the Minnesota Department of Transportation and Hennepin County’s vehicle miles traveled reduction goals. Additionally, the proposed route provides an opportunity to locate LRT in an existing transportation facility, which could minimize overall environmental impacts and provide opportunities to improve pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The proposed route would provide access to area grocery stores and the regional park system. As reflected in the Next Steps section of this report, detailed environmental analysis and development of appropriate mitigation measures will be conducted as part of the federal and state environmental review process, including potentially sensitive areas around parks, historic resources and North Memorial.



GOAL 6: ADVANCE LOCAL AND REGIONAL EQUITY AND WORK TOWARDS REDUCING REGIONAL RACIAL DISPARITIES.

What informs this goal

- Opportunities to invest in historically disinvested communities and minimize displacement of corridor residents and businesses
- Maximizing cohesion, preservation, and enhancement of BLRT communities through assessment of improved access and connections to cultural and community assets along with opportunities to honor local heritage and character of BLRT communities
- Minimizing short-term and long-term impacts to property and property access, including property vehicle access, sidewalk access, on-street parking, and right-of-way acquisition



Assessment against the goal

The proposed BLRT route would be located along Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81), a current transportation facility, which minimizes right-of-way acquisition and supports cohesion. As reflected in previous goals, the route would improve accessibility and connectivity to the broader regional transit system, thereby improving overall access to jobs and activity centers throughout the region. Additionally, this route furthers regional equity by providing METRO access to environmental justice communities, particularly in Brooklyn Park and Crystal.

The Area 2 route on Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) has been evaluated based on its ability to effectively meet the defined project goals. As reflected in the following table, this route meets the project goals, as reflected in an overall assessment of “good.” Goals that achieve an “excellent” assessment include specific areas that inform that goal that are unique and/or have a high potential to provide exemplary positive benefits. As reflected in the table, this route has not been assessed at a “poor” level, which would represent not meeting the defined project goal.

Table 5: Area 2 Evaluation Summary

ASSESSMENT OF ROUTE OPTION TO DEFINED GOALS	
PROJECT GOAL	BOTTINEAU BOULEVARD (COUNTY ROAD 81) IN BROOKLYN PARK, CRYSTAL, AND ROBBINSDALE
Goal 1: Improve transit access and connections to jobs and regional destinations	EXCELLENT
Goal 2: Improve frequency and reliability of transit service to communities in the corridor	EXCELLENT
Goal 3: Provide transit improvements that maximize transit benefits, while being cost competitive and economically viable	GOOD
Goal 4: Support communities’ development goals	EXCELLENT
Goal 5: Promote healthy communities and sound environmental practices including efforts to address climate change	GOOD
Goal 6: Advance local and regional equity and work towards reducing regional racial disparities	GOOD

Area 3: Minneapolis

For the purposes of this evaluation, the routes being considered in Minneapolis can be divided into two sections: the Lowry route and the West Broadway route. Under the umbrella of each route option, several different designs are being considered to minimize impacts and maximize benefits. These are determined in part by engineering standards and constraints.

This section will discuss each of the project goals and how the two main route options for Minneapolis address those goals. Of the three areas, Area 3 has the most changes to the proposed route from the former route, and the evaluation for this area has correspondingly more detail.

Route Characteristics

General characteristics of the two route options are summarized below:

	LOWRY ROUTE	WEST BROADWAY ROUTE
Route length	Approximately 4.3 miles	Approximately 3.5 miles
Travel time	Approximately 16 minutes	Approximately 14 minutes
Potential Stations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plymouth • Washington at West Broadway • Lowry at Washington • Lowry at Emerson/Fremont • Lowry at Penn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lyndale at Plymouth • West Broadway at Emerson/Fremont • West Broadway at Penn
Roadways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3rd Street • 7th Street • 10th Street • Washington Avenue • Lowry Avenue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7th Street • 21st Street • Olson Memorial Highway • East Lyndale Avenue • Lyndale Avenue • West Broadway

Note: Station locations reflect general study areas. The number of stations and exact locations may change. The Lowry route includes a planned station in the Plymouth Avenue area. There are currently two route alignment options being considered in this area. For the option that utilizes 10th Street and Washington Avenue, the planned station location is within Washington Avenue between 10th Street and Plymouth Avenue. For the route option that runs parallel to the 3rd/4th connector ramps, the planned station location is just south of Plymouth Avenue.



Goal 1: Improve transit access and connections to jobs and regional destinations.

What informs this goal

- Overall ridership and ability to expand and improve service to people with limited or no access to cars
- Reverse commute and off-peak transit opportunities
- Opportunity to expand and improve transit system linkages and multimodal transportation opportunities
- Maximize transit access to housing, employment, schools, community services, health care facilities, shopping, parks, activity centers and other destinations

Overview

TRANSIT ACCESS BY DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

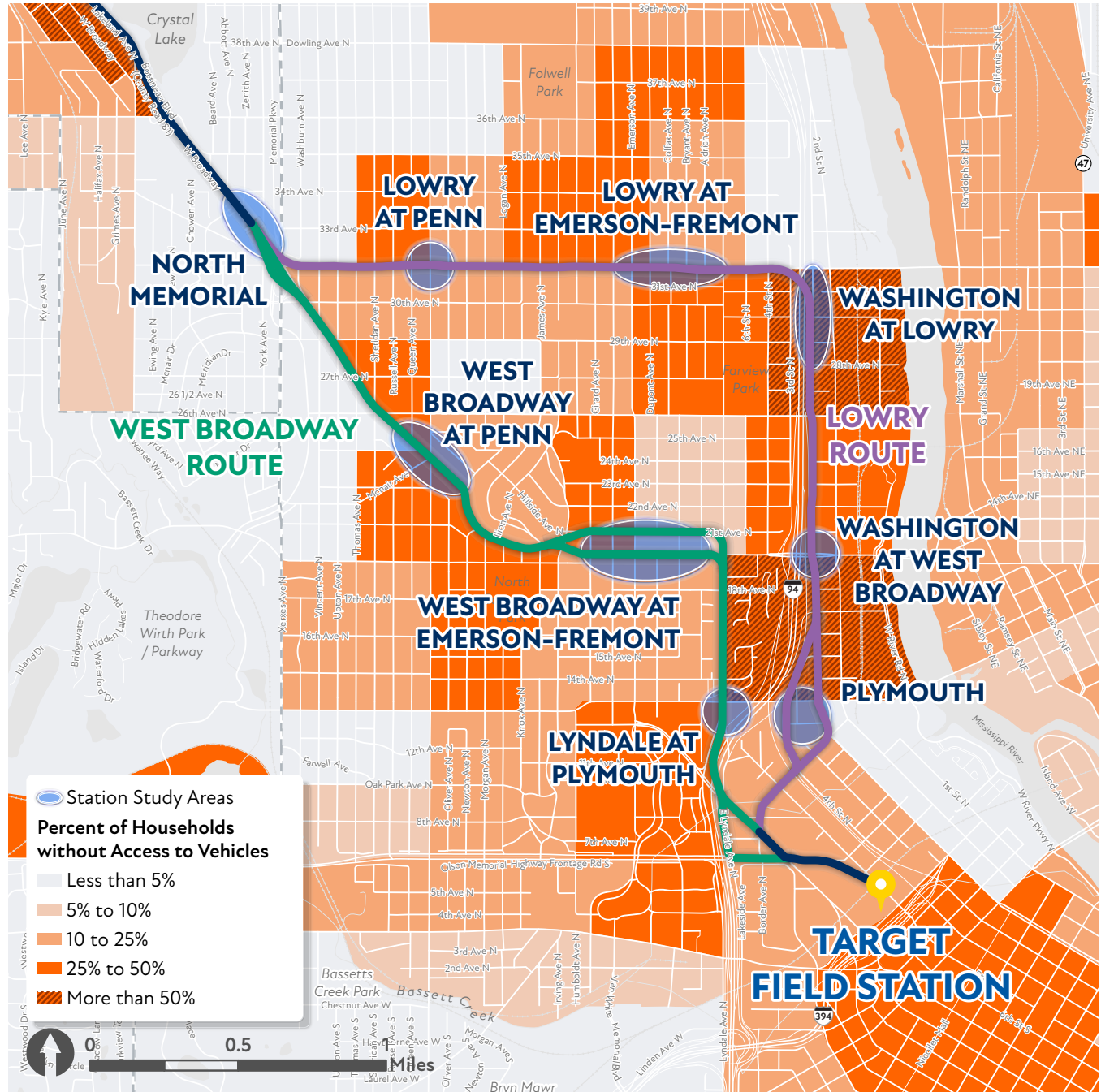
Both the Lowry and West Broadway routes would serve neighborhoods where there is limited or no access to personal vehicles (Figure 37), households that are generally below the Hennepin County median household



METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Draft Route Modification Report

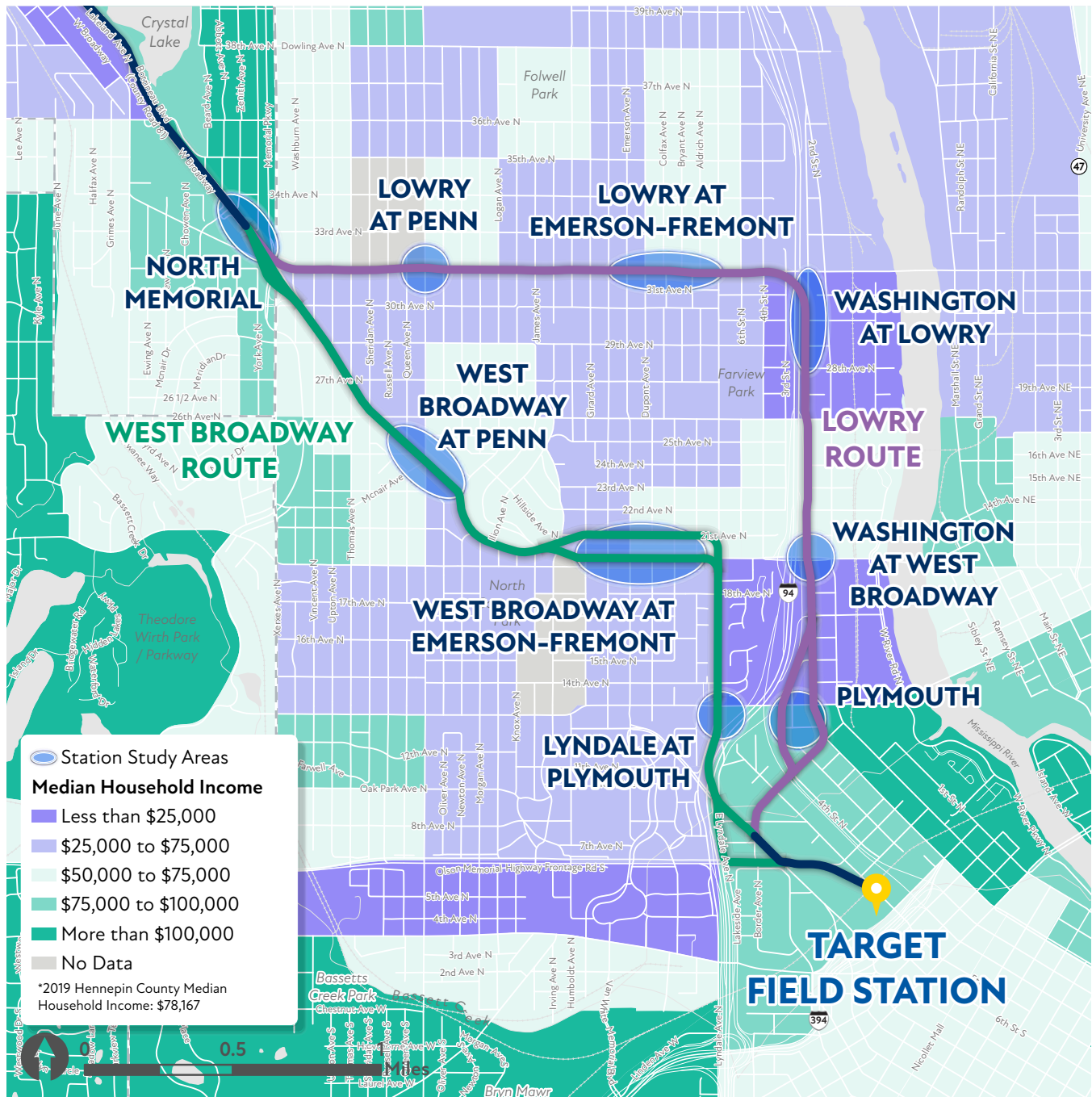
income (Figure 38), and a relatively high percentage (60 percent or more) of residents of color (Figure 39). Through the information indicated on each of these figures, it can be concluded that both the Lowry and West Broadway routes would serve neighborhoods where improved transit accessibility and ability to connect with jobs and regional destinations is important.

