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Bottineau Transitway Draft Environment
Impact Statement Public Hearing Before
Hennepin County Commissioner Linda Higgins
Friday, May 14, 2014
Crystal, Minnesota

Reported By: Lori Morrow, RPR, CRR, CLR, CCP

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PANEL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Linda Higgins, Hennepin County Commissioner, District 2

Pat Backen, Robbinsdale City Council

Mike Freiberg, Minnesota House of Representatives,
District 45B

Mark Hoffman, Crystal City Council, Ward 1

Andy Snope, Golden Valley City Council

PUBLIC SPEAKERS:

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Constance Bonniwell 3, 15

Barb Thoman 18

Scott Nieman 20

Jolene Nelson 22

Bob Fischer 23

Daniel Couture 24

Christopher Reiter 26

Chris Berne 30

1 (Reporter's Note: The first speaker, Ms. Bonniwell,
2 spoke directly to the comment reporter prior to the public
3 hearing and then also spoke a second time publicly to the
4 commission.)

5 MS. CONSTANCE BONNIWELL: My name is Constance
6 Bonniwell, B-o-n-n-i-w-e-l-l. I live at 2812 - 30th
7 Avenue South, Minneapolis, 55406.

8 These are the comments that I am making to the
9 transcriber because I don't think I'll have time to
10 finish my remarks within three minutes.

11 Eliminating BRT as an option is unacceptable.
12 If you do, you will only increase opposition to LRT. You
13 have planned a good BRT grid on the north side. If you
14 ran BRT down 81, you would have enough money to add an
15 east-west route that connects 81 with Lowry.

16 A lot of the public speakers at the May 7
17 public hearing spoke in support of Bus Rapid Transit. I
18 would have, too, but my comments were cut off at three
19 minutes. So this is the kind of Draft EIS you get when
20 it's written to achieve one thing. LRT down the BN line
21 is manipulative. 560 million for BRT. It's full of
22 vague, rambling statements such as, Other elements of the
23 project are established formally during subsequent
24 engineering based on additional information, including
25 openly near travel demand forecasts. Indeed, elements of

1 the project are established, but they are not divulged.
2 No map of the wetlands you intend to fill in, though you
3 say you plan to fill in six acres with D1. No boring
4 test results, which are of interest to property owners.
5 No map of staging areas, though Robbinsdale is already
6 prepping your way into one in Sochacki Park. You could
7 have more accurately designated traction power stations.
8 You came up with so many maps that did not include Turtle
9 Pond and other wetlands. People wonder if you are so
10 reticent with information because you're trying to
11 minimize the window of opportunity we have to repel your
12 plans. We wonder if you were even at the step to do a
13 Draft EIS, it lacks so much information.

14 And then back to the quote. Other elements of
15 the project are established formally during subsequent
16 engineering. Does this include the social engineering
17 you do to get this LRT built? All those it's happening
18 in articles in newspapers when Bot No! has never gotten
19 state matching funds? The social engineering with these
20 public hearings is unimpressive also.

21 This Draft EIS gives us no reason to trust you
22 with our woods.

23 Thank you for your consideration.

24 (Reporter's Note: The public hearing
25 begins at this point.)

1 COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Good evening, everyone.
2 Thank you for coming to the meeting about the Draft
3 Environmental Impact Statement for the Bottineau
4 Transitway.

5 My name is Linda Higgins. I'm County
6 Commissioner in District 2. The Bottineau Transitway
7 line runs through two districts, the district that I get
8 to represent, District 2, and District 1, the part of the
9 line that goes through Commissioner Mike Opat's district.
10 Mike was here earlier tonight. He's actually just
11 outside coaching his son's baseball games. So he'll
12 probably come popping his head in at some point.

13 We would invite you, if you have not had a
14 chance to sign up and you would like to speak, we have a
15 table over to your left at the front of the room. Go
16 ahead and just sign up. And then we will have up on the
17 screen the list of people so you'll know who is speaking,
18 who is next. And so it will work out very well for that.
19 So feel free to just get up and sign up.

20 We also have water and cookies from the
21 Cookie Cart in the back of the room. They are really
22 good. Be sure you have at least one.

23 At this point, I'm going to turn the microphone
24 over to Joe Gladke, and he's going to tell you how we're
25 going to proceed tonight and give you some other

1 information about the line.

