



Community Advisory Committee

May 9, 2016



Today's Topics

- Safety & Security: MTPD
- Hwy 81 Pedestrian Crossings at Bass Lake Rd & 63rd Ave
- Noise Walls
- Design Updates:
 - § Traction Power Substations (TPSS) & System Elements
 - § Golden Valley Road/Theodore Wirth Park Intersection Update
- Met Council Press Releases
- 2016 Outreach Overview
- Meeting Schedule





Metro Transit Police



Mike Johnson

Lieutenant - Metro Transit Police

West Command





Metro Transit Police



Established by MN Legislature in 1993

State Statute 473.407

2008 Statute verbiage changed to expand jurisdictional authority.

MISSION STATEMENT

Protecting our community through innovation and problem solving.

METRO TRANSIT POLICE CORE VALUES

- INNOVATION
- PARTNERSHIPS
 - ETHICS
- DIVERSITY-
- EDUCATION-





Metro Transit Police



- Sworn police officers - blended force of 200 officers
 - § 109 Full-time
 - § 77 Part-time
 - § 11 Community Service Officers

- Protecting the Transportation needs of:
 - § 90,000,000 Passengers Per Year
 - § 1,400 Bus Operators
 - § 910 Buses
 - § 100 Light Rail Vehicle Operators
 - § 75 Light Rail Vehicles
 - § 24 Northstar Engineers/Conductors
 - § 8 Locomotives / 18 Passenger cars
 - § 8 Facilities
 - § 90 Cities
 - § 8 Counties
 - Hennepin, Ramsey, Anoka, Dakota, Scott, Washington, Carver and Sherburne





Full Time Officer Academy





Part Time Officer Academy







Officer Deployment



- Squad Assignments
- Foot Beats
 - § St. Paul and Mpls
 - § Bike Officers
- Teams
 - § Bus
 - § Light Rail
 - § Northstar
- 7th/ Nic Sub Station
- Alliance Bank Sub Station
- MOA Substation
- CTU
- Special Events





4 Canines (*Explosive Detection and Patrol*)

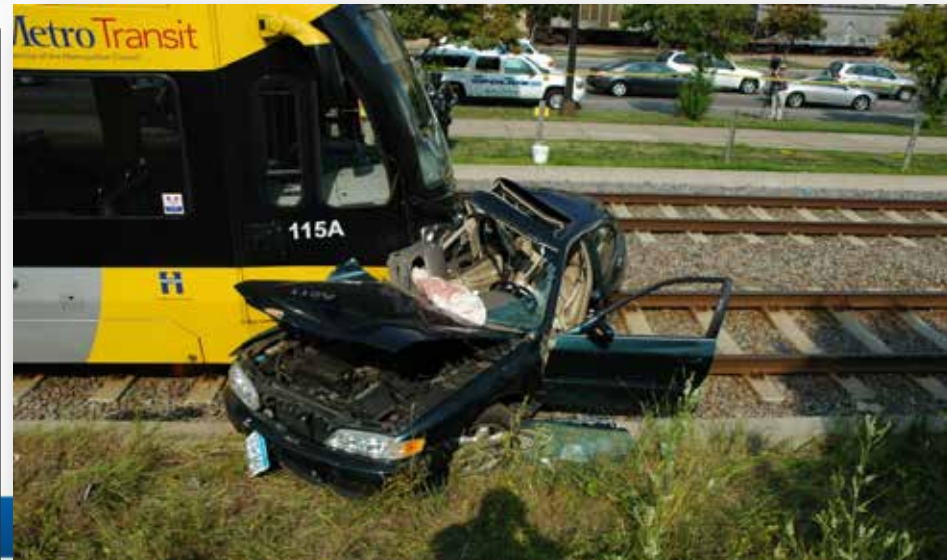




Crash Reconstruction



5 Technical Crash Investigators
8 Crash Reconstructionists





Policing Strategies:



- Neighborhood Oriented
- Policing Beats DID, 7th/Nic, BOMA, BCTC, MOA
- Operators Academy
- Be good partners, plug-in and assist

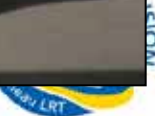
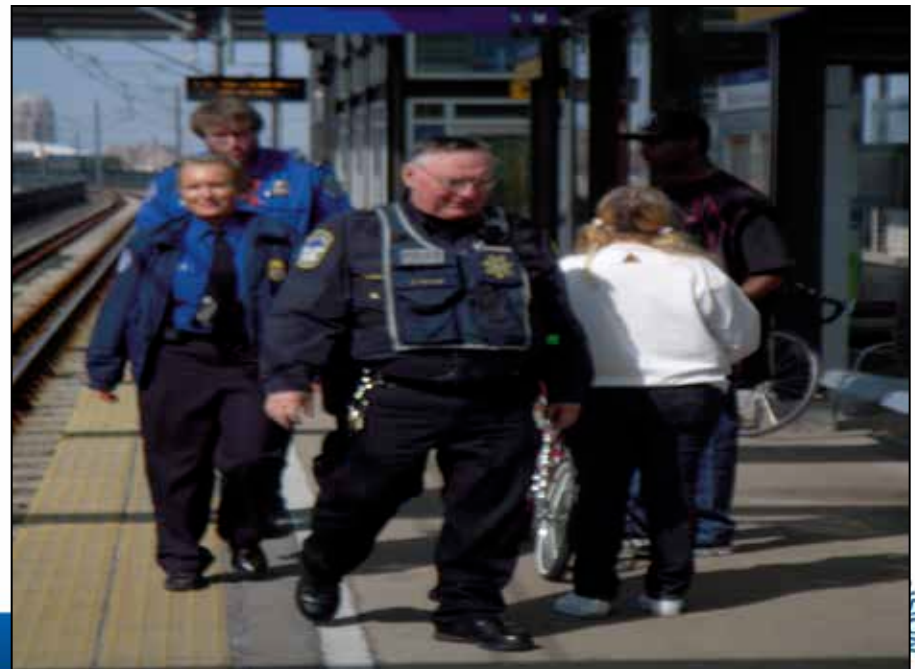




Partnerships



- TSA
- FAMS
 - § VIPR
(Visual Intermodal Protection and Response)
- APD
- BPD
- MPLS
- SPPD
- MN HSEM
 - § Grants





MTPD & Bus Operations





MTPD Bus Security - Digital Camera System



1042
Front Door
03/24/2008 17:54:42.13
Surveillance

1042
Brak



911-0
Windshield
03/25/2008 17:25:13.25
Surveillance

911



0
camera
03/25/2008 17:05:05.84
Surveillance

911



911-0
Front to back
03/25/2008 17:07:31.22
Surveillance

911



911-0
Rear door
03/25/2008 17:05:10.48
Surveillance

911



Bus Applications





MTPD & Light Rail





LRT-BLUE LINE 2004



- Service from Downtown Mpls to MOA
- 19 Stations
- Rush Hour Headways 7.5 minutes
- Approx. 40 minutes end to end
- Max speed 55mph-along Hiawatha





LRT-GREEN LINE 2014



- 18 Stations
- 9.8 miles of new double track
- 47 new Light Rail Vehicles
- 41,000 average weekday ridership in 2030
- Rush Hour Headways 10 minutes
- Approx. 50 minutes to Target Field



Light Rail - Security Features



Security Cameras



PA System on Station Platforms



Emergency Telephones on Station Platforms



Station Variable Message Sign





Public Safety: What We Are Trying To Prevent

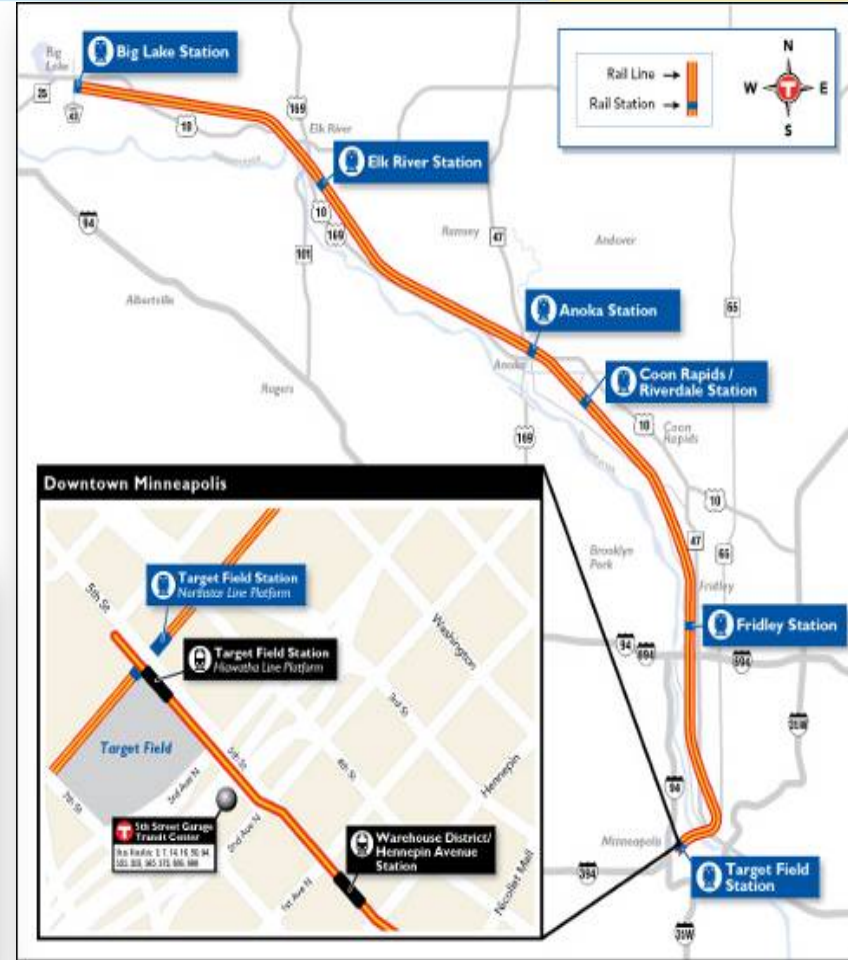




Northstar Commuter Rail 2009



- 49 minutes, 40 miles
- Six weekday roundtrips
- Three weekend roundtrips
- 2,800 parking spaces
- 3,800 weekday rides (estimate)



Push – Pull Operations
10 Trains a Day / 12 trips
1 Locomotive / 5 Coaches



Northstar Commuter Rail



- Policing & Fare Inspection-MTPD
- Northstar Owns & Maintains the Equipment
 - § BNSF Operates the Trains
 - 2 person Crew
 - § Leased BNSF track



Fort Worth, TX





Special Events



Twins – 80

Saints – 54

Vikings – 10

Gophers – 9





Transit & Emergency Management



Crash Drills

Active Shooter





Emergency Management



You will not rise to the occasion during a critical incident, you will default to your highest level of training.