Figure 37: Access to Vehicles



Source: 2019 U.S. Census American Community Survey Data

Figure 38: Median Household Income

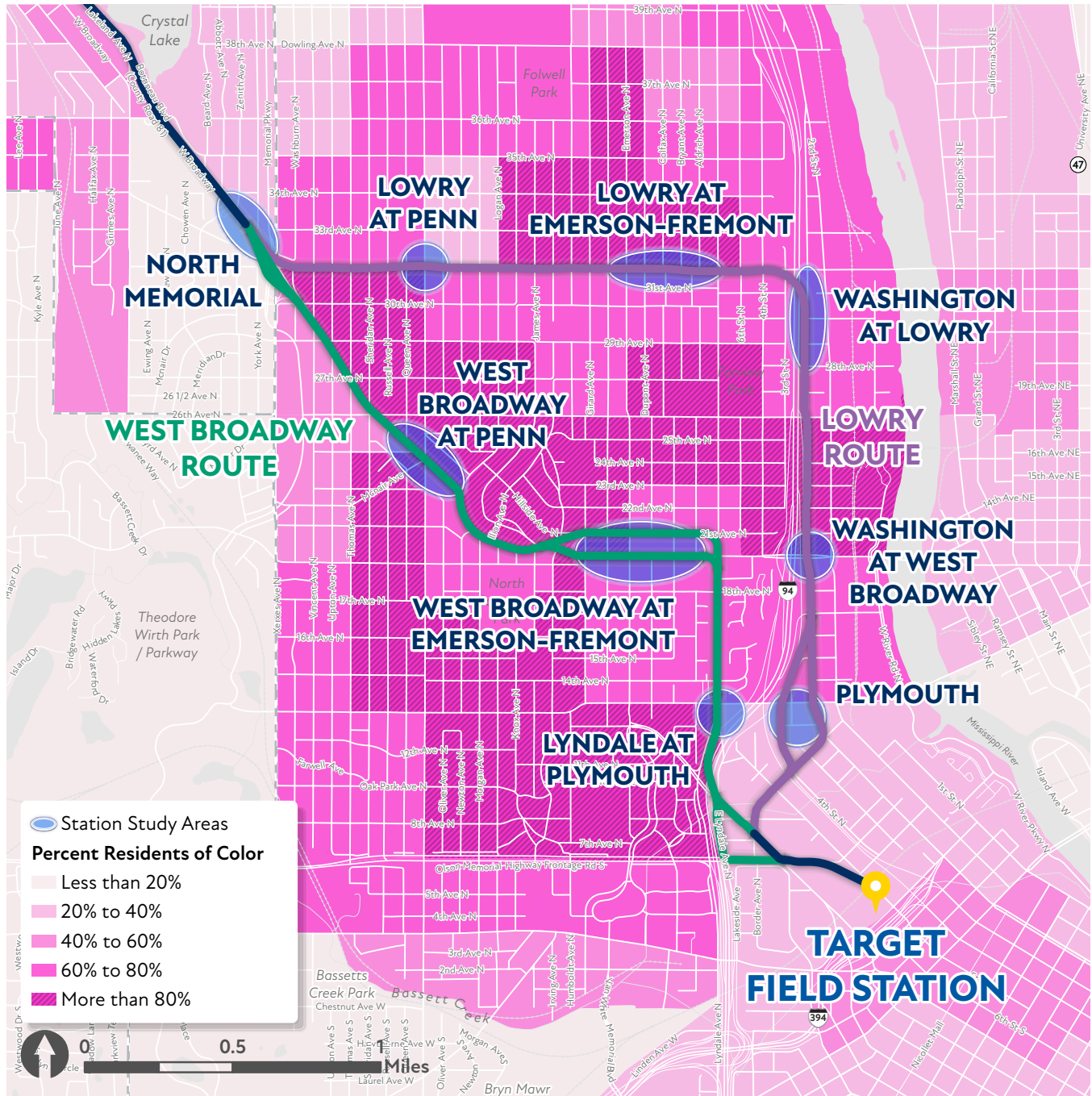


Source: 2019 U.S. Census American Community Survey Data



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Figure 39: Residents of Color



Source: 2019 U.S. Census American Community Survey Data

CONNECTIONS TO REGIONAL TRANSIT SYSTEM

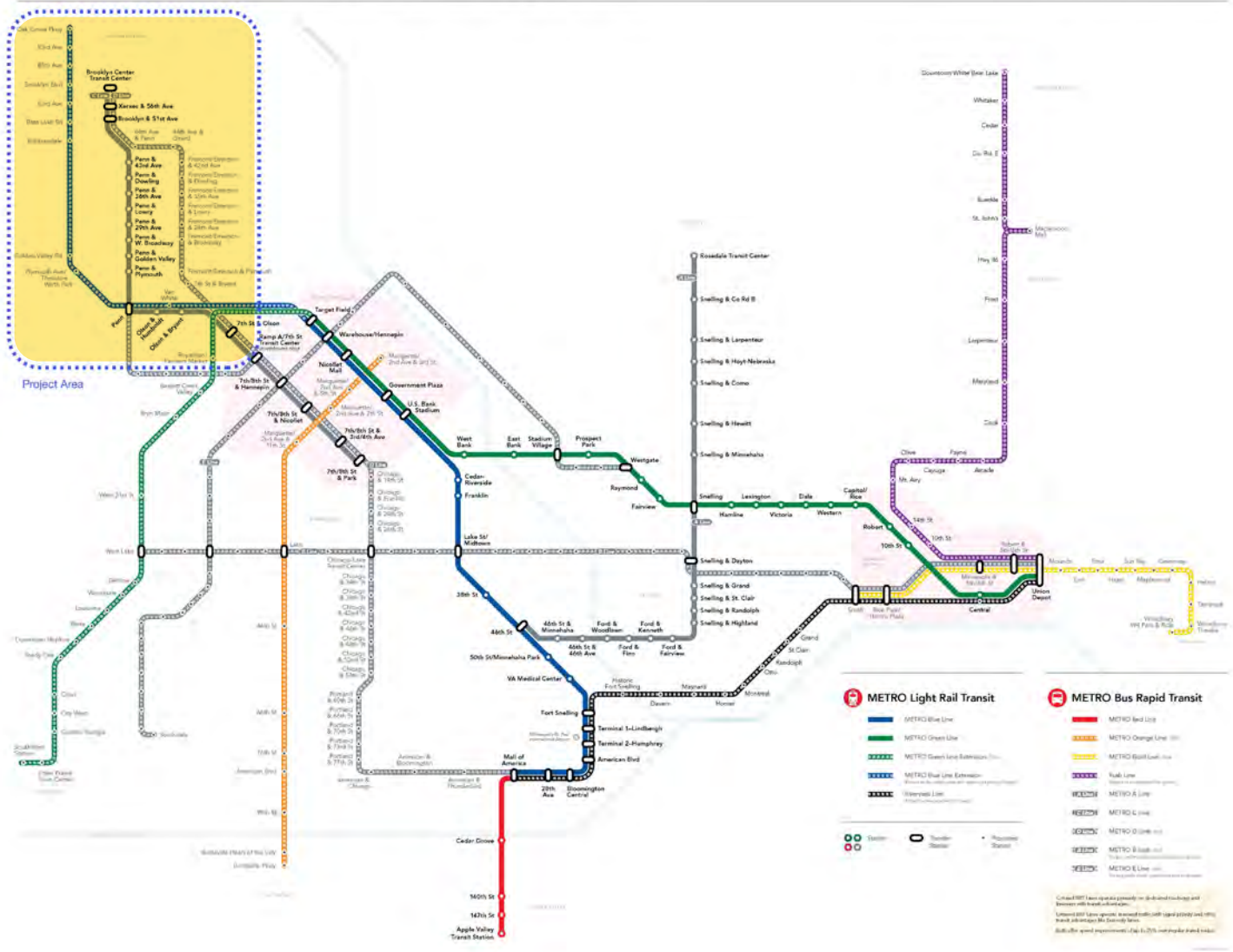
Both routes would also provide improved regional transit system connectivity through access to Northstar Commuter Rail, existing and planned LRT lines at Target Field Station, existing and planned arterial BRT lines, and express and local bus service. Increasing transit connections to the overall regional transit system in turn increases opportunities for all riders to access employment and job opportunities. This is particularly important to the environmental justice communities that would be served.

Figure 40: Future Rapid Transit Network



Fast. Frequent. All day. All yours.

Future Rapid Transit Network



Source: Metro Transit



Comparative Evaluation

People and Destinations Served by BLRT Stations

Figures 41-43 show the results of a walkshed analysis conducted to assess the populations and destinations served by each proposed station, where yellow indicates areas less than five minutes from a station and dark purple indicates a walking time of over 30 minutes to a station. The callout boxes and Table 6 provide an at-a-glance comparison of people and places within a 10-minute walking distance to each station.

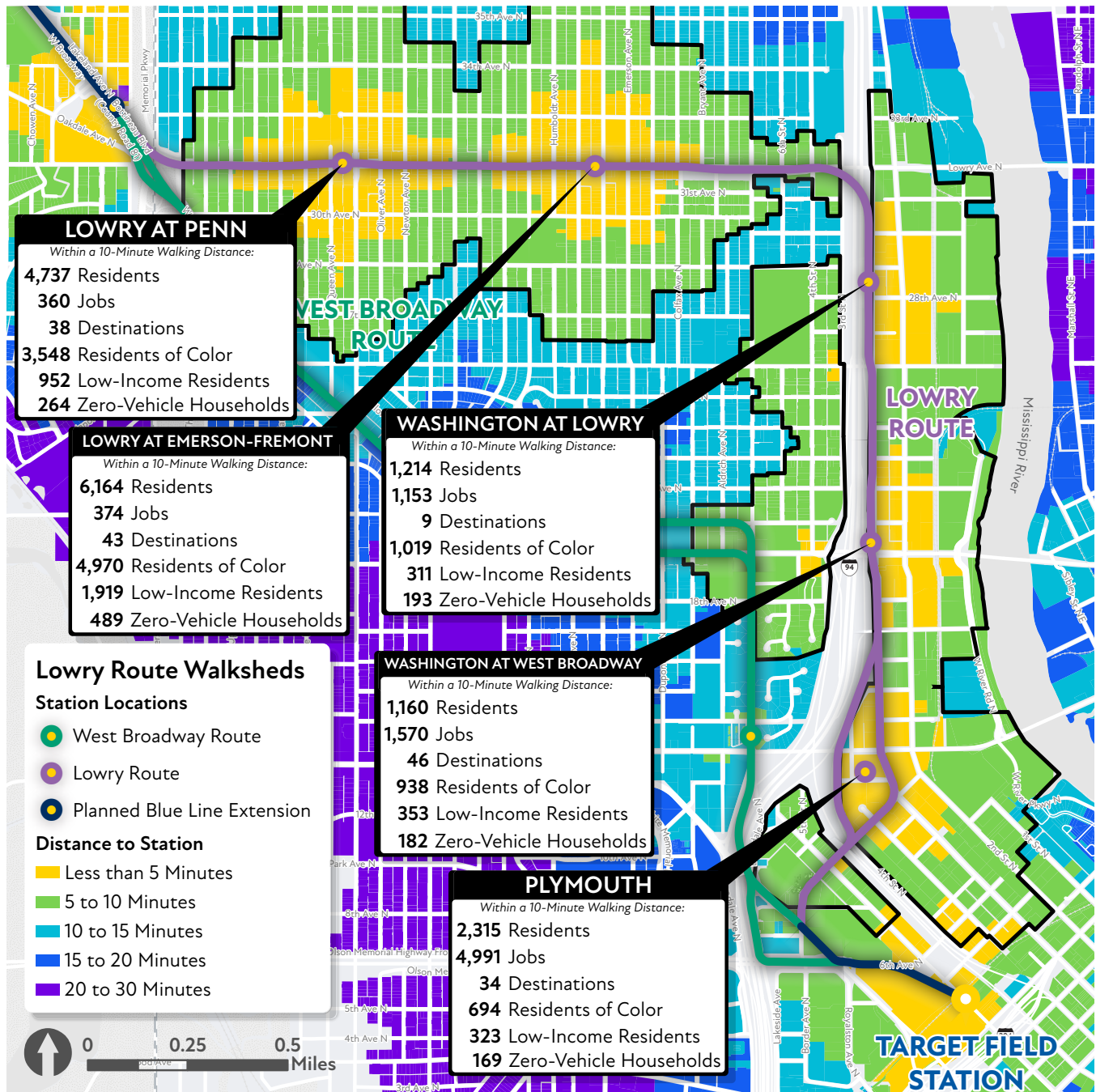
As reflected in the walkshed figures and the accompanying table, the Lowry route would serve primarily residential areas with high percentage of low income and minority populations along Lowry Avenue and more industrial areas along the Washington Avenue section. The walksheds along the Washington Avenue section are also constrained to the west of the proposed route with Interstate 94. Additionally, as reflected in Figure 41, the Plymouth station area walkshed would overlap with the existing Target Field station.

The West Broadway route would serve the heart of the West Broadway business district, most notably at the Emerson-Fremont station area. The West Broadway at Penn station area would also serve a highly residential area. All three stations on this route would serve neighborhoods with a high percentage of low income and minority populations.

