

REGULAR CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
January 11, 2022
After the REDA Meeting that takes place at 7pm
Robbinsdale City Hall
4100 Lakeview Avenue North

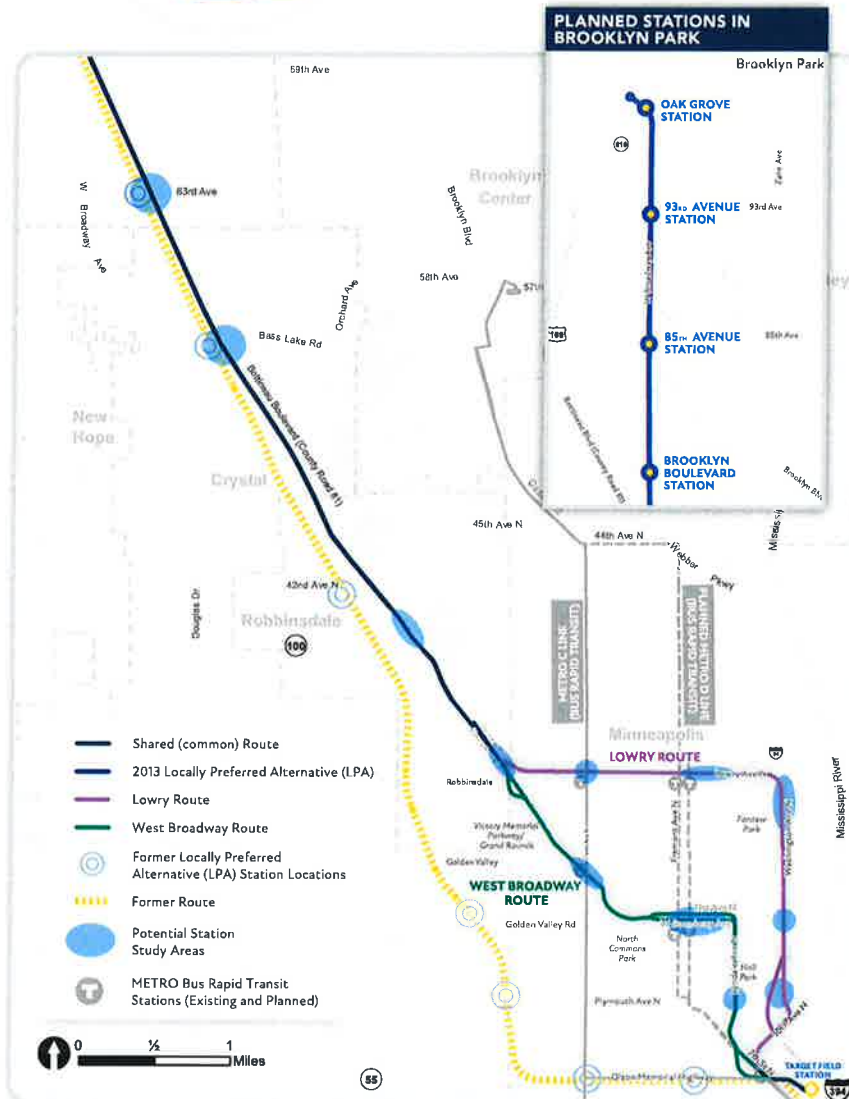
AGENDA

1. CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION CALLED TO ORDER BY MAYOR PRO TEM
2. ROLL CALL: Kline, Webb, Selman, Backen, Mayor Blonigan
3. Discussion: Evaluation of BLRT Goals – (attached)
The attached pages are the 4-page summary and excerpted pages from the full 94-page report. You can find these documents on the City webpage www.robbinsdalemn.com/blueline in the list in the 'document box.'
4. ADJOURNMENT



METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION

Draft Route Modification Report Summary • December 2021



Background

Since August 2020, the Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County have partnered to evaluate revised route options that do not use freight rail property as previously planned for the METRO Blue Line Extension.

Brooklyn Park:

The former route and stations along West Broadway in Brooklyn Park remain the same.

Crystal and Robbinsdale:

The proposed route along Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) closely parallels the original route for most of this area.

Minneapolis:

Two route options are being evaluated—one along Lowry and Washington Avenues (shown in purple) and one along West Broadway Avenue (shown in green).

Purpose of the Report

The Initial Route Evaluation Report released in March 2021 laid out a process and general timeline to identify a community-supported route for the project. Now, this Draft Route Modification Report describes the overall process, public input, and technical evaluation that will inform the recommendation of a modified route. The Final Route Modification Report will recommend a community supported route for further evaluation in spring 2022 that responds to the Project Principles and project goals.

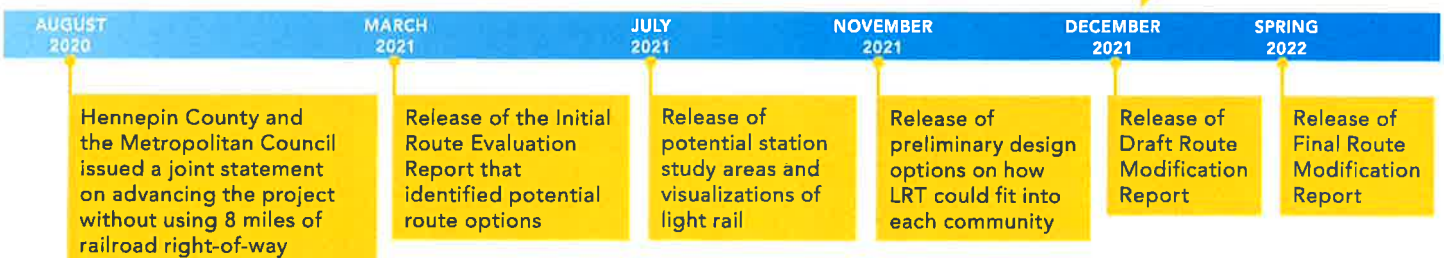
Help us select a route!

Now is the time to give comments as your feedback will shape the final recommendation. To submit your comments on the Draft Route Modification Report and for a list of upcoming community meetings, visit BlueLineExt.org.

Schedule

ONGOING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

We're here





METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION

Draft Route Modification Report Summary • December 2021

Community Engagement

The METRO Blue Line Extension Project relies on community voices to inform project decision-making. Since August 2020, the project has engaged with communities through a variety of activities, including in-person and virtual community meetings, door knocking, attending community events, online and paper surveys, and interactive maps. See below for the timing and project updates shared since August 2020.