2009

- Pan Flu Table Top
- LRT Crash full-scale drill
- BNSF Table Top—Derailment
- BNSF Table Top—TCC/Notifications

2010

- LRT-BFD- Table Top—mass casualty event LRT-crash
- BNSF—Full-scale--derailment/collision—target field

2011

- LRT-Table top—BFD—LRT crash
- LRT—Full-scale—BFD—LRT crash

- BNSF—Table Top—FLSC—multiple simultaneous events

2012

- NS—Full-scale exercise

2013

- June-NS 3 ECHO--Facilitated
- August-UofM active shooter—participated
- August-TTX-HCSO—Mumbai style attack—participated
- Oct 3 Echo Ramsey County—Co-facilitated
- Nov 6, TTX FBI—Operation Red Line-participated
- Nov—TTX—SP EM—LRT/terror attack—participated and planning team

2014

- March—FSE—Celtic blast
- April—Crash Drill—Univ/Raymond
- April—35W



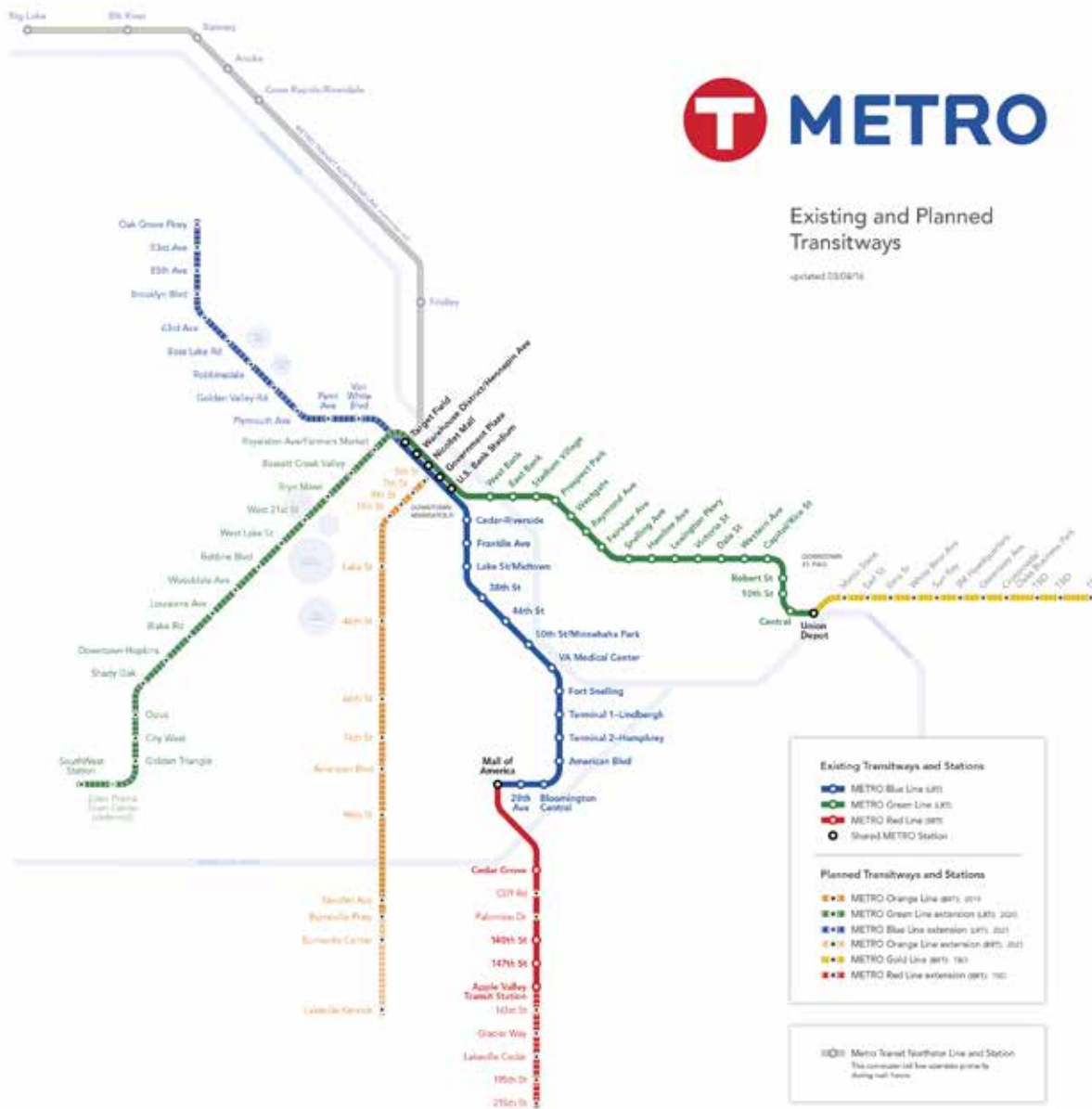


Coming Soon



Existing and Planned Transitways

updated 03/04/16





Green Line Extension





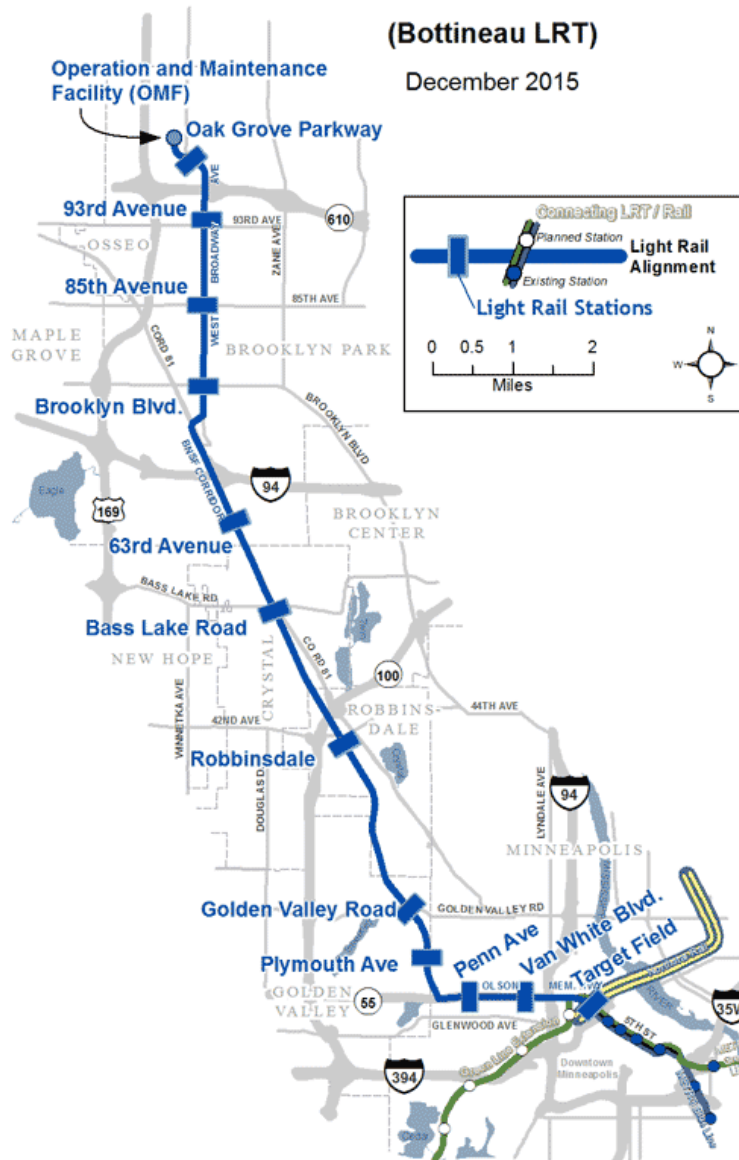
Blue Line Extension



METRO Blue Line Extension

(Bottineau LRT)

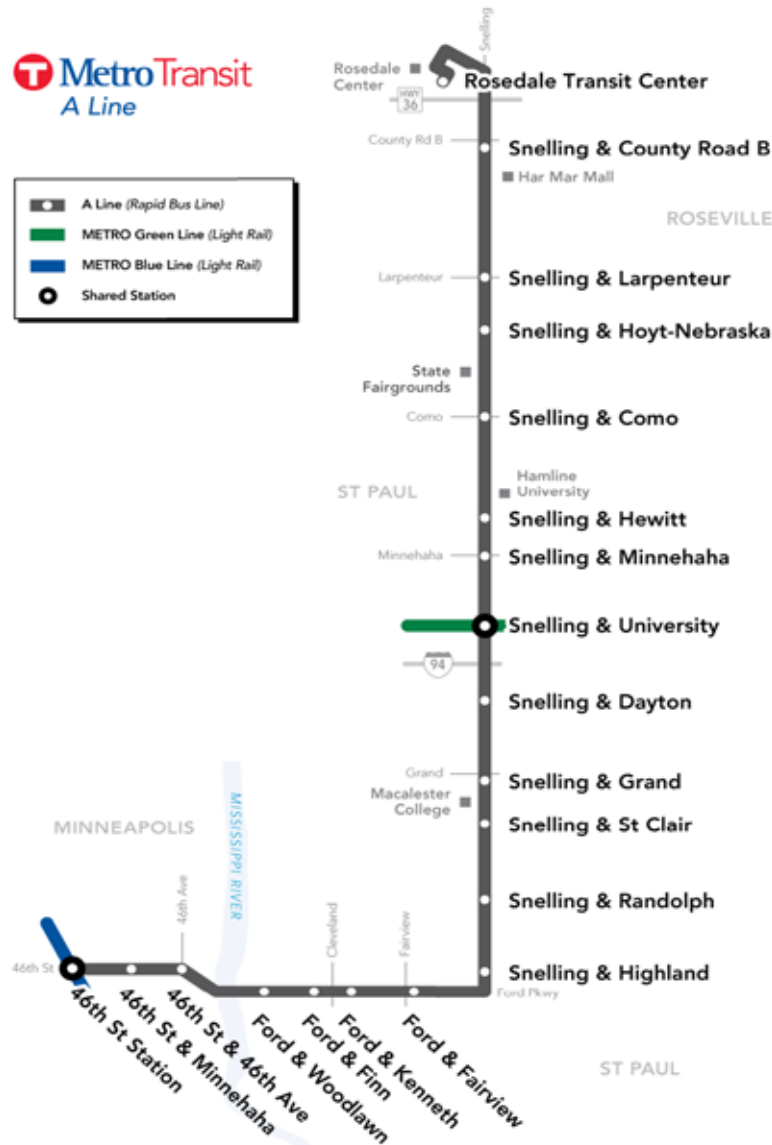
December 2015





A Line BRT

2016





C Line BRT

2019



Brooklyn Center
Transit Center

Xerxes & 56th

Brooklyn Boulevard

Penn & 43rd

Penn & Dowling

Penn & 36th

Penn & Lowry

Penn & 29th

Penn & West Broadway

Penn & Golden Valley

Penn & Plymouth

METRO

Blue Line

Extension

Olson & Penn



Final Station Plan

Updated April 5, 2016

METRO
Green Line
Extension

Ramp A/7th St
Transit Center
8th & Nicollet
8th & 3rd/4th
8th & Park

Olson & Humboldt
Olson & Bryant
Olson & 7th

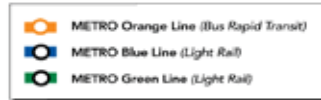
7th & Hennepin
7th & Nicollet
7th & 3rd
7th & Park

METRO
Green Line
METRO
Blue Line





Orange Line BRT 2019





Thank You

Mike Johnson, Lieutenant – MTPD West Command

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612-349-7210



Hwy 81 Pedestrian Crossings at Bass Lake Road & 63rd Ave



Hwy 81 Pedestrian Crossings at Bass Lake Rd & 63rd Ave

- February 11, 2016 CMC resolution:
“Direct staff to continue its efforts towards development of an at-grade crossing or bridge crossing at 63rd and a pedestrian bridge crossing at Bass Lake Road for the eventual inclusion in the scope of the project.”