2 MR. GLADKE: Great. Thank you,
3 Commissioner Higgins.

4 I'm Joe Gladke, manager of Engineering and
5 Transit Planning with Hennepin County. I'm just going to
6 provide a brief overview tonight. I know I've seen some
7 of you at some of the previous meetings, and some of you
8 this may be your first meeting, so I'm just going to try
9 and get through a brief overview of kind of where we've
10 been with the project, where we're at right now, where
11 the project is going.

12 COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Hey, Joe, we can't hear
13 you back here. I don't know if people can hear you out
14 there.

15 MR. GLADKE: There. Sounds even better. So
16 I'm just going to go through a few brief slides, and then
17 we'll get on to the public testimony.

18 The Bottineau Project has a variety of agencies
19 that are involved with this. At the Federal Government
20 level, our lead agency is the Federal Transit
21 Administration. And right now, Hennepin County is
22 currently the lead agency locally on the project, and we
23 work in partnership with the Metropolitan Council. And
24 as the project advances, the project will be
25 transitioning from Hennepin County on to Metropolitan

1 Council later on this summer. They will be responsible
2 for preliminary engineering as well as the Final
3 Environmental Impact Statement. They will be also in
4 charge of construction should the project progress to
5 that.

6 We also have all of our city partners along the
7 line. We have five different cities that are involved
8 with the project as well. They're in charge of the land
9 use planning and some of the local impacts for these
10 projects and making sure that this project will fit
11 within the communities and looking at the station area
12 planning, which I'll talk about momentarily.

13 You might also hear about the Metro Blue Line
14 Extension. That's another name for the Bottineau LRT
15 Project. The Metro Transit has recently kind of gone
16 through a rebranding of some of their major transit
17 routes. What was known as the Hiawatha Line is now known
18 as the Metro Blue Line. This will be an extension from
19 Target Field Station where the Hiawatha, or Metro Blue
20 Line, ends today. It will go out west on Highway 55 and
21 then up the railroad corridor up to West Broadway and
22 then head up to just north of 610 near the Target North
23 campus.

24 This slide right here kind of shows three
25 independent processes that are happening that are

1 somewhat all interrelated. The first line across the
2 top, kind of the blue bars. That really gets into kind
3 of the process that the Federal Transit Administration
4 requires these projects to go through.

5 And then the middle line is kind of the
6 environmental, both the state and federal, requirement
7 that need to be met for projects like this.

8 And then across the bottom we have land use
9 planning. That looks at the half-mile radius around each
10 one of these stations. They look at pedestrian
11 connections, land use, how things may or may not want to
12 change in the future around some of these transit
13 stations.

14 Where we're at today right now, we're at kind
15 of the tail end of the Draft Environmental Impact
16 Statement phase.

17 So moving forward, there's still another year
18 to two years that will be part of the Final Environmental
19 Impact Statement. That won't begin until likely toward
20 the end of this year. Metropolitan Council currently has
21 a request for proposals out for the preliminary
22 engineering aspect. That consultant will be hired
23 probably towards the end of the summer or the fall. Will
24 be at least two years of engineering beyond that --
25 excuse me -- preliminary engineering and then an

1 additional year or two of engineering beyond that.

2 So I heard a couple questions tonight about
3 when will this be opened up. This project still has a
4 very long way to go, and there's quite a bit of process
5 that has to happen as well as the funding has to all come
6 together to make this project happen. So it will be
7 quite some time before we worry about buying a ticket
8 quite yet.

9 Early on in the process, we had kind of five
10 goals that we looked at as far as what are we trying to
11 accomplish with the project. Those five goals were to
12 enhance regional access to activity centers, enhance the
13 effectiveness of transit service within the corridor,
14 provide a cost effective and financially feasible transit
15 system, promote sustainable development patterns, support
16 healthy communities and sound environmental practices.
17 Those kind of led the overall efforts.

18 This slide here talks about kind of similar
19 time periods about where we've been. Back in 2008, we
20 started what was an alternatives analysis study. It
21 looked at a variety of different options of trying to get
22 kind of from the northwest area, kind of connecting into
23 downtown. So there are a variety of different options on
24 the north end and on the south end. We looked at a
25 variety of options of what might be the best options

1 moving forward. Through that process, there was kind of
2 a short list of projects that moved forward. I'll show
3 you a map momentarily on that.

