

METRO Blue Line Extension (Bottineau LRT)
Minneapolis, Minnesota
New Starts Engineering
(Updated March 2021)

Summary Description	
Proposed Project:	Light Rail Transit Extension Alignment Under Review Locally
Total Capital Cost (\$YOE):	TBD
Section 5309 CIG Share (\$YOE):	TBD
Annual Operating Cost:	TBD
Current Year Ridership Forecast:	TBD
Horizon Year Ridership Forecast:	TBD
Overall Project Rating:	Under Review
Project Justification Rating:	Under Review
Local Financial Commitment Rating:	Under Review

Project Description: The Metropolitan Council (MC) is planning a light rail transit (LRT) extension of the METRO Blue Line from the existing Target Field LRT station in downtown Minneapolis to Brooklyn Park in suburban Hennepin County, serving the suburban municipalities of Golden Valley, Robbinsdale and Crystal. A 13.5-mile project with 11 stations was selected as the locally preferred alternative and advanced into the Engineering phase of the Capital Investment Grants program. However, after repeated unsuccessful attempts to negotiate with a freight rail operator that owned part of the proposed alignment, in August 2020, the Met Council announced it would advance the Project without using the freight rail right-of-way. A public outreach process on examining revised alignments began in March 2021.

Project Purpose: The Project is intended to improve access to employment and activity centers outside of downtown Minneapolis, which has nearly 140,000 jobs and a growing population. Key destinations in the Project corridor include North Hennepin Community College and a large, growing Target corporate campus near the northern end of the line in Brooklyn Park. Additionally, the Project is expected to improve transit service for residents in the corridor, who are generally more dependent on transit and lower-income than the overall population in the Twin Cities region. Finally, the Project provides through service along the existing METRO Blue Line to the Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport and Mall of America, with connections in downtown Minneapolis to the University of Minnesota campus and downtown St. Paul via the METRO Green Line.

Project Development History, Status and Next Steps: Following completion of an alternatives analysis study for the corridor, MC and its project partners selected LRT as the locally preferred alternative and added it to the region's fiscally constrained long-range transportation plan in May 2013. A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was released in May 2014. FTA admitted the Project into New Starts Project Development in August 2014. The Final EIS was released in July 2016, followed by FTA's issuance of a Record of Decision by FTA in September 2016. FTA approved the project into Engineering in January 2017.

In August 2020, the Met Council announced it would no longer pursue co-locating eight miles of the rail corridor on freight rail right-of-way. The Met Council began a public outreach process to select an alternative alignment in March 2021, and anticipates selecting a revised project alignment by the end of 2021.

Significant Changes Since Last Evaluation (November 2018): The project alignment is being reconsidered, making the previous rating no longer applicable. A new alignment is “Under Review” by local officials and the public.