



Tracking the Blue Line Extension

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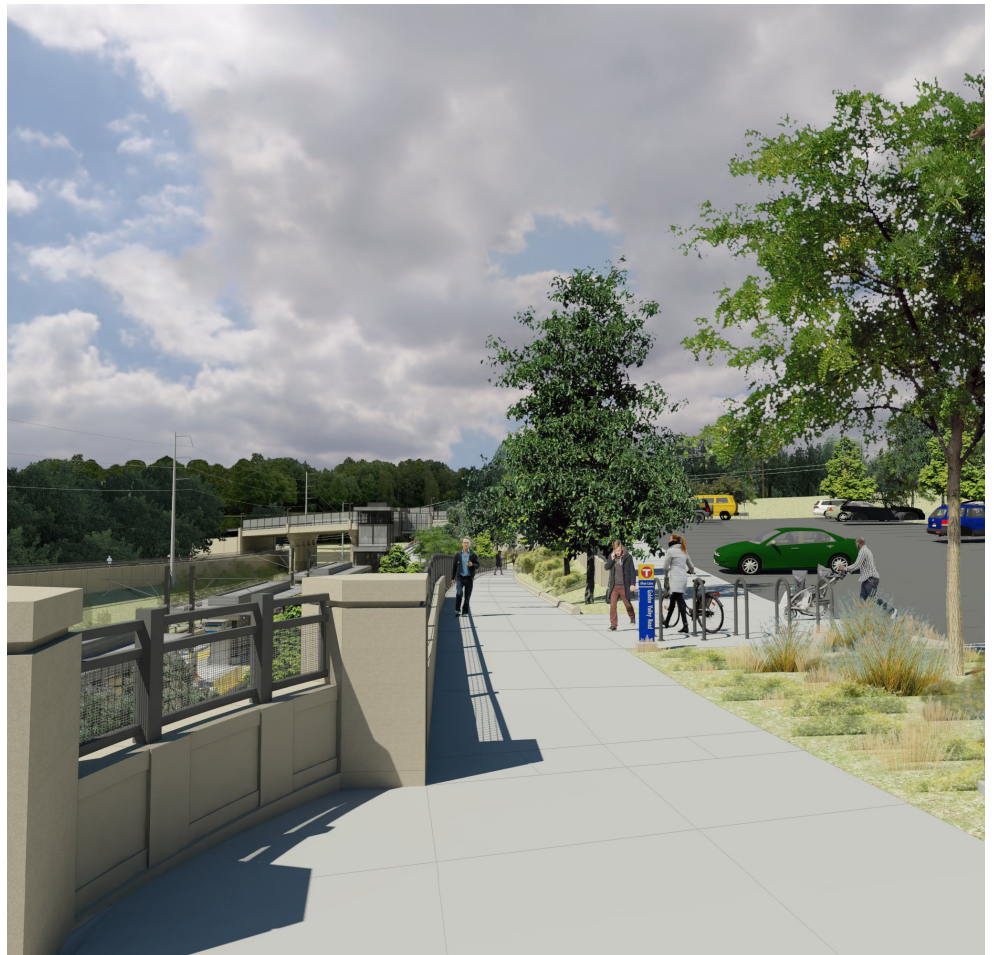
Blue Line Extension staff finalizing project design

Designs for landscaping, sidewalks and crosswalks and added screening are among details emerging as staff fine tune plans for the Blue Line Extension LRT Project.

Designs are 90 percent complete as of this winter. By community, here are some of the design details that have been added or refined since the project was at a 60 percent level of detail in early 2017:

Corridor wide

- Modified sidewalk crossings of LRT and BNSF Railway track in Robbinsdale, Crystal and Brooklyn Park
- Added plants to screen the traction power substations from view. These are small metal buildings that will house equipment to convert electrical current in the form that can be used to power LRT trains
- Modified design of the poles that will hold up the overhead wires that bring electricity to power the trains. The modification is changing the poles' design to a tapered, tubular look



Rendering of proposed station and pedestrian bridge near Plymouth Ave.

Minneapolis

- Modified Sixth Avenue by widening the sidewalk and adding plantings
- Landscaped medians in Highway 55, with 90 percent plans showing planting areas
- Designated median trees for transplanting in north Minneapolis

Golden Valley

- Refined design of the Bassett Creek channel, pedestrian bridge, stairs near Plymouth Avenue
- Added sidewalk to the north side of Golden Valley Road east of Theodore Wirth Parkway intersection

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Plan sheet showing where the light rail track (blue) will go and where sidewalk and access road (gray) improvements will be made in Sochacki park

Robbinsdale

- Sochacki Park mitigation measures, such as keeping the park open during construction, so people can use the trail. After construction, crews will reconstruct the trail through a portion of the park and create a trail connection between Sochacki Park and Theodore Wirth Park. Crews also will reconstruct the interior parking lot to allow for a bus turnaround to help accommodate plans to expand the park's youth programming in the future
- Refined the design of the 45 ½ Avenue road crossing over LRT and BNSF tracks



Rendering of the proposed pedestrian crossing near the Bass Lake Rd. Station in Crystal

Crystal

- Improved Bass Lake Road pedestrian crossing across Bottineau Boulevard with additional signage and a narrowed roadway design to shorten the crossing distance

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Rendering of the proposed Brooklyn Blvd. Station in Brooklyn Park

Brooklyn Park

- Incorporated West Broadway visioning session elements into the city- and county-sponsored streetscape design, including trees, pedestrian lighting and special corner pavements
- Added an 8-foot sidewalk between Bottineau Boulevard and Louisiana Avenue on the north side of 63rd Avenue
- Removed 63rd Avenue community access near existing park-and-ride and refined bus turnaround design
- Refined Grand Boulevard median design

Next steps to finish designs

In 2018, the project office will continue to work with the cities and county to refine the final designs.

