Gold Line Project

Environmental Process

Environmental review and compliance is an integral component of the METRO Gold Line to identify benefits and impacts to the environment, community and businesses in the corridor. All new transit projects applying for federal funding under the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Capital Investment Grant Program are required to complete an environmental review document per the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). This page provides information about the environmental regulations affecting the Gold Line and links to relevant environmental studies and reports.

Section 106 Assessment of Effects and Final Determination of Effect for Historic Properties

- Section 106 Assessment of Effects and Final Determination of Effect for Historic Properties (November 2020) 10.5 MB
- Section 106 Assessment of Effects - 60% Addendum (June 2021) 14.4 MB

Section 106 Programmatic Agreement Implementation

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) requires projects receiving federal funding to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties. A Programmatic Agreement (PA) between the FTA and Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (MnHPO) guides the completion of this process.

- Section 106 Programmatic Agreement (January 2020) 5MB
- Section 106 Programmatic Agreement Amendment (September 2021) 1MB

The Council and FTA began reporting to MnHPO and other Section 106 consulting parties in April 2020 on implementation of the PA. These reports are available below.

- Gold Line BRT Section 106 Quarterly Report No. 1 (January 7 - March 31, 2020) 0.8 MB
- Gold Line BRT Section 106 Quarterly Report No. 2 (April 1 - June 30, 2020) 0.4 MB
- Gold Line BRT Section 106 Quarterly Report No. 3 (July 1 - September 30, 2020) 0.4 MB
- Gold Line BRT Section 106 Quarterly Report No. 4 (October 1 - December 31, 2020) 0.3 MB
- Gold Line BRT Section 106 Quarterly Report No. 5 (January 1 - March 31, 2021) 0.4 MB
- Gold Line BRT Section 106 Quarterly Report No. 6 (April 1 - June 30, 2021) 0.4 MB
- Gold Line BRT Section 106 Quarterly Report No. 7 (July 1 - September 30, 2021) 0.4 MB
- Gold Line BRT Section 106 Quarterly Report No. 8 (October 1 - December 31, 2021) 0.4 MB
- Gold Line BRT Section 106 Quarterly Report No. 9 (January 1 - March 31, 2022) 0.4 MB
- Gold Line BRT Section 106 Quarterly Report No. 10 (April 1 - June 30, 2022) 0.4 MB
- Gold Line BRT Section 106 Quarterly Report No. 11 (July 1 - September 30, 2022) 0.4 MB
- Gold Line BRT Section 106 Quarterly Report No. 12 (October 1 - December 31, 2022)0.4 MB
- Gold Line BRT Section 106 Quarterly Report No. 13 (January 1 - March 31, 2023) 0.4 MB
- Gold Line BRT Section 106 Quarterly Report No. 14 (April 1 - June 30, 2023) 0.4 MB
- Gold Line BRT Section 106 Quarterly Report No. 15 (July 1 - September 30, 2023) 0.4 MB
- Gold Line BRT Section 106 Quarterly Report No. 16 (October 1 - December 31, 2023)0.4 MB
- Gold Line BRT Section 106 Quarterly Report No. 17 (January 1 - March 31, 2024) 0.4 MB
- Gold Line BRT Section 106 Quarterly Report No. 18 (April 1 - June 30, 2024) 0.4 MB

Need Help?

- Gold Line BRT Section 106 Quarterly Report No. 19 (July 1 - September 30, 2024) 0.2 MB
- Gold Line BRT Section 106 Quarterly Report No. 20 (October 1 - December 31, 2024) 0.2 MB
- Gold Line BRT Section 106 Quarterly Report No. 21 (January 1 - March 31, 2025) 1.7 MB
- Gold Line BRT Section 106 Quarterly Report No. 22 (April 1 - June 30, 2025) 1.78 MB
- Gold Line BRT Section 106 Quarterly Report No 23 (July 1 - September 30, 2025) 0.5 MB

Environmental assessment and decision documents (2018 - 2020)

The METRO Gold Line has completed an environmental assessment document to describe the transportation, social and environmental impacts associated with the construction and operation of the project.

Public comments were collected from October 7 - November 6, 2019. The comments, along with the other environmental analysis that has been done, has been used to make a decision about how the Gold Line will impact the region it serves. The Metropolitan Council is the lead regional agency in this decision, and the Federal Transit Administration is the lead federal agency.

The FTA has determined the environmental assessment adequately addressed impacts of the project, and has issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) document, which means the project will move forward without additional required analysis from the FTA. Responses to substantive comments on the environmental assessment are included in the FONSI.

Environmental Re-Evaluation

Following publication of the FONSI and validation that the environmental decision remains valid for 30% design, the project advanced to 90 percent design completion. The FTA re-evaluated the project's environmental impacts in light of these design changes and determined on April 5, 2021 that the FONSI still remains valid:

- Gold Line BRT - FTA Environmental Re-Evaluation (April 2021) 14.6 MB
- Gold Line BRT - FTA Environmental Re-Evaluation (August 2020) 4.2 MB
- Gold Line BRT - FHWA Environmental Re-Evaluation (May 2021) 0.3 MB
- Gold Line BRT - FTA Environmental Re-Evaluation (December 2021) 4.5 MB
- Gold Line BRT - FHWA Environmental Re-Evaluation (December 2021) 13 MB

Notice

Decision Documents on the ***METRO Gold Line Bus Rapid Transit Environmental Assessment*** from The Federal Transit Administration, The Federal Highway Administration and The Metropolitan Council have been issued. A ***Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)*** was published on January 17, 2020 by FTA and March 5, 2020 by FHWA, as well as a ***Findings of Fact and Conclusions*** by The Metropolitan Council on March 26, 2020.

