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Scoping Decision Document

June 2012

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1.0 Summary

1.1 What is Scoping?

Scoping refers to the process of defining the content of environmental review documents. The Scoping process is used to define the range of alternatives that will be analyzed in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), to identify the issues and impacts relating to the project, and to explain the project to interested members of the public, individuals, and groups, as well as representatives of affected Native American tribes, and local, state, and Federal agencies. The Scoping process is required under both federal and state environmental review, and is the first step in preparing a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS).

1.2 What is the Purpose of the Scoping Decision Document?

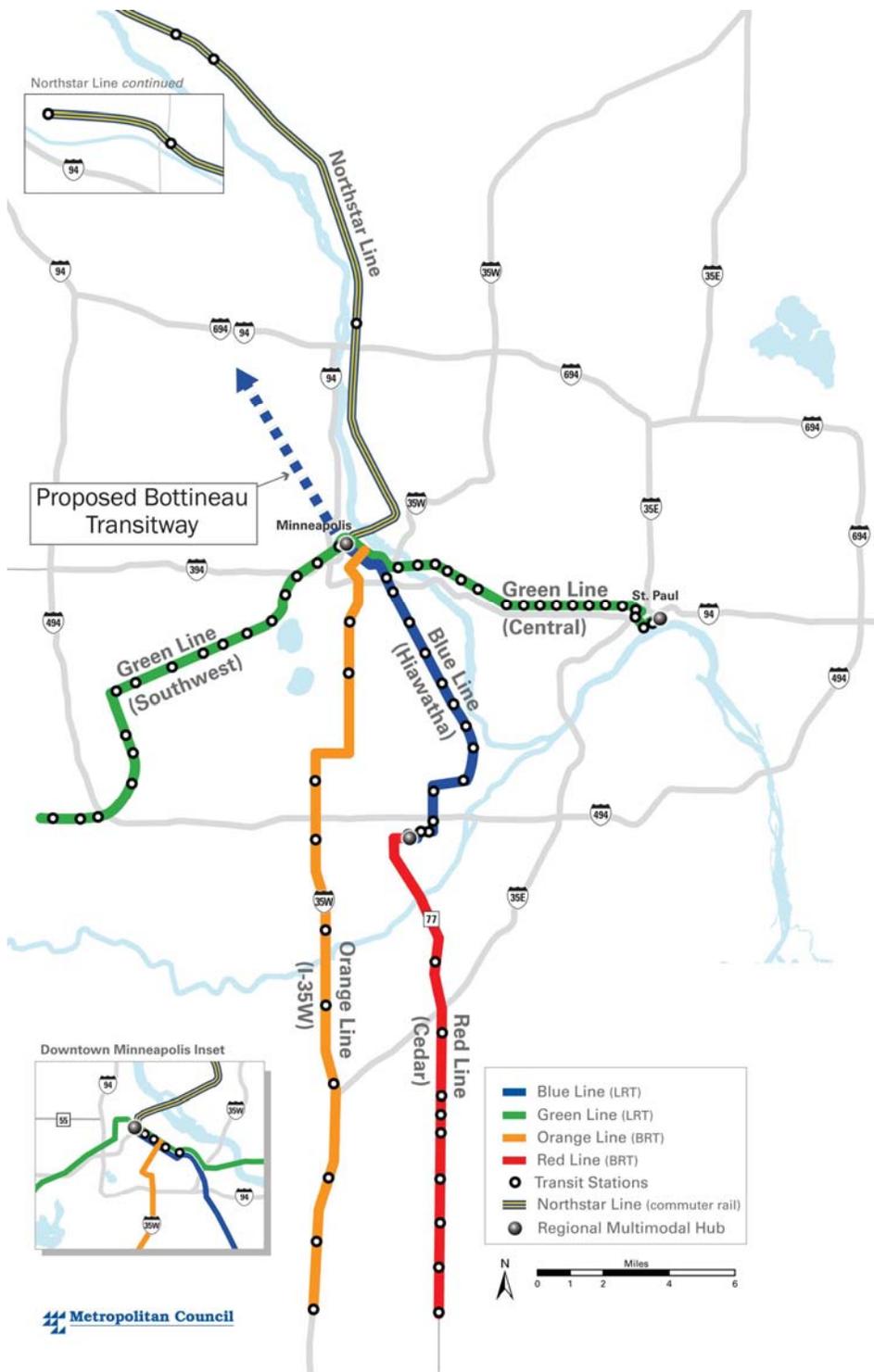
The purpose of this report is to document the efforts and results of the formal Scoping process conducted by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRRA), and the Metropolitan Council for the Bottineau Transitway Project.

1.3 What is the Bottineau Transitway Project?

The Bottineau Transitway is a proposed project that will provide for transit improvements in the highly traveled northwest area of the Twin Cities. The Bottineau Transitway is located in Hennepin County, Minnesota, extending approximately 13 miles from downtown Minneapolis to the northwest serving north Minneapolis and the suburbs of Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, New Hope, Brooklyn Park, Maple Grove, and Osseo. The transitway is anticipated to serve a broader area to the northwest; including the communities of Dayton and Rogers, and Hassan Township (Hassan Township was annexed into the City of Rogers on January 1, 2012. Future reference of Rogers in this document includes Hassan Township).

The Bottineau Transitway would connect north Minneapolis and the region's northwest suburbs with the region's system of transitways that consist of existing light rail transit (LRT) on the Blue Line (Hiawatha) and Green Line (Central Corridor and the planned Southwest light rail line), bus rapid transit (BRT) on the Red Line (Cedar Avenue) and Orange Line (I-35W South), the Northstar Commuter Rail line, and express bus routes ([Figure 1](#)). The transitway investments under study for the Bottineau Transitway would also maintain or enhance local and express bus service throughout the corridor.

Figure 1. Regional Transitway System



 Metropolitan Council

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Overview of Review Process

FTA, HCRRA, and the Metropolitan Council have initiated the environmental review process for the Bottineau Transitway Project. Federal funding for this project may be pursued through the FTA New Starts Program. As a result, FTA, designated as the lead federal agency for this project, is choosing to undertake environmental review in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). As the local public agencies sponsoring the project, HCRRA and Metropolitan Council must also comply with the requirements of the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). HCRRA is the Responsible Governmental Unit (RGU) under Minnesota Rules Chapter 4410.0500 for the Draft EIS. FTA, HCRRA, and the Metropolitan Council have determined that the Bottineau Transitway project may have significant impacts. To satisfy both federal and state requirements, an EIS is being prepared for the Bottineau Transitway project.

2.2 Overview of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Process

The EIS process occurs in three stages (Scoping, Draft EIS, and Final EIS), and culminates in a federal Record of Decision (ROD) under NEPA and a state Determination of Adequacy under MEPA. Each of the three stages includes publication of a document for public comment and narrows the number of alternatives, with the Final EIS identifying a single preferred alternative for the project.

The EIS process requires a detailed assessment of a broad range of significant social, economic, and environmental impacts. The EIS process starts with Scoping and concludes with identification of a preferred alternative.

New Starts Program

The New Starts program is the federal capital funding program for major transit projects like the Bottineau Transitway. The region is considering applying for funding through the FTA's New Starts Program to build the Bottineau Transitway. If an application is submitted, the Bottineau Transitway will be competing with other large capital transit projects around the country for this limited federal funding program. The funding program requirements are different from and in addition to the environmental review requirements.

2.3 What is the Project Schedule?

The following table lists the schedule for completion of the project activities including completed and anticipated actions.

Table 1. Project Milestone Schedule

Action	Timeframe	Actions Completed as of June 4, 2012
Distribution of Scoping Booklet	December 2011	X
Minnesota EQB Monitor Publication	December 26, 2011	X
Notice of Intent Published in Federal Register	January 10, 2012	X
Scoping Comment Period	December 26, 2011 - February 17, 2012	X
Interagency Scoping Meeting	January 19, 2012	X

Action	Timeframe	Actions Completed as of June 4, 2012
Public Scoping Meetings	January 23, 24, 25 and 31, 2012	X
Scoping Decision Document	June 2012	X
Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) Recommendation to Metropolitan Council	July 2012	
Draft EIS Preparation	May - December 2012	
Draft EIS Comment Period and Public Hearings	Early 2013	
Confirmation of Preferred Alternative	Spring 2013	
Final EIS Preparation	2013-2014	
FTA's Record of Decision	2014	
Metropolitan Council's Adequacy Determination	2014	

3.0 Purpose and Need

3.1 What is the Purpose of the Project?

The purpose of the Bottineau Transitway is to provide transit service, which will satisfy the long-term regional mobility and accessibility needs for businesses and the traveling public.

Residents and businesses in the Bottineau Transitway project area need access to the region's activity centers to fully participate in the region's economy. Access to jobs in Minneapolis, St. Paul, the University of Minnesota, and growing suburbs is crucial. Traffic congestion is expected to intensify in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area through 2030 and beyond. Current transit service in the Bottineau Transitway project area offers a limited number of travel-time competitive alternatives to personal vehicles. Without major transit investments, it will be difficult to effectively meet the transportation needs of people and businesses in the corridor, manage highway traffic congestion in the project area, and achieve the region's goal of doubling transit ridership by 2030.

3.2 What are the Major Needs in the Bottineau Transitway?

Five factors contribute to the need for the Bottineau Transitway project:

- Growing travel demand
- Increasing traffic congestion
- Needs of people who depend on transit
- Limited transit service to suburban destinations (reverse commute opportunities) and time-efficient transit options

- Regional objectives for growth

Growing Travel Demand

Over the past two decades, the population has grown significantly in the seven-county Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, and growth is expected to continue in the future. Between 2010 and 2030, the Metropolitan Council currently projects that approximately 880,000 new people and 662,000 new jobs will be added to the seven-county area that consists of Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington counties.

Between 1990 and 2010, the Bottineau Transitway communities of Brooklyn Park and Maple Grove experienced population increases of 34 and 59 percent, respectively; while communities also potentially served by the transitway such as Dayton and Rogers, have experienced higher growth rates. Between 2010 and 2030, Hennepin County is projected to grow by 242,000 people. Over the same period, communities along the Bottineau Transitway are expected to grow by 140,000 people. This represents nearly 60 percent of Hennepin County's total projected growth. Maple Grove and several communities to the north and west—Osseo, Dayton and Rogers—are projected to grow by more than 65,000 people, outpacing the overall population growth rate for Hennepin County and the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area between 2010 and 2030.

Employment in the Bottineau Transitway project area is also expected to increase in coming years. Approximately half of all jobs in the project area are located in downtown Minneapolis, which is currently the region's largest travel demand generator; nearly 65,000 additional jobs are anticipated by 2030. Large employment concentrations outside downtown Minneapolis are located at North Memorial Medical Center in Robbinsdale, the Highway 610 development area including Target North Campus in Brooklyn Park, and the Arbor Lakes commercial district in Maple Grove.

Growth in population and employment in the project area and beyond is expected to result in increased transportation demand. Significant growth in traffic volumes is anticipated within the project area, particularly in the northern suburbs of Brooklyn Park and Maple Grove, and also just beyond the transitway along the I-94 corridor through Dayton. Traffic volumes are expected to increase in the range of 15 to 20 percent along project area roadways.

Increasing Traffic Congestion

Growing travel demand is expected to increase traffic congestion on the region's highways and in downtown Minneapolis. In the past, the region responded to increased demand by constructing new roadways or expanding existing ones. In recent years, however, roadway expansion in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area has not kept pace with mounting travel demand and is not anticipated to keep pace in the future, as growth in demand is outpacing funding. Studies at the state and regional levels have concluded that highway expansion alone is an unsustainable approach to managing transportation demand. Instead, state and regional policy outlined in the *Statewide Transportation Policy Plan* and the *2030 Transportation Policy Plan* recognizes the importance of a balanced approach to meeting travel demand that invests in maintaining the existing transportation system and favors improvement projects such as the Bottineau Transitway.

Needs of People Who Depend on Transit

The Bottineau Transitway project area is home to a large number of people who depend on transit to meet their transportation needs. Based on U.S. Census information, 14 percent of households in the project area do not own a vehicle. This is nearly double the metropolitan area average of 8 percent. In some areas of north Minneapolis, the number of zero-car households exceeds 50 percent; in areas of New Hope and Brooklyn Park, the number exceeds 22 percent. The high proportion of people without access to vehicles underscores the need for transit access in these parts of the Bottineau Transitway project area.

Seniors also represent an important and growing market for public transportation. In the project area communities of Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, and New Hope, seniors make up a larger share of the population compared to the makeup of the overall regional population. Moreover, senior populations are expected to grow in the Bottineau Transitway communities during the next 20 years by as much as 125 percent.

Limited Transit Service to Suburban Destinations (reverse commute opportunities) and Time-Efficient Transit Options

The dominant travel pattern during morning commutes in the Bottineau Transitway project area today is toward downtown Minneapolis. A “reverse commute” pattern also exists toward Brooklyn Park, Maple Grove, and beyond into Rogers and surrounding communities to the north. Workers and students commute to major activity centers in the project area, such as North Memorial Medical Center in Robbinsdale, the Target North Campus, North Hennepin Community College, Hennepin Technical College in Brooklyn Park, and the Arbor Lakes retail complex in Maple Grove.

Although communities in the project area are served by a network of local and express bus routes, fast and convenient transit options to access schools and jobs are limited. Direct bus service from Minneapolis to suburban communities in the Bottineau Corridor is provided on two limited-stop and express routes. Accessing this bus service may require a transfer in downtown Minneapolis, and only a few trips are available each day. However, residents of Minneapolis and the inner northwest suburbs have other transit options for accessing activity centers in the outer suburbs of Maple Grove and Brooklyn Park. Three transit centers located within the project area (Starlite Transit Center, Brooklyn Center Transit Center, and Robbinsdale Transit Center) provide a valuable transfer point from express and urban local routes to suburban local routes. Unfortunately, these suburban local routes stop frequently, often require transfers, and travel at lower speeds on arterial streets, resulting in long overall travel times.

Regional Objectives for Growth

The policies guiding the development of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area are articulated in the *2030 Regional Development Framework*. Most recently updated in December 2006, the *2030 Regional Development Framework* established four policies for guiding growth in the region:

- Accommodate growth in a flexible, connected and efficient manner
- Plan and invest in multi-modal transportation choices to slow the growth of traffic congestion and serve the region’s economic needs
- Encourage expanded choices in housing locations and types of improved access to jobs and opportunities
- Conserve, protect and enhance the region’s vital natural resources

3.3 What are the Project Goals?

Goals directly addressing the primary project needs include:

Goal 1: Enhance regional access to activity centers throughout the Twin Cities via connections to the emerging transitway system and the greater regional transit system.

Goal 2: Enhance the effectiveness of transit service within the Bottineau Transitway project area by connecting key activity centers and providing access to jobs, schools, housing, health care, parks, shopping, and entertainment.

Goal 3: Develop the Bottineau Transitway as an integral component of a cost-effective and financially feasible transit system.

Secondary goals addressing community sustainability include:

Goal 4: Promote sustainable development patterns for the long-term viability of Bottineau Transitway communities and the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area.

Goal 5: Support healthy communities and sound environmental practices along the Bottineau Transitway.

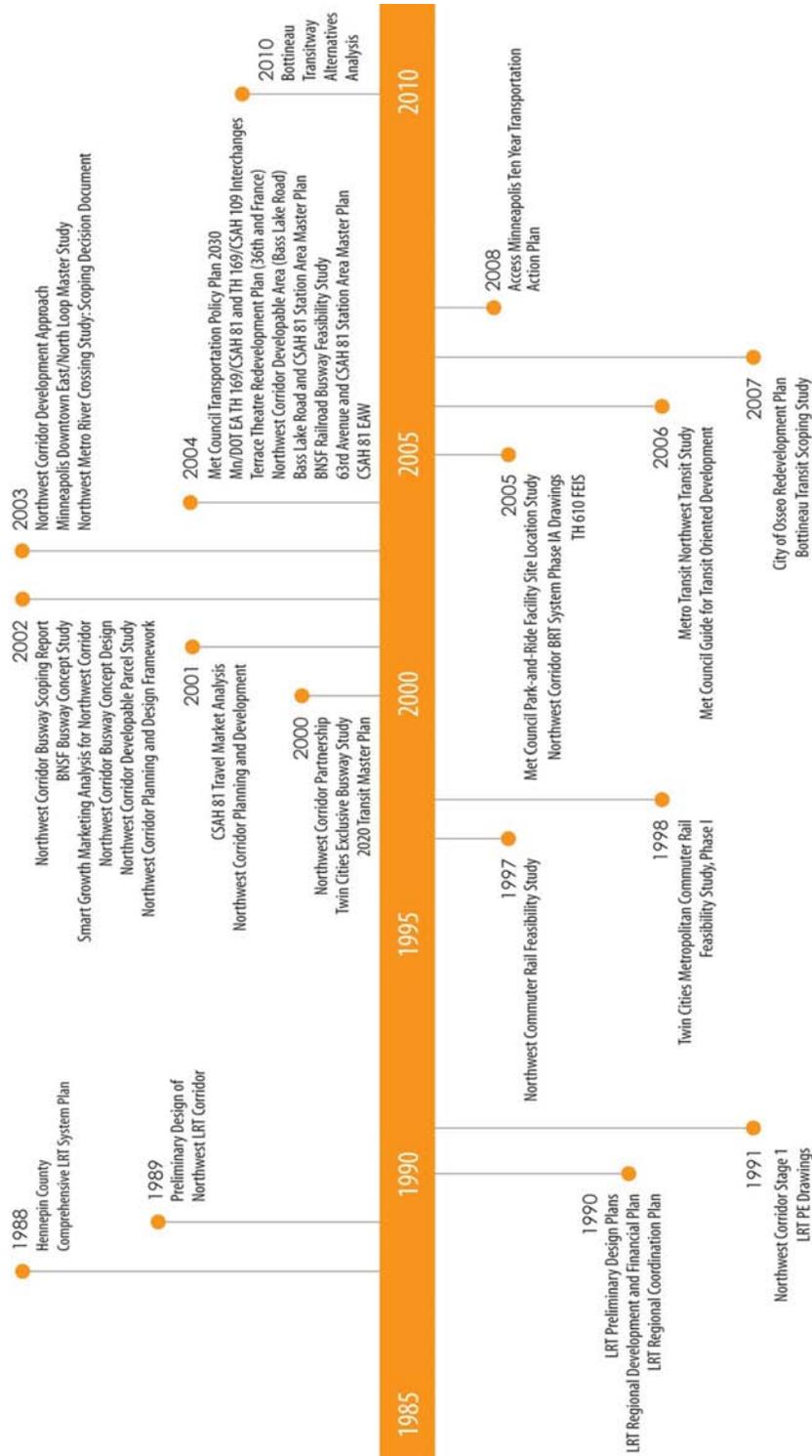
4.0 Which Alternatives Will Be Considered in the Draft EIS?