4 In early 2012, we had a series of public
5 meetings that we went out and talked to people about
6 issues and concerns that -- in fact, we studied them as
7 part of the DEIS. So with the DEIS, we now have a lot of
8 those issues and concerns that were brought up during the
9 scoping process that have been identified. So hopefully,
10 you'll see some of those things.

11 Everything is not fully known at this point in
12 time. There's more engineering work that has to happen
13 on this project that define this project as it is. And
14 there's more environmental analysis that's needed for the
15 project as well.

16 But kind of where we're at right now, we're
17 kind of at the tail end of the DEIS. We have a public
18 comment period right now. And I'll have a few more
19 specifics on that momentarily.

20 Some people may know -- may want to know what
21 is this DEIS that I've been referring to. And it really
22 assists decision makers in the assessment of the impact
23 associated with the projects. It documents the purpose
24 and the need for the project as well as alternatives that
25 are studied. It addresses transportation, social,

1 environmental, historical impacts as well as a whole host
2 of others. We've got some handouts in the back if people
3 want to see all of the different areas within the DEIS
4 that are studied. And there's kind of a reference guide
5 that can kind of steer you toward a specific period
6 within the DEIS if you have a specific area of interest.
7 It also defines potential mitigation measures.
8 Mitigation measures are more further defined in the Final
9 Environmental Impact Statement.

10 It does facilitate review by federal, state,
11 and local agencies, as well as the general public. It
12 satisfies both the federal and the state environmental
13 laws that are necessary for a project like this. It also
14 provides a comparison of alternatives and identifies the
15 environmentally preferred alternative.

16 As far as the options that were studied in the
17 DEIS, this map here shows those options. On the north
18 end, we have two different options that were studied, one
19 that connected over toward Maple Grove, which is
20 Option A, and the other option was Option B, which goes
21 up to Brooklyn Park. Option C was common to all of the
22 options. And then on the southern end, we had Option D1,
23 which stays within the railroad corridor, and Option D2,
24 which exits the rail corridor just south of 36, heads
25 down West Broadway, south on Penn, and then they all end

1 up at the Target Field Station downtown.

2 I just mentioned the five goals that we had
3 early on in the process. If we look at those five goals,
4 there were 22 different evaluation criteria that came out
5 of those five goals. If we go through kind of a ranking
6 of those 22 criteria, we kind of come up with somewhat of
7 a score associated with each one of those. So we have a
8 no-build option as well as an enhanced bus option and
9 then the four LRT build options that I talked about
10 earlier.

11 And if you look at the overall summary ranking
12 of those, the LRT Option BCD1 is the alternative that is
13 known as the locally preferred alternative as well as the
14 environmentally preferred alternative. And this here is
15 the map of the locally preferred alternative and the
16 environmentally preferred alternative. This is the
17 option that will then move forward as part of preliminary
18 engineering as well as the FEIS.

19 This is the last of the four public hearings
20 and open houses that we've had. We've had good turnout
21 at all the events thus far. And in addition to providing
22 verbal testimony here tonight, we have comment forms in
23 the back as well so people can provide written comments,
24 or you can provide verbal testimony here tonight. We
25 also have comment forms available on the website if you

1 would like to take some more time to submit them via mail
2 or email. We ask for your email so we can keep in touch
3 with you and acknowledge that we actually have received
4 your comments. We would also want to let people know
5 that these projects take quite some time to move forward.
6 So you're not going to see your comments get addressed
7 until we get into that Final Environmental Impact
8 Statement. So it might be a year or two before we have
9 more detailed answers to some of the questions that still
10 remain that you ask right now. We're going take those
11 comments. We're going to post them all on the project
12 website so people can see a variety of comments that were
13 received on the project. We're also going to take those
14 comments and try and classify them into different
15 categories so that they can then be passed on to the
16 firms that will be working on the FEIS and engineering
17 and the staff so that they see that these are issues that
18 still need further analysis before further advances.

19 So with that, I'm going to turn it over to
20 Commissioner Higgins to begin the public hearing. I've
21 had a chance to talk with some of you already. But if
22 you still have more questions, please feel free to see
23 the staff that's in the back room there. We'll be there
24 to address any questions. The public testimony will
25 begin as part of the -- if you have more questions, and

1 you want to have some dialogue, come see the staff in the
2 back. We also have the on deck seats up here in the
3 front. So if you see your name, you can come on up front
4 and be prepared to provide your testimony.

