



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

**Date:** June 5, 2012

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

**Subject:** **Bottineau Transitway Locally Preferred Alternative**

**Recommendation:**

1. Approve a resolution of support of the locally preferred alternative for the Bottineau Transitway project to the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority and Metropolitan Council.

**Previous Directives:**

- February 15, 2012 – City Council accepted an invitation to become a participating agency for the Bottineau Transitway Draft Environmental Impact Statement process and approved comments on the scope of issues to be studied in the Bottineau Transitway Draft Environmental Impact Statement.
- January 31, 2012 – T&PW Committee received and filed presentation on the Bottineau Transitway Draft Environmental Impact Statement process.
- September 22, 2009 – T&PW Committee received and filed presentation on the Bottineau Transitway Alternatives Analysis Study.

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**Approved by:**

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**Reviews:**

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

**Financial Impact:**

Action is within current department budget

**Community Impact:**

Neighborhood Notification: NA

City Goals: Supports City Transportation Goals

Comprehensive Plan: Supports Comprehensive Plan Goals

Zoning Code: NA

## **Background/Supporting Information**

The Bottineau corridor runs from downtown Minneapolis through North Minneapolis, Golden Valley, Crystal, Robbinsdale, New Hope and Osseo to either Brooklyn Park or Maple Grove. Once completed, the Bottineau Corridor will directly connect to the Northstar Commuter Rail Line, Central LRT Corridor (Green Line), Southwest LRT Corridor (Green Line Extension), and an LRT alternative for Bottineau will interline with the Hiawatha LRT Corridor (Blue Line) in Downtown Minneapolis.

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 terminus alignment options
  - “B” to Brooklyn Park and
  - “A” to Maple Grove and
- One common middle alignment (“C”)
- 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-C-D1 alignment.

On May 8, 2012, the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority completed the Scoping Phase of the Draft Environmental Impacts Statement (DEIS) process, specifying that all 4 LRT alignment alternatives, but no BRT alternative, be studied further in the DEIS. This decision followed a formal public comment period and a series of public meetings in early 2012.

In addition to the DEIS process, selection of the locally preferred alternative (LPA) for the Alternatives Analysis process is also underway. On May 10, 2012, the Bottineau Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) held a public hearing on the LPA decision. On May 24, 2012, the ARCC technical staff committee provided the following input to the PAC: (1) LRT is the preferred mode; (2) the D1 alignment is the preferred route for the southern end, and Hennepin County, Metropolitan Council, and the City of Minneapolis should work together to develop and deliver separate transit, livability and economic development investments to north Minneapolis neighborhoods as soon as possible; and (3) the technical justification for the A and B alignments on the northern end are different, but balanced. On May 30, 2012, the PAC recommended to the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) that the B-C-D1 LRT alternative be selected as the LPA. HCRRA is scheduled to hold a public hearing on the LPA on June 12, 2012 and to take action on the LPA on June 26, 2012. From July through December 2012, the Metropolitan Council will consider amending the Transportation Policy Plan to include the Bottineau LPA, which is the final action necessary to approve the LPA.

The DEIS scoping comments approved by the City Council on February 15, 2012 described the difficulty that the City of Minneapolis has in supporting either of the alignment alternatives through Minneapolis: D1, which bypasses the neighborhoods in North Minneapolis, and D2, which, while promising some economic development, divides, and in other ways negatively impacts the neighborhoods in North Minneapolis. The scoping comments suggested that the D1 vs. D2 alignment should be presented in the context of potential improvements to the transit network as a whole, rather than solely in the context of the opportunities presented by the Bottineau Transitway project and recommended that, separate from the Bottineau Transitway project, the Twin Cities region pursue arterial transitway improvements (streetcar or rapid bus)

and transit-oriented development initiatives on one or more arterial streets in North Minneapolis, potentially including West Broadway Avenue, Penn Avenue North, and Emerson/Fremont Avenue N.

Since that time there have been productive conversations with both Hennepin County and the Metropolitan Council on how to improve transit service and livability in North Minneapolis. In the past several months, four key initiatives have advanced transit service and livability in North Minneapolis:

1. The City of Minneapolis submitted an application for federal funding for a transitway Alternatives Analysis for West Broadway, and if the grant is awarded both Hennepin County and Metropolitan Council have committed to share in the funding of the required local match. This West Broadway Alternatives Analysis will advance the vision shared by many in the community of a vibrant commercial corridor served by transit.
2. The Metropolitan Council has agreed to evaluate rapid bus improvements for the Emerson / Fremont Avenues North and Penn Avenue North corridors, as well as a possible South Minneapolis connection on Chicago Avenue South, using the same evaluation process which was just completed for 11 local transitways including West Broadway Avenue through the Arterial Transitway Corridors Study. The focus on these important transit corridors will emphasize the importance of mobility to connect North Minneapolis to the regional transit system.
3. The Metropolitan Council awarded \$2 million to a mixed income, mixed use development project at Penn & West Broadway which includes funding for enhanced transit facilities. This investment will help to make the corridor ready for investments in rapid bus or streetcar in the future.
4. Hennepin County has created a Community Works project for Penn Avenue, to stimulate economic development, beautification, livability, and job creation in North Minneapolis, and County staff will be working in the next months to create a project boundaries and goals. The City will be a key player in this effort, which is a welcome addition to the County's other highly effective Community Works projects.

Therefore, staff is recommending that the City Council Approve a resolution of support of the locally preferred alternative for the Bottineau Transitway project to the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority and Metropolitan Council.