4.1 Project Background

Transportation and land use studies in the Bottineau Transitway began back in 1988 with the Hennepin County Comprehensive LRT System Plan. The Bottineau (Northwest) Transitway has consistently been included in regional transportation system plans. Many different alignments (routes) and transportation modes, including BRT, LRT, and commuter rail have been considered and evaluated in plans and studies in the past. These studies provide a valuable base of information for the Bottineau Transitway EIS process ([Figure 2](#)). Transit travel demand in the Bottineau Transitway has been consistently identified in regional transportation system plans, including the *Regional Transit Board LRT Plan* (1990), the *Transit 2020 Master Plan* (February 2000), the *2025 Transportation Policy Plan* (adopted January 2001, amended January 2002), and the *2030 Transportation Policy Plan* (adopted December 2004).

The region's current long-range transportation plan, the *2030 Transportation Policy Plan* (adopted November 2010) identifies the Bottineau Transitway as one of the transitway corridors to be developed by 2030. The recommendation for the Bottineau Transitway is based on findings from the Metropolitan Council's *2030 Transit Master Study* (2008).

Figure 2. Summary of Previous Bottineau Corridor Studies

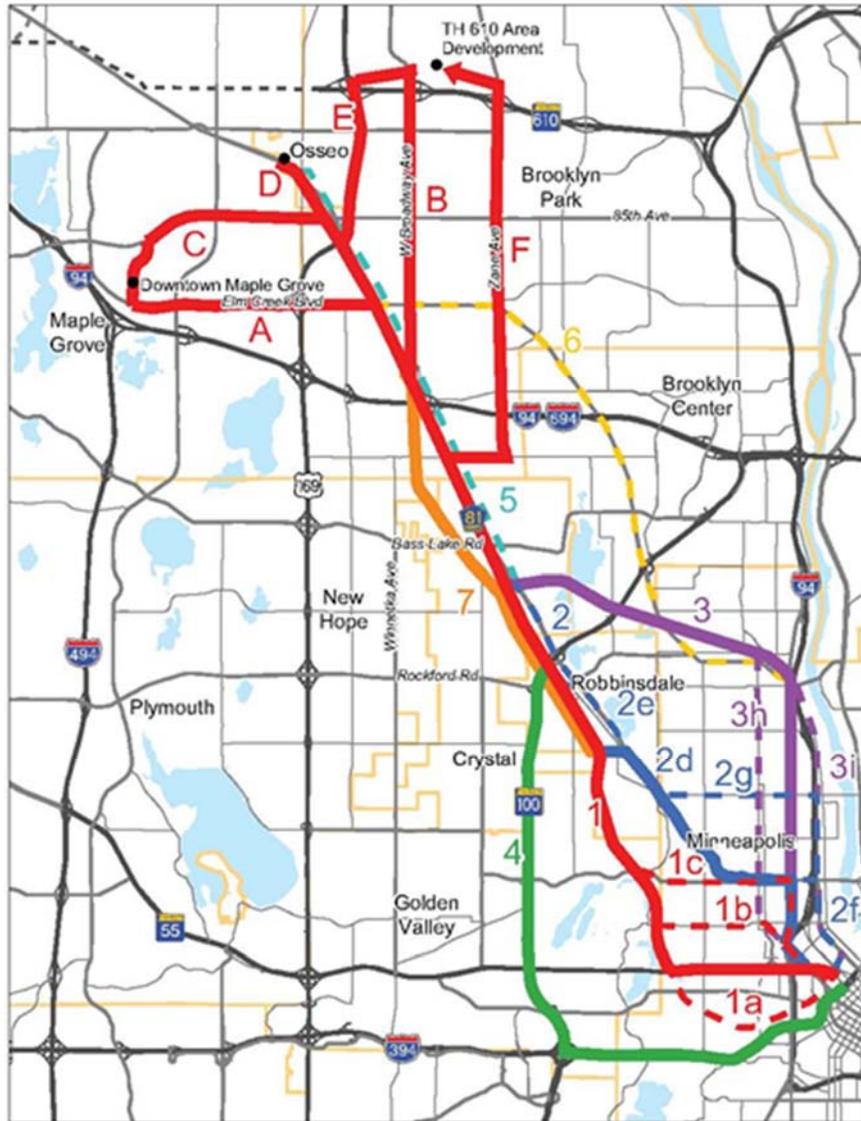


Bottineau Transitway Alternatives Analysis Study, March 2010

HCRRA, in partnership with FTA, the Metropolitan Council, Maple Grove Transit, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), and the cities of Minneapolis, Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, New Hope, Brooklyn Park, Maple Grove, and Osseo, completed an Alternatives Analysis (AA) study for the Bottineau Transitway. The Bottineau Transitway AA study evaluated a wide range of transit modes and alignments. The study progressively narrowed the transitway build alternatives (**Figure 3**) to a set of 21 alternatives (9 LRT and 12 BRT alignments) to be studied in more detail.

Those alternatives were evaluated against a set of defined goals and evaluation criteria, with three LRT alternatives emerging as the “most promising”. Additional investigation revealed interest in continued evaluation of a fourth LRT alternative. The most promising BRT alternative was also carried into the Scoping process for further consideration. The results of the AA study are the starting point for defining alternatives for consideration in the Draft EIS. A copy of the AA study can be found at www.bottineautransitway.org.

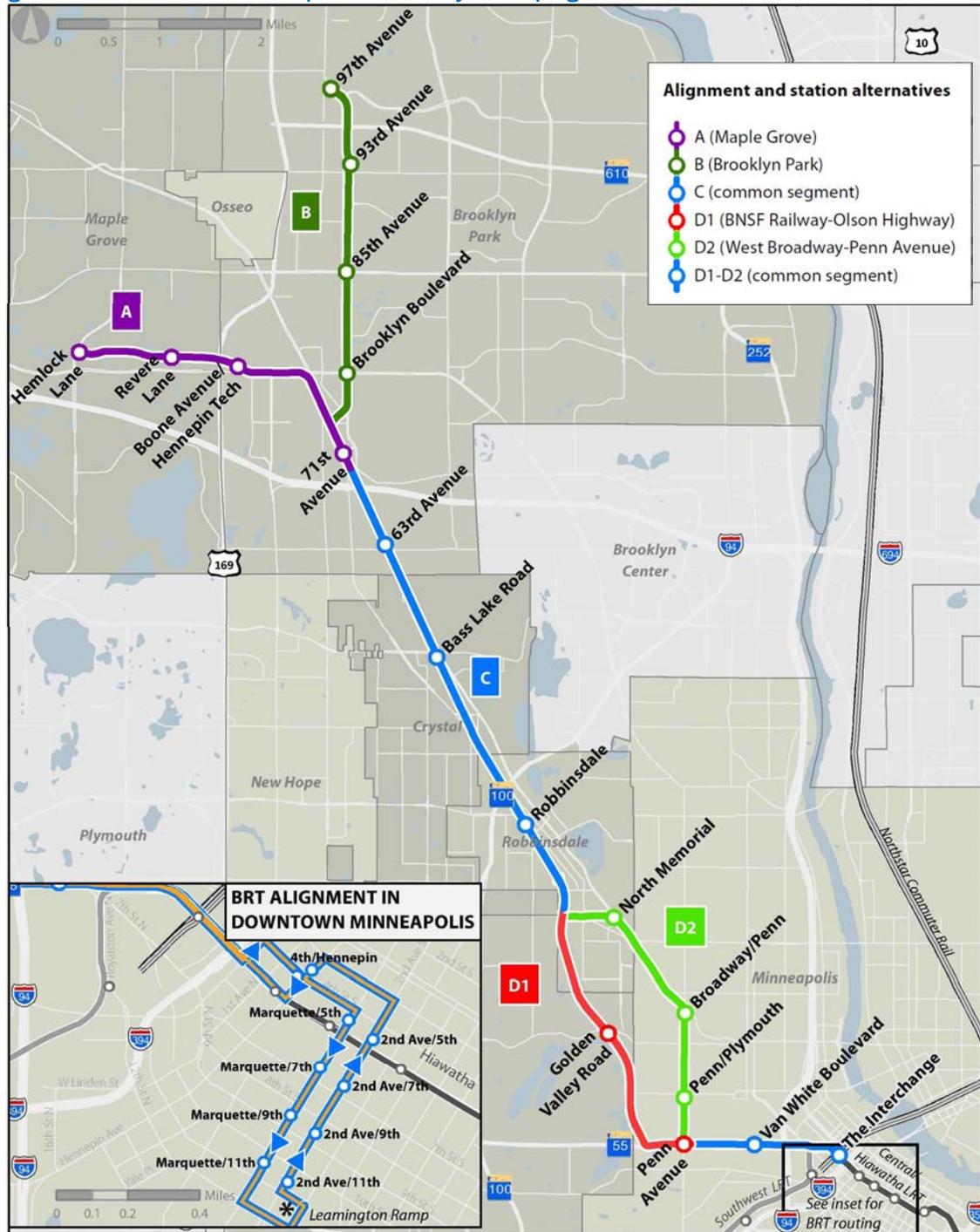
Figure 3. Transitway Alternatives Considered in the AA Study



4.2 Which Alternatives Were Presented during Scoping?

Based on the findings from the AA study, a No-Build alternative, an Enhanced Bus/Transportation System Management (TSM) alternative, four LRT alternatives, and one BRT alternative (Alignment B-C-D1) were presented in the Scoping process. **Figure 4** on the following page reflects the Build alternatives proposed for study. A description of the alternatives, presented in the Scoping Booklet is included in Sections 4.2.1 through 4.2.4.

Figure 4 Build Alternatives Proposed for Study in Scoping



4.2.1 No-Build Alternative

As defined in the Scoping Booklet, the No-Build alternative serves as the baseline against which environmental effects of the Bottineau Transitway alternatives are measured. The No-Build alternative is defined as the existing transportation system, plus any committed transportation

improvements in the region. Committed transportation improvements include roadway, transit facility, and transit service improvements (not including the Bottineau Transitway) planned, programmed, and included in the Metropolitan Council's *2030 Transportation Policy Plan*, to be implemented by the year 2030.

4.2.2 Enhanced Bus/Transportation System Management (TSM) Alternative (TSM Alternative)

As defined in the Scoping Booklet, the TSM alternative includes enhancements and upgrades to the existing transportation system in the project corridor, attempting to meet the project's purpose and need as much as possible without a major capital investment. TSM alternatives generally include bus route restructuring, scheduling improvements, new express and limited-stop services, intersection improvements, and/or other focused infrastructure improvements that improve the function of the transit system.

4.2.3 Light Rail Transit (LRT) Alternatives

As defined in the Scoping Booklet, LRT alternatives include several stations servicing community activity centers throughout the corridor between downtown Minneapolis and the Maple Grove/Brooklyn Park area. Each LRT alternative would include tracks, stations, and support facilities, as well as light rail vehicles providing high frequency LRT service along the transitway throughout the day. Connector bus service to LRT Stations would provide important transit system linkages to the LRT transitway.

The four LRT alternatives ([Figure 4](#)) under consideration during the Scoping phase include two north alignments (A and B) and two south alignments (D1 and D2) connected by one shared alignment C.

- LRT A-C-D1
- LRT A-C-D2
- LRT B-C-D1
- LRT B-C-D2

Northern alignment options:

At the north end of the corridor, there are two alignment options:

- Alignment A originates in Maple Grove at Hemlock Lane/Arbor Lakes Parkway, and follows the future Arbor Lakes Parkway and Elm Creek Boulevard to the BNSF railroad corridor located on the west side of Bottineau Boulevard.
- Alignment B begins at the Target North Campus (located just north of Highway 610), follows West Broadway Avenue, and crosses Bottineau Boulevard at 73rd Avenue to enter the BNSF railroad corridor.

Center alignment:

Just south of 71st Avenue, both the A and B alignments would transition to the C alignment in the BNSF railroad corridor on the west side of Bottineau Boulevard through southern Brooklyn Park, Crystal, and Robbinsdale.

Southern alignment options:

There are two alignments under consideration for the transitway south of 34th Avenue in Robbinsdale and into downtown Minneapolis:

- Alignment D1 continues along the BNSF railroad corridor to Olson Memorial Highway, and then follows Olson Memorial Highway to Downtown.
- Alignment D2 exits the railroad corridor near 34th Avenue, joins West Broadway Avenue, and travels on Penn Avenue to Olson Memorial Highway and into downtown.

Several refinements to alignments were considered during Scoping:

- Alignment B: Since completing the Alternatives Analysis (AA) study, the HCRRA has been working with the City of Brooklyn Park regarding alignments that integrate with master planning activities occurring on the Target North Campus. A refined alignment concept west of West Broadway north of 93rd Avenue extending north of Highway 610 to a terminus station has been identified.
- D2 Penn Avenue Options: Several options for the D2 alignment were considered for the segment between West Broadway Avenue and Olson Memorial Highway during Scoping. These options included various ways of using Penn and/ or Oliver Avenues for the Bottineau Transitway (Figure 5). The Bottineau Transitway Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) considered the D2 alignment options defined and brought forward for evaluation through the process and decided on November 14, 2011 to continue study of the option that has all vehicle and LRT traffic using Penn Avenue. This decision was made after considering a broad range of stakeholder input (including the public, CAC, ARCC, and NTN) and comparative technical analyses.
- D1 Station Location: Input during the Theodore Wirth Park Master Planning effort has suggested moving the Golden Valley Station from Golden Valley Road to Plymouth Avenue, potentially providing better access to surrounding residential areas and park facilities. This option was presented in the Scoping Booklet.
- D2 Robbinsdale Options: Coordination has taken place with the City of Robbinsdale regarding the D2 alignment transition between the BNSF Railroad corridor and West Broadway entering Minneapolis near the Terrace Mall and North Memorial Medical Center. A range of alignment concepts has been considered during the alternatives analysis study process transitioning from the rail corridor from 36th Avenue to 34th Avenue. An alignment along 34th Avenue has been identified as the best fit for the City of Robbinsdale.

Figure 5. D2 Alignment Options



D2 Option A - LRT and southbound arterial* traffic on Penn Avenue, moving northbound arterial traffic to Oliver Avenue. (Left Figure)

D2 Option B - LRT on Oliver Avenue removing all traffic from that street, maintaining both north and southbound arterial traffic function on Penn Avenue. (Middle Figure)

D2 Option C - Widens Penn Avenue to allow LRT as well as north and southbound traffic to operate on Penn Avenue. (Right Figure)

* Penn Avenue functions as a minor arterial facility and is under county jurisdiction (CSAH 2). As such, Penn Avenue serves 8,100 to 10,600 vehicles per day. Penn Avenue is a truck route and accommodates Metro Transit Route 19 operations.

4.2.4 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Alternative

As defined in the Scoping Booklet, the BRT alternative would include a busway in its own dedicated space (guideway) with several stations between The Interchange near Target Field and a Brooklyn Park terminus on an alignment following Olson Memorial Highway and the Burlington-Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad corridor to West Broadway Avenue in Brooklyn Park (alignment B-C-D1, as shown in Figure 4). This alternative would include all facilities associated with the construction and operation of BRT, including right-of-way, travel lanes, stations, and support facilities, as well as bus rapid transit vehicles providing high frequency BRT service throughout the day and connector bus service to BRT Stations. For the Bottineau Transitway, the BRT alternative represents the highest level of BRT investment which includes a dedicated guideway, high-amenity stations and speed, reliability, and frequency similar to LRT operations.

Under the BRT alternative, Route 732 would operate from the Maple Grove Transit Station to the Brooklyn Boulevard BRT station in mixed traffic, with peak period trips continuing to downtown Minneapolis via the Bottineau Transitway. Non-peak-period trips on Route 732 would operate only to the proposed Brooklyn Boulevard BRT station.

4.3 Confirmation of Decisions Made During the Alternatives Analysis Study (2007-2010)

During the Scoping process, comments were submitted inquiring why a Bottineau Transitway alternative on West Broadway Avenue east of Penn Avenue did not advance for further consideration in the Draft EIS process.

Bottineau Transitway alternatives on West Broadway Avenue east of Penn Avenue were considered as part of the AA study that started in 2007 and concluded in March 2010. LRT and BRT alternatives were considered on West Broadway Avenue east of Penn Avenue because of West Broadway Avenue's role as an important regional and local transportation and activity corridor. The AA study findings are summarized below. The Bottineau Transitway purpose and need, goals, and evaluating criteria developed and used during the Scoping process are consistent with those used in the decisions to discontinue study of LRT and BRT alternatives on West Broadway Avenue east of Penn Avenue. The decisions made during the AAs study to discontinue study of the LRT and BRT alternatives on West Broadway Avenue east of Penn Avenue are affirmed in the Bottineau Transitway Scoping process.

Light Rail Transit on West Broadway Avenue east of Penn Avenue – Study Discontinued

Study of an LRT alternative on West Broadway Avenue east of Penn Avenue was discontinued because of its connection to the regional LRT system and because of its significant and likely impacts on surrounding land uses, property owners, and other modes of transportation. As a result of these concerns, LRT was screened out as a practical West Broadway mode alternative.

- *Regional LRT System Connection* – All Bottineau Transitway LRT alternatives connect to the regional LRT system at Target Field/The Interchange since any Bottineau LRT alternative would become an extension of the Blue Line (formerly called Hiawatha). The LRT system connection necessary at Target Field/The Interchange for LRT alternatives on West Broadway Avenue east of Penn Avenue was higher cost, more complex, and limited future expansion potential as compared to the connection possible for other LRT alternatives.
- *Impacts on Surrounding Land Uses, Property Owners, and Other Modes of Transportation* – Additional issues with LRT on West Broadway Avenue east of Penn Avenue included significant impacts to land uses/private property, on-street parking, traffic operations, and right-of-way width. The development of Bottineau Transitway alternatives sought to avoid or minimize these kinds of impacts.