5 COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Thank you, Joe.

6 The way we have it set up is that each person
7 will get three minutes to speak. And we have a timer,
8 who will give you a little yellow flag at 30 seconds, and
9 then the red card will come up at the end of the
10 three-minute period, and we'll ask you to wrap up your
11 thoughts at that point.

12 Joe's turning the microphone around so that you
13 can speak to us here at the table. I'm going to let you
14 know that this is a way for you to comment. This isn't a
15 question-and-answer period. If you have questions about
16 the line, Joe and others will be in the back of the room
17 or back where we have the open house for you to
18 personally ask your questions and take as much time as
19 you want to with that. But that's not the purpose of the
20 hearing here tonight.

21 Let me introduce the people who are sitting
22 here at the table before we get started. To my far left
23 is Council Member Andy Snope, one of the Golden Valley
24 City Council members. Next to him is Representative Mike
25 Freiberg, also from Golden Valley, but also represents

1 Crystal and Robbinsdale and New Hope. Okay. Got that
2 almost right. Council Member Mark Hoffman is from the
3 City of Crystal. And to my right, Council Member
4 Pat Backen is from Robbinsdale, and Council Member
5 George Selman is from Robbinsdale as well.

6 We want you to know that we'll be listening
7 intently.

8 And we also have a court reporter here so that
9 we can accurately capture your comments so that we can
10 reflect those as we go forward with the environmental
11 impact work that we will be doing.

12 So as you see up in front on the screen, we
13 will have a list of people who have signed up to speak.
14 You'll see who is speaking and then who will be up next.
15 If you are one of the upcoming speakers, if you would
16 like to move to one of the seats in the front row, that
17 would be great. That will make it just a little easier
18 to pass from one person to another.

19 Any questions?

20 If not, the first speaker is Constance
21 Bonniwell. Welcome.

22 MS. CONSTANCE BONNIWELL: I live at 2812 - 30th
23 Avenue South in Minneapolis, but I grew up in
24 Robbinsdale. My father bought the property at 2923
25 France in 1960.

1 The BCD1 plan would go through St. Mary
2 Hills Park on its eastern border, Sochacki on its eastern
3 border, Wirth on its eastern and sometimes western
4 borders, South Halifax Park on its western border, and
5 St. Mary Hills Nature Area is very close to that. That's
6 five parks.

7 There's reasons why the FDA discourages LRT
8 through parks, one being to avoid projects getting
9 stalled by widespread opposition. Here I would like to
10 give you a copy of 96 owners around this woods who don't
11 want LRT going down the BN line. I've got more. I'm
12 still working on it, but that can go to you.

13 The number one reason people give for their
14 opposition is protecting the woods. I can say with
15 assurance that the true and localized you can get
16 preference is no build. I have listened to many owners
17 of wildlife habitat that abuts the BN line or park
18 wildlife habitat. This Draft EIS gives us no reason to
19 trust you with our woods.

20 We do not understand your aversion to Bus Rapid
21 Transit down Bottineau Boulevard, also known as
22 Highway 81, the originally planned route. Your
23 \$56 million estimated cost for Bus Rapid Transit would
24 probably make it the most expensive BRT per mile project
25 in the country. You achieve this poor economic showing

1 for Bus Rapid Transit by calculating the cost of it going
2 down a railroad track. Your environmental report never
3 mentions that zero emission natural gas buses are
4 available. So you certainly don't calculate how many of
5 them you could have bought with all the money you've
6 already spent on studies to give yourself permission to
7 put LRT down the BN line. More people prefer that you
8 buy zero emission gas buses as soon as possible.

9 BRT down 81 is very popular. It keeps LRT out
10 of our woods, it's closer to more densely populated
11 areas, and it's cheaper. It's the mass transit of the
12 21st Century. A state-of-the-art BRT system in the
13 Northwest Metro would be a fine legacy for Met Council
14 and Hennepin County planners to provide transit users.

15 Eliminating BRT as an option, as you're trying
16 to do with this Draft EIS, is unacceptable. If you do,
17 you will only increase opposition.