Bass Lake Rd Pedestrian Crossing: Intersection Improvements

- Hennepin County implementing improvements in 2016
- Wider median, add pedestrian push button in median
- Pedestrian crosswalks:
 - § Widen from 6-8' to 12' for visibility, add black paint for contrast
 - § Raise crosswalks in free right turn lanes
 - § Add stop bars



Bass Lake Rd Pedestrian Crossing: Intersection Improvements



Bass Lake Rd Pedestrian Bridge

- BPO to recommend for June 2 CMC meeting:
 - § Pedestrian bridge design with construction costs estimate
 - § Operations & maintenance plan
- Site analysis underway: utility coordination, pier location
- Research maintenance responsibilities at other jurisdictions



April 26 Brooklyn Park Tour:

Columbia Heights Pedestrian Bridge

- Pedestrian bridge constructed in 2011, replacing former structure built in 1970; owned by MnDOT and maintained by Columbia Heights
- Elevators were considered for new structure, but eliminated due to maintenance concerns
- Close proximity to several schools
- At grade crossings were removed:
 - § generally high compliance with school children, supported by educational campaign
 - § poorer compliance with general public



Columbia Heights Pedestrian Bridge



April 26 Tour Brooklyn Park Tour: 66th and France Intersection Improvements

- Pedestrian bridge awarded regional solicitation funds; at grade improvements constructed instead
- France Ave 6-lane with turn lanes
- 30,000 ADT, 35-45 mph speed limit
- Free rights removed
- Roadway: lanes narrowed, wider crosswalks set back from intersection, “Dutch” planted corners
- Median: widened, push buttons and decorative lighting added



66th and France Intersection Improvements



63rd Ave Pedestrian Crossing

- BPO to recommend for June 2 CMC meeting:
 - § Pedestrian crossing improvements with construction costs estimate (at-grade/bridge)
 - § Recommended operations & maintenance responsibilities



Noise Walls

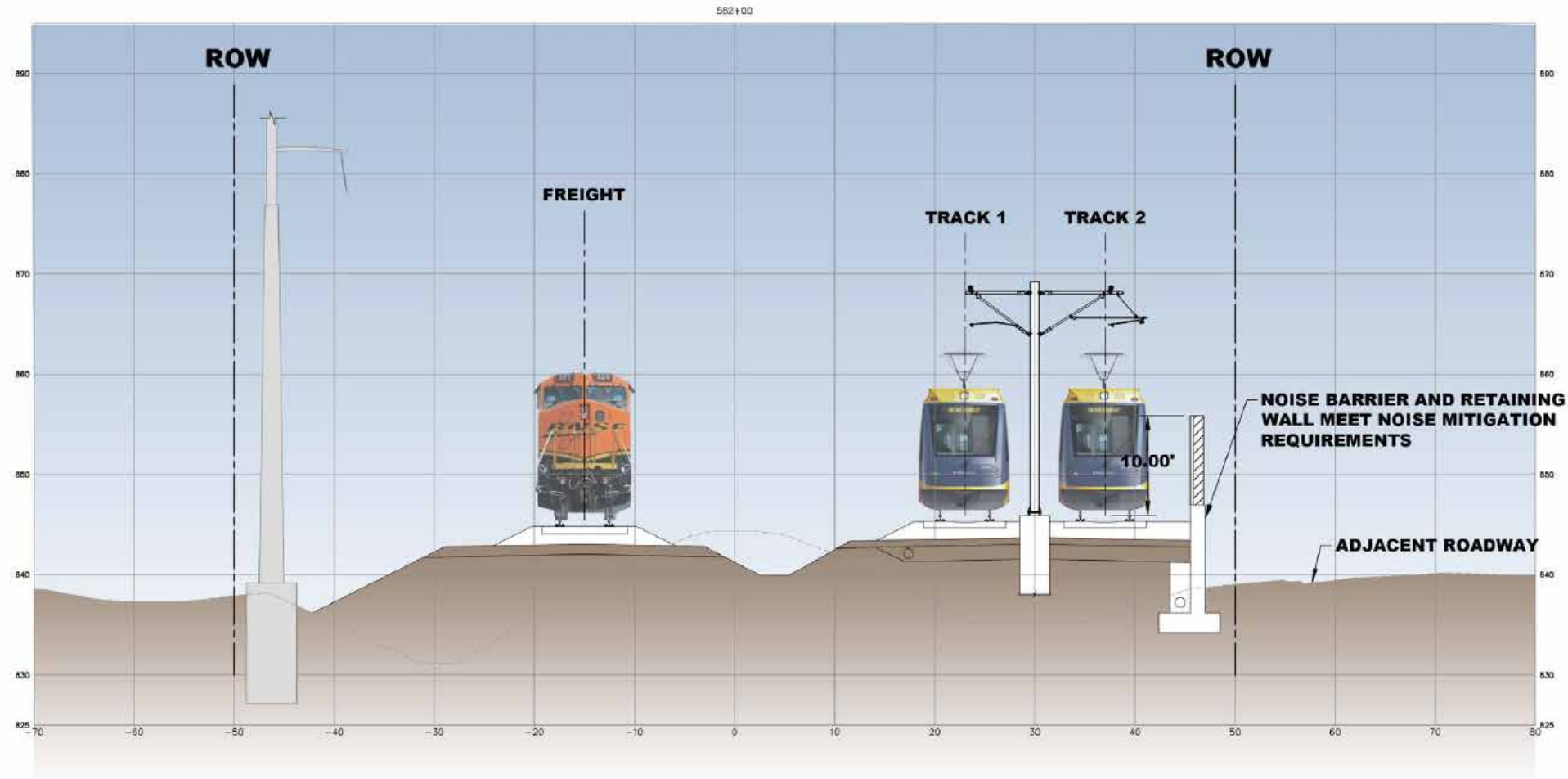


Noise Walls

- Identified as mitigation measure for LRV-generated noise
- Noise walls identified at locations in Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, and Crystal