Bus Rapid Transit Alternatives on West Broadway Avenue east of Penn Avenue – Study Discontinued

Study of BRT alternatives on West Broadway Avenue east of Penn Avenue was initiated when it became clear that an LRT would not advance for further study. The BRT alternatives were assumed to operate in mixed traffic – not in the dedicated lanes assumed for all LRT and other BRT alternatives – between Penn and Lyndale Avenues. This approach allowed the BRT alternatives to minimize impacts on land uses/private property, on-street parking, traffic operations, and right-of-way width. The study considered three BRT alternatives on West Broadway Avenue east of Penn Avenue. Study of the three BRT alternatives was discontinued because of their comparatively weak performances in terms of their ability to meet the Bottineau Transitway purpose and need. The three BRT alternatives on West Broadway east of Penn Avenue ranked primarily in the “fair” or lower categories (using a five-point ranking – Best, Good, Fair, Poor, and Poorest) for each of the five project goals, including ability to

attract new riders to the system, ability to improve regional travel time savings, and cost effectiveness.

4.4 Which Alternatives Will be Studied in the Draft EIS?

Based on the findings from the technical analysis completed to date, along with the public and agency input received during the Scoping phase, the following alternatives will be studied in more detail in the Bottineau Transitway Draft EIS:

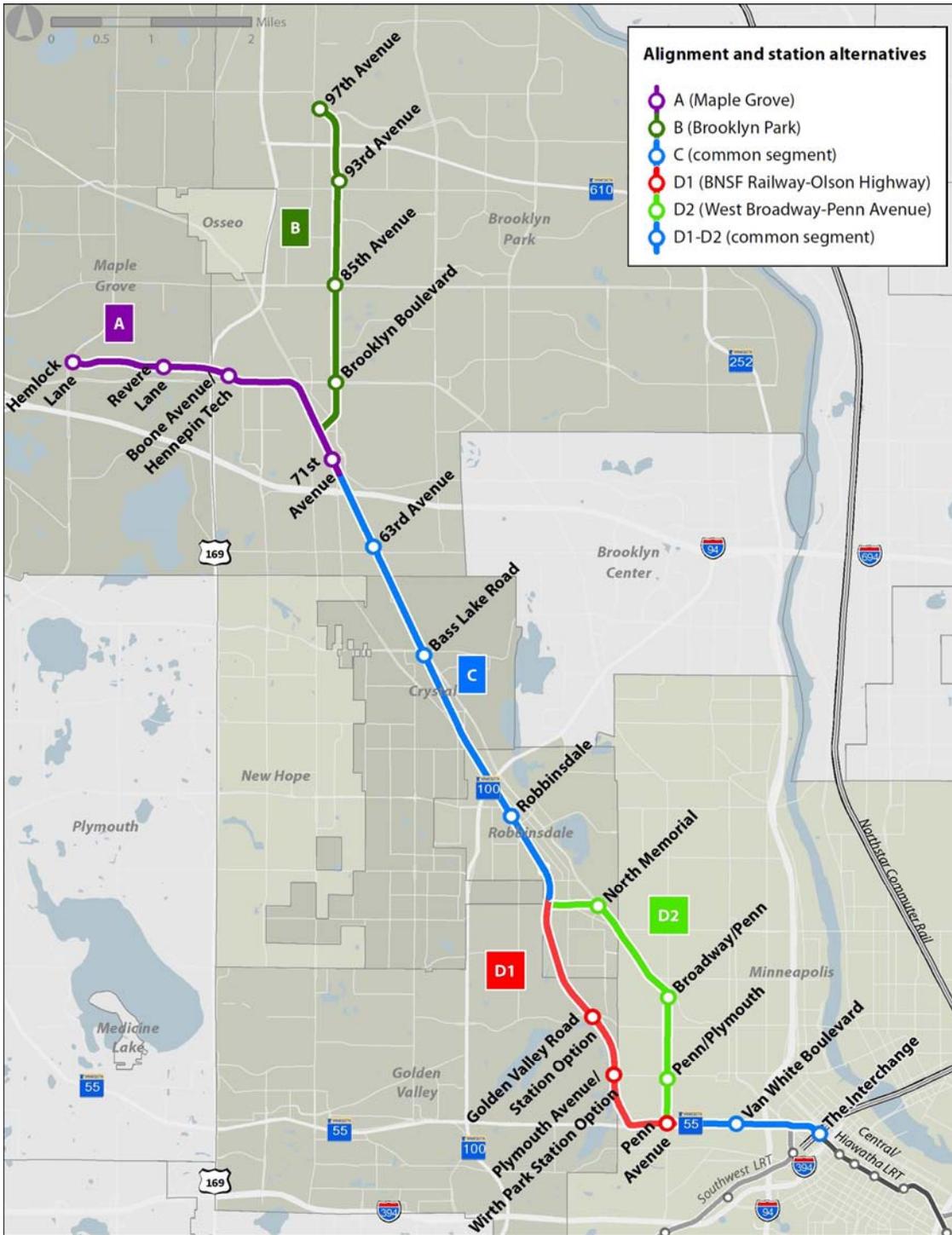
- No-Build alternative
- Baseline/TSM alternative
- 4 LRT Build alternatives on alignments A-C-D1, A-C-D2, B-C-D1, and B-C-D2 (Figure 6)

No-Build Alternative

The No-Build alternative reflects existing and committed improvements to the regional transit network for the horizon year of 2030. Major transit improvements that are included in the No-Build alternative are as follows:

- Central Corridor (Green Line) LRT and associated corridor bus service changes
- Southwest (Green Line) LRT and associated corridor bus service changes
- Cedar Avenue (Red Line) BRT with station-to-station BRT service and associated corridor bus service changes
- I-35W (Orange Line) BRT with station-to-station BRT service and associated corridor bus service changes
- A rapid bus (arterial bus rapid transit) line serving the West Broadway Avenue corridor from Robbinsdale Transit Center (in downtown Robbinsdale) to downtown Minneapolis, and associated restructuring of local bus service in the corridor
- Additional enhanced bus transit service on Snelling Avenue, West 7th Street, East 7th Street, Chicago Avenue, and American Boulevard, and associated restructuring of local bus service in these corridors in correlation with the Metro Transit Arterial Transitway Corridors Study service concepts.
- Service frequency improvements to local and express routes within the Bottineau Transitway project area, consistent with 2030 regional service improvement plans
- New park-and-ride facilities at various locations outside of the Bottineau Transitway project area as defined in the Metropolitan Council's *2030 Park-and-Ride Plan*
- Various service frequency improvements throughout the regional transit network, consistent with 2030 regional service improvement plans.

Figure 6. LRT Alternatives Proposed for Study in the Draft EIS



Transportation System Management (TSM) Alternative

The TSM alternative (also referred to as the “Baseline” alternative) is defined as enhancements and upgrades to the existing transportation system in the project corridor, attempting to meet the project’s purpose and need as much as possible without a major capital investment. The purpose of the TSM alternative is to pursue a comparable transit service to the Build alternatives without the significant capital investment of building a transitway. Service improvements proposed in the TSM alternative focus on serving the same travel markets that are addressed in the Build alternatives.

For this project, one TSM alternative has been defined that addresses the travel markets served by all variations of the Build alternatives. The TSM alternative definition may need to be refined once a preferred Build alternative has been determined to more closely correlate with the specific transitway service provided by this build alternative.

In addition to the improvements included in the No-Build alternative, the TSM alternative includes the following:

- A transit center and park-and-ride facility near 97th Avenue and West Broadway Avenue, north of Highway 610
- Limited stop bus routes 731 and 732 (*see description below*)
- Restructuring of selected existing routes in the corridor to provide connections to the Route 731/732 service, thereby enhancing connections within the corridor

Route 731 Description

New limited- stop bus Route 731 would provide all-day, two-way service in general purpose traffic lanes from Brooklyn Park to downtown Minneapolis. The route would begin at a future 97th Avenue Transit Center and follow West Broadway Avenue to the Starlite Transit Center. It then would continue along Bottineau Boulevard, West Broadway Avenue, Penn Avenue, and Olson Memorial Highway (TH 55) into downtown Minneapolis, serving downtown using the Marquette/2nd Avenue transit lanes. The route would operate with limited stops at approximately the same locations as stations proposed under the LRT alternatives.

Route 732 Description

New limited - stop bus Route 732 would provide all-day, two-way service in general purpose traffic lanes from Maple Grove to downtown Minneapolis. The route would begin at the Maple Grove Transit Station and travel along Hemlock Lane and Elm Creek Boulevard to the Starlite Transit Center, making stops at approximately the same locations as proposed stations on Alignment A. From Starlite Transit Center, the route would continue on the same alignment as Route 731 into downtown Minneapolis.

Frequencies for both Routes 731 and 732 would be 15 minutes in the peak periods and 20 minutes in the midday. Together, the routes would provide combined 7.5-minute peak/10-minute midday frequency south of the Starlite Transit Center.

LRT Alternatives

Four LRT alternatives will be studied in the Draft EIS: A-C-D1, A-C-D2, B-C-D1, and B-C-D2. Summary characteristics of each are described in

Table 2 and **Table 3** on the following page.

Table 2. LRT Alignment Descriptions

LRT Alignment Alternative	A-C-D1	A-C-D2	B-C-D1	B-C-D2
Description (from north to south)	<p>LRT Alternatives A-C-D1 and A-C-D2 both originate in Maple Grove at Hemlock Lane/Arbor Lakes Parkway, and follow the future Arbor Lakes Parkway and Elm Creek Boulevard to the BNSF railroad corridor located on the west side of Bottineau Boulevard. Both alternatives continue in the railroad corridor through the cities of Crystal and Robbinsdale. Toward the south end of Robbinsdale, LRT Alternative A-C-D1 continues into Golden Valley along the BNSF railroad corridor to Olson Memorial Highway, and then follows Olson Memorial Highway to downtown Minneapolis. LRT Alternative A-C-D2, in contrast, exits the BNSF railroad corridor near 34th Avenue in Robbinsdale, joins West Broadway Avenue where it enters Minneapolis, and then travels on Penn Avenue to Olson Memorial Highway and into downtown Minneapolis.</p>		<p>LRT Alternatives B-C-D1 and B-C-D2 begin at the Target North Campus (located just north of Highway 610), follow West Broadway Avenue, and cross Bottineau Boulevard at 73rd Avenue to enter the BNSF railroad corridor. Both alternatives continue in the railroad corridor through the cities of Crystal and Robbinsdale. Toward the south end of Robbinsdale, LRT Alternative B-C-D1 continues into Golden Valley along the BNSF railroad corridor to Olson Memorial Highway, and then follows Olson Memorial Highway to downtown Minneapolis. LRT Alternative B-C-D2, in contrast, exits the BNSF railroad corridor near 34th Avenue in Robbinsdale, joins West Broadway Avenue where it enters Minneapolis, and then travels on Penn Avenue to Olson Memorial Highway and into downtown Minneapolis.</p>	

Table 3. LRT Alternative Descriptions

Alternative	A-C-D1	A-C-D2	B-C-D1	B-C-D2
Northern Terminus	Maple Grove	Maple Grove	Brooklyn Park	Brooklyn Park
Length ³	12.6 miles	12.7 miles	13.3 miles	13.4 miles
Stations	<p><u>11 Stations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hemlock Lane¹ • Revere Lane¹ • Boone Ave/Henn Tech • 71st Avenue • 63rd Avenue¹ • Bass Lake Road • Robbinsdale¹ • Golden Valley Rd or Plymouth Avenue/Wirth Park ⁴ • Penn Avenue • Van White Blvd • The Interchange² 	<p><u>12 Stations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hemlock Lane¹ • Revere Lane¹ • Boone Ave/Henn Tech • 71st Avenue • 63rd Avenue¹ • Bass Lake Road • Robbinsdale¹ • North Memorial • Broadway/Penn • Penn/Plymouth • Van White Blvd • The Interchange² 	<p><u>11 Stations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 97th Avenue • 93rd Avenue¹ • 85th Avenue • Brooklyn Blvd • 63rd Avenue¹ • Bass Lake Road • Robbinsdale¹ • Golden Valley Rd or Plymouth Avenue/Wirth Park ^{4/} • Penn Avenue • Van White Blvd • The Interchange² 	<p><u>12 Stations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 97th Avenue • 93rd Avenue¹ • 85th Avenue • Brooklyn Blvd • 63rd Avenue¹ • Bass Lake Road • Robbinsdale¹ • North Memorial • Broadway/Penn • Penn/Plymouth • Van White Blvd • The Interchange²
Operations and Maintenance	For the alternatives that include alignment A, the OMF facility would be located at the northern end of alternative in Maple Grove on		For the alternatives that include alignment B, the OMF facility would be located at the northern end of alternative in Brooklyn Park	

Alternative	A-C-D1	A-C-D2	B-C-D1	B-C-D2
Facility (OMF) Alternatives	parcel currently within gravel mining area west of T.H. 169.		on one of two potential sites: 93 rd Ave park-and-ride or in the northwest quadrant of Winnetka Ave (CR 103) and 101 st Avenue intersection.	
Traction Power Substations	Traction Power Substations (TPSS) are proposed to be located at approximately ¾ mile – 1 mile spacing along the LRT line, with most located near LRT stations. TPSS would be located on limited access sites that are approximately 4,000 SF in size and are able accommodate a single-story building that is approximately 40 ft by 20 ft.			

¹Proposed station location where park and ride would be provided.

²Station built by others.

³ The length represents the full end to end length of the proposed alternatives. Based on direction provided during the AA study, and affirmed during the Scoping process; the alternatives evaluation will reflect full corridor analysis.

⁴ The Draft EIS will evaluate a Golden Valley Road or a Plymouth Avenue/Wirth Park station along the D1 alignment.

The proposed LRT service frequencies are summarized in **Table 4** below.

Table 4. Proposed LRT Frequencies

Day of Week	Time Period	Service Frequency
Weekday	Morning and Afternoon Peak	7.5 minutes
	Midday	10 minutes
	Evening	10 minutes
Saturday	Day	10 minutes
	Evening	10 minutes
Sunday	Day	10 minutes
	Evening	10 minutes

4.5 Alternative Not Advancing for Further Study in the Draft EIS

Following the technical analysis conducted and public input received during the Scoping process, the HCRRA determined that the BRT alternative will not be studied in the Draft EIS process.

The HCRRA decision to stop further study of the BRT alternative was consistent with the PAC recommendation to the HCRRA and the ARCC and CAC input to the PAC. The facts supporting the decision are summarized below, organized in relation to the project goals and objectives:

Goal 1: Enhance Regional Access to Activity Centers

- Forecast total ridership for BRT is 19,900 compared to 27,000 for LRT.
- Connections from BRT to other transit modes/facilities are less convenient than LRT.
- BRT would not have the capacity to handle event crowds like LRT.

Goal 2: Enhance the Effectiveness of Transit Service within the Corridor

- BRT is expected to generate approximately 1,500 fewer net new daily transit riders than LRT (Estimated Year 2030 new daily transit riders; 5,650 for BRT, 7,150 for LRT).
- BRT is expected to generate less than half as many passengers per revenue hour than LRT (Estimated Year 2030 new daily transit riders; 71 for BRT, 181 for LRT).
- Based on travel time and average speed, LRT provides higher level of daily hours of user benefits compared to BRT (Estimated Year 2030 daily hours of user benefits, 8,250 for LRT, 5,880 for BRT).

Goal 3: Provide a Cost Effective and Financially Feasible Transit System

- LRT provides relatively greater connectivity with the existing and planned transitway system due to interlining with the Blue Line (LRT) and convenient transfer to the Green Line (LRT).
- BRT is limited by single-vehicle capacity (e.g. buses cannot be linked together).
- Intersection analysis indicates that the roadway system will not be able to accommodate additional BRT vehicles beyond the assumed six-minute headways while still maintaining acceptable operations.
- 2030 ridership forecasts show that transitway demand at the maximum load point entering downtown Minneapolis during the morning peak hour exceeds the capacity of the BRT alternative.
- LRT has more flexibility to accommodate future demand following the initial investment.

Goal 4: Promote Sustainable Development Patterns

- No significant alternative differentiators under this project goal.

Goal 5: Support Healthy Communities and Sound Environmental Practices

- Preliminary traffic analyses indicate that six-minute frequencies are the maximum frequencies that can operate with signal prioritization without adversely disrupting general traffic at key high-volume intersections.
- BRT Alternative would travel to 2nd/Marquette Avenues in mixed traffic, and would add to capacity issues on the downtown street network.
- The owner of the railroad corridor for which BRT would operate in has gone on record through the Scoping Process indicating they “will not support the BRT option”.

5.0 Which Issues Will Be Addressed in the Draft EIS?

5.1 Issues Not Requiring Further Evaluation in the Draft EIS

The following issues will not be considered in the Draft EIS, because they have been determined to have no potential to be significantly affected by the proposed project.

5.1.1 Farmlands/ Agricultural

The Farmland Protections Policy Act (FPPA) of 1984 requires federal agencies to evaluate potential adverse impacts of their projects on the preservation of farmlands. Farmlands are defined by the FPPA through soil types identified by the Natural Resource Conservation Service as soils that require little modification for production of food, forage, or fiber. Farmland does not include land already in or

committed to urban development or water storage (including areas zoned for future development) and, therefore, are not subject to the Act.

Based on the location of the Bottineau Transitway project area, through areas that are in or committed to urban development, there are no farmlands as defined under the FPPA; therefore this resource requires no further evaluation in the Draft EIS.

5.1.2 Wild Scenic Rivers and Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area/ Mississippi River National River and Recreation Area

The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System was created by Congress in 1968 (Public Law 90-542; 16 U.S.C. 1271 et seq.) to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations. The Act is notable for safeguarding the special character of these rivers, while also recognizing the potential for their appropriate use and development. It encourages river management that crosses political boundaries and promotes public participation in developing goals for river protection. The state of Minnesota has a similar Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

There are no federal or state designated rivers or streams located within or near the Bottineau Transitway project area; therefore this resource requires no further evaluation in the Draft EIS.

The Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) was established in 1988 to protect the natural integrity of a portion of the Mississippi River, and includes 72 miles of the river stretching from the cities of Dayton/Ramsey to south of Hastings. The state of Minnesota's Mississippi River Critical Area (MRCA) Program works in partnership with the MNRRA Program.

The Bottineau Transitway project area lies outside of the MNRRA/MRCA district and therefore this resource requires no further evaluation in the Draft EIS.

5.2 Transportation Issues

The following transportation issues will be addressed in the EIS.

5.2.1 Transit

The Bottineau Transitway's transit service area is generally defined by the Mississippi River to the north and east, Highway 55 (Olson Memorial Highway) to the south and I-494 to the west. This area is served by several Metro Transit urban local, suburban local, and express routes; Maple Grove Transit express routes and local circulator service; and local and express routes operated by contract operators through Metropolitan Council funding.