Table 6: People and Destinations Served by BLRT Stations

NAME	TOTAL POPULATION	LOW INCOME POPULATION	RESIDENTS OF COLOR	TOTAL JOBS	DESTINATIONS	ZERO VEHICLE HOUSEHOLDS
Lowry Route						
Plymouth	2,315	323	694	4,991	34	169
Washington at West Broadway	1,160	353	938	1,570	46	182
Washington at Lowry	1,214	311	1,019	1,153	9	193
Lowry at Emerson-Fremont	6,164	1,919	4,970	374	43	489
Lowry at Penn	4,737	952	3,548	360	38	264
Total	15,590	3,858	11,169	8,448	170	1,297
West Broadway Route						
Lyndale at Plymouth	1,761	629	1,373	1,855	51	172
West Broadway at Emerson-Fremont	4,307	1,898	3,626	1,550	107	245
West Broadway at Penn	5,619	1,283	4,606	644	41	269
Total	11,687	3,810	9,605	4,049	199	686

Figure 41: People and Destinations Served by BLRT Stations along the Lowry Route



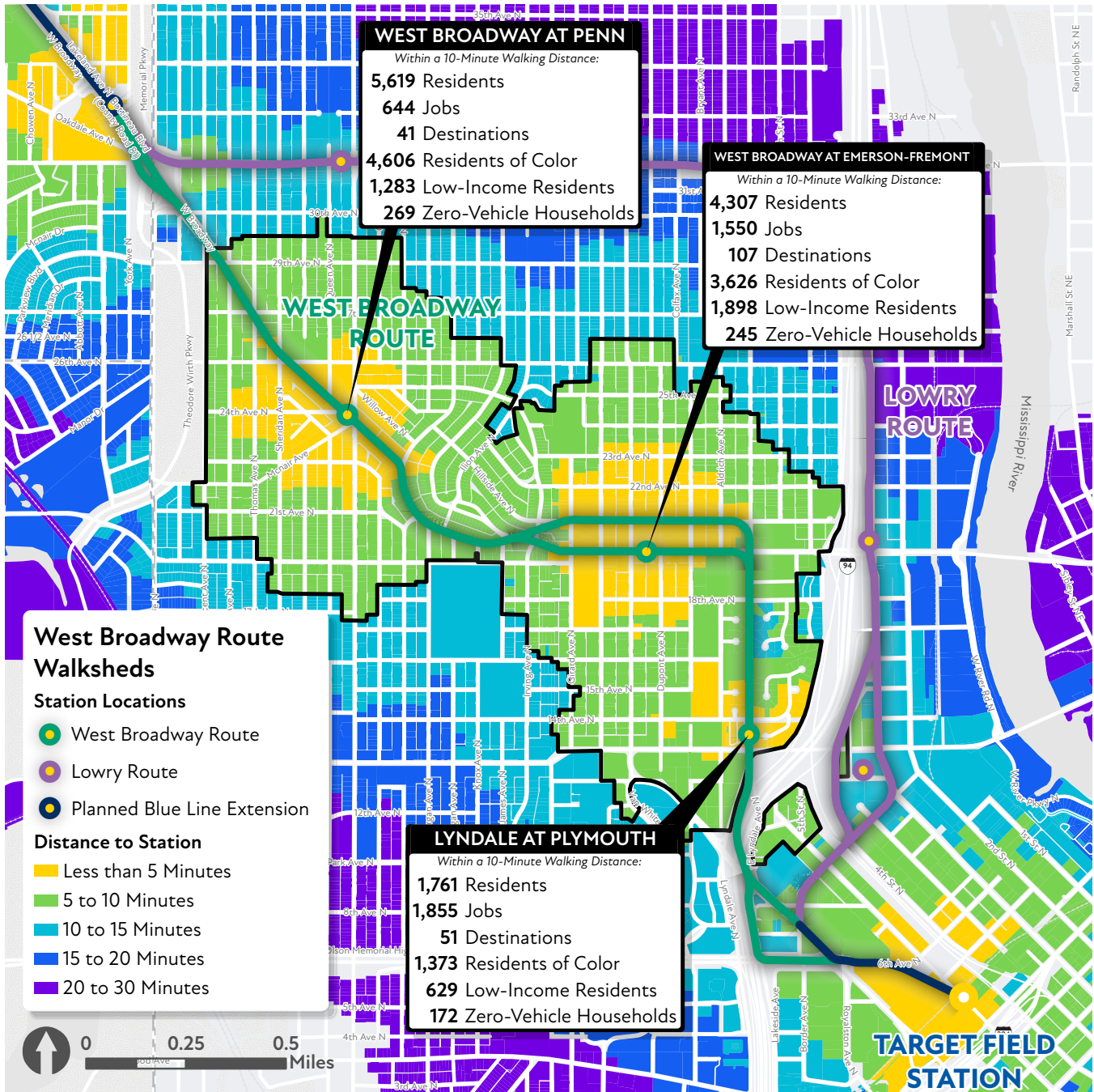
Source: 2019 U.S. Census American Community Survey Data, Urban Footprint

Note: Specific station locations have been identified for purposes of the walkshed evaluation.



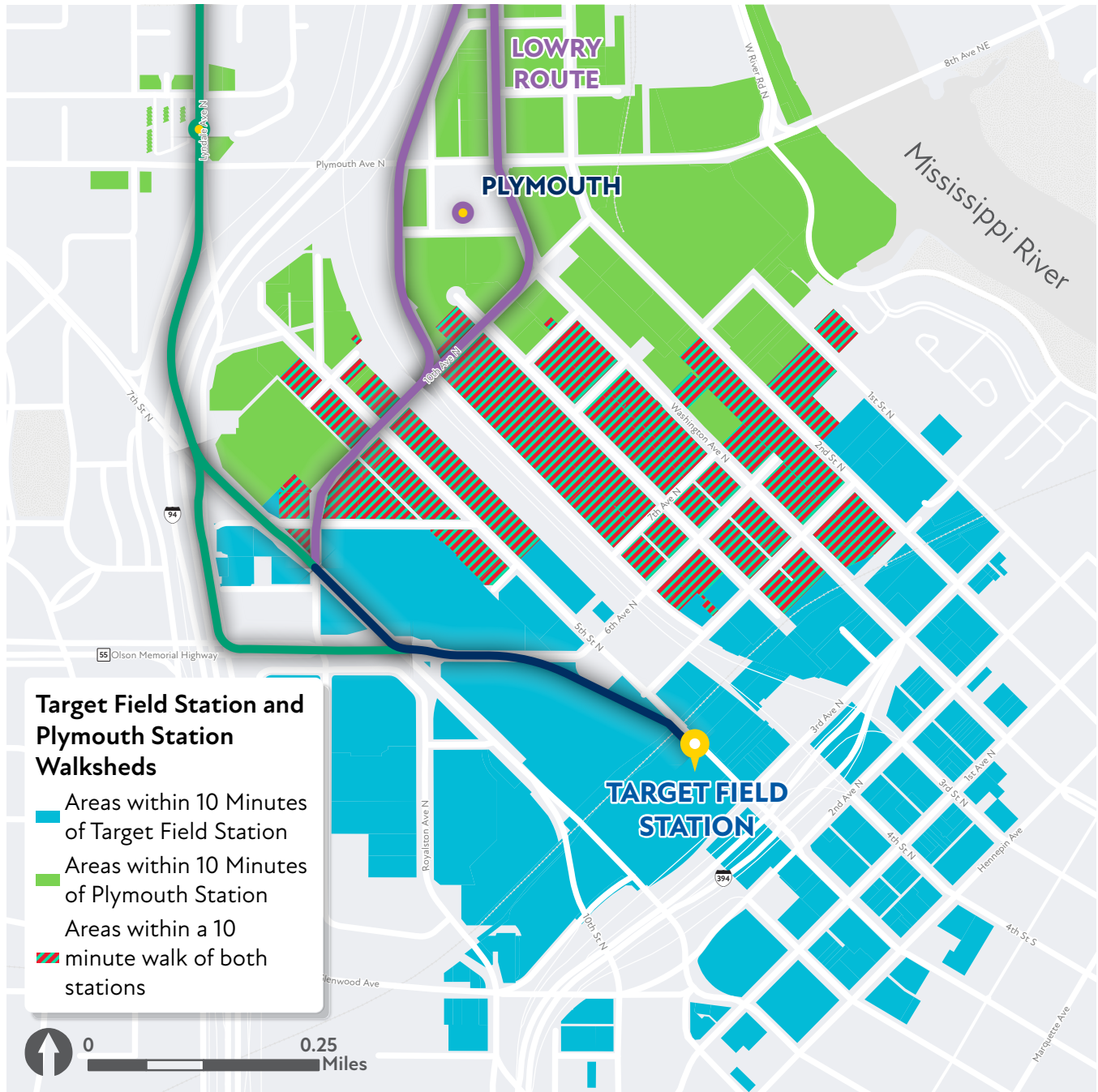
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Figure 42: People and Destinations Served by BLRT Stations along the West Broadway Route



Source: 2019 U.S. Census American Community Survey Data, Urban Footprint
Note: Specific station locations have been identified for purposes of the walkshed evaluation.

Figure 43: Target Field Station and Plymouth Station Walksheds



Source: Urban Footprint

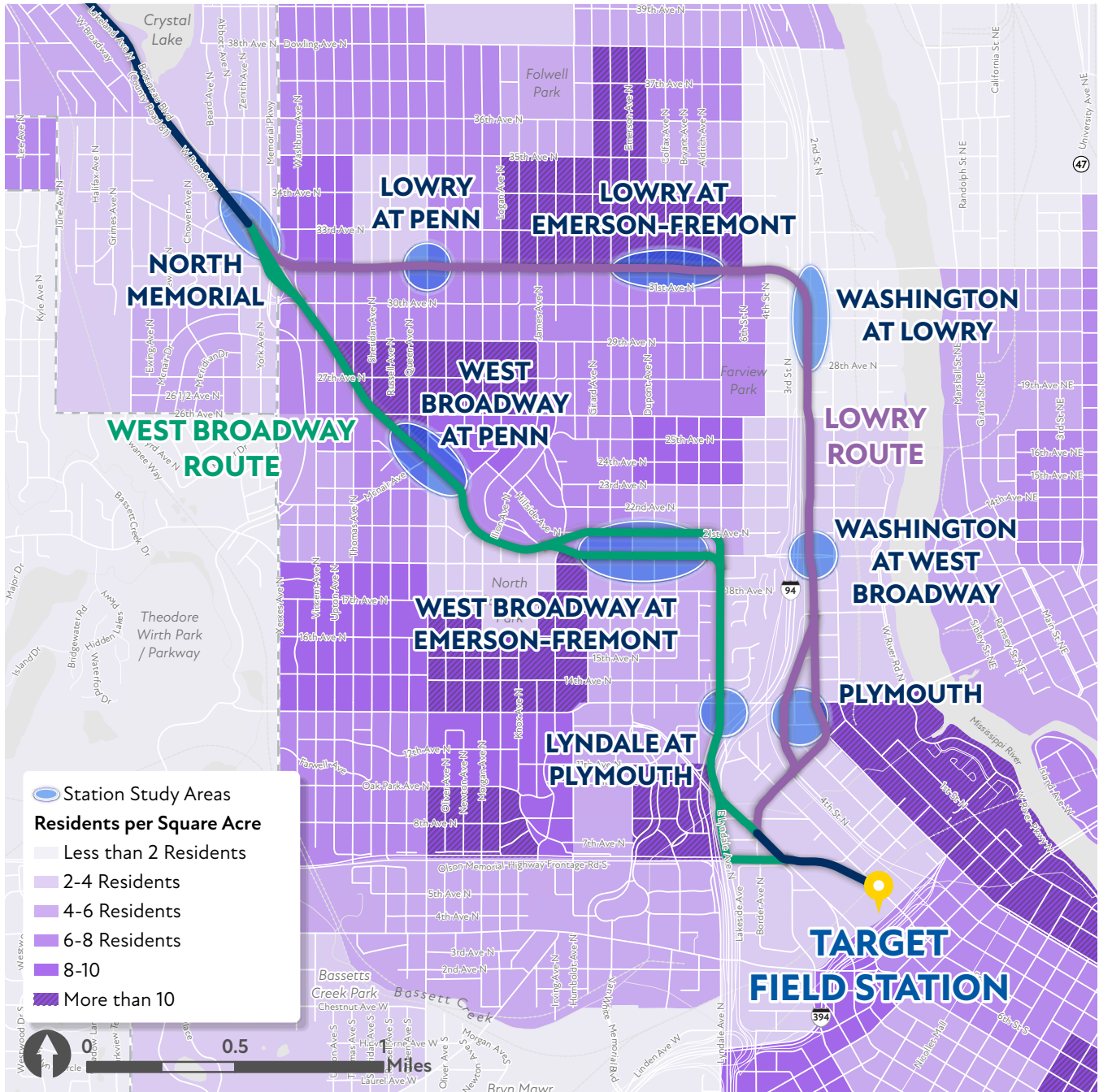
Note: Specific station locations have been identified for purposes of the walkshed evaluation.



Population Density

The proposed stations along the Lowry Avenue section of the Lowry route would serve neighborhoods with relatively high population density. Population density along the Washington Avenue section of the route, by contrast, is relatively low. This can be attributed to the industrial nature of that section and the presence of Interstate 94. The proposed stations along the West Broadway route would serve neighborhoods with a higher population density than the Lowry route.