Minneapolis

- Detailed landscape designs for Highway 55 medians
- Final location of the statue of Gov. Floyd B. Olson
- Continued coordination with Metro Transit's planned C Line

Golden Valley

- Bassett Creek bank stabilization design at Plymouth Avenue

Robbinsdale

- Robbinsdale station park-and-ride structure and associated site and roadway designs

- Confirm limits and height of fence south of 45th Avenue

Crystal

- Bass Lake Road streetscape coordination

Brooklyn Park

- 71st to 74th Avenue roadway reconstruction coordination with Hennepin County
- West Broadway pedestrian lighting
- Oak Grove Parkway Station park-and-ride structure design

Bassett Creek storm tunnel replacement on schedule



Outreach coordinator Sophia Ginis informs community members at the Harrison Recreation Center regarding the Bassett Creek storm water tunnel replacement at a public meeting on Oct. 10



Crews install new Bassett Creek storm water tunnel starting on Oct. 30

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The new Bassett Creek storm water tunnel was installed over the course of 12 days and Highway 55 immediately re-opened



Crews will continue to work with occasional lane closures through 2018

Immigrant-owned local business sees Blue Line Extension work as steppingstone to bigger opportunity

Germantown, Wis., is about as far from Nepal as you can get. But for Gopal Adhikary, a native of Nepal, the city is home base for his growing business, Himalayan Consultants.



*Himalayan Consultants owner
Gopal Adhikary*

Started 17 years ago, Himalayan Consultants has expanded operations and business aspirations. From its humble beginnings northwest of Milwaukee, Adhikary now has 12 employees in several offices across the Midwest, including St. Paul.

That expansion seems to have paid off. The firm is working on the Bassett Creek storm water tunnel relocation in Minneapolis, part of the Blue Line

Extension LRT Project. Himalayan was brought in to support the monitoring of the construction site and help ensure the environmental construction action plan is being followed. This work is a semi-recent addition to the services it offers. Himalayan Consultants originally started with a geo-technical engineering focus, but Adhikary said as the business grew so did the variety of what they offered prospective clients.

"In addition to geotechnical and environmental services, we provide roadway design, site civil engineering, surveying services and construction engineering so we have become a multi-discipline engineering firm," he said.

The multi-discipline approach has served the company well. Already it has handled major projects for several clients, including both the Wisconsin and Illinois Departments of Transportation, including a large freeway redesign. Now the company counts Minnesota Department of Transportation and Metropolitan Council among its clients.

For the Bassett Creek project, Himalayan Consultants staff utilized high-tech equipment to perform water and soil tests. They were looking for possible contamination, which could include old construction materials from the original construction of the storm water tunnel more than 100 years ago. If material was found to be contaminated, it would be transported to a landfill or a licensed wastewater treatment facility. This is an invaluable service for the community, but Himalayan Consultants may never have had the opportunity if it weren't for the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program.

The DBE program was created by the U.S Department of Transportation to help minority- and women-owned businesses work on transportation-related projects, including the Met Council's transit projects. Requirements for participating in the DBE program include limits on personal net worth (less than \$1.32 million). Also, participating firms need to meet Small Business Administration size standards as measured by annual gross receipts. Those standards vary by industry. Ownership must also be at least 51 percent female or persons of color. The DBE goal for the Bassett Creek contaminated materials monitoring work was 15 percent.

Adhikary came to the United States from Nepal in 1989 to attend Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, where he received his master's in geo-technical engineering. He started his company after working at several other design firms. His wife later joined the team as an accountant. They continue to search for business opportunities, a search aided by his company's DBE designation.

"I think of the DBE program as that it gets us to the door and gives us opportunities because of the DBE requirement on some jobs," Adhikary continued. "Then when we do a good job and serve the client and project well, then we get more opportunities both DBE and non-DBE. It allows us to show what we can do for our clients in terms of our commitment and quality of work."

Now with a DBE designation firmly in hand and many ongoing projects in several states, Adhikary said he is looking to grow once again.

"We have the capabilities to design freeways, state highways, city streets and at some point, we want to be a prime in the Minnesota area too, so we hope that this project is a steppingstone for us."



Himalayan Consultants Sr. Hydrologist Tom Dueppen (right) consults the environmental plans for the Bassett Creek storm water tunnel project

Features at LRT stations will promote safety, accessibility



Planned Golden Valley Road Station includes an elevator

The stations for both LRT extension projects will include features to promote safety and accessibility for all.

