



Tracking the Blue Line Extension

Issue 6 | July 2016

www.BlueLineExt.org

Final Environmental Impact Statement published

The METRO Blue Line Extension's Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS) published this month by the Federal Transit Administration marks a major step closer to realization of the light rail transit line. This comes after eight years of public feedback and technical analysis, done in conjunction with project staff from the Metropolitan Council.

The document shows how the line's design was advanced to avoid or minimize impacts. The document also identifies mitigation measures for impacts that cannot be avoided or minimized. It further outlines the Metropolitan Council's commitments to deal with those impacts throughout construction and operation of the light rail line.



Above: Light rail train approaching station.

The document contains responses to the comments that were received on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, which was published in March 2014.



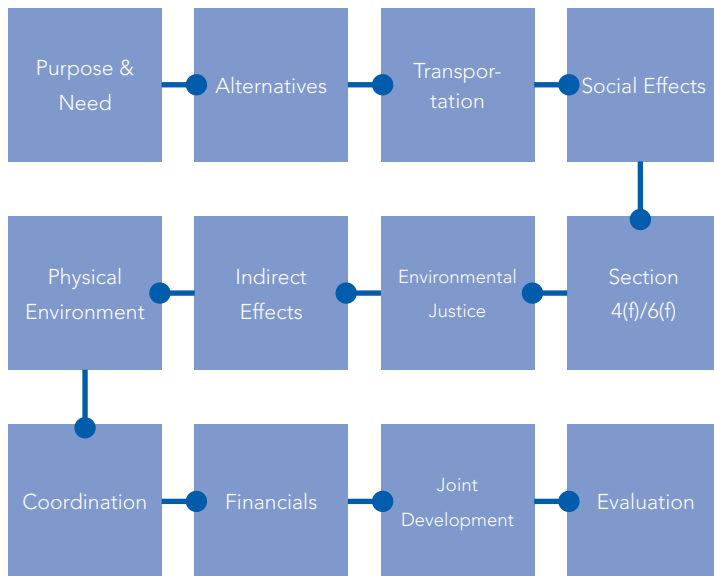
"Publishing the Final EIS is a major step forward for the communities that have worked on the planning, design and engineering for this project for years. It reinforces the need for sustainable local transit funding so we can secure the federal dollars, which cover nearly half the capital costs. I look forward to advancing the Blue Line Extension, which is an important part of our regional transit system." Metropolitan Council Chair Adam Duininck said.

After reviewing public comments on the draft, staff evaluated 16 issues that led to adjustments to the project. Federal agencies will use the Final EIS as the basis for awarding permits the project will need for work, such as wetland mitigation.

After the FTA issues a Record of Decision and the Metropolitan Council grants a Determination of Adequacy, the environmental review process will be complete. The Record of Decision includes responses to comments received on the adequacy of the Final EIS. The Record of Decision is anticipated in September 2016.

Visit <http://metro council.org/blrt/feis> to access the final document online or to learn where copies are available in your area. Questions about the project or the Final EIS? See page 6 for outreach staff contact information.

Final EIS Chapters



About the Final EIS

The Metropolitan Council is pursuing federal funding from FTA for the BLRT Extension project and as a result, FTA is required to undertake environmental review in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Council is the local public agency, and is required to comply with the requirements of the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). The intent of the NEPA and MEPA processes is to ensure that potential social, economic, and environmental impacts are identified and considered when designing any mitigation measures.

Project Impacts

The project office carefully analyzed each impact and identified ways to minimize, mitigate or avoid those impacts.

Transportation Impacts

Mitigation and minimization of impacts detailed in full Final EIS document



Transit

The project would have 27,000 average daily boardings in 2040. Bus routes will be modified to integrate with the new LRT route once it is built. Anticipate temporary bus detours during construction.



Parking

The project adds 1,670 new park-and-ride spaces but results in loss of on-street and off-street parking. Loss of off-street parking spaces will be compensated. Loss of on-street parking will be coordinated with local jurisdictions.



Freight Rail

The project relocates BNSF track about 15 feet to the west. No long-term freight rail impacts anticipated. Potential for temporary rail service impacts will be offset by working with affected freight rail owners/operators to sequence construction.



Aviation

BNSF track relocation and construction of LRT overhead wires would encroach into the Crystal Airport Runway Protection Zone. The Federal Aviation Administration has reviewed and approved this encroachment.



Bike & Pedestrian

The project would make improvements to safety and accessibility including bike parking, pedestrian crossings, new and reconstructed trails. Anticipate temporary detours during construction.



Traffic

Overall, no adverse effects on long-term traffic due to roadway and intersection improvements. Anticipate temporary lane closures, intersection closures, and detours during construction.