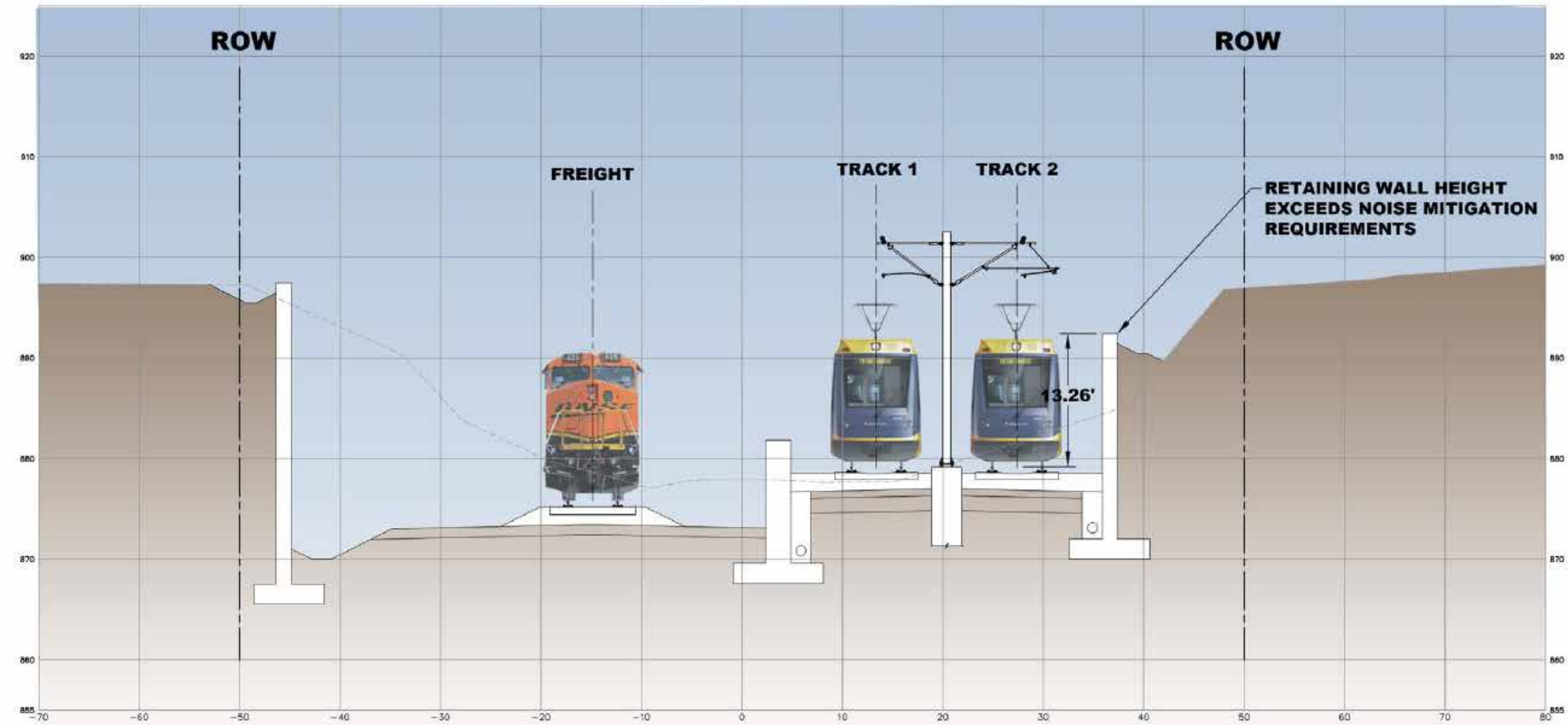


Noise Barriers on Retaining Wall

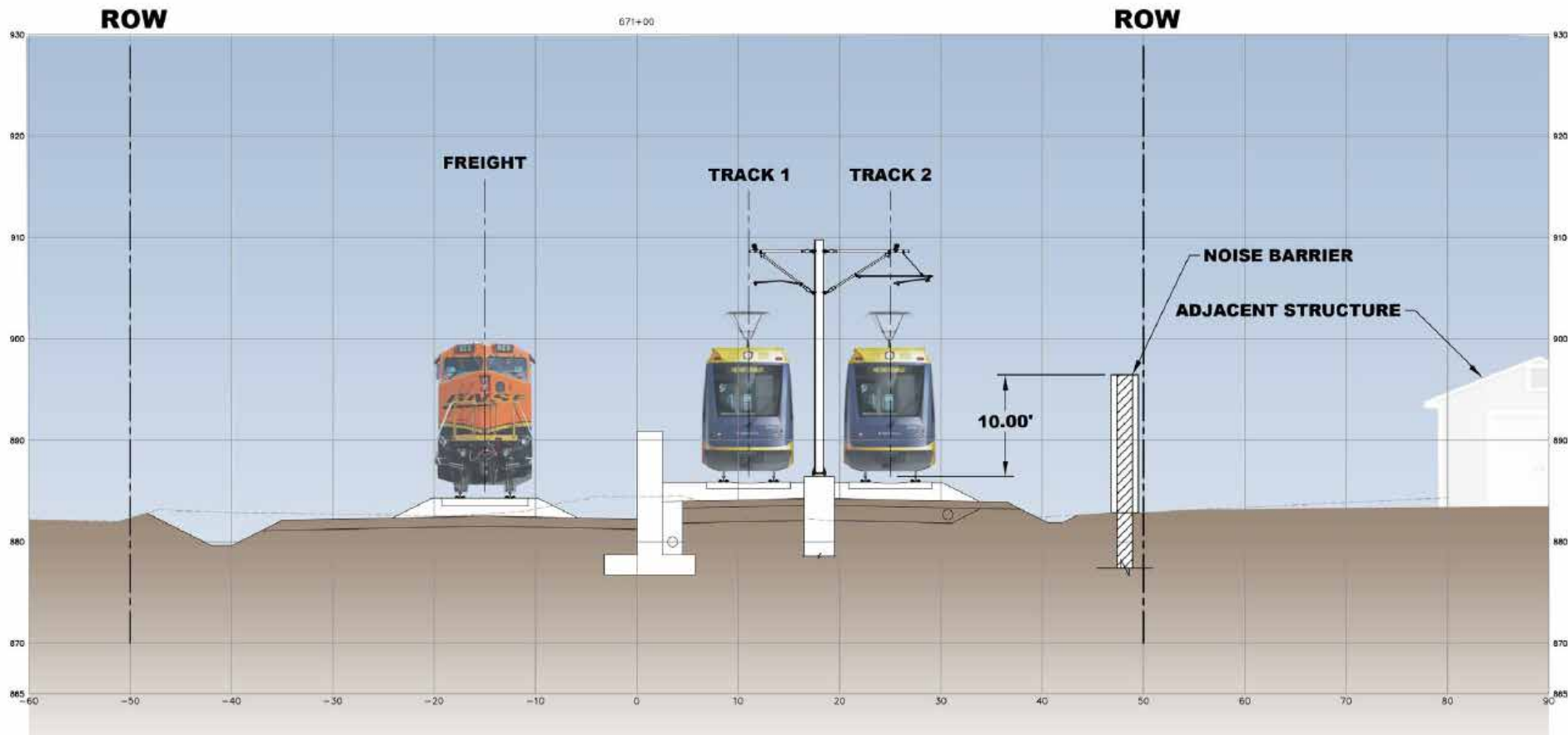


Retaining Wall as Noise Barrier

047+02



Noise Barrier Only

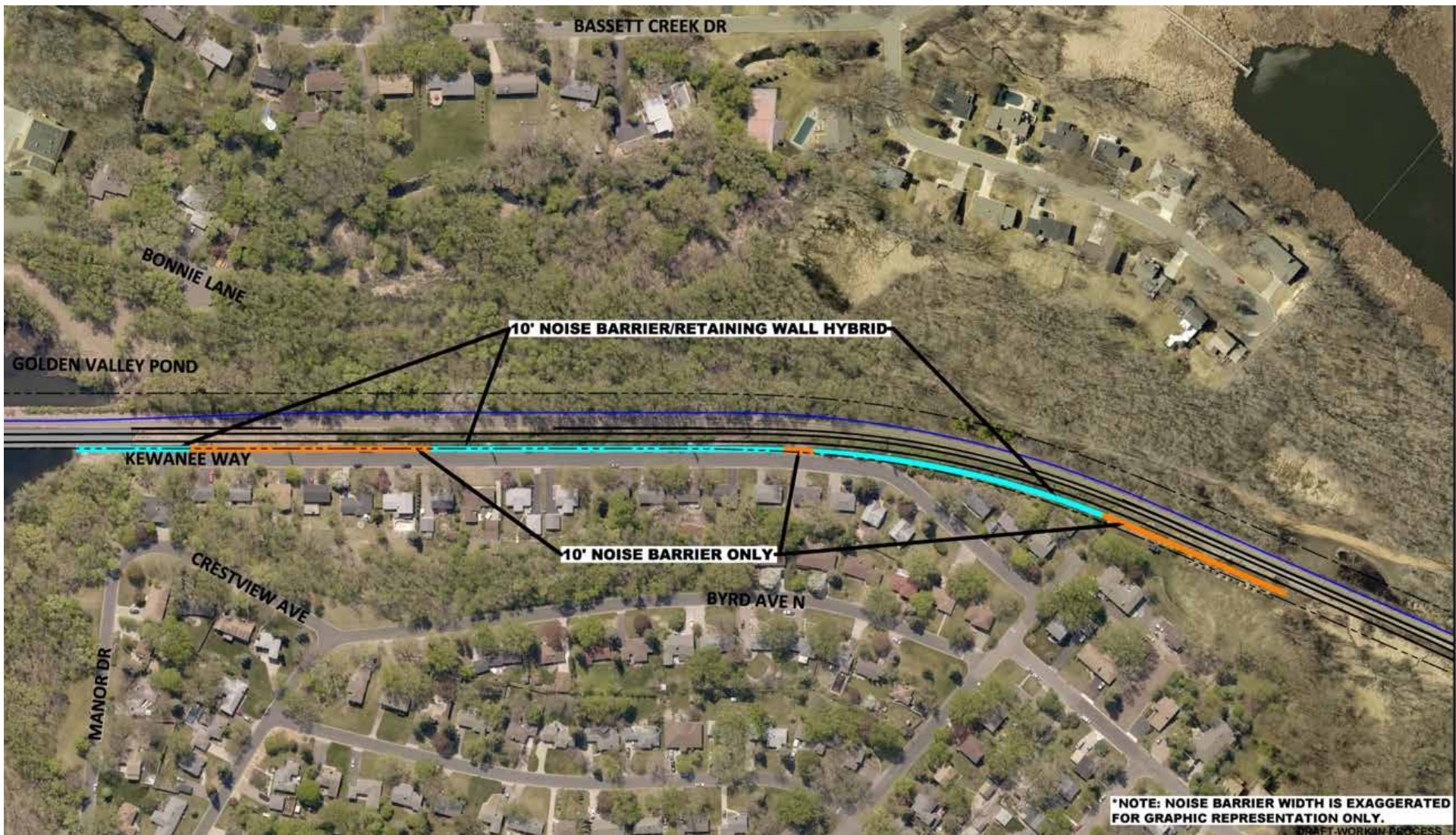


Noise Walls: Golden Valley

- Kewanee Way: from Manor Dr to north of 26th Ave
 - § Required noise barrier height of 10'
 - § Retaining wall will be used as base for noise barrier where possible



Noise Walls: Golden Valley



Noise Walls: Robbinsdale

- Indiana Avenue: from 31 ½ Ave to north of 33rd Ave
 - § Required noise barrier height of 10'
 - § Retaining wall will be used as base for noise barrier where possible
- East side of corridor: from 34th Ave to 40 ½ Ave
 - § Required noise barrier height varies from 6' to 8'
 - § Retaining wall will be used as base for noise barrier where possible
- West side of corridor: from 36th Ave to end of June Ave
 - § 6' crash wall used as noise barrier / crash wall hybrid



Noise Walls: Robbinsdale



Noise Walls: Robbinsdale



Noise Walls: Robbinsdale

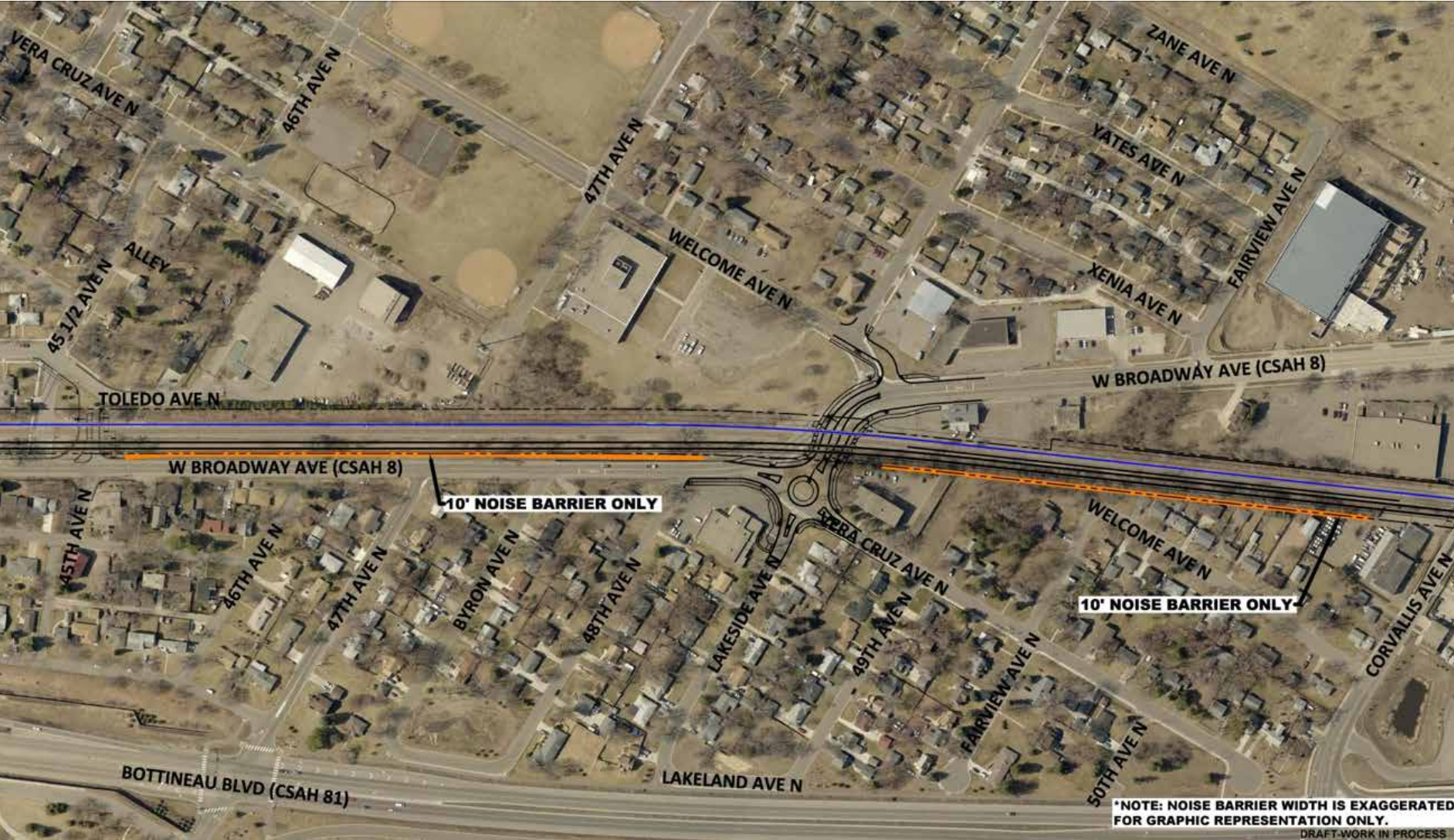


Noise Walls: Crystal

- East side of corridor: from 45th Ave to Corvallis
 - § Required noise barrier height of 10'
 - § Break in barrier required at W. Broadway crossing



Noise Walls: Crystal



Design Updates



Traction Power Substations & Systems Elements



Systems Elements Locations

- Location review looked at parcel ownership and followed the following order in determination of the optimal sites
 1. Met Council property
 2. Hennepin County Railroad Authority property
 3. Other public agency property (MnDOT, County, City)
 4. Private property acquired as part of the LRT project
 5. Vacant private property