- **Round 1 (August 2020 through January 2021):**
Input on project goals, concerns, opportunities, and thoughts on potential new routes
- **Round 2 (March 2021):**
Input on new route options released as part of the Initial Route Modification Report
- **Round 3 (July to August 2021):**
Input on the connections that light rail would make within communities and station locations within those areas
- **Round 4 (Late September to December 2021):**
Input on updated design concepts and potential opportunities and impacts of light rail options

Since March 2021, project staff have contracted directly with 12 community and cultural organizations to support a robust engagement process. These organizations are seeking feedback on the project by hosting activities prioritizing low-income communities, communities of color, and specific areas of the corridor. The community and cultural organizations include:

- Asian Media Access Inc
- CAPI USA
- Encouraging Leaders
- Harrison Neighborhood Association
- Juxtaposition Arts
- Lao Assistance Center of MN
- Liberian Business Association
- Northside Economic Opportunity Network
- Northside Residents Redevelopment Council
- West Broadway Business Coalition
- Jordan Area Community Council
- Hawthorne Neighborhood Council

Major themes heard from the community:

- Avoid impacts/disruption to communities and the environment
- Safety on transit and in communities served
- Easy pedestrian access to/from stations
- Anti-displacement efforts are a priority
- Support for businesses during construction
- Access to regional destinations
- Support economic development
- Improve the transit experience
- Improve access/serve transit dependent populations



October 9th Bike, Walk, Bus tour of Minneapolis route options and station study areas.

Anti-Displacement Initiative

The Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County are committed to delivering a light rail transit (LRT) investment that benefits current corridor residents and businesses. In response to feedback received during engagement activities, project partners are advancing efforts to address community concerns about housing affordability, business support, and displacement.

The project team is convening a diverse Anti-Displacement Workgroup with seats for agency and community partners to research and recommend programs and policies that will support this initiative. The Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) will lead and facilitate the Anti-Displacement Workgroup and provide recommendations in the next 18 months.

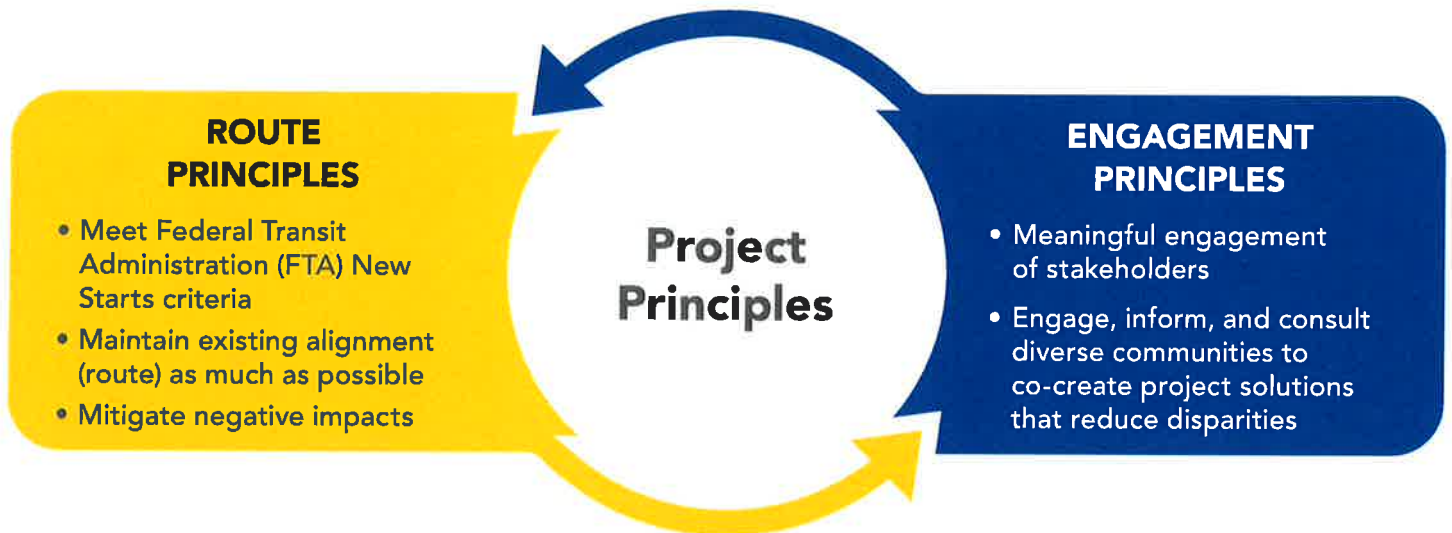


METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION

Draft Route Modification Report Summary • December 2021

Evaluation Process

To determine a community-supported route, the project team is considering Project Principles and goals, community and business feedback, and engineering requirements. Each route is evaluated against the project goals to see how it serves community needs.



Each route has been evaluated based on its ability to meet project goals. All the routes have received an overall assessment of “good” in their ability to serve the community. In some cases these routes achieve an excellent rating based on unique features and the potential to deliver exemplary positive benefits. None of the routes have been assessed as “poor,” which would mean they did not meet the project goals. The Evaluation Findings section of this report provides more detail on how each route was evaluated against the project goals.

ASSESSMENT OF ROUTE OPTIONS TO DEFINED GOALS

PROJECT GOAL	BOTTINEAU BOULEVARD (COUNTY ROAD 81) IN BROOKLYN PARK, CRYSTAL, AND ROBBINSDALE	LOWRY ROUTE	WEST BROADWAY ROUTE
Improve transit access and connections to jobs and regional destinations	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT
Improve frequency and reliability of transit service to communities in the corridor	EXCELLENT	GOOD	GOOD
Provide transit improvements that maximize transit benefits, while being cost competitive and economically viable	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD
Support communities' development goals	EXCELLENT	GOOD	EXCELLENT
Promote healthy communities and sound environmental practices including efforts to address climate change	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD
Advance local and regional equity and work towards reducing regional economic disparities	GOOD	GOOD	EXCELLENT



METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION

Draft Route Modification Report Summary • December 2021

Next Steps

The Draft Route Modification Report is available for public review, and comments will be accepted through **January 25, 2022**. The Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County will carefully review the community input received along with the findings from the technical analysis completed to date to recommend a community-supported route for further evaluation in spring 2022 as part of the Final Route Modification Report. Following that recommendation, design and technical evaluation of the recommended route will advance and will be documented in federal and state environmental review documents. Further robust community engagement will continue through these and future phases.

To submit your comments on the draft report and for a list of upcoming community meetings in January, visit BlueLineExt.org.