18 More than half of the speakers at the May 7
19 public hearing spoke in favor of Bus Rapid Transit. And
20 I would have, too, but my comments were cut off at three
21 minutes.

22 COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Thank you very much.

23 MS. CONSTANCE BONNIWELL: Am I done?

24 COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Yes.

25 MS. CONSTANCE BONNIWELL: I was going to talk

1 about how your cutting us off denies us the right to hear
2 our fellow citizens. Not only does it discount the
3 amount of time you have to --

4 COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Thank you.

5 MS. CONSTANCE BONNIWELL: -- listen to us, it
6 prevents us from hearing our fellow citizens.

7 COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: You're also welcome
8 always to give us your comments in writing. I see you
9 have notes there. We would be happy to take those in
10 writing as well.

11 Thank you very much, Constance.

12 MS. CONSTANCE BONNIWELL: Bot No! Bot No!

13 COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Thank you. The next
14 speaker is Barb Thoman.

15 MS. BARB THOMAN: Good evening. My name is
16 Barb Thoman. I work for an organization called Transit
17 for Livable Communities. We're located in St. Paul,
18 Minnesota. And we have members all across the metro area
19 and a few in Greater Minnesota. All of our members are
20 people who want expanded public transit and more options
21 for walking and biking. We have a number of members with
22 disabilities who cannot drive and people who cannot
23 afford a motor vehicle.

24 So this project, the Bottineau Project, is a
25 really important link in an expanded transit system that

1 our region sorely needs. The project, along with
2 arterial rapid bus, more express bus service, more local
3 service, and additional rail lines are greatly needed in
4 this region. They are long overdue. We are a very -- a
5 region with a very large regional highway system. We've
6 spent a tremendous amount of money widening local roads
7 and widening highways. And now it's time that we really
8 invest in public transit and sidewalks and trails and
9 building out these other systems that we have neglected.

10 This line is really important. It's going to
11 connect people to schools, to jobs, to entertainment, and
12 to parks. One of the things you'll note about many of
13 our parks is they have a parking problem. And there are
14 a lot of people who can't get to parks because there
15 isn't a transit option. LRT is a clean travel option.
16 It reduces emissions. It's very cost efficient. When
17 you look at the numbers from the Federal Transit
18 Administration and you look at the subsidy per passenger,
19 they are always the lowest on light rail because they
20 carry a lot of people in both directions all day long,
21 and they serve our high capacity corridors.

22 Sadly, our region doesn't have the money it
23 needs to build out our full public transit system,
24 including the Bottineau Line. We don't have the funding
25 they have in Dallas and Denver and Houston and Seattle

1 especially, Vancouver, Calgary, all of these other
2 places. And so we hope that all of you and people who
3 support this line will support the Move Minnesota effort
4 to increase funding for public transit, walking, biking
5 and for road repair. And if anyone wants to know more
6 about that, they can talk to me in the back of the room.
7 Thank you very much.

8 COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Thank you.

9 The next speaker is Scott Nieman followed by
10 Jolene Nelson.

11 MR. SCOTT NIEMAN: Hi. I'm Scott Nieman. I
12 have a property -- I live at 4548 Zenith Avenue North and
13 have had a property in North Minneapolis at 3306 Thomas
14 Avenue North, and I've been on the north side for over 30
15 years.

16 And one of the observations that I have,
17 there's no one here from the City of Minneapolis,
18 the city council. And I do want to make a statement
19 that, first of all, I'm very much in favor of the
20 Bottineau Transitway, but I do think it's under
21 serving North Minneapolis in its current preferred
22 option.

23 One of the things I want to highlight is that
24 Section 2.6, there's a statement on the least damage to
25 the environment. It contradicts the statements in the

1 summary of Table 5.21, which shows that there was 18 --
2 over 18,000 cubic yards of flood plain impact. That is
3 not the least damage. I think most people know that the
4 Theodore Wirth Parkway, the D1-7 wetland floods every
5 single year. It flooded last week. We had to shut down
6 the Theodore Wirth Parkway road. That concerns me
7 significantly because of what would be planned for
8 mitigation of that would probably be dredging or some
9 other means to divert water which is in the floodplain.
10 We would have some serious ripple effect as far as the
11 ecological -- the ecosystem that lives down there. So I
12 don't think we can make nature better by dredging that
13 area.

