



# METRO BLUE LINE LRT EXTENSION

Initial Routes for Consideration • March 2021

## Routes for Consideration

The METRO Blue Line Extension is now seeking feedback on revised routes that do not use freight rail property as previously planned. Based on technical considerations, community input, and past project work, these options currently represent the best potential routes for light rail to connect communities from Minneapolis northwest to Brooklyn Park. The goal is to identify a single community-supported route by the end of 2021 to advance through engineering and environmental review in the coming years.

Three unique areas in the corridor for the Blue Line Extension have been identified (shown on Figure 1).

## Background

The Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County announced in August 2020 the need to advance the Blue Line Extension project without using freight railroad property. After several years of unsuccessful discussions with the freight railroad, it was time to move the project forward so that partners could deliver this critical transportation investment.

To guide our collaborative work moving forward, project partners and stakeholders developed a set of Project Principles that set the project direction and guide decision-making and engagement.

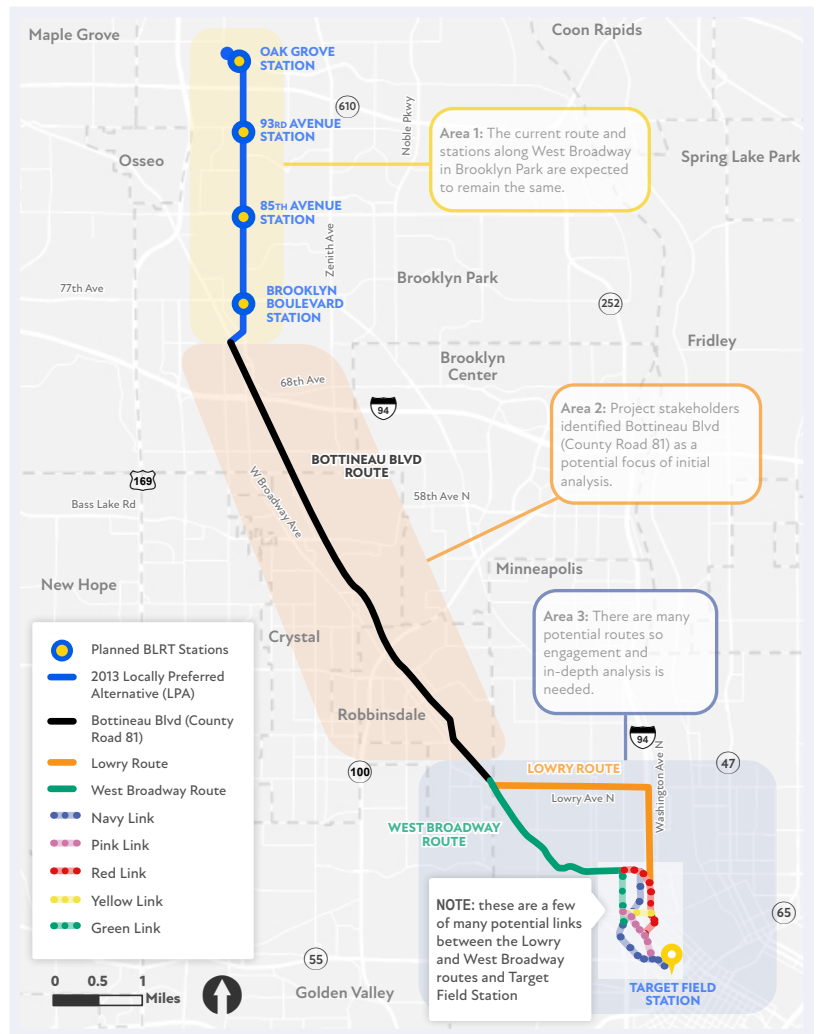


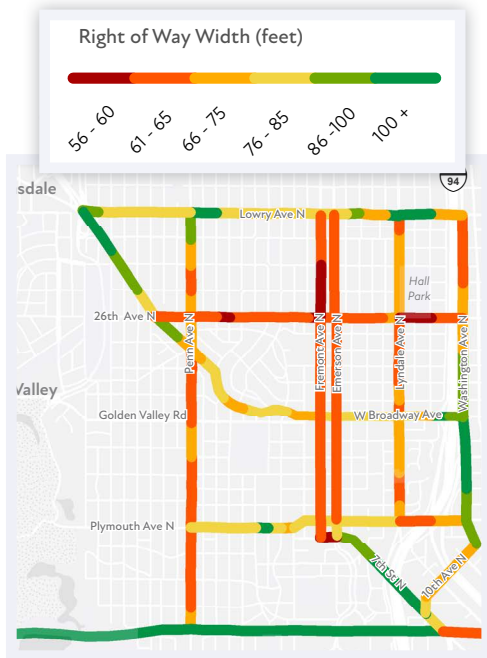
Figure 1: Project Areas and Routes for Initial Evaluation

The Blue Line Extension Project Principles have been the starting point for identifying initial routes for consideration. The represented candidate routes for Area 3 within Minneapolis have taken into account the following factors:

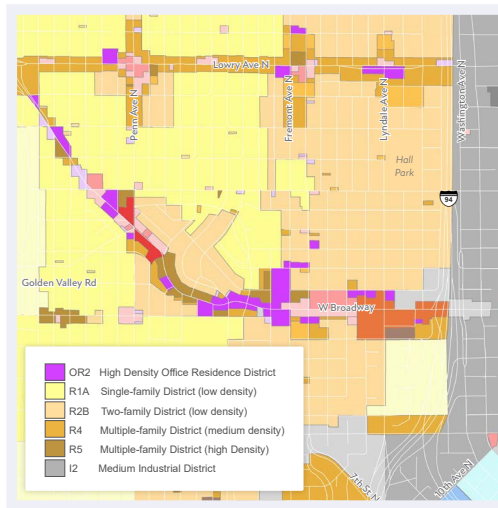
- ✓ **Available Public Right-of-Way** – Based on experience with the existing Blue and Green Lines we know that a light rail guideway requires approximately 30 feet of width (more at stations) for street level service (see Figure 2).
- ✓ **Continuity** – A light rail corridor needs a continuous, relatively 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 of employment are best suited to accommodate light rail and maximize community and economic development opportunities.

The City of Minneapolis zoning map (Figure 3) illustrates the existing zoning across Area 3. The majority of the area is represented as R1A and R2B (multifamily), with an area of I2 (industrial) east of I-94. There is a concentration of R4 and R5 (multifamily) and OR2 (high density office residence district) clustered along Lowry Avenue N and West Broadway Avenue.

- ✓ **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.



**Figure 2: Rights-of-Way Width in Area 3**



**Figure 3: Existing Zoning in Area 3 (Source: City of Minneapolis)**

Using these factors, the project team reviewed potential options.

What remained after the initial review includes two primary routes (Lowry Avenue and West Broadway) and a series of linking segments in downtown Minneapolis that could connect the two in varying ways.



**Figure 4: Potential Routes for Evaluation in Area 3**

## Next Steps

We want to hear from you! Visit [BlueLineExt.org](http://BlueLineExt.org) to view our interactive map, provide comments, take a survey, or connect with project staff.



What routes do you want to see advanced?



What opportunities do you see?



What challenges do you see?

## Stay Connected!

Project website: [BlueLineExt.org](http://BlueLineExt.org)  
Follow us on Twitter: [@BluelineExt](https://twitter.com/BluelineExt)

For project questions or to invite us to an event, contact Sophia Ginis, Manager of Public Involvement:  
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