We're here ▶



LRT projects are complex and unforeseen challenges arise. Schedules and timelines are subject to change.

Blue Line Extension Community-Supported Route:

- Best meets the Project Principles and goals
- Grounded in community feedback through collaboration with stakeholders
- Supported by project corridor communities and decision-makers

Stay Connected!

For project questions or to invite us to an event, contact:

Brooklyn Park/Minneapolis/Robbinsdale/

Overall Project Questions:

Sophia Ginis – Sophia.Ginis@metrotransit.org

Crystal:

David Davies – David.Davies@metrotransit.org



Visit BlueLineExt.org for more information, to sign-up for the project newsletter, and share your comments, questions and concerns on our interactive feedback map.

@BluelineExt @Blue_Line_Extension
 @METROBlueLineExtension



METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Draft Route Modification Report

where they would like stations within those areas, if the right number of station study areas had been identified, and if they were overall in the correct location. [Read the full engagement report here.](#) Visualizations also began the conversation about how light rail might fit into the community.

Engagement in Robbinsdale

The following themes were identified through engagement activities held in Robbinsdale during the fall of 2021. One of the key features of engagement was a series of driveway talks hosted by Commissioner Lunde, community residents, and Robbinsdale policy makers from May to October 2021. This approach of meeting people where they are uncovered and documented key community issues and aspirations. This input was included in the public input summaries to inform project decision-making.

The following themes emerged from this input:

- Concerns about safe pedestrian crossing, including the need for pedestrian facilities such as a bridge to avoid traffic and visual details that encourage cars to slow down
- Questions about the history of the project and why freight rail property could not be used
- Desire for station design to focus on safety elements
- Ensure greenery is part of future design
- Ensure access to park, boat launch, and bike trails
- Some concern about noise increases near residential areas

Engagement in Crystal

The following themes were identified through engagement activities held in Crystal during the fall of 2021:

- Comments expressed support that the station area was similar and that the need for this transit connection was important
- Asked for designers to focus on safe pedestrian crossings and to minimize crossing distances, especially for those with mobility challenges
- Support for grade-separation of County Road 81, coupled with desire to make sure the station is visible and feels safe
- Some concern about noise or vibration increases near residential areas



November 16 Workshop at the Capri Theater



METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Draft Route Modification Report

DISPLACEMENT AND GENTRIFICATION

- Minimize impacts, disruption, and displacement of businesses and residents
 - Displacement and gentrification occurring along the route is the highest concern; need up front commitment from the project team on these issues before selecting a route
 - Need to address how those impacted by light rail will be compensated and how the project will create new ownership opportunities for housing
 - Concerned with limited development options after light rail is built
- Many of the people that live in the light rail corridor are immigrants and refugees who are low- to middle-income; they can't afford to be displaced
- Need to support young people on the Northside by generating jobs and apprenticeship opportunities
- How are we incorporating lessons learned from past transportation projects that negatively impacted Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities to inform our approach – such as Green Line and Blue Line?
- Need for affordable housing
- Need to preserve affordable commercial space for small businesses

STATION LOCATION AND LRT DESIGN

- Stations should be well lit and heated
- Stations should reflect local communities, culture, history; should enhance neighborhood aesthetically, not just for their function
- Easy/safe pedestrian access to stations is key; improve sidewalk connections
- Concern about lack of parking at stations will cause riders to park in neighborhoods
- Locate stations at major intersections
- Include wayfinding to local businesses, places to get food, etc.
- Incorporate street beautification and public art



Talk Out Lao'd Facebook live event hosted by Lao Assistance Center on May 26, 2021



METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Draft Route Modification Report

Figure 11: Existing, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) at 40th Avenue, Robbinsdale



Figure 12: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) at 40th Avenue, Robbinsdale

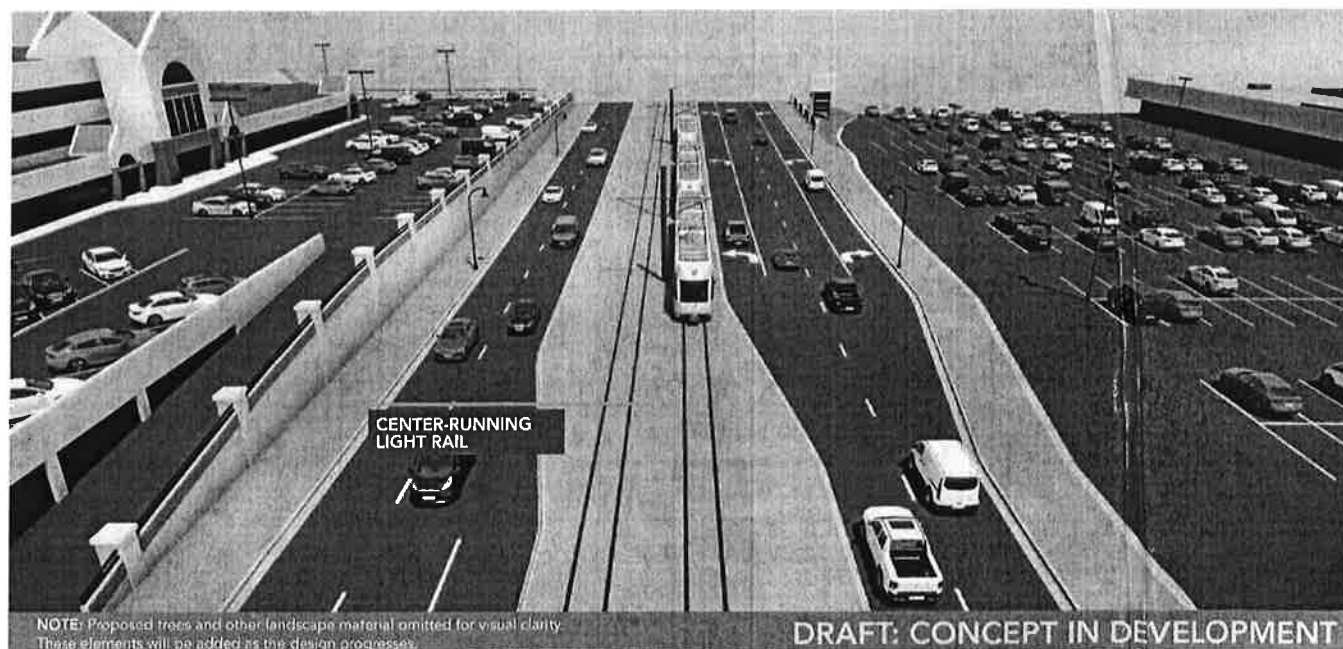


Figure 13: Existing, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) near Crystal Lake, Robbinsdale