The environmental assessment is an analysis required by the National Environmental Policy Act that evaluates impacts and benefits from proposed projects.

What is the purpose of the analysis?

- Ensure compliance with environmental laws
- Evaluate benefits and impacts to environmental, social, economic and transportation resources
- Identify solutions to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts
- Inform the public and agencies on impacts as part of the decision-making process

What is evaluated in the environmental assessment?

- **Transportation**: Traffic; transit; parking and driveways; pedestrian and bicycle facilities; freight rail; aviation
- **Community and Social**: Land use plan compatibility; community facilities, character and cohesion; acquisitions, displacements, and relocations; visual quality and aesthetics; business and economic; safety and security; environmental justice

- **Physical and Environmental**: Utilities; flood plains; surface water; stormwater and water quality; geology, groundwater and soils; hazardous materials and contamination; noise and vibration; biological environment; air quality; energy; farmlands
- **Section 4(f) and 6(f)**: Park and recreation areas
- **Section 106**: Cultural resources and historic properties

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Alternatives analysis study (2010 - 2013)

The *Alternatives Analysis* was completed in February 2013. The study identified bus rapid transit (BRT) and light rail transit (LRT) alternatives as best meeting the project goals and recommended that both alternatives move forward for further study. With both BRT and LRT recommended for analysis from the Union Depot in downtown Saint Paul to Manning Avenue in Lake Elmo/Woodbury (approximately 12 miles), and BRT service continuing to Wisconsin (approximately seven additional miles), an environmental impact statement was determined to be the appropriate National Environmental Policy Act class of action.

The *Alternatives Analysis* is available on the Project Facts page.

Draft environmental impact statement scoping process (2014)

The National Environmental Policy Act Scoping is a formal process to identify issues and alternatives for analysis in the National Environmental Policy Act document, which is either an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement. The purpose of scoping is to identify the transportation alternatives that will be evaluated, to describe the environmental issue areas that will be assessed and to outline the community involvement process proposed for this project. The *Scoping Decision Document* includes information on the scoping elements described above, as well as information on the public review and comment period in 2014.

The *Scoping Decision* is available on this page, under Environmental documentation.

Initial locally preferred alternative selection (2014 - 2016)

The process to formally recommend a locally preferred alternative for the Gateway Corridor project began after the *Scoping Decision* was published. The initial locally preferred alternative, described as BRT generally on the Hudson Road-Hudson Boulevard alignment that crosses to the south side of I-94 between approximately Lake Elmo Avenue/Settlers Ridge Parkway and Manning Avenue, was selected in 2014 and adopted as part of the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan, the Metropolitan Council's fiscally constrained long-range transportation policy and investment plan, in 2015. However, the City of Lake Elmo did not pass a resolution supporting the locally preferred alternative.

Locally preferred alternative refinements (2016 - 2018)

The eastern end alignment, stations and cost were then re-evaluated (east of I-694). A new alignment that terminates at the Woodbury Theatre was adopted as the new locally preferred alternative recommendation in 2016. However, as of 2018, the proposed Woodbury 494 Park & Ride is now considered the terminus and beginning station for Gold Line in Woodbury.

The *East End Alignment and Stations Technical Memorandum* is available on the Project Facts page.

Change in National Environmental Policy Act class of action (2017)

After the Alternatives Analysis Study was completed, an EIS was determined to be the appropriate NEPA class of action based on multiple modes (BRT and LRT) under consideration, the number of alternatives and the length of the potential alignments. In 2013, there were multiple 22-mile BRT alternatives that affected two states, a managed lane alternative and a 12-mile LRT alternative under consideration.

Since then, through the Scoping and Locally Preferred Alternative processes, the Gateway Corridor/METRO Gold Line has reduced its geographic reach from Hudson, Wisconsin to Woodbury, Minnesota, which is a 10-mile reduction in total project length. Additionally, transit technologies under evaluation have been reduced from LRT, BRT and Managed Lanes to only BRT. These changes resulted in only one viable BRT alignment. That alignment also has a low potential for impacts because it is primarily within existing public right-of-way. Based on these changes, the FTA and WCRRA, in consultation with the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Metropolitan Council, determined that an Environmental Assessment (EA) is the appropriate NEPA class of action consistent with other projects of its scope and scale. A 10-day public comment period was held for people to comment on the change from an EIS to an EA. Three comments were received.

The *Environmental Impact Statement Termination Notification* and the *Environment Impact Statement Termination Comment Summary* are available on this page, under Environmental documentation.

Environmental documentation

Metro Transit anticipates publishing an environmental assessment document in late 2019. The document will identify potential environmental, social and transportation effects from the Gold Line's construction and operations. After completion of the environmental assessment, the document will be made available for public comment. The Gold Line previously anticipated drafting and publishing an environmental impact statement, but due to changes in the project's scope, alignment and stations that occurred in 2016, the Gold Line will instead complete an environmental assessment.

- Environmental Impact Statement Termination Comment Summary (Sep. 2017)
- Memo: Environmental Impact Statement Termination Notification (Aug. 2017)
- Notice to Rescind the Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (Mar. 2017)
- Scoping Decision Document (Oct. 2014)

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