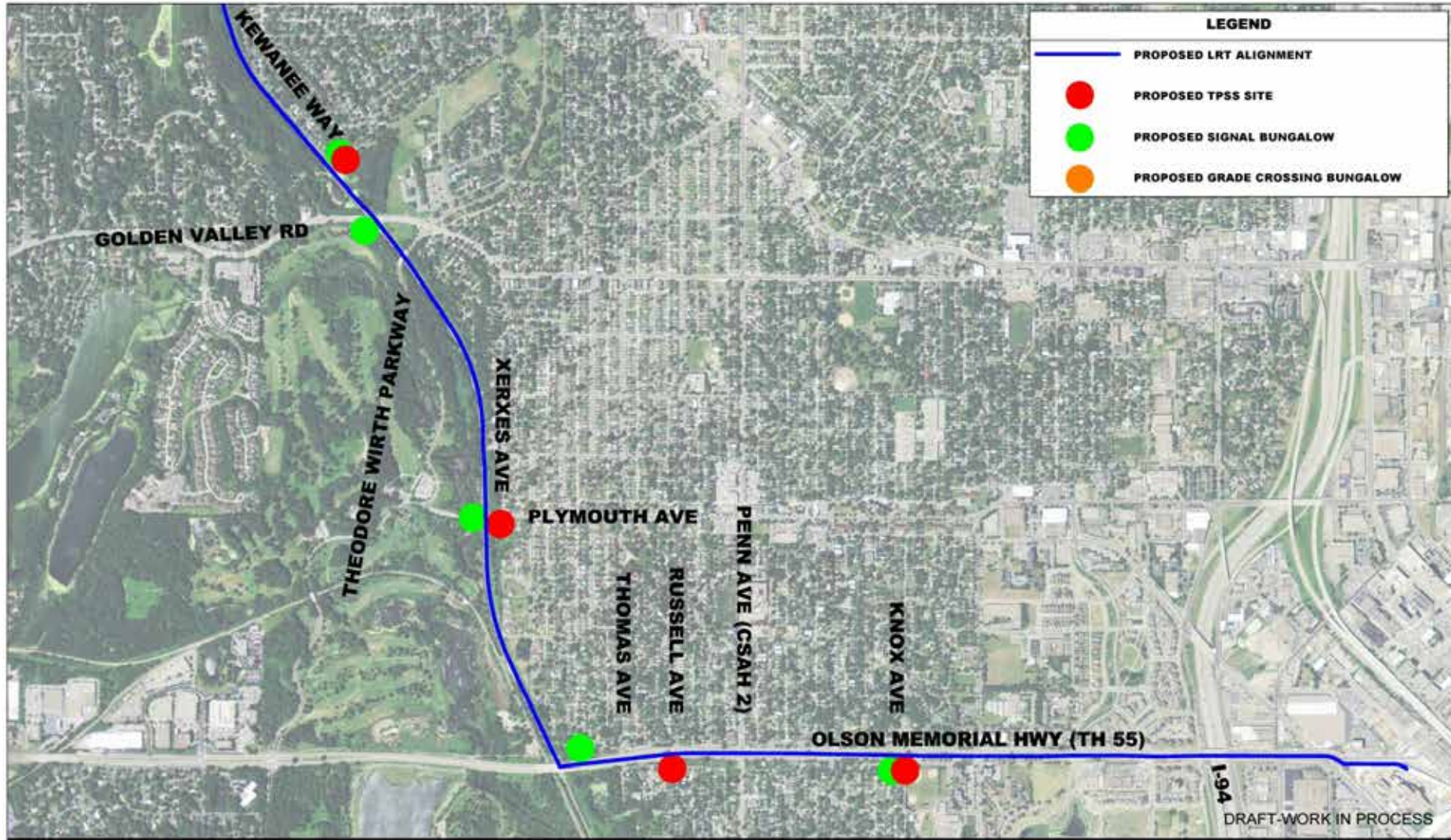


Systems Elements

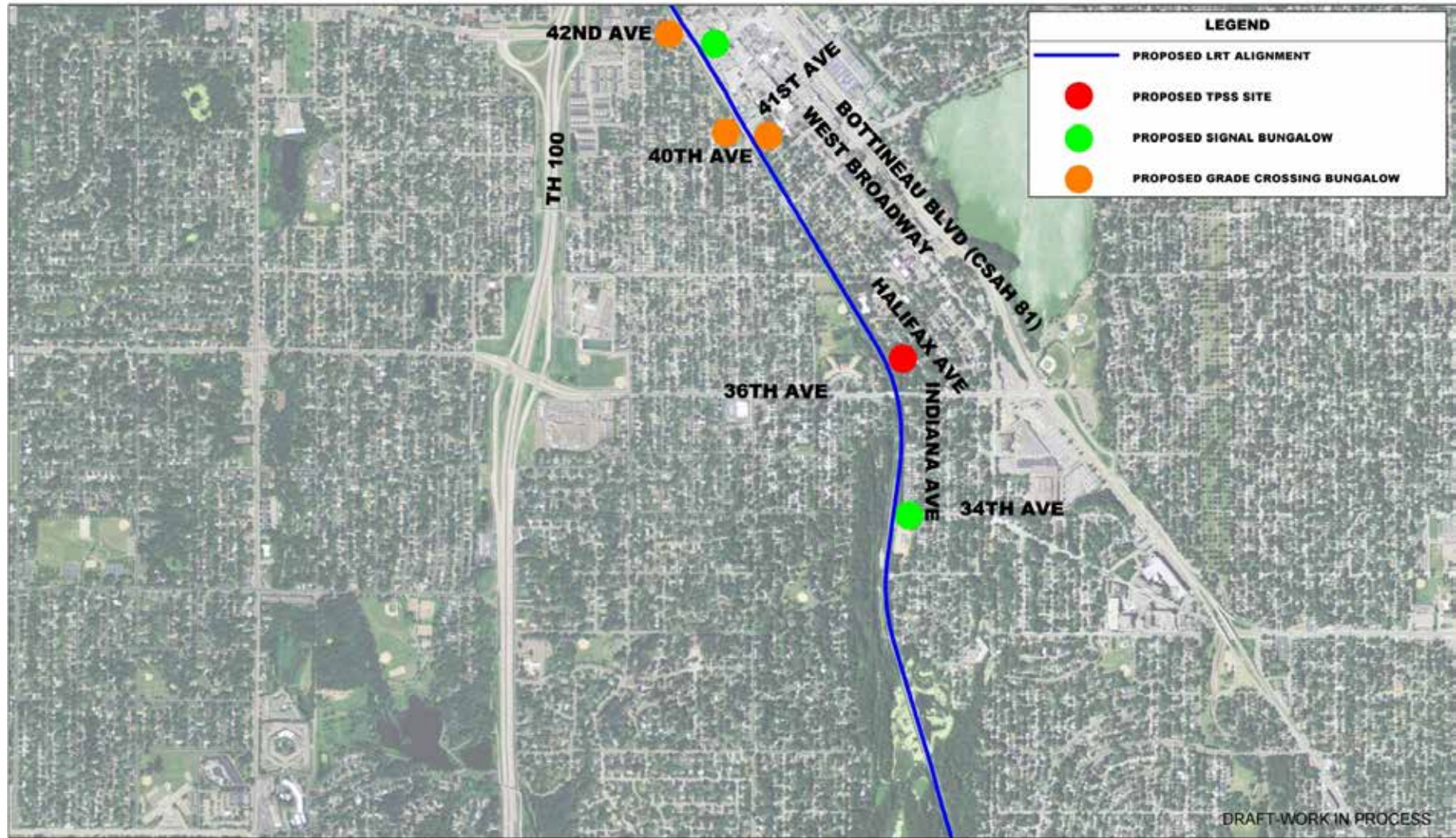
- TPSS's (15)
 - § 6 on Public Parcels
 - § 0 on BNSF ROW
 - § 9 on Private Parcels
- Signal Bungalows (15)
 - § 7 on Public Parcels
 - § 2 on BNSF ROW
 - § 6 on Private Parcels
- Grade Crossing Bungalows (12)
 - § 1 on Public Parcel
 - § 10 on BNSF ROW
 - § 1 on Private Parcel



Systems Elements Locations: Minneapolis and Golden Valley



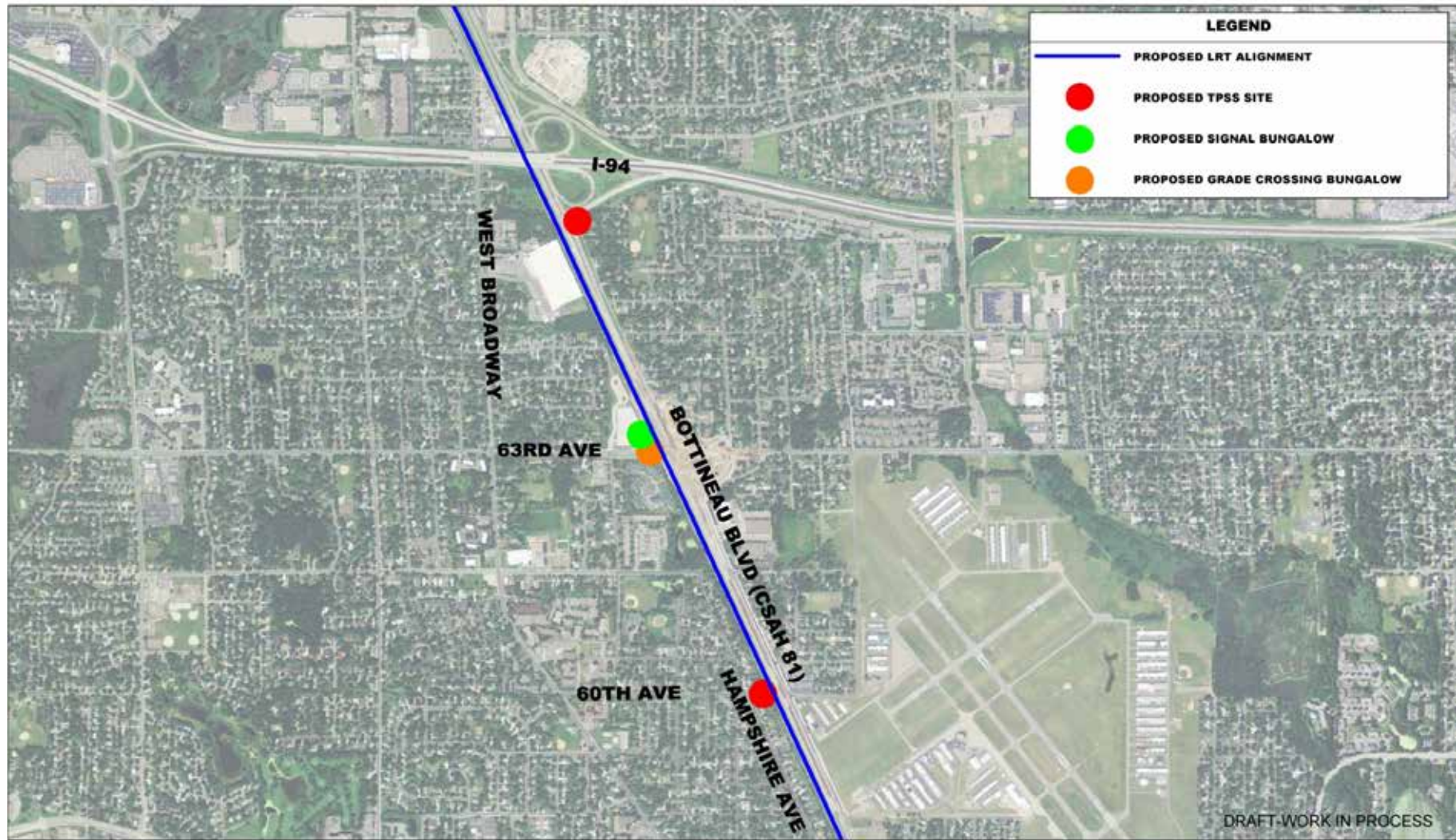
Systems Elements Locations: Golden Valley and Robbinsdale