While the Draft EIS is being prepared, detailed transit ridership forecasts will be completed to measure the improved transit access and travel time competitiveness of each of the proposed alternatives under consideration. The analysis will refine the ridership forecasting conducted in the AA, using an updated version of the Twin Cities regional travel demand model, reflecting transit ridership characteristics identified in the Metropolitan Council's 2010 Transit On-Board Survey, as well as current socioeconomic forecasts from approved municipal comprehensive plans, regional roadway network updates, and transit improvement plan updates. The Draft EIS forecasts will also use refined LRT operating assumptions, as well as corridor bus network service changes.

The **geographic extent of analysis** for transit will examine the "Bottineau Corridor" as defined the project Purpose and Need.

This analysis will be documented in a Transportation Technical Report, with a summary of the findings included in the Draft EIS.

5.2.2 Freight Rail Conditions

A large portion of the Bottineau Transitway is located within an existing freight rail corridor that is owned and operated by the BNSF Railway Company. Currently freight train operations on this track average approximately one train per day traveling on the track, but have seen as many as five trains per day during peak conditions. The existing freight rail corridor is generally 100 feet wide and includes one track that is generally located in the middle of the railroad right of way (ROW). The topography of the railroad corridor varies from being parallel to an existing roadway (CSAH 81) and generally at the same elevation as the adjacent land areas to being located in a “trench” through Robbinsdale and parts on Minneapolis, to being parallel to and traveling through wetlands, ponds, and waterways in the Bassett Creek Watershed adjacent to Theodore Wirth Park. The proposed Bottineau Transitway project would relocate the freight track approximately 25 feet west of the current alignment in order to accommodate the transitway guideway in the east half of the BNSF ROW.

The Draft EIS will address the impacts to the freight rail corridor, both during construction and operational phases of the project, for the existing freight rail corridor affected by the transitway alignments. The existing BNSF single freight track will be realigned within the existing right-of-way to accommodate the proposed transitway. The Draft EIS will assess the implications of this freight track realignment. The analysis that is performed will focus on a review of the vertical and horizontal clearance requirements to adjacent retaining wall and bridge structures as well as the proposed transit guideway, freight track access road requirements, impacts to existing siding tracks due to track relocation and construction staging.

The **geographic extent of analysis** for freight is defined as BNSF Railway Company ROW, generally 50 feet on either side of the existing freight rail track, between Brooklyn Boulevard in Brooklyn Park and T.H. 55 in Minneapolis, as currently proposed to be evaluated in the Draft EIS.

This analysis will be documented in a Transportation Technical Report, with a summary of the findings included in the Draft EIS.

5.2.3 Vehicular Traffic

Vehicular traffic patterns throughout the corridor vary due to natural topographic features, land use and development patterns and characteristics of the existing roadway network.

Traffic operations will be assessed at key locations where there were issues or concerns to determine the potential effects on the roadway network, and intersections in the project area. These assessments will be based on Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) measures of effectiveness, specifically level of service (LOS). Intersections forecast to operate at a poor level, defined by LOS E or LOS F, will be further evaluated for potential mitigation measures. VISSIM and Synchro/SimTraffic will be the primary tools used for modeling operations or movements along the transitway.

The **geographic extent of analysis** for vehicular traffic will adhere to HCM and industry standards as noted above. Generally the extent of analysis will include all signalized intersections and proposed signalized intersections along the transitway alignments.

This analysis will be documented in a Traffic Technical Report, with a summary of the findings included in the Draft EIS.

5.2.4 Non-Motorized Transportation

Pedestrian and non-motorized transportation facilities are prevalent throughout the project area, including sidewalks, single and multi-use trails, on-road bike facilities, and pedestrian bridges. These facilities vary significantly in terms of design, context, and condition.

Pedestrian and bicycle facilities that may be impacted by the project will be identified. Bicycle crossings will be tallied using parks and trails maps produced by the cities along the corridor, the Hennepin County Bicycle System Map, Three Rivers Park District Trail Plan, and the Minneapolis Bikeways: Existing, Funded, and Planned map generated by Minneapolis Public Works. The alignment drawings will be used to determine the number of impacts to existing bicycle trails. Connections to county trails, on- and off-road bike lanes, and sidewalks will be identified. Connections will be identified at the alignment level. Pedestrian crossings will be tallied using the suburban parks and trails maps used in the bicycle analysis, as well as aerial photography. All legal pedestrian crossings whether marked or implied will be analyzed.

Potential physical encroachments onto existing trail facilities will be identified and measures to avoid or minimize these impacts will be explored. If impacts cannot be avoided, trail reconstruction options will be discussed with the agency(ies) that have jurisdiction over the facility. If trail facilities also have restrictive covenants due to funds used for construction, these requirements will also be addressed. Potential indirect impacts to trail facilities, including safety concerns and visual impacts will also be identified.

Impacts to pedestrian and/or bicycle routes due to transitway crossing restrictions will be identified and alternate routes examined. Pedestrian and bicycle safety at transitway crossings and measures to improve safety will also be addressed and used to inform station area planning or other corridor activities for non-motorized facility improvements.

Pedestrian and bicycle access at station areas will be evaluated in terms of pedestrian and bicycle connections between the existing and planned sidewalk and trails system, and the location and convenience of access for transferring riders between transit system connector route service and the transitway. As an example, bus stop locations will be reviewed and may be adjusted to optimize connections. Impacts to publicly-owned recreational facilities, including parks and regional trails, will be further analyzed in the Section 4(f) evaluation.

The **geographic extent of analysis** will include a ½-mile area around alignments, with most analysis expected directly at crossings and stations where bicycle and pedestrian activity is highest.

This analysis will be documented in a Transportation Technical Report, with a summary of the findings included in the Draft EIS.

5.2.5 Parking

The Draft EIS will address the impacts of displaced parking for each of the proposed alternatives both during the construction and operational phases of the project. Parking impacts may include removal of existing on-street parking due to the proposed roadway/ guideway improvements and stations.

The Draft EIS will identify and evaluate the potential impacts associated with proposed park and ride facilities at designated stations under each of the LRT alternatives. For stations where park and ride facilities are not proposed; the Draft EIS will acknowledge the importance of further coordination with each city to identify municipal policies to address the potential for parking in surrounding neighborhoods.

The **geographic extent of analysis** for parking consists of the preliminary construction limits.

This analysis will be documented in a Transportation Technical Report, with a summary of the findings included in the Draft EIS.

5.3 Community and Social Issues

5.3.1 Land Use/ Consistency with Future Plans

Land use along the 13-mile project area consists of a variety of uses including residential, commercial, industrial, railroad corridors, and recreational open space. Issues to be specifically covered in the Draft EIS include the land use changes due to direct impacts, the compatibility of the alternatives under evaluation with both existing and planned land uses and the compatibility of the land use change with local and regional land use planning policies and sustainability goals for individual communities along the corridor.

Direct impacts will be calculated based on construction limits and presented by land use type. The compatibility with existing and planned land use will be based on the land use inventories and plans in cities' adopted comprehensive plans, as well as current planning activities, and will consider uses within a half-mile of the proposed alternatives. In addition, city plans will be reviewed in detail for policies supportive of transit-oriented development. General recommendations for city plan updates will be provided, if appropriate.

For operating phase impacts, the **geographic extent of analysis** is defined as land uses within a half mile of the proposed alternatives. A half mile radius is commonly used by transit planners to represent the distance transit users are willing to walk to access an LRT station. Construction impacts will be evaluated based on preliminary construction limits.

This analysis will be documented in a Land Use Technical Report, with a summary of the findings included in the Draft EIS.

5.3.2 Community Character/Cohesion

The proposed Bottineau Transitway crosses through six cities as well as a number of different neighborhoods within each city. These neighborhoods represent a wide diversity of character as well as varying degrees of neighborhood interaction across the proposed transitway alternatives.

The Draft EIS will identify neighborhoods along the corridor alternatives based on city plans and in consultation with local planning staff. Qualitative descriptions regarding the affected neighborhood character will be gathered, including physical characteristics, demographics, landmarks, and notable social/cultural qualities.

The Draft EIS will analyze compatibility with the affected area's city planning policies and initiatives and the overall neighborhood character. Other factors, including changes in access to affected properties and roadways, evaluating the transitway as a barrier to community cohesion, and short-term construction impacts will be analyzed.

There is a range of national studies that address the effects of transitways on adjacent properties with a range of outcomes in terms of property value impacts. Site specific conditions and market forces strongly influence the benefits and impacts a transit project can have on property values. The Draft EIS will summarize findings from national case studies, including the work by the University of Minnesota on the Hiawatha LRT, and provide a qualitative assessment based on existing conditions and the national findings for the alternatives evaluated in the Draft EIS.

The total population served by the alternatives under evaluation, as well as the transit-dependent

population (defined as zero car households) in the project area will be calculated using available data from the most recent U.S. Census and American Community Survey. Potential for economic benefit due to redevelopment at station areas will also be assessed, per section 5.3.7.

The **geographic extent of analysis** for community character/cohesion is defined as 1/2 mile on either side of the alignments currently proposed to be evaluated in the Draft EIS. Construction impacts will be evaluated based on preliminary construction limits.

5.3.3 Right-of-Way/ Relocations

It is anticipated that the Bottineau Transitway project will require the acquisition of land, and easements both during the construction and operation phases of the project

The Draft EIS will further refine the right-of-way impacts noted in Scoping and will calculate the estimated cost to acquire the property and relocate impacted residential or business structures. Concept modifications and mitigation measures necessary to offset potential adverse impacts will be identified.

The relocation potential for displaced residents and businesses will be evaluated. The proposed project will comply with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act of 1970, as amended. FTA Circular 5010.1D dated November 1, 2008, as amended, title Federal Transit Administration Grant Management Guidelines will also apply to any real estate acquisitions.

The **geographic extent of analysis** is defined as land and property within preliminary construction limits, or land adjacent to the construction limits which may be impaired or compromised in some way by the proposed action.

5.3.4 Cultural Resources

As the proposed project is receiving federal funding from the FTA, it must comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (Section 106). In addition, since the project is also using funds from HCRRA and may use State of Minnesota funds in the future Metropolitan Council, it must also comply with applicable state mandates governing cultural resources, such as the Minnesota Historic Sites Act, Minnesota Field Archaeology Act, and Minnesota Private Cemeteries Act. A Section 106 evaluation will be conducted to further analyze the impacts to known historic and archaeological resources, as well as identify other potential resources that may be impacted. Alternatives and design modifications to accommodate historical or cultural resources will be addressed in the Draft EIS.

The **geographic extent of analysis** for cultural resources is defined as an Area of Potential Effect (APE) and is developed in close coordinating with MnDOT Cultural Resources Unit (CRU). The APE for archaeology will include all areas of proposed construction activities or other potential ground disturbing activities associated with construction. Based on information currently available for the project, the APE for architectural history includes the following:

- Proposed alignments/corridors - 500 feet either side
- Stations – 0.25 mile radius
- New structures (new or replacement bridges, pedestrian bridges, etc.) – 0.25 mile radius
- Existing structures – Modification (widening/reconstruction of existing structures) – 0.25 mile radius

- Existing structures – Pier Modification (moving piers to allow LRT to go under) – 500 feet either side

The APEs may be refined as more project details are developed.

This analysis will be documented in a Cultural Resources Technical Report, with a summary of the findings included in the Draft EIS.

5.3.5 Visual/Aesthetics

The Draft EIS will assess the existing visual character including physical development, vegetation, and other natural features, visually sensitive landmarks, and views. The Draft EIS will then evaluate the potential impacts that the alternatives evaluated may have on the visual and aesthetic character of the adjacent areas. The potential project impacts on visual quality include land conversion, tree removal, traffic and parking changes, new LRT infrastructure (rail, poles, stations, signage, etc., including aesthetic compatibility), and LRT operations. Design modifications and mitigation measures necessary to offset potential adverse impacts will be identified.

The **geographic extent of analysis** for visual/aesthetic impacts will be based on field review and views at eye level. The area will not stray much from the immediate area of properties adjacent to and in visual proximity to the various project components, including track alignments, stations, park-and-rides, TPSS, new bridges, and any other infrastructure elements.

This analysis will be documented in a Visual/Aesthetics Technical Report, with a summary of the findings included in the Draft EIS.

5.3.6 Section 4(f)/6(f) - Parklands

Properties will be evaluated to determine if any lands will be affected by the project that are protected under Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act, including historic and archaeological sites, parks, and recreation, wildlife and water fowl areas.

Section 6(f) of the USDOT Act covers outdoor recreation properties planned, developed, or improved with funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON). These properties cannot be converted to other uses unless replacement land of equal fair market value and equivalent usefulness is provided.

The area, the types of amenities and services offered at these parks, as well as their significance to nearby neighborhoods will be analyzed. The Draft EIS will identify the extent of impacts to parklands and potential indirect impacts to parkland due to changes in access or parking, noise, vibration, and visual impacts. Alternatives, design modifications, or mitigation measures will be identified that are necessary to avoid or minimize the potential impacts to protected properties.

The **geographic extent of analysis** for Section 4(f)/6(f) resources is defined as those properties within, or directly adjacent to, the project construction limits.

This analysis will be documented in a Section 4(f)/ 6(f) Technical Report, with a summary of the findings included in the Draft EIS.

5.3.7 Economic Development/Redevelopment

The Draft EIS will analyze a range of potential economic benefits and impacts, including those related to improved transportation access to major activity centers, reverse commute service, business impacts involving right-of-way acquisition, displacement, traffic, parking losses, and access impacts.

Economic impacts related to construction will be identified. More quantitative information related to the potential for development and redevelopment at station areas also will be included.

The **geographic extent of analysis** for economic development/redevelopment is defined as 1/2 mile around station areas currently proposed to be evaluated in the Draft EIS.

This analysis will be documented in an Economic Development/Redevelopment Technical Report, with a summary of the findings included in the Draft EIS.

5.3.8 Public Services/ Community Facilities

The Draft EIS will include an inventory of community facilities and identify potential long-term (operations) and short-term (construction) impacts. Potential impacts to emergency services will be evaluated based on the location of emergency service facilities and input from emergency service providers.

The **geographic extent of analysis** is defined as public services and community facilities within a half mile of the proposed alternatives. This will cover direct impacts as a result of construction, and any impacts in the operational phase such as emergency vehicle routes, walking distance from facilities to stations, etc.

5.3.9 Safety and Security

Each of the proposed alternatives will be evaluated relative to safety and security of patrons using the system. Proposed design elements such as lighting, security personnel, video monitoring, and other measures to increase personal safety and security at the proposed stations will be described.

The **geographic extent of analysis** will include facilities within the construction limits of the system, and will also be closely coordinated with public services/community facilities analysis.

5.3.10 Environmental Justice

Executive Order (EO) 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low Income Populations*, dated February 11, 1994, calls on federal agencies to identify and address any disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of federal programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations. In 1997, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) published a final DOT order (DOT Order 5310.2) to establish procedures for use in complying with EO 12898 for its operating administrations including the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). This order stresses the importance of addressing environmental justice (EJ) concerns early in the development of a program, policy, or activity. It requires where relevant, appropriate, and practical, that information be obtained on the population served and/or affected, including information on race, color, or national origin and income level. It advises that steps be taken to guard against disproportionately high and adverse impacts on minority and low-income populations. FTA Circular 4702.1 *Title VI and Title VI-Dependent Guidelines for Federal Transit Administration Recipients*, published May 13, 2007, provides guidance on conducting analysis of projects to integrate environmental justice analysis into NEPA documentation for FTA projects. This guidance is in the process of being updated, as reflected in FTA Circular 4703.1 *Environmental Justice Policy Guidance for Federal Transit Administration Recipients* published in draft form on September 19, 2011.

The environmental justice analysis completed for the Bottineau Transitway Draft EIS will comply with the guidance in effect at the time the analysis is being completed. Consistent with the guidance, the following factors will be considered when determining if disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental impacts exist:

- Whether a high or substantial impact exists which adversely affects an EJ population;
- Whether effects on EJ populations exceed those borne by non-EJ populations;
- Whether cumulative or indirect effects would adversely affect an EJ population;
- Whether mitigation and enhancement measures will be taken; and
- Whether there are off-setting benefits to EJ populations.

The **geographic extent of analysis** for environmental justice is defined as 1/2 mile on either side of the alignments currently proposed to be evaluated in the Draft EIS.

This analysis will be documented in an Environmental Justice Technical Report, with a summary of the findings included in the Draft EIS.

5.4 Physical and Environmental Issues

5.4.1 Utilities

The project may require the relocation of utilities throughout the corridor in the cities of Minneapolis, Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, Brooklyn Park, and Maple Grove. There will likely be both private (gas, electric, telephone and cable systems) and public utilities (sewer and water) existing under the future transitway. In addition to the underground utilities located throughout the corridor, there is an existing Xcel Energy transmission line located in a portion of Alignment B, Alignment C, and Alignment D1 that may require relocation due to the proposed transitway improvements.

The MnDOT Utility Manual process will be followed to identify utilities that require relocation due to conflicts with the project. The project will identify potential agreements or permits from the appropriate municipalities, as necessary, for the relocation of public utilities. In the Draft EIS, utilities that are adjacent to or parallel with the proposed corridor will be evaluated to determine impacts and identify required mitigation measures, which may include utility relocation.

The **geographic extent of analysis** is defined as those utilities within, or directly adjacent to, the project construction limits.

5.4.2 Hydrology/Floodplains

Floodplain evaluation is required at the state level by the Floodplain Management Law (Minnesota Statute 103F.101 – 103F.155) and by the federal government in accordance with Executive Order 11988 Floodplain Management.

In the Draft EIS, floodplains will be evaluated in more detail to estimate the area (transverse or longitudinal) and volume of impact of the proposed work associated with the Bottineau Transitway.

A Floodplain Finding (only practicable alternative finding) will be completed if a floodplain impact is identified. This will include a statement in the final environmental document if the proposed project is likely to result in a significant encroachment to a floodplain and there is no practicable way to avoid the encroachment.

The **geographic extent of analysis** for hydrology/floodplains is defined as the area within the preliminary construction limits.

This analysis will be documented in a Water Resources Technical Report, with a summary of the findings included in the Draft EIS.

5.4.3 Wetlands

The Federal Clean Water Act (Section 404 b1 and Section 401) requires protection of wetlands under the purview of the Army Corps of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency. Similarly, Executive Order 11990, dated May 24, 1977, Protection of Wetlands, establishes a national policy "to avoid to the extent possible the long- and short-term adverse impacts associated with the destruction or modification of wetlands and to avoid direct or indirect support of new construction in wetlands wherever there is a practicable alternative." At the state level, the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act of 1991 establishes the goal of no net loss of wetlands. Additionally, standards and criteria for granting permits to change the course, current, or cross-section of public waters are outlined in Minnesota Rules Chapter 6115.0150 to 6115.0520.