What steps are taken to address the potential effects of a project like the Blue Line Extension?

1 AVOID

2 MINIMIZE

3 MITIGATE

4 ENHANCE

Community and Social Impacts

Mitigation and minimization of impacts
detailed in full Final EIS document



Land Use & Plan Compatibility

The project is compatible with local land use plans of Minneapolis, Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, and Brooklyn Park.



Cultural Resources

A memorandum of agreement identifies how adverse impacts to historic resources, such as Grand Rounds Historic District, Osseo Branch Historic District, Floyd B. Olson Memorial Statue, and Wayman AME Church will be addressed.



Community Facilities & Character

Long-term impacts do not affect overall community character and cohesion, or accessibility to community facilities. Temporary disruptions will happen during construction. A 24-hour construction hotline, advance notice of detours, roadway closures, and utility shutoffs, and public meetings will mitigate construction impacts.



Visual & Aesthetics

Adverse impacts to higher-quality visual features were documented at several locations. Visual impacts will be mitigated through design, landscaping, and screening.



Displacing Residents & Businesses

No residential displacements are anticipated based on the current design of the project. 278 parcels will have a partial acquisition.



Economic Effects

Long-term economic effects include a loss of tax revenues caused by right-of-way acquisitions, which would be partially offset by increases in other tax revenues from potential future redevelopment.



Safety & Security

Safety and security measures will be incorporated into the design, such as fencing at steep grade changes, at-grade LRT crossings, freight barriers, appropriate lighting for public areas, and emergency equipment at stations. Ongoing safety and security measures will include Metro Transit police, emergency vehicle access, and coordination with emergency service providers.

Built Environment

Mitigation and minimization of impacts
detailed in full Final EIS document



Utilities

The project will result in adjustments to overhead power and communication lines and impacts to underground utilities. Minor temporary service disruptions during construction will be mitigated by providing advance notice.



Vibration

Use of ballast mats in the track design of three areas will mitigate vibration impacts.



Contamination

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency will review the Metropolitan Council's plan for proper handling of contaminated materials during construction and operations to protect human health and safety.



Noise

Most noise impacts will be avoided through the use of Quiet Zones. Other mitigation measures include noise walls, wayside horns, and interior testing to determine appropriate mitigation. Only a few noise impacts remain after all of these measures. A Noise Control Plan will be implemented to limit impacts during construction.



Energy

The project will not have a substantial impact on regional energy consumption.

Natural Environment



Floodplains

Two floodplains will be affected: Bassett Creek and Grimes Pond. A floodplain mitigation area has been identified in Theodore Wirth Regional Park as mitigation. Excavation of area adjacent to Grimes Pond will provide additional floodplain mitigation.



Wetlands

Nearly 10 acres of wetland will be permanently impacted and over 13 acres of wetland will be temporarily impacted. Mitigation includes on-site wetland mitigation and purchases of private wetland credits. During construction, crews will protect wetlands and other aquatic resources using best management practices.



Soils

Soil correction is required in areas of poor soils. During construction, the project will obtain the appropriate permits from the Department of Natural Resources for short-term dewatering and follow appropriate standards for erosion control.



Wildlife and Habitat

The project will affect approximately 28 acres of forested lands. Mitigation includes tree plantings in and around Theodore Wirth Regional Park, areas throughout the project corridor, and vegetation restoration in temporarily disturbed areas. There are only minimal impacts to Threatened and Endangered Species and Migratory Birds.



Stormwater

The project will increase the amount of impervious surface area. Water infiltration and detention facilities will be built to control and treat stormwater runoff caused by the project. During construction, erosion- and sediment-control plans will limit amount of sediment carried into lakes and streams.



Air Quality

No long-term air quality impacts anticipated. During construction, equipment and traffic detours may cause temporary increases in emissions.

Upcoming Activities

Fieldwork starting in August to test areas for potential contamination on route

Testing will begin in early August 2016 to identify contamination along the planned Blue Line Extension LRT route. Typical contaminated sites include former railroad yards, gas stations, machine shops, former industrial properties, dry cleaners and landfills. Soil and groundwater contaminants can include gasoline or diesel range organics, volatile organic compounds, metals, pesticides and asbestos, among others. Results from this work will allow the Metropolitan Council to develop a plan to deal with it safely before and during construction.



Above: Example of equipment used to test for soil contamination

Test work will include drilling or digging shallow trenches and crews will take soil and groundwater samples at regular intervals. Site assessment reports are expected to be complete by the end of 2016. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) will review the reports and the plan for handling contamination during construction. If contamination is found on private property, landowners will be notified verbally and in writing by the Council.