Figure 44: Residents per Square Acre

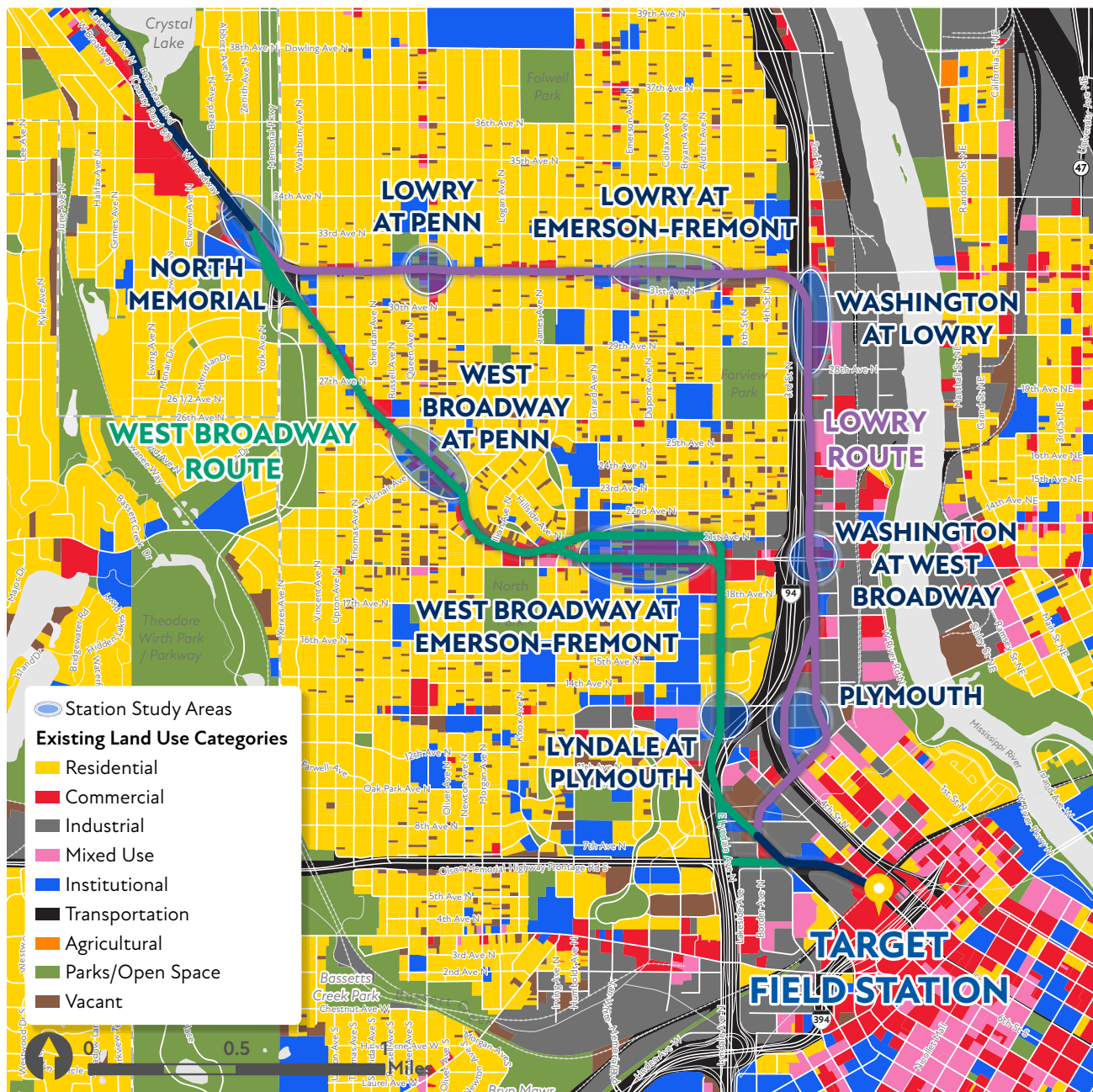


Land Use

The proposed route on Lowry Avenue is surrounded primarily by residential land uses and some commercial uses. On the east side of Washington Avenue, land use is industrial and commercial, with Interstate 94 to the west of the proposed route.

Along the West Broadway route, commercial land uses are concentrated proximate to the proposed route on West Broadway Avenue, with residential areas to the north and south of these commercial areas. The Lyndale Avenue section is mostly residential along with institutional uses to the west.

Figure 45: Existing Land Use Categories



Source: Metropolitan Council



Destinations

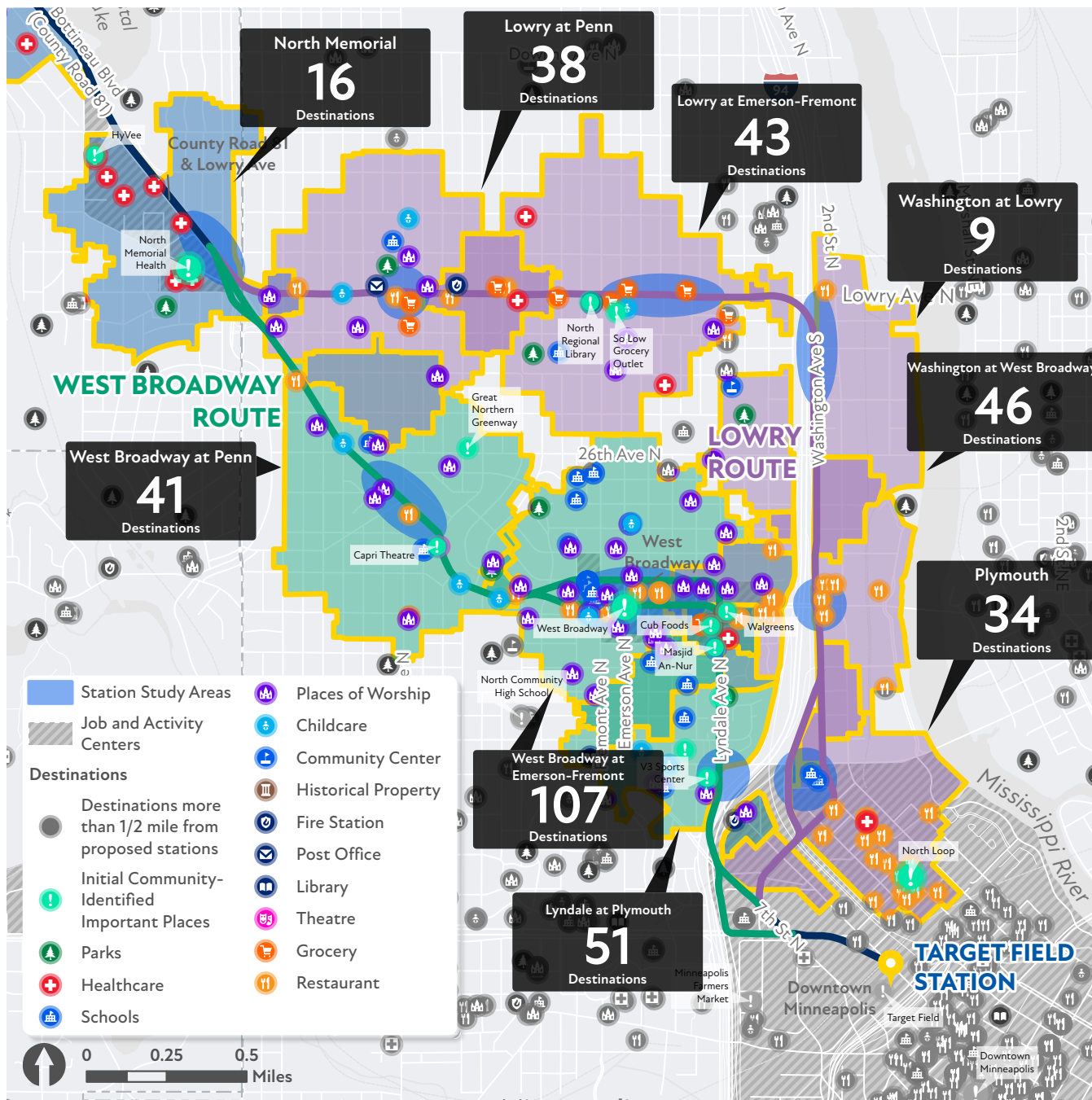
Figure 46 shows existing destinations within a half mile from the proposed station areas in Minneapolis as well as destinations that were identified as important places through community input. The Washington Avenue section of the Lowry route and its proposed stations serve a limited type and number of existing destinations. Additionally, this section is constrained by Interstate 94 on the west and the Mississippi River to the east. The Lowry Avenue section would serve some community destinations, including the North Regional Library. The potential station area at Washington and Lowry has the opportunity to serve the future Upper Harbor Terminal development project. Additionally, access over Interstate 94 is provided at Lowry Avenue, as well as access over the Mississippi River to Northeast Minneapolis. The West Broadway route and proposed stations would serve numerous existing community destinations, most notably in the West Broadway and Emerson-Fremont area: Capri Theatre, Masjid An-Nur, and North Community High School are examples of key community hubs along this route.

COMMUNITY-IDENTIFIED DESTINATIONS IN MINNEAPOLIS

The following are examples of locations identified by the community over the past year as important assets to preserve and promote along the corridor. Visit BlueLineExt.org to continue to share more locations on our interactive feedback map.

- **Education Facilities:** North Community High School, Minneapolis Public School – Nutrition Service Department, Franklin Middle School, Elizabeth Hall Elementary
- **Grocery/Pharmacy/Food:** Cub Foods, Aldi, Walgreens, Minneapolis Farmers Market, So-Low Grocery Outlet, Target, Pair of Dice Pizza, Breaking Bread, Sammy’s Avenue Eatery
- **Libraries:** North Regional Library
- **Parks/Recreation/Sports:** Theodore Wirth Park, Great Northern Greenway, V3 Sports Center, Hall Park, Target Field
- **Arts/Theatre:** Capri Theatre, Juxtaposition Arts
- **Activity/Business/Cultural Centers:** West Broadway, North Loop, Downtown Minneapolis, the future Upper Harbor Terminal development
- **Spiritual Institutions:** Masjid an-Nur, Shiloh Temple, Sanctuary Covenant Church
- **Local businesses/organizations:** KMOJ Radio, Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ), Wolfpack Promotionals

Figure 46: Destinations



Source: Hennepin County and City of Minneapolis data and input from communities



Ridership

Overall, ridership on the West Broadway route would be similar to the Lowry route. Additionally, both routes would expand and improve transit access to people with limited or no access to vehicles.



Goal 2: Improve frequency and reliability of transit service to communities in the corridor.

What informs this goal

- Improve mobility for transit riders and attract new riders
- Expand and improve safe and efficient connections to existing and planned METRO transitways along with balancing improved transit accessibility with traffic mobility

Overview

Both the Lowry and West Broadway routes would improve overall transit service to communities. BLRT would operate at 10-minute frequencies during the weekday and would provide improved regional transit connectivity through connections to local and arterial BRT (C and D Lines), along with connections to the regional LRT system at Target Field Station (Figure 40). The Lowry route would provide a connection that does not exist today from Lowry Avenue into downtown Minneapolis without a transfer. Under the West Broadway route, Metro Transit currently operates local route 14. As the community-supported route advances, coordination with Metro Transit would take place to determine the overall local transit route structure to maintain and improve overall system connectivity for the transit user.

Providing transit in a dedicated guideway improves transit service reliability as the LRT is not subject to congestion delays associated with auto traffic. The routes under evaluation in Area 3 would result in lane reductions to accommodate LRT. In general, the Lowry and West Broadway routes have similar existing traffic volumes, which range from around 10,000 vehicles per day near Robbinsdale to around 20,000 vehicles per day near downtown Minneapolis (Figure 47).

Figure 47: Existing Average Daily Traffic





Comparative Evaluation

Travel time and ridership

As stated under goal 1, ridership on the West Broadway route would be similar to the Lowry route. As the Lowry route is approximately 0.8 mile longer than the West Broadway route, with the potential for up to two additional station stops, the travel time for the Lowry route would be longer than on West Broadway. When developing ridership forecasts, one of the important inputs in the evaluation is the overall travel time for the rider. This is particularly true for riders who have a choice whether or not to use transit. Hence, while the Lowry route provides the potential for additional locations to access the system, which is a positive, the additional travel time in comparison to the West Broadway route could reduce its competitiveness.

Traffic

Intersections along Lowry Avenue would have similar operations with the proposed lane reductions. The intersections along Washington Avenue would be expected to have more substantial increases in delays due to the proposed lane reductions, specifically at intersections closer to downtown Minneapolis.

Due to high peak hour directionality of traffic volumes, most intersections along West Broadway Avenue in Minneapolis would experience increased delays and queues with the proposed lane reductions, particularly at intersections east of Irving Avenue North.



Goal 3: Provide transit improvements that maximize transit benefits, while being cost competitive and economically viable.

What informs this goal

Balance project benefits and costs through a tiered approach to capital, operating, and maintenance cost estimates.

