

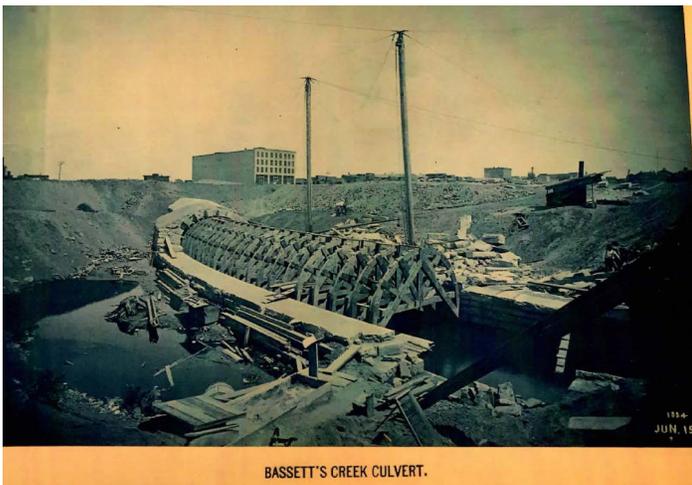


# Tracking the Blue Line Extension

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## Pre-construction work to begin late fall for future Blue Line Extension



Bassett Creek culvert; circa 1884



Bassett Creek culvert relocation map

Replacement will begin late this fall of more than a century old storm sewer pipe under Highway 55 in Minneapolis to make room for the future Van White Station and LRT tracks in the median.

Relocation of the Bassett Creek storm sewer utility will be the first earth turned in preparation for LRT heavy construction now set to begin in 2019, instead of 2018 as originally planned. The project also anticipates doing additional early construction in 2018 such as floodplain mitigation, Theodore Wirth Parkway bridge reconstruction and sanitary sewer relocation.

The Metropolitan Council plans to apply in May 2018 instead of September 2017 for the Full Funding Grant Agreement, the federal government's commitment to pay nearly half of the LRT project's construction costs.

This delays the project's opening date to 2022. The overall project budget is still \$1.536 billion.

### Storm sewer pipe needs to be replaced because it's structurally deficient

Besides being done to accommodate light rail, the storm sewer replacement under Highway 55 in Minneapolis also needs to be done because the Minnesota Department of Transportation considers it structurally deficient. The relocation needs to be done during a low-flow time for storm water, which is during the fall and winter.

The closure of Highway 55 in Minneapolis for up to 12 days will begin after Oct. 27, allowing for completion first of work on nearby Interstate 94.

The work is estimated to cost \$4.4 million. Two bid packages were released in June for the work. One was for procurement of the construction materials while the other was for the storm sewer tunnel construction. The Metropolitan Council awarded the material procurement contract in July and the construction contract will be awarded in September.

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## Met Council's new chair has railroad background, been involved in SWLRT/freight rail talks



*New Met Council Chair Alene Tchourumoff*

New Metropolitan Council Chair Alene Tchourumoff has more than a decade of transportation policy and finance experience and has been involved with the Southwest LRT Project in discussions with the affected freight rail companies.

Gov. Mark Dayton recently appointed Tchourumoff (pronounced CHUHR'-uh-mahf) to succeed Adam Duinck. Her term will begin on July 31.

For the past year, Tchourumoff has been the state's rail director and worked on rail safety and economic development along rail corridors. Before becoming state rail director, she was director of the Planning Department for Hennepin County Public Works.

Tchourumoff previously was a manager for Deloitte Consulting in Washington, D.C., where she was a financial and strategic policy advisor to the Federal Railroad Administration at the U.S. Department of Transportation, focusing on rail program implementation and financing. She also previously was a

manager in the transportation and finance practice for Infrastructure Management Group, advising the mayor of San Juan, Puerto Rico, the California High-Speed Rail Authority and Dallas Area Rapid Transit on rail policy and finance issues

Current Chair Adam Duinck is stepping down to become government affairs director with the North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters. Duinck was appointed in 2015 to be the first full-time chair of the Met



*Current Chair Adam Duinck*

Council. He was first named to the Met Council in 2011, representing District 8, which covers part of Minneapolis. He was chair of the Met Council's Transportation Committee in his first term. As the chair of both the Southwest LRT and Blue Line Extension LRT Projects' corridor management committees, Duinck saw both projects complete the environmental process and the project development phase.

## Outreach bus illustrates the “Future of Twin Cities Transit”



New outreach bus at Twin Cities Pride

Kevin Cannon’s illustrations – what he calls “cartoon cartography” – helped memorialize the openings of the METRO Green and A Lines.

After depicting these routes in pieces that appeared in the Star Tribune and commemorative posters, Cannon was presented an even larger palette – a 40-foot bus that will travel to outreach activities across the Twin Cities.

The bus features illustrations of recognizable landmarks – water towers, parks and school buildings – from communities where planned extensions of the METRO Green and Blue lines will run.

