
TO: METRO Gold Line Interested Parties
FROM: Charles Carlson, Senior Manager, BRT/Small Starts Projects
DATE: August 28, 2017
SUBJECT: METRO Gold Line – Environmental Impact Statement Termination Notification

There is a proposal to change the type of state environmental process for the project. A summary of the changes to the project that led to this decision and information on the public comment period are provided below.

Changes to the METRO Gold Line since 2014

In 2014, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Metropolitan Council, and the Ramsey and Washington County Regional Railroad Authorities initiated the environmental review process for the Gold Line. Based on the range of routes and types of transit being considered, it was determined that the Gold Line could have significant impacts. To satisfy both federal and state requirements, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was determined the appropriate level of environmental review. Under the state rules, an EIS was not mandatory for the Gold Line but the project partners decided to complete a discretionary EIS.

From 2014 to late 2016, the project collected community input and technical details on all of the routes and types of transit under consideration and in December of 2016, chose the route and mode of the transitway. Many community groups weighed in on the process including the Gateway Corridor Commission, and Policy Advisory Committee, which were made up of citizens and representatives of the communities that will be served by the line. Additionally, resolutions of support were passed by the Cities of Saint Paul, Maplewood, Oakdale, Landfall, and Woodbury. The regional railroad commissions of Ramsey and Washington counties also adopted resolutions of support.

Based on the technical analysis, required local support, and ability for the alternatives to effectively meet the project's purpose and need, the project transitioned from considering four different routes that were approximately 13 miles long to one route that is nine miles long. The remaining route, seen in [Figure 1](#), would be Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in a dedicated guideway. This route, known as the Locally Preferred Alternative, is approximately 80 percent within publically owned rights of way.

Based on the initial impact analysis of the Locally Preferred Alternative as a BRT line (instead of LRT), a discretionary EIS is not warranted as the project does not have the potential for significant environmental effects. A discretionary combined state and federal Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW)/Environmental Assessment (EA) document will be prepared for the Gold Line instead of an EIS. An EAW/EA requires environmental impact analysis on the project and provides an opportunity for the public to comment on the findings. The FTA has rescinded the notice of intent to prepare an EIS under the National Environmental Policy Act (Federal Register, March 15, 2017).

Questions and Comments

The comment period for this decision is from August 28 to September 8. Please direct any questions or comments to:

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Figure 1. Locally Preferred Alternative