Assessment against the goal

Detailed capital cost estimates will be prepared as the community-supported route advances into more detailed design. That said, consistent with the approved Project Principle of meeting the FTA's New Starts criteria, which includes cost effectiveness, the project team will work to define and advance a route that effectively balances capital and operating costs with overall transit system benefits. Important considerations in developing cost estimates will include overall length of the LRT guideway, required street reconstruction, bridges and retaining walls, and right-of-way acquisition. With this approach in mind, both routes are assessed at achieving this goal with a "good" rating.



Goal 4: Support communities' development goals.

What informs this goal

- Assessment of capacity and likelihood of transit-oriented development and/or redevelopment opportunities in station areas
- Assessment of consistency with approved plans and policies, including policies related to affordable housing and prioritization of transportation modes

Overview

TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Based on experience with both the Blue Line and the Green Line in the Twin Cities, it is anticipated that public and private investment would be made during design, construction, and after the BLRT is open. Through the programs and policies that come out of the Anti-Displacement Workgroup, the intent would be to focus the investments on housing and business development and redevelopment that benefits the community.

Other public realm improvements could be part of the BLRT project, including improvements to existing infrastructure, and other community investment to improve safety, access, or the overall look and function of infrastructure.

CONSISTENCY WITH AND SUPPORT OF EXISTING PLANS

A federal initiative and state, regional, and local plans have identified specific goals related to expanding multimodal transportation options, equity, and reduction in vehicle miles traveled. Both the Lowry and West Broadway routes would advance achieving the specified goals. Below is a selection of relevant plans, studies, and policies and how they support or rely on the implementation of BLRT.

Justice40 Initiative

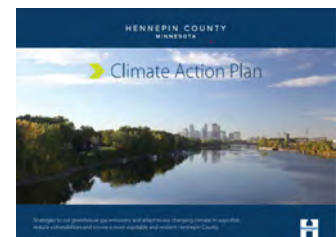
Justice40 is a federal initiative which directs that 40 percent of benefits from certain federal investments should go to disadvantaged communities. Programs and investments covered under Justice40 include those related to climate change and clean transportation, and potential benefits include greenhouse gas emissions reductions; reduction of exposure to emissions; improvement in public transit accessibility, reliability, and options; access to clean, high-frequency transportation; and increased bicycle and walking paths.

Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) Sustainable Transportation Advisory Council (STAC) Recommendations

STAC's recommendations, adopted by MnDOT in March 2021, include a goal of 20 percent reduction in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) statewide by 2050. Replacing trips in personal vehicles with trips by BLRT would make significant progress towards this goal.

Hennepin County Climate Action Plan

Hennepin County's Climate Action Plan, adopted in May 2021, uses STAC's 20 percent VMT reduction goal as a threshold and states that the county will develop a more ambitious goal for VMT reduction by June 2022.



Minneapolis Transportation Action Plan

Minneapolis' Transportation Action Plan, adopted in December 2020, calls for the prioritization of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, complete streets, and transit access. Specific goals include:

- Focus pedestrian improvements along and across the Pedestrian Priority Network
- Create and improve pedestrian connections across freeways, highways, rivers, and railroads
- Build bikeway connections that overcome significant physical barriers during the buildout of the All Ages and Abilities Network
- Increase transit coverage so that 75 percent of city residents are located within a quarter mile and 90 percent of residents are located within a half mile of high frequency transit corridors
- Increase the speed and reliability of transit





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Minneapolis 2040

Minneapolis' 2040 Plan, which took effect in 2020, guides Minneapolis' growth over the next two decades. A major pillar of the plan is that everyone should benefit from this growth, since past growth and investment have resulted in inequities. While the plan is broad in scope, covering land use, housing, jobs, environment, and more, equitable transportation is one of its fundamental goals. The plan seeks to implement frequent, reliable, and accessible transit to help people reach housing and jobs, and to do so in a way that ensures everyone benefits from major transit investments.

Metropolitan Council's Thrive MSP 2040 and 2040 Transportation Plan

Thrive MSP 2040, the region's long-term vision, identifies five desired outcomes: stewardship, prosperity, equity, livability, and sustainability. As stated in the plan:

"Equity connects all residents to opportunity and creates viable housing, transportation, and recreation options for people of all races, ethnicities, incomes, and abilities so that all communities share the opportunities and challenges of growth and change. For our region to reach its full economic potential, all of our residents must be able to access opportunity. Our region is stronger when all people live in communities that provide them access to opportunities for success, prosperity, and quality of life."

Promoting equity means:

- Using our influence and investments to build a more equitable region
- Creating real choices in where we live, how we travel, and where we recreate for all residents, across race ethnicity, economic means, and ability
- Investing in a mix of housing affordability along the region's transit corridors
- Engaging a full cross-section of the community in decision-making

The 2040 Transportation Policy Plan identifies six broad goals for the regional transportation system and provides a framework to achieve them. The goals include transportation system stewardship, safety and security, access to destinations, competitive economy, health and equitable communities, and leveraging transportation investments to guide land use.

Bottineau Transitway Health Impact Assessment, Hennepin County

In 2013, Hennepin County conducted a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) for the BLRT. While the HIA was based on the 2013 locally preferred alternative, there are relevant elements of the study as the BLRT community supported route evaluation advances specific to how the project can work towards improving the health of surrounding communities. A summary of the findings from the study are provided below:

The Bottineau Transitway (now called BLRT) could:

- Increase people's daily physical activity
- Improve access to jobs for communities in the station areas
- Make the combined costs of housing and transportation more affordable
- Improve traffic safety
- Provide access to educational and vocational institutions
- Improve access to healthy food
- Promote better health for disadvantaged communities



Comparative Evaluation

The Lowry route and potential stations could provide access to Upper Harbor Terminal, a planned development project along the Mississippi River. The plan for the site, a former barge shipping terminal, includes market-rate and affordable housing, commercial and industrial uses, parks, and a performing arts venue.¹ Due to its proximity to this site, the Lowry route would provide greater access to Upper Harbor Terminal than the West Broadway route, most notably at the proposed Washington at Lowry station area. Additionally, there is currently vacant publicly owned land on Lowry Avenue.

Along the West Broadway route, there are several undeveloped parcels of land or properties that are currently vacant or owned by a public entity. These parcels provide an opportunity for development or redevelopment. West Broadway Avenue's commercial character would provide greater business development or redevelopment opportunities in comparison to Lowry Avenue.

Under both routes, the Metropolitan Council, Hennepin County, and the City of Minneapolis are committed to implementing a comprehensive, innovative set of strategies to help communities build wealth in place. These strategies will ensure the investment builds on, supports, and protects existing community assets and provides more opportunities for equitable housing, employment, business development, cultural experiences, and other activities of daily life.



Goal 5: Promote healthy communities and sound environmental practices including efforts to address climate change.

What informs this goal

- Minimize impacts to natural and cultural resources
- Assessment of connections from stations to recreation and healthy food options to maximize health and environmental benefits to BLRT communities
- Assessment of connections to community destinations supporting transit use
- Assessment of existing and future sidewalks and/or trail connection opportunities at stations to improve the safety, connections, and accessibility for people walking, biking, and rolling to the BLRT
- Assessment of potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through reducing vehicle miles traveled

Overview

Both route options would provide roadway and overall safety improvements. Figures 48 and 49 reflect both an unsignalized and signalized intersection along University Avenue (Green Line), highlighting various project-related improvements that were constructed. These figures are included as an example of features that could be included as part of BLRT to provide safe and efficient connections to transit in Minneapolis.

1 <http://upperharbormpls.com/>



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Figure 48: Potential Roadway Improvements - Signalized Intersection



Figure 49: Potential Roadway Improvements - Unsignalized Intersection



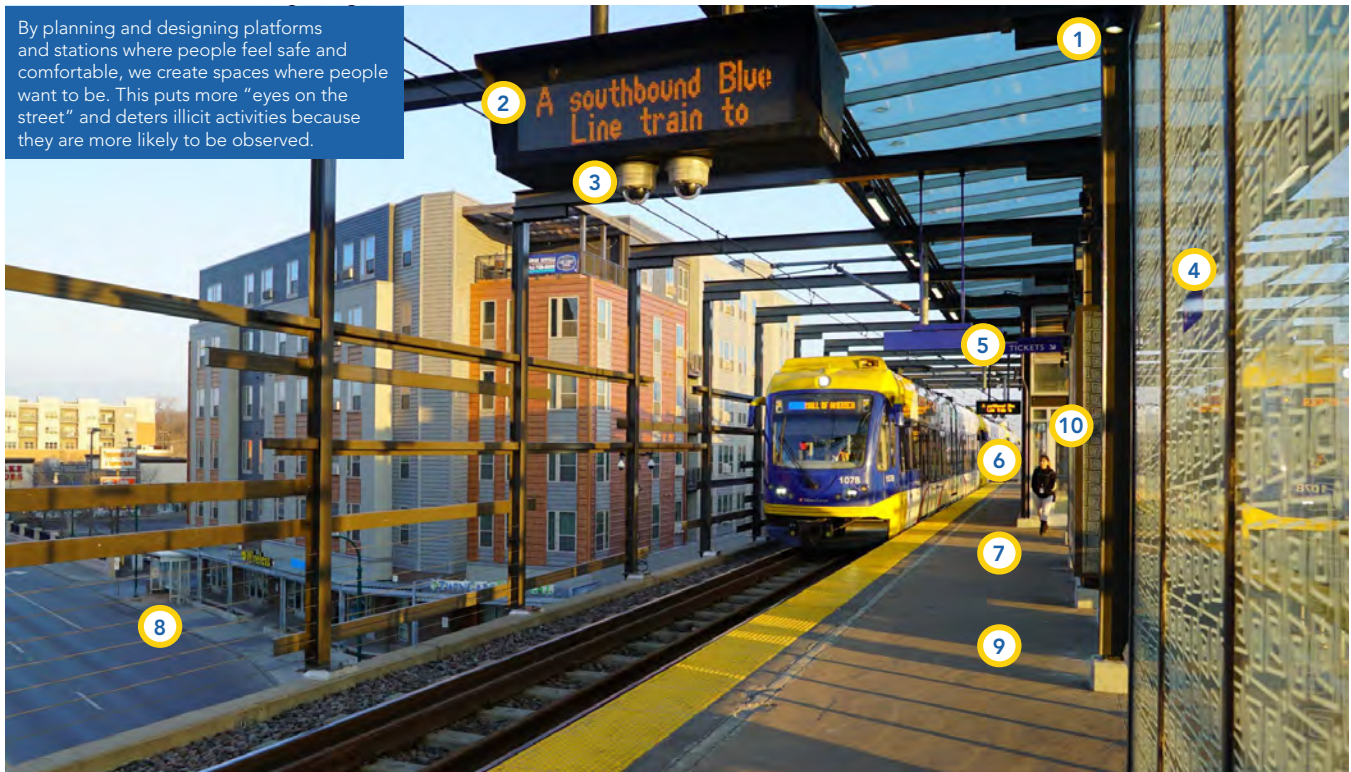
Additionally, the project team has consistently heard through one-on-one conversations and input at workshops that safety at stations is a critical concern. As reflected in Figure 50, safety and security are key considerations factored into the planning and design of LRT before the line is built and while it is in operation.



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Figure 50: Safety and Security Features at a Station

By planning and designing platforms and stations where people feel safe and comfortable, we create spaces where people want to be. This puts more “eyes on the street” and deters illicit activities because they are more likely to be observed.



- 1 Appropriate lighting in the station area and on the trains
- 2 Real-time information
- 3 Security cameras
- 4 Open-air and/or transparent shelters and waiting facilities.
- 5 Consistent wayfinding and signage
- 6 A human-scale feel, which means facilities are designed to be comfortable to riders of all abilities.
- 7 Clear sight lines which allow train operators and riders to see each other.
- 8 Visibility from nearby roadways so riders feel safe and drivers are aware of transit stops.
- 9 Intuitive circulation, which allows riders to safely access the trains.
- 10 Emergency telephones

Comparative Evaluation

WATER RESOURCES (WETLANDS, FLOODPLAINS, PUBLIC WATERS, IMPAIRED WATERS)

The Washington Avenue segment of the Lowry route is within $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of the Mississippi River (a floodplain, public water, and impaired water resource) and may have a greater potential for impacts to this resource. The Lowry route crosses the Bassett Creek tunnel; the potential for conflict with the creek/tunnel would need to be evaluated. Overall, the Lowry route has a greater potential for impacts to water resources.

The West Broadway route is separated from the Mississippi River by $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile or more and would be less likely to impact this resource. The West Broadway route crosses the Bassett Creek tunnel; the potential for conflict with the creek/tunnel would need to be evaluated. Overall, the West Broadway route has a lower potential for impacts to water resources.

WILDLIFE, WILDLIFE HABITAT, AND THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

The Lowry and West Broadway routes lie in urban land with small patches of parkland and residential gardens that may provide habitat for pollinators. The Washington Avenue segment of the Lowry route is adjacent to an Important Bird Area associated with the Mississippi River. The Washington Avenue segment is also within $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of the Mississippi River, where rare mussel species have been identified. The Lowry route therefore may have greater potential for impacts to birds; impacts to mussel species are unlikely. Overall, the Lowry route has a greater potential for impacts to wildlife, wildlife habitat, and threatened and endangered species.