Attachment #1 – Corridor map

**A RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT OF THE LOCALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE (LPA) FOR THE BOTTINEAU TRANSITWAY PROJECT TO THE HENNEPIN COUNTY REGIONAL RAILROAD AUTHORITY (HCRRA) AND METROPOLITAN COUNCIL**

**WHEREAS**, the Bottineau Transitway is a proposed project to provide transit service which will satisfy long-term regional mobility and accessibility needs for businesses and the traveling public in the heavily traveled northwest area of the Twin Cities, and;

**WHEREAS**, the Bottineau Transitway is located in Hennepin County, Minnesota, extending approximately 13 miles from downtown Minneapolis to the northwest through north Minneapolis and the suburbs of Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, New Hope, Brooklyn Park, Maple Grove, and Osseo, and;

**WHEREAS**, the HCRRA in partnership with the Metropolitan Council and other project stakeholders recently completed the Bottineau Transitway Alternatives Analysis Study that in addition to the No Build and Transportation System Management (TSM) alternatives; recommended four Light Rail Transit (LRT) Alternatives and one Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Alternative be advanced for further study in the federal and state environmental review processes, and;

**WHEREAS**, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) and the Metropolitan Council have initiated both federal and state environmental review for the Bottineau Transitway project, and;

**WHEREAS**, federal funding will be pursued for this project from the FTA, which has consequently been designated as the lead federal agency for this project, and;

**WHEREAS**, the Bottineau Transitway recently completed the Scoping Phase of environmental process, and;

**WHEREAS**, through the Scoping process, the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) recommended further study of the No Build and TSM alternatives along with further study of four LRT alternatives (A-C-D1, A-C-D2, B-C-D1, B-C-D2) in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS), and;

**WHEREAS**, through the Scoping process, the PAC recommended no further study of the BRT alternative, and;

**WHEREAS**, on May 8, 2012 the HCRRA adopted (Resolution No. 12-HCRRA-0028) the recommendations of the PAC regarding the alternatives to be further evaluated in the Bottineau Transitway Draft EIS, and;

**WHEREAS**, the identification of an LPA is a critical step in pursuing federal funding for the Bottineau Transitway, and;

**WHEREAS**, the LPA includes the definition of the Bottineau Transitway mode and alignment, and;

**WHEREAS**, the adoption of the LPA and amendment of it into the region's long-range transportation plan, the Transportation Policy Plan, concludes the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Alternatives Analysis (AA) process, and;

**WHEREAS**, the LPA will be one of the build alternatives identified and studied in the Draft EIS, and;

**WHEREAS**, the LPA selection process does not replace or override the requirement to fully examine alternatives and determine the adverse impacts that must be avoided or mitigated under the federal and state environmental review process, and;

**WHEREAS**, the four LRT alternatives to be studied in the Draft EIS were further considered with respect to defined project goals, objectives and evaluating criteria set forth in the AA study and further refined during the Scoping Phase of the federal and state environmental analyses, and;

**WHEREAS**, the Advise, Review Communicate Committee (ARCC) and the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) have provided input into the selection of an LPA, and;

**WHEREAS**, the ARCC, in a technical advisory role to the PAC, provided the following input: (1) LRT is the preferred mode; (2) the D1 alignment is the preferred route for the southern end, and Hennepin County, Metropolitan Council, and the City of Minneapolis should work together to develop and deliver separate transit, livability and economic development investments to north Minneapolis neighborhoods as soon as possible; and (3) the technical justification for the A and B alignments on the northern end are different, but balanced.

**WHEREAS**, the Bottineau Transitway PAC held a public hearing on May 10, 2012 as part of the LPA selection process, and;

**WHEREAS**, the Bottineau Transitway PAC passed a resolution on the recommended LPA on May 30, 2012, defined as B-C-D1, and;

**WHEREAS**, the City of Minneapolis has provided written comments during the scoping process, stating that the Draft EIS include provisions that address community impacts and mitigation to those impacts, and;

**WHEREAS**, the City of Minneapolis continues to be an active participant in Bottineau Corridor planning process, and;

**WHEREAS**, in the past several months, four key initiatives have advanced transit service and livability in North Minneapolis:

1. The City of Minneapolis submitted an application for federal funding for a transitway Alternatives Analysis for West Broadway, and if the grant is awarded both Hennepin County and Metropolitan Council have committed to share in the funding of the required local match. This West Broadway Alternatives Analysis will advance the vision shared by many in the community of a vibrant commercial corridor served by transit.
2. The Metropolitan Council has agreed to evaluate rapid bus improvements for the Emerson / Fremont Avenues North and Penn Avenue North corridors, as well as a possible South Minneapolis connection on Chicago Avenue South, using the same evaluation process which was just completed for 11 local transitways including West Broadway Avenue through the Arterial Transitway Corridors Study. The focus on these important transit corridors will emphasize the importance of mobility to connect North Minneapolis to the regional transit system.
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4. Hennepin County has created a Community Works project for Penn Avenue, to stimulate economic development, beautification, livability, and job creation in North Minneapolis,

and County staff will be working in the next months to create a project boundaries and goals. The City will be a key player in this effort, which is a welcome addition to the County's other highly effective Community Works projects.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the City of Minneapolis supports the LPA recommendation of the PAC, and identifies Alternative B-C-D1 as the Locally Preferred Alternative for the Bottineau Transitway project.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the City of Minneapolis commits to working with Hennepin County and the Metropolitan Council to pursue enhanced transit service, economic development and livability in North Minneapolis, including a West Broadway Alternatives Analysis; evaluation of rapid bus improvements for the Emerson / Fremont Avenues North and Penn Avenue North corridors; development of the mixed income, mixed use project at Penn & West Broadway with enhanced transit facilities; the creation of a Community Works project for Penn Avenue North; and feeder bus network improvements connecting North and Northeast Minneapolis with the Bottineau Transitway.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this resolution adopted by the City of Minneapolis be forwarded to HCRRA and the Metropolitan Council for their consideration.