Wetlands will be identified through the use of aerial photography, County soil survey maps, National Wetland Inventory data, and field review, which is consistent with the Army Corps of Engineers 1987 Manual methodology for off-site wetland boundary identification.

The Draft EIS will identify the alternatives, design modifications, or mitigation measures that are necessary to avoid or minimize the potential impacts to wetlands. The permits required for these impacts will also be identified.

The **geographic extent of analysis** for wetlands is defined as the area within the preliminary construction limits.

This analysis will be documented in a Water Resources Technical Report, with a summary of the findings included in the Draft EIS.

5.4.4 Geology/Soils/Topography

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) administers National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting for construction projects to protect soils and prevent erosion. The state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) oversees appropriation permits.

The Draft EIS will analyze the potential soil erosion for each alignment as well as the potential construction impacts and mitigation associated with construction. The findings of this analysis will be summarized in the Draft EIS.

The **geographic extent of analysis** for geology/soils/topography is defined as the area within and adjacent to the preliminary construction limits.

5.4.5 Hazardous Materials

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) oversees regulations pertaining to contaminated soil, groundwater, and waste cleanup plan approvals; petroleum underground storage tank registration and removal; and NPDES permitting. Additionally, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) regulates asbestos abatement.

The MPCA database will be reviewed through an EDR data search to inventory previously investigated properties, properties suspected of contamination, and currently enrolled cleanup sites. In the Draft EIS, each alternative will be evaluated for potential impacts and mitigation of constructing the project near these sites or potential sites containing hazardous or regulated materials. Recommendations will be developed for further Assessment (Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment) for any sites ranked as medium or high-risk contamination sites, based on existing records.

The **geographic extent of analysis** for hazardous materials encompasses a one-mile buffer around each of the proposed alternatives.

This analysis will be documented in a Contaminated Materials Technical Report, with a summary of the findings included in the Draft EIS.

5.4.6 Noise and Vibration

For the Draft EIS, the noise and vibration impact will be evaluated based on the methods and criteria defined in the FTA guidance manual "Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment" (Report FTA-VA-90-1003-06). To characterize the existing environment, ambient noise levels will be measured throughout the corridor and vibration measurements will be conducted to quantify the transmission of vibration through the ground. Reference noise and vibration levels for transit sources will be measured or estimated and the FTA models will be used to predict future levels of noise and vibration. The modeling considers details of the proposed alignment and factors such as transit operations, grade-crossing and special trackwork locations, and the effects of intervening structures or terrain. For noise, the projected future project noise levels at sensitive locations will be compared to the existing levels, and noise impacts will be assessed according to the FTA criteria. For vibration, impacts will be assessed by comparing the projected vibration levels to the FTA criteria.

The **geographic extent of analysis** for noise and vibration is based on the screening distances provided in Chapters 4 and 9 of the FTA guidance manual *Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment* (May 2006). All noise and vibration sensitive land use within the relevant screening distances will be reviewed to identify locations where impacts may possibly occur.

This analysis will be documented in a Noise and Vibration Technical Report, with a summary of the findings included in the Draft EIS.

5.4.7 Biological Environment

The governing regulations that aim to protect the biological environment include: Federal laws include Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, and the comparable state endangered species act. Minnesota statutes also provide for the conservation of certain native habitats by controlling weeds (Minnesota Noxious Weed Law 18.76-18.88).

The Draft EIS will present information on vegetation and wildlife communities, which will be compiled from field reviews, existing literature, and environmental regulatory agencies. General plant communities and their associated wildlife habitat along the corridor will be identified and described based on information collected and input from the DNR and Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. Potential habitat for federal and state species listed as endangered, threatened, or species of special concern within the project area will also be identified. Each of the proposed alternatives will be evaluated based on potential impacts to these communities in coordination with federal, state, and local agencies. The analysis will be conducted in accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act for any listed species identified as impacted. Analysis of potential impacts to other wildlife will also be provided, including potential bald eagle nesting sites. The findings of this analysis will be summarized in the Draft EIS.

The **geographic extent of analysis** for terrestrial and aquatic environments that could serve as general habitat for wildlife is defined as the area contained within the limits of construction for each of the alternatives that will be evaluated in the Draft EIS. The geographic extent of analysis specifically for threatened and endangered species included a record search area of a one mile radius from the project corridor.

This analysis will be documented in a Biological Environment Technical Report, with a summary of the findings included in the Draft EIS.

5.4.8 Water Quality/ Stormwater

The project study area crosses up to four Watershed Management Organization (WMO) boundaries: Mississippi, Bassett Creek, Shingle Creek, and West Mississippi. Each has its own policies for managing storm water for a linear transportation corridor. A Preliminary Drainage Report will be completed for the proposed project addressing the storm water and erosion control practices of the applicable watersheds. The objective of the analysis will be to identify and document water quality issues relating to compliance with the Clean Water Act, and other federal, state, and local regulations that address surface water runoff.

The **geographic extent of analysis** for stormwater is defined as within the construction limits identified for each alignment alternative to determine stormwater requirements, surface waters on and adjacent to the project, groundwater within and immediately adjacent to the project and receiving waters located adjacent to the project. This extent will also include impaired waters that are located within one mile of, and will receive discharge from, the project.

This analysis will be documented in a Preliminary Drainage Technical Report, with a summary of the findings included in the Draft EIS.

5.4.9 Air Quality

Consultation with the MPCA will occur to determine if air quality modeling is required for the Bottineau Transitway and what methodologies and assumptions will be used if modeling is required. At this time, it is anticipated that regional air quality modeling may be required and that CO modeling will be performed if intersections with high levels of traffic congestion and delay are identified through traffic operations analysis.

The **geographic extent of analysis** for air quality is defined as roadways and intersections along the alignments currently proposed to be evaluated in the Draft EIS and potentially affected by proposed transit service. Intersections expected to operate at poor level of service in the traffic evaluation will be selected for detailed air quality analysis.

This analysis will be documented in an Air Quality Technical Report, with a summary of the findings included in the Draft EIS.

5.4.10 Energy

Changes in regional energy consumption resulting from the project will be reported in the Draft EIS. The analysis results will be reported in British Thermal Units (BTUs) per mile as calculated from the vehicle miles traveled (VMT) reported for each alternative by the Twin Cities Regional Travel Demand Model. Energy consumption factors will be based on estimates of average energy consumption rates used for federal Section 5309 New Starts Criteria.

The **geographic extent of analysis** for energy includes anticipated changes in travel patterns and bus operations within the various alternatives proposed for study in the Draft EIS. The focus is on direct energy use—the energy consumed in the operation of vehicles including autos, buses, and trucks.

5.4.11 Construction-Related Impacts

Short-term impacts of the proposed project to the surrounding environment resulting during construction will be evaluated and will include: traffic and circulation disruption, business and economic disruption, park disruption, construction equipment noise and ground-born vibration, dust

dispersal, storm water discharge, erosion and sedimentation, utility relocations and disruptions, and public health and safety factors.

The **geographic extent of analysis** for construction-related impacts will be limited to the preliminary construction limits.

Construction methods for the project will be described to the extent known. Mitigation measures for potentially significant impacts will be formulated in the respective technical reports or issue sections of the Draft EIS, with a summary of all construction impacts included in this section of the Draft EIS.

5.5 Financial Considerations

Financial considerations will include the evaluation of capital and operating/maintenance costs for each of the alternatives studied as part of the Draft EIS. These costs will be developed and refined utilizing information that is developed as part of the environmental and technical evaluation that is performed in the Draft EIS. Alternative costs will be evaluated to determine the cost effectiveness and cost competitiveness for FTA New Starts funding. The following provides a summary of the methodology that will be used to develop the capital and operating/maintenance costs.

5.5.1 Capital Costs

Capital cost estimates will be prepared to provide an overall project cost for the alternatives identified to move forward into the Draft EIS technical analysis. These cost estimates will be prepared using the format and procedures currently required for project evaluation by FTA. The FTA methodology includes the use of standard cost categories (SCC) which groups costs by various components such as guideway, stations, operations and maintenance facilities, site work, signalization, and communications systems, right-of-way acquisition and vehicles. Also included will be “soft costs or professional/ technical services” for items such as engineering, construction services, insurance, and owner’s costs, as well as contingencies for uncertainty in both the estimating process and the scope of the project. Allocated and unallocated contingencies will be applied to compensate for unforeseen items of work, quantity fluctuations, and variances in unit costs that develop as the project progresses through the various stages of design development.

5.5.2 Operation and Maintenance Costs

Operating and maintenance (O&M) cost estimates are important in the planning process for New Starts projects because design-year projections are one of the inputs required to determine New Starts measures of cost effectiveness. An O&M cost model estimates the annual cost to operate, maintain, and administer a transit system for a given set of service indicators. O&M costs are expressed as the annual total of employee earnings and fringe benefits, contract services, materials and supplies, utilities, and other day-to-day expenses incurred in the operation and maintenance of a transit system.

In general, steps of the O&M cost estimating process are:

- Develop methodology for estimating O&M costs
- Develop appropriate cost model(s) to evaluate alternatives
- Calibrate the model for current year operations
- Generate operating plans and statistics for each study alternative
- Estimate annual transit operating and maintenance costs for each study alternative

5.5.3 Sources of Funding

Capital Funding

Funding for the Bottineau Transitway will come from a variety of sources. The federal funding source for large capital transit projects is typically Section 5309 New Starts funding; this funding program is a competitive process with other projects throughout the country.

The following is the anticipated split in capital funding for the project:

- Federal New Starts – 50 %
- State of Minnesota – 10 %
- Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB) – 30%
- Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority – 10%

Operating Funding

Operating funds for the Bottineau Transitway are anticipated to come from CTIB and the State of Minnesota. After accounting for fare revenues, the net operating cost would be paid 50 percent CTIB and 50 percent State of Minnesota.

5.6 Cumulative Impacts and Indirect Effects

Appropriate past and present projects within the general project area will be addressed in the existing conditions or background analysis conducted for each resource. The potential future projects may include other planned transit and transportation projects that operate near the project, and local development projects such as: the Interchange Project, the Target North Campus development, Maple Grove Gravel Mining Area/Arbor Lakes development, and master plan, County Road 103 (West Broadway) and CSAH 81 reconstruction projects, and the Theodore Wirth Park master plan. An assessment will be made within each of the issue areas relative to potential cumulative and indirect effects of the defined projects to the Bottineau Transitway alternatives.

5.7 Which Permits are Needed to Complete the Project?

Table 5 presents the potential permits and approvals required for the Bottineau Transitway. This table will be refined as the analysis is completed for each of the alternatives under evaluation in the Draft EIS.

Table 5. Preliminary Project Permits and Approvals

Permit/ Decision	Jurisdiction
Federal Approvals	
Record of Decision	Federal Transit Administration
Section 4(f) Determination	Federal Transit Administration
Section 106 Programmatic Agreement (PA) or Memorandum Of Agreement (MOA)	Federal Transit Administration, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
Section 404 Wetland Permit	US Army Corps of Engineers

Permit/ Decision	Jurisdiction
Minnesota State Approvals	
Section 106 Programmatic Agreement (PA) or Memorandum Of Agreement (MOA)	State Historic Preservation Office
Right-of-way Permit	Department of Transportation
National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit	Pollution Control Agency
Section 401 Water Quality Certification	Pollution Control Agency
Public Waters Wetland Permit	Department of Natural Resources
Water Appropriation Permit	Department of Natural Resources
Hazardous Materials Management Plan	Pollution Control Agency
Noxious Weed Management Plan	Department of Agriculture
Local Approvals	
EIS Adequacy Determination	Metropolitan Council
Building Permits	Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Golden Valley, Maple Grove, Minneapolis, Robbinsdale
Sediment and Erosion Control Permits	Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Golden Valley, Maple Grove, Minneapolis, Robbinsdale, Mississippi Watershed Management Organization, Bassett Creek Watershed Management Organization, Shingle Creek Watershed Management Commission, and West Mississippi Watershed Management Commission
Wetland Conservation Act Permit	Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Golden Valley, Maple Grove, Minneapolis, Robbinsdale Mississippi Watershed Management Organization, Bassett Creek Watershed Management Organization, Shingle Creek Watershed Management Commission, and West Mississippi Watershed Management Commission

6.0 How is the Public Involved?

6.1 Scoping Process

The initiation of the EIS for the Bottineau Transitway project began with a formal Scoping process (See Section 1.1 of this Document).

The Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS on the proposed Bottineau Transitway was published on Tuesday, January 10th, 2012 in Vol. 77, No. 6 of the Federal Register (See Appendix B). In addition, the Notice of Availability (NOA) of the Bottineau Transitway Scoping Booklet, Scoping Open Houses, and Interagency meeting was published in the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board Monitor on December 26, 2011, which began the scoping period under the state environmental review requirements. The formal scoping comment period extended from December 26, 2011 to February 17, 2012. The Scoping Booklet was provided to all parties required under MEPA; as well as members of the Bottineau Transitway project committees and other interested stakeholders on the project mailing list. The project committees include the Advise, Review and Communicate Committee (ARRC), the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), and the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC).

ARCC Members are technical staff from agencies convened to advise project development. The ARCC provides advice regarding the local governmental perspectives, issues of concern, technical methodologies, and study process details. The ARCC is comprised of staff from Hennepin County; the cities of Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Golden Valley, New Hope, Maple Grove, Minneapolis, Osseo, and Robbinsdale; Maple Grove Transit; the Metropolitan Council, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, and project consultants.

CAC members represent communities, in the Bottineau Transitway study area. CAC members provide a conduit for integrating the values and perspectives of citizens, and communities, into the study process.

PAC members are elected officials, key policy leaders for participating agencies, business leaders, and institutional leaders, convened to review and advise on policy decisions during the development of the Bottineau Transitway project.

The Scoping Booklet was posted on the project website, and hard copies provided to libraries and community centers in the project area.

6.1.1 Scoping Booklet

The Scoping Booklet for the Bottineau Transitway answered questions and presented information on the following subjects:

- What is the Bottineau Transitway?
- What would be built as part of the Bottineau Transitway project?
- Why is an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) necessary? How long will the process take?
- What is Scoping?
- Why Build the Bottineau Transitway? What benefits will it provide? (Project Purpose and Need)
- What previous studies apply to Scoping?
- What alternatives are being considered?
- How will the alternatives be evaluated?
- How many alternatives will be analyzed in the Draft EIS?
- What is the difference between the alternatives identified at the end of the Scoping process for further study in the Draft EIS and the locally preferred alternative?
- Why does an LPA need to be identified before the EIS analysis has been completed?

- What types of issues will be covered in the Draft EIS?
- How can I voice my opinion in the process?
- How will my comments be used? Will they make a difference?
- What does the Scoping Decision Document tell us?
- What happens after Scoping? Can I still be involved?

Copies of the Scoping booklet are available on the project website at www.bottineautransitway.org. A copy of the booklet is included in Appendix B.

6.2 Public Involvement Plan and Events

6.2.1 Overview of the Public Involvement Plan and Coordination Plan

Public Involvement Plan (PIP)

The Bottineau Transitway PIP describes strategies for encouraging public input and describes opportunities to be provided to the public to encourage early and ongoing involvement in the project development process. As required by SAFETEA-LU Section 6002, the public was able to provide specific input on the purpose and need and the range of alternatives during the Scoping phase, and will be invited to provide comments on the Draft EIS during a formal document review period. The PIP identifies key stakeholders and defines the roles of decision-making and advisory bodies, and identifies communication methods, and frames sequencing for public involvement activities.

Coordination Plan

Section 6002 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU 6002) requires the lead agencies to establish a plan for coordinating public and agency involvement during the environmental review process.

The purpose of this Plan is to define the process by which the HCRRA in coordination with the FTA and the Metropolitan Council will communicate information about the Bottineau Transitway EIS to agencies and the public, and how input from agencies will be solicited and considered.

In addition, the intent of the Plan is to ensure the timely and efficient development of technical information, review of technical information by stakeholders, and the timely availability of input for decision-making throughout the process. The Plan will be updated periodically (summer and late fall 2012) to reflect adjustment to the technical scope of work refinements and results, stakeholder input, and schedule adjustments that occur over the course of the project.

6.2.2 Scoping Meetings

Scoping Open Houses

The content of the Scoping booklet was discussed at four public Scoping Open Houses and one Interagency Scoping meeting. The Scoping meetings were held to gain input on the purpose and need for the project, the alternatives proposed for further study, and the issues to be addressed in the Draft EIS. Formal public Scoping open houses occurred as follows:

Scoping Open House #1:
 Monday, January 23rd
 4:30 to 6:30 PM
 Theodore Wirth Chalet
 1301 Theodore Wirth Parkway, Minneapolis

Scoping Open House #3:
 Wednesday, January 25th
 5:30 to 7:30 PM
 Urban Research and Outreach/Engagement
 Center (UROC)
 2001 Plymouth Avenue N, Minneapolis

Scoping Open House #2:
 Tuesday, January 24th
 6:00 to 8:00 PM
 Brooklyn Park City Hall
 5200 85th Avenue N, Brooklyn Park

Scoping Open House #4:
 Tuesday, January 31st
 6:00 to 8:00 PM
 Robbinsdale City Hall
 4100 Lakeview Avenue N, Robbinsdale

Table 6 provides the number of attendees for each meeting.

Table 6. Open House Meeting Attendance

Location of Open House	Date	Attendees*
Theodore Wirth Chalet	January 23, 2012	127
Brooklyn Park City Hall	January 24, 2012	44
Urban Research and Outreach/Engagement Center	January 25, 2012	47
Robbinsdale City Hall	January 31, 2012	165
Total	--	383

* Number of people who signed the sign-in sheet

Interagency Meeting

Government agencies were invited to an interagency Scoping Meeting on January 19th in St. Paul. A summary of the Interagency Meeting is included in Appendix C.

7.0 Summary of Comments

This section provides a summary of public comments received during the Scoping period for the Bottineau Transitway Draft EIS. Copies of the comments received are included in Appendix B.

Comments Received during the Scoping Process

Open house attendees were encouraged to provide input on the purpose and need for the project, the alternatives proposed for the study, and the project impacts or benefits that should be evaluated or any other areas of interest or concern. Comments were received in the following formats:

Comment forms: Interested individuals were invited to submit written comments on comment forms provided at the Scoping open houses. Scoping comment forms were provided along with the Bottineau Transitway Scoping Booklet (See Appendix B).