The location of the West Broadway route relative to the Mississippi River makes it unlikely that impacts to the Important Bird Area or rare mussel species would occur. Overall, the West Broadway route has a lower potential for impacts to wildlife, wildlife habitat, and threatened and endangered species.

PARKS

The northern end of both the Lowry route and the West Broadway route intersects Theodore Wirth Parkway (part of the Minneapolis park system); there is a potential for impacts to the parkway at this location. The Lyndale Avenue segment of the West Broadway route passes between the east and west portions of Hall Park; there is a potential for impacts to this park, specifically the existing pedestrian bridge over Lyndale Avenue. Overall, the Lowry route option would potentially impact fewer parks than the West Broadway route option. It is important to point out that both routes would also provide improved transit access to Theodore Wirth Regional Park at the proposed North Memorial station area.



An aerial view of North Memorial

VISUAL IMPACTS

The Lowry route option is located in a similar setting to the West Broadway route option and is anticipated to have a similar effect on visual quality.

NOISE AND VIBRATION

Relative to the West Broadway route, the Lowry route has a greater number of residential properties that may be affected by noise, but fewer institutions (schools, theater, and similar facilities) that may be affected by noise. The number of properties that may be affected by vibration is similar to the West Broadway route.



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CULTURAL RESOURCES

Historic properties were identified along the Lowry and West Broadway routes through a review of existing survey data. Impacts to cultural resources at this stage of project development were limited to an identification of potential National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) listed and eligible properties, using publicly available sources of information. Known historic properties are those sites that have been determined eligible for listing on the NRHP, are currently listed in the NRHP, are National Historic Landmarks, are listed in the State Register of Historic Places, are State Historic Districts, or are locally designated historic properties or places. At this stage of project development, making any determination of potential effects of the project on these properties has not been done. However, a planning-level assessment of potential effects was undertaken and limited to an identification of known historic properties within ½ mile of each route and known historic properties with potential right-of-way impacts.

Lowry Route

The listed Frederica Bremer School at 1214 Lowry Avenue is the only NRHP-listed or determined-eligible property along the length of east-west Lowry Avenue. Surveys of the corridor's commercial and residential fabric appear to be 10-20 years old and resurvey will likely be required.

The Lowry route turns south along Washington Avenue, where most of the determined-eligible properties on the east side of the route and the freeway are south of the Upper Harbor Terminal Historic District. No identified properties are adjacent to the route, however; approaching Target Field, the Lowry route has about as much exposure to an edge of the NRHP-listed Minneapolis Warehouse District as does the West Broadway route. The LaVoris Chemical Company Building at 918 3rd Street North is a prominent building near the Plymouth station. The route is adjacent to contributing properties to the historic district, including the Ford Plant at 420 5th Street North and six other properties along 3rd Avenue North opposite Target Field.

West Broadway Route

Based on the preliminary review, along West Broadway there are many pre-1975 churches and institutional and commercial buildings in addition to dwellings. Plymouth Masonic Lodge, Durham Hall, and the Minneapolis Public Library (1834 Emerson Avenue, previous library now under different use) are located near the potential Emerson-Fremont station and are determined eligible properties.

Approaching Target Field, the route edges two blocks of the NRHP-listed Minneapolis Warehouse District and its historic rail corridor. The adjacent Ford Plant at 420 5th Street North is a prominent contributing building to the historic district. Opposite Target Field there is a group of six contributing properties along 3rd Avenue North.

Both Routes

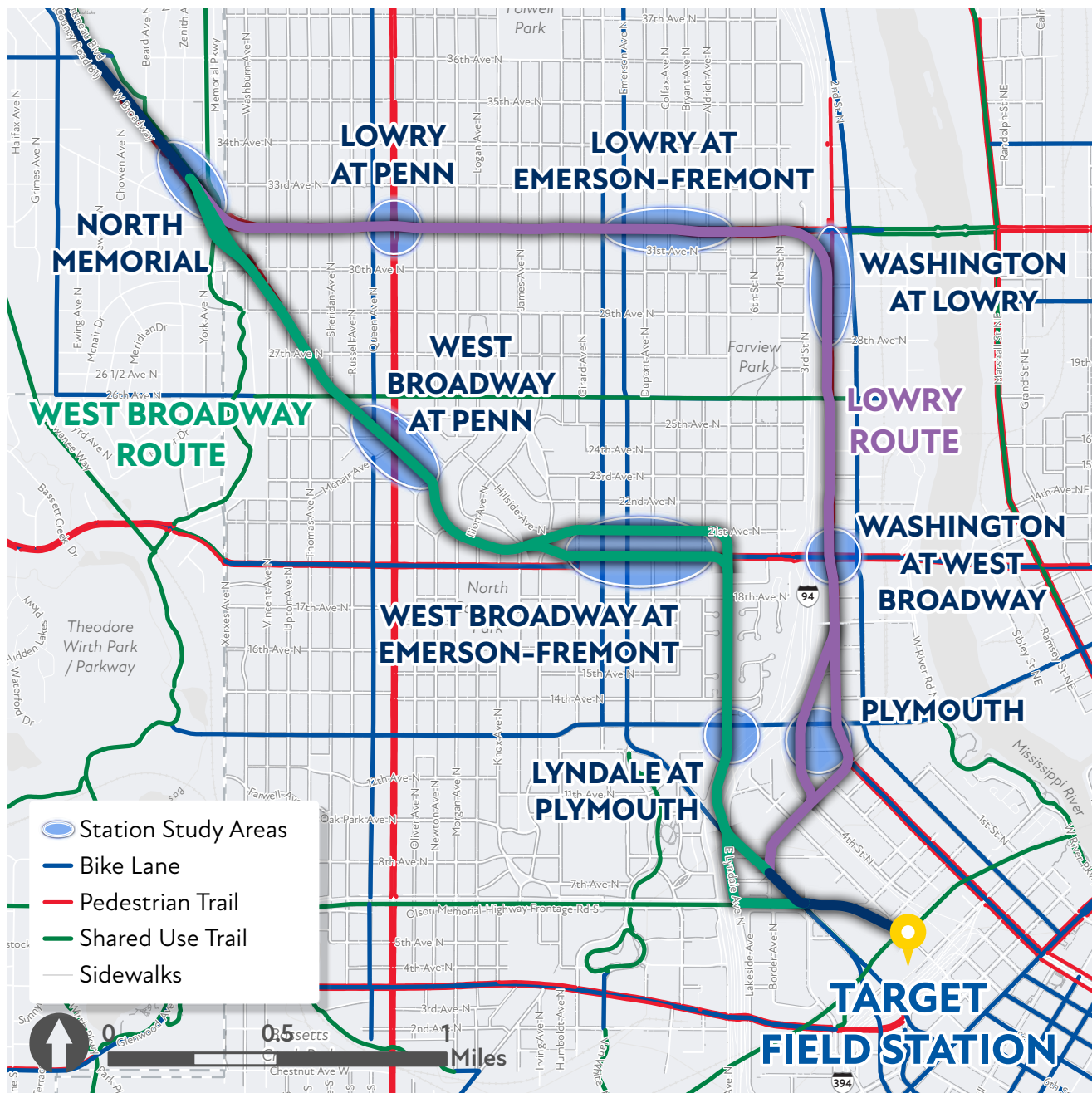
The north end of the Lowry and West Broadway routes begin at the edge of the Victory Memorial Drive Historic District, part of the Minneapolis Grand Rounds. This Drive (Parkway) was evaluated in 2005 and has been determined NRHP eligible. The City of Minneapolis lists it among locally designated properties. Depending on potential direct and indirect effects, intensive Section 106 review would be expected.

The adjacent North Memorial (Victory Memorial) Hospital was previously recommended as not eligible. Both routes are also adjacent to the Pilgrim Heights Community Church at 3120 Washburn Avenue North.

TRAIL CONNECTIONS

Both the West Broadway and Lowry routes would provide good connections to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. However, the Lowry route faces several barriers: while there are some pedestrian bridges over Interstate 94 to the west, it still presents a challenge for pedestrians navigating the area, and to the east, the Mississippi River creates a natural barrier.

Figure 51: Trails and Sidewalks



Source: Metro Trails and Bikeway Collaborative and the City of Minneapolis

Vehicle Miles Traveled

The assessment of reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is an important metric in assessing greenhouse gas emissions and health impacts. As part of the preliminary analysis associated with the ridership forecasts, the potential for reducing VMT under each route option was evaluating at a preliminary level. Based on overall inputs to the evaluation, which include such factors as how riders access the stations, the distance they are traveling to and from the stations, and the number of new riders attracted to the project; the West Broadway route was determined to have approximately 17 percent more reduction in VMT than the Lowry route.



Goal 6: Advance local and regional equity and work towards reducing regional racial disparities.

What informs this goal

- Opportunities to invest in historically disinvested communities and minimize displacement of corridor residents and businesses
- Maximizing cohesion, preservation, and enhancement of BLRT communities through assessment of improved access and connections to cultural and community assets along with opportunities to honor local heritage and character of BLRT communities
- Minimizing short-term and long-term impacts to property and property access, including vehicle access, sidewalk access, on-street parking, and right-of-way acquisition

Overview

Neighborhoods served by both the Lowry and West Broadway routes have historically experienced underinvestment (Figure 52).

As reflected previously in this report, the project team is convening a diverse Anti-Displacement Workgroup with participation by agency and community partners to create programs and policies aimed at preventing displacement. This work will continue regardless of the route that is advanced for further study.

Preventing the multiple forms of displacement (physical, economic, and cultural), maximizing community benefits from BLRT, and reflecting priorities expressed by corridor cities are all priorities for the Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County. Investment in current businesses could be part of programs established by the Anti-Displacement Workgroup.

The Metropolitan Council, Hennepin County, and corridor cities are committed to helping communities build wealth in place. Innovative strategies will ensure the investment builds on, supports, and protects existing community assets.

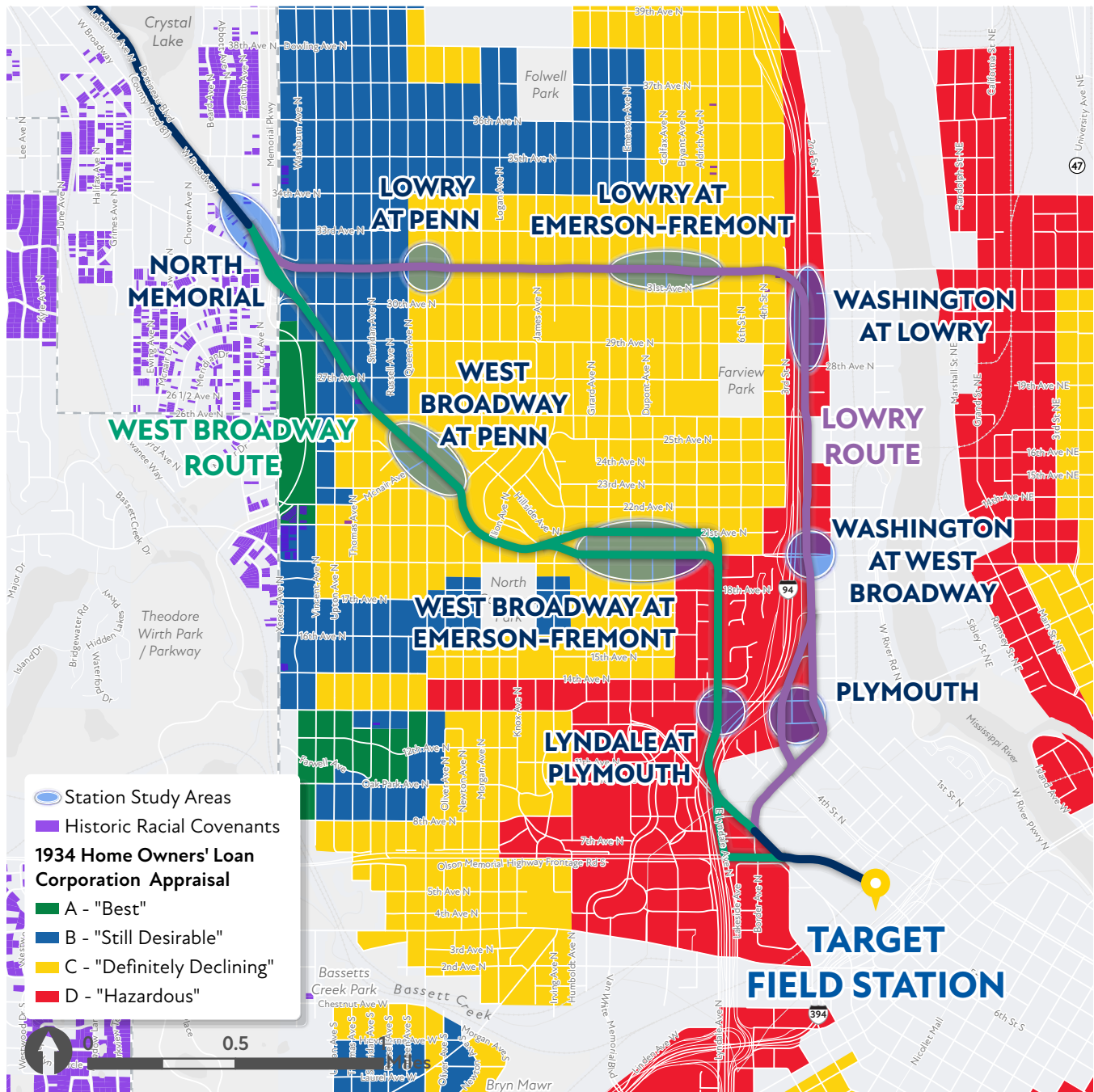
History of Disinvestment

Figure 52 shows lending designations by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) in the 1930s and historic racial covenants, which dictated that homes could not be sold to people of certain races. HOLC designations were used to make lending inaccessible to homeowners and homebuyers in neighborhoods with high concentrations of people of color. Put together, these policies locked people of color out of the housing market and prevented investment in their communities, and the impacts of this disinvestment are still felt today in the areas around the proposed BLRT routes. With both the Lowry and West Broadway routes there is an opportunity to rectify this lack of investment and provide significant benefits to the community.