Figure 14: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) near Crystal Lake, Robbinsdale





METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Draft Route Modification Report

Figure 15: Existing, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) near North Memorial, Robbinsdale

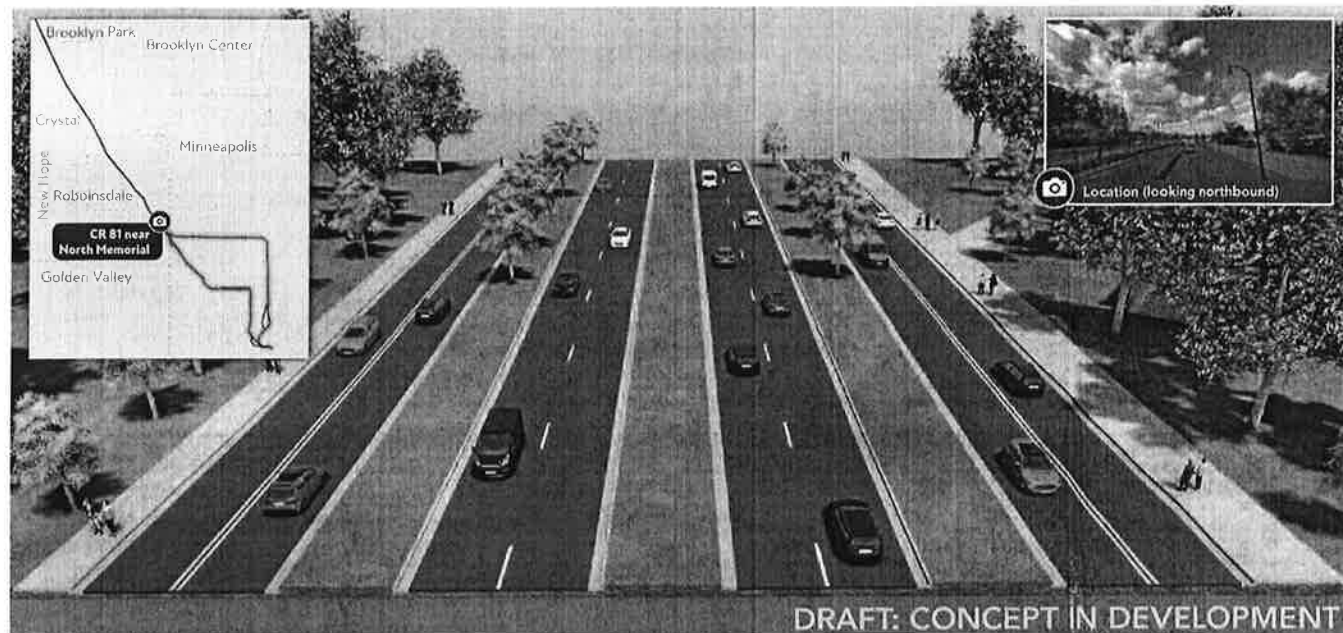
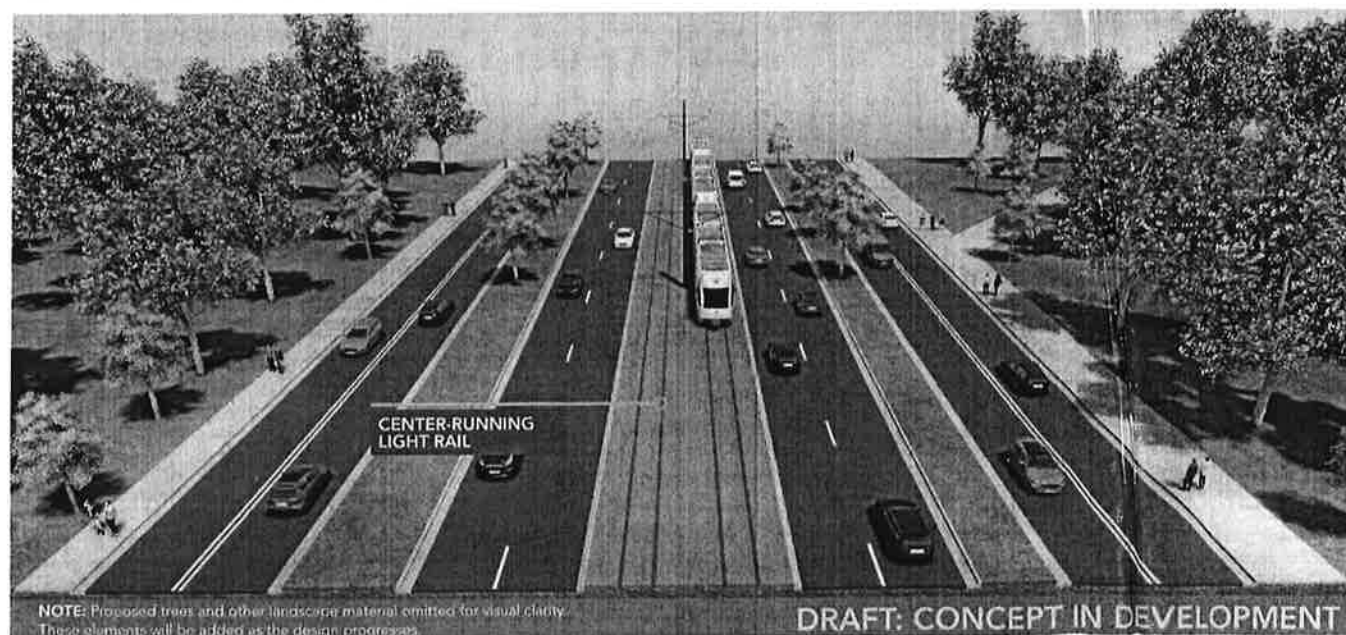


Figure 16: Concept, Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) near North Memorial, Robbinsdale





Evaluation Findings

Area 2: Brooklyn Park, Crystal, and Robbinsdale

Area 2 is proposed to run on Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) from approximately 73rd Avenue to the station at North Memorial. Stations in this section are proposed at 63rd Avenue, Bass Lake Road, downtown Robbinsdale, and North Memorial in Robbinsdale. This section of the route along Bottineau Boulevard replaces the route in the freight rail right-of-way.