Verbal statements: A court reporter was available at each open house to record verbatim statements. One verbal statement was given via a phone call and recorded in an email message.

Written statements: Interested individuals were invited to submit written comments. Written statements could be submitted in letter format or submitted electronically to the project manager or the project e-mail address. Comments were also received by city officials and forwarded for inclusion in the scoping input. In addition to comments from the general public, written statements were also received from the following municipalities, agencies, and organizations: City of Crystal, City Brooklyn Park, City of Robbinsdale, City of Golden Valley, City of Maple Grove, City of Minneapolis, Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board, Metropolitan Council’s Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, Shingle Creek Watershed Management Commission, Bassett Creek Watershed Commission, West Broadway Business and Area Coalition, Transit for Livable Communities, Alliance for Metropolitan Stability, North Loop Neighborhood Association, Harrison Neighborhood Association, ISIAAH, BNSF Railway, and the Bottineau Transitway Community Advisory Committee (CAC).

Table 7, 295 comments were received through February 17, 2012. Of these, 84 written comments and 45 verbal comments were received at the Scoping open houses. The balance was received by mail or e-mail prior to the end of the comment period and one person commented by phone. A few individuals provided comments using more than one format (e.g., email and comment form), or submitted comments to more than one recipient (e.g., project website and the city council).

Table 7. Summary of Comment Types

Type of Comment	Number
Comment forms submitted at open houses	84
Verbal statements received at open houses	45
Additional comments	166
Total	295

A detailed summary of the comments received during the Scoping process is included in Appendix B.

8.0 Scoping Comments and Responses

8.1 AGENCY AND CITY COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Each letter or email message from a responding agency or governmental unit during the Scoping process is addressed below. The specific section, as defined in the Scoping Decision Document, that will address the referenced comment is also provided for referral.

From: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Twin Cities ES Field Office
4101 American Blvd East
Bloomington, MN 55425-1665

Biological Environment – Section 5.4.7

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Comment: Although the USFWS indicated that there are no known eagle nests within the action area, it was noted that existing data may not be current. If Alignment D1 continues as a viable option, eagle nest surveys should be incorporated in the EIS for any forested areas planned for development. The surveys should be performed a few years prior to construction. If eagle nests are identified, construction timetables should be designed to do much of the work outside the eagle nesting season or outside a 660 foot buffer from the nest.

Response: Updated information regarding eagle nest locations will be reported in the Draft EIS. If Alignment option D1 is selected as the Preferred Alternative, an eagle nest survey will be conducted and protective measures identified if required.

Wetlands – Section 5.4.3

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Comment: The USFWS noted the potential for wetland impacts along Theodore Wirth Park (D1) and would like to see a detailed discussion of anticipated wetland impacts and mitigation to such impacts in the alternatives analysis for the Draft EIS. Moving the Golden Valley Station from Golden Valley Road to Plymouth Avenue also has the potential for wetland impacts. Alignment alternatives should avoid or reduce wetland impacts to the greatest extent practicable.

Response: Assessment of anticipated wetland impacts will be discussed in the Draft EIS.

From: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)
520 Lafayette Road North
St. Paul, MN 55155-4194

Water Quality/Stormwater – Section 5.4.8

MPCA Comment: If the project will disturb a total of one acre or more of land, a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System/State Disposal System (NPDES/SDS) Construction Stormwater Permit (CSW) is required from the MPCA. A detailed Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), containing stormwater management requirements both during and post construction, as well as erosion control and sediment control requirements during construction, must be prepared prior to submitting a CSW Permit application.

We recommend you check the current listing of impaired waters on the MPCA Inventory of Impaired Waters located on the MPCA website. We recommend you utilize the MPCA Special Waters and Impaired Waters Search mapping tool to identify special or impaired waters located near proposed projects. Certain impairments will dictate additional increased stormwater treatment both during construction and require additional increased permanent treatment post construction.

Any project that will result in over 50 acres of disturbed area and has a discharge point within one mile of special or impaired water is required to submit their Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) to the MPCA for a review at least 30 days prior to the commencement of land disturbing activities. The MPCA encourages the project proposer to meet with staff at preliminary points to avoid issues with the terms and conditions of the General Permit.

If a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Section 404 Individual Permit is required for any project-related wetland impacts, an MPCA Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 401 Water Quality Certification or waiver must also be obtained as part of the permitting process. The Section 401 Water Quality Certification ensures that the activity will comply with the state water quality standards.

Response: It is anticipated that a NPDES/SDS will be required for any of the Build Alternatives. Impaired waters will be identified in the Draft EIS. If indicated, a SWPPP would be prepared prior to construction. Anticipated Section 404 and Section 401 requirements will be identified in the Draft EIS.

Hazardous Materials – Section 5.4.5

MPCA Comment: Efforts should be made prior to construction to determine if and where any petroleum or other contamination is likely to be encountered. It is the responsibility of the project sponsor to complete the project safely through any areas of contamination and to properly manage any contaminated soil that is excavated during the project.

Response: Environmental site assessments would be completed by the project sponsor and management plans, if required, would be developed in later stages of project development. A preliminary assessment of potential contaminated and hazardous materials will be completed and results reported in the Draft EIS.

From: Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission (BCWMC)
7800 Golden Valley Road
Golden Valley, MN 55427

Hydrology/Floodplains – Section 5.4.2

BCWMC Comment: There is a potential for filling within the Bassett Creek floodplain (generally within Wirth Park and in Grimes Pond/North Rice Pond). The BCWMC will not allow filling within the BCWMC-established floodplain without mitigation.

Response: Analysis of floodplain impacts and potential mitigation measures, if required, will be discussed in the Draft EIS.

Water Quality/Stormwater – Section 5.4.8

BCWMC Comment: The project has the potential to significantly increase the amount of impervious surface in the Bassett Creek watershed. Alignment D1 in particular would increase the impervious surface close to the creek. This will result in increased runoff rates if not controlled. Best management practices (BMPs) must be implemented to ensure flood profiles are not increased along Bassett Creek.

The BCWMC strongly encourages the County to implement BMPs to treat transitway runoff to ensure that the project does not increase pollutant-loading to adjacent water bodies. The BCWMC expects the project design to include stormwater treatment and erosion control measures that will reduce the amount of phosphorus and sediment carried by stormwater runoff to Bassett Creek. The BCWMC also expects the County to consider measures to minimize the amount of increased impervious surfaces resulting from the project. Additional pollutants of concern to the BCWMC include chloride from road salting, fuel, oils, metals, and construction runoff that could enter storm drains and downstream water resources. Adequate permanent and temporary construction BMPs must be implemented as part of the project.

The Draft EIS should describe the maintenance measures the County proposes to undertake to ensure the effectiveness of stormwater management features. The Draft EIS should also identify the

parties responsible for inspections, the parties responsible for maintenance, and the inspection and maintenance schedules.

Temporary and permanent BMPs must be implemented to control construction and post-development runoff from the site and erosion.

Response: *Stormwater rate control and treatment as well as erosion control measures will be assessed in the Draft EIS for all Build Alternatives. Temporary (during construction) and permanent BMPs will be identified as well as inspections and maintenance procedures.*

Wetlands – Section 5.4.3

BCWMC Comment: The BCWMC wetland goal is to achieve no net loss of wetland in the Bassett Creek watershed in conformance to the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) and associated rules. Minneapolis and Golden Valley are the local governmental units (LGUs) responsible for administering the WCA in their cities; BCWMC is the LGU for Robbinsdale.

Response: *Assessment of anticipated wetland impacts, as well as measures to avoid and/or minimize wetland impacts will be discussed in the Draft EIS.*

From: Shingle Creek Watershed Management Commission
3235 Fernbrook Lane
Plymouth, MN 55447

Water Quality/Stormwater – Section 5.4.8 Wetlands – Section 5.4.3

Shingle Creek Watershed Management Commission Comment: The engineer from the Shingle Creek Watershed Management Commission provided an update regarding rule revisions that will probably affect the transitway project by the time it is submitted to the Commission for project review. Below is a list of points that may affect the project:

- The volume management standard will probably change from retaining a 0.5” storm off of impervious surface to 1.0” storm.
- The project threshold may change from five acres to something less. The project is probably well in excess of the existing size threshold.
- A soil management standard that will require a top soil and compost mix in turf areas to a depth of one foot.
- There are wetlands along the corridor and the Commission is the LGU for Crystal and Brooklyn Park.

Response: *The impact of any changes to Bassett Creek Watershed District rules will be considered in project design.*

From: City of Brooklyn Park
5200 85th Avenue North
Brooklyn Park, MN 55443-4301

Light Rail Transit – Sections 4.2 and 4.4

City of Brooklyn Park Comment: The City of Brooklyn Park supports continuing study of the B and D1 alignments. The City is also supportive of continuing study of light rail transit (LRT) as the preferred transit mode.

Response: *Alignments B and D2 will be further evaluated in the Draft EIS (See HCRRA Scoping Decision Resolution, May 8, 2012). The proposed BRT alternative defined in the Scoping Booklet will not be studied further in the Draft EIS.*

From: City of Crystal
4141 Douglas Drive
Crystal, MN 55422

Purpose and Need – Sections 3.1 and 3.2

City of Crystal Comment: Provided the Locally Preferred Alternative is the C alignment, the City finds that the proposed Transitway will provide enhanced connections and an additional transit alternative to access jobs, school, health care, activity centers, and areas of high growth. The C alignment will also respond to the region's increasing traffic congestion, address the needs of transit-dependent populations, and offer express transit service to urban and suburban destinations.

Response: *Each of the LRT alternatives advanced for further study in the Draft EIS includes Alignment C.*

Light Rail Transit – Section 4.2 and 4.4

City of Crystal Comment: From a local perspective, the City Council supports Alignment C because it minimizes crossings at roadways and signalized intersections, offers reasonable opportunities for station siting, requires no additional right-of-way aside from station and parking areas, and provides a station within the City's most significant concentration of existing shopping and employment. From a system-wide perspective, the City Council finds that the preferred alignments for further study should be A-C-D1 and B-C-D1. Alternatives that include the D2 alignment should not be carried forward for further study because travel times would be sacrificed, the alignment has significant technical challenges associated with operating a transitway in a largely residential area on arterial streets with relatively narrow existing right-of-way, would require many property acquisitions, and duplicates existing bus service in contrast to the D1 alignment.

Response: *Each of the LRT alternatives advanced for further study in the Draft EIS include Alignment C. Alignment D2 will also advance for further evaluation in the Draft EIS as there were comments received specific to further study (See HCRRA Scoping Decision Resolution, May 8, 2012).*

Light Rail Transit – Sections 4.2 and 4.4 **Bus Rapid Transit – Sections 4.2 and 4.4**

City of Crystal Comment: The City Council prefers that both LRT and BRT be studied further because of the significant difference in capital costs between the two modes.

Response: *The BRT alternative will not be advanced for further study in the Draft EIS (see Section 4.5 for evaluation findings supporting this decision).*

Noise and Vibration – Section 5.4.6

City of Crystal Comment: Transitway operations will increase the frequency of noise above the baseline within the rail alignment through Crystal, particularly at crossings (Bass Lake Road, Corvallis, and West Broadway). Transitway operations will increase the frequency of vibrations above the baseline within the rail alignment through Crystal.

Response: *Noise and vibration impacts, including noise generated from warning devices as well as transit vehicles, will be assessed in the Draft EIS.*

Vehicular Traffic – Section 5.2.3

City of Crystal Comment: Traffic control devices must offer protection at transitway crossings without compromising the integrity and capacity of the local streets and county systems.

Response: *Proposed traffic control devices and resulting impacts to the adjacent street systems will be discussed in the Draft EIS.*

Station Location and Operation – Sections 4.2 and 4.4

City of Crystal Comment: Neither park-and-ride nor kiss-and-ride lots are contemplated currently for the Crystal station. The lack of such parking or drop-off facilities suggests that the Crystal station will serve walk-up riders only, which is not a realistic expectation. The lack of such facilities will compromise pedestrian safety and pose traffic/pedestrian conflicts as riders are dropped off and picked up on adjacent roadways. The safety of pedestrians and non-motorized traffic must be protected. In addition, pedestrian access to the proposed Bass Lake Road station requires safe crossing of Bottineau Boulevard, Bass Lake Road, and the rail line.

Response: *Impacts to, and safety of, pedestrians and non-motorized traffic will be discussed in the Draft EIS.*

City of Crystal Comment: The siting of the Crystal station at a location between 56th Avenue North (Bass Lake Road) and Wilshire Boulevard is dependent upon various considerations that must be taken into account, including adjacent opportunities for redevelopment, visual prominence, traffic delays at nearby roadway crossings, and noise impacts on adjacent residential properties.

Response: *Visual impacts, traffic operations, and noise impacts will be discussed in the Draft EIS.*

From: City of Golden Valley
7800 Golden Valley Road
Golden Valley, MN 55427

Light Rail Transit (LRT) – Sections 4.2 and 4.4 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) – Sections 4.2 and 4.4

City of Golden Valley Comment: The City has received feedback from several of its commissions as well as residents of the community. In general, most comments pertain to concerns related to impacts that the D1 alignment would have to natural areas of the city and impacts to surrounding properties. It appears that the D2 alignment would serve a larger population and provide a greater opportunity for economic development.

Response: *Both Alignments D1 and D2 will be further evaluated in the Draft EIS. The Draft EIS evaluation will include an assessment of potential impacts to parklands, habitat, and natural*

resources. Additionally, the analysis will address potential right of way impacts, economic development potential and refined ridership forecasts, by proposed station.

Section 4(f)/6(f) - Parklands – Section 5.3.6

City of Golden Valley Comment: Alignment D1 is proposed to be located within and adjacent to Theodore Wirth Regional Park, Mary Hills Nature Area, and Glenview Terrace Park. The Comprehensive Plan for the City establishes clear goals that provide protection of these natural areas. The City requests that it be involved in all decisions that impact the parks.

Response: Potential environmental impacts to Theodore Wirth Regional Park and other area parklands including wetlands, floodplains, wildlife, and ecosystems will be studied further in the Draft EIS. Potential impacts to recreational uses in Theodore Wirth Regional Park and other area parklands (including observation of wildlife and trail impacts) will be studied further in the Draft EIS. Park and trail impacts will also be assessed in conjunction with Section 4(f) of the Transportation Act and conversion of use clauses associated with parks funding sources. The City of Golden Valley as well as other jurisdictional authorities will be involved in these assessments.

Carbon Footprint

City of Golden Valley Comment: The City is interested in “the comparison between the carbon footprint associated with building a transit facility in a natural area versus the carbon footprint that would be associated with increased transit usage as a result of the Bottineau Transitway”.

Response: The environmental costs (impacts) and the transportation benefits for all alternatives will be included in the Draft EIS. Specific topics of interest in response to this comment will be Energy, Air Quality, Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), and Biological Environment.

Hydrology/Floodplains – Section 5.4.2

City of Golden Valley Comment: Any impacts to floodway or floodplain must be mitigated in accordance with the laws and policies of the regulating agencies. The City recognizes that mitigation within the existing railroad corridor will be challenging, and it encourages the County to work closely with the Bassett Creek Watershed Management commission (BCWMC) and its member cities to identify potential flood storage outside of the railroad right-of-way.

Response: Analysis of floodplain impacts and identification of potential mitigation measures, if required, will be coordinated with the appropriate agencies.

Wetlands – Section 5.4.3

City of Golden Valley Comment: Wetland impacts will need to be mitigated in accordance with the laws and policies of the regulating agencies. The City of Golden Valley is the local government unit responsible for administration of the Wetland Conservation Act. The County is encouraged to work with its local partners to identify potential mitigation solutions outside the railroad right-of-way.

Response: Assessment of anticipated wetland impacts, as well as measures to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate wetland impacts will be coordinated with the appropriate agencies and local partners.

Water Quality/Stormwater – Section 5.4.8

City of Golden Valley Comment: The transitway project will need permits or approvals from all agencies regulating stormwater, including but not limited to the City, BCWMC, and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. At a minimum, best management practices addressing erosion and sediment control will need to be implemented during construction. It is possible that rate control and stormwater treatment that reduces pollutants is required, especially with the development of a transit station, park and ride facility, BRT, or other impervious surface.

Response: Stormwater rate control and treatment as well as erosion control measures will be assessed in the Draft EIS for all Build Alternatives. Temporary (during construction) and permanent BMPs will be identified as well as inspections and maintenance procedures.

Biological Environment – Section 5.4.7

City of Golden Valley Comment: The natural areas located within the D1 alignment are home to a vast array of wildlife. Care should be taken to avoid impacts to the habitat and travel ways of all wildlife, including endangered, threatened, or special concern species. The City Council requires more specific information about the location of fencing along Alignment D1, as well as what type of fencing would be used. Movement of wildlife through the natural areas may be impeded by certain types of fencing. If fencing along the route is a requirement, the City Council would like to know if there are ways in which to waiver from the requirement.

Response: Impacts to wildlife, including barriers to wildlife movement, will be discussed in the Draft EIS. If wildlife movement is found to be adversely affected as a result of the Build Alternatives, potential mitigation measures will be identified.

Cultural Resources – Section 5.3.4

City of Golden Valley Comment: The City states that the project corridor will need to be studied for the presence of historic and cultural resources. The historical significance of Theodore Wirth Chalet should also be considered in this study. The City requests to be contacted if archaeological resources are discovered.

Response: Cultural Resource studies, including identification of historic properties and archaeological sites eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and Native American burial grounds as well as assessment of impacts to identified sites will be conducted as a part of the EIS. Results of cultural resource studies will be made available to the City.

Light Rail Transit – Sections 4.2 and 4.4 **Bus Rapid Transit – Sections 4.2 and 4.4**

City of Golden Valley Comment: Both potential station locations for Alignment D1 (Golden Valley Road and Plymouth Avenue) would require the acquisition of property owned by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.

Response: Acquisition of parkland for any of the Build Alternatives will be identified as part of the Section 4(f) evaluation to be included in the Draft EIS.

City of Golden Valley Comment: The City would like more detailed information about how buses would be incorporated into the station areas, including the amount and frequency of feeder buses

servicing the stations, and information about how bus drop-off and pick-up would function at the stations.

Response: *Further information regarding operation of “feeder buses” to the Bottineau Transitway will be provided in the Draft EIS.*

City of Golden Valley Comment: The City would like more detailed information about how parking would be studied to function at the station locations, as well as potential costs that area associated with parkland acquisition for parking. The City would like to know how many parking spaces would be necessary at each location and whether or not parking ramps are being considered for the sites. If there were to be insufficient onsite parking at station locations, and transit riders park on the surrounding streets, an access and traffic management plan should be considered as part of the project.