These include:

- Platform edge protective bollards between light rail vehicle cars
- Gently sloping access ramps from sidewalk to platform
- Tactile warning strips to mark the edge of the platform
- Audible and visual warnings at street and track crossings
- Wider platforms to allow two wheelchairs to pass side by side
- Shelter areas with seating and open spaces for wheelchairs
- Elevators to provide access from stations that are below street level including the Golden Valley Road Station on the Blue Line Extension LRT



Left: Stations include safety features such as between car bollards and tactile warning strips

Feedback results in modifications to accessibility features



TAAC members experience full sized mockup of proposed vehicle design changes and meet project designers to offer their input.

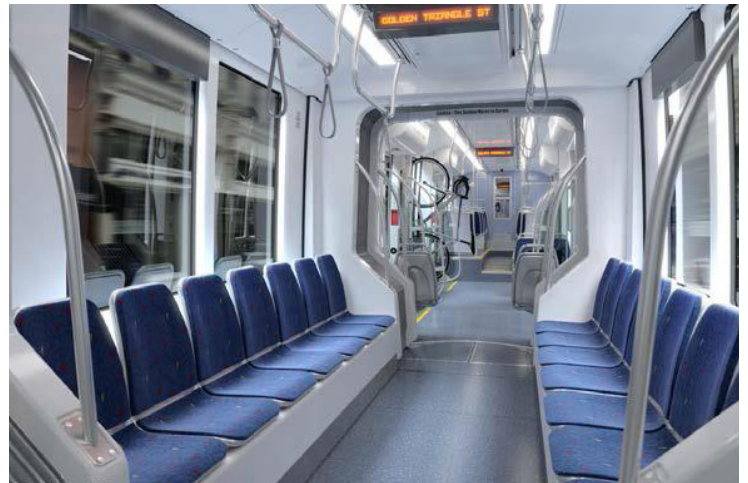
The interiors of the new LRT trains to be built for Southwest LRT, as well as the Blue Line Extension, will be modified, thanks to community feedback.

The redesign will have some seats running parallel along the middle vehicle walls facing each other. This increases circulation away from ADA-designated seating and allows for a wider path for users of some wheelchairs and walkers while keeping nearly the same number of seats.

Designers met regularly with the public, including two key advisory committees, both LRT projects' Community Advisory Committees and the Metropolitan Council's Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee. The TAAC is a 16-member committee made up of transit users and advocates for older people and the disability community, as well as representatives of service providers and other appropriate agencies.



Light rail vehicle design includes space for passengers in wheelchairs and companion seating.



Design for center section of new light rail vehicles has seats facing each other which creates a wider aisle.

Blue Line Extension employee receives award for volunteering

Equal opportunity consultant Jon Vang, who works with the Blue Line Extension LRT Project, said he was "blown away" when he received a call recently from the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits.



Jon Vang takes notes at a Great Minds workshop

"I got the phone call out of the blue," Vang explained. "The person told me I had won the Virginia McKnight Binger Unsung Hero Award. I said, 'What is that?'"

The Unsung Hero award is a partnership between the McKnight Foundation and the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits to honor "individuals doing life-changing work in communities across Minnesota with little or no recognition," according to the Council of Nonprofit's website. Vang is one of four recipients who each received \$10,000, no strings attached.

Vang was nominated for the award by Headwaters Foundation for Justice, a social-justice grant-making organization. Vang participated in the Headwaters' Giving Project fund-raising program and continues to be a

mentor there. He is also being recognized for his work to end gender-based violence in the Hmong community with ManForward and his work to support men returning from prison through the Power of People Leadership Institute.

"I do a lot of volunteer and community work on the side and have been doing it for quite a while," Vang said. "I wasn't expecting to get anything in return."

In his position as an equal opportunity consultant, Vang works with the Council's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program and workforce outreach for the Blue Line Extension project. For the last several months, Vang has been running the training program for LRT BUILD. The Met Council's LRT BUILD program helps people without construction experience get training so they can have the opportunity to work on the Blue Line Extension project when the time comes. In June, the program graduated 16 students.

About the project

The planned METRO Blue Line Extension (Bottineau) light rail transit project will operate about 13 miles northwest from downtown Minneapolis through north Minneapolis, Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal and Brooklyn Park, drawing riders northwest of Brooklyn Park. The alignment will have 11 new stations in addition to Target Field Station where it will continue as the METRO Blue Line, providing one-seat rides to Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and the Mall of America. It will connect Minneapolis and the region's northwest communities with existing LRT on the METRO Green Line, future LRT on the METRO Green Line Extension (Southwest LRT), bus rapid transit on the METRO Red Line, the Northstar commuter rail line and local and express bus routes.

The Metropolitan Council will be the grantee of federal funds and is charged with building the line in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Transportation. The Blue Line Extension Corridor Management Committee, which includes local officials from Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, Brooklyn Park and Minneapolis, provides advice and oversight. Funding is provided by the Federal Transit Administration, Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB), state of Minnesota, Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) and Hennepin County.

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