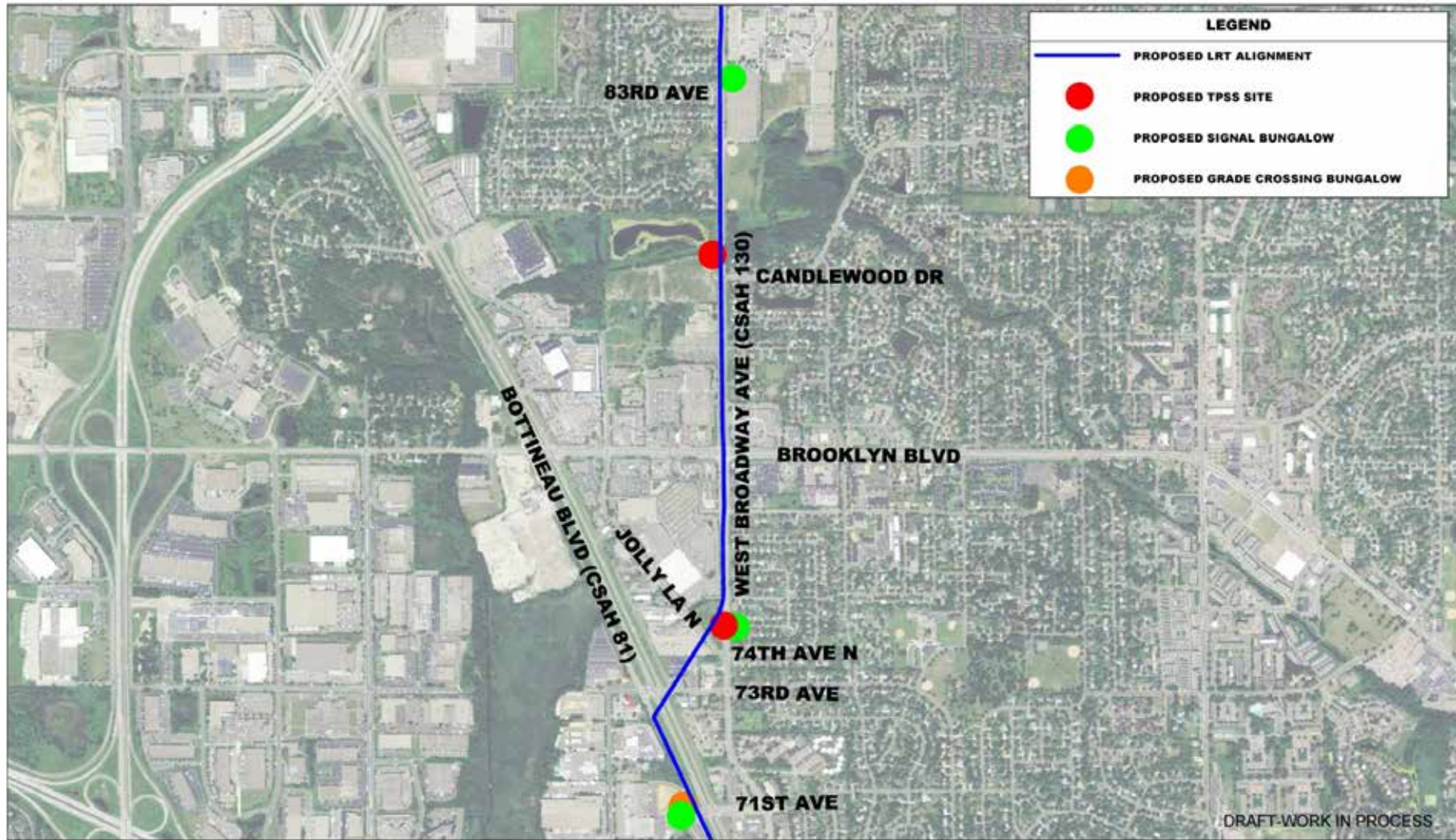
Systems Elements Locations: Robbinsdale and Crystal



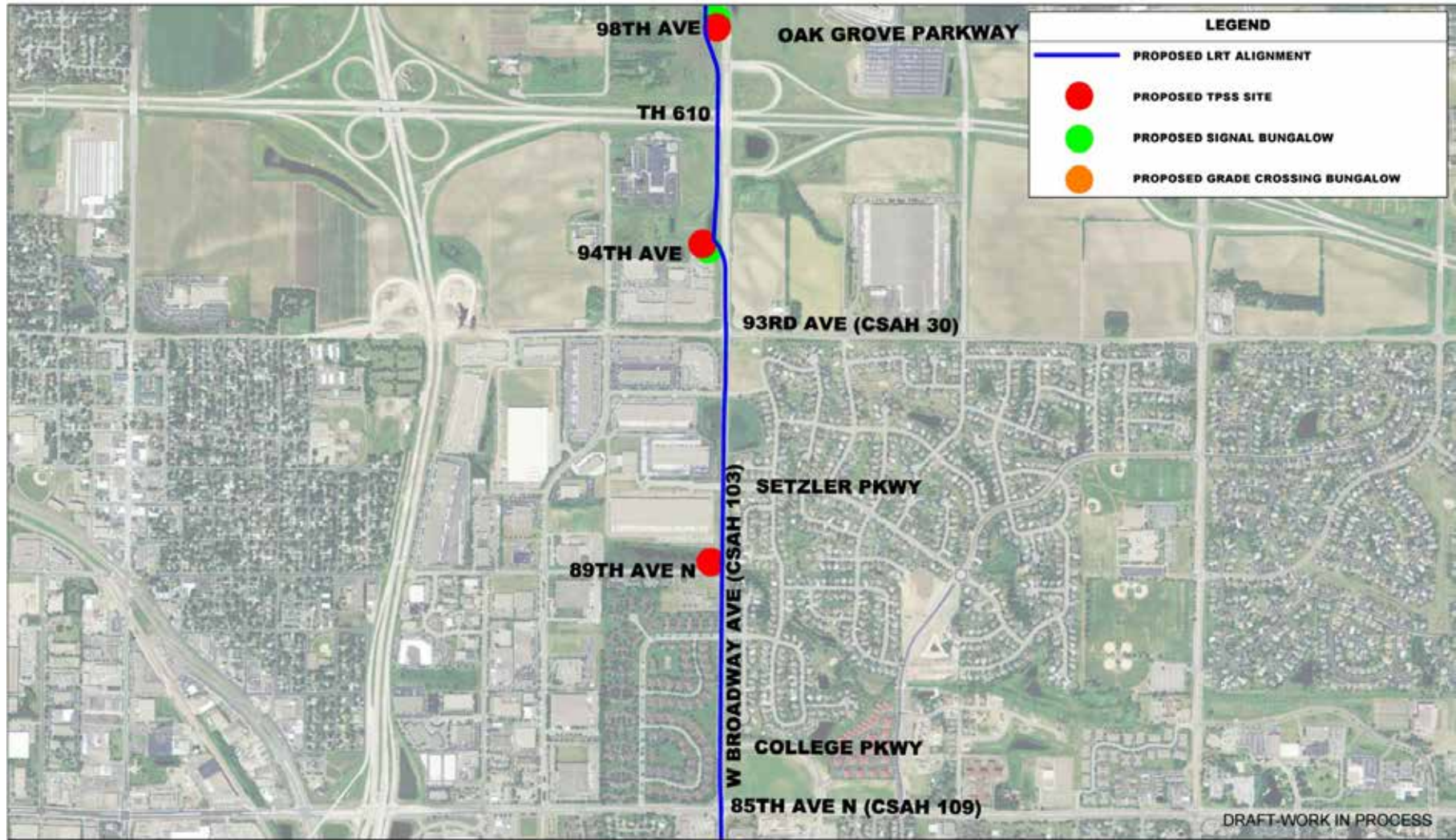
Systems Elements Locations: Crystal and Brooklyn Park



Systems Elements Locations: Brooklyn Park



Systems Elements Locations: Brooklyn Park



TPSS and Signal Bungalow: Green Line



TPSS at 25th and U of M Transitway



Signal Bungalows



Grade Crossing Bungalows



Systems Elements Next Steps

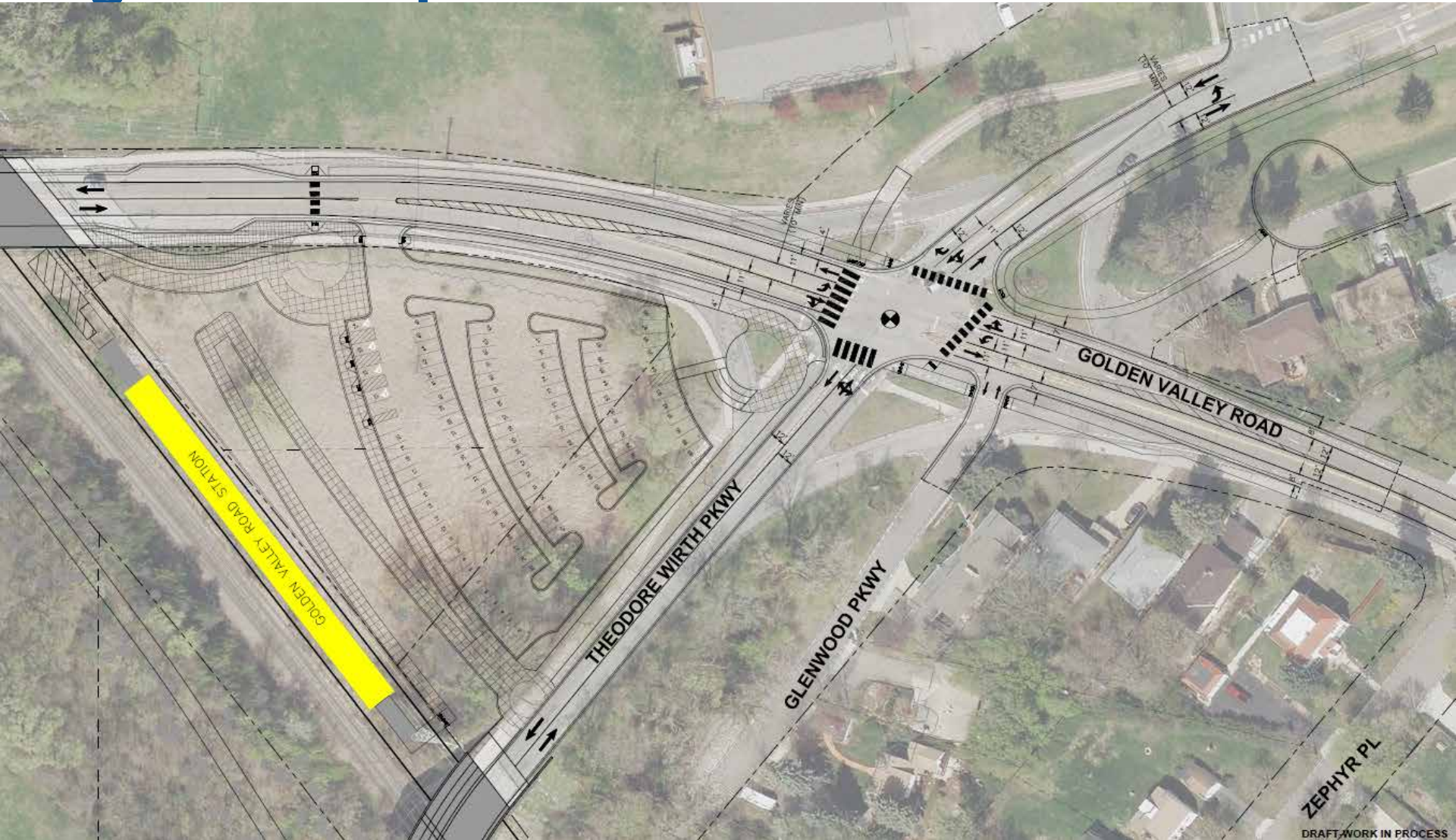
- Continue working with project stakeholders to finalize locations
- Develop site plans
- Investigate fencing and screening options as design advances



