



Request for City Council Committee Action From the Department of Public Works

Date: January 31, 2012

To: Honorable Sandra Colvin Roy, Chair Transportation & Public Works Committee

Subject: **Bottineau Transitway Draft Environmental Impact Statement Scoping
Comments and Memorandum of Understanding**

Recommendation:

1. Receive and file presentation by Hennepin County on the Bottineau Transitway Draft Environmental Impact Statement process.
2. Accept the invitation to become a participating agency for the Bottineau Transitway Draft Environmental Impact Statement process.
3. Approve and submit comments on the scope of issues to be studied in the Bottineau Transitway Draft Environmental Impact Statement.
4. Endorse the D1 alignment for the Bottineau Transitway, subject to an executed Memorandum of Understanding with Hennepin County and Metro Transit to pursue an arterial transitway project and transit-oriented development initiatives in North Minneapolis, separate from the Bottineau Transitway project.

Previous Directives:

- September 22, 2009 – T&PW Committee received and filed presentation on the Bottineau Transitway Alternatives Analysis Study.

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Approved by:

Steven A. Kotke, P.E., City Engineer, Director of Public Works

Presenters: Anna Flintoft, Transportation Planner, Public Works
David Frank, Director of Transit-Oriented Development, CPED
Joe Gladke, Hennepin County

Reviews:

Permanent Review Committee (PRC):	Not Applicable
Civil Rights Affirmative Action Plan:	Not Applicable
Policy Review Group (PRG):	Not Applicable

Financial Impact

No financial impact

Community Impact

Neighborhood Notification: Not applicable

City Goals: CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

Comprehensive Plan: Implementing a network of regional transitways is consistent with the transportation goals in the Comprehensive Plan.

Zoning Code: Not Applicable

Background/Supporting Information

The Bottineau corridor runs between downtown Minneapolis and North Minneapolis through Golden Valley, Crystal, Robbinsdale, New Hope, Osseo, Brooklyn Park and Maple Grove. Hennepin County previously conducted an alternatives analysis study for the corridor, which progressively narrowed the transitway build alternatives from a large universe of alternatives to 4 Light Rail Transit (LRT) alternatives and 1 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) alternative. The LRT alternatives include two suburban alignment options ("B" to Brooklyn Park and "A" to Maple Grove) and two North Minneapolis alignment options ("D1" via the BNSF railroad right-of-way through Theodore Wirth Park and Olson Memorial Highway and "D2" via West Broadway Avenue, Penn Avenue N, and Olson Memorial Highway). The BRT alternative includes the "B" and "D1" alignments.

The next phase of study is now underway. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority, and the Metropolitan Council have initiated the environmental review process for the Bottineau Transitway project. A Draft Environmental Impact Statement is being prepared for the project, and the formal "Scoping" process is currently underway to determine the scope of the DEIS. The attached scoping booklet provides information about the scoping process. The scoping public comment period closes on February 17, 2012, and the public and agencies are encouraged to provide comments. Several public open houses have been held, with the final open house on the evening of January 31:

- Monday, January 23, 4:30-6:30pm, Theodore Wirth Chalet, 1301 Theodore Wirth Parkway, Minneapolis
- Tuesday, January 24, 6-8pm, Brooklyn Park City Hall, 5200 85th Avenue N, Brooklyn Park
- Wednesday, January 25, 5:30-7:30pm, Urban Research and Outreach/Engagement Center (UROC), 2001 Plymouth Avenue N, Minneapolis
- Tuesday, January 31, 6-8pm, Robbinsdale City Hall, 4100 Lakeview Avenue N, Robbinsdale

The City of Minneapolis is also expected to be invited, along with other corridor jurisdictions and agencies, to be a participating agency for the DEIS. It is anticipated that a letter of invitation from the FTA will be received prior to the February 10 City Council meeting.

In addition to the DEIS process, selection of the locally preferred alternative (LPA) for the Alternatives Analysis process has not yet been completed. Hennepin County would like to complete the LPA approval process May-June 2012, including approvals by the technical staff committee (Advise, Review, Communicate Committee), the Policy Advisory Committee, the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority, and the city councils of communities along the corridor, followed by Metropolitan Council approval.

As described in the attached draft scoping comments, there are issues of concern with both of the North Minneapolis alignment options. D1 is faster and less expensive than D2, but it largely bypasses North Minneapolis and does not extend the transportation and economic development benefits provided by the transitway to North Minneapolis. D2 more directly serves North Minneapolis than D1, but it has significant impacts on the community, including acquisition of all of the houses on the west side of Penn Avenue between West Broadway and Olson Memorial Highway, a reduction of the traffic lanes on West Broadway Avenue from 4 lanes to 2 lanes and

elimination of the off-peak on-street parking, and reduction of east-west through streets crossing Penn Avenue. Like most streets in North Minneapolis, West Broadway and Penn avenues have narrow rights-of-way (75 feet on West Broadway and 66 feet on Penn Avenue), which is very constrained for LRT or BRT operating with an exclusive runningway. (As a comparison, University Avenue where Central Corridor LRT is being constructed has a 120 foot right-of-way.) Other D2 subalternatives on Oliver and Penn avenues have been investigated and also have significant negative impacts. City staff, with the assistance of the Bottineau project team, have not been able to identify other alternative alignment options through North Minneapolis for LRT or dedicated busway modes that do not have similar significant negative impacts due to the physical constraints of existing neighborhoods with narrow street rights-of-way throughout North Minneapolis.

Unlike the impacts of the D2 alignment alternative, staff believes that the issues of concern associated with the D1 alignment could be avoided through improvements to the broader transit network, including specifically one or more arterial transitway projects connecting North Minneapolis to the regional transitway system via premium transit service along arterial streets, potentially including West Broadway Avenue, Penn Avenue and Emerson/Fremont Avenues. Metro Transit is currently studying these types of premium transit improvements through the *Arterial Transitway Corridors Study*; however, there has been no commitment to fund and implement these improvements.

Therefore, staff is recommending that the City endorse the D1 alignment alternative only if the City, Metro Transit and Hennepin County can come to an agreement to cooperatively pursue one or more arterial transitway projects, transit-oriented development, and livability initiatives in North Minneapolis. Discussions with Hennepin County and Metro Transit about such an agreement are underway. Staff recommends that such an agreement be executed prior to June 2012 when Hennepin County and Metropolitan Council are expected to request a City Council resolution supporting the Bottineau Transitway LPA.

At the January 31 T&PW meeting, Hennepin County staff will present an overview of the Bottineau Transitway DEIS process. Staff is also recommending that the City accept the invitation to become a participating agency for the Bottineau Transitway Draft Environmental Impact Statement process, approve and submit the attached draft comments on the scope of issues to be studied in the Bottineau Transitway Draft Environmental Impact Statement, and endorse the D1 alignment for the Bottineau Transitway, subject to an executed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Hennepin County and Metro Transit to pursue an arterial transitway project and transit-oriented development initiatives in North Minneapolis, separate from the Bottineau Transitway project, as described in the attached MOU conditions.

Attachments:

- Bottineau Transitway DEIS Scoping Booklet
- Draft City comments on the scope of issues to be studied in the Bottineau Transitway Draft Environmental Impact Statement.
- Bottineau Memorandum of Understanding Conditions