Jobs and Training

Specific to jobs and training, Metro Transit is committed to hiring women and minorities and contracting with disadvantaged business enterprises on its projects. Metro Transit offers job training opportunities to help build a diverse work force. As an example, the METRO Green Line extension partnered with 10 building and construction trade unions and Twin Cities RISE to create the *Building Strong Communities* program, an apprenticeship preparatory program that prepares adults and high school graduates for careers in the construction industry.

Figure 52: Historic Redlining Designations and Presence of Racial Covenants



Source: Metropolitan Council dataset on Equity Considerations for Place-based Advocacy and Decisions



Comparative Evaluation

Property Impacts and Access

Large transit investments typically involve some property impacts, and this is true for both the Lowry and West Broadway routes; however, the Metropolitan Council is committed to finding ways to minimize and find solutions for these potential impacts. A number of design options have been developed for both the Lowry and West Broadway routes and were included as project materials for public review on the project website and at the November 2021 community workshops. Potential building impacts have been included on the exhibits, which can be viewed at BlueLineExt.org. As one of the Project Principles is to minimize residential, commercial, and environmental impacts, several of the design options were specifically developed to minimize property impacts. While it is the project's intent to work within existing available right-of-way as much as possible, there are properties that will be impacted. For the Lowry route, property impacts are most prevalent along Lowry Avenue, and on the West Broadway route, most impacts are along West Broadway Avenue. Conversely, under the Lowry route, the Washington Avenue section has adequate right-of-way to accommodate LRT. Similarly, under the West Broadway route, Lyndale Avenue is not anticipated to have building impacts.

Both of the route options through Area 3 include the expectation of private property impacts. These impacts result from the relatively dense urban environment along portions of West Broadway Boulevard and Lowry Avenue, and the close proximity of existing buildings (commercial and residential) to the roadway. The property impacts fall into three general categories:

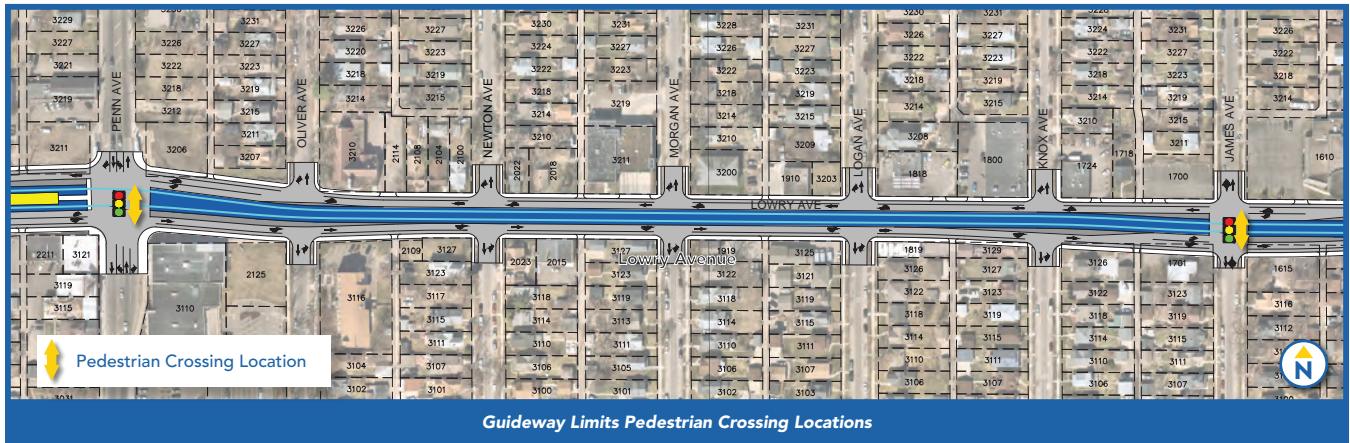
- **Low Impact:** the project may need to purchase a small portion of the property from its owner, but the fundamental use of the property would not need to fundamentally change
- **Medium Impact:** the project would need to purchase a portion of the property such that the existing primary structure is impacted, requiring a review of options to modify the existing structure or purchase the entire property
- **High Impact:** the project would need to purchase a significant enough portion of the property and its primary structure that the fundamental use of the property is compromised, requiring the owner to be accommodated for through a full purchase and planned relocation process

The number of impacts for each route option have not been tallied because the route layouts are conceptual in nature, and many sections of the layouts include multiple design options, each of which have differing numbers and categories of property impacts. Based on a general review of the layout drawings developed for each section of both route options, there is no clear differentiator as to the relative level of impacts between the two routes. A more detailed assessment of private property impacts will occur as a part of the federal environmental review process during the next phase of project planning and design. This environmental review will include a detailed summation of associated property impacts and the planned mitigations for those impacts.

As reflected in Figures 53-56, the inclusion of LRT under both the Lowry and West Broadway routes will impact accessibility from streets, alleys, and driveways that are located on the proposed route. Specifically, access would be primarily limited to right-in/right-out for vehicles. Full crossing access for vehicles, as well as pedestrian and bicyclists, would be provided at major streets with full access control. As design advances, locations for mid-block pedestrian and bike crossings will be explored. However, due to right-of-way constraints, these locations could result in additional right-of-way impacts.

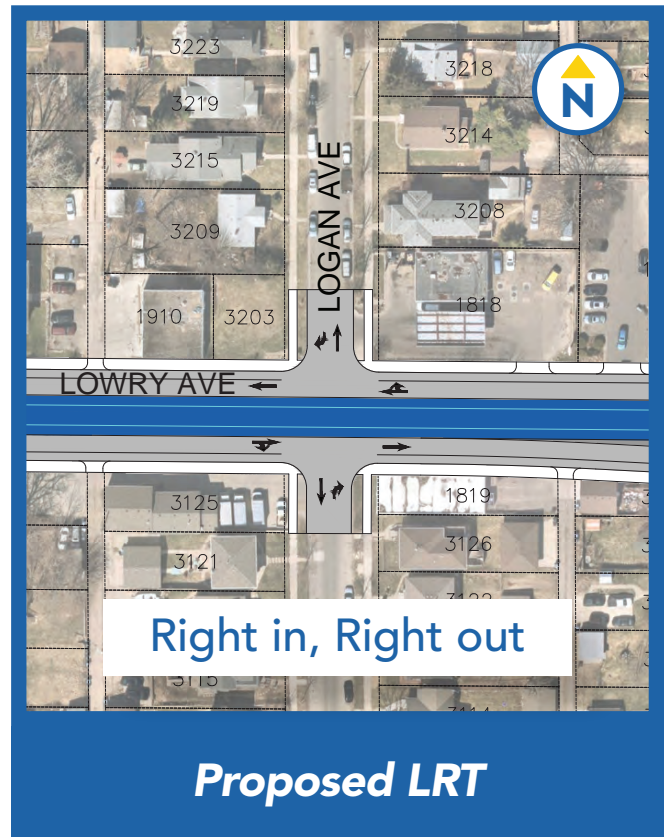
While design options are still being finalized, the Lowry route seems likely to involve more limited crossings and turns, creating a physical and traffic barrier through this area. This could have the effect of dividing the neighborhood north and south of Lowry Avenue. Access impacts along Lowry Avenue are more likely to affect residents, while access impacts along West Broadway Avenue are more likely to affect businesses and commercial areas.

Figure 53: Lowry Pedestrian Access



Note: Additional pedestrian crossings are likely but could result in additional right-of-way impacts.

Figure 54: Lowry Vehicle Access





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Figure 55: West Broadway Pedestrian Access



Note: Additional pedestrian-only crossings are likely but could result in additional right-of-way impacts.

Figure 56: West Broadway Vehicle Access



Parking Impacts

Figure 57 shows data from a Parking Utilization Study completed in June and July 2021. This data was averaged from the amount of occupied curb space along each block with available parking to identify areas of high and low parking use.

For the Lowry route, parking along the Washington Avenue portion is available and heavily used. Along the Lowry Avenue portion, parking is limited and what is available is used extensively. For the West Broadway route, there is abundant parking available with restricted uses; typically, not all of this parking is utilized. Parking impacts are likely to be heavier along the Lowry route.

Figure 57: Existing Parking Availability



Source: Hennepin County Parking Utilization Study, 2021



Summary of Differentiating Evaluation Findings

As reflected throughout this document, the performance on how a route can achieve defined project goals will be used to recommend a route to evaluate in more detail as the project advances. This section summarizes the differentiating elements for each of the routes under evaluation in Area 3 and serves as supporting information to the summary table presented on page 78.

Lowry Route



GOAL 1: IMPROVE TRANSIT ACCESS AND CONNECTIONS TO JOBS AND REGIONAL DESTINATIONS

- This route is approximately 0.8 mile longer than the West Broadway route and has up to two more proposed stations, meaning more access points for the community. It is important to point out that the station locations reflect general areas and could change in location and number as the project advances.
- Overall, this route would serve neighborhoods with limited or no access to personal vehicles, households that are generally below the Hennepin County median household income, and a relatively high proportion (60 percent or more) of residents of color. Interstate 94, however, serves as a barrier to access potential stations along Washington Avenue, including transit-dependent and environmental justice communities west of the highway.
- Access to community destinations would also be provided by this route, primarily along the Lowry Avenue section.
- The station at Plymouth would serve an important geographic area of the city, including the North Loop area. However, many of these riders would already have transit access via Target Field Station.



GOAL 2: IMPROVE FREQUENCY AND RELIABILITY OF TRANSIT SERVICE TO COMMUNITIES IN THE CORRIDOR

- The Lowry route would improve overall transit service to communities, most notably east-west transit service along Lowry Avenue.
- As the Lowry route is longer than the West Broadway route, the travel time is approximately two minutes longer. The additional travel time could reduce competitiveness of the LRT service.
- Intersections along Washington Avenue are expected to have increases in delays due to the proposed lane reductions to accommodate LRT, specifically at intersections closer to downtown Minneapolis.



GOAL 3: PROVIDE TRANSIT IMPROVEMENTS THAT MAXIMIZE TRANSIT BENEFITS, WHILE BEING COST COMPETITIVE AND ECONOMICALLY VIABLE

- Consistent with the approved Project Principle of meeting the FTA's New Starts criteria, which includes cost effectiveness, the Metropolitan Council will work to define and advance a route that effectively balances capital and operating costs with overall transit system benefits. With this approach in mind, the Lowry route is assessed at achieving this goal with a "good" rating.



GOAL 4: SUPPORT COMMUNITIES' DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- This route would provide connections to various economic development opportunities like the Upper Harbor Terminal project.
- Existing undeveloped land that is vacant or owned by a public entity provides opportunity for development and redevelopment.



GOAL 5: PROMOTE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES AND SOUND ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES INCLUDING EFFORTS TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE

- The Lowry route would provide roadway and overall safety improvements.
- The Lowry route would reduce vehicle miles traveled to a lesser extent than the West Broadway route.
- There would be environmental, social, and cultural resource impacts associated with this route.



GOAL 6: ADVANCE LOCAL AND REGIONAL EQUITY AND WORK TOWARDS REDUCING REGIONAL RACIAL DISPARITIES

- There would be property impacts associated with this route. The addition of mid-block crossings for pedestrians, while a benefit for north/south access, could also result in additional right-of-way impacts.
- LRT along Lowry Avenue would limit north/south access, which could adversely divide this residential area.
- There would be a reduction in parking associated with the Lowry route. Along Lowry Avenue, parking is currently limited and what is available is extensively used. Along Washington Avenue, parking is available and heavily used.

West Broadway Route



GOAL 1: IMPROVE TRANSIT ACCESS AND CONNECTIONS TO JOBS AND REGIONAL DESTINATIONS

- This route serves the commercial and cultural heart of North Minneapolis, where people live, work, and spend their time. This route would provide access to numerous community-identified cultural assets and destinations.
- Overall, this route would serve neighborhoods with limited or no access to personal vehicles, households that are generally below the Hennepin County median household income, and a relatively high proportion (60 percent or more) of residents of color.