The March 2021 report reflected locating LRT on Bottineau Boulevard in this area. Bottineau Boulevard is approximately 100 feet east of the rail corridor for much of this area. Constraining features in this section of the corridor include the Crystal Airport along with Twin and Crystal Lakes, all located just to the east of existing Bottineau Boulevard. While shifting from the original route to this proposed route will create different impacts and a need for new engineering solutions, a route along Bottineau Boulevard is the closest possible to the original, which is consistent with the Project Principle of maintaining existing alignment as much as possible. This is also an important consideration relative to the station area planning work that was previously completed in each of these communities.

While there is one route proposed in this area to avoid use of the freight rail right-of-way, it is important to assess its ability to meet the established project goals. This section summarizes how the proposed route on Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) meets each of the project goals. These goal-specific summary statements serve as supporting information to the summary table presented on page 44.



GOAL 1: IMPROVE TRANSIT ACCESS AND CONNECTIONS TO JOBS AND REGIONAL DESTINATIONS.

What informs this goal

- Overall ridership and ability to expand and improve service to people with limited or no access to cars
- Reverse commute and off-peak transit opportunities
- Opportunity to expand and improve transit system linkages and multimodal transportation opportunities

Assessment against the goal

As stated previously, the proposed route on Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) would include potential station areas at 63rd Avenue, Bass Lake Road, Downtown Robbinsdale and North Memorial. The potential station areas at 63rd Avenue and Bass Lake Road are relatively close to the previously planned stations, and would therefore provide similar access and connections to jobs and regional destinations as under the 2013 locally preferred alternative. In contrast, the potential station areas in Downtown Robbinsdale and North Memorial have the opportunity to provide access and connections to neighborhoods not directly served under the 2013 locally preferred alternative. As reflected in Figure 36, the potential Downtown Robbinsdale and North Memorial station areas have the ability to serve a broad walkshed area that includes the Downtown Robbinsdale area and the North Memorial medical complex, respectively. The North Memorial station would also provide access to Theodore Wirth Regional Park, Victory Park, and North Minneapolis.

Figure 36: Robbinsdale Station Area Walksheds



Source: 2019 U.S. Census American Community Survey Data, Urban Footprint

Note: Specific station locations have been identified for purposes of the walkshed evaluation.



METRO BLUE LINE EXTENSION Draft Route Modification Report



GOAL 2: IMPROVE FREQUENCY AND RELIABILITY OF TRANSIT SERVICE TO COMMUNITIES IN THE CORRIDOR.

What informs this goal

- Improve mobility for transit riders and attract new riders
- Expand and improve safe and efficient connections to existing and planned METRO transitways along with balancing improved transit accessibility with traffic mobility

Assessment against the goal

Providing transit in a dedicated guideway improves transit service reliability. Additionally, transit service frequency and regional connectivity would improve. Specific to traffic, in Crystal, redesignating one lane in each direction on Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) from general-purpose traffic lanes to LRT and the proposed grade-separation of County Road 81 at Bass Lake Road would result in similar intersection delay and travel times compared to No-Build conditions. In Robbinsdale, adding LRT in the median of Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) would result in similar intersection delay compared to No-Build conditions due to the minor impact LRT would have on intersection geometrics. As the design advances, additional coordination will take place with both cities to address traffic and safety concerns.

The proposed route could provide roadway and overall safety improvements at both signalized and unsignalized intersections in areas such as: incorporation of additional green space, pedestrian intervals to give pedestrians a head start crossing an intersection, potential for narrowing travel lanes to shorten pedestrian crossing distances and calm traffic, pedestrian crossing signals, new pavement, and pedestrian crossings that meet all current accessibility requirements.



GOAL 3: PROVIDE TRANSIT IMPROVEMENTS THAT MAXIMIZE TRANSIT BENEFITS, WHILE BEING COST COMPETITIVE AND ECONOMICALLY VIABLE.

What informs this goal

- Balance project benefits and costs through a tiered approach to capital, operating, and maintenance cost estimates

Assessment against the goal

Detailed capital cost estimates will be prepared as the community-supported route advances into more detailed design. Consistent with the Project Principle of meeting the FTA's New Starts criteria, which includes cost effectiveness criteria, the Metropolitan Council will work to define and advance a route that effectively balances capital and operating costs with overall transit system benefits. As the route on Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) is proposed to be at-grade and would run in existing transportation right-of-way, it is anticipated to be cost-competitive. With this approach in mind, the Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) route is assessed at achieving this goal with a "good" rating.



GOAL 4: SUPPORT COMMUNITIES' DEVELOPMENT GOALS.

What informs this goal

- Assessment of capacity and likelihood of transit-oriented development and/or redevelopment opportunities in station areas
- Assessment of consistency with approved plans and policies, including policies related to affordable housing and prioritization of transportation modes

Assessment against the goal

Based on experience with both the Blue and Green Lines in the Twin Cities, it is anticipated that public and private investment would be made before, during, and after BLRT is open. As the potential station areas at 63rd Avenue and Bass Lake Road are proximate to the original station locations, it is anticipated that previous work on transit-oriented development plans and policies at these stations would be applicable. Coordination with the City of Robbinsdale would continue to effectively integrate both the Downtown Robbinsdale and North Memorial stations into the surrounding community. Additionally, the Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County are committed to working with the cities of Crystal and Robbinsdale to implement a comprehensive, innovative set of strategies to help communities build wealth in place. These strategies will ensure the investment builds on, supports, and protects existing community assets and provides more opportunities for equitable housing, employment, business development, cultural experiences, and other activities of daily life.



GOAL 5: PROMOTE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES AND SOUND ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES INCLUDING EFFORTS TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE.

What informs this goal

- Minimize impacts to natural and cultural resources
- Assessment of connections from stations to recreation and healthy food options to maximize health and environmental benefits to BLRT communities
- Assessment of existing and future sidewalks and/or trail connection opportunities at stations to improve the safety, connections, and accessibility for people walking, biking, and rolling to the BLRT
- Assessment of potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through reducing vehicle miles traveled

Assessment against the goal

The proposed route would support advancing both the Minnesota Department of Transportation and Hennepin County's vehicle miles traveled reduction goals. Additionally, the proposed route provides an opportunity to locate LRT in an existing transportation facility, which could minimize overall environmental impacts and provide opportunities to improve pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The proposed route would provide access to area grocery stores and the regional park system. As reflected in the Next Steps section of this report, detailed environmental analysis and development of appropriate mitigation measures will be conducted as part of the federal and state environmental review process, including potentially sensitive areas around parks, historic resources and North Memorial.