14 I really think that the D2 alternative was not
15 adequately looked at. I do not see any evidence of a
16 subway option being investigated to go underneath
17 West Broadway and have a substation at where the old
18 Burger King resided. An escalator going down and having
19 a subway under Penn Avenue, which would have reduced
20 impact to land acquisitions, would have lower, long-term
21 maintenance cost. It would have really no impact to
22 vehicle traffic except during construction. And it would
23 have improved safety risks for pedestrians and vehicles.
24 Similar -- you know, we've had lots of accidents on
25 Hiawatha. We don't want anymore, especially in this

1 area.

2 I do think that placing a substation at Penn
3 and Broadway provides incredible economic development
4 opportunities in an area that's been long trying to have
5 an arts district serving the Capri Theater and other
6 venues in the 5 Corners [sic] development effort. That
7 has just basically failed. So -- done?

8 So I will have a four-page summary that I'll be
9 emailing.

10 COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Thank you.

11 Jolene Nelson followed by Bob Fischer.

12 MS. JOLENE NELSON: Hi. I'm Jolene Nelson,
13 6008 Hampshire Avenue North, Crystal, Minnesota.

14 The line runs right behind my house, so the
15 railroad is right behind my house. And my main concern
16 with this is with the track moving, it's going to move
17 closer to my home causing -- the railroad track itself,
18 causing more noise and vibration. And currently, there's
19 trees that have grown up around there and in my backyard
20 where my son plays. So my concern would be those trees
21 are going to be removed, and I'm not going to see the
22 train right away, and the highway noise from County
23 Road 81, in addition to the light rail running, it's
24 going to cause more noise there and vibration as well.
25 And so my concern is how fast the speeds are going to be.

1 Is there going to be any kind of noise mitigation,
2 whether that be trees planted in place of what's taken
3 down? Is there going to be a new wall to minimize the
4 amount of noise and vibration that would happen? I think
5 it's going to affect a lot of people in that same way.
6 And so I am a proponent of the light rail as long as
7 those concerns are taken care of. And that's it.

8 COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Thank you very much.
9 Bob Fischer, followed by Daniel Couture.

10 MR. BOB FISCHER: Good evening. Thank you
11 first of all. I've had the -- I live on Hampshire
12 Avenue, so I'm actually Jolene's neighbor.

13 A couple of points. I certainly won't take my
14 three minutes. I've lived in a city, in D.C., that had
15 the Metro. So I know the advantages of that. So I'm
16 100 percent supportive of this. And I'm also supportive
17 that it's going in my backyard. To Jolene's point, there
18 needs to be some type of a barrier established. Whether
19 it's natural or if it's a wall or if it's a wall with
20 sound board, there certainly needs to be something,
21 because it's disappointing to see the goals and not --
22 there could be as easy a sixth goal of protecting the
23 people that will be involved in this. I know it's built
24 into that and it's threaded in that, but I think there's
25 a better opportunity to involve more people, because I

1 work with developmentally disabled adults and senior
2 populations. This just opens up a whole new world for
3 them. So I applaud that.

4 And my last comment. Extremely disappointed
5 with the gentleman from Crystal. I've lived in my house
6 for three years. I've not gotten one piece of mail
7 telling me that this was going to happen in my backyard.
8 So I don't think that's asking for too much, because I
9 know our neighbors up and down Hampshire Avenue would all
10 take the same position as I have. I accidentally found
11 out about this. And I know you've met your obligations
12 by posting this how you need to, and it's on the public
13 forum. But I think a piece of snail mail in three years
14 would have been appropriate. So I'm very disappointed in
15 that lack of communication.

16 So thank you.

17 COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Thank you very much.

18 Daniel Couture followed by Christopher Reiter.

19 MR. DANIEL COUTURE: Good evening. My name is
20 Dan Couture. I'm here representing Brooklyn Park,
21 specifically segment B along West Broadway.

22 I'm not against light rail. I understand the
23 need for transit basically to support, you know, the
24 growing population needs and disperse populations.

25 However, I am coming here tonight to basically speak out

1 against the locally preferred options known as BCD1 in
2 favor of ACD1 primarily because -- and it's unfortunate
3 that the Draft Environmental Impact Statement doesn't
4 accurately reflect the impact to the properties along
5 West Broadway between 78th Avenue and 93rd Avenue to the
6 north.

