



TO: Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

FROM: Michael Schroeder, Assistant Superintendent, Planning

DATE: 24 May 2023

SUBJECT: BLUE LINE EXTENSION PROJECT UPDATE

BACKGROUND

Project Description

Prior to August 2020, the planned METRO Blue Line Extension LRT project was anticipated to operate on approximately 13.5 miles of new double track from downtown Minneapolis to the northwest serving the communities of Minneapolis, Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, and Brooklyn Park. In August 2020, the Metropolitan Council (Council) and Hennepin County announced the need to advance the METRO Blue Line Extension project without using approximately eight miles of freight railroad property as was initially planned. The METRO Blue Line Extension is anticipated to serve a broader area to the northwest, including the communities of New Hope, Brooklyn Center, Plymouth, Maple Grove, Osseo, Champlin, and Dayton.

It is anticipated that the METRO Blue Line Extension will operate primarily at-grade with structures providing grade separation of LRT crossings, roadways, and water bodies at specified locations. The northernmost station on the line is anticipated to be located at Oak Grove Parkway in Brooklyn Park. From Target Field Station south through downtown Minneapolis, the METRO Blue Line Extension is expected to be interlined/through-routed with the existing METRO Blue Line, sharing tracks on South 5th Street in downtown Minneapolis.

The Council is the Federal Transit Administration grantee and will serve as the owner-operator of the completed METRO Blue Line Extension.

Project Status

In June 2022, the Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County Board adopted the route recommendation for the METRO Blue Line Extension. The new route for the Blue Line Extension will extend the existing Blue Line light rail transit from Target Field Station along West Broadway Avenue in Minneapolis to County Road 81 in Crystal and Robbinsdale, and along West Broadway Avenue in Brooklyn Park. Extending this line provides a one-seat ride from Brooklyn Park, through Minneapolis, to the airport and the Mall of America.

The next steps for the project include advancing the route through environmental review, engineering, and station area planning over the coming years. The project anticipates completing



the environmental review process in the Fall of 2023, which will clear the pathway to construction.

Topics of Discussion

The project has engaged in on-going coordination meetings with MPRB staff through regularly scheduled Issue resolution Team meetings (IRT). During these discussions, park access touch points have been identified along the proposed route options in Minneapolis. On May 24, Blue Line Extension project staff will provide the Board of Commissioners with an update and be available to answer questions and discuss the project. Specific topics of discussion will include:

- Route overview
- Park touch points and coordination
- Project timeline and next steps

This discussion items supports the following goals and strategies in Parks for All, the MPRB Comprehensive Plan 2021-2036:

Goal:

05. Expand focus on health equity

04. Work from our strengths and determine our role in partnerships

Strategy:

03. Support year-round, multimodal, vehicular, non-motorized, and shared mobility options that create safe recreation and commuter access to and through parks and the Grand Rounds through infrastructure, filling trail gaps, traffic calming, maintenance, promotion, crash reduction, and education on trail protocols.

08. Create system-wide connections to and through parks for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders based on master plans and in collaboration with agency partners.

Attachments: N/A

Jbr 5.24.2023.