

City of Minneapolis Bottineau DEIS Scoping Comments
DRAFT 1/23/2012

1. D Alignment Alternatives Issues

The City of Minneapolis has significant concerns with the impacts of the D2 alignment alternative. The D2c alignment alternative through North Minneapolis along West Broadway and Penn Avenue North has significant negative impacts on the communities in North Minneapolis. Like most North Minneapolis streets, it has a narrow right-of-way width (66 feet on Penn Avenue N and 75 feet on West Broadway Avenue) and requires right-of-way acquisition along a 1+ mile stretch of Penn Avenue North, including all of the single-family homes on the west side of the street, in order to fit the LRT and maintain two-way traffic. The remaining parcels on the west side of Penn Avenue would be substantially smaller, and it is not known whether they could be redeveloped. In addition, West Broadway Avenue would be reduced from 4 traffic lanes to 2 traffic lanes, and the existing off-peak on-street parking would be removed. There has been significant study of subalternatives for the D2 alignment on Penn and Oliver avenues (D2a and D2b); these subalternatives also had 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.

The City of Minneapolis also has significant concerns with the D1 alignment alternative. One of the factors contributing to the need for the Bottineau Transitway project is to improve transit access for the high proportion of people who depend on transit in the study area. As stated in the DEIS Scoping Booklet, 14% of households in the project area do not own a vehicle, compared with only 8% regionwide, but that in some areas of North Minneapolis, the number of zero-car households exceeds 50%. The D1 alignment alternative, however, largely bypasses these transit-dependent communities in North Minneapolis and does not extend the transportation and economic development benefits provided by the transitway directly to these communities.

Unlike the impacts of the D2 alignment alternative, the City of Minneapolis 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. These types of transitway improvements generally operate in mixed traffic and are more compatible with the existing neighborhoods and narrow street rights-of-way in North Minneapolis. 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. These arterial transitway improvements are needed now, regardless of a Bottineau Transitway improvement because they improve the quality of transit service of existing high-ridership bus routes that are planned to remain in place with the Bottineau Transitway improvement. While they will

improve transit connections between North Minneapolis and the Bottineau Transitway, they do not duplicate the transit service to be provided in the future by the Bottineau Transitway. Therefore, the City of Minneapolis strongly supports implementing these arterial transitway improvements in North Minneapolis independently from the Bottineau Transitway project.

Recommendation: The City of Minneapolis recommends that the DEIS include an analysis of the distribution of the project's benefits relative to the transit-dependent, minority and low-income communities in the corridor for the D1 alignment alternative. The City also recommends that, separate from the Bottineau Transitway project, the Twin Cities region pursue arterial transitway improvements on one or more arterial streets in North Minneapolis, potentially including West Broadway Avenue, Penn Avenue North, and Emerson/Fremont Avenue N.

2. D1 Reverse-Commute Feeder Bus Network

One of the factors contributing to the need for the Bottineau Transitway project, as stated in the DEIS Scoping Booklet, is to improve transit access in the reverse-commute direction between Minneapolis and the inner northwest suburbs to schools and jobs in Maple Grove and Brooklyn Park. Because the D1 alignment alternative largely bypasses North Minneapolis, as stated in comment #2, it is extremely important that the feeder bus network be modified to provide convenient transit connections to the D1-C stations from North Minneapolis neighborhoods in the reverse commute direction. Currently, the majority of bus service in North Minneapolis, particularly in neighborhoods north of Lowry Avenue, terminates at the Brooklyn Center Transit Center, which does not connect with the D1-C stations. In the inbound direction, the existing bus network provides reasonable connections to the LRT system in downtown and the D1 alignment on Highway 55.

Recommendation: The City of Minneapolis recommends that the DEIS include an evaluation of reverse-commute feeder bus connection options to the D1 alignment and identify improvements to the feeder bus network to the D1 alignment connecting residents in North Minneapolis with jobs and schools in the northwest suburbs.

3. D1 Station Locations in Theodore Wirth Park

The two D1 alignment station location options in Theodore Wirth Park just west of the North Minneapolis neighborhoods are at Golden Valley Road and Plymouth Avenue. There are benefits to both of these station locations. The Golden Valley Road station has more roadway connections through both Minneapolis and Golden Valley, and these roadways are designed to carry heavy vehicles; it therefore, offers more opportunities for feeder bus connections, which is particularly important for neighborhoods north of West Broadway Avenue. The Plymouth Avenue station provides direct access to the main entrance of Theodore Wirth Park, a regional park, and has more housing units within a ½ mile radius of the station than the Golden Valley Road station; however, it has fewer opportunities for feeder bus connections. The proximity and use of these two stations is similar to the 46th St and 50th Street/Minnehaha Park stations on the Hiawatha LRT.

Recommendation: The City of Minneapolis recommends that the DEIS include an evaluation of the benefits and costs of including stations at both Golden Valley Rd and Plymouth Avenue along the D1 alignment.

4. **D1/D2 Highway 55 Pedestrian Environment**

Both the D1 and D2 alignment alternatives run on Highway 55 into downtown Minneapolis. Highway 55 is a wide, multi-lane roadway with residential neighborhoods on either side. There are currently pedestrian crossings every 1/16 to 1/8 mile along Highway 55 through either signalized intersections or uncontrolled pedestrian crossings connecting the discontinuous streets to the north and south. The introduction of a transitway and potential redevelopment spurred by the transitway will increase the number of pedestrians crossing this busy roadway to access stations or other neighborhood destinations. It is important that pedestrian crossing opportunities be conveniently located and safely designed to accommodate this increased pedestrian activity. In addition, the initial D1/D2 alignment concepts on Highway 55 included geometric changes to add turning lanes, resulting in a wider roadway for pedestrians to cross and narrowing space behind the curb for sidewalks and tree boulevards, which could be contrary to the goal of creating a transit-oriented, pedestrian-oriented environment around the stations.

Recommendation: The City of Minneapolis recommends that the DEIS evaluate the impacts of the transitway and associated roadway design on pedestrian safety along Highway 55 and identify safe and convenient pedestrian infrastructure improvements.

5. **BRT Interchange/Target Field Station**

The Bottineau Optimized BRT alternative developed at the end of the Alternatives Analysis study and shown in the inset map on page 7 of the Scoping Booklet runs on 5th Street, similar to the LRT alternatives, but does not stop at The Interchange/Target Field, different from the LRT alternatives. The BRT alternative has stations approximately ¼ mile west of The Interchange at Border Avenue and approximately ½ mile east of The Interchange at Hennepin Avenue and 4th Street. These station locations will require transit riders to walk several blocks to access Northstar Commuter Rail and Target Field; this is particularly an issue on Twins game days when LRT ridership is very high to Target Field.

Recommendation: The City of Minneapolis recommends that the DEIS evaluate alternative Target Field station location options and/or pedestrian access improvements for the BRT alternative that provide more convenient access to Target Field and the Interchange than the proposed Border Avenue station.