7 Because of a concurrent county project, which
8 is barely referenced in the 800 pages -- it's one
9 paragraph out of the 800 pages where it talks about this
10 project. Because of it, there's 100 homes that are going
11 to be impacted, property that's going to be taken. About
12 half those homes, at least 50 of them, the families are
13 going to be displaced. And they're probably the lucky
14 ones, because it's probably going to be financially
15 devastating to the ones that are left behind. The ones
16 that are going to be stuck with homes that could be as
17 little as 50 feet away from the transit line, that are
18 going to be virtually unsellable, would not be the kind
19 of place, I think, anybody would want to live because
20 these trains run 21 hours a day every 10 minutes, and
21 they have very loud bells that clang anywhere near a
22 station. And 85th Avenue would be a station.

23 These are modest homes. This is a
24 working-class neighborhood. Folks who live there are --
25 there's a large number of seniors, a large minority

1 population. A lot of the folks can't make it to meetings
2 like here tonight because they're still at work or they
3 are having dinner with -- sitting down to dinner with
4 their families.

5 I think, unfortunately, if the folks who are
6 evaluating those various alternatives knew about these
7 additional 100 homes that are going to be impacted, if
8 they knew about the additional 50 families that would
9 need to be displaced, I think it would definitely have
10 affected the community cohesion score that the B segment
11 would have received. I think that would have made it
12 easier for folks to vote in favor of the Option A for the
13 locally preferred option.

14 The benefits -- the price tags for the A versus
15 B are the same. Both a billion dollars. Both have
16 similar ridership of about 27,000 average riders a day.
17 They both have a college as a destination. They both
18 have major employers as well as residents at the tail end
19 of the property. But the one thing that Maple Grove has
20 that Brooklyn Park doesn't offer is a major regional
21 retail center. So for that reason, I hope that it's not
22 too late that the commissioners involved with making a
23 final decision on what route is chosen could reconsider
24 their option to go down West Broadway and vote in favor
25 of ACD1.

1 Thank you.

2 COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Thank you.

3 Christopher Reiter followed by Chris Berne.
4 It's the Chris section of the lineup.

5 MR. CHRISTOPHER REITER: Hi. Christopher
6 Reiter, 3612 June Avenue North in Robbinsdale.

7 First off, which by the way, we've had
8 hearings -- public hearings in Minneapolis, Brooklyn
9 Park, Crystal, and one more.

10 COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Golden Valley.

11 MR. CHRISTOPHER REITER: Golden Valley. But
12 there hasn't been one for Robbinsdale, which I don't
13 think is very fair. I think there should be one set up.
14 There's a lot of homeowners that are going to be
15 impacted, many severely, according to the noise portion
16 of this analysis, including myself. And I'm also listed
17 as an impacted property. There's a line through my tool
18 and lawn shed in the back. And so it looks like my fence
19 and my shed and the power line pole and probably a few
20 trees and numerous shrubberies that block that whole
21 sight line towards the railroad tracks would have to be
22 removed. I do see -- I'm reviewing the impact statement
23 here that they plan on putting up -- there's a plan to
24 put up some barriers, but it doesn't say how high they
25 are. And with these scheduled to go by every 10 minutes,

1 I can envision the value of my property plummeting to
2 about probably maybe 70 percent of what it's worth right
3 now if this goes through. And that's pretty optimistic,
4 in my opinion.

5 I honestly think that either the line should
6 run on Highway 81 and then Bottineau Boulevard. I don't
7 think it should not only [sic] be going through all those
8 houses that are impacted in Crystal and many in
9 Robbinsdale, but if it's going to go to the -- if it has
10 to go in as opposed to buses -- I know Connie mentioned
11 the natural gas buses, which I think would be a great
12 alternative. We could use existing infrastructure for
13 that. It wouldn't have not only the impact of all the
14 light rails going by every 10 minutes, but the
15 construction. So I think that it should -- the whole
16 line should run along there. And as opposed to the 42nd
17 Avenue Station by the police department there, they
18 should just have a station down at the corner of 42nd and
19 Bottineau Boulevard. And right now, there's quite a good
20 section of Bottineau that already has a major median
21 running down the middle of it, which could be expanded
22 out a little bit to accommodate the light rail.