GOAL 6: ADVANCE LOCAL AND REGIONAL EQUITY AND WORK TOWARDS REDUCING REGIONAL RACIAL DISPARITIES.

What informs this goal

- Opportunities to invest in historically disinvested communities and minimize displacement of corridor residents and businesses
- Maximizing cohesion, preservation, and enhancement of BLRT communities through assessment of improved access and connections to cultural and community assets along with opportunities to honor local heritage and character of BLRT communities
- Minimizing short-term and long-term impacts to property and property access, including property vehicle access, sidewalk access, on-street parking, and right-of-way acquisition



Assessment against the goal

The proposed BLRT route would be located along Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81), a current transportation facility, which minimizes right-of-way acquisition and supports cohesion. As reflected in previous goals, the route would improve accessibility and connectivity to the broader regional transit system, thereby improving overall access to jobs and activity centers throughout the region. Additionally, this route furthers regional equity by providing METRO access to environmental justice communities, particularly in Brooklyn Park and Crystal.

The Area 2 route on Bottineau Boulevard (County Road 81) has been evaluated based on its ability to effectively meet the defined project goals. As reflected in the following table, this route meets the project goals, as reflected in an overall assessment of “good.” Goals that achieve an “excellent” assessment include specific areas that inform that goal that are unique and/or have a high potential to provide exemplary positive benefits. As reflected in the table, this route has not been assessed at a “poor” level, which would represent not meeting the defined project goal.

Table 5: Area 2 Evaluation Summary

ASSESSMENT OF ROUTE OPTION TO DEFINED GOALS	
PROJECT GOAL	BOTTINEAU BOULEVARD (COUNTY ROAD 81) IN BROOKLYN PARK, CRYSTAL, AND ROBBINSDALE
 Goal 1: Improve transit access and connections to jobs and regional destinations	EXCELLENT
 Goal 2: Improve frequency and reliability of transit service to communities in the corridor	EXCELLENT
 Goal 3: Provide transit improvements that maximize transit benefits, while being cost competitive and economically viable	GOOD
 Goal 4: Support communities' development goals	EXCELLENT
 Goal 5: Promote healthy communities and sound environmental practices including efforts to address climate change	GOOD
 Goal 6: Advance local and regional equity and work towards reducing regional racial disparities	GOOD

Area 3: Minneapolis

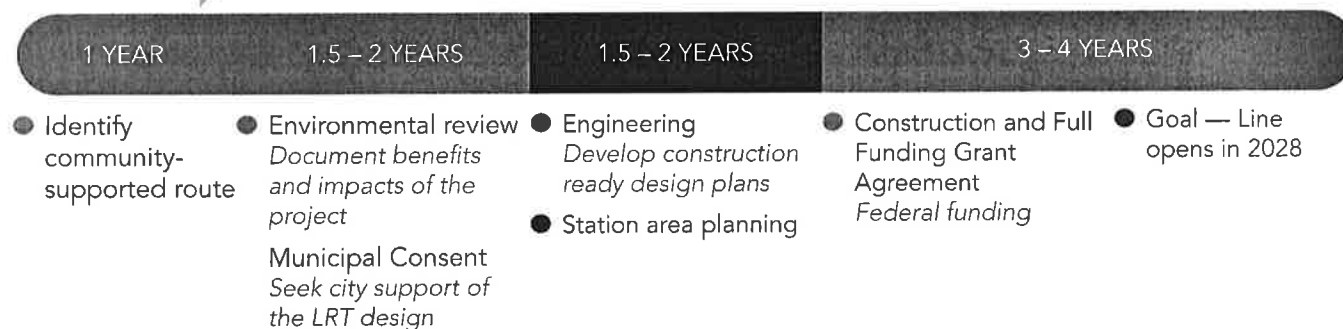
For the purposes of this evaluation, the routes being considered in Minneapolis can be divided into two sections: the Lowry route and the West Broadway route. Under the umbrella of each route option, several different designs are being considered to minimize impacts and maximize benefits. These are determined in part by engineering standards and constraints.

This section will discuss each of the project goals and how the two main route options for Minneapolis address those goals. Of the three areas, Area 3 has the most changes to the proposed route from the former route, and the evaluation for this area has correspondingly more detail.

Next Steps

This Draft Route Modification Report will be available for public comment for 45 days. The Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County will review this input along with findings from technical analyses and recommend a community-supported route for further evaluation. This recommendation will be documented in the Final Route Modification Report in spring 2022. Both versions of the report will be guided by Project Principles and goals, community feedback, engineering and environmental considerations, and other factors. After a community-supported route is officially adopted by the Metropolitan Council, work on the design and environmental review will advance.

We're here



LRT projects are complex and unforeseen challenges arise. Schedules and timelines are subject to change.

Blue Line Extension Community-Supported Route:

- Best meets the Project Principles and goals
- Grounded in community feedback through collaboration with stakeholders
- Supported by project corridor communities and decision-makers

Station Area Planning

As engineering and design work continues on the community-supported route, station area planning will also be conducted. This process will focus on access to stations via walking, biking, and other modes, and development opportunities to maximize station area potential. Community benefits such as improved pedestrian facilities, landscaping, and urban design amenities will also be realized through station area planning. The project is committed to equitable development around station areas, and the tools and strategies created by the Anti-Displacement Workgroup will inform the station area planning process.

Environmental Review

Through federal and state environmental review, a detailed evaluation of the community-supported route will be completed and documented. As part of this process, impacts and proposed mitigation in areas such as access, property, parking loss, construction, pedestrian safety, traffic congestion, and noise will be defined. The FTA is the lead federal agency for the environmental review and is also a critical funding partner. The Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County are in close coordination with the FTA on the local decision-making process.



currently underway as well as the upcoming environmental process requirements. Additionally, through the environmental review process, the Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County will work closely with project partners at all levels to effectively address and advance defined goals and policies set forth in adopted plans and applicable design guidelines.

The environmental analysis will be informed by advanced design and input from the Anti-Displacement Workgroup. Based on the community-supported route that advances, coordination with reviewing and permitting agencies and each of the corridor cities will continue to further define the project, anticipated limits of disturbance for evaluation, and development of mitigation measures as noted above.

A brief summary of some of the additional analysis to be completed during the environmental review phase is provided below.

Water Resources (Wetlands, Floodplains, Public Waters, Impaired Waters)

For an initial understanding of potential impacts to water resources, standard publicly available data sources were reviewed through a desktop Geographic Information Systems analysis process. As the project progresses, water resource agencies will be consulted to better understand impacts and mitigation requirements. These agencies may include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR), and watershed districts/watershed management organizations. If necessary, field surveys may be conducted to gain additional information regarding water resources in the project area.