Response: *Proposed park-and-ride facilities at station locations will be addressed in the Draft EIS as well as potential impacts to neighborhood parking resulting from transitway users. If adverse impacts are identified, potential mitigation measures will be discussed.*

City of Golden Valley Comment: Current land use and zoning controls that are currently in place at the proposed station location sites do not allow parking that is not associated with park uses. To allow for parking to be constructed, changes to land use and zoning controls would need to be made by the City Council. If the County moves forward with the study of Alignment D1, the City requests that funding be made available to allow for planning studies, which include consideration for parking options.

Response: *The Draft EIS impact evaluation will include an assessment of the alternatives consistency with approved local and regional planning documents. On-going coordination activities will take place with the City of Golden Valley throughout the development of the Draft EIS, including by not limited to the City’s involvement on the ARCC and PAC*

City of Golden Valley Comment: The trip generation for the proposed station or a future park-and-ride facility may result in the need to modify, enhance, or expand the nearby transportation system, which includes roads, trails, and sidewalk facilities. It is expected that the County would partner with the appropriate road authority to address and mitigate any traffic concerns.

Response: *If roadway impacts resulting from the proposed project are identified, potential mitigation measures will be identified, and further refined and evaluated in the Final EIS and the Preliminary Engineering phase.*

Non-Motorized Transportation – Section 5.2.4

City of Golden Valley Comment: Sidewalks currently serve both station locations. The existing sidewalk system will require upgrades and/or expansion to meet accessibility design requirements and the needs of the community. It is expected that this would be accomplished as part of the site access evaluation and implementation. The City owns and maintains concrete sidewalks on both sides of Golden Valley Road (CSAH 66) at the intersection of the proposed transitway. In addition, Three Rivers Park District has identified the Golden Valley Road corridor for the proposed Bassett Creek Regional Trail that would connect French Regional Park and the Medicine Lake Regional Trail to Wirth Regional Park and the trails along the Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway. This network of trails and sidewalks would require year-round maintenance, especially for accessibility purposes, for LRT or BRT to succeed in this multi-modal transportation area.

Response: *Proposed pedestrian and non-motorized transportation access to station areas, as well as impacts to trails and other pedestrian and non-motorized transportation facilities will be discussed in the Draft EIS. ADA compliance will be included in this discussion.*

City of Golden Valley Comment: The City owns and maintains an asphalt trail near the BNSF Railway in the Mary Hills Nature Area. This trail provides an important north-south connection from Golden Valley Road north into Robbinsdale via Sohacki Park. It is anticipated that a new transitway may impact this trail and the City requires that it be actively involved with any reconstruction or realignment of this trail.

Response: *If City facilities require relocation or realignment as a result of the project, mitigation or replacement measures would be coordinated with the City and documented in the Draft EIS.*

City of Golden Valley Comment: The costs to reconstruct Golden Valley Road and the existing multi-modal facilities, in addition to any facilities necessary to fully meet the anticipated needs, must be considered in the evaluation of the potential station location.

Response: *As part of the Draft EIS evaluation, potential impacts associated with the proposed LRT alignment and station locations will be assessed, including potential impacts to surrounding roadways and bridges.*

Community Character/Cohesion – Section 5.3.2

City of Golden Valley Comment: There is information that addresses property value impacts for properties located adjacent to transit station locations. However, there is no comparable data that demonstrates impacts to properties along the transitway with no convenient access to a station. Data should be provided that show how the transitway would impact single family residential properties along the corridor.

Response: *There is a range of national studies that address the effects of transitways on adjacent properties with a range of outcomes in terms of property value impacts. Site specific conditions and market forces strongly influence the benefits and impacts a transit project can have on property values. The Draft EIS will summarize findings from national case studies, including the work by the University of Minnesota on the Hiawatha LRT, and provide a qualitative assessment based on existing conditions and the national findings for the alternatives evaluated in the Draft EIS.*

Noise and Vibration – Section 5.4.6

City of Golden Valley Comment: While current and possible future freight rail traffic creates noise, it is different from constant and consistent noise associated with a regional transit system. BRT and LRT may yield different noise and vibration levels in surrounding neighborhoods and these effects should be studied in greater detail.

Response: *Noise and vibration impacts, including noise generated from warning devices as well as transit vehicles, will be assessed in the Draft EIS.*

Visual/Aesthetics – Section 5.3.5

City of Golden Valley Comment: The potential transitway and transit station will have a visual impact on surrounding properties. Most notably will be the addition of lights and lighting that does not exist with the current freight rail. The effects of lighting should be studied and the screening of adjacent neighborhoods and park areas should be considered as part of this project. The City would also like to

have more information about the presence of potential sound walls and other barriers that may cause visual obstructions to surrounding properties.

Response: *Visual impacts analysis included in the Draft EIS will include an assessment of light impacts as well as other visual intrusions. Current design standards require illumination of proposed station platforms. If adverse effects are identified, potential mitigation measures, including screening, will be considered. Design standards for past LRT projects that have been constructed in the Twin Cities have not required that the entire trackway be illuminated. Trackway illumination will be required at all at-grade roadway crossing locations and where safe vehicle stopping distance exceeds night visibility for operating speed. If noise mitigation measures are proposed, the visual impacts of any potential mitigation measures identified (including noise walls) will be evaluated.*

Public Services/Community Facilities – Section 5.3.8

City of Golden Valley Comment: The proposed transitway and transit stations would likely require an increase in community resources such as police, fire, public works maintenance, and traffic management. Since the proposed transit system is managed by the Metropolitan Council, it is anticipated that Metro Transit Police will be the primary law enforcement agency at the station.

Response: *As part of the project development process, a Bottineau Transitway Safety and Security Plan will be required and developed. Through the development of this Plan, Metro Transit will work directly with each of the communities along the proposed Transitway.*

Utilities – Section 5.4.1

City of Golden Valley Comment: The City owns water main, sanitary sewer, and storm sewer facilities in the area of the proposed route. Some of these facilities cross under the existing BNSF track. Record drawings and other information are available in the City's engineering office to assist in the planning and design of the project. The City requests that it be consulted on all design and construction considerations and field decisions involving City-owned utilities.

The City owns a 48-inch water main that passes under the BNSF track north of Golden Valley Road and Metropolitan Council Environmental Services owns a large sanitary sewer interceptor that parallels the BNSF track in Wirth Park. The City requests that it be consulted along with the custodial agency on all design and construction considerations and field decisions involving these utilities.

The County's project consultant estimated that as many as 15 Xcel Energy transmission line towers may need to be relocated as a result of the proposed transitway. The City's Right-of-Way Management Ordinance currently requires that any proposed reconstruction, relocation, or replacement of overhead utility lines over 300 feet be buried underground. This code requirement may apply to this situation.

Response: *Utility impacts will be evaluated and discussed as part of the Draft EIS. As the project moves into future design phases, the utility owner will be consulted on the proposed design and construction of the impacted utilities throughout the corridor and determination of applicable code requirements.*

Geology/Soils/Topography – Section 5.4.4

City of Golden Valley Comment: Many areas of Golden Valley have substandard soils that are unsuitable for construction without proper correction or engineering. A good portion of the transitway corridor through Golden valley is located within floodplain, lowland, or wetland areas. In addition,

there are areas in Golden Valley that were found to be filled with construction debris or hazardous materials. The City requests that a careful and detailed analysis of the soils be included as part of the project.

Response: *The project team is aware of soil concerns in this area. A detailed geotechnical and environmental analysis will be conducted to assess cost and/or mitigation measures needed to address soil conditions.*

From: City of Maple Grove
12800 Arbor Lakes Parkway North
P.O. Box 1180
Maple Grove, MN 55311

Light Rail Transit (LRT) – Sections 4.2 and 4.4
Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) – Sections 4.2 and 4.4

City of Maple Grove Comment: The City of Maple Grove supports forwarding on for review the A-C-D1, A-C-D2, B-C-D1, and B-C-D2 alignments as they can help meet the needs and purpose outline in the Scoping Study.

Response: *The four LRT alternatives referenced in the City's comment have been advanced for further study in the Draft EIS.*

City of Maple Grove Comment: If the alignment of the transitway is located in the right-of-way of a future Arbor Lakes Parkway, the line should be located on the north side of the street and not be center running.

Response: *The project team has been working with the City of Maple Grove staff to address their concerns on a center-running versus side-running alignment. The Draft EIS will outline the specific advantages and concerns of each option and will be coordinated with City staff.*

City of Maple Grove Comment: If a Bottineau Transitway route alignment is located in Maple Grove, either upon initial start-up of transit operations or after start-up of operations to maximum not to exceed 30 years, renders the Maple Grove Transit Station located at 12350 Main Street North to be obsolete of its current designated transit use, Hennepin County will bear the cost to decommission the facility. Furthermore, while the City of Maple Grove will retain ownership of the parcel, it will not be responsible to pay back any pro rata share of Federal, State or metropolitan Council grants to purchase land and to construct the Maple Grove Transit Station due to failure to maintain capital asset for designated purpose for 50 years.

Response: *Bus service is still anticipated to be provided from the Maple Grove Transit Station regardless of which alternative is selected. Coordination with the Metropolitan Council will occur during the Draft EIS to confirm no issues will be encountered with the funding for this facility.*

City of Maple Grove Comment: The City's affirmation of support for this project does not in any way obligate current or future City of Maple Grove funds to be used for the construction and/or operation of the Bottineau Transitway.

Response: *See Section 5.5, Financial Evaluation.*

From: City of Robbinsdale
4100 Lakeview Avenue North
Robbinsdale, MN 55422

Purpose and Need – Sections 3.1 and 3.2

City of Robbinsdale Comment: The Transitway will provide enhanced connections and an additional transit alternative to access jobs, schools, housing healthcare, activity centers, and areas of high growth for Robbinsdale and adjacent cities. The Transitway will also respond to increasing traffic congestion offer residents express transit service to urban suburban destinations, and provide economic development opportunities for downtown Robbinsdale.

Response: *The City's comments speak to the Bottineau Transitway's Purpose and Need Statement.*

Light Rail Transit (LRT) Sections 4.2 and 4.4

City of Robbinsdale Comment: The City supports LRT for the C-D1 alignment.

Response: *Four LRT alternatives are advancing for further study in the Draft EIS, including those alternatives with a C-D1 alignment.*

Noise and Vibration – Section 5.4.6

Vehicular Traffic – Section 5.2.3

Visual/Aesthetics – Section 5.3.5

City of Robbinsdale Comment:

There are specific items that will require study for the C-D1 alignment:

- Impact of increased noise and vibration due to BNSF track being moved closer to properties on the west side of the railroad right-of-way;
- Noise and vibration impacts and loss of privacy to adjacent residential properties and possible methods to mitigate these impacts;
- Specific study is required on loss of privacy, noise and vibration impacts in locations where the LRT tracks are elevated (such as north of County Road 9) and homes near the railroad right-of-way;
- Specific study is required of the impact (specifically noise and vibration) on several residential dwelling units that will be as close as 35 feet from the presumed relocation of the freight railroad tracks and the addition of two light rail tracks and several dwellings including one high-density residential building (Windsor Court Apartments) that will be 25 feet from the closest set of light-rail tracks and what mitigation efforts are needed;
- Study of these impacts is especially necessary because the very close proximity of the above mentioned homes to the relocated freight and new LRT tracks and the impact has not been experience elsewhere in the metro area on the Hiawatha LRT;
- Study of the crossing at 39-1/2 Avenue North for mitigation of noise caused by signal controls and impacts on the neighborhood traffic if the crossing is not closed;
- Impacts to the natural/quiet character of the park as a result of the movement, noise and vibration [Triangle, Lee, Sochacki, and South Halifax parks are located in Robbinsdale];
- Traffic delays/congestion caused at crossings with preemption particularly at County Road 9 and 42nd Avenue North with a variety of bus (school, metro mobility, etc.) traffic required to stop at crossing in addition to stops for transit traffic crossings and methods to mitigate these impacts; and

- Study of the impact of park-and-ride demand at and near the Hubbard Marketplace transit station is needed. This parking will have a significant impact on traffic and could have an impact on available surface parking essential to the nearby compact downtown, which already depends on shared parking.

There are also items that will require study for the D2 alignment:

- Impacts caused by noise, vibration, vehicular traffic, and parking in the areas south of 36th Avenue;
- Impacts of increased noise, vibration, and traffic resulting from a new LRT crossing at France Avenue North and Oakdale Avenue North;
- Movement, noise, vibration and visual impact to adjacent properties including several dwelling units that will be 45 feet from the center of the tracks;
- Impacts to aging foundations of homes built in the 1920s caused by the LRT lines only 45 feet away and by the construction of the rail lines;
- Impacts on vehicle traffic on Bottineau Boulevard, West Broadway, and Victory Memorial Parkway.

Response: *All of the above concerns will be addressed in the Draft EIS analysis. Specific areas of concern have also been noted, and will be considered during the impact evaluation conducted as part of the Draft EIS.*

Hydrology/Floodplains – Section 5.4.2

Wetlands – Section 5.4.3

City of Robbinsdale Comment:

Additional items that will require study for the D1 alignment:

- Impact on drainage in the post-developed BNSF right-of-way; and
- Wetland mitigation and floodplain compensating storage requirements will be required for the construction for the light rail lines in the floodplain.

Response: *Drainage, wetland and floodplain impacts, as well as potential mitigation measures with be studied in the Draft EIS.*

Community and Social Issues – Section 5.3

City of Robbinsdale Comment:

Additional items that will require study for the D2 alignment:

- Impacts on North Memorial Medical Center;
- Impacts on the neighborhood south of 36th Avenue that will become fragmented and isolated as a result of the closure of local street crossings in Robbinsdale and the new LRT line;
- The difficulty of emergency access through “bottlenecks” resulting from local street closings;
- Dislocation/relocation of affected property owners/tenants. The 34th Avenue alignment directly affects at least 13 dwelling units and significantly affects more than twice that number; and
- Impacts and disruption to neighboring residential and commercial properties during the construction process.

Response: *–The D2 alignment through this segment of Robbinsdale will receive further study during the Draft EIS.*

Safety and Security – Section 5.3.9

City of Robbinsdale Comment: Study of the D2 alignment should include safety at controlled crossings, particularly for pedestrians and safety for individuals that may not cross at controlled crossings.

Response: *Pedestrian safety will be studied in the Draft EIS.*

Capital Costs – Section 5.5.1

City of Robbinsdale Comment: Study of the D2 alignment should include costs associated with acquisition of right-of-way, mitigation, and construction.

Response: *All project-related costs will be included in preliminary cost estimates.*

From: City of Minneapolis
350 South 5th Street
Room 203
Minneapolis, MN 55415

The following comments on the scope of issues and alternatives to be studied in the Draft EIS reflect the extreme difficulty that the City has in supporting either of the alignment alternatives through Minneapolis: D1, which bypasses the neighborhoods in north Minneapolis and D2, which while promising some economic development, divides, and in other ways negatively impacts the neighborhoods in north Minneapolis. The City made five recommendations, which are detailed below:

City of Minneapolis Comment: The City of Minneapolis recommends that the Draft EIS include an analysis of the distribution of the project's benefits relative to the transit-dependent, minority, and low-income communities in the corridor for the D1 alignment.

Response: *The Draft EIS will include a quantitative evaluation of the distribution of transportation benefits relative to transit-dependent populations using available zero-car household indicators in the regional travel demand model. The Environmental Justice section of the Draft EIS will also include a qualitative assessment of the distribution of benefits relative to minority and low-income populations.*

City of Minneapolis Comment: The City also recommends that, separate from the Bottineau Transitway project, the Twin Cities region pursue arterial transitway improvements (streetcar or rapid bus) and transit-oriented development initiatives on one or more arterial streets in north Minneapolis, potentially including West Broadway Avenue, Penn Avenue North, and Emerson/Fremont Avenue North.

Response: *Metro Transit and Hennepin County supported the city's recent application for federal funding to help cover the costs of an alternatives analysis (AA) of the West Broadway corridor. The West Broadway AA will examine several alternatives (i.e. current service, "rapid bus," and streetcar, among others) for a final recommendation on what is best to move forward with for future implementation. Additionally, Metro Transit has had conversations with the city about further study of both Penn and Emerson/Fremont avenues for "rapid bus" improvements. These were not included in the original 11 corridors studied, but an initial analysis indicated that they would be strong candidates for study.*

City of Minneapolis Comment: The City of Minneapolis recommends that the Draft EIS include an evaluation of the benefits and costs of including stations at both Golden Valley Road and Plymouth Avenue along the D1 alignment.

Response: *Both the Golden Valley Road and Plymouth Avenue stations will be further evaluated in the Draft EIS. Based on Regional Transitway Guidelines specific to station spacing, the LRT Alternatives which include the D1 alignment will consider Golden Valley Road or the Plymouth Avenue station. If during the Draft EIS evaluation process, it is determined that one the stations would not be feasible to construct, that decision will be noted, and the level of evaluation included in the Draft EIS could be at a potentially lesser level of detail.*

City of Minneapolis Comment: The City of Minneapolis recommends that the Draft EIS evaluate the impacts of the transitway and associated roadway design on pedestrian safety along Highway 55 and identify safe and convenient pedestrian infrastructure improvements.

Response: *Potential impacts to pedestrian safety and measure to improve safety will be discussed in the Draft EIS.*

City of Minneapolis Comment: The City of Minneapolis recommends that the Draft EIS evaluate alternative Target Field station location options and/or pedestrian access improvements for the BRT alternative that provide more convenient access to Target Field and the Interchange than the proposed Border Avenue station.

Response: *The BRT alternative is not advancing for further evaluation in the Draft EIS.*

From: Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board (MPRB)
2117 West River Road
Minneapolis, MN 55411-2227

Light Rail Transit – Sections 4.2 and 4.4

MPRB Comment: The MPRB supports the Bottineau Transitway and a light rail transit plan for it. Specifically, the MPRB supports the D2 alignment because it believes it presents the greatest opportunities for urban revival, economic development, strong ridership, and transportation equity in north Minneapolis and therefore is the only legitimate option. The MPRB opposes the D1 alignment because it believes it presents great potential for significant impacts to current and potential natural resources, parkland, and recreation opportunities it is entrusted to protect.

Response: *The Draft EIS will include an impact evaluation of both Alignments D1 and D2, and will include an evaluation of the referenced issue areas.*

MPRB Comment: If the D1 alignment is selected for inclusion in the Draft EIS, the MPRB recommends inclusion of the Golden Valley Road and Plymouth Avenue stations in the analysis. While it is understood that only one would be built if the alignment is chosen, it is critical that both are fully evaluated.

