



City of Brooklyn Park
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June 6, 2023

Chair Charlie Zelle and Corridor Management Committee
Metropolitan Council
390 Robert Street North
Saint Paul, MN 55101

Dear Chair Zelle and Members of the Corridor Management Committee:

Throughout the journey of planning the Blue Line Extension, Brooklyn Park community members, elected officials, and City staff have remained engaged in the process and are committed to seeing the project through. As the region approaches the next decision-making milestone for the project, we want to re-iterate the City's support for the route modification made in 2022 and for the Blue Line Extension as a whole. We also want to take this opportunity to convey the City's position on the following topics.

Anti-displacement

The City appreciates the work that has been completed to date by the Anti-Displacement Working Group and the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs on identifying strategies for ensuring that the community currently in place benefits from the project. Fulfilling the promise of anti-displacement will require a sustained commitment at all levels of government, with a coordinated, prioritized, and targeted approach. Community members will be more confident in the promise of LRT with a regional commitment to fully fund anti-displacement initiatives at the same level of certainty as the physical aspects of the project, and with the strategies formally identified as required mitigation in the Environmental Impact Statement. It will also be critical to continue direct engagement with the community throughout the process of implementation.

We also understand that community commitment to the project in the face of potential displacement extends beyond the borders of Brooklyn Park, with concerns expressed throughout the corridor. This relates directly to project routing and design decisions along the West Broadway corridor in Minneapolis. Minimizing direct and indirect impacts to businesses and residents along that part of the route should be a primary focus of the project, with clear communication about the tradeoffs involved.

Public Safety

The success of the METRO Blue Line Extension depends on addressing the public safety challenges that Metro Transit riders have been experiencing over the past three years. While we believe that public transit is a fundamentally safe form of transportation, we cannot ignore the feedback we hear from riders about the uncomfortable and sometimes dangerous situations they are facing on buses and trains. We appreciate that Metro Transit has developed a detailed strategy for improving public safety, and that this work is now underway with funding from the legislature.

East-West Bus Connections

Each of the five planned stations in Brooklyn Park will be located at an intersection with an important east-west corridor in our community, each bringing opportunities to connect community members to the stations via multiple modes of transportation. In partnership with the project office, Hennepin County, and Three Rivers Park District, the City has been planning for and constructing pedestrian and bicycle improvements to provide these connections to the stations in time for opening day. Still undefined is the extent of bus service that will serve the stations. We understand that Metro Transit will conduct a future study to plan connecting bus routes, but we believe there is some urgency to complete this work so that final engineering can take into account the facilities necessary to serve bus riders.

We also request that Metro Transit prioritize improvements to east-west bus service in the short term, prior to opening of the METRO Blue Line Extension, through the Network Now planning process currently underway. Some census tracts in Brooklyn Park have among the highest rates of zero- and one-car households in the region, and residents who rely on buses for their daily needs cannot wait until 2030 for route improvements.

Design

City staff have been working closely with the project office on design details emanating from the 2022 route modification, and we appreciate the coordination and cooperation. This work builds on years of collaboration on the original route, which is mostly unchanged in Brooklyn Park. Following are key issues that require resolution prior to municipal consent:

63rd Avenue Station – The route modification shifted the location of the 63rd Avenue station platform from the west side of Bottineau Boulevard to the median. Design of this station and surrounding area will require careful attention to safe and efficient pedestrian crossings from both sides of the road. This includes reducing vehicle speeds on Bottineau Boulevard to 45 mph through design cues and a reduction in the posted speed limit. We also request that the project office explore grade separation options, similar to the work at Bass Lake Road in Crystal.

73rd Avenue Flyover – With the LRT guideway running down the middle of Bottineau Boulevard, the geometry of the flyover at 73rd Avenue will change somewhat. It will be important to ensure that development opportunities and planned street connections are retained in that area with the modified design. Also, we request that the project team meet with each property owner and tenant impacted by the design changes to ensure they are informed of the changes and have an opportunity to have their questions answered.

Oak Grove Station Area – Earlier in the design process, MNDOT and the project office committed to including an east-west street in the northwest quadrant of West Broadway and Highway 610 to serve new development, known as the “fourth leg.” This connection is critical to realizing the vision of the station area plan for high quality mixed-use development, and it must be included in the final project design. The City also requests that the grade-separated Rush Creek Trail crossing at Winnetka Avenue be included in

the project to ensure safe bike and pedestrian crossing at the northern boundary of the project area.

The City of Brooklyn Park continues to prepare for opening day of the Blue Line Extension and is making proactive investments to ensure that the project contributes to the prosperity of our community and the northwest area of the region. We appreciate the partnership of the Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County and look forward to the next steps in the process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hollies", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hollies Winston
Mayor of Brooklyn Park

CC Chris Beckwith, METRO Blue Line Extension Project Director
Dan Soler, Hennepin County Director of Transit and Mobility