Wildlife, Wildlife Habitat, and Threatened and Endangered Species

The Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS), a MNDNR database of known federal and state rare, threatened, and endangered species and critical habitat areas, was reviewed to assess the potential for impacts to these natural resources. Agencies such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the MNDNR will be consulted to better understand potential natural resource impacts and any required mitigation. If necessary, field surveys will be conducted to gain additional information regarding natural resources in the project area.

Parks

Parks in the project area were identified through a review of publicly available data from jurisdictions and the Metropolitan Council through a desktop GIS analysis process. Although there are many parks and recreational areas identified within the project area, the potential for direct impacts is limited to two parks. Both of these parks are managed by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. Theodore Wirth Regional Park would likely see a direct impact under both the West Broadway and Lowry routes. At 740 acres, Theodore Wirth Regional Park is the largest park in the Minneapolis park system. The portion that could be affected by both the Lowry and West Broadway routes is located at the very northern limit of the park, where it transitions to Victory Memorial Parkway. Hall Park is a 6-acre park in the Near North neighborhood of Minneapolis, divided into two sections by Lyndale Avenue but connected by a pedestrian bridge that provides access across Lyndale. The Lyndale section of the West Broadway route is anticipated to impact that existing pedestrian crossings. Impacts to these parks, as well as any others that could be affected by the project, will require close coordination with the agencies that have jurisdiction over the parks. Avoiding direct impacts to parks and recreational facilities is important, and as the project advances, opportunities to avoid impacts will be explored.

Visual Impacts

At this stage of project design, the potential for visual impacts was assessed by identifying the locations where major project elements, such as bridges, stations, and park-and-ride facilities, would be located. As the project moves into the design process, visual effects will be assessed by evaluating visual character, reviewing proposed plans and features, and documenting existing conditions to evaluate impacts. If an impact is identified

that cannot be avoided, mitigation such as minimizing nighttime operational lighting and visual screening of project facilities would be identified.

Noise and Vibration

A preliminary assessment of the project's potential for noise and vibration impacts was completed based on known land uses, determined using GIS information provided by jurisdictions and the Metropolitan Council as well as input from early outreach activities. The assessment used current guidance from the FTA on how an assessment of noise and vibration impacts should be conducted. This includes looking at categories of potential impact, including sites of high sensitivity (e.g., recording studios and concert halls), residential uses, and institutional uses like schools, theaters, and churches. Three properties that were noted during early outreach activities were North Memorial Hospital (sensitive to vibration, according to the FTA impact assessment methodology), the Capri Theater and KMOJ (sensitive to noise). For these and all potentially sensitive properties, a detailed assessment of impacts will be conducted when the project advances. Opportunities to successfully mitigate impacts for noise include applying vehicle and equipment noise specifications, operational restrictions, and measures to keep all rail equipment in optimal operating condition. Vibration mitigation measures could include special systems installed to support the LRT tracks and measures to keep the tracks and vehicles in optimal operating condition. It is important to note that a full understanding of vibration impacts requires knowing the location of vibration sensitive activities and equipment within a building. For example, North Memorial is identified as a complex with a high sensitivity to vibration from the project; however, many of the structures near the proposed BLRT tracks are used for parking and other types of uses that likely would not be affected by LRT-generated vibration. The detailed noise and vibration impact assessment completed for the project when it advances will evaluate this in greater detail.

Cultural Resources

As the project advances, impacts to cultural resources will proceed in consultation with the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office, FTA, and other interested parties, including the public. These steps will include defining the project's area of potential effect (APE), identifying all listed and eligible historic properties within this area, assessing whether there will be any adverse impacts of the project on these properties, and (if required) committing to mitigation that will offset adverse effects.

Environmental Justice

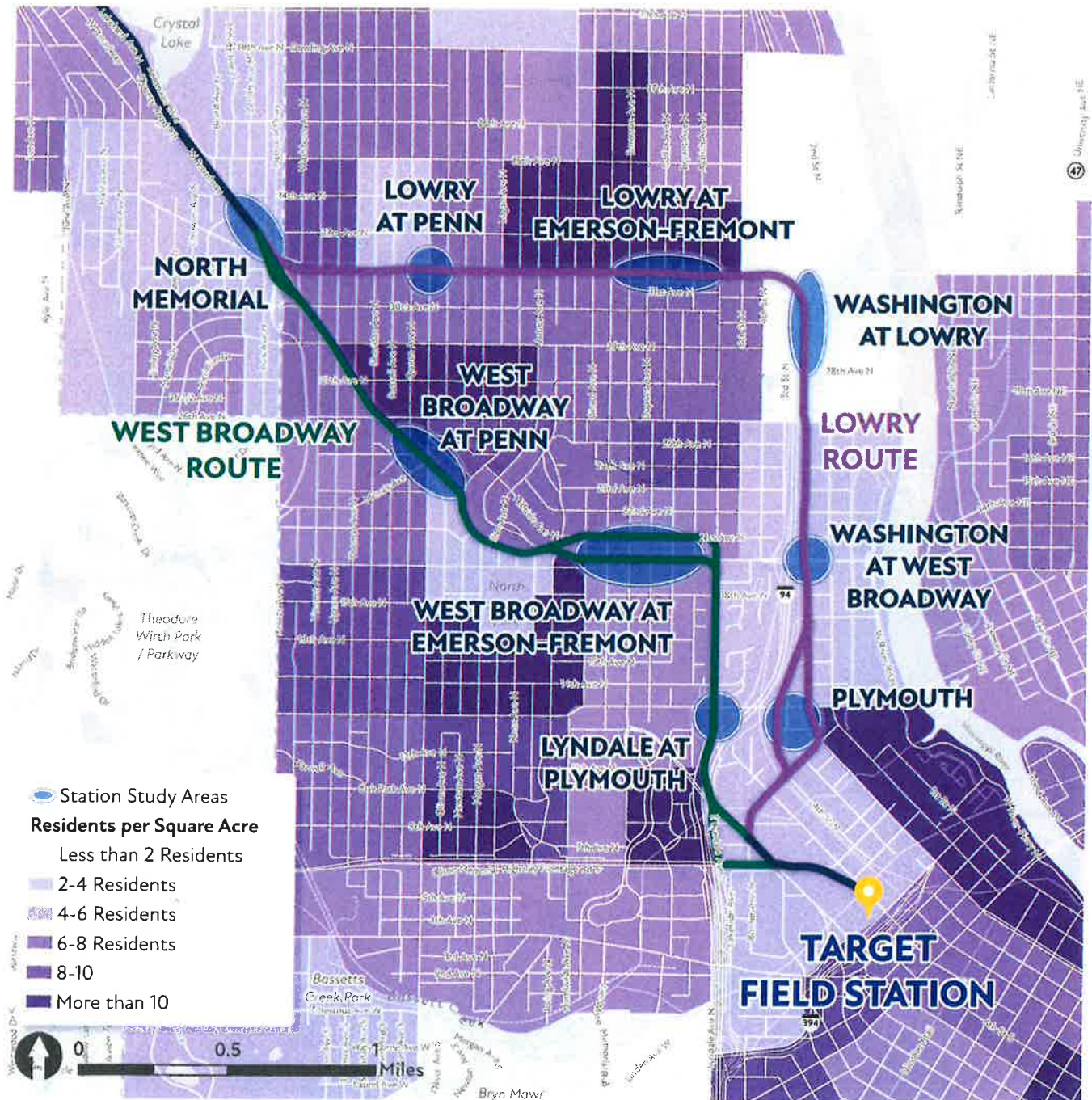
Executive Order 12898: Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations (1994) serves as the basis for implementation of environmental strategies in all federal agencies within the executive branch. As a federal agency, the FTA is required to identify and address "disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations and to include environmental justice analysis in the National Environmental Policy Act process."