23 But I just -- I don't see the benefit of this
24 program to anybody that happens to be severely impacted
25 or even marginally impacted by this line. And I know

1 we've had some other hearings, and I've been to one or
2 two other hearings previously. And I just don't
3 understand why with all this major impact to homeowners
4 who -- like in my case, this is my first house. I bought
5 it in 2008. And I don't really have the means to
6 relocate right now, although I would like to because I
7 know, like I said, just as soon as the work starts, the
8 value of my property -- the ability to sell it is going
9 to -- it's going to be hard to even sell at that point.
10 And I don't know -- I don't know how I'm possibly going
11 to sleep at night with trains going by every 10 minutes
12 and get up for work at Hennepin County. I really wish
13 you would take a close look at reexamining the whole line
14 that runs off of already existing thoroughfares.

15 And I appreciate the opportunity to get my
16 comments.

17 I also would like to reiterate that I do think
18 there should be a Robbinsdale public hearing. With the
19 massive number of people that are impacted in
20 Robbinsdale, they should have their say as well.

21 That's all I have to say.

22 Thank you.

23 COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Thank you very much.

24 And just a reminder, if anybody has come in who
25 would like to testify and hasn't signed up, please go to

1 the table at the front of the room and at the far left,
2 and we'll get you on the list. Also, for people who
3 don't feel like talking, there are paper forms in the
4 back where you can write to your heart's content and
5 either give them back or email them or even put them on
6 the website.

7 So Chris Berne, you're next.

8 MR. CHRIS BERNE: Thank you. It's Chris Berne.

9 COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: I've gotten everyone's
10 name wrong tonight. I'm sorry.

11 MR. CHRIS BERNE: It's okay. Everybody does
12 it, even last night from your cohort, Mr. Opat.

13 So Chris Berne, and I live at 8743 North
14 Maplebrook Circle in Brooklyn Park.

15 As I intimated, I was at the hearing last
16 night. And the reason I am here tonight is to make
17 sure -- because I knew there was going to be new --
18 different officials here tonight and a different group of
19 residents, I thought it was important for them to hear
20 what was said last night.

21 The issue for us up in Brooklyn Park, as
22 Dan Couture talked about a little bit earlier, is the
23 final terminus route of this project up through the
24 West Broadway corridor in Brooklyn Park. We are on an
25 extremely fast track up there because the county in its

1 wisdom is going to be rebuilding West Broadway. And what
2 they want to do is make assumptions at this point in time
3 that the rail line is going to go through, and they want
4 to build the road with that in mind. The problem is it's
5 going to take 30 to 50 homes with the idea that this
6 might come through, and they want to do it starting this
7 fall. So we're very concerned about that.

8 Most of these homes are modest income, low
9 income. There's a lot of minorities. The other thing
10 that we have in Brooklyn Park is a lot of immigrants.
11 And a lot of immigrant families who have come to this
12 country with the great old American dream of home
13 ownership are now going to be told you have to leave your
14 home. That's not the message that we as Americans want
15 to send to those that come to our country.

16 But we have also offered an alternative pathway
17 just three blocks adjacent to West Broadway that does not
18 require taking any homes. It does not require any
19 industrial buildings to be taken or any businesses in any
20 way to be taken. The Brooklyn Park City Council is now
21 going to be taking a look at that. And so there may be
22 some delays on this project because they want to take a
23 look at what's happening up there. So I just wanted to
24 make sure that everybody is aware of that. What's going
25 on on the north end hasn't been talked about too much

1 here tonight, but that is part and parcel of this
2 project.

3 None of us want to have a repeat of the
4 Southwest Light Rail Project nightmare. There's already
5 too much rancor. There's already too much delay, too
6 many tens of millions of dollars that are being wasted.
7 And we would like to see this done in a better manner on
8 this one. And hopefully, some cooler heads will prevail.

9 Thank you very much.

10 COMMISSIONER HIGGINS: Thank you. Is there
11 anybody else who hasn't signed up or would like to talk
12 as long as we're here?

13 Okay. Then if you came in during the
14 presentations, if you would like to stop back and look at
15 some of the maps and the documents, they are on the other
16 side of this wall. Enjoy the cookies, talk to your
17 neighbors, say good night, and go enjoy this beautiful
18 evening.

19 Thank you all for coming.

20 (Concluded at 6:40 p.m.)

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