GOAL 2: IMPROVE FREQUENCY AND RELIABILITY OF TRANSIT SERVICE TO COMMUNITIES IN THE CORRIDOR

- This route would improve overall transit service to the community.
- This route would provide the most efficient connection to regional destinations and connections as people travel from others parts of the metro area to destinations along the corridor and from North Minneapolis to regional jobs and destinations.
- Most intersections along West Broadway Avenue would experience increased delays with the proposed lane reductions, particularly intersections east of Irving Avenue North.



GOAL 3: PROVIDE TRANSIT IMPROVEMENTS THAT MAXIMIZE TRANSIT BENEFITS, WHILE BEING COST COMPETITIVE AND ECONOMICALLY VIABLE

- Consistent with the approved Project Principle of meeting the FTA's New Starts criteria, which includes cost effectiveness, the Metropolitan Council will work to define and advance a route that effectively balances capital and operating costs with overall transit system benefits. With this approach in mind, the West Broadway route is assessed at achieving this goal with a "good" rating.



GOAL 4: SUPPORT COMMUNITIES' DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- This route would serve the heart of the West Broadway business district and North Minneapolis. Existing undeveloped parcel of land or properties that are vacant or owned by a public entity provide opportunity for development and redevelopment in the existing business district.



GOAL 5: PROMOTE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES AND SOUND ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES INCLUDING EFFORTS TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE

- The West Broadway route would provide roadway and overall safety improvements.
- The West Broadway route would reduce vehicle miles traveled to a greater extent than the Lowry route.
- There would be environmental, social, and cultural resource impacts associated with this route.
- Because of West Broadway’s importance as a commercial hub and gathering place, impacts during construction are a concern to the community and will require development of effective mitigation measures.



GOAL 6: ADVANCE LOCAL AND REGIONAL EQUITY AND WORK TOWARDS REDUCING REGIONAL RACIAL DISPARITIES

- There would be property impacts associated with this route. However, under this route there are several options based on existing land use and right-of-way to provide LRT service in the community.
- This route has the potential to support community wealth-building in an area that has historically had limited investment. The commercial district along West Broadway is highly valued by the community.
- The addition of mid-block crossings for pedestrians, while a benefit to north-south access, could also result in additional right-of-way impacts.

Summary of Area 3 Evaluation

Both Area 3 routes – Lowry and West Broadway – have been evaluated based on their ability to effectively meet the defined project goals. As reflected in the following table, both route options meet the project goals, as reflected in an overall assessment of “good.” Goals that achieve an “excellent” assessment include specific areas that inform that goal that are unique and/or have a high potential to provide exemplary positive benefits. As reflected in the table, neither of the routes have been assessed at a “poor” level, which would represent not meeting the defined project goal.

Table 7: Area 3 Evaluation Summary

ASSESSMENT OF ROUTE OPTIONS TO DEFINED GOALS		
PROJECT GOAL	LOWRY ROUTE	WEST BROADWAY ROUTE
Goal 1: Improve transit access and connections to jobs and regional destinations	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT
Goal 2: Improve frequency and reliability of transit service to communities in the corridor	GOOD	GOOD
Goal 3: Provide transit improvements that maximize transit benefits, while being cost competitive and economically viable	GOOD	GOOD
Goal 4: Support communities’ development goals	GOOD	EXCELLENT
Goal 5: Promote healthy communities and sound environmental practices including efforts to address climate change	GOOD	GOOD
Goal 6: Advance local and regional equity and work towards reducing regional economic disparities	GOOD	EXCELLENT

Next Steps

This Draft Route Modification Report will be available for public comment for 45 days. The Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County will review this input along with findings from technical analyses and recommend a community-supported route for further evaluation. This recommendation will be documented in the Final Route Modification Report in spring 2022. Both versions of the report will be guided by Project Principles and goals, community feedback, engineering and environmental considerations, and other factors. After a community-supported route is officially adopted by the Metropolitan Council, work on the design and environmental review will advance.

We're here



LRT projects are complex and unforeseen challenges arise. Schedules and timelines are subject to change.

Blue Line Extension Community-Supported Route:

- Best meets the Project Principles and goals
- Grounded in community feedback through collaboration with stakeholders
- Supported by project corridor communities and decision-makers

Station Area Planning

As engineering and design work continues on the community-supported route, station area planning will also be conducted. This process will focus on access to stations via walking, biking, and other modes, and development opportunities to maximize station area potential. Community benefits such as improved pedestrian facilities, landscaping, and urban design amenities will also be realized through station area planning. The project is committed to equitable development around station areas, and the tools and strategies created by the Anti-Displacement Workgroup will inform the station area planning process.

Environmental Review

Through federal and state environmental review, a detailed evaluation of the community-supported route will be completed and documented. As part of this process, impacts and proposed mitigation in areas such as access, property, parking loss, construction, pedestrian safety, traffic congestion, and noise will be defined. The FTA is the lead federal agency for the environmental review and is also a critical funding partner. The Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County are in close coordination with the FTA on the local decision-making process



METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Draft Route Modification Report

currently underway as well as the upcoming environmental process requirements. Additionally, through the environmental review process, the Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County will work closely with project partners at all levels to effectively address and advance defined goals and policies set forth in adopted plans and applicable design guidelines.

The environmental analysis will be informed by advanced design and input from the Anti-Displacement Workgroup. Based on the community-supported route that advances, coordination with reviewing and permitting agencies and each of the corridor cities will continue to further define the project, anticipated limits of disturbance for evaluation, and development of mitigation measures as noted above.

A brief summary of some of the additional analysis to be completed during the environmental review phase is provided below.

Water Resources (Wetlands, Floodplains, Public Waters, Impaired Waters)

For an initial understanding of potential impacts to water resources, standard publicly available data sources were reviewed through a desktop Geographic Information Systems analysis process. As the project progresses, water resource agencies will be consulted to better understand impacts and mitigation requirements. These agencies may include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR), and watershed districts/watershed management organizations. If necessary, field surveys may be conducted to gain additional information regarding water resources in the project area.

Wildlife, Wildlife Habitat, and Threatened and Endangered Species

The Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS), a MNDNR database of known federal and state rare, threatened, and endangered species and critical habitat areas, was reviewed to assess the potential for impacts to these natural resources. Agencies such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the MNDNR will be consulted to better understand potential natural resource impacts and any required mitigation. If necessary, field surveys will be conducted to gain additional information regarding natural resources in the project area.

Parks

Parks in the project area were identified through a review of publicly available data from jurisdictions and the Metropolitan Council through a desktop GIS analysis process. Although there are many parks and recreational areas identified within the project area, the potential for direct impacts is limited to two parks. Both of these parks are managed by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. Theodore Wirth Regional Park would likely see a direct impact under both the West Broadway and Lowry routes. At 740 acres, Theodore Wirth Regional Park is the largest park in the Minneapolis park system. The portion that could be affected by both the Lowry and West Broadway routes is located at the very northern limit of the park, where it transitions to Victory Memorial Parkway. Hall Park is a 6-acre park in the Near North neighborhood of Minneapolis, divided into two sections by Lyndale Avenue but connected by a pedestrian bridge that provides access across Lyndale. The Lyndale section of the West Broadway route is anticipated to impact that existing pedestrian crossings. Impacts to these parks, as well as any others that could be affected by the project, will require close coordination with the agencies that have jurisdiction over the parks. Avoiding direct impacts to parks and recreational facilities is important, and as the project advances, opportunities to avoid impacts will be explored.

Visual Impacts

At this stage of project design, the potential for visual impacts was assessed by identifying the locations where major project elements, such as bridges, stations, and park-and-ride facilities, would be located. As the project moves into the design process, visual effects will be assessed by evaluating visual character, reviewing proposed plans and features, and documenting existing conditions to evaluate impacts. If an impact is identified

that cannot be avoided, mitigation such as minimizing nighttime operational lighting and visual screening of project facilities would be identified.

Noise and Vibration

A preliminary assessment of the project's potential for noise and vibration impacts was completed based on known land uses, determined using GIS information provided by jurisdictions and the Metropolitan Council as well as input from early outreach activities. The assessment used current guidance from the FTA on how an assessment of noise and vibration impacts should be conducted. This includes looking at categories of potential impact, including sites of high sensitivity (e.g., recording studios and concert halls), residential uses, and institutional uses like schools, theaters, and churches. Three properties that were noted during early outreach activities were North Memorial Hospital (sensitive to vibration, according to the FTA impact assessment methodology), the Capri Theater and KMOJ (sensitive to noise). For these and all potentially sensitive properties, a detailed assessment of impacts will be conducted when the project advances. Opportunities to successfully mitigate impacts for noise include applying vehicle and equipment noise specifications, operational restrictions, and measures to keep all rail equipment in optimal operating condition. Vibration mitigation measures could include special systems installed to support the LRT tracks and measures to keep the tracks and vehicles in optimal operating condition. It is important to note that a full understanding of vibration impacts requires knowing the location of vibration sensitive activities and equipment within a building. For example, North Memorial is identified as a complex with a high sensitivity to vibration from the project; however, many of the structures near the proposed BLRT tracks are used for parking and other types of uses that likely would not be affected by LRT-generated vibration. The detailed noise and vibration impact assessment completed for the project when it advances will evaluate this in greater detail.

Cultural Resources

As the project advances, impacts to cultural resources will proceed in consultation with the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office, FTA, and other interested parties, including the public. These steps will include defining the project's area of potential effect (APE), identifying all listed and eligible historic properties within this area, assessing whether there will be any adverse impacts of the project on these properties, and (if required) committing to mitigation that will offset adverse effects.

Environmental Justice

Executive Order 12898: Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations (1994) serves as the basis for implementation of environmental strategies in all federal agencies within the executive branch. As a federal agency, the FTA is required to identify and address "disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations and to include environmental justice analysis in the National Environmental Policy Act process."

As the BLRT project advances into the federal and state environmental review process, the Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County will work with the communities to minimize impacts and maximize benefits to environmental justice communities served throughout the corridor, from Minneapolis to Brooklyn Park. Input from the Anti-Displacement Workgroup will also be an important element in this evaluation and development of appropriate mitigation strategies.



Public Review and Upcoming Engagement

This report is available for public review and comments will be accepted through **January 25, 2022**. To help you frame your comments, here are suggested questions that will inform staff as they prepare the Final Route Modification Report:



As the project advances, what information would you find most useful for community decision-making?



What issues or opportunities do you see with the routes and the information?



Based on the information presented in the report, do you have a preferred route? Why?

The Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County will carefully review the input received along with the findings from the technical analysis completed to date and will recommend a community supported route for further evaluation in spring 2022. To submit your comments, visit BlueLineExt.org to fill out the comment form, or mail in the attached copy. See below for a list of upcoming community meetings that will be hosted during the comment period for this report.

Visit BlueLineExt.org for more information on upcoming meetings, to sign up for the project newsletter, and continue to share your comments, questions and concerns on our interactive feedback map.

We look forward to discussing this information with you at an upcoming in-person or virtual workshop.

IN-PERSON COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Presentation and questions starting at 5:30 p.m.

Tuesday, January 4, 2022 | 5 – 7 p.m.

Gathering Hall at North Hennepin Community College
7411 85th Ave N
Brooklyn Park, MN 55445

Thursday, January 6, 2022 | 5 – 7 p.m.

Crystal City Hall
4141 Douglas Dr N #1696
Crystal, MN 55422

Tuesday, January 11, 2022 | 5 – 7 p.m.

Elim Lutheran Church
3978 W Broadway Ave
Robbinsdale, MN 55422

Wednesday, January 12, 2022 | 5 – 7 p.m.

North Commons Recreation Center Gym
1801 N James Ave
Minneapolis, MN 55411

VIRTUAL COMMUNITY MEETINGS

For details to join the virtual community meetings, to request meeting accommodations, and for more information visit: www.BlueLineExt.org

Friday, January 7, 2022 | 12 – 1:30 p.m.

Thursday, January 13, 2022 | 5:30 – 7 p.m.



To find the Draft Route Modification Report online and provide additional comments on our interactive map, visit: BlueLineExt.org



We are accepting comments on the Draft Report through **January 25, 2022**

 **CONTACT INFO**

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Email: _____

Please add me to the project email list

.....

To provide these responses via email or phone, or for questions, contact Sophia Ginis, Manager of Public Involvement: sophia.ginis@metrotransit.org or 651.592.1911.



Comment Form

METRO Blue Line Extension

FOLD HERE

Return Address

PLACE
STAMP
HERE

**Southwest LRT Project Office
Park Place West Building
Suite 500
6465 Wayzata Boulevard
St. Louis Park, MN 55426**

FOLD HERE



Stay Connected!

For project questions or to invite us to an event, contact:

Brooklyn Park/Minneapolis/Robbinsdale/
Overall Project Questions:

Sophia Ginis – Sophia.Ginis@metrotransit.org

Crystal:

David Davies – David.Davies@metrotransit.org



Visit BlueLineExt.org for more information, to sign-up for the project newsletter, and share your comments, questions and concerns on our interactive feedback map.

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