As the BLRT project advances into the federal and state environmental review process, the Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County will work with the communities to minimize impacts and maximize benefits to environmental justice communities served throughout the corridor, from Minneapolis to Brooklyn Park. Input from the Anti-Displacement Workgroup will also be an important element in this evaluation and development of appropriate mitigation strategies.

Population Density

The proposed stations along the Lowry Avenue section of the Lowry route would serve neighborhoods with relatively high population density. Population density along the Washington Avenue section of the route, by contrast, is relatively low. This can be attributed to the industrial nature of that section and the presence of Interstate 94. The proposed stations along the West Broadway route would serve neighborhoods with a higher population density than the Lowry route.

Figure 44: Residents per Square Acre

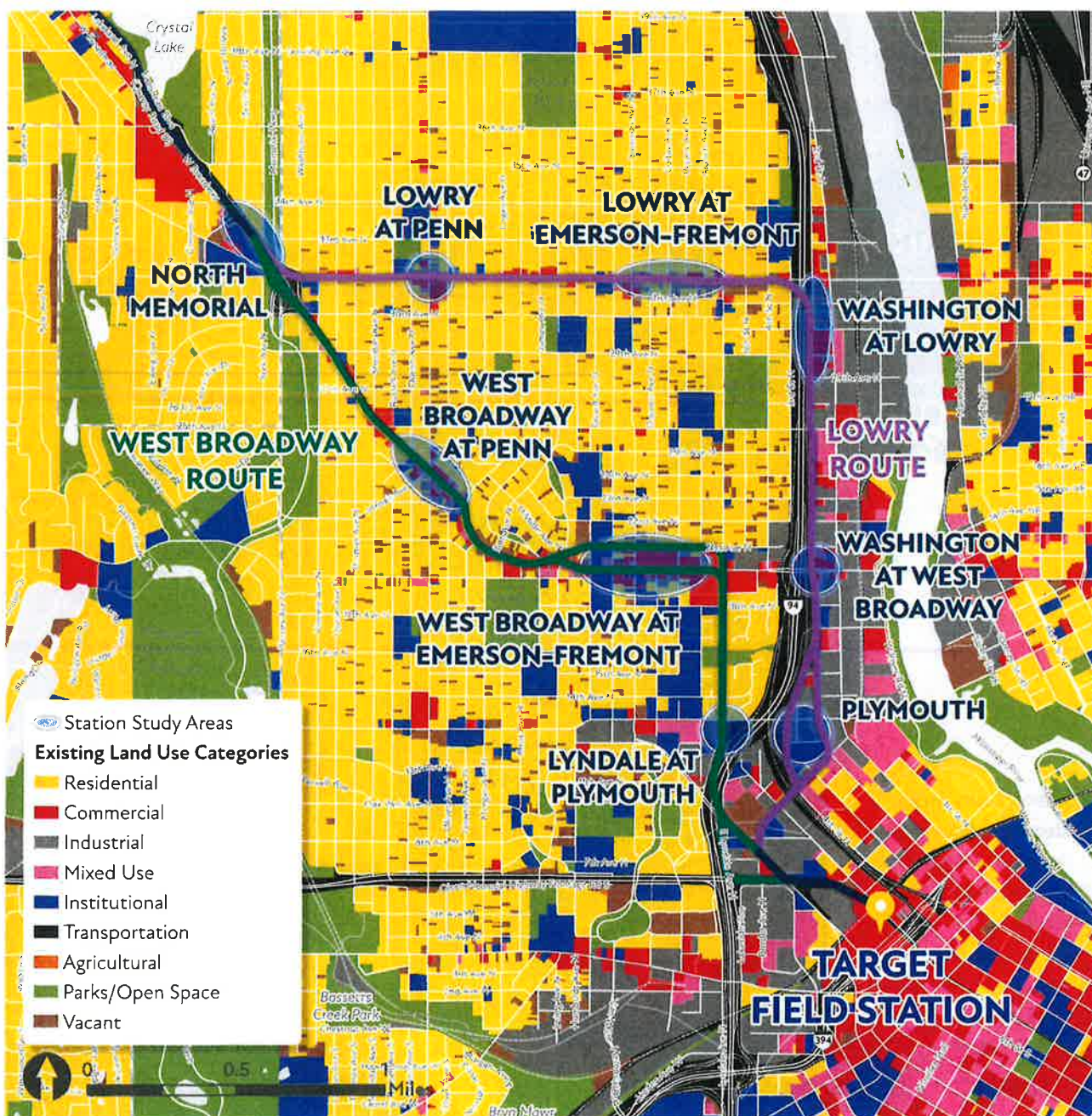


Land Use

The proposed route on Lowry Avenue is surrounded primarily by residential land uses and some commercial uses. On the east side of Washington Avenue, land use is industrial and commercial, with Interstate 94 to the west of the proposed route.

Along the West Broadway route, commercial land uses are concentrated proximate to the proposed route on West Broadway Avenue, with residential areas to the north and south of these commercial areas. The Lyndale Avenue section is mostly residential along with institutional uses to the west.

Figure 45: Existing Land Use Categories



Source: Metropolitan Council