Response: *Both the Golden Valley Road and Plymouth Avenue stations will be further evaluated in the Draft EIS. Based on Regional Transitway Guidelines specific to station spacing, the LRT Alternatives which include the D1 alignment will consider Golden Valley Road or the Plymouth Avenue station. If during the Draft EIS evaluation process, it is determined that one the stations*

would not be feasible to construct, that decision will be noted, and the level of evaluation included in the Draft EIS could be at a potentially lesser level of detail.

Cultural Resources – Section 5.3.4
Section 4(f)/6(f) - Parklands – Section 5.3.6

MPRB Comment: Theodore Wirth Regional Park and Wirth Memorial Parkway Regional Trail are part of the MPRB's Grand Rounds. The Grand Rounds is considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The D1 and D2 alignments will need to be assessed to ensure significant historic characteristics of the Grand Rounds are preserved.

Response: Impacts to properties listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places will be assessed in the Draft EIS.

MPRB Comment: Theodore Wirth Park is part of the Metropolitan Regional Park system. The proposed station at either Golden Valley Road or Plymouth Avenue requires land currently owned by the MPRB. As such, loss of park acreage due to Alignment D1 or potential station locations will require a thorough review of original property deeds and current Metropolitan Council policies related to disposition of regional parklands. If it is determined that the Transitway project is required to replace MPRB land that is taken for the project, the MPRB will require that the replacement land be free and clear of environmental concerns and suitable for park use.

Response: Park and trail impacts will be assessed in conjunction with Section 4(f) of the Transportation Act and conversion of use clauses associated with parks funding sources.

MPRB Comment: The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's Ordinance PB-5 outlines bus transportation restrictions on MPRB parkways. Therefore, it is critical that the projected ridership does not assume that bus routes on MPRB parkways are added to increase ridership at proposed stations for the D1 or D2 alignment.

Response: The ridership forecasts are based on an operating plan that assumes bus service is extended between north Minneapolis and Robbinsdale using a segment of Victory Memorial Parkway between 42nd Avenue North and Lake Drive. However, due to the presence of alternate routes in the vicinity, the assumption of bus service on the MPRB parkway is not critical to the ridership forecast. The location of bus service in the neighborhood will continue to be refined as the Bottineau Transitway project proceeds and requirements for supporting bus service will be discussed in the Draft EIS.

Non-Motorized Transportation – Section 5.2.4

MPRB Comment: Currently, a path exists along the eastern edge of Theodore Wirth Regional Park. This is an important route for the community through the park. It is the MPRB's intent to restore and retain a trail in this area. It is critical that this be included in design development, if the D1 alignment is selected.

Response: The impact evaluation and development of proposed mitigation measures under the D1 alignment will address the existing path along the eastern edge of Theodore Wirth Regional Park. On-going coordination with the MPRB will take place during the Draft EIS evaluation process.

MPRB Comment: Currently, the Highway 55 underpass along the D1 alignment is used by pedestrians, bikers, and skiers. As a critical segment of the Luce Line Regional Trail and the winter

cross-country ski trails, it is essential that this area continue to be passable by trail users. Additionally, the available space needs to accommodate ski trail grooming equipment.

Response: *The current D1 alignment does not impact the portion of the Luce Line Regional Trail that passes under Highway 55.*

Section 4(f)/6(f) - Parklands – Section 5.3.6
Biological Environment – Section 5.4.7

MPRB Comment: A portion of the D1 alignment parallels the eastern boundary of Theodore Wirth Regional Park. The increased frequency of LRT or BRT travel in addition to current rail services along this segment is expected to increase the barrier between the community and Theodore Wirth Regional Park, create a significant barrier for wildlife near Bassett Creek, and permanently and significantly alter the passive recreation opportunities on the eastern side of the park. Therefore, if the D1 alignment continues to move forward, it is critical that this impact to parkland, wildlife, and recreation be identified and addressed in future corridor consideration, environmental assessments, and design development.

Response: *Impacts to wildlife, wildlife movement, as well as passive and active recreational activities in Theodore Wirth Regional Park will be addressed in the Draft EIS.*

Hydrology/Floodplains – Section 5.4.2

MPRB Comment: The D1 alignment would have significant floodway and floodplain impacts. The master planning for Theodore Wirth Regional Park that is currently in progress is addressing multiple recreation, habitat restoration and ecosystem protection goals and interests. Due to these goals and interests, it is not expected that the park will be able to accommodate floodway or floodplain mitigation for the transit project.

Response: *As part of the Draft EIS evaluation, potential impacts and mitigation measures specific to floodplains and floodways will be assessed and identified. HCRRA will continue to coordinate with the MPRB during the Draft EIS evaluation process on this, and other potential park specific concerns.*

Biological Environment – Section 5.4.7

MPRB Comment: The median of Highway 55 is the site of a previous Arbor Day event. It was planted with disease resistant elms by the MPRB. Mitigation for removal of any trees along this corridor will be expected by the MPRB.

Response: *Effects to vegetation will be assessed and potential mitigation measures, if appropriate, will be discussed in the Draft EIS.*

8.2 CITIZEN AND ORGANIZATION COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Some of the respondents presented more than one issue or concern. Similarly, many comments were similar in nature. As a result, the comments summarized below include all of the comments received from the general public. The following comments are grouped and summarized by issue. Each comment includes the number of respondents who addressed the issue in their comment.

In addition to comments received from the general public, responses were received from the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, BNSF Railway, the Bottineau Transitway Community Advisory Committee and

the Metropolitan Council Transit Accessibility Advisory Committee (TAAC). Their comments precede the issues and concerns offered by the general public.

Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe

Comment: The letter from the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe stated that they could not comment on the project without maps detailing the route of the Bottineau Transitway in Minneapolis, Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, Brooklyn Park, and Maple Grove.

Response: *Additional information will be provided as appropriate.*

BNSF Railway

Comment: The letter from BNSF Railway indicated that the Operations and Engineering departments have reviewed Hennepin County's proposal to operate a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system immediately adjacent to the BNSF trackage on the Monticello Subdivision. After reviewing the proposal, BNSF will not support the BRT option.

Response: *The BRT alternative will not be advanced for further study in the Draft EIS.*

Bottineau Transitway Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

Comment: The CAC has a strong preference for LRT because it is seen as the best transit mode to serve the long-range needs of the corridor. The CAC favors Alignment B over Alignment A because it has near term emerging needs. The CAC favors Alignment D1 over Alignment D2 because it is considered preferable from a system-wide perspective.

Response: *HCRRA, serving as the RGU under the state environmental review process passed a Scoping Decision resolution on May 8, 2012. The resolution identified the No- Build, TSM and four LRT alternatives (A-C-D1, A-C-D2, B-C-D1 and B-C-D2) for further consideration. The BRT alternative will not advance for further study in the Draft EIS.*

Comment: The CAC also provided an extensive list of impacts and benefits that need to be addressed in the Draft EIS. In general, the CAC's suggestions are similar in content to those expressed by the general public.

Response: *The Draft EIS will examine a wide range of potential social and environmental impacts resulting from the project. The CAC will be involved in the development of the Draft EIS in response to community concerns.*

Metropolitan Council TAAC

Comment: The BRT does not appear to provide direct service to neighborhoods in North Minneapolis. Additionally, if BRT advances, carefully consider whether wheelchairs need to be secured on a BRT vehicle, and if so, how to secure wheelchairs effectively and very efficiently to minimize transit travel time.

Response: *HCRRA, serving as the RGU under the state environmental review process passed a Scoping Decision resolution on May 8, 2012. The resolution identified the No- Build, TSM and four LRT alternatives (A-C-D1, A-C-D2, B-C-D1 and B-C-D2) for further consideration. The BRT alternative will not advance for further study in the Draft EIS.*

Comment: Carefully consider the inclusion of park-and-ride at stations, they may not be needed in neighborhoods with high numbers of zero car households.

Response: *The Draft EIS will include the identification and assessment of stations that are proposed to include park-and-ride facilities.*

Comment: Carefully consider economic development potential in the selection of the locally preferred alternative.

Response: *The Draft EIS will include an evaluation of economic development/redevelopment potential associated with the proposed alternatives.*

Comment: The TAAC requests that a TAAC member be named to one of the project advisory committees to advise on accessibility for people with disabilities, if the Bottineau project proceeds into preliminary engineering. The TAAC also requests a meeting with Hennepin County Public Works ADA Title II specialist during preliminary engineering.

Response: *The TAAC's request for participation on an advisory committee and meeting with Hennepin County (noted above) at the time the project advances to the preliminary engineering phase has been noted, and will be considered at the referenced stage in the project.*

Comment: If commuter bus service is assumed in the Baseline alternative, consider how to provide paratransit service that complements the commuter bus service so this kind of connecting transit service is available to people of all ages and abilities.

Response: *Section 4.4 of this document includes a description of the proposed Baseline/TSM Alternative transit facilities and routes. During the Draft EIS phase of the project, further refinement and evaluation to the Baseline/TSM Alternative will occur.*

Summary of General Comments, by Issue Area represented in Scoping Decision Document

Social and Economic Impacts and Relocation

Many comments (70) indicated concern about decreases in property values and increases in taxes as a result of the proposed transitway.

Response: *There is a range of national studies that address the effects of transitways on adjacent properties with a range of outcomes in terms of property value impacts. Site specific conditions and market forces strongly influence the benefits and impacts a transit project can have on property values. The Draft EIS will summarize findings from national case studies, including the work by the University of Minnesota on the Hiawatha LRT, and provide a qualitative assessment based on existing conditions and the national findings for the alternatives evaluated in the Draft EIS.*

Other comments expressed concern about impacts to homes/businesses and stated the importance of minimizing impacts to properties and providing appropriate compensation.

Response: *Impacts associated with the removal of homes and businesses will be studied in the Draft EIS including relocation options for residents and businesses currently occupying the acquired properties, cost impacts to the project, and impacts to municipal tax bases resulting from the acquisitions. Potential disproportionate and adverse effects on low-income and minority populations resulting from the acquisitions will be studied in compliance with the Order on Environmental Justice.*

Many comments (30) related to social impacts expressed concerns about the importance of providing affordable, accessible, and equitable transportation to low-income and minority residents so that they

can have access to financial opportunities (jobs), educational opportunities, health services, and healthy food alternatives.

Response: *These concerns are among the key benefits anticipated with the Bottineau Transitway project as stated in the project Purpose and Need. These benefits will be further explored during the Draft EIS phase of the project.*

A total of 18 comments noted the importance of the transitway in spurring economic development, business investment, and revitalization in north Minneapolis and Brooklyn Park.

Response: *Redevelopment opportunities and overall economic impacts will be studied in the Draft EIS.*

Wagner's Drive In

Three individuals who attended the open house in Brooklyn Park noted the importance of avoiding impacts to *Wagner's Drive-In*.

Response: *Wagner's Drive-In is located on West Broadway Avenue, just west of the BNSF tracks and north of Interstate 694. Potential impacts, direct or indirect, of the Bottineau Transitway project will be further assessed in the Draft EIS.*

ADA Accessibility

One individual expressed concern for ADA accessibility, specifically mentioning the need to ensure access to people at the Courage Center.

Response: *The project acknowledges that ADA accessibility is of particular interest at the Golden Valley station on the D1 alignment, which is proposed to be located below street level and is proximate to the Courage Center. As the project advances to preliminary engineering, the design will meet ADA and other accessibility requirements.*

Visual Impacts

Five comments expressed concern with aesthetic impacts as a result of the Bottineau Transitway project.

Response: *Aesthetic impacts associated with construction of the Bottineau Transitway will be assessed as part of the Draft EIS.*

Emergency Services

Three comments expressed concern about impacts to emergency services.

Response: *Impacts to emergency services, including, but not limited to, emergency vehicle access to North Memorial Medical Center will be assessed as part of the Draft EIS.*

Noise and Vibration

Numerous comments (55) expressed concerns about noise and vibration impacts (during construction and during operation) and the need to mitigate them. Comments expressed concerns about noise generated by the train whistle and the arm of the crossing guard, vibration damage to foundations, health impacts, impacts to children and pets, and noise affecting quality of life (e.g., loss of peacefulness, inability to sleep).

Response: Noise and vibration impacts, including noise generated from warning devices as well as transit vehicles, will be assessed in the Draft EIS.

Traffic, Congestion, and Accessibility

Many comments (25) identified concerns regarding increases in congestion and traffic.

Response: Impacts to traffic operations both within the Bottineau Transitway corridor and on intersecting and adjacent roadways will be analyzed in the Draft EIS.

Safety, Security, and Crime

Numerous comments (22) expressed concerns about safety for neighborhood children, trail users, pedestrians crossing the tracks, and commuters using the transitway. Five comments mentioned concerns about increases in crime to their neighborhoods as a result of the transitway.

Response: Design of the Bottineau Transitway system in any of the Build Alternatives will seek to optimize safety for users of the Transitway and pedestrians and vehicles intersecting and adjacent to the Transitway. Security measures and operational procedures will also be considered, including best practices of security through crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED).

Parking

A total of 14 comments expressed concerns about parking.

Response: Proposed park and ride facilities will be identified in the Draft EIS as well as potential impacts to neighborhood parking resulting from transitway users. If adverse impacts are identified, potential mitigation measures will be discussed.

Parks and Trails

A total of 38 comments expressed concerns related to recreational (e.g., safety and disruption of peacefulness/tranquility) and environmental (e.g., wildlife, wetlands, vegetation, etc.) impacts to parkland. Theodore Wirth Regional Park, Mary Hills Nature Area, and Sochacki Park were specifically mentioned. Concerns regarding Triangle Park and Lee Park were also expressed.

Response: Potential impacts to Theodore Wirth Regional Park and other area parklands including wetlands, floodplains, wildlife, and ecosystems will be studied further in the Draft EIS. Potential impacts to recreational uses in Wirth Park and other area parklands (including observation of wildlife and trail impacts) will be studied further in the Draft EIS. Park and trail impacts will also be assessed in conjunction with Section 4(f) of the Transportation Act and conversion of use clauses associated with parks funding sources.

Construction Impacts

One comment specifically noted that construction would disrupt access to Highway 100 from Golden Valley Road for the house north of the Church of St. Margaret Mary. Another comment expressed concern that transitway construction will create traffic problems and generate noise.

Response: Construction impacts including traffic disruption and construction noise will be assessed in the EIS.

Transit Operations

Eight comments and suggestions were made regarding transit operations. A dozen comments stressed the importance of maintaining a system of “feeder buses” to provide access to transit stations.

Response: *Potential changes to local transit operations including connecting bus network provisions for each of the Build Alternatives will be discussed in the Draft EIS.*

Eight comments reflected a general need to run the transitway in corridors where the greatest number of residents and businesses can be served.

Response: *Ridership is a key component of determining alignments and station locations for the project. Project planners will seek to optimize ridership in consideration of project costs, operations, equipment costs, and social-environmental impacts. A comprehensive discussion of anticipated ridership for each of the Build Alternatives will be presented in the Draft EIS.*

Station Locations

A total of 15 comments addressed station locations. Comments addressed dissatisfaction with some station locations and also suggested locations for additional stations/stops. Specific comments noted that North Memorial station is too far from the hospital, the Golden Valley and Plymouth stops are inaccessible for many people, and that the stops on Alignment D2 are too far apart for an elderly person to walk.

Response: *Decisions regarding the number and locations of transit stops provided on a Transitway require careful balancing of the number of potential riders and destinations accessed at a station location against the travel time impacts incurred by each stop, which are disincentives to ridership. Physical constraints and other impacts to transit operations must also be considered. Further consideration of the number and locations of Transitway stations will be given as engineering proceeds and will be reported for each Build Alternative in the Draft EIS. Each alternatives consistency with the Regional Transitway Guidelines, February 2012 will also be assessed relative to proposed station locations.*

Cultural Resources

Three comments mentioned historic or archaeological resources including the Terrace Theater in Robbinsdale and a Native American burial ground on the D1 alignment.

Response: *Native American burial grounds, historic properties, and archaeological sites that are listed or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places will be identified as part of the Draft EIS. An assessment of impacts to the identified sites will be conducted.*

Project Cost

A dozen comments addressed concerns about the cost of the project, cost to taxpayers, use of “scarce public funds,” transitway subsidies, and the likelihood that the transitway will not be able to support itself solely with fares.

Response: *See Section 5.5, Financial Evaluation.*

Data Assumptions

Four comments challenged the accuracy of statistics for population and employment growth. The data accuracy for senior population growth and their use of public transit as a segment of the population who depend on transit was also questioned.

Response: Ridership modeling discussed in the Draft EIS will be based on the most current demographic information (current and projected) available. Although it's true that the majority of Metro Transit customers are riding to work or school, a small but steady portion of their riders - about 4% - are over the age of 65. Recently published data from Metropolitan Council forecasters indicates that senior populations will more than double by the year 2030. As these trends unfold, meeting the needs of this population will become increasingly critical.

Public Engagement Process

Six comments addressed the public engagement process, indicating that not enough has been done to involve the community members.

Response: Opportunities for public involvement have been provided throughout the Alternatives Analysis and Scoping phases of the Bottineau Transitway Project (See Section 6.6). Project development advisory committees include a CAC consisting of corridor community representatives, which has met consistently through project development to advise the process, an ARCC committee, and a PAC. Project staff have also worked with other local groups including the Northside Transportation Network (NTN) to address project concerns. Project outreach has included press releases, radio interviews, newspaper articles, posters, and project materials in community gathering places (city halls, libraries, community centers, and churches). The project also maintains an up to date project website, which include information on upcoming meetings, project documents, and Frequently Asked Questions. As part of the Scoping process, a project video was also prepared and presented at each of the Scoping meetings. Additionally, HCRRA and Metropolitan Council are working closely with the Corridors of Opportunity engagement groups specifically located and involved in the Bottineau Transitway project. Suggestions for improving community outreach will be considered and implemented as resources allow.

Environmental Impacts – Multiple Sections

A total of 40 comments expressed concerns about environmental impacts, many of which were associated with Alignment D1. Comments expressed concerns about negative impacts to natural resources (e.g., wetlands, floodplains, vegetation, wildlife and habitat, ecosystems, etc.). Many comments specifically noted concerns about environmental impacts to resources in Theodore Wirth Park, Mary Hills Nature Area, and Sochacki Park. Several comments mentioned concerns about light pollution and pollution in general.

Response: Environmental impacts identified in Sections 5.1 through 5.7 of this document will be analyzed and discussed in the Draft EIS.