Visit metro council.org/blrt/fieldwork for more information on environmental field work.

Project design advances to 30 percent level of detail

In the first half of 2016, design of the Blue Line Extension LRT Project advanced from a 15 percent level of detail to 30 percent. Staff refined the design of the project's bridges, rail system elements, retaining walls and traffic signals. Staff added details for mitigation of environmental impacts such as noise walls, visual screening in Crystal, and for a relocated Bassett Creek stormwater tunnel.

In August, the project office will be issuing the 30 percent design plans to Hennepin County, city and other jurisdictions for their staff to review and provide technical comments.

These plans, now at 30 percent design, will show more detail on the general alignment of the track, location of stations, sidewalks, roadway improvements and other project elements.

A summary of the plans will also be posted on the project website at www.BlueLineExt.org for the general public to review. A complete hard copy will also be available at city halls and the project office for review.

The LRT project's community outreach coordinators also can provide details and explain the content of the plans. The project designers and engineers will continue work on the project; 60% design plans are expected in early 2017.

Document Availability

The Final EIS; including the Amended Draft Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) Evaluation, USACE Section 404 permit application, and Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement, and all appendices; is available online at <http://metro council.org/blrt/feis>.

The Final EIS is also available at the locations listed below. A CD of the Final EIS is available upon request.

- **Osseo Library:** 412 Central Avenue, Osseo, MN 55369
- **Osseo City Hall:** 415 Central Avenue, Osseo, MN 55428
- **Maple Grove Library:** 8001 Main Street North, Maple Grove, MN 55369
- **Maple Grove Government Center and Public Safety Facility:** 12800 Arbor Lakes Parkway North, Maple Grove, MN 55311
- **Brooklyn Park Library:** 8500 W Broadway Ave, Brooklyn Park, MN 55443
- **Brooklyn Park City Hall:** 5200 85th Avenue North, Brooklyn Park, MN 55443
- **Brookdale Library:** 6125 Shingle Creek Parkway, Brooklyn Center, MN 55346
- **New Hope City Hall:** 4401 Xylon Avenue North, New Hope, MN 55428
- **Rockford Road Library:** 6401 42nd Avenue North, Crystal, MN 55427
- **Crystal City Hall:** 4141 Douglas Drive North, Crystal, MN 55422
- **Blue Line Extension Project Office:** 5514 West Broadway Avenue, Suite 200, Crystal, MN 55428
- **Robbinsdale City Hall:** 4100 Lakeview Avenue North, Robbinsdale, MN 55422
- **Golden Valley Library:** 830 Winnetka Avenue North, Minneapolis, MN 55427
- **Golden Valley City Hall:** 7800 Golden Valley Road, Golden Valley, MN 55427
- **North Regional Library:** 1315 Lowry Avenue North, Minneapolis, MN 55411
- **Sumner Library:** 611 Van White Memorial Boulevard, Minneapolis, MN 55411
- **Hennepin County Library – Minneapolis Central:** Government Documents, 2nd Floor, 300 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis, MN 55401
- **Minneapolis City Hall:** 350 South 5th Street, Minneapolis, MN 55415
- **Metropolitan Council Library:** 390 Robert Street North, St. Paul, MN 55101
- **Minnesota Department of Transportation Library:** 395 John Ireland Boulevard, St. Paul, MN 55155
- **Legislative Reference Library:** 645 State Office Building, 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, St. Paul, MN 55115

Meet the community outreach coordinators

Contact the Blue Line Extension Project's dedicated public involvement specialists with your questions about the Final Environmental Impact Statement, environmental testing to begin in August or any other questions you might have about the project.



BROOKLYN PARK

Stations: Oak Grove Parkway, 93rd Avenue, 85th Avenue, Brooklyn Boulevard, 63rd Avenue

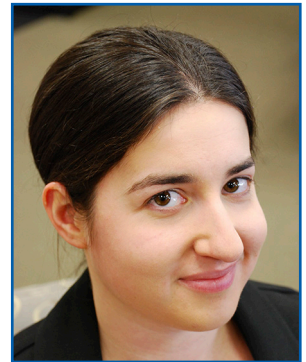
Juan Rangel
612-373-5338
Juan.Rangel@metrotransit.org



CRYSTAL, ROBBINSDALE, GOLDEN VALLEY

Stations: Bass Lake Road, Robbinsdale, Golden Valley Road, Plymouth Avenue

David Davies
612-373-5336
David.Davies@metrotransit.org



MINNEAPOLIS

Stations: Penn Avenue, Van White Boulevard, Target Field

Sophia Ginis
612-373-3895
Sophia.Ginis@metrotransit.org

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 proposed 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), Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRRA), and the state of Minnesota.

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