The bus also denotes the Green, Blue and Red lines, and the planned Orange Line, and includes large text inviting people to imagine the “Future of Twin Cities Transit.”

The design was made in collaboration with Metro Transit’s Creative Services team. It debuted at the recent Pride Parade and will appear at dozens of community events through the end of the year. Metro Transit recently caught up with Cannon to talk about his work.

### How would you describe your style?

I think my style is best described as “cartoon cartography.” I try to capture the essence of a building or place through caricature but I don’t sweat the details, like accurate size relationships or navigability. Anyone who tries to use my maps to get from point A to point B will probably get lost. I think I can get away with “creative accuracy” because I’m a cartoonist, and fortunately this freedom to warp spatial relationships allows me to draw maps to fit strange and unique shapes like, say, the side of a bus.

### How did you get your start?

Drawing has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. My earliest memories are of drawing.

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### **What inspired your vision for this bus?**

I'm extremely excited that Metro Transit is branching farther out into the community, making the amenities of Minneapolis and St. Paul accessible to everyone. Having lived briefly in New York City and London, I know what it's like to wake up and be able to jump on a train and go nearly anywhere you want and it's fun to see the Twin Cities move in that direction. Since I come from a train family – my great-grandpa used to take steam engines across the Stone Arch bridge -- I'm particularly excited about the proposed light rail routes.

### **What do you hope people will take away from seeing the bus?**

My hope is that people will get excited about how all the new routes will connect the Twin Cities and will inspire people to get out and explore. Hopefully my style and cartoon landmarks will catch peoples' eyes as the bus passes and will encourage them to learn more about what Metro Transit has in the works over the next several years.

See more of Kevin Cannon's work at [kevincannon.org](http://kevincannon.org). Construction activities on the Green Line Extension, running from Minneapolis to Eden Prairie, are scheduled to begin late this year. Heavy construction on the Blue Line Extension, which will run from Minneapolis to Brooklyn Park, is scheduled to begin in 2019. The lines are scheduled to open in late 2021 and 2022, respectively.

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### **Several factors behind change in project schedule**

The change in the project schedule resulted from the need to:

- Secure the remaining local funding of \$149 million; the initial plan was for these funds to be covered by the state. While this didn't occur in the 2017 legislative session, the dissolution of the Counties Transit Improvement Board and increase in Hennepin County sales and use tax clears the way for Hennepin County to cover the remaining local funds;
- Conclude negotiations and execute agreements with BNSF in whose corridor the LRT tracks will be built for eight miles from Golden Valley to Brooklyn Park;
- Be rated at least medium by the FTA in the Annual Report on Funding Recommendations (Note, this was achieved with the FTA's May 2017 report giving Blue Line Extension a medium-high rating); and
- Receive a funding appropriation by Congress in the FY2018 federal budget.

## First 16 students graduate from LRT Build apprenticeship program



LRT Build Graduates

Sixteen people completed LRT Build at the end of June, a 10-week apprenticeship-readiness program to help prepare workers for construction jobs now that will give them work experience before heavy construction of Southwest LRT starts in 2018.

“They are qualified to become an apprentice. Once they get into their craft, they are going to be junior-level craft workers and doing whatever their craft needs of them,” said Richard Krohn, who taught the students basic construction skills at North Hennepin Community College.

Chevalier Gonzalez, one of the graduates, is grateful for the opportunity.

“These past 10 weeks have been a blur but the skills I have learned are going to help me for the rest of my life. I’m convinced that this program will help me enter the construction industry and for that I’m thankful for everybody who was part of this program. I’m just so excited to start a career in the construction industry,” Gonzalez said.

The Southwest LRT Project is expected to create 7,500 construction jobs, drawing workers from all over the state. Workforce goals for the project are 32 percent people of color and 6 percent female.

Building light rail in the Twin Cities “will truly be your legacy for the region and will lift everyone up to be able to have better access to jobs, better access to school,” Metro Transit Deputy General Manager Mark Fuhrmann, who is program director for LRT projects, told the graduates at a commencement ceremony at North Hennepin Community College.

A second round of LRT Build classes will be offered in spring 2018.

The program is funded by the Metropolitan Council, Minneapolis Building and Construction Trades Council, North Hennepin Community College, Twin Cities RISE, Hennepin-Carver Workforce Development Board, Construction Careers Foundation and McKnight Foundation. Gary Courtney and Jon Vang, Metropolitan Council equal opportunity consultants assigned to the two LRT projects, oversaw the LRT Build program.



LRT Build students at Operating Engineers union training center in Hinckley



Here is a link to a video about LRT Build's first class; <https://youtu.be/0Rvfb8qLkY4>

Careers Foundation and McKnight Foundation. Gary Courtney and Jon Vang, Metropolitan Council equal opportunity consultants assigned to the two LRT projects, oversaw the LRT Build program.

## 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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