Golden Valley Road/Theodore Wirth Park Intersection Update



Golden Valley Rd Intersection: Signalized Option



DRAFT WORK IN PROCESS



Golden Valley Rd/Theodore Wirth Pkwy Intersection Update

- Signalized intersection
 - § Recommended by MPRB, County and City
 - § Signal offers better pedestrian and bicycle access
 - § Function at acceptable level of service for vehicular traffic
- Next steps:
 - § Receive public comments regarding design details at public meetings this summer



Met Council Press Releases



2016 Outreach Overview



2016 Outreach Overview

- Key Topics:
 - § LRT operations
 - § Safety and security
 - § Environmental process
 - § ROW process
 - § Survey work: environmental, geo-technical
 - § Technology
 - § Parks
- One-pagers, newsletters, website, community presentations



2016 Outreach Overview

- Key Outreach Activities: Corridor-wide
 - § Station design
 - § 30% civil design
 - § Park-n-ride design
 - § Traction power substations/signal bungalows
 - § Fencing/streetscaping
- Open houses, community meetings/presentations, newsletters, website, city council presentations



2016 Outreach Overview

- Key Outreach Activities: Community specific
 - § Roadway modifications
 - § Aesthetics
 - § Environmental testing
 - § Operations & maintenance facility design
 - § Property owner meetings
- Neighborhood meetings/presentations, property owner meetings



Meeting Schedule



BLRT Advisory Committees

- Update on Project Scope
 - § TPAC: May 31
 - § CAC & BAC: May 31 (joint meeting)
- Recommendation of Project Scope and Budget
 - § CMC: June 2
- Action on Project Scope and Budget
 - § CMC: June 23



Funding Partners

- Recommendation on Project Scope and Budget
 - § CTIB: June 15
 - § HCRRA: June 21
- Update on CMC recommendation of Project Scope and Budget
 - § HCRRA: July 12
 - § Metropolitan Council: July 13
 - § CTIB: July 20
- Approval of Project Scope and Budget
 - § Metropolitan Council Transportation Committee: August 8
 - § Metropolitan Council: August 24



More Information



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METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES | PARKS | **TRANSPORTATION** | WASTEWATER & WATER | HOUSING | PLANNING

METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION

Route

Stations

Environmental

Timeline

Project Partners

METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION

Bottineau Transitway – Minneapolis & Northwestern Communities

The METRO Blue Line Extension (LRT) will operate northwest from downtown Minneapolis through north Minneapolis, Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal and Brooklyn Park, drawing riders northwest of Brooklyn Park. The proposed alignment is primarily at-grade and will have up to 11 new stations in addition to Target Field Station and about 13 miles of double track. The line will interline with the METRO Blue Line and connect Minneapolis and the region's northwest suburbs with existing LRT on the METRO Green Line, future LRT on the METRO Green Line Extension, bus rapid transit on the METRO Red Line, the Northstar commuter rail line and local and express bus routes.

Latest News
Feds: Met Council can begin designing METRO Blue Line Extension

Route
Click on the map below for more information

Website: BlueLineExt.org

Email: BlueLineExt@metrotransit.org

Twitter: [@BlueLineExt](https://twitter.com/BlueLineExt)



Development along Green Line soars to more than \$4 billion

Southwest LRT spurs more than \$400 million in local development

\$5 Billion Total Development Along Existing and Planned LRT Lines

St. Paul, Minn – April 19, 2016 – The Metropolitan Council has tracked \$4.2 billion in development along the existing METRO Green Line, a jump from the calculated \$3.2 billion last fall.

“The continued development along the Green Line tells a story of how transit investment can transform communities while better connecting people to the entire region,” said Met Council Chair Adam Duininck. “The Green Line success story illustrates exactly why transit is such a good investment for our communities. At a cost of \$957 million – half of that covered by the federal government – the Green Line has provided a serious return on investment for Minnesotans.”

Saint Paul Mayor Chris Coleman says he is pleasantly surprised by the pace of development.

“Though we always expected development to follow the LRT, this pace is ahead of expectations,” said Mayor Coleman. “Original projections called for \$7 billion worth of development along the line over 30 years. After just five years (three years of construction and almost two years of operation), we are already halfway to our goal. And we are absolutely hearing from developers that the Green Line is driving their investments.”

The region is now seeing a similar dynamic along the planned Southwest LRT (SWLRT). The Met Council has tracked \$430 million in development, either finished or underway on the extended route. The Blue Line Extension (Bottineau LRT) has also seen \$358 million of development in various stages.

This development comes even before construction has begun on either lines. Heavy construction is scheduled to begin in 2017 for SWLRT and 2018 for the Blue Line Extension.

“Developments both existing and underway along Green Line, SWLRT, and the Blue Line Extension now total nearly \$5 billion,” said Duininck. “It is critical that the state legislature provides the remaining local funding necessary for SWLRT, so we can not only leverage \$895 million in federal funds, but continue to spur even more development in the local communities along the line. We want these federal dollars to be invested in our Minnesota communities, not given away to Seattle or San Francisco who are eager to move forward with transit projects in their regions.”

In addition to spurring development, SWLRT is expected to create at least 7,500 jobs totaling at least \$350 million in payroll to workers and contractors across the state.

The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers says the construction of Green Line alone provided work for hundreds of its electricians and system technicians. But even more exciting is the prospect of continued employment in the construction of developments along the line and the future LRT extensions.

“You’re looking at a five- to seven-year bump after the project is completed. If you look down University Avenue and count the new buildings, it’s not just the initial construction but the construction of new homes and businesses afterward. It creates an ongoing jobs project,” said Ray Zeran, political director for IBEW Local 292, which has nearly 5,000 members from Minneapolis to the South Dakota border.

Spurring development in communities along future Green Line Extension

The Met Council's SWLRT Office has tracked \$430 million in private investments in existing buildings, new construction and announced developments since fall 2011 when the federal government authorized "preliminary engineering" (now called project development).

In **Eden Prairie**, Willmar-based TPI Hospitality, plans to build a five-story, 105-room Hampton Inn near the Southwest line. In addition to a Minnesota developer, Willmar-based Cities Edge Architects will design the hotel. Kevin Hansen, architect with Cities Edge, told the Eden Prairie Planning Commission last month that the LRT is viewed as a benefit for the hotel, which is scheduled to open in 2017.

In **Hopkins**, a current apartment building uses the planned Green Line Extension in its marketing materials to potential tenants. Gallery Flats, a 177-unit apartment building in downtown Hopkins, opened in 2013. The building is located on Eighth Avenue, just across Excelsior Boulevard from the future Downtown Hopkins Station, on a street Hopkins is designing to tie the station to its downtown area.

"It's really vital that the light rail get in here," said Bruce Rubinger, general partner in Sidal Realty, the owner of Gallery Flats. The new LRT line "will be a great thing once it comes in, and a great benefit for people who can go to and from work on it," he said.

Also in Hopkins, Doran Companies is in the early stages of construction on The Moline, a 241-unit apartment building across the street from Gallery Flats. That building will include at-grade public parking that can be used by Green Line riders.

"It's a great location," said John Wodele, a spokesman for Doran Companies.

Wodele notes that the city of Hopkins has a lot of plans for its urban downtown renewal along Eighth Avenue, and is moving forward with that project. Known as "The Artery," several blocks of Eighth Avenue will be redesigned into a pedestrian-friendly environment with redevelopment potential. Artery construction is set to start in 2017 when heavy construction also is scheduled to begin on the SWLRT line.

In **St. Louis Park**, city officials are seeing ongoing multi-family housing developments near the planned Wooddale Station.

Blue Line Extension route sees lots of development already in Brooklyn Park

The Met Council's Blue Line Extension project office has similarly tracked \$358 million in development since summer 2014 when the federal government approved the beginning of project development.

Brooklyn Park has seen a flurry of development near West Broadway Avenue's intersection with both Highway 610 and 93rd Avenue North, including:

- Millennium Pharmaceutical's \$70 million investment in an existing pharmaceutical facility
- A new \$27.9 million Menards store
- A new \$23.5 million Hennepin County Library under construction, located across the street from the planned 85th Avenue Blue Line Extension station
- A new \$16.7 million facility for Nilfisk (a maker of professional floor polishers), which is moving its American headquarters and 300 jobs from Plymouth to Brooklyn Park

For more information on the SWLRT and Blue Line Extension projects, visit swlrt.org or BlueLineExt.org.

###

Real estate figures show access to transit major factor for homebuyers

Residents increasingly seeking out housing near transit lines

ST. PAUL, Minn. – April 25, 2016 – New real estate figures show access to transit is increasingly becoming an asset for homebuyers. The Minneapolis Area Association of Realtors has studied the impact of the METRO Blue Line LRT on housing prices, and says more and more, people are considering transit when evaluating where they want to live.

“We regularly hear from our members who work with millennials and boomers alike that today’s buyers want the option to take transit to the airport, to entertainment, to work, to sporting events or even for an evening out with friends or family,” said David Arbit, Director of Research and Economics for the Minneapolis Area Association of Realtors. “Today’s buyers want the option to not own a car, or if they do own a car, the option not to use it every single day.”

Arbit says his research shows that the value of homes in neighborhoods near Blue Line stations in Minneapolis continue to be higher than homes in neighborhoods not connected to the region’s first LRT line. In January 2015, the median value in an LRT-connected neighborhood was \$220,000, and the median-valued home was \$194,000 in a non-LRT neighborhood. (See more about the research [here](#), beginning on slide 20).

“The Minneapolis light rail neighborhoods continue to outperform the rest of the city,” said Arbit.

Dynamic likely to be replicated along Green Line and planned expansions of LRT system

Arbit says realtors are now seeing a similar dynamic along the METRO Green Line LRT. Home values have performed better in the Green Line area than in the city of St. Paul as a whole and when compared to the metro region as a whole since the line’s 2014 opening. Compared to the rest of the metro, he says he’s expecting the same to happen in communities along the planned Southwest LRT line, with the exception of the Kenwood of Minneapolis, where the price effect is expected to be minimal due in part to low turnover rates of homes and the existing price point.

“I think values in St. Louis Park and Hopkins will perform quite well, similar to values along the Hiawatha line. I’d expect Minnetonka and Eden Prairie values to perform in the middle, somewhere between St. Louis Park/Hopkins and Kenwood,” he said.

Arbit said he expects to find property values in LRT-connected neighborhoods along the proposed Blue Line Extension in north Minneapolis, Golden Valley and Crystal to “perform better than their control group and better than the region just as we found on Hiawatha.”

Balance needed to ensure affordable housing options along transit lines

Met Council Member Gary Cunningham says while the increase in home values demonstrates the desire for people to live near transit lines, it also underscores the need to ensure there is available affordable housing along public transit. Median household incomes within a half-mile of the planned Green Line Extension’s planned 15 stations is \$50,580, well below the metro-wide figure of roughly \$80,000.

“We have a great need for more affordable housing in this region,” said Met Council Member Gary Cunningham. “While many critics claim residents along Southwest corridor are wealthy compared to other residents in the area,

the fact is that there are many working-class families in need of affordable housing all along the line. We need to work together with stakeholders to ensure the people who need to access transit can do so.”

Hennepin County Commissioner Jan Callison agrees there’s a misperception that the cities along the Green Line Extension are more prosperous. “If you dig below the impression, you’ll see they’re quite diverse, and many of them have a history of affordable housing.”

A Hennepin County task force is working to ensure that one-third of the new housing units expected along Green Line Extension by 2030 are affordable for people with low and moderate incomes to prevent gentrification. Projections estimate 11,200 new apartments, condos, and homes.

Residents increasingly seeking out housing near transit lines

[A national study by the Rockefeller Foundation](#) finds that 66 percent of millennials say access to high-quality transportation is one of their top three priorities when considering a move to another city.

“People rely on public transit to get to work, to school, to opportunities,” said Met Council Chair Adam Duininck. “It’s clear that many people are deciding where to live and work based on access to transit. If we are going to compete for the top talent in the country, we must continue to build out our regional transit system and provide people more options to get around.”

Older residents are also increasingly attracted to housing near public transit. Marvin Plakut is President and CEO of Episcopal Homes. He says many residents sought out the independent living center at the Fairview Avenue Station in St. Paul because of its proximity to the Green Line.

“LRT had a major positive impact on our Episcopal Homes campus and our residents and staff. It brought more than just transportation and increased independence. It brought excitement and vibrancy and a sense of newness and urban chic,” said Plakut. “Our Episcopal Homes campus expansion filled up prior to opening our doors last year, and we have long waiting lists. Nearly all guests inquiring about our offerings are saying that a significant part of their interest is a result of the light rail line stopping right in front of our campus door.”

###

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EMPLOYEES, EMPLOYERS TRAIN THEIR SIGHTS ON SOUTHWEST LRT FOR BETTER ACCESS

Posted In: [Transportation](#)

Date: 5/5/2016

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ST. PAUL, Minn. -- May 5, 2016 – A reverse commuter from northeast Minneapolis who works at one of the largest employers in Minnesota, the CEO of a family-owned company, a senior housing official and a pizza restaurant manager have one thing in common.

They all want the proposed Southwest LRT (METRO Green Line Extension) to be built to improve access to the 175,000 jobs already located along the corridor. Another 64,000 new jobs are expected to be added by 2035 within one-half mile of the planned new stations and five existing stations in downtown Minneapolis.

Reverse commuting

Peter Janelle reverse commutes from his home in northeast Minneapolis to his job as a senior financial consultant for UnitedHealthcare in Minnetonka. His family only owns one car, so he rides a bus most days. Janelle says he would appreciate the greater frequency of LRT trains over buses, especially when he has to arrive at work early before his company's intercampus shuttle is operating.

"Southwest Light Rail would make my commute a bit shorter and more direct," said Janelle, who takes buses three days a week to Shady Oak Road and Highway 62 and drives his family car two days a week. "It's more of a challenge in the winter months to try to piece together the commute. If the express bus doesn't work out, I take the city bus route 12. If I work late, I have to walk three-quarters of a mile which is OK for me but for people who are older it would be a bit tougher."

UnitedHealthcare's location in Opus Business Park is among several job-rich centers on the Southwest LRT line. The others are Eden Prairie Center (mall), Golden Triangle Business Park and Optum Corporate Headquarters in Eden Prairie; Downtown Hopkins; Park Nicollet Methodist Hospital near the future Louisiana Avenue Station in St. Louis Park; and Royalston Station Area in Minneapolis.

Southwest LRT would give Janelle and other commuters access not just to those centers, but to locations all along the existing Blue and Green lines, including: downtown Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, downtown St. Paul, the Veterans Administration Medical Center, Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and the Mall of America.

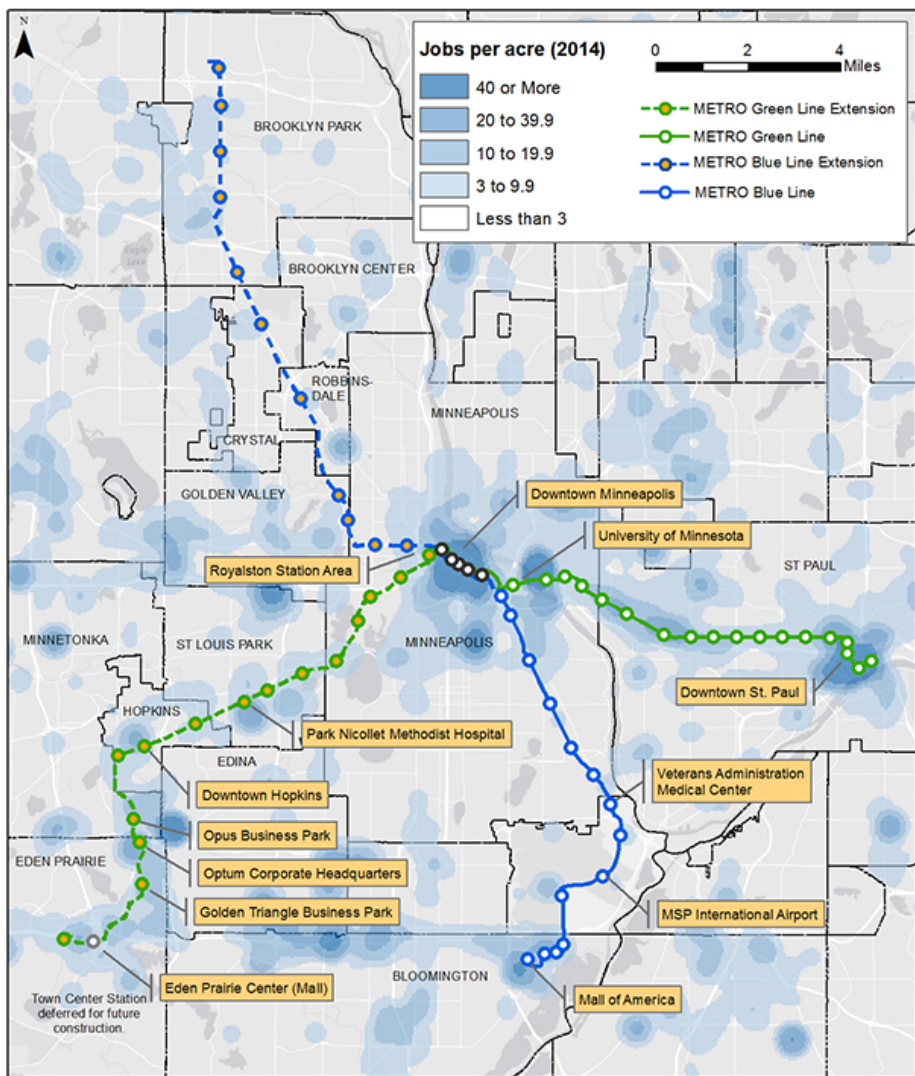
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Twin Cities Regional Job Density with Existing and Proposed Light Rail Transit



(2014 employment data)

5/2016

Above: The shading on this map shows employment concentrations along the proposed Southwest LRT line and regional destinations on existing METRO Green and Blue Lines and planned Blue Line Extension.

Broadening the pool of prospective employees

Nordic Ware CEO David Dalquist realizes that an expanding transit network will increase the area from which employers can draw employees in the future.

Dalquist said about 50 of his employees, who number from 350 to 400 depending on the season, would benefit from building out the network.

Southwest LRT “will provide us greater access to the geographically spread-out Twin Cities workforce which, in turn, will make us more competitive in the job market. There’s no question that there’s upside to having a public transit system situated adjacent to a business,” said Dalquist, whose St. Louis Park-based company’s bakeware line includes the Bundt pan.

“Though we currently have ample on-site parking, if some employees were commuting each day via LRT, it would reduce our need for parking spaces,” he added.

A draw for people of all ages

TowerLight Senior Living and Child Day Care is near the future Wooddale Station in St. Louis Park, and it promotes that proximity on its website’s homepage. “Located near future light rail stop. Don’t feel like staying in? Board light rail and explore other parts of town.”

Greg Zoidis, TowerLight’s manager partner, says they are interested in seeing Southwest LRT approved for funding.

“Providing quality care begins with hiring and retaining the best possible staff. Not all of our 50-plus employees currently have dependable private transportation, which creates stress for them and our leadership team. A fully functioning LRT will expand our labor pool and reduce stress among our caregivers, which translates directly to better care for our seniors and children,” Zoidis said.

"In addition, we have many senior residents who no longer drive. The ability to offer activities accessible by LRT will create excitement and energy for both our day-care children and their grand friends," he said.

At Pizza Lucé in Hopkins, a popular stop by the future Blake Road Station, general manager Bucky Jaszewski is looking forward to the arrival of Southwest LRT.

The restaurant and bar has about 105 employees of all ages, and many of them use their bikes and the adjacent Cedar Lake Regional Trail to get to work. In the winter, though, Jaszewski says that doesn't work out so well.

"To have the light rail come here is going to be a big bonus for us," he said.

Customers will use the line too, he said, as the restaurant is already a popular lunch and after-work stop.

Jaszewski lives a block from the restaurant and says the looming arrival of LRT has been a draw.

"It's kind of a big thing moving out to this area, knowing LRT is coming," he said, adding that easy connections to downtown Minneapolis are attractive.

The business case

The TwinWest Chamber of Commerce has long supported Southwest LRT, which will serve three of Minnesota's 17 Fortune 500 companies: C.H. Robinson, SuperValu and UnitedHealth Group. Six other Fortune 500 companies are on the existing LRT lines in downtown Minneapolis (Ameriprise Financial, Target, Thrivent Financial, US Bancorp and Xcel Energy) and downtown St. Paul (Ecolab). "Target's Northern Campus is located on the planned Blue Line LRT Extension, Maplewood-based 3M is on the proposed Gold Line Bus Rapid Transit line and Richfield-based Best Buy is on the proposed Orange Line Bus Rapid Transit line. ("Target has locations on two transitways but is counted only once on the list of Minnesota's Fortune 500 companies.)

"Part of the health of our metro area is investment in transportation infrastructure," TwinWest Chamber President Brad Meier said. "The TwinWest Chamber understands that growth of business, jobs and people in the area requires a transportation system for the future that improves roads, bridges and transit.

"We believe businesses will grow the economic base of the area, and we know a strong transit infrastructure along with roads and bridges will support job growth in the west metro."

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